ARTS | ORILLIA
Creativity | Culture | Community

OCTOBER 1, 2026

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP):

Comprehensive Marketing, Audience Development and Brand Strategy

23 Mississaga St W, Orillia, ON L3V 3A5
Charitable Reg#: 81819 8764 RR0001

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

RFP Title: Comprehensive Marketing, Audience Development and Brand Strategy
Issuing Organization: Arts Orillia
Date of Issue:
Proposal Submission Deadline:

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1. Statement of Purpose
Arts Orillia is seeking competitive proposals from qualified marketing agencies or independent consultants to develop a comprehensive, multi-year **marketing, audience development and brand strategy**.

The successful proponent will demonstrate deep, proven experience within the Canadian performing arts spectrum, including dance, music, Indigenous storytelling festivals, multidisciplinary performance, arts education, charitable organizations, and audience engagement initiatives.

The strategy will serve as a foundational implementation tool supporting Arts Orillia's five-year strategic plan, **Building Creative Futures… Through Education, Arts and Community**, and will support the organization's goals related to:

- Audience acquisition and retention
- Increased ticket sales and earned revenue
- Philanthropic growth and donor engagement
- Corporate sponsorship development
- Community awareness and advocacy
- Youth participation and educational engagement
- Cultural tourism and regional audience growth
- Long-term organizational sustainability

Arts Orillia has received funding to support this project through a dedicated Strategic Marketing Investment. The maximum budget available is $15,000. We recognize this is a modest budget and are open to discussing in-kind contributions that may be eligible for charitable recognition through an approved cheque-swap arrangement.

2. Organization Background
Arts Orillia is a registered Canadian charity dedicated to advancing the arts through education, mentorship, artistic creation, performance, and community engagement.

Founded in 2015, Arts Orillia delivers festivals, youth mentorship programs, artist residencies, educational initiatives, and community-based artistic experiences throughout Orillia and Central Ontario.

Our mission is to foster a dynamic cultural scene through arts education, mentorship, and performance.

Our vision is that by 2031, Arts Orillia will be:

- The most sought-after arts education programmer for youth in our region;
- The leading creative incubator north of Barrie for artists and artistic development;
- A respected provider of cultural and artistic programs that grow and inspire broader community participation and engagement.

Our newly approved Strategic Plan, **Building Creative Futures… Through Education, Arts and Community**, identifies audience growth, community awareness, philanthropic expansion, revenue diversification, and organizational sustainability as critical priorities over the next five years. The marketing strategy developed through this RFP will play a central role in achieving those objectives.

3. Scope of Work & Deliverables

The selected partner will collaborate closely with Arts Orillia leadership, staff, and key community partners to develop and deliver a comprehensive marketing strategy.

The scope of work shall include:

Market Research & Audience Analysis

- Analyze current audience demographics, ticket buyer behaviours, donor segments, volunteers, sponsors, and community participants.
- Review current marketing activities, communications tools, and digital platforms.
- Examine regional, provincial, and national performing arts trends.
- Identify opportunities to expand audiences both within and beyond North Simcoe.
- Assess educational, youth, tourism, donor, sponsorship, and community engagement markets.

Audience Segmentation & Growth Strategy

Develop audience profiles and growth recommendations for:

- Festival attendees
- Ticket purchasers
- Youth and school participants
- Donors
- Sponsors
- Volunteers
- Community advocates
- Educational partners

Establish measurable audience acquisition and retention targets aligned with Arts Orillia's Strategic Plan for Years 2 through 5.

