



Bringing the Arts to You



Spark: An Overview

Spark is a program designed by OSAC to help Arts Councils mentor and develop the next generation of performing arts presenters in their communities. It was created in response to two issues consistently voiced by Arts Councils: youth engagement and succession planning. It aims to engage teens and young adults under age 29 as audiences, participants, and decision-makers and enable them to make an impact in their communities.

How does it work?

Through Spark, one performance per season will be presented by the Spark Coordinator (the mentee) under the guidance of the Arts Council's Performing Arts Coordinator (the mentor). Any community or Arts Council under 29 is eligible as a Spark Coordinator. This demographic is very diverse; they may be a high school student looking to build their skills and experience, or a working professional who wants to pursue a passion for the arts through volunteering.

Any Showcase or Price List artist is suitable and eligible for the grant. Councils will have the option of including the Spark show in their Season or market it as a stand-alone show. Performances under the Concerts for Kids banner are also eligible.

NEW: OSAC suggests that Spark shows offer a Youth Ticket (29 and under) for \$10. This is a suggestion for 2019/2020, but may be implemented as mandatory for the program in the future. This is in response to feedback that cost is one of the barriers to younger folks attending live shows.

NEW: Mentors working with youth under the age of 18 are now required to submit a Criminal Record Check, which shall be satisfactory to OSAC in its sole discretion, along with the Spark application form.

Bursary

OSAC recognizes that for organizations that have operated a certain way for a very long time, such a change may be daunting for various reasons, not the least of which is financial. Through the Spark Bursary, OSAC will relieve some of the risk that the Arts Councils may face for trying something new.

The Spark Bursary will cover 50% of the artist fees to a maximum of \$1000 per Arts Council. OSAC has committed \$7000 in financial support for the program. If more than seven applications are approved, the grant amount will be pro-rated to make sure every interested Arts Council that applies and meets the requirements of the program will receive some funding. The artist fee minus the Spark grant will still be eligible for the full PA Grant or 5% grant if it is less than a three show season.



Youth Engagement

Meaningful youth engagement is more than seeing younger faces in the audience or having a token youth on the Arts Council; it is about genuine inclusion and allowing new members to participate in decision-making processes. The greater the sense of ownership and personal investment a person has in an endeavour, the more excited and engaged they are likely to be. Working with a mentor, the Spark Coordinator will select and present a show which they believe they can market to their peers.

Mentorship

A mentor is an experienced and knowledgeable person who works alongside an emerging person in the same field to help them in their professional development and to succeed in their goals. In the Spark program, the mentor would be the Arts Council's Performing Arts Coordinator or other qualified Arts Council member and the shared goal is to present a live performing arts show in the community. It is important to note that the role of a mentor is not to delegate tasks but to let the Spark coordinator be in the driver's seat. The mentor is the trusted advisor and role model who provides support, guidance, and practical assistance.

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 that 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 also want to check with schools to see if this program and the students are eligible for credit for volunteering in the community.

Promotional materials are available for download on the Spark website to help you reach out to potential Spark Coordinators in your communities. There are three versions of a poster which include a space for your contact information. It can be printed on 8.5 x 11 paper. There are three different images which can be posted on websites, Facebook, Twitter, and/or Instagram.



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Timelines

September	Arts Councils work on selecting a SPARK Coordinator
October	SPARK Coordinator attends OSAC Showcase with their community arts council
November	Arts Councils submit SPARK Grant Application to OSAC
December – March	Regular OSAC booking cycle continues
April – May	Brochures and Posters delivered to Arts Councils for the upcoming season
October – May	Season Performances take place
	After the show, the Spark program evaluation is completed by the Spark Coordinator and Performing Arts Coordinator.
	Upon receiving the evaluation, OSAC disburses the Spark bursary to the Arts Council

More information: <http://osac.ca/index.php/performing-arts/90-spark>

The Spark section on the OSAC website contains the following program resources:

- **Program Overview**
- **Manual for Mentors: The Performing Arts Coordinator and the Role of Mentorship**
- **Manual for Spark Coordinators: The SPARK Coordinator and Presenting Performing Arts**
- **Application form**

Contact

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you want to discuss the program further.

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