

SPARK PROGRAM OVERVIEW

History

OSAC has long struggled with youth engagement. Being a mature organization where many founding members have stayed involved well into their 70's and 80's, the Arts Councils in some cases have been exclusive more than they have been inclusive in regards to mentoring emerging presenters. This is starting to change a bit in some communities as younger members are joining and getting involved. We see renewed energy and enthusiasm in the communities where younger people have engaged. The goal of the SPARK program is to encourage Arts Councils to begin mentoring the next generation of arts presenters. With tools and financial support provided by OSAC as well as the shared experiences of other arts councils, we hope to help build the future of arts presenting in the province.

A New Approach

OSAC recognizes that there is likely not one solution that will work for our varied membership due to demographics, economical, geographical and cultural factors. A strategy that involves a multitude of varied initiatives is required. The goal will be to build a repertoire of activities and methods that will produce results with some probability of success that can then be replicated in similar communities, but likely not all communities. OSAC understands there will likely be failures and there will be successes that may only work for one community.

Current Youth (29 years and younger) Delegates

The one constant that we have seen with younger members becoming involved in the Arts Councils is exposure to Arts Council events or the arts themselves at a young age. Alysson Mondor, President of the Assiniboia and District Arts Council, was involved in the arts growing up and Marc Holt of the Biggar and District Arts Council and other youth delegates had family members who were involved in the Arts Council and encouraged them to attend Arts Council events in their youth. We plan to model our youth engagement and emerging presenters program around the model of these members' experiences.

I joined the council as a Youth Advisory Member, and went to my first OSAC Showcase. I became hooked instantly! When I started getting involved in the arts, I really found what I was passionate about, and then when my path crossed with the Arts Council and OSAC, my world absolutely took off. It opened up so many different opportunities to me. I have gotten to meet and work with artists of all different styles and forms, and have made lasting connections in the arts world that I would probably not have had otherwise. What OSAC does for this province is nothing short of phenomenal! I feel so incredibly fortunate to have been a part of it.
Travis Boser – Youth Advisory Member - Leader and District Arts Council

Organizational Plan

The SPARK program will be the responsibility of the Performing Arts Coordinator. Councils interested in presenting a SPARK show in their community will fill out the SPARK Grant Proposal form and return it to the Performing Arts Coordinator explaining how they plan to not only present the performance that is targeted at youth audiences but also engage them in the presenting of the show. Depending on the artist and uptake from the membership, OSAC will cover 50% of the artist fees to a maximum of \$1000 per Arts Council, up to a total cost of \$7000 for OSAC. If OSAC receives more than 7 proposals, the grant will be reduced to cover all applications. For example if we get 20 proposals each council will receive \$350.

Idea and Initiative Mining

The application form will ask interested Arts Councils to submit proposals on how they plan to get the youth involved in presenting the performance. Ultimately the goal is to develop a SPARK coordinator position at each Council that would present this one show per season under the guidance of the performing arts coordinator. For many new members and emerging presenters, the idea of taking on an entire season is daunting. A new member may be more willing to take on one show with guidance from a seasoned performing arts coordinator. Our membership know their communities better than we do and what might be effective in Biggar may not work in Moosomin. One community might have a very strong piano teacher and a student might feel they can present a classical Pianist like Samuel Deason in their community while another young person might feel a contemporary vocal group like Eh440 is a band they could market to their peers. The idea is that if we ask the Councils to present their experiences, we will collect a wide range of recruitment and programming methods that we can then share amongst the membership for them to review and decide what might be a fit for their community.

Program Requirements

- The SPARK coordinator should be involved as much as possible in the selection of the artist for their SPARK performance. We feel the more ownership they have in the process, the more excited and engaged they will be.
- Any community or Arts Council member high school age to 29 is eligible as a SPARK coordinator.
- Any Showcase or Price List artist is suitable and eligible for the grant. It would be ideal if SPARK coordinators could attend Showcase in years going forward.
- Councils will have the option of including the SPARK show in their Season or market it as a stand-alone show. Performances under the Konzerts for Kids banner are also eligible. The artist fee minus the SPARK grant will still be eligible for the full 20% PA Grant or 5% grant if it is less than a 3 show season.
- OSAC will produce webinars for mentors and SPARK coordinators outlining best practices and expectations.

