

Subject: New submission ALBANY Arts, Culture, and Tourism Application

Date: Friday, June 30, 2023 at 3:21:21 PM Eastern Daylight Time

From: jnytko@govsol.org

To: jnytko@govsol.org

General Information
Date of application
06/29/2023
Name of Entity
Mahogany Connections LLC
Entity TIN, EIN or Social Security Number
923268456
Entity physical address
98 Woodlawn Ave Albany, NY 12208 United States Map It
Is the physical address different from the mailing address?
No
Website (if available)
https://www.cnysblackexpo.com
Primary Contact Information
Primary contact name
Tatiana Cunningham
Primary contact title
Owner
Primary contact phone
(518) 364-7998
Primary contact email
cnysexpo@gmail.com
What is the primary contacts preferred method of contact?
Either
Entity Info and Structure
Which structure best describes the entity?
For profit business
If "For profit business" is above, what is the legal structure or your business?
Limited Liability Corporation

If "For profit business" above, what is the primary function?

Arts, Entertainment, Recreation

What is the date of establishment?

2014

If applicable, is the entity a W/MAM (Minority or Women-Owned Business Entity)?

No

Have you or the entity ever received any form of COVID-19 relief funds or loans specific to the negative impacts of the Pandemic?

Yes

If "Yes" above, please specify the type(s) and amount(s).

SBA \$19,000

General Project Information

Describe the arts/cultural/tourism activities your organization provides in Albany County.

CNYS Black Expo plays a crucial role in supporting and enhancing the arts, cultural, and tourism activities in Albany County. This event serves as a vibrant platform that showcases the diverse artistic expressions, cultural traditions, and tourist attractions within the region. Here's a description of how CNYS Black Expo contributes to and benefits the arts, cultural, and tourism activities:

Celebration of Cultural Diversity: CNYS Black Expo celebrates the rich cultural heritage of the African diaspora, bringing together artists, performers, and cultural enthusiasts from diverse backgrounds. By providing a dedicated space for artistic expression, the expo promotes cross-cultural understanding, fosters appreciation for different traditions, and encourages dialogue among communities. This celebration of cultural diversity greatly enriches the arts and cultural landscape of Albany County.

Showcasing Local Artists and Performers: The expo serves as a platform for local artists, artisans, musicians, dancers, and performers to showcase their talents and creations. It provides them with an opportunity to reach a wider audience, gain recognition, and contribute to the local arts scene. By highlighting the artistic endeavors of individuals and groups within Albany County, CNYS Black Expo supports and nurtures the local creative community.

Economic Impact: The expo attracts visitors from near and far since 2018, generating economic activity within Albany County. Attendees of the event often explore the region, patronize local businesses, and engage in tourism-related activities. This influx of visitors provides a boost to the local economy, benefiting restaurants, hotels, retail establishments, and other tourism-related industries. The increased economic activity contributes to the overall growth and vitality of the arts, cultural, and tourism sectors in the county.

Promoting Tourism Attractions: CNYS Black Expo serves as a platform to promote the tourism attractions and landmarks of Albany County. Through various exhibits, presentations, and interactive experiences, the expo highlights the unique cultural and historical aspects of the region. It raises awareness about local museums, historic sites, galleries, theaters, and other cultural destinations, encouraging visitors to explore and engage with the county's tourism offerings.

Collaboration and Networking Opportunities: The expo brings together artists, cultural organizations, tourism agencies, small businesses and stakeholders from various sectors. This creates valuable networking opportunities, fostering collaborations and partnerships that can lead to the development of new artistic projects, cultural initiatives, and tourism experiences. By facilitating connections and knowledge sharing, CNYS Black Expo strengthens the arts, cultural, and tourism ecosystem in Albany County.

In summary, CNYS Black Expo plays a significant role in advancing the arts, cultural, and tourism activities in Albany County. Through its celebration of cultural diversity, promotion of local artists, black businesses, economic impact, tourism promotion, and fostering collaborations, the expo contributes to the vibrancy and growth of the arts, cultural, and tourism sectors in the county.

