

MPTF explained – or “How do I do a free concert and get paid for it?”

What is it? – The Recording Industries Music Performance Trust Fund (or MPTF for short), was created in 1948 as a result of negotiations between our union (the AFM) and the recording industry. The long-playing record had just come on the scene (have you forgotten – those 33 1/3 RPM LP’s?) and the union feared that another electronic medium would put even more live performers out of work, as talking films had done earlier in the century. So the recording industry agreed, and still does, to put aside a percentage of their sales into a fund administered by a separate Trustee (hence “Trust” fund). This fund is used to co-sponsor live, free-admission performances of music all over North America. Each year there are close to 18,000 MPTF concerts, enjoyed by an audience estimated at over 15 million. These concerts result in close to \$11 million worth of work for musicians.

What types of concerts? – MPTF performances are of a completely non-commercial nature: they usually take place one of three areas:

1. in public areas such as parks, city squares, or halls
2. educational concerts in schools – this has proven itself to be valuable in presenting live music to children, and sparking their interest in music at a time when many of them will be choosing to join school music programs.
3. areas where people cannot otherwise attend live performances, for example in nursing homes, hospitals and seniors’ residences.

Any musical group, regardless of what type of music they play, can do MPTF concerts where appropriate, as long as they meet MPTF guidelines.

What are these guidelines? – The Trustee publishes an extensive list of guidelines. They are too numerous to print in their entirety here – the following are the most important ones:

1. The performance must be a **concert**, that is, the prime purpose for the engagement must be a musical performance for an audience (e.g. **not** a dance, club date, background music, etc.)
2. The concert must be free – there can be no admission charge to the concert or the venue in which it is held – and it must be open to the public at large. Although MPTF concerts are performed in seniors’ care homes and schools with limits on the audience size, they technically cannot be in venues closed to the public at large.
3. MPTF concerts are **co-sponsored**; meaning the cost of the performance is shared by MPTF and a local co-sponsor. The local co-sponsor is usually a school or school district, a municipal government body, a business, or even a private individual. An AFM local may not be a co-sponsor.
4. The co-sponsor must provide the following: the performance venue, including any major equipment needed (seating, sound system if possible) **and** at least 50% of the Local 247, AFM scale wages for the engagement, including costs for cartage and transportation. For general public concerts (i.e. not school or nursing home

- concerts) the co-sponsor is required to pay at least 65% of the scale wages for the engagement.
5. The wages for all MPTF concerts are the applicable AFM local minimum scales for the jurisdiction where the engagement takes place. MPTF will not pay overscale.
 6. Wherever possible, the ratio of audience to performer must be as large as possible. For example, the Trustee will not approve of an eighteen-piece big band performing in a nursing home with only fifty residents. Concerts in schools should be held for assemblies, not individual classes, unless classes from more than one program or school can be combined to produce a large audience.

How does it all work? – Every fiscal year beginning May 1, MPTF grants ***area allocations*** to each province and state in North America. These allocations represent the amount of funds available from the Trust Fund to co-sponsor concerts in that area (to give you an example, B.C.'s allocation this year is approx. \$99,000). The allocation is based on the population of the area and the number of AFM members it has. The most important thing to remember is that ***these funds are not under the control of the AFM locals***. The MPTF Trustee has the final say on whether a concert is approved. MPTF also does all of the payroll for the concerts – musicians are paid by cheques issued from their office. Although MPTF has final say over the fund, it is the AFM Local that ***makes recommendations*** for projects to them. Locally, we have an MPTF committee that screens applications to ensure that they meet the MPTF Trustee's guidelines and any local guidelines that we set from time to time. This committee then applies to MPTF for approval of each project.

How do I apply? – if you are interested in the MPTF program, and you are a potential co-sponsor, or a musician with a co-sponsor in mind to fund a project, contact us at the office and we will assist you in filing an application. Keep in mind that co-sponsor funds have to be submitted ***in advance*** with the application, and applications must be received in the MPTF office in New York at least thirty days in advance of the first performance. You can not apply for MPTF funding retroactively.

In Victoria, we have a long-standing partnership between the Local and the City of Victoria Department of Community Development. Every summer they act as co-sponsor for a large series of MPTF concerts held in Centennial Square and Beacon Hill Park. The Local MPTF committee receives applications from musicians to participate in this series every spring (the closing date is usually in April), and schedule the groups according to their availability and the City's needs. Application forms for participation in the City of Victoria series go out with our Local newsletter, ***tutti***, with the first issue of each year.

For more information, please contact us, or go to www.mptf.org.