



Executive Summary - Proposal for a Pilot ArtsCare Social Prescription Program

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Mississauga Arts Council

Executive Summary: Addressing Mental Health Challenges through Arts in Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated global mental health issues, particularly affecting vulnerable populations, as evidenced by multiple studies (Earnst et al., 2022; Lin, 2023; O’Neill & Wittnebel, 2020; Pongou et al., 2022; WHO, 2022). Traditional approaches, such as medication and talk therapy, may not suffice for everyone grappling with the full spectrum of mental health challenges.

In Mississauga, a strained public health system has left many children, youth, and adults dealing with mental health crises without adequate support, particularly for those experiencing long term illness (O’Neill & Wittnebel, 2020). Recognizing the need for innovative solutions, the Mississauga Arts Council (MAC) and Mass Culture had initiated a collaborative project to find research (through a datathon) and connect leading professionals (with focus groups and a conference) in the field of arts in health to design an arts prescription model, called ArtsCare. This current pilot extends the successes of the previous funding cycle, from 2019 to 2022.

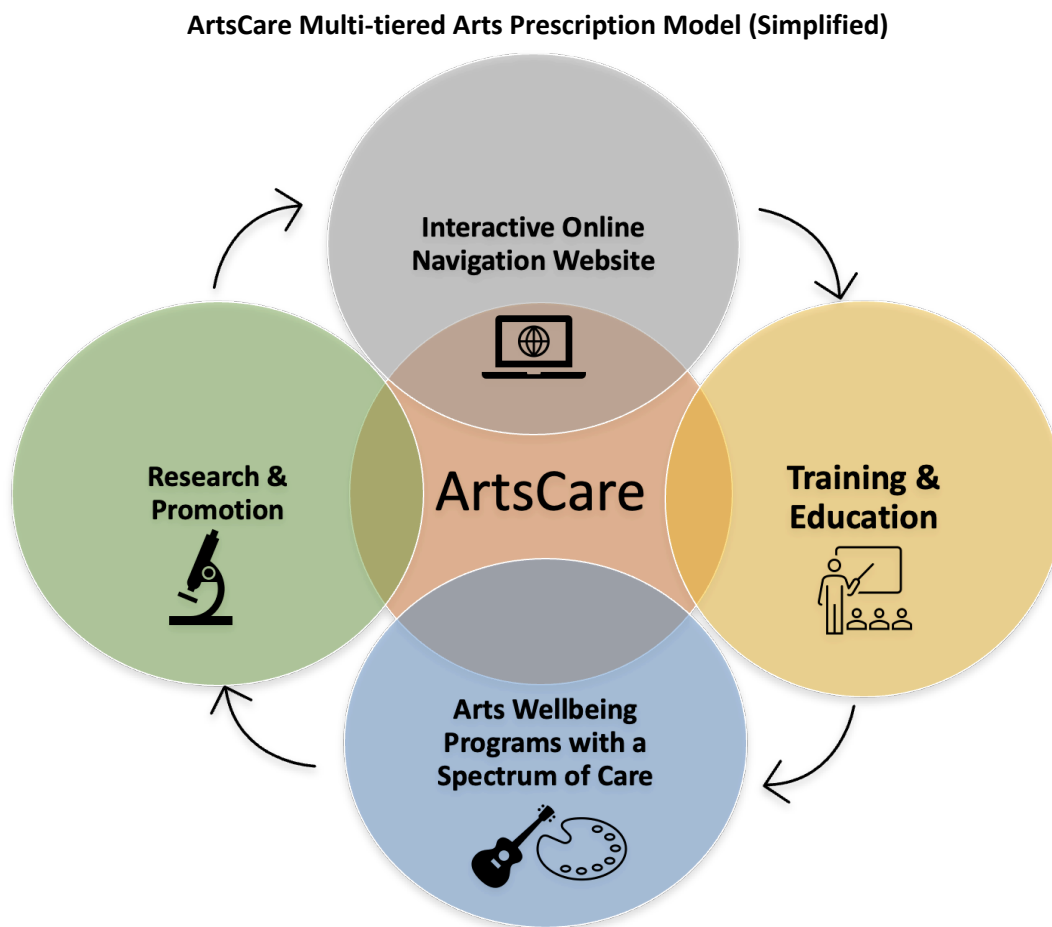
Based on empirical research and stakeholder consultation, this current proposal builds on the outcome of the National Arts for Mental Health Conference and outlines a 2-year pilot project incubated by MAC in collaboration with regional health bodies and existing community organizations/programs. The pilot project, grounded in arts in health models and aligned with the Ontario Government’s *Roadmap to wellness: a plan to build Ontario’s mental health and addictions system’s* (2022) 4 pillars, seeks to provide patient and community access to multi-tiered supportive arts-based programs within a spectrum of care. The goal is to enhance individual and community health and wellbeing, fostering resilient, sustainable, and creative community support and health services for diverse populations while concurrently aiming to reduce public health costs through prevention, long-term impact, implementing innovative services, improving access to care, and focusing on patient intrinsic strengths.