Brand Positioning & Messaging

Refine Arts Orillia's organizational value proposition to clearly communicate:

- Artistic excellence
- Community impact
- Youth development outcomes
- Educational programming
- Artist support and development
- Equity, inclusion, and reconciliation initiatives
- Economic and tourism impact

Multi-Channel Marketing Strategy

Develop a detailed roadmap covering:

- Digital marketing
- Social media
- Website optimization
- Email marketing
- Public relations
- Media partnerships
- Community outreach
- Influencer and ambassador initiatives
- Tourism and destination marketing opportunities

Philanthropy & Sponsorship Marketing Framework

Develop recommendations that support:

- Donor acquisition and retention
- Annual fundraising campaigns
- Corporate sponsorship growth
- Foundation engagement
- Sponsor recognition and stewardship

The strategy should identify audience journeys and conversion pathways that support:

Attendee → Subscriber → Donor → Sponsor Advocate

and contribute to long-term organizational sustainability.

Community Awareness & Advocacy Strategy

Develop communications approaches that:

- Increase public awareness of Arts Orillia's impact.
- Communicate the value of arts education and youth development.
- Support municipal, regional, corporate, and philanthropic advocacy.
- Reinforce Arts Orillia's position as a regional cultural leader.

Volunteer & Brand Ambassador Framework
Provide recommendations for:
- Volunteer recruitment and engagement
- Artist ambassadors
- Community champions
- Strategic partnerships that support visibility and audience growth

KPI & Measurement Framework
Establish measurable performance indicators aligned with Arts Orillia's Strategic Plan, including:
- Audience growth
- Ticket sales
- Website traffic
- Social media engagement
- Email list growth
- Donor conversion
- Sponsorship inquiries
- Media reach
- Youth participation
- Community engagement

Final Deliverables
The successful proponent will provide:
1. Comprehensive Marketing Strategy
2. Audience Segmentation Report
3. Brand Positioning & Messaging Framework
4. Donor & Sponsorship Engagement Framework
5. Community Awareness & Advocacy Strategy
6. Five-Year KPI Dashboard
7. Implementation Roadmap with Year 1-5 priorities

4. Required Qualifications & Experience
Proponents must meet the following mandatory criteria:
- While we value supporting "local", we recognize that we may need to broaden our scope. We are seeking an agency based in Canada with a deep understanding of the Canadian cultural and charitable landscape.
- Minimum five (5) years of strategic marketing planning experience.
- Demonstrated experience working within the performing arts sector, including festivals, presenting organizations, music, dance, theatre, or multidisciplinary arts organizations.
- Proven experience supporting audience development initiatives.
- Experience working with registered charities and non-profit organizations.
- Experience developing strategies that support fundraising, philanthropy, sponsorship, and community engagement.
- Strong understanding of arts education, youth engagement, cultural tourism, and equity-focused programming is considered an asset.

5. Proposal Submission Requirements
Proponents are requested to submit their proposals in digital format (PDF) containing the following sections:
a. **Executive Summary:** A brief overview of the proponent's understanding of the project.
b. **Company Profile & Team:** Introduction to the agency or consultant, including bios of key team members who will work on this account.
c. **Relevant Experience & Case Studies:** Provide at least two (2) examples of previous marketing strategies developed for organizations in the performing arts spectrum.
d. **Strategic Alignment Statement**
Proponents should describe how their approach will assist Arts Orillia in achieving its strategic goals related to:
- Audience growth
- Revenue diversification
- Youth engagement
- Community awareness
- Philanthropic growth
- Sponsorship development
- Organizational sustainability

e. **Methodology & Timeline:** A detailed description of the approach, phases of work, and expected timeline for completion.
f. **Financial Proposal:** A comprehensive budget breakdown, including hourly rates, flat fees, and any anticipated disbursements.
g. **References:** Contact information for two (2) previous clients, ideally from the arts or non-profit sector.

6. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following weightings:

Evaluation Criteria	Weight
Performing Arts & Charitable Sector Experience	30%
Methodology & Strategic Approach	30%
Audience Development, Fundraising & Sponsorship Expertise	15%
Cost Effectiveness & Budget Alignment	15%
Qualifications, References & Case Studies	10%

Additional Evaluation Considerations

Preference may be given to proponents that demonstrate experience:

- Increasing attendance and audience engagement for performing arts organizations.
- Supporting donor acquisition and fundraising growth.
- Developing sponsorship marketing strategies.
- Working with organizations focused on youth development and arts education.
- Creating measurable marketing plans tied to organizational strategic objectives.