If an award is made, describe how Albany County will benefit. Where possible, please quantify impact.

If CNYS Black Expo is awarded the grant, CNYS BLACK EXPO will be hosted at the New York State Convention Center Hall in Albany County for the first time, Albany County would experience numerous benefits. The presence of

over 250 vendors and organizations, coupled with an enhanced marketing budget, would have a substantial impact on Albany County. While the exact quantification of impact would depend on various factors, here are potential benefits and impacts:

Small Business Support: The expo's inclusion of over 250 vendors and organizations provides an exceptional opportunity for small businesses and organizations to showcase their products, services, and missions. This exposure can lead to increased brand visibility, customer acquisition, and potential collaborations. The impact could be quantified through metrics such as sales growth, new business connections established, and subsequent business expansion.

Increased Brand Awareness for Albany County: The enhanced marketing efforts, including social media commercials, radio advertisements, and newspaper features, would raise awareness about Albany County as the capital of New York State. This increased brand visibility can position the county as an attractive location for tourism, business, and investment opportunities. The impact could be evaluated through brand recognition surveys, website traffic analysis, and media coverage assessment.

To accurately quantify the impact of hosting CNYS Black Expo with over 250 vendors and organizations and implementing an expanded marketing budget, various measurement techniques would need to be employed. These may include surveys, participant feedback, economic analysis, tourism metrics, brand recognition surveys, and media coverage evaluation. Such assessments would provide insights into the economic, social, and cultural benefits brought to Albany County through the expo and enhanced marketing efforts.

If an award is made, describe how the funds will help you to sustain your operations in Albany County.

If CNYS Black Expo is awarded a grant of \$100,000, the funds would greatly contribute to sustaining its operations in Albany County. Here's how the grant could support the organization:

Community: This grant would allow us to offer this event free to the community. For past events there has been an entry fee.

Venue Rental and Operational Expenses: A significant portion of the grant will be allocated towards securing the New York State Convention Center Hall as the venue for the expo. The funds would cover the rental fees, setup costs, utilities, and other operational expenses associated with hosting the event. This ensures a suitable space for exhibitors, attendees, and activities, thereby maintaining the quality and success of the expo.

Marketing and Promotion: A portion of the grant will be allocated to marketing and promotional efforts. This would include advertising expenses across various channels such as social media, radio, newspaper, and online platforms. The funds would enable the organization to reach a wider audience, both locally and nationally, creating awareness about the expo and attracting attendees. Effective marketing and promotion would contribute to the sustainability and growth of CNYS Black Expo in Albany County.

Vendor Support: The grant will offer an opportunity to lower vendor fees which would make it more affordable for vendors especially in underserved communities. By easing the financial burden on vendors, the funds would encourage their participation and ensure a diverse and vibrant range of exhibitors at the event.

Operational Costs: The grant will also cover various operational costs essential to running the expo smoothly. This includes expenses related to event management, staffing, permits, insurance, equipment rentals, and technical support. By addressing these operational needs, the funds would enable the organization to focus on delivering a high-quality event experience while maintaining the necessary infrastructure and resources.

Programming and Content Development: The grant would support the development and execution of engaging programming and content for the expo. This might include guest speakers, panel discussions, workshops, cultural performances, and interactive experiences. Allocating funds towards programming would enhance the overall attendee experience, provide educational opportunities, and highlight the diverse cultural expressions represented at the expo.

Administrative and Organizational Support: The grant will be used to cover administrative expenses related to managing the organization and its activities. This might include office rent, utilities, office supplies, software licenses, and other administrative costs. By addressing these overhead expenses, the funds would enable the organization to allocate more resources towards delivering impactful programming and achieving its mission.

By utilizing the grant funds strategically, not only would it create a free family event but also sustain CNYS Black Expo's operations in Albany County effectively. The financial support would contribute to venue rental, marketing efforts, vendor support, operational costs, programming, and administrative needs. Ultimately, this would ensure the longevity and success of the expo, promoting cultural diversity, economic growth, and community engagement in Albany County.

