



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 in presenting performing arts. Through this mentorship experience, participants develop new skills, bring new ideas, and have the gratifying experience of presenting a show in their community.

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 member 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.

Arts Councils will have the option of including the Spark show in their season or market it as a stand-alone show.

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

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 for the 2022/2023 season is \$500 per Arts Council. If more applications than are budgeted for are approved, the grant amount will be pro-rated to make sure every Arts Council that applies and meets the requirements of the program will receive some funding. If the program is not fully subscribed to, we will look at adding some additional dollars to successful applicants. The artist fee is still eligible for the full PA Grant amount (or 5% grant if it is less than a three show season).



Timeline

Stage 1: Recruitment & Artist Selection	
*takes places one year ahead of start of the following season	
September	Arts Councils recruit a SPARK Coordinator
October	SPARK Coordinator attends OSAC Showcase with their local Arts Council. Artist selections are made.
November	Artist selections are due. Arts Councils submit the SPARK Application.
December-May	Regular OSAC booking cycle continues.
Stage 2: Spark Show is promoted and presented	
September-May	Season performances take place, one of which is the Spark show.
	The Spark Coordinator and Performing Arts Coordinator work together on all aspects of the presenting the show.
Stage 3: Follow-Up	
	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

Youth Engagement

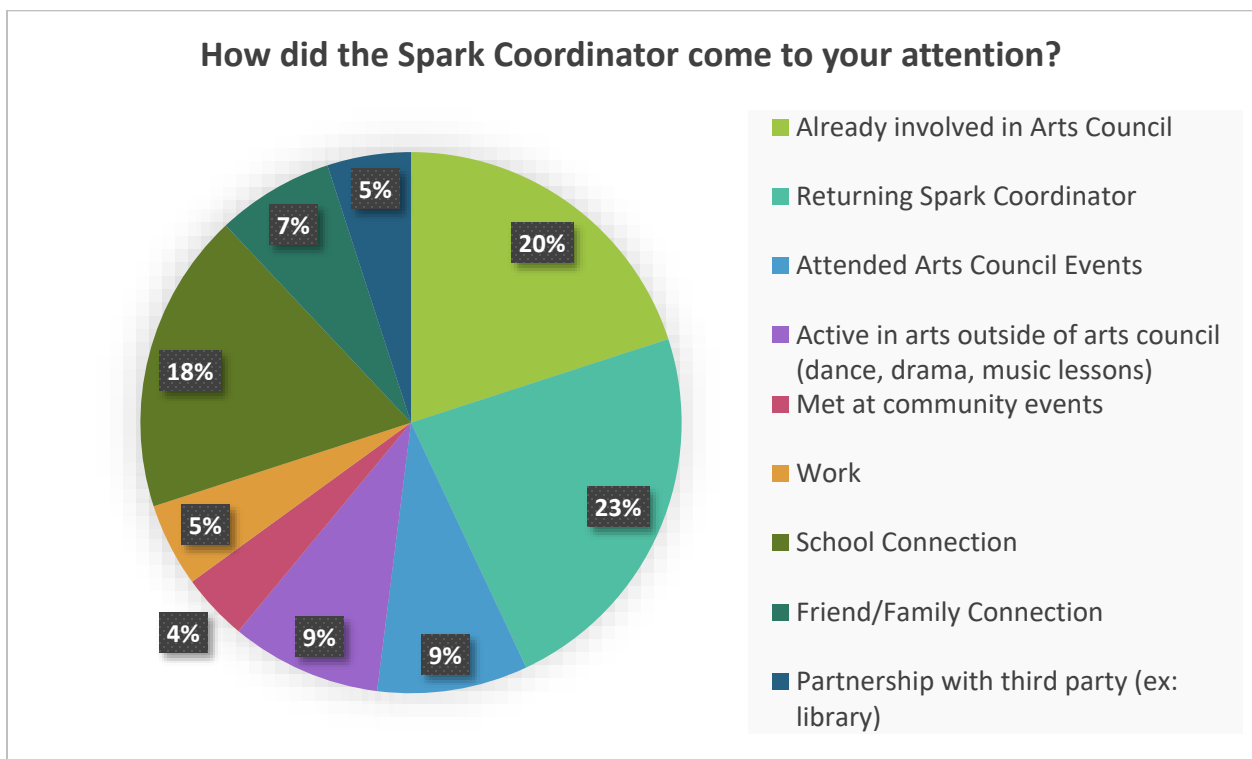
Meaningful youth engagement is more than seeing younger faces in the audience or having a token youth on the Arts Council; it is about genuine inclusion and allowing new members to participate in decision-making processes. The greater the sense of ownership and personal investment a person has in an endeavour, the more excited and engaged they are likely to be. This can translate into continued involvement with the Arts Council or other arts organizations well into the future. 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 challenging task if your Arts Council does not have any current youth members. In reviewing past seasons, OSAC has identified some common ways Arts Councils have had success recruiting Spark Coordinators:



Tip: Consider having two Spark Coordinators, as some Arts Councils have found that young people, especially teens, may be more likely to join if they can do so with a friend.

A couple of places to start might be your high school, music, drama and arts classes, local music teachers, or any current youth members of your Arts Council. 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. Remember that we consider anyone under 29 as eligible for the SPARK Coordinator position. This may be a young professional who has moved for work and is looking to become involved in your community.

OSAC suggests that shows presented through Spark offer a Youth Ticket (29 and under) for \$10. This is currently just a suggestion, 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.



Bringing the Arts to You

Promotional materials are available for download on the OSAC website to help you reach out to potential Spark Coordinators in your communities. There is a poster which includes a space for your contact information and can be printed on 8.5 x 11 paper. There are three different images which can be posted on social media.

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

Contact

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

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