



PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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To: City of La Crosse Economic Development Commission

From: Planning and Development Staff

Date: December 17, 2020

RE: #20-1767 Staff report for Minority Owned Business Program – Amanda’s Academy of Dance

Applicant Proposal Summary:

Total Project: \$15,039.10

Equipment Purchase (MOBA Eligible): \$10,885.76

Ask: \$5,000.00

Other funding sources:

\$5,000 Launch La Crosse Resiliency Grant

\$5,039.10 Owner Contribution

Overview of the Business

AAD is owned and operated by Amanda Verthein who has been involved in the dance industry most of her life; teaching and choreographing various levels of dance for over 23 years. Before becoming a dance instructor, she received her dance training at Milwaukee’s Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Viterbo University, the University of WI-La Crosse, Steven’s Point Performing Arts Program and various leading studios and conventions. In addition, Amanda holds a degree from the University of WI-La Crosse and co-owns Trilogy Dance Competition. Amanda managed a dance studio for ten years before opening her own studio, in addition to her teaching classes for nearly 23 years. Amanda has an established following of students, dance instructors, and business mentors that have supported her in the opening and the expansion of her business over the years.

Amanda’s Academy of Dance opened in 2007 on the south end of downtown La Crosse. Currently, 10 part time employees (including the studio owner & operations director) maintain a 3-studio, 3,600 square foot facility. The studio space is also available to be leased out by local fitness and dance groups for further community development. Currently, an estimate of 200 students attend AAD, where 45 weekly classes are offered.

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Review of the Current Project

Like most businesses, AAD had to close their doors in March of 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. They were able to finish out the season with virtual sessions via Zoom. AAD was successful in securing grants to help them while they explored their options for delivering services under new guidelines. They were awarded \$3000 through our Small Business Relief Grant, as well as funds from EIDL, PPP, We're All In SBG and Launch La Crosse SBRF. These funds were used to maintain payroll and rent payments.

In response to the setbacks, AAD is working to expand business operations by providing a safer environment and services for clients. The plan is to purchase equipment that will aid in the transition to a virtually friendly studio. By adding upgraded audio/ visual stations in each studio, the virtual experience will add more value to the at home dance education. In addition to the enhanced virtual experience, the plan is to acquire a touchless water bottle filling station for a safe means of hydration.

Program Objectives

- Expansion or creation of a business
- Grows small business or number of small businesses
- Owned by disadvantaged demographic
- Business is meeting an emerging or untapped market or is a project with high growth

The business meets 4 of the 4 program objectives

Staff Recommendation

This project is a great example of a business expansion. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this type of business is forced to change operations in order to continue services for their clients in a sustainable way. The business is a woman owned enterprise that offers recreational, competitive, and fitness dance classes for all ages. Staff recommends proceeding with a grant agreement awarding up to \$5000 on a reimbursement basis. This grant award is to be contingent upon a successful environmental review of the project for purchasing equipment to expand services that accommodate to virtual demands.



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