

# Asheville Lyric Opera Operational Support

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*FY 2017 Buncombe County Community  
Funding*

## ***Asheville Lyric Opera***

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# Application Form

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## Project Name\*

Name of Project

Asheville Lyric Opera Operational Support

## Amount Requested\*

Amount Requested

\$5,000.00

## Service Area\*

Which Commissioner Districts are served by this program?

Access a map of Buncombe County Commissioner districts [here](#).

District 1

## Which county sustainability goal aligns best with the goals of this project?\*

Based on the Buncombe County Sustainability Plan, select a Category, Goal & Objective that align with the focus of the project and the specific results that will be achieved.

Access the Buncombe County Sustainability Plan [here](#).

Economy > Sustainable Localized Economy > Support small business development

## If applicable, select a second sustainability goal that aligns with project goals.

**Result 2 is optional** - Select if project aligns with more than one Sustainability Category, Goal & Objective.

*[Unanswered]*

## If applicable, select a third sustainability goal that aligns with project goals.

**Result 3 is optional** - Select if project aligns with more than one Sustainability Category, Goal & Objective.

## **Project Description**

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### **Project Description\***

#### **Description of Project**

Asheville Lyric Opera (ALO) is seeking funding for operational support. Funding will support the initiatives set forth in the strategic plan and our mission. On July 1, 2016, we will be relocating our administrative offices to an undetermined location while maintaining our opera and musical theatre productions at the Diana Wortham Theatre (DWT). Anticipated increases in expenses on both of these fronts will affect our ability to carry out our strategic plan and stunt the momentum we have in our growing education and community outreach programs. After 17 years of successful programming in western North Carolina, we have grown out of the cultural center context, and are poised to settle in administrative offices and rehearsal space to accommodate our growing needs. With the anticipation of increasing staff and the need for reliable, cost effective rehearsal space, a new administrative location will allow our infrastructure to expand to meet the demands of our growing programs. Since our founding in 1999, our administrative offices and production venue have been located in the heart of downtown. While we will continue utilizing the DWT to showcase our productions, it is imperative that our administrative offices remain close by for the access of our patrons and coordination of our productions. A negative change in DWT's funding will increase our productions' overhead in rental, ticketing and labor fees. Currently, real estate costs for a space that will accommodate our administrative needs is \$19-\$22 in downtown Asheville. This is a 15% increase from our current occupancy expenses. While we are seeing a steady increase in donation revenue, it currently is not enough to offset the immediate rise in expenses to where they do not affect our main programming and new growth initiatives set forth in the strategic plan and implemented in 2015.

### **How many people will this project serve?\***

State the number of individuals or households in Buncombe County that will be served by this project. Also state the number of people that will experience the desired result. For example, if dropout prevention services are being delivered to 100 students, how many will successfully graduate from high school?

Annually, this project will serve our 3,000 patrons, 200 Buncombe County students, 150 artists, and 3 administrative staff. Without the help of additional funding to offset our rising expenses, operations and programs will both be severely affected. The infrastructure supported by administrative staff will not grow, stalling the organization's overall growth. The hiring of additional staff will not be possible, and we may minimize currently employed staff. The 150 artists contracted every year will be affected by a cut in pay or shifts in programming to minimize available positions. Our new, education and outreach initiatives, the Chamber Series Education Performance and Singing in the Park, may not continue. We work to maintain a balance in our ticket pricing by keeping prices affordable while also maintaining an appropriate level of earned income from sales. If rising costs cannot be mitigated, ticket prices will rise moving out of the reach of low-moderate income households.

### **Describe the people this project will serve.\***

Characterize the demographics of the project's target population in terms such as age, gender, income, race, ethnicity, geographic area, etc. Include information about method of referral/recruitment of the target population.

This project will affect both our audiences and staff. Currently, our educational programs 100% target students between the ages of 5-14 who come from low-to-moderate income households. 85% of the outreach programs' audiences are over the age of 65, and the remaining 15% is comprised of families. Most of the artists we work with fall into the demographics of 21-35 years old and white, but those demographics are

subject to casting requirements such as a 75% increase in employed Hispanics during West Side Story in 2015. In 2017, we will produce Show Boat requiring the cast to be at least 50% comprised of African-Americans. Administrative staff is 100% white; 80% are between the ages of 21-35, while 20% is between 35-50 years old. Our main production audiences are approximately 85% white and over the age of 45, but this information is hard to quantify without directly surveying audience members at every show. We do not currently have an infrastructure to manage this surveying in depth.

