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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)

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**Transit Station Activation Project**

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**Describe your proposed activation project:**

To contribute to RTA's Transit is the Answer initiative, Mandala proposes a transit crawl, activating four bus stops on the Devon Avenue of Chicago with multicultural music performances as part of its annual Makers Festival.

Every year, the Mandala Makers Festival organizes dance and music performances at shops and street corners of Devon Avenue, bringing art and culture to everyday lives of people and creating equitable representation for its diverse communities. In a neighborhood that has underlying divisions based on race, faith, ethnicity and nationalities, bus stops and transit stations offer inclusive and accessible spaces for people of all backgrounds to safely gather. Highlighting this inclusive quality of the transit system, Mandala combines the vision of the Makers Festival and Transit is the Answer into a mutually supportive performing art intervention- the Musical Transit Crawl.

The program would take place on 7th June 2024 as part of the sixth Makers Festival. Mandala would activate one CTA station and four major bus stops (based on ridership and cultural significance) on bus route 155 that traverses along Devon Avenue, namely, Sheridan & Loyola (including CTA Red Line Station), Devon & Clark, Devon & Rockwell, and Devon & Kedzie. Based on the CTA ridership data available online, Mandala proposes the project at the busiest business hours on Devon Avenue. The program will take place twice on a weekday from 7am-10am and repeat from 3pm-6pm.

At each of the chosen bus stops musicians will be seated playing fusion music from South Asian, African American, Thai, Middle Eastern musical genres, reflecting Devon's multiculturalism. The performance would be open to the general public, passersby and invited audience. Members of the public traveling eastbound and westbound will be able to start the transit crawl from either points, break in the middle or stop by to watch a single performance. On the window of each bus shelter and seats inside the bus, audience members would find a QR code, leading them to a webpage with a map and information on the transit crawl. While on the bus, in-between two stops, the audience can scan the QR codes and engage with information on the webpage, learning more about the different artist groups, musical genres and background stories of the pieces played on the bus stops. Mandala would seek permission to dress up the bus shelters, making the program locations visible from afar and creating a more hospitable and welcoming environment around the bus stops. The music performances, evoking resonance and nostalgia, would contribute to fostering a sense of belonging, thereby creating a feeling of safety on buses and bus stops. Through this performing arts intervention we aim to change the perception towards bus stations while inviting large audiences to engage with the transit system. The transit crawl would advance the goal of the Makers Festival of making art more accessible, and through the bus, carry culture to different parts of Devon Avenue.

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**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.)**

The project would take place on four bus stops on route 155 that traverses the Devon Avenue:

- Stop: Sheridan and Loyola
  - Red Line Platform
  - Bus Stop
- Stop: Devon and Clark
- Stop: Devon and Rockwell
- Stop: Devon and Kedzie

The first performance at Sheridan and Loyola would move from Red Line platform to the Bus Shelter

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

\$22,500

- Tech: \$5,000
- Hiring of sound technician and rental equipment for audio and sound amplification: \$1,250 per event
- Advertising: \$5,000
  - Posters with QR codes and promotion leading up to the event
  - Social media advertising, flyers, banners
  - Buying advertising space on buses, designing
- Operations: \$4,500
  - Mandala staff to handle the logistics of the program, including hiring, executing, and documenting events
- Artistic: \$5,000
  - \$1,250 allocated for each group of 3 artists per day rate, including performance fees and per diem
- Miscellaneous: \$3,000
  - Permits, licenses, and insurance
  - Other unforeseen costs

25% of the budget, i.e. \$5625 will be supported from the Together We Heal grant, awarded by DCASE. This has already been secured by Mandala arts.

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**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)**

Thursday, 7th June 2024

- Transit Crawl 1: 7am-10am
- Transit Crawl 2: 3pm-6pm

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

Yes, the general public would be invited to participate in the event in a few different ways. As audiences of music performances on the bus stops, the general public will be asked to participate in call and response, dancing with the music and singing along. In addition to this, the public will have access to QR codes stuck on windows of the bus shelter that would direct them to the transit crawl route. With this, they would be able to start from either Sheridan and Loyola and travel westwards or start from Devon and Kedzie and travel eastwards to finish the crawl. The program encourages participants and invited audience to use public transport.

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

Mandala requires assistance to get in touch with CDOT for activating the bus shelters and CTA for performing on the Sheridan and Loyola station. Through Mandala's existing Together We Heal grant and collaboration with DCASE, the organization is receiving technical support for executing the proposed project. Additionally, Mandala is collaborating with interns from University of Chicago to provide technical support in creating webpages for the project which would be freely accessible by the public to listen to background stories and music pieces.

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

Mandala has extensive experience in organizing and implementing large-scale public programs. Mandala Makers Festival is the organization's annual urban program and 2024 marks its sixth edition. This festival has helped Mandala gain extensive experience in urban space programming, build relationships with local businesses and the multicultural community of the neighborhood. Starting as a South Asian arts organization, Mandala has expanded its programming to include several other cultures groups for a more accurate representation of the neighborhood.

Additionally Mandala's involvement in Thanksgiving Parade and our presentation for the 100th anniversary of Lions Club International underscores its proficiency in managing high-profile engagements with precision and creativity.

Mandala's commitment to community engagement extends to the Devon neighborhood, where the organisation has been actively involved since 2017. Over the years, Mandala has developed strong partnerships and deep-rooted connections within the community. Its team, comprising individuals proficient in multiple languages, ensures effective communication and engagement with residents from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Drawing from Mandala's track record of impactful community initiatives and our proficiency in managing large-scale events, it is well-equipped to implement the proposed project. The organisation's experience underscores its ability to navigate logistical complexities, foster meaningful collaborations, and deliver outcomes that resonate with stakeholders and enrich the fabric of the Devon neighborhood.

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**What resident or community support do you have or would like to gain for the proposed activation?** Mandala has garnered significant resident and community support for our proposed activation, and we continue to seek further assistance to ensure its success. The organization's partnerships include the Rogers Park Business Alliance, whose collaboration strengthens our ties with local businesses and enhances community engagement. Additionally, Mandala has garnered the support of the aldermen's offices, particularly those representing wards 40 and 50. Mandala's partners are assisting in connecting with key stakeholders for the proposed project- the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) and the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT).

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**Is there any additional information you want us to know?** The transit crawl would be part of the sixth Mandala Makers Festival in June 2024 that is funded by the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events and Together We Heal Award to bring communities together. Mandala has also receive Ford Foundation's Weaving Illinois grant.

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**Please upload a map of where specifically the activation will take place:** <https://rtaform.formstack.com/admin/download/file/16105361931>

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## Closing Questions

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**How did you find out about the call for projects? (Select all that apply)** Email from my CMAP local government network (LGN) liaison

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**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

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**How difficult was it to fill out this application?** Very easy

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