

EmcArts launches ArtsFwd Business Unusual National Challenge

Five arts organizations, selected by vote, will have the opportunity to crowdsource bold new ideas in response to their most pressing adaptive challenges and win \$35K.

Organizations are invited to enter through May 9, 2013

What is the Business Unusual National Challenge?

The ArtsFwd Business Unusual National Challenge is a new competition/collaboration inviting arts organizations from across the country to submit a persistent, complex challenge they are facing. Five organizations will be selected by vote for the chance to crowdsource bold ideas from inside and outside the arts sector in response to their challenge. Ultimately, one organization will win a package of grants and resources worth \$35,000 to prototype an innovative approach.

For more information about the Challenge and to enter, visit: ArtsFwd.org/Challenge.

Because the Challenge is a complex opportunity, we strongly encourage entrants to take advantage of the resources we provide, including video tutorials, worksheets, a webinar and the opportunity to discuss your submission with EmcArts program staff via phone counseling. See below for more details. To schedule an appointment, contact Karina Mangu-Ward (kmangu-ward@emcarts.org; 212-362-8541 ext. 29).

Why a National Challenge?

The arts sector is facing a time of tremendous change, one that requires organizations to innovate and adapt – to try things they’ve never done before. The trouble with doing this kind of adaptive work is that all too often they’re limited to the ideas of the people in the room – the usual suspects.

That’s why we’re launching the 2013 Business Unusual National Challenge, to crowdsource bright minds in and outside the arts sector to help organizations tackle the most significant challenges they’re facing today. We’re looking for the kind of challenges that have no obvious solution, no set procedures, and no recognized experts – we call these adaptive challenges.

Over the next 6 months, we’ll gather adaptive challenges from organizations across the country, conduct a vote to determine five Finalists, source provocative new ideas from an exciting group of big thinkers, specialists, and ArtsFwd readers, and ultimately, award one Winner a package of grants and resources worth \$35,000 to prototype an innovative new approach.

What is the timeline for the Challenge?

The Challenge has four phases:



Phase 1: A national call for adaptive challenges: March 20 – May 9, 2013: Arts and culture organizations from across the country will be invited through an open call on ArtsFwd to submit a description of a significant adaptive challenge.

Phase 2: Selecting finalists: May 15 – June 1, 2013: ArtsFwd readers will vote on 12-20 Semi-Finalists (selected by EmcArts) to determine the top five Finalists.

Phase 3: Crowdsourcing bold new approaches: June 15 – July 31, 2013: Finalists will be posted on ArtsFwd.org. Big thinkers, specialists in the field, and ArtsFwd readers will be invited to contribute inspirations and ideas in response to the challenges articulated by the five Finalists.

Phase 4: Determining a winner: September 15 – October 15, 2013: A panel of outsiders and EmcArts staff will determine one Winner, who will receive a package of grants and facilitation worth \$35,000 for prototyping a new approach to their adaptive challenge. The winner will be announced in October 2013.

How does EmcArts define “adaptive challenges”?

Most organizations are familiar with “technical” challenges to their operations and systems, challenges that can typically be solved by gradually changing and improving current practices. Ronald Heifetz, professor at the Kennedy School of Management at Harvard, distinguishes these from “adaptive” challenges – those that demand new approaches and strategies because there are no set procedures, no recognized experts and no evident responses available to meet the challenge. Challenges of this kind require that organizations shift their ingrained organizational assumptions and let go of cherished beliefs in order to develop innovative responses that are unprecedented for that organization.

The National Challenge has been created to help encourage, improve and support organizations as they question their assumptions and develop new and innovative approaches to addressing well-defined adaptive challenges.

Why is it important to question assumptions?

Times of great and rapid change—such as we’re experiencing in the arts today—demand that we re-examine the foundational assumptions that have led us to success in the past. We must rethink our assumptions in order to see if we need to change them, because they may no longer reliably predict success.

How does EmcArts define “innovation”?

Based on research into the literature of innovation, EmcArts has developed the following working definition of organizational innovations for the social sector, which is now widely adopted in the field:

Organizational innovations are instances of change that result from a shift in underlying organizational assumptions, are discontinuous from previous practice, and provide new pathways to creating public value.

While not all innovations meet all these criteria, this definition provides a useful framework for recognizing changes that are more than just incremental revisions to business-as-usual. It helps distinguish innovation



from efforts that are simply “novel” and unrelated to achieving the organization’s mission or creating public value. Above all, the definition draws attention to the fact that innovation requires a shift in the organization’s underlying assumptions about its own processes and products and about the external operating environment. Organizations entering the Challenge should bear this definition in mind as they prepare their entries.

Entries to the Challenge can address challenges in programming, community engagement, partnerships, operations, communications, governance, and more.

What does EmcArts provide to participants in the Challenge?

