Baby Ghosts Info Session Transcript

Action Items

- Apply for the Baby Ghosts program by September 25th at weirdghosts.ca/apply
- Schedule an interview with Eileen and Jennie in September if your application is selected
- Prepare for a potential pitch meeting with Weird Ghosts and Gamma Space in October if you move forward in the process
- Have your studio ready to start the program on November 1st if accepted

Intro

Eileen

Okay, it's 3:02. That means we're getting started. So welcome, everybody. Thank you so much for joining us today. We're thrilled to have you all here. I am really excited to talk to you about the Baby Ghosts Peer Accelerator program. We are going to be covering a lot of information over the next 30 minutes. So, if you have any questions, please post them in the chat throughout. And we'll gather them up and then answer them all at the end of the session. And if we get through all those questions, we will have some time at the end to answer questions as well. And if, for any reason, something doesn't get answered during the session, you can always reach out to us at hello@weirdghosts.ca, and we'll get right back to you. So, what to expect today: We're going to start by introducing what the Baby Ghosts program is. We're going to talk to you about who we ghosts are, and then Gamma Space will introduce themselves and talk about what they do and how they're involved. And then we'll have a Q&A portion as well. And I did see a question in the chat about recording. So, I just want to add that yes, we're recording the session, and the recording will be made available later on as well.

That's the agenda for today. So although we're meeting in digital space today, our bodies are also grounded on this earth and on various lands. The presenters you see today are coming to you from across Canada, from Tiohtià:ke/Montréal on the unceded territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation to Toronto on the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples; as well as Kingston, Jamaica, the colonial and postcolonial capital of the unceded indigenous Taíno territory, Xaymaca, where abducted, trafficked marooned and enslaved Africans, and their latterly freed descendants have been the majority of the population for almost 500 years. And do feel free to add to the chat where you're coming from today and look up the land you were on, if you don't know. And, of course, I want to acknowledge that a land acknowledgement only goes so far. Recognizing the history of the

land we're on and whose land we're on is one very small step toward reconciliation and decolonization. Truly changing the thing, truly changing the way things are, involves completely restructuring how we exist, participate in community, and work together. And that's some of the stuff that we like to think about and some of the stuff that we will talk about today in the info session as well.

What is the Baby Ghosts program?

So what is the Baby Ghosts Peer Accelerator program? It is designed to help early indie game studios who are interested in alternative business structures and cooperative structures to build companies that are sustainable, healthy, invested in community, and set up for future funding opportunities. The program is open to studios located in Canada, meaning that the majority of the founders of the studio need to be located in Canada. If some members are elsewhere, that's okay. And a majority of founders are from an underrepresented identity group. So that includes anyone who's experienced marginalization or underrepresentation due to their gender, race or skin colour, sexuality, disability, religion, housing status, economic status, and immigration or citizenship status. The Baby Ghost program offers a $25,000 grant from Weird Ghosts, that's me and Jennie, whom you'll meet in a moment, and six months of mentorship from our collaborators, Gamma Space, whom you will also meet later today.

We will accept five participants from the applicants and they'll receive $5,000 for the first two months of the program and the rest for the final four months. We'll go into that in more detail later if you have any questions about it. The Baby Ghosts program aims to help early studios with studio development. So that includes structure, ownership, management, business models, goals and values, and project management. And this doesn't mean we never talk about your game projects. But we're asking teams to look at *more* than just their games and to really slow down and think about what they are really aiming to do and why they want to do that.

If you plan on applying to five different grants or accelerators while also participating in our program, this might not be the best match for you. We can help you find future funding when the program is over. But again, the emphasis of our program is to give you the resources and the space to slow down and establish your goals so that you can find future funding under more sustainable circumstances.

And we offer much support and mentorship throughout this program to help you with that slowing down process. But we also encourage everyone to have supports outside of the program. So whether that's family friends, therapists, dog walkers, guys on the street that you say hello to or so on, although it's not ideal, sometimes studios in the program realize that they don't work well together and decide to part ways. We want everyone to be ready for those possibilities and have the supports in place if it happens. And we are focused specifically on studios who are interested in cooperative structures. And you might not know

exactly what that means yet for you, or you might not be incorporated, and those things are okay. But you should be at least thinking and dreaming about this kind of structure. We strongly encourage everyone to read our application carefully and go over our website for even more details to see if applying is the right fit for you right now. But of course, we will also be talking about that today.