7. RFP Timeline

- **RFP Issued:** November 12, 2026
- **Deadline for Questions:** November 27, 2026
- **Proposal Submission Deadline:** December 16, 2026. Late submissions will not be considered.
- **Interviews with Shortlisted Candidates:** January 8, 2027
- **Contract Award:** January 15, 2027

Please note: Thank you for your interest in partnering with Arts Orillia. We recognize the significant effort involved in preparing a proposal and sincerely appreciate each submission. Following our review process, only those proponents selected for further consideration will be contacted.

8. Disclaimer and Rights

Arts Orillia reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all proposals without incurring liability.
- Modify the scope of the RFP and invite revised proposals.
- Negotiate with the selected firm before finalizing the contract.

9. Contact Information

All inquiries and final submissions must be directed via email to:

Jeanette Heywood, General Manager
Arts Orillia
gm@artsorillia.ca





ARTS ORILLIA

Creativity | Culture | Community

Strategic Plan 2026 - 2031

















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Building Creative Futures… Through Education, Arts, and Community 2026 to 2031

Our theme for the next five years, **Building Creative Futures… Through Education, Arts, and Community**, brings Arts Orillia's vision to life. It celebrates the creativity, connection, and possibility at the heart of our work—and the future we are building together through three interconnected pillars:

1. **Education**
   We open doors to creativity through school partnerships, in-class programming, youth mentorship, Global Steps, SHSM, the Creative Youth Lab, the Creative Youth Writing Lab, and lifelong learning opportunities.

2. **Creative Development**
   We champion artists and new ideas through residencies, creative incubation, performances, festivals, and opportunities that nurture artistic excellence, professional growth, and the creation of bold new work.

3. **Community**
   We bring people together through accessible cultural experiences, meaningful partnerships, and wel coming spaces that strengthen inclusion, belonging, well-being, and economic vitality across our region.

Together, these pillars connect **The Community We Want** with The **Arts Orillia We Need**. They turn our vision into action—guiding every program, partnership, and investment as we grow a resilient, sustainable organization with an even greater impact.

Building Creative Futures is also an invitation to take part. Donors, sponsors, businesses, foundations, governments, artists, educators, families, and community members can all help shape a vibrant cultural future. Every contribution—of time, talent, partnership, advocacy, or funding—creates more opportunity, deepens belonging, and empowers the next generation of artists, audiences, and community builders.

Arts Orillia is not simply delivering programs. We are building creative futures through education, arts, and community.

Mission

Arts Orillia fosters a dynamic cultural scene through arts education, mentorship, and performance.

Vision

By **2031**, Arts Orillia will be…

- The most sought-after arts education programmer for **youth** in our region;
- The leading creative incubator north of Barrie for **artists'** residencies, developing new work;
- A respected provider of **cultural** and artistic programs that grow and inspire broader community participation and engagement.

Values

Arts Orillia Believes in…

- **Diversity and Inclusion** – we are committed to providing opportunities that are equitable, diverse, accessible, and inclusionary. We seek to celebrate and lift up our community and everyone in it through the arts.
- **Collaboration** – we actively work with individuals, organizations, and government from our community, our region and beyond.
- **Innovation** – we strive to demonstrate our organization's value to the community and our commitment to diverse and new expressions of creativity and artistic endeavours.
- **Sustainability** – we demonstrate resiliency and nimbleness, and adapt to changing circumstances, in securing resources that will enable us to achieve our mission and vision.

