



Building Empowered Lives Through Art

BELTÀ (*bell-TAH*) - from Italian; meaning beauty.
An artist cannot fail; it is a success to be one. ~Charles Horton Cooley

MISSION/VISION

BELTÀ is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that supports and empowers artists and musicians as they build lives and careers centered in the fine arts. We aim to make success possible for people of all backgrounds by showcasing the talent, vision, and dedication of emerging artists and connecting them with people everywhere who love and value their work, appreciate their courage and dedication, and are inspired to lend a helping hand in ways great and small.

BELTÀ fosters a non-competitive, collaborative environment among all artists, and among arts non-profits, in an effort to strengthen, connect, and empower the capacity of the disciplines to grow and flourish with as few barriers to success as possible.

Why Our Mission is Critical and Timely

Choosing to pursue a career in the fine arts is a life-altering act. It offers great rewards: Combining your life's passion and your life's work; placing creativity at the center of your career; aligning what you do with who you are at your core; expanding your perspective by connecting with others through art; and contributing something of value and beauty to the community of humankind.

However, the challenges of this career path can easily outweigh its rewards. Without varied and abundant support, many artists become overwhelmed, lose hope, or simply abandon ship under the weight of financial burden just when they are on the brink of full artistic maturity and great achievement.

In today's economic climate, artists must be as creative and as collaborative as possible. BELTÀ is committed to helping artists embrace these qualities and flourish. With your organization's help, BELTÀ can help artists receive the support they need to keep going.

HISTORY

BELTÀ was founded in 2009 when three like-minded emerging fine arts professionals from disparate geographic and artistic backgrounds crossed paths in Texas and recognized a need within the fine arts community for different types of career support. In response to this need, the BELTÀ team has worked to develop a variety of programs (described in detail below) including an online funding toolkit for artists, a fine arts internship program, an arts event publicity platform, a resource exchange that helps artists connect and trade services, career development support, and programs for artists in need.

In keeping with our non-competitive mindset, we endeavor to work together with other arts nonprofits to provide educational and outreach programming to the national fine arts community, and to share information and learn from the examples of successful and longstanding organizations.

All three founders are actively engaged in building careers in the fine arts, are accustomed to thinking creatively, doing a lot on a shoestring budget, and maintaining a strong work ethic. In addition to an intimate familiarity with the rewards and challenges of choosing a professional life centered in the fine arts, the managing team brings a sincere desire to build careers collaboratively, to treat colleagues respectfully, and to engage and educate the public passionately to the table at BELTÀ.

PROGRAMMING

1. LaunchPad Online Funding Toolkit– BELTÀ is in the process of creating an online toolkit that will allow artists to effectively generate financial support for upcoming concerts, exhibitions and projects. LaunchPad will connect emerging professional artists with people from the general public interested in supporting the fine arts in a tangible and personal way, raise public awareness about the career paths of fine artists, provide the public with free access to high quality art and music by showcasing projects in a multimedia format, and improve the professional reputation of the featured artists.

Process: BELTÀ will accept applications via the organization’s website (where an application form will be available) from individual artists across the United States who have upcoming performance/exhibition, training, or outreach fine arts projects. Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis and reviewed by the BELTÀ team at regular intervals (maximum every 30 days).

BELTÀ board members (and/or staff members) will screen projects using the following criteria: artistic merit and quality of work samples/portfolio, strength and clarity of project proposal, and degree of professionalism demonstrated by the artist. A limited number of the highest quality projects will be approved during each screening period. Artists whose projects are approved will be required to sign an agreement verifying that the funds awarded will be used for artistic purposes, and to submit a report within one year of receipt of funds verifying how the funds were used. Applicants whose projects are not approved will receive a response encouraging them to reapply at a later date including specific feedback on how a project proposal may be strengthened.

Approved projects will be featured on the BELTÀ website. Potential donors from the general public will be able to browse the featured project profiles, listen to audio samples, view portfolio materials, and read biographical materials. Donors may then choose to fund one or more featured projects.

Our intention is for each project to be funded by a number of small donations from the general public. Featured projects will be displayed until a predetermined deadline (initially 90 days) has passed, at which point all funds generated for that project will be

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distributed directly to the artist, and another approved project will be featured for active funding. Artists whose projects are featured in the LaunchPad program may reapply with subsequent projects.

Timetable: Due to the nearness to the heart of our mission and low overhead cost, this project is our top priority. The BELTÀ team has recruited four artists from the Austin area to participate in a LaunchPad pilot project, currently in progress. We aim to expand to 10 pilot artists this fall, and to have the full online interface ready to go live in the spring of 2012.

2. Fine Arts Internship Experience – The BELTÀ internship program will be developed in two stages. In stage one, interns will gain valuable professional experience working with BELTÀ to provide programming central to our mission. In stage two, BELTÀ will provide financial support for students who have secured internship positions within other fine arts organizations. We aim to treat our interns as full members of the BELTÀ team, and to provide challenging and meaningful work that affects tangible progress within the organization and the arts community.

