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Last fall, before the #MeToo movement heated up but after the stories of last summer, StageSource asked [Impact Boston](#) to hold a bystander training session for our members. We partnered with Impact because of their expertise in the areas of self-defense and bystander training. As interesting/difficult/emotional as the two-hour class was, it was the conversation in the hallway afterwards that spotlighted the need for ongoing training in the performing arts community. That, and other conversations I've had in the past few months with artists who have been in rehearsal rooms or auditions where a line was stepped over. Or where behavior was observed, but as a bystander other folks didn't know how to behave. Or workplaces where folks didn't feel safe because of the climate.

While there are webinars and trainings available around the topic of sexual harassment, too often they are too broad to be helpful in a workplace where physical contact and heightened emotional states are part of the job.

There was and is a call in the performing arts community to address the issues of sexual harassment, and workplace bullying, and as the service organization for the New England theater community, StageSource has been working on ways to heed the call.

We are planning two paths of work by partnering with different organizations.

STEP ONE

We are partnering with Impact Boston to create a program that includes four steps:

- **Surveys and focus groups** to clarify the needs within the community. This will aid in determining (or showing) the need for the work.
- **Organizational culture and policy work.** Some organizations are already doing this, and can add to the pool of resources. The goal for this step is to develop community guidelines, resources, and to create a code of conduct that companies and artists can adopt.
- **Bystander training.** This training (for people like stage managers, ASMs, actors, ADs, company managers, technicians, etc.) will be designed to give people the tools to intervene if they witness sexual harassment, impropriety, or other situations where the person being targeted might not be safe to advocate for themselves.
- **Empowerment self-defense/physical and verbal resistance training.** The focus groups and surveys would help Impact develop training specific to the needs of the performing arts community.

By having a program designed specifically for the performing arts community, we can create a path toward change.

STEP TWO

If someone blows a whistle, who answers? Every organization should have (and will have, after Step One) a sexual harassment policy and work place code of conduct. Nonprofits will have a board member designated to oversee these issues for the staff. But if things need to escalate, what happens? The Arts & Business Council of Greater Boston works with Ipswich Bay Advisors to provide HR services. They are developing guidelines, and trainings for the community.

We are also working with both of them to address this question—how do situations get investigated? Who does the investigations? How do they get funded? Is there a funded pool of resources that can be developed to create an arts specific initiative? What are the best steps forward? StageSource cannot take on the role of a performing arts police force, but we can partner with folks who have expertise, and can help us figure out the best path forward.

Today I am writing to you to ask for your support of these sector-wide initiatives. We are looking for grant funding, and a community show of support will help us make our case. Soon we will add crowdfunding to this initiative, and we'll ask you for social media support. And of course, once the program is up and running, we hope your organization will send people to participate in the activities and training programs.

If you would like to write a letter of support, or to take a more active role in the initiative, please contact me. In the meantime, will you provide your leadership to this initiative by signing on to [support it here](https://goo.gl/forms/2ImBNLM4e9E01MV62)? (If the link doesn't work, cut and paste this link into your browser: <https://goo.gl/forms/2ImBNLM4e9E01MV62>)

Looking forward,

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