

IncentOvate Case Study – Old Town School of Folk Music



(Iron Heart Chicago, Jimmy Burns)

Old Town School of Folk Music is one of two organizations to receive IncentOvate funding two years in a row. We're thrilled to share some details about their success!

"The DCASE IncentOvate program offers organizations an incredible opportunity to stretch out their programmatic muscles and try something new. Old Town School's city-wide initiatives — Iron Heart and the 77 Beats — would never have been realized without the catalyzing impact of these grants."
—Bau Graves, Executive Director, Old Town School of Folk Music

What did the IncentOvate grant make possible?

DCASE's support provided funding for a **new project** – Iron Heart Chicago. Through **40 free concerts** on all **8 CTA train lines**, as well as **20 additional performances** as part of Chicago Park District's "Night Out In the Parks" series and at the annual Square Roots Festival, Iron Heart Chicago elevated public awareness of our city's master traditional musicians and the community vitality they exemplify. Building on this success, Old Town launched **77 Beats** in their second year of IncentOvate funding, bringing pop-up performances featuring master musicians representative of Chicago's ethnic diversity to restaurants, food festivals and Farmer's Markets throughout many of **Chicago's 77 designated community areas**.

Why were these projects selected for IncentOvate grants?

IncentOvate panelists were impressed by the **innovation** showcased by this work. Iron Heart Chicago used CTA elevated train stations as performance venues, transforming the daily commute into a cultural experience. By demonstrating the excellence and vitality of a range of local musical genres in such a publically prominent manner, Old Town School helped to change preconceptions of what folk and traditional music is, and how it contributes to Chicago's global perspective.

This work also exemplifies **community engagement**. 77 Beats takes a wide range of arts programming directly to Chicago's streets. It reaches people directly where they live, and also invites them to come and experience more of Old Town School's offerings, such as World Music Wednesdays, Global Dance Parties and the annual Square Roots Festival.