Meeting everyone who's here

And so, let's move on to the next portion, which is meeting everybody who's here today. So, because I'm already talking, I will keep talking and introducing myself. I am Eileen Mary Holowka, and I use they/them or she/her pronouns, and I'm one half of Weird Ghosts, an impact fund for indie game devs in Canada. I'm also a proto-member of the Gamma Space cooperative. I'm a writer, game dev, patient advocate, and ex-academic. I have my doctorate in communication studies, where I researched how people living with a condition called endometriosis use social media to navigate research and advocate about their disease. And I have a background in theatre in games and music, as well as community organizing. And I like video games because they offer a way to do a whole bunch of different art forms at once in one sort of amalgamation. I live in Montreal right now, but I will soon be living in Winnipeg with my large cat, Merton. And a fun fact about me is that I once memorized 50 digits of pi. And I can now never forget them. And with that, I'm going to pass it over to Jennie.

Jennie

Hi, everyone. I'm Jennie Robinson Faber, the other half of Weird Ghosts. And like Eileen, I'm a proto-member of the Gamma Space co-op and one of the co-founders from way back when we were a physical coworking and event space here in Toronto. I'm a huge advocate for space for artists and was the Operations Director of the Toronto Media Arts Center before the city closed our space. My background is in community arts organizing. I co-founded the video game arts nonprofit Dames Making Games and was its executive director for ten years. I also designed and delivered the inaugural Damage Labs investment readiness program for startup studios in 2021. I live in Toronto with Henry and our dog Bosley, who you'll see on a slide in just a moment. And my fun fact is that I have a Mass Effect tattoo.

Datejie

Oh, hello, everyone. I'm Datejie Green, a queer cis, Jamaican-Canadian woman based in Toronto and Kingston, Jamaica. My pronouns are she/her but also fluid, so long as they're said respectfully. And today, I'll be introducing you to our Gamma Space Peer Accelerator mentorship team, one by one, and there are four of us. And let me start with myself. I'm a journalist, an audio engineer, a collective organizer, a teacher, an independent scholar, and a lover of archives, and my journey traverses decolonial feminist witnessing recovery and storytelling across five languages from Turtle Island to Africa to the Caribbean, anticipating the digital convergence of news archives and interactivity. I've brought my community

development ethic and my news innovation Descendancy, diasporic African agency, to incubate with and through the Gamma Space.

Next up is Kaitlyn. Kaitlyn Dougon's pronouns are they/them, and they are a queer white settler artist also based in Toronto. They earned their radio and TV broadcasting degree, then found their way into video game production to develop alongside other indie devs while redefining their relationship to value, capital, and community in ways that can generate stability and sustainability. A lot of their time is dedicated to thinking about world-building, story crafting, process and structure, world and art history and classism, but you'll typically find them creating 3D models that bring their worlds to life.

Next up is bryan. bryan depuy, pronouns they/them, is a queer white settler artist also based in Toronto, from a background of audio engineering, community activism, tech support and weird creative tangents. They somehow arrived at video games, where they now spend a good deal of their time. They're proud to work with Gamma Space and Weird Ghosts, nurturing practices of collective care, anti-capitalism and political accountability.

Next up is Henry. Henry Faber's pronouns are he/him. He is a cis white settler, digital producer, community developer, and accessible arts-based advocate based in Toronto. He has worked for more than 25 years to facilitate more equitable and inclusive relationships between artists, technology and processes. Henry co-founded Gamma Space as a not-for-profit coworking space for indie game makers in 2012. A pandemic found him rethinking how communities cared for and worked together. Since 2020, he has been helping transform Gamma Space into a co-op that actively engages with its values.

Weird Ghosts background

Jennie

Thank you, Datejie, for introducing the Gamma Space folks. We are going to go into a little bit more about the background of Weird Ghosts. And then, we'll get on to how to apply. So at the end of the Damage Labs program, I had a realization that all the education and mentorship in the world won't help if there are no accessible funding options for emerging indies in Canada. And right around that time, in 2021, I met Eileen, and we decided to bring together our backgrounds in game dev, community development, and studio business education under Weird Ghosts. And we couldn't do any of this without the support of Infinite Ammo. Eileen inherited the game company from their late brother, and this allowed us to establish the fund. We are currently independent of other outside funding and investment.

So when we started Weird Ghosts, we conceived of three funding programs to address all of the different stages that we saw with the indies in our communities.

1. Baby Ghosts, which is what you're here to learn about today, for emerging studios, which comes with a grant and structured mentorship to prepare studios for further investment

and sustainable operations.

2. Our SEAL investments are for operating studios that need a boost to focus on studio development for a year. And we share in the studios' profits after they pay operating costs, and we don't take any equity.