Strategies and Key Initiatives...Arts Orillia's focus from now to 2031

Ensure Financial Resilience and Sustainability

- Advocating for increased funding from government (OAC, CCA, CAPF, City, etc.)
- Increased Philanthropy – Core Funding from Private Foundation or Corporation – Establish possible Reserve Fund for the organization's security
- Revenue diversification – e.g., Increased ticket sales (#+$); Program Variety; Small business & Corporate Sponsorships; Foundation Grants

Growing Audiences & Expanding Access

- Grow the number of partnerships with the education sector
- Grow audiences and presence within and beyond North Simcoe
- Multi-year engagement with youth to foster life-changing development
- Explore delivery of programs in collaboration with other arts "partners"
- Increase connections and understanding between local cultural groups through relevant artistic programming and events

People & Culture

- Board, Committee & Volunteer Development, and a clear definition of Roles and Responsibilities
- HR Plan – additional staff & volunteers to grow capacity for participation and involvement.

Communications and Brand Awareness

- Increased social media presence; media partnership
- Brand ambassador program
- Increased community awareness & engagement = more support
- Greater advocacy with the City of Orillia, County & Province re Value of Arts to Communities

Call to Action...

Arts Orillia believes that vibrant communities are built through creativity, connection, and opportunity. As we enter the next phase of our journey, we invite artists, youth, educators, cultural organizations, businesses, funders, volunteers, and community members to join us in shaping a stronger cultural future for our region.

The years ahead will require collaboration, innovation, and investment. Together, we will create opportunities for young people to discover their potential, support artists in developing and sharing new work, and increase access to meaningful arts experiences for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Through education, performance, mentorship, and cultural engagement, Arts Orillia will continue to demonstrate that the arts are not an extracurricular luxury—they are essential to building healthy communities, strengthening belonging, inspiring dialogue, and contributing to economic and social vitality.

This Strategic Plan is our collective commitment to ensuring that creativity continues to thrive in Orillia and across the region. We invite everyone who believes in the power of the arts to be part of the journey.

The Community we Want...

We envision a community where creativity is accessible, valued, and woven into everyday life. A community...
...where young people have opportunities to explore their creativity, develop confidence, and see pathways for personal and professional growth through the arts.

...where artists are recognized as contributors to community well-being, economic development, education, and social change—and where they are supported to create, experiment, collaborate, and thrive.

...that embraces diverse voices, cultures, traditions, and perspectives, using the arts to foster understanding, dialogue, and belonging.

...where arts experiences bring people together across generations, creating opportunities for shared learning, celebration, and connection.
...that recognizes the arts as an investment in quality of life, fostering youth development through education partnerships while contributing to a vibrant and resilient community and economy.

...where every person—regardless of age, background, ability, identity, or circumstance—can participate in and benefit from meaningful creative experiences.

The Arts Orillia We Need...

As an evolving organization, Arts Orillia is committed to building a sustainable, focused, and impactful future. We will continue to grow deliberately, aligning our resources with the areas where we can make the greatest difference.

We need an Arts Orillia that:

- Centres youth by creating transformational opportunities for learning, mentorship, leadership, and artistic expression.
- Supports artists through residencies, incubator programs, professional development, creation opportunities, and meaningful presentation platforms.
- Builds audiences by making arts experiences accessible, welcoming, relevant, and engaging for a broad and diverse public.
- Leverages partnerships with elementary and secondary schools, post-secondary institutions, cultural organizations, businesses, municipalities, and community groups to increase impact and reach.
- Champions diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, ensuring that underrepresented voices are celebrated and reflected in our work.
- Balances artistic excellence with community impact, delivering programs that inspire creativity while strengthening community connection.
- Operates sustainably, with diversified revenues, strong governance, committed volunteers, capable staff, and long-term financial resilience.
- Acts as a regional cultural leader, helping position Orillia and surrounding communities as a destination for arts, culture, learning, and innovation.
- Measures and communicates impact, clearly demonstrating how arts participation changes lives, strengthens communities, and contributes to economic and social well-being.
- Creates opportunities for people to participate, not simply attend, fostering lifelong engagement with the arts.

By 2031, Arts Orillia will be recognized not only for the programs it delivers, but for the opportunities it creates, the partnerships it builds, the artists it supports, and the lasting positive impact it has on youth, community, and culture throughout the region.







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