### **What key steps will you take to achieve the results of this project?\***

Describe the core elements of your implementation plan, including milestones that will take place within the funding timeframe.

In accordance with our strategic plan, we have already been working to increase our revenue through donations, grants, and sponsorships to support our objectives for growth. By collaborating with other organizations and institutions, we are able to leverage resources and offset production costs. With the support of this grant, we will be able to continue the momentum of responsible growth we are seeing in the implementation of new educational and outreach program as well as donor cultivation. Milestones for success will include increasing hours for fundraising staff and hiring an administrative assistant. Other milestones will be updating our donor database, growth in number of schools and students reached for our educational programs, and diversifying our outreach efforts to include more retirement communities and other demographic groups, such as young adults, a segment we have barely touched due to lack of staff to coordinate.

### **Describe the evidence of success that backs this project's approach.\***

What evidence of success (i.e. evidence-based research, practice model, accreditation, industry standards, and/or other framework) are you using as a basis for your project design?

After working with fundraising consultants, in 2014 the board of directors shifted the organization's focus to fundraising. Taking on a 21st century nonprofit model to develop relationships with the community, families, businesses, and specifically donors, has become our driving force behind setting goals and strategies to sustain and grow the organization. Many opera companies across the country continue to face mounting challenges that jeopardize the organization. Several have closed, suspended seasons, or severely cut programs. Opera companies must adapt to the changing times to avoid closing. In 2014, efforts began to mitigate rising costs while increasing revenue, and we set out to forge collaborations with local and regional institutions, such as the Brevard Music Center and Western Carolina University. Unlike other, long established opera companies, we have seen an increase in audience attendance, donor recruitment and retention, and financial contributions.

### **Describe your data collection, tracking, and reporting procedures.\***

Explain your methods for documenting project, service and client information. Include a description of any software or other tools utilized.

We use a variety of methods for collecting data. For managing donors, we maintain information in a database that tracks contact information and giving history as well as staff and board of directors speaking directly with donors. With patrons, we receive reports from Diana Wortham Theatre that provides contact and show attendance information on the individual who purchased tickets. We also survey them with written questionnaires at shows and emailed surveys. Questions on these surveys pertain to program preferences, marketing efforts and some demographics. We document attendance numbers and ask for direct feedback from attendees and coordinators at our education and outreach events. We also use outside analytics, such as

Google to evaluate our website effectiveness, tracking social media efforts, and information supplied by our email newsletters, such as number of clicks on article links. Information is evaluated internally by staff and reported to the board of directors.

### **Explain your technological resources and capacity.\***

Explain your current technological strengths and barriers and how this impacts your ability to track data and report outcomes. Who is responsible for adaptation and use of technology within your organization?

Digital analytics supplied by third parties, such as Google and FaceBook, have aided in the success of our online presence. In 2013, after studying information on our website provided by Google, we identified a need to update our website's platform to WordPress. The website has now become the one-stop shop for information on shows, events, education programs, and ways to donate. Our biggest challenges in tracking information are with our donor database and patron ticket reports. The mid-top tier donor databases available are out of our reach financially. As a result, fundraising staff spends a significant amount of time interpreting information from the database's rudimentary reports. This is counterproductive in accomplishing our fundraising goals. Our patron reports are supplied by Diana Wortham Theatre, and are subjective to their database's outdated capabilities. Tracking the method of payment, type and number of tickets bought by patrons is practically impossible.

## **Organizational Profile**

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### **How does the proposed project support your mission and strategic plan?\***

State your mission and the date of your most recent strategic plan, and explain how the proposed project helps advance your organizational goals.

The board of directors approved a new mission statement and strategic plan in June 2015. Our mission is to stage original productions of opera and lyric theatre to enrich, engage, and educate. We serve patrons and the community through collaborations and outreach with organizations and schools from Asheville and the surrounding region. The strategic plan is written with our fundraising goals steering the course. It maintains current programs and sets goals for growth in the areas of fundraising, marketing, shows, education, and community outreach. This proposal requests funding to offset an anticipated rise in expenses for 2016 and beyond. Without the assistance, the rise in expenses will affect administration and programs; our strategic plan's goals for growth will be stunted. New educational and outreach programs implemented in 2015 will be cut back, staffing will be affected by the inability to hire administrative assistance and artists, and the quality of productions will suffer.

### **What expertise/accomplishments do you have that are relevant to the proposed project?\***

List your organization's strengths as well as accomplishments from the past 3 years that position the organization to be successful with the proposed project.