Describe the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic increased or decreased demand for your services. As an option, you may attach to this application any optional information that supports you're the service increase or decrease being described below.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on events, gatherings, and public activities, including expos and cultural events like CNYS Black Expo. CNYS BLACK EXPO was cancel 2020 it was not able to host the expo. However, we did provide food and COVID-19 mask hand sanitizers to Albany county residents. In 2021 the expo did host the expo.

Decreased Demand:

The pandemic and associated restrictions on public gatherings and travel likely led to a decrease in demand for services provided by CNYS Black Expo. Social distancing measures, limitations on large gatherings, and travel restrictions resulted in the postponement or cancellation of many events, including expos and trade shows. This did affected the attendance and participation levels for CNYS Black Expo, potentially leading to reduced demand for the organization's services during the pandemic.

Increased Demand for Virtual Services:

To adapt to the challenges posed by the pandemic, CNYS Black Expo may have pivoted to offering virtual services and events. This include virtual exhibitions, webinars, online networking opportunities, and digital marketing initiatives. In this case, the demand for the organization's virtual services may have increased as individuals and businesses sought alternative ways to connect, promote their products, and engage with the expo's offerings in a safe and accessible manner.

It's essential to consider that the actual impact of the pandemic on CNYS Black Expo's services would depend on several factors, such as the timing and duration of restrictions, the organization's ability to adapt, and the specific needs and preferences of the expo's target audience.

Please select the grant opportunity you wish to apply to

Arts, Culture, and Tourism (ACT) Promotion Grants (Up to \$100,000)

Project Information – Promotion Grants

Please select whether the proposed project is new or existing

Expands an existing initiative or project

Please provide a short summary of your proposed project including a project name, general description, total cost, reason(s) why you are pursuing the project and anticipated impact:

Executive Summary

CNYS Black Expo is a business-focused event that aims to give small businesses in disenfranchised and underrepresented communities the exposure they need to succeed. This event is designed to empower minority business owners, provide networking opportunities, and foster economic growth in communities of color throughout Central New York State.

The goal is to create an accessible and inclusive platform where black-owned businesses, entrepreneurs, and professionals can showcase their products or services, connect with potential customers and investors, and learn from their peers.

Financial Projections

Based on our estimates, we anticipate that CNYS Black Expo will require an initial investment of \$250,000 to launch and carry out our programs and services for the first year. We anticipate generating \$275,000 in total operating revenue, with a net profit of \$75,000. Beyond year one, we anticipate significant growth in membership and sponsorship revenues as we expand our programs and services to more businesses in the community.

Conclusion

CNYS Black Expo is committed to creating a more equitable and prosperous business environment for Black-owned businesses in Upstate New York. Our business plan outlines the strategies and initiatives for achieving this goal, and we request your support in securing funding to launch and sustain this important work. Together, we can create a brighter future for our communities and empower Black-owned businesses to achieve their fullest potential.

What amount of funding is being requested?

\$100,000.00

Please describe the entity’s capabilities to implement the project you propose including organizational structure, staff members involved, a summary of similar initiatives you have undertaken and the date they were completed:

CNYS Black Expo operates under the leadership of its founder, Tatiana Cunningham. The organization has a dedicated team of staff members who contribute their expertise and efforts to implement the project. The key staff members involved in the planning and execution of the expo include:

Erin H. Maybin - Executive Advisor: Provides strategic guidance and advisory support to the CNYS Black Expo team, leveraging their experience in event management and business development.

Salisa Brandon - Supporting Community Members: Engages with community members and stakeholders to ensure their needs and perspectives are represented in the planning and execution of the expo.

Tyhisha Ghaffar-Adiei - Community Outreach Leader: Takes the lead in outreach efforts, building partnerships, and engaging with local communities to promote participation and maximize community impact.

