Decision Package

Creative Pinellas

**Operating Decision Package Request – TDT Fund**

**1.** Local Co-op Arts and Culture Advertising and Marketing Program Pilot Program

**2**. $400,000 non-recurring

**3. Description**

Creative Pinellas is requesting $400,000 in non-recurring funding from TDT Funds to launch a pilot co-op program to advertise, market and promote local arts and cultural offerings in support of and working collaboratively with VSPC ‘s messaging of Pinellas County as an arts and cultural destination.

This program will require participating artists and arts organizations to invest new advertising dollars, which will be matched by Creative Pinellas to double the value and impact of their advertising spend. (For example, the participant contributes $5,000, Creative Pinellas matches the $5,000 and the result is a $10,000 advertising campaign.) With the participant match, return on the Creative Pinellas investment in media placement is immediate.

Similar to the co-op program that VSPC offers its tourism partners, but with a specific focus on advertising and promoting arts activities, events and venues, this co-op program will make use of local media outlets to reach tourists once they are here in Pinellas County and to actively promote their engagement with the arts. In this way, it will both drive tourists to attend museums, theatres, dance performances, arts fairs, concerts etc. while they are here, and support the strong arts and culture message that VSPC is sending externally, reinforcing the believability and credibility that Pinellas is an arts and cultural destination.

Ads will include a specific call to action: “Come to see this exhibit open now.” “Attend this concert this Friday.” “Buy tickets for this today through Sunday.” All ads will be tagged (branded) with a consistent message and visual mark reinforcing Pinellas County as an arts and arts and cultural destination.

Creative Pinellas will manage participant recruitment and on-going service, messaging, and overall program management. We will work with VSPC and their advertising/media agencies to place the media in the market, gaining the benefit of their knowledge and buying power and the reduced rates that brings.

The initial funding request is based on a detailed analysis of the arts organizations able and likely to participate, and their probable level of participation the first year. Based on the success of the program (in terms of participation, awareness and attendance results) we will look at continuing the program into the future and increasing the budget as needed.

**4. Justification**

This is a program which in similar markets has proven to have increased awareness, attendance, sales and participation in arts and cultural activities. As it focuses on tourists once they are in Pinellas, it is a beneficial enhancement to the VSPC marketing campaigns that focus on tourism-audiences outside Pinellas County. As such it gives both Creative Pinellas and VSPC the opportunity to work cooperatively and to conserve resources, including leveraging the media buying power of BVK, VSPC’s media-buying agency.

The co-op program also addresses a communication need recently uncovered during VSPC’s research on the strategic plan and visitor perception study. That is the importance of reaching/messaging tourists once they are here and to making them aware of arts and cultural activities and events they will enjoy. Additionally, feedback suggests that because many tourists come to visit family and friends, it is beneficial for local residents to understand and be aware of the many opportunities for they and their guests to enjoy arts and culture, and that such knowledge is a draw when convincing visitors to come.

With the benefit of dollar matching the program creates opportunity for participants who would otherwise find the price of advertising cost prohibitive. For those who are already advertising, it doubles the impact of their advertising dollars, which in this media-noisy environment is invaluable.

Because there is a branded tag or closing message, touting Pinellas County as an arts and cultural destination, the campaign will also contribute to awareness and identification both inside and outside of the market of Pinellas County as an arts destination increasing our competitive position with other markets (such as Sarasota) that make the claim that they are an arts destination.

Finally, it answers a need and desire that has come from the arts community for years, that there be marketing and advertising support for specific arts activities, venues and events. And it does so at a scale that makes sense and benefits from the knowledge and connection that Creative Pinellas has and maintains with the arts community and arts and cultural institutions.

**5. Effectiveness Measures**

Effectiveness will be measured by the number of participants, by digital, broadcast and print standard advertising metrics, by customer awareness studies, self-reporting from participants, audience numbers and ticket sales, wellbeing of arts businesses and arts and cultural organizations including increased financial stability, job growth and audience expansion. Further, we will look at repeat participants and an increase/expansion of the number of participants in the program.

**5. Alternatives**

VSPC could launch this program locally. However, it seems to make more sense for Creative Pinellas to launch and manage, as it a small, very local program that is in Creative Pinellas’ wheelhouse, so will be fairly easy and straightforward to launch and manage. We will look to VSPC for consulting and alignment with their messaging strategy and target audiences, and for media placement.

**Operational Impact**

The intended results are to establish a Creative Pinellas (TDC) sponsored marketing and advertising presence that will build recognition and attendance/sales of arts activities, venues and events, while tourists are here, and increase both visitor satisfaction and the arts community’s bottom line.

This will provide a significant service to area artists and arts businesses/arts organizations as it responds to an identified need, provides funding to meet that need and also requires that participants contribute funding as well. Thus, it establishes a mutually beneficial partnership.

Creative Pinellas currently has a team member who has managed a similar program in South Florida, so brings operational expertise to media placement, account management and reporting, and accountability. This team member will be able to work closely with VSPC and their agency to ensure program effectiveness and efficiency. Additionally, Creative Pinellas has strong financial controls in place and a history of strong financial management year-over-year.

**Budgetary Impact**

This request is a non-reoccurring from the TDT Fund in its initial year and requires a temporary FTE or contract employee.

$75,000 FTE/Program manager

$25,000 Administrative costs and fees

$300,000 media purchased

$400,000 total