Founded in 1999, we have a track record of 17 years in successful programming. In 2012, we saw a major shift in our audiences due to a change in programs. Our first musical theatre production, "Sound of Music", performed to sold out audiences comprised of not only our regular attendees, but also young families and new patrons we have not reached before. Our musical theatre productions continue to attract new audiences each year. Organizational evaluations in 2013 led to a shift in our focus areas for 2014. Recognizing the need

to focus on our donors and fundraising efforts to ensure a successful 21st century nonprofit model, we hired a part-time Development Officer tasked with managing these efforts and updated our donor database. As a result, donor retention increased by 2%, and the Annual Fund has seen a 13% increase in donations.

### **Describe partners that are critical to the success of your organization.\***

List any external partners, intermediaries or advisors important to your success, and describe their role and evidence of their commitment. Describe successful collaborations with these people or groups.

The Diana Wortham Theatre (DWT) has been the core location of programming since our beginning in 1999. We are one of their most significant renters utilizing their space at least three times a year. DWT is ideal venue for our needs as a regional performing arts organization with the seating capacity and infrastructure to accommodate our show audiences of 500. The theater is in an ideal location in the heart of downtown Asheville surrounded by diverse cultural offerings. The health of DWT directly affects us in every way. Changes in their resources, infrastructure, and funding have a collateral impact on our organization.

## ***Financial Information***

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### **Nonprofit financial assurance requirements:**

Financial statements, prepared using a recognizable basis of accounting (i.e., modified accrual) and IRS Form 990s must be submitted to Buncombe County annually.

- Organizations with annual revenues of \$300,000 or greater must submit financial statements audited in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards.
- Those with revenues between \$100,000 and \$300,000 must submit financial statements reviewed in accordance with SSARS 19.
- Those with revenues of less than \$100,000 must submit non-disclosure financial statements compiled in accordance with SSARS 19.

All financial statements must be reported on by a certified public accountant and include a full balance sheet, income statement, and cash flow statement.

These requirements are considered minimum requirements. Organizations may submit a higher level of assurance than is required.

### **IRS Form 990 - Upload Here**

Click Choose File to upload a copy of the 990 form you most recently completed.

ALO 2013 Form 990 Final for Public Inspection.pdf

**If your organization does not have a 990, briefly state the reason.**

Include a statement of intent to comply with nonprofit financial assurance requirements as listed above.

**Financial Statements - Upload here**

Click Choose File to upload a copy of the most recently completed financial statements (audit, compilation or review).

Asheville Lyric Opera 2014 Audit Report - Final - 02-18-15 (2).pdf

**If your organization does not have financial statements, briefly state the reason.**

Include a statement of intent to comply with nonprofit financial assurance requirements as listed above.

**Complete Budget Worksheet - Upload Here\***

Download the budget form [Here](#).

Complete the budget form for this project/program and the overall agency. Save it to your computer, then upload it by clicking Choose File.

buncombecountygrant\_budget-2.xlsx

**Budget Narrative\***

Describe all differences between current year and proposed year. List all pending funding sources with expected date of notification. Please detail any other information that may help clarify the budget.

Grant funding for programs will be announced early 2016. In 2016, our fiscal year will follow a calendar year.

**What (if any) portion of requested funds will be used to support capital expenses?\***

Capital projects are defined as those used to acquire or upgrade physical assets such as property, buildings, or equipment. Please detail.

N/A

**Employee Wages**

Please provide information about the wage breakdowns of your employees. Living wage for Buncombe County has been identified as \$11.00 per hour for employees with employer-provided health insurance and \$12.50 per hour for employees without.

**Employees with employer-provided health insurance\***

List the number of employees in your organization with employer-provided health insurance in each wage category. For salaried employees, use hourly wage equivalents.

\$7.25 - \$10.99 per hour

\$11.00 - \$14.99 per hour

\$15.00 - \$19.99 per hour

\$20.00 - \$24.99 per hour

\$25.00 - \$29.99 per hour

\$30.00 - \$34.99 per hour

\$35.00 - \$39.99 per hour

\$40.00+ per hour

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**Employees without employer-provided health insurance\***

List the number of employees in your organization without employer-provided health insurance in each wage category. For salaried employees, use hourly wage equivalents.

\$7.25 - \$12.49 per hour

\$12.50 - \$14.99 per hour

\$15.00 - \$19.99 per hour

\$20.00 - \$24.99 per hour

\$25.00 - \$29.99 per hour

\$30.00 - \$34.99 per hour

\$35.00 - \$39.99 per hour

\$40.00+ per hour

(1) \$20-\$24.99/ hour; (1) \$12.50-\$14.99; (1) \$7.25-\$12.49