Timelines

September –	Arts Councils work on selecting a SPARK Coordinator
October –	SPARK Coordinator attends OSAC Showcase with their community arts council
October –	Showcase weekend to include a SPARK Coordinator meeting
November –	SPARK Grant Application sent to Arts Councils
January -	SPARK Applications due back to the PA Coordinator by January 25
December – March	Regular OSAC booking cycle continues
April – May	Regular Brochures and Posters delivered to arts councils
October – May	Season Performances take place
May –	SPARK Grant final report due back to the Performing Arts Coordinator

Bringing the Arts to You

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Bringing the Arts to You

OSAC SPARK Program Guide

The goal of the SPARK program is to help OSAC Arts Councils mentor and develop the next generation of arts presenters in the province. The attached application form is to be filled out by both the Arts Council PA Coordinator and the SPARK Coordinator.

Finding a SPARK Coordinator: This can be a difficult task. A couple of places to start might be your high school, music, drama and arts classes, or any existing youth members of your arts council. Other places to look might be local music teachers. Remember we consider anyone under 29 as eligible for the SPARK Coordinator position. There may be parents of children in the programs mentioned above that might consider helping to present one performance. The SPARK program is meant to be flexible and we have purposely tried to not mandate what type of performance or where the SPARK Coordinator comes from to give Arts Councils flexibility in finding and mentoring the SPARK Coordinator. You may want to also check with your School to see if this program and the students are eligible for credit for volunteering in the community.

Ensuring commitment of the SPARK Coordinator: There are a couple of things you can do to help the SPARK Coordinator take ownership of the performance. It is important they have input and choice in selecting the performance they are going to help with. This will ensure a higher level of ownership and investment in the program. In future years we will ask that the SPARK Coordinator attend Showcase and be allowed to select the performer based on their feelings and beliefs that they can successfully present the performance in your community.

Mentoring: The Arts Council must assign a mentor to the SPARK Coordinator that is willing to spend the time helping the SPARK Coordinator fill in the paperwork, market the show, explain contracts and riders etc. and execute the day of activities. Ideally the PA Coordinator will fill this role, but there may be former PA Coordinators, Past-Presidents etc. that could also fill this role.

OSAC Tools: OSAC is working on separate webinars for both the SPARK Coordinators and the Arts Council Mentors that will include resources and guidance to help them in their roles. These will be available early 2015. The OSAC office is of course always available to help with any questions or concerns you may have.

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OSAC SPARK Application Guide

Below are further explanations to the questions on the Application form. We have specifically not elaborated on the SPARK Coordinator questions as they are self-explanatory and will help give both the Arts Council and OSAC a baseline understanding of the SPARK Coordinator.

PA Coordinator Portion

How did the SPARK Coordinator come to your attention?

We are interested to know how the SPARK Coordinator came to your attention because your story when shared with other Arts Councils may inspire another Arts Council to also pursue a SPARK Coordinator in a similar fashion. It might also make them think of a youth member in their community that would be a good fit for the program. A big part of the SPARK program is sharing of experience.

How would you describe the current youth engagement in the arts in your community? In the Arts Council?

We are interested to know the arts ecology in your community and where the Arts Council fits in. There are no wrong answers here as every arts council operated differently. We are looking for possible disconnects and opportunities you see. For example if there are a large number of kids taking Music, Theatre or Dance Lessons in your community, but they are not attending Arts Council events perhaps that is an opportunity the SPARK Coordinator can help explore.

What impact do you see the SPARK program having in your community? In the Arts Council?

Are there specific things you feel the SPARK program will accomplish? Short Term? Long Term? What about your Arts Council? What impact will having the SPARK program in your community have on your Arts Council?

SPARK Coordinator Portion

How did you hear about the SPARK program?

How and why did you select this artist?

What do you plan to do to get your peers out to attend this performance?

What skills or experiences do you have that you think will help you successfully present this artist?

What skills or experiences do you hope to gain by presenting this artist?

How would you describe the current youth engagement in the arts in your community? In the Arts Council?

What impact do you see the SPARK program having in your community? In the Arts Council?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this program please contact the OSAC Performing Arts Coordinator.

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