3. And finally, our growth loans are for established studios who need a bridge while they wait for tax credits or other revenue. And this program is effectively on hold because we are focused on Baby Ghosts right now. We quickly saw that the demand was at that end of the funnel. So that's where we're focusing our resources right now.

In our first two years, we have funded 12 studios across five provinces between our Baby Ghosts and SEAL investments, and they've been co-ops, partnerships, sole proprietorships, unincorporated collectives, and traditional share corporations working collaboratively. Our focus is on supporting underrepresented founders across Canada because those are the folks who have been structurally excluded from funding in business mentorship. We believe you are the studios who will change the ecosystem in Canada.

We place an emphasis on building strong, impactful teams in worker-centric structures. That means teams where roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and where goals and values are aligned. Where social impact is at the heart of everything you do and where the structure of the studio empowers workers. We aim to create a funding landscape in Canada that truly supports game studios at all stages through our research and advocacy around centring social impact within the games industry and creating less extractive funding models. We are an impact investor, which means we're looking for studios with impact at their heart, which leads perfectly to the next section on social impact. Eileen?

Social impact

Eileen

Thank you. So you might be wondering what social impact is. So, as Jennie mentioned, Weird Ghosts is a social impact fund. This means that we not only invest financially in people, but we are also interested in investing in ways that create a social impact. For us, this means helping to support underrepresented game developers, alternative studio structures, and supportive community networks. Our dream overarching goal is to create a world where all marginalized game creators and studio founders in Canada have equitable access to a sustainable funding system and the resources they need to achieve their goals. And of course, that's, you know, long-term goal, and we're not there yet. But we have already seen our fund having an impact on how some other big funders in Canada operate, which is really exciting.

The way that we invest at Weird Ghosts through grants and shared earning investments, as Jennie explained, aims less at making outrageous financial returns and more at creating something sustainable so we can keep funding studios and supporting underrepresented

game devs and just building communities that make a better future for the games industry. Part of what we help studios to do is understand their own social impact goals. So some of the studios that we have worked with are interested in using some of their funds to reinvest in the games community or the environment. Some are focused on improving the representation of IBPOC people or 2SLGBTQI+ folks in games. Some are just interested in how they can operate as a co-op and help other studios become co-ops. These are all things that we love to see and talk about with the studios we support. In May of this year, the Canadian government launched the Social Finance Fund, which is a $755 million initiative that will provide matching funds to impact investors. So Jennie and I are hoping that we can benefit from the SFF in the future to support studios with even more financing.

And the key really is that for us, video games are not just games, we believe that games have the power to transform us and to create real change. It's important to us that the studios we work with are interested in thinking about their social impact, even if they don't know exactly how to approach that yet. We know that making a game and running a business is a lot to think about. But we also hope that the idea of thinking of that business as a way of creating change gets you at least a little bit excited. And it's something you'd be down to talk more about during your program. And so I'm going to leave that section here for now, of course, open to questions on it later. And I'm going to actually pass it back to data to talk about Gamma Space.

About the Gamma Space co-op

Datejie

Thank you, Eileen. Once again, my name is Datejie, and I'm excited to speak about the Gamma Space Peer Accelerator. And I'm especially honoured to speak on behalf of our peer mentor and co-op leadership team just introduced to you a minute ago. This presentation is a truly collective effort by our team of Kaitlyn bryan, Henry and myself, and is the result of deeply intentional and iterative work with Weird Ghosts, our Gamma Space collective, and previous Baby Ghosts in this program.

Let me start also with a thanks to all of you who have joined today or who are watching this video asynchronously. Your interest in this program and your eagerness to make impactful games in impactful ways is really exciting because it's what we're all about at Gamma Space. Gamma Space Collaborative Studio began in 2012 as a physical coworking robbing space in downtown Toronto. Indie devs and creators joined in all their diverse glory, and with them, Gamma Space began influencing the industry. Pivoting with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Gamma Space transformed into a fully remote distributed cooperative. We are dedicated to exploring more community-led, collectively prosperous ways to care for support and elevate each other. Gamma Space prioritizes the transformative engagement of people marginalized from dominant tech spaces and collectively redefines and applies equitable creative practices.

