

Creative Strategies Incubator: Preparing Your Letter of Interest

**METCALF
FOUNDATION**

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Agenda

Background

- ▶ Introduction to Creative Strategies Incubator
- ▶ Components of Creative Strategies Incubator
 - Supported Initiatives
 - Learning Network
 - Focus Issue
- ▶ Possible Approaches to Focus Issue

Agenda

Making an Application

- ▶ Program Eligibility
- ▶ Letters of Interest
 - Content
 - What is the Foundation looking for?

Q & A

Creative Strategies Incubator

“...the Metcalf Foundation believes in supporting a diversity of responses to address complex challenges. We believe that this work will be more successful if people and organizations share what they learn and build on each other’s solutions. We also believe it is important to engage at an overarching, policy level in order to address systemic issues that go beyond the efforts of an individual company.”

Creative Strategies Incubator

- ▶ non-profit performing arts sector facing complex sectoral challenges
- ▶ complex challenges require different responses from a variety of organizations
- ▶ this work is strengthened if these different organizations have opportunities to share learning
- ▶ some policy-level challenges are beyond capabilities of any individual organization

Components

- ▶ Supported Initiatives
- ▶ Learning Network
- ▶ Focus Issue

Supported Initiatives

- ▶ very similar to former Strategic Initiatives program

“What’s the best new, creative way
for my company
to approach this particular challenge?”

Supported Initiatives

“What’s the best **new, creative way** for my company to approach this particular challenge?”

- ▶ has to be new approach/activity for your company – this is not funding for ongoing operations
- ▶ must be innovative for your company – should be innovative for sector
- ▶ looking to build Learning Network of most creative responses to the particular challenge

Supported Initiatives

“What’s the best new, creative way **for my company** to approach this particular challenge?”

- ▶ initiative should reflect the manner in which your company does/wants to do business
- ▶ needs “buy in” from all levels of company – professional staff (artistic and administrative), volunteer leadership (Board)

Supported Initiatives

“What’s the best new, creative way for my company to approach **this particular challenge?**”

- ▶ needs to address Focus Issue identified by Metcalf for that year’s applications

Supported Initiatives

- ▶ Metcalf will support the cost of implementing your Supported Initiative
- ▶ funding parameters (2013)
 - up to \$75,000/year for 3 years
 - can be a different amount in each year
 - can request funding for only 1 or 2 years
 - “cost of implementing Supported Initiative” can include salaries, but this is not operating funding
 - amount of request important – will address that issue in Letter of Interest requirements

Learning Network

- ▶ comprised of representatives from all companies working on Supported Initiatives
 - as much as possible, should be more than one person from each participating organization
 - should be organization personnel with ongoing knowledge and experience of the Supported Initiative
 - these people should be prepared to make an active commitment, attending all network meetings
 - should include artistic staff as well as administrative staff

Learning Network

- ▶ comprised of representatives from all companies working on Supported Initiatives
- ▶ will participate in up to four day-long meetings each year
 - share the learning from the implementation of your initiative – help other organizations and be prepared to accept their feedback and help
 - receive technical assistance from consultants and subject experts

Learning Network

- ▶ comprised of representatives from all companies working on Supported Initiatives
- ▶ will participate in up to four day-long meetings each year
- ▶ will be expected to share learning with other organizations across performing arts sector
 - possible “open house” in addition to four meetings
 - online/social media sharing

Learning Network

- ▶ comprised of representatives from all companies working on Supported Initiatives
- ▶ will participate in up to four day-long meetings each year
- ▶ will be expected to share learning with other organizations across performing arts sector
- ▶ “shepherded” by a committee formed by Metcalf, that will assume responsibility for some sector-wide policy issues

Focus Issue

2013

- ▶ “...new approaches to, or alternative sources of, revenue”

2014

- ▶ “...will likely be related to audience engagement, although this is subject to change...”

Focus Issue

2013

- ▶ “...new approaches to, or alternative sources of, revenue”

2014

- ▶ “...will likely be related to audience engagement, although this is subject to change...”
 - Metcalf is interested in working in this area, but leaving flexibility in case pressing sectoral issue arises
 - will undertake informal community poll at beginning of summer to finalize

Focus Issue

2013

- ▶ “...new approaches to, or alternative sources of, revenue”

2014

- ▶ “...will likely be related to audience engagement, although this is subject to change...”

Please Note:

- ▶ make sure your Supported Initiative actually addresses the Focus Issue...

