Stratford Festival created the following *Compassion Fund Pilot Report* in 2022 as part of their Balancing Act Level UP! Pilot Project. The document was developed to clearly articulate the operating procedures and results of the Compassion Fund.

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Stratford Festival
Compassion Fund Pilot Report

“This is one of the first opportunities I've experienced in an institution where there is a tangible thing that they are doing to support the marginalized artists they are wanting to work with.”

– Participant of the 2022 Director’s Workshop Presentation

Pilot Conducted and Report Written by:
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Scope of the Project:

To provide a fund in which eligible applicants could apply for financial assistance in amounts of up to $500 to aid in the areas of support for: child and elder/adult care, transportation, wellness, and general support due to under employment, loss of income, or increased care responsibilities.

Eligibility Requirements:

Participants of the 2022 Langham Directors' Workshop - Directors' Workshop Presentation engaged on a contract are eligible to access this fund for support. 41 Eligible Participants (Actors, Directors, Designers & Stage Managers)

Application Process:

Applicants were asked to fill out a barrier free application form and are required to fill out a feedback survey as a stipulation of receiving funds.

Results Summary:

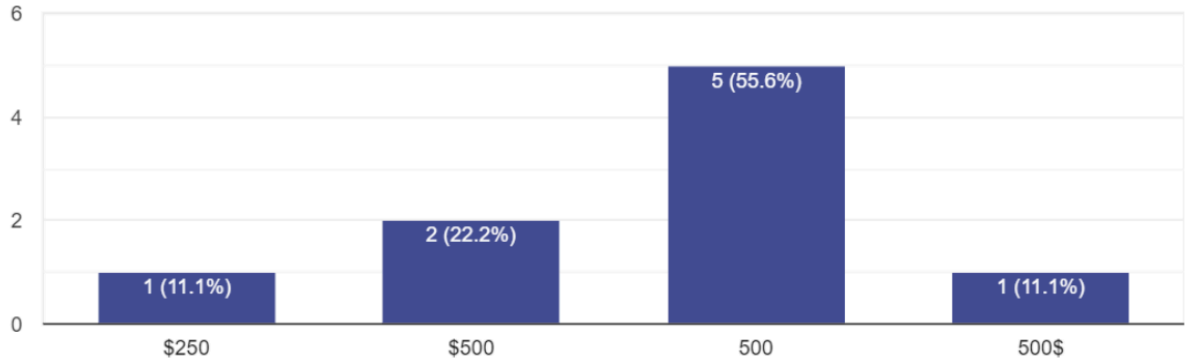
- Came in under budget: budget total $5,000, funds distributed $4,250, $750 unused
- Total applicants: 9 (Approx. 25% of eligible applicants applied)
- Total recipients of funds: 9 (amounts requested fulfilled in full).
- 8 out of 9 recipients asked for the maximum amount allowed ($500)
- Self assessment: child/elder/adult care support seemed to make the biggest impact in a participants ability to participate and perform better at work
- Travel and general support seemed to be selected the most for use of the funds
- Most recipients expressed significant gratitude in the existence of this program

How did this fund assist in reducing barriers to actively engage in the work?

- Helped with double rent
- Wellness needs: dental care, mental health care
- Increasing gas costs for travel to/from Toronto (multiple trips)
- Relocating family expenses
- Increased travel due to medical appointments out of town.
- Adult dependant with continued care needs, single income home
- Car maintenance - to have the ability to apply for future jobs out of town

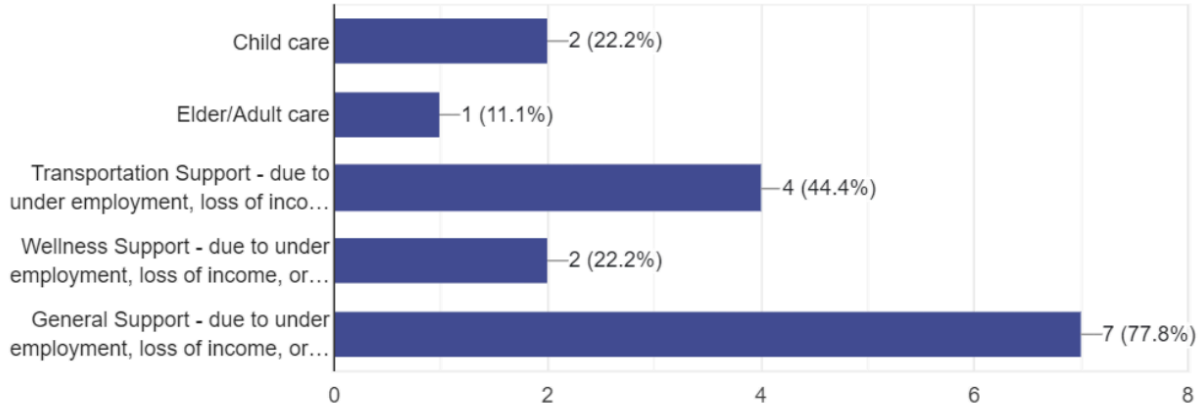
Amount requested (up to $500)

9 responses



Funds will be used toward: (Check one or more option)

9 responses



Self assessment, what option below best fits you?

9 responses

Reflections:

1. If a fund were to continue we would recommend applicants should be encouraged to assess their needs in literal amounts vs asking for the maximum. For example: If their day care costs $256 dollars for the week they should apply for $256 dollars etc.

2. One applicant applied for money for their car specifically to help them with acquiring more work. We don't think this fell in line with what we were trying to achieve with the fund supporting people's work on the DWP so stricter language regarding eligibility or use would be recommended for future funds.

3. 7/9 applicants applied before the first deadline but we still think having two deadlines worked well to insure accessibility.

4. We suggest making the question: "How did this / how might this fund assist in reducing barriers to actively engage in the work?" mandatory vs. optional as 2/9 applicants did not provide a written reason for needing the funds.

5. The finance side of things went smoothly. Our finance department was a great help to this initiative.

Next Steps:

1. To scale up a Compassion Fund (options):

    a. Using the pilot's budget vs number of eligible participants the Festival would need a budget of approximately $50,000 to serve the same demographic of people (Directors, Designers, Stage Managers and Actors) in the 2023 season.
    b. Use 0.5% (for example) of the Festival's annual budget and allow all staff and artists to access it for support.

2. Application deadlines: Due to the repertory schedule we would need multiple application opportunities to insure funds are available equitably throughout the season to anyone working at the Festival.

3. Expand Compassion Program to utilize low/no-cost options to support a greater number of 2023 staff and artists.