So in our years-long transition to a remote cooperative Gamma Space members have identified at home these core values number one, video games as a catalyst for positive socio-economic and cultural change, the impact of the games themselves the ways in which the game development work is done, and the relationships that make it all happen. Number two, this requires creative empowerment of the creative work and the creative workers. It's a process. It's not a one-time thing. Number three, of course, to empower creators means challenging the systemic norms that have been disempowering. Number four, to ensure the empowerment of all including the most marginalized or vulnerable, means learning and practicing accountability to these values. Number five, how we practice that accountability is where we are different from the rest of the industry; our environment, our processes, and our relationships are all nurtured with care and support through systems and structures that we're also carefully developing. Next up is our recent successes. In our short history of this pure accelerator with Weird Ghosts since 2022, we've mentored 11 Studios onboard and integrated seven new studio members, and we've created four shareable value flows. These are ways of working, collaborating and valuing ourselves and our work. Last but not least, this year, we were awarded access to Canada's impact readiness program that prepares us to receive impact investments for publishing the games from our own studio members. Next up is collaborative empowerment. Our collaborative empowerment model looks at what has been toxic in the industry has been toxic for our creators and their studios and their ambitions in terms of career development. We were facing and we continue to face an outside world that we've all been socialized into. This is the capitalist world, where jobs and income are precarious, where there are high levels of exploitation, hierarchical structures, and systems that leave us isolated and oftentimes subjected to violence that isn't necessarily interpersonal at the workplace, although we know that happens in harassment, but the structural violence of these various systems. Next up, the collaborative environment to what we have been doing in Gamma Space is moving away from that toxic environment towards an environment that we are building. It is not just a safe space; it's a protected space. It is a redoubled space of solidarity, in which we advance collectivism, and we educate ourselves about that through accountability, mutual and mutual support and amplification. We share in the learning, but we don't just receive; we also give back through mentoring and through collaboration. Last but not least, and you'll learn a lot more about this if you could join the program, we regenerate. Our regenerative model has developed from our members who've been working hard to figure out ways to break free of the value chains, the supply chains and all the chains. So, this is not just a non-hierarchical model. It's not just sustainable. It's regenerative in particular ways. What you'll see in this model on the slide is the actual program that happens within Gamma Space. But for the peer accelerator, it's just the first three steps. Developers come in and are immersed in our values. Developers then choose to become members if they want to, and then the members work on their personal projects and collective activities. Beyond the scope of the program, Gamma Space members are invited to pitch their impact games or projects to the community for project funding. The projects are produced within the

community, and then the community regenerates from the income and revenue streams from that project. Next up is the pure accelerator. For our peer accelerator, Baby Ghosts come into the program and are introduced to our practices. You share your values and your vision with the group. And to some extent within the Gamma Space Collaborative Studio, you use the method of our remote distributed Co-Op, which is Slack, for active and regular participation. There are regular facilitator check-ins and meetings to work through what you're developing and any pain points that you might encounter. Next up is the next slide. There are two parts or two stages to this program and months one to two where you're given $5,000 of support from Weird Ghosts. The focus is on your team goals and value alignment. And the outcome of that is a self-evaluation. From months three to six, where you're given $20,000 support from Weird Ghosts, you'll be focusing primarily on ongoing studio structure consolidation and your pitch and workflow or prototype. But the number one thing that determines Baby Ghosts' advancement from stage one to stage two is the success of their work on alignment of goals and values. This self-evaluation has been included as a prerequisite step, and this is why we have included the pain points and the value exercises in the application process. If you haven't seen that already, look out for that in the application, our achievements. To date, our past Baby Ghosts have won industry prizes such as the Ubisoft indie series; they've been included in high-profile showcases and been very, very impactful in forums such as Game Devs of Color. They've also, we're really, really proud of this kicked off our new community publishing program. As mentioned before, beyond the scope of the peer accelerator, we are developing a publishing node that will develop all the things needed to publish our members' games. That's it. Thank you for listening, and we look forward to your questions.

How to apply

Jennie

All right, so you're probably here because you're interested in applying for our fall intake. Or maybe you're just curious. In any case, applications are open now at weirdghosts.ca/apply. And I'm just going to go a little bit more into the process. So, this year's application process is a little bit different from previous submission periods. A big change is that we no longer require a pitch deck in the first stage of the application. We found that it was an unfamiliar task for a lot of studios, and it didn't always get us the info that we needed. We hope this new process will be more accessible and better for us as well as you. Instead, we ask questions in a forum on our site; there are three sections. The first is about your basic info, so we know who you are. The second is the alignment exercises that Datejie just spoke about. And there'll be more on this in a moment. And the third is about your studio and your game. In this section, we asked you about your dreams for your studio, who's working with you, some background about what you've done so far, and how you plan to become financially sustainable. And you don't have to have the perfect answer to that. We just want to know what you're thinking. And we also ask about your perspective on social impact. If this is a new concept to you, we really encourage you to read through our blog at weird ghost.ca as well as