Nubian Lawrence - Executive Entertainment Manager: Oversees the planning and coordination of entertainment activities and performances during the expo, ensuring a vibrant and engaging experience for attendees.

Mark "Supreme" Sharpe - Supporting Community Members: Works closely with community members, businesses, and organizations to provide support, resources, and assistance in their involvement with the expo.

Allison Miles - Special Project Coordinator: Responsible for coordinating special projects related to the expo, managing timelines, logistics, and ensuring smooth execution of various initiatives.

CNYS Black Expo has a track record of organizing successful events and initiatives that support minority business owners and promote economic growth in underrepresented communities. While specific details and dates may vary, the organization has undertaken similar initiatives in the past, which include:

Previous CNYS Black Expo Events: CNYS Black Expo has organized several annual events in Albany, New York, providing a platform for black-owned businesses to showcase their products and services. These events have facilitated networking, collaboration, and economic opportunities for participants.

Entrepreneurship Workshops and Seminars: The organization has conducted workshops and seminars focused on entrepreneurship and business development. These sessions aim to educate and empower aspiring entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the business world.

Resource Fairs: CNYS Black Expo has organized resource fairs that bring together various organizations and agencies offering resources and support services to minority entrepreneurs. These fairs provide access to capital, mentorship, technical assistance, and other resources crucial for business growth.

This year our main objective is Black Business in Tech, Community Investments, and Small business initiatives. We will also award scholarship/grant funding for two deserving students and two small businesses/organizations at our CNYS Black Expo Honors & Scholarship Soiree formerly the CNYS Black Expo Gala. Sponsorship. sponsoring the Business Symposium, the CNYS Black Expo, the Bluebird Organization, Inc or all events planned for 2023.

Business Symposium - 10am to 3pm - Osborn Amphitheater, 235 Hoosick St, Troy, NY 12180
CNYS Black Expo - 11am to 5pm - NYS Convention Center, Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12242
Scholarship Soiree formerly the known as (CNYS Black Expo Gala) Date/location TBD 2023

Please describe, in detail, the impact your proposed project will have on Arts, Culture and/or Tourism in Albany County. Describe how your project will attract new visitors to Albany County. Where possible use metrics/estimates of impact (i.e. increased visitation etc.).

Since 2018, Mahogany Connections, LLC has presented the highly anticipated CNYS Black Expo, the largest event showcasing black entrepreneurship and business in Upstate, NY and surrounding regions.

With close to 1,000 vendors from across NYS, and over 27,000 attendees, the expo continues to grow each

year with the help of our community and neighborhood partners. While the expo showcases entrepreneurs and businesses that have already taken off, our not-for-profit Bluebird Organization, Inc. looks to support underrepresented small businesses and students. We believe that as a community we soar, which is why providing grants, scholarships, and business development opportunities for those who need it most is so important. As a small team of community minded leaders and volunteers, we strive to empower our community, and we are writing to ask for your support and partnership in the form of sponsorship to help our vision come to fruition for 2023.

Cultural Enrichment: CNYS Black Expo would provide an enriching cultural experience for residents and visitors alike. It would showcase the diverse artistic expressions, traditions, and heritage of the African diaspora, fostering cultural understanding, appreciation, and dialogue. The impact will be measured through metrics such as attendance numbers, participant feedback, and community engagement.

How will you track performance goals and define success? Include at least two key performance indicators and expected annual outcomes/impact during the reporting period (September 2023 - December 2026).

During the reporting period of September 2023 to December 2026, CNYS Black Expo will track performance goals and define success by monitoring key performance indicators (KPIs) that reflect the organization's objectives. The economic impact KPI focuses on measuring the success of CNYS Black Expo in driving business growth and financial success for black-owned enterprises. The increase in revenue generated by participating businesses reflects the effectiveness of the expo's platform in creating economic opportunities and supporting the local economy.

