

THE FUNDING NETWORK – TORONTO

Report

Proram Title: Inspirations Studio

Description of the project including the key audience:

Inspirations Studio is an art-based incubator and social enterprise initiative that utilizes a self-employment model that focuses on building women's capacity to supplement their income and enhance their livelihoods through arts/craft training, production and business development. The participants in the program are low-income women the majority in receipt of social assistance with incomes less than \$7,000 annually. Most of whom have experienced homelessness, or are at-risk of homelessness, struggle with mental health issues, have histories of trauma and addictions, all of which are complicated by deep poverty.

Located on Queen West, Inspirations Studio offers individual or small group instruction in art, primarily ceramics, painting/print-making and to a lesser extent jewellery and textiles and business skills. The Studio also provides access to art equipment and supplies, and sales opportunities. The goal is to facilitate the earning of supplemental income, recovery of self esteem, self confidence, respect and dignity of the members, and to create a community of entrepreneurs. Inspirations Studio has a catalogue, website, and utilizes several marketing vehicles to create sales and production opportunities for the women.

Inspiration Studio has been growing both in numbers and reputation as the word spreads about its impact and benefits. Currently, the project supports an active membership of 50 women. Annual income generated by the women combined sales averages \$45,000. Last year, Inspirations received the Leonardo Da Vinci award for entrepreneurship from the Creativity and Innovations Day Celebrations and for three consecutive years a member of the Studio has been a recipient of an award from the American Artists Professional League for her work.

Studio members are also provided Peer teaching and coaching opportunities as a part of the teaching model for both artistic and business learning. This aspect of the program has developed into a program of its own, as some members now teach recreational arts activities at other drop-ins and shelters in the city.

Inspirations Studio operations are led by an expert team: Natalie Wood, a professional artist with a background in arts education, printmaking, painting and business skills development; and Theresa Morin, a professional artist and teacher with expertise in ceramics, painting and printmaking.

The Request

Sistering requested a grant from the Funding Network-Toronto to update equipment the program needed by purchasing the following:

- A computerized kiln
- A pugmill with de-airing and mixing properties
- A 17-inch MacBook with design and graphic capabilities

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The program bought the laptop and the kiln (financial details are below). The pugmill equipment was donated by the United Way, who found a donor that was interested in the program. Hence the \$10,010 that we received was spent on the kiln, laptop and pottery materials, primarily clay and glaze components.

This new kiln has enabled the program to save funds spent on energy and staff time, as it is more advanced. It can be pre-set, and shuts off automatically after the firing process is over. Its convection properties, ensures that temperature remains consistent producing a higher quality product.

The Macbook has been tremendously helpful in designing promotional materials, the website and greeting cards produced by members. It has also been invaluable in promotional presentations that highlight the social purpose enterprise aspect of Inspirations Studio.

Not having to purchase the Pugmill enabled the program to purchase higher quality clay and glazes, this offered the women an opportunity to experiment, producing new and more complex pottery items.

Financials

R-280 Kiln	\$3,500.00
Delivery, installation and disposal	
Of old kiln	\$1,030.50
17" Macbook	\$1,609.00
Gst Receivable	\$ 102.50
Pottery materials (clay, glaze components)	<u>\$3,862.01</u>
TOTAL	\$10,104.01