learn dot weird ghost.ca. We have a bunch of resources there for you. So, let's talk a little bit about the mural exercises. If you're unfamiliar with Miro, it is a free online collaborative whiteboard tool. And we use it a lot during the program for collaboration. We asked you to use it to do two exercises. To align your goals and determine your top pain points. You will need to create or log into a mural account first. And then, at the top of the application form, you'll find a link to a Miro template. Open it up, and you'll find all the detailed instructions on how to use it. And when you're done, just copy a public link to the board and enter that into the appropriate form field. Another big change this year, and Eileen and Datejie have already covered this, is the larger grant size stage deployment and longer program. The reason we're staging the grant is that your first two months with us will be a very deep dive into your goals, values and alignment as a team. It can be very challenging, and we want to provide you with an out if this process leads to the disillusion of your team or a change to your structure that's not compatible with our program. We've also increased the length of the program by two months to allow for the slowing down process at the beginning. In the past, we've welcomed teams on a rolling basis. We've decided this year to accept all five teams at the same time. So you'll have plenty of company, maybe even some folks on this call, going through what you are. And we think that this will create an even stronger sense of community among our program participants. So some important dates to keep in mind. And all of this is on our site; you probably saw it on our Baby Ghosts page for your reference. But let's get into a little bit more detail. So after you apply, which is given, you're going to apply, we will review your application and get back to you either letting you know that we don't think you're a good fit at this time or to schedule an interview with Eileen and need to get to know you and your team better. These interviews are scheduled at your convenience during the month of September. We will email you within a week of your application with a link to book through our Calendly. After you've chatted with us, you can expect to hear about your status on October 2. From there, if we're continuing with you in the process, we will schedule a pitch meeting with everyone from Weird Ghosts that you've met, as well as the folks from Gamma Space. These meetings will be scheduled between October 3 and 13. You don't have to prepare a pitch deck or slides, although you probably want to. But it's not required. At this meeting, what we're doing is going over everything in your application in more detail. And it's half pitch, half Q&A. So be prepared for us to ask questions about your studio and your plans. And then finally, notifications of your status for everybody. We'll go out on October 16. And the program starts for all five selected teams on November 1. We run this program regularly. So, if you don't make it through this time, and there are far more people interested in the program than we're able to accept at one time, we strongly encourage you to apply again. During the next round. We will provide feedback about your studio, your application and neural exercises to help you with future applications to Weird Ghosts or to other funders. Now, I'll pass it back to Eileen to get us started with the Q&A portion.

Q&A

Eileen

Great. Thank you, Jennie. So Jennie is going to be asking questions to Datejie and me, and we'll field them as we go. I'm just going to stop sharing here right now. So, we're going to start with the questions that we collected on Slack. And then, if we have time after, we will take live questions.

Jennie

Is it okay, if we may not have all of the medium-term goals figured out for our application?

Eileen

Sure. So yes, I think that's completely okay. And we don't expect everyone to know everything that they need. Going ahead, I think the main priority that I would emphasize is making sure you're thinking about social impact, your workflow and the structure of your studio and reflecting that in your short, medium and long-term goals. So you know, where you want to get to, you know, what your values are? You might not know all the steps on the way, but what can you imagine?

Datejie

Yeah, I can just add that. This is kind of a principle for various parts of the application. But the point is to show that you've thought it through at least somewhat, you know, obviously, some people, some studios, will be further ahead in thinking about some of these questions than others. And we don't want to penalize people for, you know, "Oh my god, this is the first time I've been asked to think this way," right? But you do still have a few weeks to get your application in. So it's really, really important that you actually set aside the time. If it's a sole proprietor studio, or whether you're working with your crew, please set aside the time to consider and reflect and write stuff down and then leave it and come back and revise it. The more thought you can put into it, the better.

Jennie

All right, thank you both. Next question. How intensive are the sessions? How much time should I and my team allow each month?

Eileen

Yeah, great question. So, I'll let you fill in if I forget anything here, but we ask that folks are ready to share about their studio and their progress in Slack. Weekly, I would say. So being prepared to regularly update Slack. And then being prepared to have meetings once a week or once every two weeks with us in person. And we can accommodate schedules to a degree and we can accommodate, you know, life events that come up, again, to a degree above it because it's a cohort program as well, we're going to be trying to keep folks on relatively the same schedule. But you'll want to have time for Slack updates; you want to have time for those in-person [virtual but sunchronous] meetings. We have Monday night community check-ins that are optional but are great if you're looking to connect with folks. So that's

something to keep in mind. And I will say that there's often a lot of time right at the beginning, especially to really dive deep into values to understand Gamma Space to understand where all the studios are at. So, making sure there's time at the beginning as well as important. Data. Do you want to add anything to that?