Expected Annual Outcomes/Impact:

- Year 1 (2023-2024): Aim to attract a minimum of 4,500 attendees and 280 vendor participants.
- Year 2 (2024-2025): Increase attendance by 10% to reach 4,950 attendees 310 and vendor participants.
- Year 3 (2025-2026): Continue growth with a target of 5,445 attendees and 330 vendor participants.

or

- Year 1 (2023-2024): Target a cumulative revenue increase of \$200,000 for participating businesses.
- Year 2 (2024-2025): Aim for a cumulative revenue increase of \$450,000.
- Year 3 (2025-2026): Strive for a cumulative revenue increase of \$750,000.

Tracking the number of attendees and participants at CNYS Black Expo events allows the organization to assess its reach and the level of engagement it achieves. The gradual increase in attendance over the years demonstrates the expo's ability to attract a larger audience, providing more opportunities for black-owned businesses to connect, showcase their products or services, and forge valuable connections. It also signifies the expo's expanding influence in promoting economic growth and supporting the empowerment of minority entrepreneurs Albany, New York.

What is the proposed project start date?

March 12023

What is the anticipated date of completion?

12/1/2023

Please provide key performance indicator(s) demonstrating anticipated results

Indicator	2024	2025	2026
Vendors	280	310	330
participants.	4,500	4,950	5,445

Please provide key project milestones inclusive of the anticipated timelines and descriptions

Milestone	Anticipated Timeline	Task Description
4,780 VENDORS AND CONSUMERS, \$200,000 TOAL REVENUE	11/2022- 11/2023	CNYS BLACK EXPO

92 VENDORS AND CONSUMERS, \$12,500 TOAL REVENUE	11/2022- 11/2023	BUSINESS SYMPOSIUM
5,260 VENDORS AND CONSUMERS, \$200,000 TOAL REVENUE \$450,000	11/2024-11/2025	CNYS BLACK EXPO
98 VENDORS AND CONSUMERS, \$14,500 TOTAL REVENUE	11/2024-11/2025	BUSINESS SYMPOSIUM
5,775.00 VENDORS AND CONSUMERS \$750,000 TOTAL REVENUE	11/2025- 11/2026	CNYS BLACK EXPO
100 VENDORS AND CONSUMERS, \$16,500 TOTAL REVENUE	11/2024-11/2025	BUSINESS SYMPOSIUM

At the top of this page is a downloadable project budget. Please download the budget form and upload it here.

- [REVENUES.pdf](#)

If you are funding a multi-year initiative, please provide a breakdown of funding level per year below*:

2023	2024	2025	2026
30K	23K	23K	23K

Is any upfront funding needed to successfully implement your proposed project?

Yes

If "Yes" above, please specify below.

August 15 th – Business Owner Seminar

\$8,000

\$60.00 per person food/beverage minimum 80

Sunday November 10 th – Gospel Explosion

\$1000

\$1000 Choir Booking Fee

Sunday November 11 th – CNYS Black Expo

\$15k

\$ 5,750 Keynote

Sunday November 12 th – Blue Bird Scholarship Gala

\$5000 non-refundable deposit which will be credited back to your final invoice

Marketing Budget

\$5,750 ads

\$35,000 Marketing Staff

Consultant:\$12,000

Telecommunications:\$10k

Training & Ed: \$8,500

Direct Admin Cost:\$8,000

Other: \$5,700

Describe how the funding will support a sustainable Arts/Culture/Tourism initiative that will continue to serve Albany County residents after ARPA funds have been exhausted .

Diversify funding sources: While ARPA funds may provide an initial boost, it is essential to explore other funding sources to ensure ongoing support. This will include seeking grants from arts and cultural foundations, applying for state or federal funding programs, establishing partnerships with corporate sponsors or private donors, and generating revenue through ticket sales, merchandise, or vendor fees.

Develop a business model: CNYS BLACK EXPO can establish a sustainable business model that generates income through various means. This can include monetizing certain aspects of the event, such as premium ticket options or exclusive experiences, and exploring opportunities for year-round programming, such as workshops, exhibitions, or performances that generate revenue.

