

INVITATION FOR YEG PERFORMING ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

Does your organization produce music, theatre, dance, opera, circus, puppetry, drag, burlesque, poetry, or other performing arts in Edmonton, Alberta? Is your organization an industry-specific service organization?

Join Edmonton Performing Arts Accessibility Ad Hoc Group

Research project funded by the Edmonton Community Foundation and Edmonton Arts Council

SUMMARY

This group will benefit from a funded research project in which an Accessibility Consultation Facilitator will be hired to engage with Edmonton-based individuals and communities that experience accessibility issues in the performing arts and who will report back to the group with their findings, recommendations, and suggested action plan. The group will then work together and support each other in following through on this research in improving accessibility to Edmonton performing arts.

INTRODUCTION

A consortium of Edmonton performing arts producing organizations is interested in offering more accessible live performances for community members who face barriers (physical, neurological, language, and economic) to attend as audience members, and more accessible working environments and programs for artists with similar barriers. These initiatives may include, but are not limited to, ASL Interpreted/Integrated productions or workshops, Open Captioning, Audio Description, Light/Projection/Vibration design, Tactile Tours, Relaxed Performances, comprehensive staff training, modified communication tools, and capital projects that would increase accessibility infrastructure within traditional and new producing models.

A number of these organizations have incorporated various elements of accessibility in the past (for patrons and artists who are d/Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Low Vision, Blind, Neurodiverse, or living with disability), but it has been done piecemeal and without any consistency. Our organizations want to do more to incorporate accessibility as part of our regular seasons and routines. We are seeking proactive approaches – for this work not to be special “one-offs” for each of us, but for accessibility and equity to become part of the fabric of the Edmonton performing arts community.

Over the past season, these organizations have met on an ad hoc basis to determine the needs and costs surrounding these shared challenges. We have agreed that the first step is to find out what historically marginalized and/or excluded individuals and communities desire and need, recognizing that it is not our role to dictate or prioritize activities. We would like to undertake a period of research with a qualified Accessibility Consultation Facilitator, and have confirmed funds from the Edmonton Community Foundation and the Edmonton Arts Council.

CONSORTIUM

The following producing groups have committed to work on this project together. They have agreed to provide access to their own information/data to undertake this work. It is acknowledged that all organizations below having varying levels of flexibility within their budgets and staff infrastructure to support research, but will contribute time, energy, and resources whenever possible. The organizations are Azimuth Theatre, Catalyst Theatre, Citadel Theatre, Concrete Theatre, Edmonton Opera, Fringe Theatre, Nextfest, Rapid Fire Theatre, SOUND OFF: A Deaf Theatre Festival, Theatre Alberta, Theatre Network, Varscona Theatre, and Workshop West Playwrights Theatre.

CONSORTIUM CONT'D

It is the desire of the group and the funders that we have a true representation of the Edmonton performing arts community and include producers of all types of performing arts. **We invite other Edmonton-based performing arts producers and industry organizations that would like to participate in this research phase, which will include interviews, surveys and data collection.** It is the desire of the group and the funders that we have a true representation of the Edmonton performing arts community and include producers of all types of performing arts. Please contact yegperformingarts@gmail.com for more information if your producing organization would like to join.

For the purpose of this process, “performing arts” is defined as music, theatre, dance, opera, circus, puppetry, drag, burlesque, poetry, performance art and others. For the purpose of this process, “producer” is defined as a non-profit group or individual whose primary activity and mandate is to produce performances for the public and directly engages artists as part of an artistic process. For the purpose of this process, “industry organization” is an industry-specific service organization that is mandated to serve or promote performing arts organizations (one example is Theatre Alberta). Other stakeholders that will be included in the research phase include community groups and advocates, service providers, audience members, consortium member organization staff, and artists.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

Research will:

- Confirm the types of accessible initiatives for the performing arts that are of interest in Edmonton (through artist/audience/community interviews and surveys), to ensure we are offering what patrons or artists want or will seek out;
- Confirm performing arts organizations that would like to offer similar programming and take part in data gathering;
- Quantify the number of performances or artistic processes each organization would like to offer;
- Confirm qualified service providers that are currently available in Edmonton, which providers or styles are preferred by served communities, and which providers would need to be trained;
- Research what technology would need to be purchased or shared.

KEY GOALS of the Research Phase:

1. Make contact with previously identified and newly found organizations, community members, and advocates.
2. Survey organizations/communities to determine:
 - a) What art forms and events would they like better access to?
 - b) What barriers currently exist that prevent them from attending or participating in these events?
3. Conduct research into:
 - a) Best practices for addressing accessibility issues, including access and communication;
 - b) Costs associated with these solutions.
4. Write a report with recommendations and an action plan for the consortium to consider. This report will be made available to funders and members of the public.

KEY OUTCOMES of the Research Phase:

1. A clear idea of what art forms are under-served when it comes to access;
2. An action plan on how to serve and communicate with historically marginalized and/or excluded individuals and communities;
3. Costs associated with serving historically marginalized and/or excluded individuals and communities;
4. Possible sources of funding for any plans/actions.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE & TIMELINE (subject to change)

June 30, 2019 – Request for Proposals for Accessibility Consultation Facilitator(s) made public;
July 31, 2019 – Request for Proposals closes;
August 6 - 9, 2019 – Contact shortlisted candidates for interview;
August 20 - 23, 2019 – Interviews (ASL Interpretation Available);
August 30, 2019 – Successful bidder contacted;
September 15, 2019 – Project begins;
January 31, 2020 – Project ends.

EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

The consortium is in the process of posting for a Request for Proposals from possible consultation facilitators. Proposals will be evaluated as follows:

- Bidder has the experience, knowledge, skills, qualifications, and authority to provide these services.
- The competitive cost of services.
- Bidders must reside and work in the greater Edmonton, AB area.
- Priority will be given to bidders who face similar barriers to those being addressed by this project. Applicants who are Deaf or who have disabilities, including those living with mental illness, and require accommodation at any stage of the application process are encouraged to share their needs with us as part of their proposal.
- Proposals will be processed by Jessie van Rijn (Citadel Theatre Producer) and shared in their entirety with a selection committee comprised of five individuals of the Edmonton performing arts community. A list of applicant names will be shared with the entire ad hoc group after the proposal deadline. Proposal documents (work product) will be accepted and held in confidence.

PROPOSED RESEARCH PHASE BUDGET

EXPENSES

Facilitator(s) Fee: \$ 8 000
Consultancy Fees*: \$ 5 000
Materials & Service Fees: \$ 2 000 (survey costs, meetings, space rentals, ASL interpretation for meetings)

**we feel that it is integral we fairly compensate community members and organizations for their participation in interviews and assisting with data collection (survey distribution, etc).*

CONCLUSION

Over the past several years, many performing arts organizations in Edmonton have been working independently of each other to create solutions for what they saw as the needs of particular marginalized communities. By creating this consortium, we are pulling together various resources, sharing approaches, breaking down barriers, and avoiding duplications. Discovering what specific communities need and want will go a long way to ensuring that the arts are accessible and inclusive for all Edmontonians.

We invite other Edmonton-based performing arts producers and industry organizations to join the consortium as part of this research phase and future planning. If you would like to add your company to the producer/industry organization list, please email yegperformingarts@gmail.com.

If you are viewing this document and are a community organization, an audience member, an advocate or service provider, we invite you to join as part of this research phase as well; if you would like to add your name or company name to the interview/survey list, please email yegperformingarts@gmail.com.

Thank you for your consideration!