Datejie

Yeah, sure, Eileen. So, the sessions can be intense. The first part of the question is, how intense are the sessions? And a lot of times, people underestimate brain work. There's creative brain work. I know that's one side of the brain. And there's kind of reflective, maybe administrative organizing, scheduling, but also values-based brain work. And I can't tell you which side of the brain that is, but the brain gets tired. So if you think about this, as a, you know, it's part on-the-job training, but it's also part school, I'd say. And in all of those kinds of instances, when it's a self-directed thing, people will say, you get what you put in, you get out of it, what you put into it. So if you can consider maybe an hour, less than an hour, up to two hours a week of participation, maybe in the Slack space in terms of communications, and then at least an hour a week meeting with peer mentors, or an hour every two weeks, depending on how really tight your schedules are. But that's just the scheduled time. And what I'm suggesting is that you need to schedule time around the scheduled time, right? Make sure that you have time to reflect and process and just rest your mind because it's gonna be a lot of new thinking. And that is taxing. So really, you get out of it, what you put into it in terms of scheduling and blocking off time for yourself.

Jennie

All right. Thank you. Another question. You've said a few times that studios will be asked to slow down, but you're calling this an accelerator. I'm confused.

Eileen

I think we've had this exact conversation before amongst ourselves. And it's it's, you know, it's partly like, what is partly just semantics of what to call the program. Is it a residency? Is it a mentorship program? Is it an accelerator? Is it a lab? So, in some ways, the word accelerator, I think, is there because that's what this kind of thing is often called. But it is the deceleration to acceleration program. We should call it the Baby Ghosts Decelerator program, but I think everyone would get confused.

Datejie

I'd like to add to that because Eileen, I know you're a gardener, and many of us love the outdoors. And there are lots of analogies with plants and trees. And you know, if, if, if you look at any kind of plant, it has roots that we can't see. And if the roots are not deep enough, the plant will not thrive or fall over, not grow very tall or big, or not stick around very long. And especially a plant that doesn't have enough roots will be subject to the vagaries of winds and rains and God knows with climate change even worse, right? And that's kind of what happens when you're working in the creative field. There's so much going on buzzing on social media;

there's so much that's being demanded of us. When we think about creating something, we're also very listening very much listening to things outside of us, including the idea of, well, I should make my art targeted to my audience, oh, God, who is my audience, and it's very normal accelerators, normal accelerator programs and lab programs are being mainly oriented to the outside. And that acceleration is your relationship to the outside. What we do is we accelerate your routes, we accelerate everyone going internally, figuring out themselves, so they have a solid, solid foundation. And they're not buzzing around looking at what's the latest was Ooh, shiny, or the latest, greatest other funding or whatever. So it'll feel like slowing down because you're not doing any of that. But in fact, you're gonna end up speeding up because you'll speed up your internal consolidations and put yourself on the right footing.

Jennie

Beautiful. All right, next question. Are you Canadian only? Are there any partnerships with other countries?

Eileen

So we are Canadian only. And right now, we don't have any partnerships outside of Canada. And I can't say I know of a fund that's outside of Canada that's doing exactly what we're doing. We have talked to the folks from Astra Fund before, and they're focused specifically on puzzle, thinky kinds of games. And we have some, I think they're all Canada-based resources on our website. Actually, yeah, we are primarily Canadian-based, unfortunately.

Jennie

All right, is there a target word count for each of the fields in the application? For example, social impact? I assume we would want to keep it concise, but cover all the relevant points.

Eileen

Yeah, I would say there's no magic number in terms of word count. As long as you're covering the things that are important to you, we're going to read through everything that you put. You don't need to write a five-page paper. You don't even need to write a two-page paper; it can just be a couple of paragraphs, as long as you're covering what really matters to you.

Jennie

Right, one of our founders lives in Iran now, which has a hard economic status, international sanctions and lots of social limitations by the local government. Does this situation cover an underrepresented identity group?

Eileen

Absolutely, yes. And as long as the majority of your founders are located in Canada, you're good to go.

Jennie

All right, moving right along. Someone else said they were also wondering about international team members while being based in Canada as a studio.

Eileen

Yeah, it's it's, it's no problem. Just while you're working on your application, I would ask folks to think about how you work together in terms of different time zones. And whether you'll be able to meet with us all at a dedicated time; that said, that can sometimes be tricky when we're working across the world.

Jennie

Can we include things like a talk that has been given by a founder in our application?

Eileen

Yeah, absolutely. We might, we may or may not be able to watch the full talk ourselves. But we're interested to see what you're doing. And we'll definitely check it out. And we're, you know, let us know what you've been involved in, let us know the kind of work you've been doing. All of those things are completely irrelevant and great for us to know.

