

# Commission's Grant Application Form

Shelby County Board of Commissioners

## **GRANT APPLICATION**

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| Legal Name of the Organization: | Memphis Black Arts Alliance, Inc. |
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|      |            |
|------|------------|
| EIN: | 58-1605133 |
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|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Street Address of Organization | 985 S. Bellevue Blvd. |
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|---------------|--------------|
| Office Phone: | 901-948-9522 |
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|        |  |
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| E-mail | <a href="mailto:mbaafirehouse@gmail.com">mbaafirehouse@gmail.com</a> |
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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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|            |              |
|------------|--------------|
| First Name | Lar'Juanette |
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| Last Name | Williams |
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## GENERAL CONTACT FOR THIS REQUEST(if other than Executive Director)

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|            |                             |
|------------|-----------------------------|
| First Name | <i>Field not completed.</i> |
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| Last Name | <i>Field not completed.</i> |
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| Title: | <i>Field not completed.</i> |
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## DESCRIPTION OF GRANT REQUEST

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| Program/Project Area: | MBAA General Operating Support |
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|------------------|-------------|
| Amount Requested | \$50,000.00 |
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|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Total Organizational budget (for current year): | \$347,940.00 |
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Total Project/Program Budget: \$157,140.00

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Dates covered by this budget: July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017

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Project/Program Name: MBAA Operating Budget

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## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF ORGANIZATION

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Please summarize in a short paragraph the purpose of your agency. Briefly explain why your agency is requesting this grant, what outcomes you hope to achieve, and how you will spend the funds if a grant is made.

The Memphis Black Arts Alliance, Inc., an organization that has been dedicated to preserving, celebrating, and advancing African American Arts, Literature and Culture for nearly 35 years is dedicated to improving the quality of life and economic wellbeing of Greater Memphis by providing a platform that gives voice to the concerns and ills that plague our community but also provides "solutions" to be realized, heard and seen, therefore compelling progressive activity rather than destructive. Formally under the guided hand of Founder Bennie Nelson West, the organization maintained its presence in the South Memphis community and has fostered artistic excellence throughout the world. Due to the untimely loss of close family members, Bennie Nelson West was led to retire from this important work. A succession plan was not in place but due to the historic legacy and the many lives MBAA has touched throughout the years, the Board of Directors were able to secure one in the personage of Lar'Juanette Williams, who came aboard as Executive Director. MBAA currently operates through the assistance of programming contract stipends and earned revenue. All workers, including Ms. Williams, function on a mostly volunteer basis. Since coming aboard MBAA, Ms. Williams has led the administration to develop and adopt a strategic plan to secure affective operations and meet said goals. After the planning process, MBAA went into action. Since December 19, 2015, the organization has redeveloped programming, increasing visits to the historic FireHouse Community Arts Center to well over 3000, including Memphis community leaders such as Greg Spillyard from STAX/New Town Center development, Ed Galfsky from Carnival Memphis, and Mayor Jim Strickland. The new MBAA programming has attracted city-wide talent and as a result we experience high volume and capacity attendance. Records indicate that the Greater Memphis area has a documented 170 gangs with 9100

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gang members. 54% of those arrested are ages 24 and younger. A different study reveals that over 93% of youth ages 24 years and younger have access to mobile devices and watch video, listen to music, and engage in entertainment more than 5 times a day. The MBAA desires to serve as a catalyst to merge the efforts of our local government and South Memphis community leaders with what seems to be our inner-city youth's greatest passion, The Arts! The Grant Award by the Shelby County Commission would assist in securing administrative salaries and operating expenses so that the work that we have begun will continue; improving our community and most importantly, encouraging South Memphis youth to do the same.

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## Narrative - Organization

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Current programs and accomplishments. Please emphasize the achievements of the recent past.

Since December 19, 2015, the MBAA has functioned through four (4) main programs: The Academy - A year-round educational opportunity for ages 3 and up, facilitated by professionals. The Academy most recently finished our performing arts summer camp (SPARK) that ended with two successful productions, involving approximately 75 youth and young adults, luring more than 800 Memphis residents to Soulsville for performances. MBAA Voices - Our Open Mic opportunity featuring poetry, song, dance and storytelling. Voices provides a lenient setting that gives voice and creative opportunity to those that would otherwise refrain. Voices is held at the FireHouse Community Arts Center every other month and has drawn approximately 150 patrons since January 2016. Jazz-A-F!RE - Our hit monthly jazz event hosted by the Prime Cut Trio and featuring local jazz favorites. This event often plays to a "sold out – standing room only" crowd monthly. Souls-A-F!RE - Includes youth ages 7-24 that sing, dance, act, write, and perform multi-media arts. Souls reach youth and young adults that have been abused, abandoned and in despair, and gives our youth a creative repository to hold all of the negative emotions and turn them into positive outcomes. Souls-A-F!RE is our feature group that perform throughout the Shelby County area, including KROC Center, Africa In April, Tiger Lane, and many others. FireHouse Community Arts Center and Gallery - Since January 2016, the MBAA has hosted Community Meetings, Book Signings, Cd Releases, Receptions, and Art Exhibits. In May, we were honored to host

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a reception for Mayor Jim Strickland as he received a piece of original art work created by our current resident artist, MoSal Morszart.

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Numbers of paid full-time staff:      None Currently

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Number of paid part-time staff:      Three (3)

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Number of volunteers:      Fifteen (15)

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### **Narrative - Funding Request**

Please describe the program/project for which you seek funding and include how it will benefit the general welfare of residents in Shelby County, TN.

