Femmes du Feu Creations created the following *Project Field Notes* in 2023 as part of their Balancing Act Level UP! Pilot Project.

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Femmes du Feu Creations
Level UP! Care Solutions Pilot
Project Field Notes

The following notes were written in 2023 by Holly Treddenick, Artistic Director of Femmes du Feu Creations (FdFC) after FdFC completed their Level UP! Pilot Project.

Project focus: Piloting childcare support for touring and residency artists at the Bank Art House, and creating a Welcome Package.

Project inspiration: As an artist-run centre in a regional town, providing care support for visiting artists is important.

Planning and implementation

Our project was twofold. The first part of the project was to support circus artists in residence and through presentations at The Bank Art House. The second part was to enhance support for artists we engage through our internal governance, which included integrating caregiving support into our policies and contracting.

As part of this, we added a baby change table to the main floor universal washroom in the FdFC home, The Bank Art House. The change table wasn't difficult to mount, but it needed to be properly installed in the wall for safety (1/2- 1 day for 1 worker to install).

We also created a "Care Package" document for out of town artists coming to Welland. It was created for anyone's use, but with focus for caregivers of children. This included resources for parks, pharmacies, child care givers that we had vetted, child friendly restaurants and more.

We were also able to offer financial compensation for artists who came to Welland for residencies at The Bank Art House. FdFC hosted four 1-week artists residencies through 2022 and 2023. In each residency one of the lead artists was a mother and this financial compensation supported them to arrange good child care at home and come to the residency with a more clear and focused state for creation. At the time of offering a spot

in the residency, we would offer childcare support, either in conversation or via email. The amount of the financial compensation was averages $700 for 1 week.

When we applied for this funding, we had certain ideas in mind that we wanted to achieve. We realized that we need to work on an individual basis with artists and companies rather than creating a blanket plan or proposal for all artists we engage. This takes the form of individual conversations around needs as early in the process as possible. This will allow us to write these supports into our funding proposals and work with the artists/companies to also include the extra expenses in their proposals.

We have had many conversations with our team about caregiving—what support we can offer, what facets of care we can support—all while maintaining care for ourselves within our capacity.

This is an ongoing conversation that is nuanced and individual. The goals and capacities are ever-changing, with variables from both sides of the conversation. Ultimately, we are aiming to understand our values as an organization and how to keep those as our compass.

Key conversations

Caregiving is something we discuss at all our board and team meetings since initiating work with Balancing Act. Tthis is relevant to all members of our team as caregiving affects us all in different ways at different times. We are all aligned that caregiving is an important part of the organization's values and aim to continue searching for ways to support all involved.

Conversations have been initiated by me as the Artistic Director, often by posing questions to the team. Some conversations are initiated when different scenarios arise. Once we find a solution for a given scenario, we hold onto that, but the next scenario may be totally different, so we again search for the best solutions we can find.

We are continuing to aim to settle into the unknown space of evolution, change, adaptability, and trusting the value compass of our organization.

Future planning

Moving forward, we plan to budget more than we think for caregiving support because it can take so many different forms, from babysitting to the need to rent larger

accommodations and more. We recognize the need to define the boundaries and capacities of our organization and articulate why they are set so that we can communicate what we can and cannot offer to artists.

Sustainability

Our pilot was very succesful and helped our organization further define caregiving as a core value and move closer towards understanding what that means and how to put it into action. We certainly plan to continue this as an ongoing support in our programming and activities, which will involve adding a caregiving line in all funding applications, having conversations around needs prior to those funding applications, and understanding that all of it may change by the time the funding comes in.

We are also looking at developing a fundraising strategy for caregiving. This includes a donation jar at the door for all our activities and asking for donations of non-perishable items. We have learned that a relevant aspect of caregiving for us is providing healthy food and snacks at our activities, as there are many people of all ages who cannot always manage this basic need.

Key information and advice

In our experience, offering caregiving support takes more time, conversations, and money than you may expect. It's important to be aware of your capacity and know your boundaries, and be careful not to overextend yourself to support others.