During Phase 1, EmcArts staff will offer email and phone counseling for entrants, including reviewing draft entries (see below for details). After Phase 1 and prior to Phase 2, EmcArts staff will select 12-20 Semi-Finalists from the pool of entries (see below for selection criteria). During Phase 3, EmcArts will facilitate the crowdsourcing effort in collaboration with the Finalists, including but not limited to: issuing special invitations to contributors, organizing public dialogues to extend the conversation online and offline, and consulting with Finalists. After Phase 3 and prior to Phase 4, EmcArts will offer email and phone counseling to the Finalists as they develop their full proposal.

EmcArts will provide a package of grants and facilitation worth \$35,000 to the winning organization.

What is the breakdown of the \$35,000 package for the Winner?

The package includes a grant of \$15,000, plus 5 days of on-site process facilitation and 3 days of off-site coaching and preparation. (See below for selection criteria).

What are my organization’s responsibilities?

Your organization’s responsibility varies in each Phase:

Phase 1: March 20 – May 9, 2013: Preparing and submitting an entry will require gathering a group and making time to identify your organization’s adaptive challenge – which may include watching video tutorials, completing worksheets, and participating in a webinar.

Phase 2: May 15 – June 1, 2013: If chosen as a Semi-Finalist, your organization must be prepared to spread the word to your community about your participation in the Challenge (to get out the vote for your organization’s adaptive challenge project!).

Phase 3 & 4: June 15 – September 15, 2013: If chosen as a Finalist, your organization must make the commitment to be an active participant for the duration of the crowdsourcing. This will include preparing your adaptive challenge for the ArtsFwd website, actively dialoguing with readers, leaders, and other contributors during the crowdsourcing phase, communicating with EmcArts staff, and shaping a full proposal to be submitted by September 15, 2013 for consideration in the final phase of the Challenge.

Phase 5 (Winner only): November 2013 – October 2014: If chosen as the Winner, your organization must be prepared to make a serious commitment over 12 months to develop and gather an



innovation team of roughly 10 people, develop an innovative strategy, and prototype it. This includes, but is not limited to, committing the innovation team to participating in 5 full days of facilitated meetings on roughly the following schedule:

November 2013 – March 2014: During two full-day facilitated meetings, the Innovation Team works with EmcArts facilitator to finalize the Team members, explore strategic options, compile relevant data, construct a detailed work plan that matches your needs, and co-design the content and style of your two-day retreat.

April 2014: The Innovation Team takes part in a two-day local retreat, which serves as an “accelerator” to develop the intended innovation and ready it for prototyping.

May – October 2014: The Innovation Team works to prototype the developed strategy and to integrate it with the organization as a whole, supported by a grant of \$15,000, follow-up coaching, and one full day of on-site facilitation by EmcArts. Prototyping consists of one or more limited trials of the strategy followed by evaluation and revision.

Ongoing: The winner will also be expected to work with EmcArts to document the development and implementation of the innovation project in order to share it with the field.

Who is eligible?

All US-based arts and culture organizations that produce and/or present visual art, performing arts, electronic media and film art, arts and culture programming, arts education, and/or serve arts organizations or artists are eligible to enter.

This includes, but is not limited to: art museums, science museums, theaters, libraries, historical houses and societies, dance companies, music organizations, media production organizations, service organizations, and education organizations or institutions.

There is no minimum budget or staff requirement. Eligible organizations must have non-profit 501(c)3 status or a non-profit fiscal sponsor. If you have a question about eligibility, email kmanguward@emcart.org.

How will the Semi-Finalists be selected?

A panel of EmcArts staff will select Semi-Finalists. Successful entries will provide clear evidence of many of the following:

- Successful identification of a major adaptive challenge that is persistent and complex and does not have any standard or established solution.
- Your organization has either not yet developed a response to this challenge, or your current responses aren't proving effective.
- There is a sense of urgency to address this challenge.



- If you successfully tackle it, it is likely to have significant impact on your ability to fulfill your mission.

The selection panel will also take into account organization type (discipline), size (operating expenses) and geographic distribution in order to build a diverse group of participants in the Challenge.

How will the Finalists be selected?

A popular vote on the ArtsFwd website will determine which of the 12-15 Semi-Finalists will move on to become Finalists. The five Finalists will then move onto the crowdsourcing phase of the Challenge.

Who can participate in the crowdsourcing?

The crowdsourcing phase, during which the five Finalists will present their adaptive challenges to a public audience via the ArtsFwd website, will allow for a range of big thinkers, leaders in the arts and culture sector, and ArtsFwd readers to contribute inspirations, ideas, and reflections to the Finalists' adaptive challenges.

Anyone from the public will be able to contribute by submitting comments on each organization's Challenge page. In addition, there will be a series of online dialogues taking place during the summer of 2013, which will include a group of specific thinkers and leaders invited to participate by the ArtsFwd team.

How will the Winner be selected?

EmcArts staff will compile and review all the submissions, and may ask entrants to submit revisions, updates or additional information. A panel of five experts in innovation and organizational change will select the Winner. The panel will recommend an organization as the Winner and the EmcArts team will make the final selection.