Build strategic partnerships: Collaborating with local businesses, tourism organizations, and community stakeholders can create opportunities for shared resources, cross-promotion, and sponsorship. These partnerships this also help secure additional funding, marketing support, and access to networks that can contribute to the long-term success of the initiative.

Explain why ARPA Funds Are Needed to Complete the proposed program/project. Would the proposal be Possible Without ARPA Assistance? Describe how your proposal would be impacted if you are awarded a smaller grant than requested?

No, proposal would not be possible.

Should we be granted less than the full \$100,000. We will not be able to have funding to build our organization, which would prevent us from being able to host more vendors thus limiting the reach of potential out of town consumers.

Also, without the full funding we will be limited to the advertisement to attract more business vendors and consumers.

We will not be able to give the disadvantaged businesses locally in Albany County the opportunity to be advertised nor provide the resources to support them financially.

Tax Information

Please upload Federal tax returns for 2019

- [2019_TaxReturn.pdf](#)

Please upload Federal tax returns for 2020

- [2020_TaxReturn.pdf](#)

Please upload Federal tax returns for 2021

- [2021-Tax-Return1.pdf](#)

Please use this space to upload any additional documents that you feel would support your applications (optional)

- [2023-sponsor.pdf](#)

If available, please provide your Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) from SAM.gov

ok

Risk Assessment

Has the entity adopted and/or implemented policies relating to: records retention, conflict of interest, code of ethics, and/or nondiscrimination policies?

Yes

If "Yes" above, please specify which policies have been adopted

Mahogany Connections LLC. envisions a diverse and equitable world for everyone. Whether it's through advocating for marginalized communities or promoting inclusion. We believe that we all have a responsibility to create a better society not just for our future but for our present. Mahogany Connections LLC is an equal opportunity organization and will not allow discrimination based upon age, ethnicity, ancestry, gender, national origin, disability, race, size, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, or any other status prohibited by applicable law. All are welcome.

Is the entity properly insured?

Yes

If "Yes" above, please specify which types of insurance(s) are held and the limit(s).

Coverage Coverage Limits Coverage C - Personal Property \$30,000 Coverage D - Loss of Use \$6,000 Coverage E - Personal Liability \$100,000 Coverage F - Medical Payments to Others \$1,000

Does the entity have a financial management system?

No

Has there been any change in the entity's key staffing positions in the last 2 years?

No

Has the entity previously done work for the Federal government (i.e. Is the entity experienced in managing Federal funds)?

No

The County is careful about identifying and avoiding conflicts of interest, especially with grants awarded through the County. A conflict of interest arises when a person's self-interest and professional interest or public interest intersect. In this situation, there is the potential for biased professional judgment and lack of objectivity which creates a serious conflict when one of the interests can benefit financially or personally from actions or decisions made in the official capacity. A conflict of interest exists whether or not decisions are affected by a personal interest; there only needs to be the possibility of bias for a conflict. If your organization knows of a possible conflict of interest with your application for funds please disclose that information here. Otherwise write "None."

none

Certifications

US Treasury Reporting & Compliance Acknowledgment 1

- I Have Been Provided a Copy and Understand the U.S. Treasury's Compliance and Reporting Guidance for State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (see link or PDF included at the top of page)

US Treasury Reporting & Compliance Acknowledgment 2

- Should the County Allocate ARPA Funds, I am Able to and Pledge to Adhere to ALL Compliance and Reporting Requirements of the U.S. Treasury as it relates to any State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

US Treasury Reporting & Compliance Acknowledgment 3

- I Understand the County Will Contact me if/when Additional Information is Needed and that Information will be Promptly Provided to the County to Support Reporting Requirements

US Treasury Reporting & Compliance Acknowledgment 4

- If for Any Reason I am Unable to Comply with the U.S. Treasury's Compliance and Reporting Requirements I will Immediately Notify the County in writing by email or letter

US Treasury Reporting & Compliance Acknowledgment 5

- All Information Submitted in this Application is True & Accurate

Electronic Signature Agreement

- I Agree

Type name

Tatiana Cunningham