The comprehensive model, titled ArtsCare, comprises four interconnected components that provide a Spectrum of Care that meets the diverse modern challenges of people are experiencing isolation, mental health challenges, and various forms of distress in Mississauga with the potential to expand across Ontario:

1. **An interactive online navigation website** offering a clear system for socially prescribing and self-prescribing arts in health programs. It will include individualized navigation and follow-up support by trained professionals. This will help improve access to mental health services within a spectrum of care.
2. **Training and education** from credentialed professionals in the field of arts in health for medical providers, artists, and partner organizations, thus implementing innovative solutions and improving quality of care.
3. **Multi-tiered arts in health programming** catering to diverse mental health needs based on a Spectrum of Care, ranging from symptom prevention to complex mental health support, tailored to contemporary community needs. This, in-turn will help provide diverse services to people with different mental healthcare needs.

4. **Research and promotion** efforts collecting diverse empirical data on the effects of arts-in-health programming from inception, including a cost-benefit analysis. These findings will be shared across various platforms, from academic journals to social media, to advocate for and inform policymakers, researchers, and individuals about the program's benefits and outcomes that continuously seek to improve community wellbeing and quality care.

This holistic approach aligns with WHO's (2019) recommendations for multisectoral prevention and promotion of mental health, aiming to build competence, resilience, and empowerment within the community. In addition, this unique and modern holistic approach to mental health and wellness aligns with the Ontario Ministry of Health and Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addiction's vision for "A province where all Ontarians have access to high-quality, easily accessible mental health and addictions support throughout their lifetime, where and when they need it" (Government of Ontario, 2022, para. 1).



Model credit: Toll, H. (2023).

The pilot model above is designed with the intention to scale the ArtsCare service up for the Province of Ontario. Furthermore, applicants understand that this vision contains multiple steps that will take time to implement, while the activities that are socially prescribed can eventually expand beyond the arts on prescription other therapeutic activities, such as horticulture and bibliotherapy, depending on local and national partnerships and funds.

Executive Views Supporting Arts for Mental Health Care

“In a study based on a 2016 Statistics Canada General Social Survey, the Canada Council for the Arts found that 52% of Canadians who participated in 15 arts, culture and heritage activities were more likely to report very good or excellent mental health than non-attendees and participants. This study looked at activities such as live music, art galleries, reading books, art and culture festivals, theatre and comedy shows.”

Hon. Michael Tibollo, Associate Minister for Mental Health and Addictions
Comments recorded October 6, 2021, at [Arts for Mental Health Conference](#)

“Today you have the opportunity to harness some remarkable research and brainpower, to help inform practical recommendations for an uplifting arts for mental health program in Peel. It is my hope that by connecting health and social services agencies with creative groups that we can foster a program of creative experiences that will benefit those who need them the most.”

Bonnie Crombie, former Mayor of Mississauga

“A non-pharmacological solution is needed for the looming unprecedented demands for an overburdened mental health care sector.”

Dr. Colin Saldanha, Past Chair, Trillium Health Partners Foundation

“There has never been a time when new mental health services were needed more.”

Provincial Mental Health Support report (Ontario), February 22, 2021

“This [Nanos Research, 2017] study clearly demonstrates that people across Ontario believe that the arts make an important contribution to their quality of life and social well-being and that arts activities are key factors in increasing the attractiveness of their communities as places to live and work.”

Rita Davies, Chair, Ontario Arts Council, 2017

“..., arts interventions are often low-risk, highly cost-effective, integrated and holistic treatment options for complex health challenges to which there are no current solutions.”

World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, September 2019

“Engaging with the arts is good for you and can tangibly improve lives. While there is increasingly robust research that shows the arts can have a demonstrable impact on health, we still know little about how to implement these interventions at scale and in different cultural contexts.”

Nino Berdzuli, Director of the Division of Country Health Programmes at WHO/Europe, April 2021

ArtsCare Participant Views

“When I start with a paintbrush in my hand, you start off with a little line, and your thought process will just go out there. And you turn your bad thoughts into your happy thoughts. Your peaceful thoughts. It gives you a tranquil outlook.”

Participant of Addictions Program, Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS), Mississauga
recorded on October 17, 2021

“I run for my children. I run for my husband. I run for everything, but for me, now, it’s my turn.”

Fabiola, Participant in the *Now I See Me, Now I Don’t* arts expression program run for newcomer women by Anna Silgado as a part of the ArtsCare Program Development MicroGrant, Mississauga
recorded on May 3, 2023

“This is a platform, providing an opportunity to meet with different people and to spend some good time. Singing and dancing are the two things which really make your mood lighter and happy.”

Tahseen, Participant in the *Now I See Me, Now I Don’t* arts expression program run for newcomer women by Anna Silgado as a part of the ArtsCare Program Development MicroGrant, Mississauga
recorded on May 3, 2023

Read the full Proposal for a Pilot ArtsCare Social Prescription Program [by clicking here.](#)

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