



EQUITY, INCLUSION, ACCESS STATEMENT  
Adopted October 13, 2020

ArtsMemphis recognizes that **Equity, Inclusion and Access** to the arts for all **members of** our community are critical for the vitality of our city. We acknowledge that our organization, founded in the era of segregation in 1963, has much work to do. **Further**, we understand that the art and culture traditions for which Memphis receives global recognition – Rock ‘n’ Roll, Blues and Soul, BBQ and Jookin’ – all originated within African American culture. To honor this legacy and continue to propel the art forms authentic to Memphis, we want to ensure that people of all heritages, orientations, backgrounds, and abilities are proportionately represented in ArtsMemphis, in the artists and organizations we support, and in the art produced and presented in our community.

We acknowledge that ArtsMemphis and the local arts sector, while vibrant and innovative, are not representative of our community. Arts organizations led by people of color are a minority in a city whose population is majority African American, and these organizations continue to be underfunded. Boards and staff of our and other arts organizations are not representative of our community’s population. Yet, despite these failings, our arts ecosystem is rich and collaborative, ambitious and full of promise. The historical art forms and organizations that anchor this sector have given rise to new art forms and new organizations, who are creating a new Memphis culture and cultivating the next generation of artists and citizens.

We believe that the arts are the soul of our city and that we have an obligation to ensure that all members of our community, particularly those who have been historically underserved and underrepresented, have access to arts experiences that have relevance to their own lives, and are available in their own communities and neighborhoods. We believe we are obligated to cultivate, nurture, and empower organizations that serve and represent historically underrepresented people so that these organizations may succeed in their missions and goals. We believe that through respect, openness, and transparency, we can create an organization and a community that celebrates the richness of our diversity, embraces inclusion and develops a dynamic support structure for our arts sector. We believe that in meeting this obligation, Memphis will grow as a place that attracts and retains talented people and sustainable arts organizations, attracting diverse artists with sustained opportunities to create and perform and ensuring the arts are an integral part of the quality of life **of the members of our entire community**.

This statement of our commitment to Equity, Inclusion and Access articulates **ArtsMemphis’** commitment to arts investments (grant-making and programs) that advance equity, **inclusion and access** through **and to** the arts. It also serves as our foundation for our Equity Work Plan addressing specific actions and goals.

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**ArtsMemphis values:**

- Access, Equity and Inclusion
- Creativity
- Innovation and Transparency

**Access:** People in neighborhoods across Shelby County will have broad and consistent access to arts experiences, including communities that have been underserved by ArtsMemphis and the arts sector.



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Access is the provision of equal opportunities for people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds, and the availability of resources that enhance one's chances of getting what one needs.<sup>i</sup>

**Equity:** ArtsMemphis seeks to engage members of diverse communities, particularly those that are underrepresented, by increasing investments in artists, arts organizations and arts programs by and for members of these communities.

Equity is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems, as well as in their distribution of resources. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.<sup>ii</sup>

**Inclusion:** ArtsMemphis commits to support and promote arts experiences **that** represent and engage the **diverse members of our community**, and through these experiences, community members gain a better understanding of one another. Arts experiences create a deeper feeling of connection to Memphis and among members of our entire Shelby County community.

Inclusion is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people. It's important to note that while an inclusive group is by definition diverse, a diverse group isn't always inclusive. Increasingly, recognition of unconscious or 'implicit bias' helps organizations to be deliberate about addressing issues of inclusivity.<sup>iii</sup>

**Creativity:** ArtsMemphis' purpose is to encourage and support the originality and expressiveness of all members of our **community**, and to amplify awareness of creative approaches in all art forms.

Creativity involves thinking and producing, turning new and imaginative ideas into reality, finding connections to generate solutions.<sup>iv</sup>

**Innovation:** ArtsMemphis supports innovation and calculated risk taking in order to advance equity and inclusion, acknowledging the importance of cultural autonomy and the power of the arts to explore social issues of broad public concern.

Innovation is the deliberate application of information, imagination and initiative through an organizational focus on audience needs, to challenge existing practices and generate new perspectives in order to derive greater value from resources. Innovation requires a tolerance for failure in order to apply lessons and ensure improvement towards achievement of goals.

**Transparency:** ArtsMemphis' arts investments are determined by guidelines and criteria that are regularly revisited by our **Board** and staff to refine our organizational effectiveness. We will publish and distribute information about our plans, decisions, policies, standards and performance, finding



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connections to generate solutions; and we will provide information about our governance and management.

Transparency is an obligation or willingness to publish and make available critical data about the organization. Organizations that are transparent are more likely to act with integrity, follow best practices, and less likely to engage in unethical or irresponsible activities.<sup>v</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Center for the Study of Social Policy, Race Equity Glossary of Terms

<sup>ii</sup> Grantmakers in the Arts

<sup>iii</sup> Grantmakers in the Arts

<sup>iv</sup> Creativity at Work

<sup>v</sup> Charity Navigator