Focus Issue

Possible Approaches to Focus Issue

- ▶ building sources of primary earned revenue (new approaches to box office/marketing)
- ▶ monetizing existing resources
- ▶ creation of social enterprise revenues
- ▶ unique/new approaches to fundraising or development

Focus Issue

Important Considerations

- ▶ the more creative, the better the likelihood of funding...
- ▶ really not looking for “We just want to hire a fundraiser...”

Program Eligibility

“In addition to being a registered charity, applicants ... must be professional theatre, dance, music, or opera companies, located in the City of Toronto, who have been in operation for at least three years.”

Program Eligibility

“In addition to being a **registered charity**, applicants ... must be professional theatre, dance, music, or opera companies...”

- ▶ legal requirement for Metcalf funding
- ▶ will consider collaborative applications including non-charities, but lead applicant must be registered and must be responsible for activities of partnership (not simply a conduit for funds)

Program Eligibility

“In addition to being a registered charity, applicants ... must be **professional** theatre, dance, music, or opera companies...”

- ▶ are artists/performers paid for their work?
- ▶ is your organization funded by one of the arts councils? (recognized by peer jury)

Program Eligibility

“...must be professional **theatre, dance, music, or opera companies**, located in the City of Toronto...”

- ▶ will consider collaborative applications, including companies outside of this description, but lead applicant must be a performing arts company
- ▶ will consider applications from ASOs with focus solely on performing arts
- ▶ excludes media arts (film, radio, television) and visual arts (including museums, galleries)

Program Eligibility

“...theatre, dance, music, or opera companies, **located in the City of Toronto**, who have been in operation for at least three years.”

- ▶ primary office/studio address in “M” postal code area
- ▶ eligible for Toronto Arts Council funding
- ▶ may consider companies based in GTA with strong annual presence in Toronto

Program Eligibility

“...theatre, dance, music, or opera companies, located in the City of Toronto, who have been in operation for at least three years.”

- ▶ typically, three years of production history
- ▶ company need not have been a registered charity for three years

Program Eligibility

Other Considerations

- ▶ appreciate collaborative applications
- ▶ will not consider applications from companies currently receiving Strategic Initiatives funding
- ▶ contact Program Director with specific questions

Letters of Interest

- ▶ brief background to company
 - least important section – brief
 - if collaborative application, should introduce all partners

Letters of Interest

- ▶ brief background to company
- ▶ outline your proposed initiative
 - most important section
 - Is your proposed initiative focused, clearly articulated, well thought out, achievable?

Letters of Interest

- ▶ brief background to company
- ▶ outline your proposed initiative
- ▶ names/titles of people who will participate in Learning Network
 - people who will be involved with proposed initiative
 - people with authority across organization
 - in full application stage, each of these people will need to provide a statement regarding what they hope to gain from the Learning Network

Letters of Interest

- ▶ brief background to company
- ▶ outline your proposed initiative
- ▶ names/titles of people who will participate in Learning Network
- ▶ experience working in collaborative learning environments
 - could be company or individual experience

Letters of Interest

Important Considerations

- ▶ description of proposed initiative most important section for letter of interest
- ▶ three page maximum (honest three pages...)
- ▶ require hard copy (printed double-sided) and electronic copy
- ▶ need Metcalf cover sheet
- ▶ application deadline firm – all materials must be received by 5:00 pm on Monday, March 11

What is Metcalf looking for?

- ▶ typically, Metcalf has been very lenient at letter of interest stage in Performing Arts Program

What is Metcalf looking for?

- ▶ Is the letter of interest eligible?
 - registered charity
 - professional performing arts organization
 - based in Toronto
 - three years' production history
 - addresses Focus Issue
 - not an operating request
 - applicant is not currently receiving Strategic Initiatives funding

What is Metcalf looking for?

- ▶ Is the proposed initiative compelling?
 - Is it new for this company? Is it innovative for the sector?
 - Is it focused? Was the company thoughtful and rigorous in the development of this plan?
 - Has it been well-researched? Is there evidence of a strong business plan for the initiative?
 - Is it achievable? Is it achievable on the proposed budget?

What is Metcalf looking for?

- ▶ Does the amount of funding requested feel appropriate for the proposed initiative?
 - Is it within the program parameters?
 - Is it too much money? Does it feel “padded”? Does it feel like a “disguised” request for operating support?
 - Is it too little money? Is the proposed activity really possible for this amount of money?

What is Metcalf looking for?

- ▶ How would this company and this proposal contribute to the Learning Network?
 - Is this a new, creative way to approach the Focus Issue?
 - Would this company/these people bring diversity to the Learning Network? (discipline, company size, art form)
 - Would this company bring participation from both artistic and administrative leadership?
 - Is this a company with a strong history of leadership in the sector, particularly at the local level?

Q & A

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Thank you for participating in today's webinar.

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