The Memphis Black Arts Alliance (MBAA), a South Memphis community staple that sits in the Soulsville gateway, has served intergenerational artists and arts lovers for more than 30 years. The MBAA creates platforms for solutions to be realized, heard and seen, therefore coercing progressive activity rather than destructive. We seek funding to assist General Operating Support in the amount of \$50,000. Since December 2015, the MBAA new administration has sought to increase visibility and expand the scope of current programming. This has proven successful in that MBAA has received well over 3000 visits to the FireHouse Community Arts Center since December 2015, has produced major works, attracting over 2000 attendees to Memphis area locations, has taught the importance of community leadership and encouraged youth participants' involvement in community cleanups and meetings, provided a stage for area community leaders to address community concerns and plan action, created an atmosphere where area performing artist may nurture and hone their abilities, and most importantly, utilized South Memphis facilities to present semi-professional performances and visual arts works that has appealed to thousands of area residents and lured them to SoulsvilleUSA! The Memphis Black Arts Alliance is just beginning and would like to continue this work. We need your help to do so.

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### **General Operating Support**

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If applying for general operating support, briefly      MBAA currently seeks funding from Shelby County to assist with General Operating Support. It is our desire to continue the

describe how this grant will be used.

work that we have begun, and in order to do so effectively, it is imperative that we secure needed administrative personnel on a full-time basis. This would include Operations/Business Manager, Two Program Coordinators, a part-time Development Specialist and, of course, the Executive Director. The amount that we request (\$50,000) will certainly not cover all salaries, however, with matching dollars from other funders that are also confident in our programming and the potential outcomes, we are certain that we will be able to continue the strong and effective work that we have begun and deliver measurable outcomes that will be both compelling and positive.

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### **Project Support**

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Please explain the specific project including a statement of its primary purpose and the need or problem that you are seeking to address.

General Operating Support: As a result of the untimely and unplanned retirement of founder Bennie Nelson West, the Memphis Black Arts Alliance's Board of Leaders did not have time to develop a succession plan for a new administration. To this vain, the new Executive Director, understanding the concern and the need to continue the work, decided to come aboard on a volunteer basis and assist in the development of a Strategic Plan and revamping of Fundraising strategy. The need to restore programming was critical and vital to substantiate the importance of the artistic impact on the community and how artistry can assist in generating positive change. Through grassroots fundraising efforts and funding by means of programming and earned revenue, the MBAA has managed to not only maintain operations, but has also re-established themselves as viable community leaders that offer a unique and valuable service to Greater Memphis. The ground has been laid and the seeds have begun to sprout. It is now time to work and nurture what was planted in order to receive sufficient harvests. In order to accomplish this, the MBAA must have the necessary staff in place.

How does the project contribute to your organization's overall mission?

Our Mission: The Memphis Black Arts Alliance is dedicated to improving the quality of life and economic wellbeing of Greater Memphis through preservation, celebration and advancement of African American arts, culture, and literature. We inspire, educate and engage artists and audiences towards the creation of just and equitable communities through forward-thinking experiences. Vision: At Memphis Black Arts Alliance, we envision imaginations ignited through African American arts and culture radiating from Soulsville across Memphis and the

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Mid-South, inspiring justice, equity, and sustainable community development. Core Values: We acknowledge that African American art and culture are living, breathing, and ever-evolving, not only to be preserved and remembered but to be created every day. As such, by valuing the present lived experiences of African Americans, we value and vision forward.

- o African America Cultural Heritage and Afro-Futurism
- o Creativity and Innovation
- o Economic and Cultural Sustainability
- o Intergenerational Exchanges
- o Justice and Equity
- o Youth Leadership and Voices
- o Inspiration, Dedication and Drive

In order to assure the success of our mission, we need to secure employees that are well equipped to execute the demand. With that said, we need the assistance of the Shelby County Commission in order to employ and engage them.

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### **Narrative - Evaluation**

Please explain how you will measure the effectiveness of your activities. Describe your criteria for a successful program and the results you expect to have achieved by the end of the funding period.

The MBAA will measure our effectiveness of our outcomes in four ways: 1) Improving the economic well-being of Greater Memphis by employing Memphis residents on a full-time basis. 2) Taking surveys at each event to make sure that areas of concerns are indeed being addressed through evaluations 3) Tracking the attendance at events to make sure that our mission based work attracts our constituency. 4) Open and ongoing communication with government entities to track statistical data that will hopefully result in positive change in our community as a result of the artistic work.

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Attachments:

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If your request is under \$25,000 please attach the following:

1. Copy of the entity's 501 (c) 3 certificate for charitable organizations or 501 (c) 4 certificate for civic organizations
2. Most recent IRS Form 990 or Financial Statements (balance sheet and income statement) as of the most recent fiscal year end certified by Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer of the entity.
3. Complete Budget for grant request

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If your request is \$25,000 or more please attach the following:

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1. Copy of the entity's 501 (c) 3 certificate for charitable organizations or 501 (c) 4 certificate for civic organizations

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2. Copy of an annual audit as of a date within 18 months of the start of the current fiscal year.

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3. Complete Budget for grant request

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File 1 [Pg 1 6-9-15 - IRS Exemption Confirmation.jpg](#)

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File 2 [990-2014 -15 Final.pdf](#)

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File 3 [2016-2017 Operating Budget final2.docx](#)

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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**

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Read, and if you agree to the provisions, sign the following:

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The information provided has been submitted in good faith and as completely as our records and recollections permit.

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I understand that the information provided in this application shall be open to inspection upon filing with the office of the Shelby County Board of Commissioners.

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Signature: Lar'Juanette Williams

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Printed Name: Lar'Juanette Williams

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Date 8/12/2016

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