**ARTSGREENSBORO**

**Elevate. Amplify. Support**

**INNOVATION PROJECT SCOPE - DRAFT**

**Background**

ArtsGreensboro (AG) is a nonprofit organization advancing the arts as a transformational force for Greensboro and the region. It does so by providing grants to arts organizations, projects, artists, and teachers, including Triad Stage, Carolina Theatre, Eastern Music Festival, GreenHill, the Dance Project, Elsewhere, African American Atelier, the Piedmont Blues Preservation Society and Guilford County Schools, and providing support through shared promotional and advocacy efforts. Over the years, AG has given grants to 1,309 artists, to arts programs affecting 353,523 attendees, and to arts initiatives benefiting 121,346 K-12 students. Its 17Days Festival offered more than 60 events to over 10,000 participants as an example of strategic programs. In addition, ArtsGreensboro manages and operates the Van Dkye Performance Space and the Sternberger Artists Center. Access to the arts, increasing arts education, and strengthening economic vitality through the ripple effects of the arts are the organization’s highest priorities and values.

**The Innovation Need**

Businesses today are confronted with significant issues in their workforce, including increasing rates of employee disengagement, chronic illness, and stress, along with diminishing levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction. As companies struggle to find enough qualified individuals to fill jobs at a time of record low unemployment, they are also pressed to keep new hires productively engaged so investments in recruitment and training are not lost. These human resources issues directly affect the top and bottom lines of businesses.

ArtsGreensboro may help businesses address these challenges by providing an innovation. Studies indicate that the arts can increase employee productivity, reduce stress, improve well-being, heighten creativity, and elevate learning and communications, among other benefits (e.g. Knight and Haslam 2010). The innovation need is for a novel yet effective program that brings the arts directly into companies to improve workforce characteristics such as productivity, well-being, and engagement.

Concomitantly, the innovation should increase employee awareness of and support of the arts through direct experience with it, as well as provide meaningful opportunities for artists (and possibly art educators) to show, teach, and engage employees in their crafts. The arts are not confined to visual forms such as paintings and drawings, but encompass the entire range, from music and poetry to theatre and culinary events.

The innovation should represent a win-win-win-win, in that it aids a) businesses to have happier and higher performing employees (win #1), b) workers to be healthier and more satisfied with their jobs as well as more appreciative of the arts (win #2), c) artists, art educators, and arts communities to grow the audience for their work (win #3), and d) ArtsGreensboro to fulfill its values of access, economic vitality and arts education in a new way, and to broach businesses and employees for financial support, having brought the arts to them in tangibly beneficial ways.

**Innovation Considerations**

Some considerations in designing an innovation are below:

* The innovation provides employees direct experiences of the arts in their workplaces
* The innovation increases arts awareness, appreciation, and perceived relevance of the arts (e.g. that it isn’t just for the educated, cultured, or monied)
* The innovation includes a means of capturing workforce gains, such in productivity and well-being
* The innovation includes multiple forms of the arts and does not regularly disrupt business operations
* The innovation may integrate the arts with targeted business processes (e.g. teamwork, strategic planning)
* The innovation brings some face-to-face interactions between employees and artists/art educators
* The innovation includes indirect and passive art experiences (e.g. consuming art) and direct and active art experiences (e.g. creating art)
* The innovation is scalable and adjustable to firm size

**Project Parameters**

* MBA students will be placed in teams of 5, for a total of 6 to 7 teams, working on this project August - November 2019
* They will be taught about and guided through a design thinking process, which emphasizes creativity and human-centeredness (i.e. that innovations must empathically address real human needs)
* They come from a variety of backgrounds, such as accounting, and for nearly all this will be their first exposure to design thinking and intensive collaboration on a complex problem (not relying on dispassionate quantitative analysis but on first-hand information, ideation, prototyping, experimentation, collaborative teamwork, flexible mindsets, uncertain processes, and iterative learning)
* ArtsGreensboro--possibly with artists, art educators, and HR managers--will come to class for one entire session to be interviewed by the teams in round robin fashion
* ArtsGreensboro--possibly with HR and C-suite executives—will attend the project presentations and prototype demonstrations at the end of the semester

**Team Deliverables (end of November, on the date of the presentations)**

* Project “portfolio” or report of project process and outcomes in hard and electronic copies
* Prototype, in any medium, of the innovation along with recommendations for implementation
* Project presentation and final prototype in hard and electronic forms