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For which project type are you applying? (Choose one – You may apply for more than one type of assistance by completing a separate application form.) Transit Station Activation Project (pilot program)

Transit Station Activation Project

Describe your proposed activation project:

Mandala Arts proposes interactive live music and dance performances at selected train stations that would be tailored to reflect the unique cultural identity of the neighborhood and the diversity of the city of Chicago. The Red Line, which runs from Howard to 95th, passes through many historically significant and cultural neighborhoods that house communities that have shaped the landscape of the city, and we want to help the community get to know them through their art. Some notable examples include the Argyle stop in the Uptown neighborhood, famed for iconic Southeast Asian fare, and the Belmont stop adjacent to the Boystown neighborhood, an area that has a storied history with the LGBTQ+ community. At each selected transit station, Mandala would present one live musician that represents the neighborhood and two musicians that reflect other cultural neighborhoods along the Red Line. In this way, commuters will become acquainted with the neighborhoods they pass by in their local community, and locals will get to appreciate the vibrant diversity of the city they live in. Art has the power to foster mutual respect and understanding, which would permit commuters to feel safer about gathering at the CTA stations. In addition to live music at the stations, Mandala proposes to have QR codes on the train and at each of the stops that link commuters to artists and stories from the neighborhood so that they may learn more about diverse groups in Chicago.

The Red Line of the Chicago "L" system runs from the Howard station on the north side to the 95th/Dan Ryan station on the south side. Along its route, it passes through several neighborhoods that reflect the diverse population of Chicago. Some notable stations include:

Howard: Located on the northern end of the Red Line, this station serves as a transfer point to the Purple Line and is situated in the Rogers Park neighborhood, known for its diverse population including immigrants and students from nearby Loyola University Chicago.

Argyle: Situated in the Uptown neighborhood, this station serves a vibrant Asian community, particularly Vietnamese and Chinese residents. The area is known for its Asian restaurants, shops, and cultural events.

Belmont: Located in the Lakeview neighborhood, this station is near Boystown, one of the largest LGBTQ+ communities in the United States. Lakeview is also home to a diverse mix of residents including young professionals, families, and artists.

Cermak-Chinatown: This historic neighborhood has been home to Chinese immigrants since the 1800s, who have since worked hard to establish its many iconic eateries and architectural attractions.

Sox-35th: Situated near Guaranteed Rate Field (home of the Chicago White Sox), this station serves the Bridgeport neighborhood, historically known as a working-class Irish and Italian community. In recent years, Bridgeport has become more diverse, with a growing population of

Hispanic, Asian, and African American residents.

95th/Dan Ryan: This southern terminus of the Red Line is located in the Roseland neighborhood, which has a predominantly African American population. Roseland has a rich history and is known for its community activism and cultural institutions.

Mandala would choose four most prominent stations based on the ridership data, history of the neighbourhood, safety requirements and funding. Through this programming, Mandala aims to symbolically utilise the Red Line to weave the disparate communities together, thereby building understanding and a sense of belonging and establishing emotional safety on the transit system.

Where will the project take place? (State the name of the transit station or stop and the specific location where the activation project will take place. Please also note the name of the property owner if not on Service Board property.)

Mandala has identified 5-6 major transit stations/stops along the Red Line route that are in neighbourhoods with distinct cultural traditions. Based on the funding, the organisation aims to activate four stations from the selected list:

- Howard or Morse (closer to Devon) - South Asian Artist
- Argyle - Vietnamese artists
- Belmont - LGBTQ
- Cermak - Chinese
- Roosevelt : Multi ethnic artists
- Garfield - South side - Blues/ jazz/Gospel

How much funding are you requesting? Please detail the expenses (estimates are fine).

Total:\$38,000

Artist Fees: \$9,000 (18 artists at \$500 each for full-day work)
Marketing and Advertising: \$12,000 (Includes social media advertising, fliers, banners, advertising space on trains, and design)
Mandala Operating Costs: \$4,000 (To implement the program)
Audio and Sound Amplification: \$6,000 (Based on \$1,000 per performance for 6 performances)
QR Code Creation: \$2,000 (Including apps)
Permits, Licenses, and Insurance: \$5,000 (To perform in public spaces and liability coverage)
Total Budget: \$38,000

Mandala will raise additional funds from the Department of Cultural affairs musician roster and sponsorship from local businesses .

What is the timeline for this activation? (i.e. What is your thinking about the time of day, day of the week, month, for your proposal)

Ideal presentation for this project will be the month of September to coincide with the Chicago World Music Festival. Our live artists would play at times coinciding with the morning and evening rush hours, from 7-9am and 3-7pm, on weekdays.

Marketing and advertising for the event will begin 6 weeks in advance of the launch using QR codes on the Red Line trains and displays at the train station kiosks. This will encourage people in advance to gather at site for the event

Will the project process include activities in which the general public will be invited to participate? If so, please describe:

Yes, the general public and commuters will be engaged by the artists who will initiate calls and responses or encourage audience members to sing and clap along at appropriate points in the performance. These performances will be set up to assure that even a commuter who arrives in the middle of a performance will still be able to engage with the artist and understand what is going on.

Is your organization currently in communication with the relevant transit agency and/or property owner? Do you anticipate needing assistance in making contact?

No. Mandala seeks help in communicating with the CTA to activate transit stations and advertise QR codes for an extended digital program.

Describe any experience you have with implementing something similar to your proposal:

Pranita has experience curating and directing multicultural music and dance programs at public spaces in Chicago. As the artistic director at Mandala Arts, Pranita has presented free music events at third-spaces in Devon avenue in Roger's Park to encourage mutual appreciation and respect for South Asian arts amongst diverse communities. Under Pranita's direction, Mandala has been the proud recipient of the MacArthur Award for their work in bringing multicultural performances to Chicago's South side, with events at park districts, libraries, community centers and public schools. Recently, Mandala has received the Joyce Foundation Award to fund the program, "Singing Together: Qawwali and Gospel", a music event that combines the genres of Sufi and Gospel music to highlight the similarities and shared experiences between the South Asian and Black communities of Chicago. All of these experiences have assured that Mandala has significant contacts with musicians all across Chicago and experience with curating performances that are impactful and honor the cultural roots of the artists and communities they perform in.

What resident or community support do you have or would like to gain for the proposed activation?

For the proposed activation, we would greatly appreciate support from various community stakeholders. Specifically, we seek assistance from the local ward office, Chamber of Commerce across different neighborhoods they serve, and the aldermen's office for community engagement and awareness building.

Is there any additional information you want us to know?

Mandala has successfully connected communities of Chicago's North Side and South Side through its Joyce Foundation funded Qawwali and Gospel program. In the past, it has also secured funding from Bank of America for its culturally sensitive programming.

Please upload a map of where specifically the activation will take place:

<https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/16105386576>

Closing Questions

How did you find out about the call for projects? (Select all that apply)

Email from my CMAP local government network (LGN) liaison

What resources did you find helpful as you apply for the call? (Select all that apply)

Instructional videos
Web page FAQ
Receiving assistance from CMAP or RTA staff
Meeting with call for projects team to discuss a project

How difficult was it to fill out this application?

Very easy
