



CREATING ART THAT CHALLENGES PERCEPTIONS OF DISABILITY

1860 Minnehaha Avenue West, St. Paul, MN 55104 • PH: 651-209-3575 • EMAIL: info@interactcenter.com www.interactcenter.org

One Time Appropriation for Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts SF 5357/HF 5356

About Interact

Interact operates as a Home and Community-Based Service provider under MN DHS license 245D. With our mission to “create art that challenges perceptions of disability,” we stand out as the *only* organization in Minnesota that supports people with disabilities in creating professional-level artistic work in *both* visual *and* performing arts. We sustain a high level of community integration through public performances and arts exhibitions, and we pay all artists with disabilities at rates commensurate with other local and regional small arts organizations.

Today, Interact members see themselves as visual artists, performers, singers, dancers, and creative people advancing careers in the arts. The belief that art is for everyone is the cornerstone of Interact's mission. People with disabilities who historically have had little access are now center stage in both performing and visual arts, creating a more diverse theater and arts community in Minnesota.

In our history, Interact Theater has won two Ivey Awards (Minnesota's equivalent to the Tony Awards) as well as multiple awards from the National Endowment for the Arts. We have collaborated with Mixed Blood Theater, the History Theatre, and Theater Latte Da here in Minnesota, as well as with Tutti Ensemble in Adelaide, Australia, a thriving company which we helped create. Interact Visual Artists exhibit work in our own Gallery, as well as in professional galleries throughout the region, including The M in downtown Saint Paul, Franconia Sculpture Garden, the MN Textile Center, and many more.

Our Staff and Artists

Our staff of 22 employees consists of experienced and talented arts managers, as well as professional artists who mentor Interact artists with disabilities and collaborate with them as actors, writers, sculptors, song writers, weavers, painters, dancers, comedians, and more. Interact currently serves 71 visual artists with disabilities and 35 performing artists with disabilities.

Our Situation

- Interact enrollment has not reached the pre-pandemic levels. Consequently, waived services revenues are down substantially while ongoing operating and fixed costs continue to rise exponentially.
- Revenues have not been exceeding expenses during the past three years.
- Philanthropic contributions for have also declined 30% since the pandemic and that trend is expected to continue in the foreseeable future.
- While the waiver rate increase will help as it is phased in this year, shifting Metro Mobility transportation to Metro Move is projected to wipe out the net waiver rate increases.
- All of these factors have required Interact to draw down its reserves to deliver services. The reserve account is nearly depleted and cost cutting measures are occurring.
- While these challenges may not be unique to Interact, we are experiencing urgency to build earnings as a way to sustain our unique mission as the *only* organization in Minnesota – and across the nation – that offers professional quality training and public engagement opportunities in both visual and

performing arts for artists with disabilities – generating equity in community integration, creative leadership, and earnings opportunities in Minnesota’s twelve billion dollar arts economy.

Bridge funding appropriated through this bill would:

- Allow us to regenerate our vigorous pre-COVID roster of small performances and arts exhibitions in corporations, schools, civic organizations, and other venues throughout Greater Minnesota - opportunities which generate fees for our appearances, and that will also connect us to broader communities of corporate and individual donors.
- Enable us to serve more people in Greater Minnesota by expanding distance learning opportunities.
- Foster partnerships with other service providers to expand opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in visual and performing arts programming.
- Explore opportunities for Interact to offer DEI support and engagement in the community by including disability performance and visual arts programs as part of organizations’ DEI workplans.
- Share our well-equipped arts studio and theater space beyond our typical 4:00 PM closing time to present more community inclusive programming during evenings and weekends.
- Develop a sustainable cost-model for professional theater productions.

All of these opportunities would involve engaging in a formalized, facilitated strategic business planning process to identify and implement viable models. Our request for bridge support will include market analysis for each option listed above as well as business plan development.