Jennie

Thank you. Right. Is this an exclusive fund? Or would our studio be able to get grants and funds from other sources?

Eileen

Yeah, good question. It's not exclusive. In terms of contractually exclusive, what we encourage is that you're not applying to multiple accelerators or lab programs or mentorship programs during the time that you're in the Baby Ghosts because this is something that involves a lot of heavy brain work, as Datejie was talking about and something that really involves your focus and, and that you're going to get the most out of if you have that space in time. Of course, this program is a grant. So, you know, there's no obligation to pay that money back. It's your money; you get it. And you, you can do what you like with it.

Datejie

I will just add very quickly the slide that I had shown that was about, you know, the Peer Accelerator in stages, two stages; you can go back and look at the recording of this event to really reflect on that. Um, the thing is, so yes, other grants and other sources of funding are fine. Depends on the strings attached, right? And as Eileen said, it's not exclusive; nobody's gonna say, Nah, you can't do that. But if you're in a, you know, a venture capitalist, oriented and framed accelerator over here, or Media Zone over here, or program over there, while working with us, where we're really focused on social purpose organizations and cooperatives, what's going to happen is, you'll end up butting heads with the other programs, if you're doing it simultaneously. Or even if you're doing it concurrently, right, you'll end up

butting heads with the values, the differences in values of the program. And it will be contradictions that are not necessarily going to be surmountable, let me say, right, and because this program goes in those two stages, if you're spending that kind of time being at odds within yourself and within your funding obligations, during phase one, it's going to be like unlikely that you'll reach goals and value alignment, to be able to move on to stage two, unless you make the hard decision that says, hey, I really believe in this Weird Ghosts and this Gamma Space framing and this trajectory, and I'm choosing this, and you'll actually have to make a choice that would probably be against the other program, or vice versa. So just consider that.

Eileen

Yeah, that's good; that's an important thing to add. All right,

Jennie

This one's a little bit longer. So I'm going to try to summarize, someone asked, and they have a team that's collaborating, but it sounds like they do not intend to form a studio together. They're all working on their separate parts. But this person is the main idea person, that's their game. Do we support this kind of thing? And they're distributing the benefits project based on the time each one has to distribute?

Eileen

Yeah, so I would say that we are really, in general, looking for folks who are coming together as a studio and as a cooperative group. And that they're, you might, you might have a day job. Or you might have things that you're interested in, you know, outside of that, but we do want people for whom that studio is their main focus. Because you kind of need to be there in order to start doing some of the values work that we're talking about, you need to be on the same page. And you need to be all really focused on this as your goal. Do you want to build on that data?

Datejie

Yeah, just very quickly. Yeah, the best way to approach this and understand it is that it's a commitment. It's not just a six-month program commitment and then you're done. It's not just a part-time commitment. It's a real, it's a real commitment of reorientation. And so having loose collaborators, for whatever sorts of reasons, is going to be difficult to maximize your success in this program. If you could have a very serious conversation with all those collaborators and say, you know, we're actually signing up for a reorientation of how our games developed kind of program, are you? Are you interested in this? Every single person you want to collaborate with in this program should be reading this application and doing the heavy thinking along with you. I think that's a good way to approach it. Even if there's still a leader doing that heavy thinking and assembling it, it's really not just a sort of leader and satellite freelancer kind of thing. Not this instance.

Eileen

Yeah, and really, you want to be coming with a clear sense of who your team is, a clear sense of the kind of work that you want to be doing.

Jennie

All right, um, someone said, I know you said you need the majority of founders to be in Canada. Is 50% all right?

Yes. Round up. Half or more. Yeah. Good. Good question.

Um, you mentioned that you've accepted sole proprietorships before. Currently, I'm operating as a sole proprietorship utilizing contractors. I'm very interested in expanding to a co-op, but I'm wondering how Weird Ghosts views sole proprietorships applying to the program.

Eileen

Yeah, that's, that's fine. We don't necessarily judge what your current structure looks like, but the focus is that you're interested in building a co-op and you're seriously thinking about what that would look like. And if you're working with contractors, I would ask, you know, are your contractors coming on as members of the coop? Is that something that you're thinking about? Do you want them to be involved in the application process with you to do that values exercise with you? Some things to sort of mull over in advance?

Jennie

Great question about the application for the creative assets to be submitted. During the application. I was wondering if we're able to submit animated GIFs.

I can answer that, yeah, as the maker of the form. Right now, you can't, but I will change that because it's a good thing for people to be able to upload. The other thing is you can put a link to a Google Drive in any of the text fields. So, if you have more that you want us to look at, just include that in one of the other fields.

