



Off-Leash Area

Arts Impact for Groups FY22 Sample Grant Application

Group's Purpose

Off-Leash Area's mission is to create original multi-disciplinary and risk-taking productions and out-of-the-box community programming.

OLA and its artistic directors are among the area's most awarded and recognized artists, with Ivy and Sage awards, as well as NEA, Jerome, McKnight, and many MSAB and MRAC grants.

With its artistic work and its community programming OLA's goals are to continue to push artistic boundaries, and expand its capacity to guide, nurture, and sustain independent, often marginalized local artists throughout their careers.

OLA has created 23 original multi-disciplinary productions, from mini-stage family oriented works in neighborhood garages, to full-scale dance/theater works at venues like the Cowles Center. Importantly, throughout its history OLA has established organic relationships in the disability community, as with its partnership with Blind Inc on "Now Eye See You Now Eye Don't", about a painter who goes blind. OLA has also implemented numerous community programs, like the Neighborhood Garage Tour, where we worked with home-owners, including several persons with disabilities, to transform garages into black box theaters, invite neighbors - both known and unfamiliar - and commune together in an unlikely space through the transformative power of art.

Our new program, the Off-Kilter Cabaret, furthers our mission by highlighting and giving voice to artists with disabilities on stage, and in the design and leadership of the program.

Grant Number & Project Name

AIG22-1-161 Off-Kilter creates access to leadership & performance for artists with disabilities

Project/Program Description

Funding to strengthen Off-Leash Area's Off-Kilter program, by deepening outreach to community organizations, audiences, and performers with disabilities through leadership, partnerships, and marketing.

Project or Program

1. The Off-Kilter Cabaret program takes the form of a weekend of cabaret-style performances by artists with disabilities, chosen through an open public call for proposals, and selected by a jury of community peers with disabilities.

Off-Kilter Cabaret was designed and curated by a leadership team made up of a majority of persons with disabilities, including Amy Salloway (actor and writer, physical disability), Sam Jasmine (KFAI radio host, blind), Mike Cohn (dance artist, physical disability), Jon Skaalen (fmr Program Dir VSA Arts), and OLA founding co-artistic directors, Jennifer Ilse, and Paul Herwig (low vision).

2. Our goals are to:

*To increase and diversify our core leadership group by 2 persons, emphasizing increased diversity in race, gender identification, and age

*To partner with 3 new organizations and expand the program's reach into the community

*Hire a part-time social media outreach and communications assistant (at 6hrs per month for one year) to raise awareness of the program

3. As a community program Off-Kilter Cabaret aligns with Off-Leash Area's mission and vision in that it provides a platform for artistic inclusivity and ingenuity, featuring artists of many disciplines and abilities of a marginalized community together on one stage; in that each Cabaret has a challenging and provocative theme (previous theme was "Organ Recital", about the body as instrument); and in that it puts persons with disabilities in leadership.

4. To achieve our three program goals, will hold at least 4 large community meet-ups with refreshments, and will seek out a range of organizational venues to hold them in, like for example Pillsbury House, Courage Center, Blind Inc, etc. We will share the Off-Kilter Cabaret story, and our current goals for the program. Most of all we will ask for and then listen to community members hopes and desires for the disability community, and specifically for a program like Off-Kilter Cabaret, and implement their voices in our development work. We will identify enthusiastic individuals, organically aligned community partners and past leaders of disability community programs that have ended, and invite them to individual meetings to further generate interest, advice, and a commitment to support the program. At each group meet-up and at the individual meetings we will solicit interest in the leadership positions, organizational partnerships, and social media coordinator position. Every activity will be fully accessible.

Community

1. Over its history individuals with disabilities have always been a part of OLA artistic activities and organizational leadership. For instance, Leadership Team member Sam Jasmine was a host on our Neighborhood Garage Tour. For our much lauded production, Maggie's Brain, we partnered with NAMI and the UofMN mental health

department for artistic and audience development. We designed our former venue, the Off-Leash Art Box, to be fully accessible.

2. Individuals and partnering organizations in the disability community, OLA staff and board, and Off-Kilter Leadership are all participants in the program activities. Regarding connection to the larger community, take the Paralympics, which gives vibrant physical and visual proof that competitive athletics are for all bodies; that there is no such thing as “normal”. We want Off-Kilter Cabaret to help strip away the limiting factors of perception and stigma that are often accepted and reinforced in live art, and to demonstrate viscerally that in our community of the Twin Cities, artists have no one standard container.

Expanding and strengthening the Off-Kilter Cabaret program through increased leadership, forging new lasting community partnerships, and bolstering our social media presence for increased awareness, will all help to ensure the longevity of the program. There has been such a loss of small venues and the programs they once hosted, due to gentrification and the pandemic. Off-Kilter Cabaret will expand connections to groups that have been needing to network with and support each other’s artistic opportunities and advocacy efforts.

3. Each member of the Leadership Team has accomplished much in making the art of people with disabilities known and appreciated, and they bring that lived experience to the execution of the grant activities: Amy Salloway’s award-winning solo plays about a vibrant life as an artist altered by severe chronic illness have aired on MPR, CBC and others. Sam Jasmine’s many years interviewing artists and accessibility advocates for KFAI’s “Disability and Progress” show, and her own stage performances have publicized the wealth of expertise in the greater disability community. Jon Skaalen’s management of grants for emerging artists with disabilities as well as organizations seeking to improve their accessibility, first for VSA Minnesota and now for the MN Access Alliance. Paul Herwig’s creativity has been recognized as innovative out-of-the-box scenic design while working around low vision barriers. Jennifer Ilse’s choreography and inclusive direction have uncovered multiple benefits of involving all-ability dancers as a natural part of her work.

For Off-Leash Area and the program Leadership Team, Off-Kilter Cabaret is not simply a cabaret production. We believe that Off-Kilter Cabaret represents the power of disability inclusion for those who have been isolated to no longer feel isolated; that those who believed that they do not belong have proof that they in fact, do.

Proposal Budget

Project Budget Expenses

3,000 OLA program leadership (2 artistic directors)
3,000 Leadership Team development work (five x \$600)
600 Refreshment Expenses for 4 community gatherings (snacks, bevs), and 10 individual recruitment meetings (at a cafe, for example)

1,800 Social Media Assistant (\$25 per hour x 6 hours per month x 12 months)
1,000 webpage refresh, new media content creation (photo, video, w/ captioning)
600 ASL interpreters at community meet-ups & meetings

Total Project Cash Expenses

\$10,000.00

Amount Requested

\$10,000.00

Project Budget Income

\$10,000 MRAC Arts Impact for Groups grant

Total Project Cash Income

\$10,000.00

***(Important!)* Additional Fields Required**

Please note that in the full application there are additional fields that will need to be completed and are not shown to panelists.