



Follow Your Art Community Studios Request for Proposal

Seeking: Development Consultant to Create an Initial Three Year Plan

Project Overview:

Follow Your Art Community Studios, a three-year-old, local non-profit arts center located in Melrose, Massachusetts, seeks to contract a development consultant to create a three-year development strategy and roadmap.

Who We Are:

Mission: Follow Your Art Community Studios (FYACS) builds community by supporting creative endeavors for all, with opportunities for learning, growth, discovery, and outreach through visual arts, craft, writing, and storytelling/performance. We are committed to inclusivity and diversity in the arts and strive to create an accessible and welcoming environment for people of all identities, abilities, cultural backgrounds, and economic situations.

Background: Follow Your Art Community Studios is a nonprofit community arts center that grew from Follow Your Art, LLC, (FYA). FYA was a small business that opened in 2008 and brought creative art experiences to the greater Melrose community both through its small storefront and through community outreach and art projects beyond studio walls. Owned and operated by Kris Rodolico, it ran successfully with a small but dedicated team of artists and community members.

During the 10 years that it operated, FYA felt more and more like a nonprofit community endeavor as it grew and adapted to the interests and needs of the community. In 2018, Kris made the decision to follow that path, and work began to turn Follow Your Art into a non-profit community arts center. Members of the community came together to craft a mission, incorporate as a nonprofit, and pool resources to secure a larger location where the center could live and expand.

In September 2019, Follow Your Art Community Studios (FYACS) began operations. It's new location, a three-floor Victorian house on Main Street, houses two floors of artists and writers studios, and several ground-level rooms where FYACS holds classes, workshops, and events for people of all ages—with room to expand. The building is owned by Art Ventures, a separate LLC that was formed to purchase the property in 2018. FYACS pays monthly rent to cover mortgage and taxes, as well as all utilities.

Since its inception as a 501(c)(3), FYACS has become an integral part of the Melrose community, providing a range of arts opportunities for individuals of every age and ability, spearheading many

community arts projects that are free and open to all. We have been able to deliver online and in-person programs and workshops safely and effectively during the COVID pandemic.

Arts for All: As part of our ongoing commitment to be as inclusive as possible, we developed Arts for All, our program that provides services and scholarships to people with disabilities. The program has broadened to provide tuition assistance to those with financial constraints through participation in Massachusetts Cultural Council's Card to Culture program, translation services, DEIA training, specially trained assistants when required, free community arts events designed to bring new people to the arts, and funding to support programs led by BIPOC facilitators.

Our 3-Year Vision:

In three years, FYACS would like to see its facility at 647 Main Street maximized with expanded programs in creative writing, storytelling, performance, and ceramics; an active events calendar that includes art shows and sales, musical and storytelling performances, and literary events and readings. Investments in instructional, marketing, technology, and development staff may be required to make these programs successful and sustainable. FYACS also plans to purchase the property, though that may be outside of the three year plan.

Current Situation:

Our organization has weathered the global pandemic that began when it was still within its first seven months of operations. The team handled the organization with agility, creativity, sound planning and incredible community support, though our plans for creating a development strategy were put on hold during this time.

Our development approach to date includes small fundraisers, grants, gifts, and donations, as well as membership fees. Our fundraisers generally target small donors from the local community (Melrose residents); they have included a (pre-pandemic) live music event, a silent auction, author talks, a Facebook campaign, and an end-of-year direct appeal via our email list. They are often planned in an ad-hoc fashion, using a combination of our small staff, volunteers, and paid consultants.

Approximately 45% of our current revenue comes from programs run on site and paid contracts. In 2020, about 17% of our funding came from grants, 14% from donations and 15% from studio dues from the artist/writers studios on our second and third floors.

Current Challenge:

We need a strategic, systematic, and sustainable development plan to incorporate into our annual budget and programming goal-setting. We fear our current approach risks sapping current resources and exhausting our small-donor base and is missing larger opportunities. We know we need to broaden our donor base and raise funds to expand our programs and execute the capital projects that will sustain FYACS' growth over the long term, and seek guidance to help us accomplish this.

Our small, highly dedicated group of board members, staff, and volunteers wish to learn the best way forward to ensure the success of this grassroots organization for years to come.

Project Goals:

We seek a development consultant to create a three-year development roadmap that:

- Identifies targets and goals for fundraising, membership, grants, corporate sponsorships, and gifts
- Considers timing and frequency of annual fundraising events, initiatives, and solicitations
- Expands our donor base within Melrose and across surrounding communities
- Helps us focus and prioritize our capacity building, including investing in development staff and projects
- Streamlines fundraising operations and effort

Project Description:

Timeframe and budget:

Project timeframe: January 3 through March 31 for plan development, with a potential for up to a month of assistance in beginning implementation

Project budget: \$15K–\$20K

Deliverables:

- A three-year development roadmap in the form of:
 - Written report
 - Presentation
- A concrete action plan to implement the roadmap, *given the abilities and limitations of our small organization*
- Assistance in implementing the first stages of that roadmap

Points of Contact:

While the contractor would work primarily with FYACS's Executive Director, the contractor will also be expected to engage with members of FYACS's board of directors, staff, and volunteer committee members to develop this plan.

Submission Requirements:

- Demonstrable expertise and success doing development work with new organizations, grassroots and non-profit organizations, organizations with limited paid staff that rely on volunteers
- Willingness to work with a small organization with an informal culture
- An understanding of community arts organizations and their specific challenges
- Articulation of your:
 - Relevant expertise (industry, topic, technical)
 - Consulting approach/style
 - Experience working on similar projects

- Availability to do the project within the timeframe
- Proposed scope of work and budget (not to exceed \$20,000)
- Typical post consultation practices, availability, and fees
- Resume and references

Application Deadline:

- October 15, 2021
- Review applications through Nov 1
- Interviews scheduled through the end of November
- Selection made by December 10
- Project begins Jan 1
- Send submissions to Kris Rodolico at krodolico@fyamelrose.org