And next question, are you okay with a team where a few of the members have day jobs that are committed to the studio as a primary goal slash dream?

Eileen

Yes, as long as you've got the time to meet with us and the time to do that thinking work. We understand that people need to make ends meet. And especially, you know, folks who have been, you know, systemically underrepresented or marginalized. We all need to make ends meet, but some of us need to think about it a little bit more. So that's completely fine. Yeah.

Jennie

All right. So are you going to tell me how to make my game?

Eileen

No, that's not our interest. That's not our goal. We're here for studio development. And you know, your game is your game. You get to do that however you like; we're here to support you to make sure that you can do that project in the ways that are best for you and all the folks you're collaborating with. But we don't have any input on what's happening in your game; we can just help you with some of the steps along the way. In particular, Kaitlyn's really great at helping folks think about the narrative design of their game and the structure and mapping all those things out. So we're here to help with aspects of your game, but we're not going to change it. Alright,

Jennie

I'm sure one of my teammates is interested in joining me seriously. Is it possible to be too serious team members, but consider the rest of the freelance?

Datejie

Yeah. I mean, I don't I don't want to be in contradiction against the last answer to the questions that I gave. I think, really, it depends on the roles that you're playing. So coming in as two people, coming in as a sole proprietor, you know, coming in as a person who is dedicated to this, I find myself in the same position where I need to build a team with people who may not be dedicated to the amount of time that I'm putting in for the values alignment and the goals alignment, but it's gonna end up being a contradiction. At a certain point down the line, if I'm just hiring the Freelancers as one-offs into an ecosystem that I've created for myself in my own cooperative studio, that has a whole other set of values because there's a tension between the values that you'll end up Being exposed to through the program and potentially adopting and the ways that freelancing often happens now depends on you, you may be well in advance of some of the, you know, normative practices with freelancers. And I could have to say, Oh, my God, can we please learn from you? Right. But by and large, there are typical practices that we've seen out there that end up being such that the Freelancers get left out of the love. Really, right? So just bear in mind as you come to your application, and you think through how can this happen, how can we do this? How can we build something that's got a really solid foundation and a solid core and still have relationships with freelancers and even send some of the solid foundation and love from our core to those freelancers? This is all we're kind of asking, especially at this stage; we're not expecting, you know, a manifesto or a womanfesto. But we just want to hear and see that you've thought about this. And there's some intention.

Eileen

Thank you, Datejie, that that's a really great addition. And I also just want to add something about that previous question about games is whether we, whether we sort of impact how you make your games, the one thing to think about is, as you start talking about values and studio structure, there's a chance that that might impact what your games look like. So that's not us

telling you to change anything about it, but it could be something that comes out of the process. Yeah.

Jennie

All right, one last question. I think that we have time for, um, let's see. Somebody's asking if they can share a link to a website with visual references, gameplay videos, etc. In the application?

Eileen

Yeah, that's no problem. Thank you. Yeah.

Datejie

There's a there's a last question, Jennie. I think that's very quick.

Jennie Robinson Faber

Yeah. Can you tell us more about the co-op business structure that you mentioned?

Eileen

Do you want to take that one data?

Datejie

Oh, well, really, I was just going to refer back to learn.weirdghosts.ca, where there's an incredible amount of training and learning that Jennie has put up about these kinds of structures. So there's way more and way more concise information there than we could answer right now.

Eileen

Yeah, that's great. Thank you, Datejie. Okay, perfect.

I want to give you a little summary of the most important things. So, applications close on September 25. Make sure you have time during this next month and into October to have meetings with Jennie and me or pitch meetings with Weird Ghosts and Gamma Space. And then if you get accepted into the program, which we, you know, we're really excited to meet you folks. It starts on November 1, and you can apply at Weird Ghosts.ca/apply. And there's tons of information on the Weird Ghosts website, as well as learn.weirdghosts.ca. So do check that out.

And just a big thank you to all the studios we've worked with, as well as Gamma Space and support from Infinite Ammo. We are completely made up of the community that we work with, and community is such an important grounding of everything we do. So, a huge thank you to everyone we've worked with and a huge thank you to everyone who's come out today. I really look forward to meeting you and talking with you one-on-one. And this recording will be made available to everyone after the fact. If you have any further questions, email us at Hello at

Weird Ghosts.ca. Hit us up on Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram. Wow, we're everywhere. And I think that's everything that I need to mention before we wrap up today.

Datejie

And if you know some underrepresented, marginalized, socially vulnerable justice-seeking founders and studios or game devs anywhere, please please circulate this information.

Eileen

Amazing. Thank you so much, everyone.