The Winner will provide clear evidence of many of the following:

- Adaptive leadership that is able to engage the voices of multiple stakeholders in complex change processes, and organizational readiness for adaptive change
- An organizational culture that shows a high level of critical self-awareness and is supportive of innovation (e.g., evidence that independent thinking, idea generation, and challenging "business-as-usual" are valued by the organization and facilitated by its structures and systems)
- A high level of community engagement
- A "half-baked" idea regarding strategic responses to the identified adaptive challenge, that enjoys organizational support but is not yet fully worked out
- The organization's strategic thinking about the challenge is likely to contribute sustainable value to the organization, its community and the field
- The entrant's capacity (as an organization and on the part of individual staff) to share what is learned through their work in the Challenge with their colleagues in the field

What is the deadline for submissions?



EmcArts must receive all submissions online via the ArtsFwd website by 11:59pm EDT on May 9, 2013.

Where should I submit my entry?

Entries should be submitted online at <http://artsfwd.org/challenge/enter-the-challenge/>.

What should the entry include?

Entries consist of responses to the 7 questions below, plus 2 representative images, and basic contact information.

1. What is your vision of success for your organization? *(Write a few sentences articulating the community impacts and benefits that you are looking to achieve.)*
2. What foundational assumptions that have reliably predicted success in the past are you now questioning? *(This questioning of assumptions is at the core of identifying your adaptive challenge.)*
3. What evidence is causing you to question your assumptions? *(Consider both evidence within your organization that contradicts your assumptions and evidence of new strategies in the field or other sectors that is contributing to your questioning.)*
4. In response to all this, what bold new direction are you imagining for your organization? *(This should be a new predictor of future success you could test in practice.)*
5. Considering questions 1 through 4, describe your adaptive challenge. *(Try this format: Because [1] (the most important evidence driving the challenge), we will [2] (the success you want in the future), by [3] (your bold new direction(s)).*
6. Why is it important that your organization address this challenge, and why now?
7. What are the core activities of your organization and whom do you serve?

Who should prepare and sign the submitted entry?

All organizational leaders and staff who are likely to be responsible for developing and implementing a response to the adaptive challenge should be involved in compiling the submission.

While a given challenge may involve one type of organizational constituent in particular, the engagement of leaders across all constituencies, including the executive leaders, is seen as evidence that the institution supports engaging in adaptive change, which is therefore more likely to be successfully implemented. It is also important you obtain the explicit commitment of any relevant partners in the community.

The organization's executive leader must electronically sign the entry.

What resources are available?

We are offering the following resources, all of which are designed to help you prepare your responses to the 7 entry questions:

Downloadable worksheets at:

http://artsfwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/ArtsFwd_Adaptive_Challenge_Worksheets.pdf



Video tutorials at:

<http://artsfwd.org/challenge/resources/video-tutorial/>

An interactive webinar on April 18th from 1 – 2pm EDT. Register at:

http://www.eventbrite.com/myevents?org_id=2589630

Phone counseling with EmcArts staff to answer questions and review drafts:

Appointments are available from April 8 – May 9, 2013. To schedule an appointment, contact Karina Mangu-Ward (see below for details and contact info).

Is it possible to get feedback on draft entry?

We strongly encourage all entrants to seek feedback on their ideas and draft entries. Members of the EmcArts staff will provide telephone counseling on initial proposal ideas or general questions about the Challenge. Upon request, EmcArts staff can also review draft entries and provide up to 30 minutes of feedback via telephone.

Please email Karina Mangu-Ward (see contact info below) at EmcArts with requests for initial counseling and/or draft entry review, attaching a draft entry, if appropriate. Only one counseling session/review will be provided per entrant.

EmcArts does not guarantee that a review will make a submitted entry competitive, and EmcArts does not intercede with the selection panel on behalf of any entrant.

Who can provide further guidance regarding content?

We encourage entrants to discuss their innovation plans with EmcArts. For clarification about the Challenge as a whole, please contact Karina Mangu-Ward, preferably via email. If you want to discuss a specific project or explore in more detail whether a submission would be appropriate and timely, contact Karina.

Karina Mangu-Ward
Director of Activating Innovation
EmcArts Inc.
127 West 122nd Street
New York, NY 10027

Tel: (212) 362-8541, ext. 29
Email: kmangu-ward@emcart.org

About ArtsFwd

ArtsFwd is a place for leaders in the sector to share and learn about adaptive strategies and the power of effective innovation. Important new strategies are being developed throughout the professional arts and culture sector, but too often these advances remain isolated within their organizations. EmcArts saw the urgent need for a field-wide learning platform that enables the entire sector to benefit from the remarkable adaptive work underway in some organizations. Our aim is not to encourage mere replication of successful projects, but to share the process of innovation and to foster a new understanding of how adaptive change is achieved. www.ArtsFwd.org



About EmcArts

Recognized as the leading nonprofit provider of innovation services to the arts sector nationwide, EmcArts serves as a nonprofit intermediary for arts funders, and as a re-granting agency and service organization for the arts field around innovation and adaptive change. Our innovation programs support the development and implementation of mission-centered new strategies by arts organizations of all sizes. The programs range from directly incubating specific innovation projects to introductory programs that enable new thinking and build a culture of innovation across local arts communities. EmcArts is a 501(c)(3) organization. www.EmcArts.org

#####