Process: The BELTÀ team was invited to participate in internship fairs held by The University of Texas at Austin's College of Fine Arts Career Services in November 2010 and April 2011. At these events, student interns were recruited, interviewed, and hired for the following positions:

- **Marketing and Publicity Intern** – Assists as BELTÀ builds its donor base and expands its network of artists. Tasks include developing and implementing marketing strategies for BELTÀ programs and events; gathering feedback from artists and musicians via online surveys; recruiting artists and musicians for BELTÀ programs; posting on social networking sites, blogs, and forums; attending art and music events as a spokesperson for BELTÀ; and collaborating with BELTÀ's board of directors and staff as programming develops.
- **Artist and Donor Relations Intern** - Assists as BELTÀ cultivates relationships with artists and donors. Tasks include identifying individuals and businesses locally and nationally whose philanthropic interests connect with BELTÀ's mission; connecting with potential donors in writing, via telephone, and in person at music and art events; recruiting artists and musicians for BELTÀ programs; and attending art and music events as a spokesperson for BELTÀ. This intern collaborates closely with the marketing intern and the BELTÀ board of directors.
- **Graphic Design Intern** – Designs, maintains and implements images for print and online materials that promote BELTÀ's programs and featured artists. Collaborates with the BELTÀ board of directors and web design team to develop BELTÀ's image portfolio and styling guidelines. Assists with development of a strong online presence for BELTÀ.

Timetable: BELTÀ welcomed the first two student interns to our team in January 2011. Both of them were offered and accepted continuing positions for the summer 2011 semester. We created and filled a third position in May 2011. We plan to continue with a similar program design in the future. Stage two of the internship program is scheduled for implementation once a dedicated internship fund has been developed.

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3. Arts Events Publicity - The website the BELTÀ team is creating will allow us to offer publicity for events free of charge to emerging artists. This activity will have the added benefit of building awareness about BELTÀ's mission and building an online community that regularly visits the BELTÀ site when LaunchPad begins accepting applications.

Process: BELTÀ will provide an online form which artists can use to post upcoming events to the BELTÀ website events section. Events will be indexed by geographic area, date, price, and type of event. Artists will be able to direct members of their support network to the BELTÀ site to receive details about the upcoming event. Art lovers will be able to browse the events section to find exciting (and affordable) arts events in their local areas.

Timetable: Our goal is to begin publicizing arts events in order to build community and support artists in the summer of 2012.

4. Career Development Awards - BELTÀ will provide financial support to outstanding emerging professionals in the fine arts (classical music and visual art) in need of funding for training, performance/exhibit related projects. BELTÀ will award career development funds to selected artists on a competitive basis.

Process: Applicants will submit an application form, which will be available on the BELTÀ website, as well as a proposal and work samples. These materials will be reviewed by qualified professionals (which may include BELTÀ board members and/or an external review panel from the applicant's discipline). Specific criteria for each discipline will be used in the review process, in each of the following areas: artistic merit and quality of work samples, strength and clarity of proposal, and demonstration of career potential. In-person auditions and interviews may be organized to further screening to select the most career-worthy combinations of talent, ambition, and skill.

A small application fee (\$10-15 range) may be charged to artists to cover the cost of honoraria paid to outside expert reviewers. Recipients of career development funds will be required to sign an agreement verifying that the funds awarded will be used for artistic purposes, and to submit a report within six months or receipt of funds verifying how the funds were used.

Timetable: BELTÀ will establish a dedicated fund from which to award career development support. Our goal is to begin accepting applications from artists in the 2012 calendar year, and to fund an initial group of 3 projects totaling no more than \$10,000 by year's end. We plan to award project grants on a semi-annual basis thereafter.

5. Resource Exchange – The BELTÀ team is working to develop an online interface that allows artists from different disciplines to connect, exchange services and share resources. By fostering collaboration among artists of various disciplines, the resource exchange will help reduce the financial burden on each individual artist.

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Process: Components of the online resource exchange may include a forum for in-kind trading of artistic services (music lessons for headshots, musicians to perform at gallery events for art to display at concert venue, etc.) among fine artists, discounts from businesses for arts career services for participating artists (such as music recording studios, website designers, etc.), a directory of employment opportunities that offer flexible schedules, and other resources for artists. Similar to LaunchPad, this program is designed to run at a very low overhead cost after its initial web design.

Timetable: This program is currently in the initial stages of development.

6. Bridge Stipends –BELTÀ will develop a program which provides monthly stipends to successfully working emerging artists demonstrating full time engagements for a six-month period, but whose compensation for those engagements is meager. This program will help artists who have managed to secure a series of professional engagements to focus their efforts on their artistic endeavors during the period of engagement.

Process: The application process will be similar to that for the Career Development program. Additionally, applicants would be asked to provide evidence of either a single lengthy artistic engagement or a series of artistic engagements, details about the compensation provided, and a statement of anticipated income and expenses for the time period.

Timetable: BELTÀ envisions these stipends eventually being endowed, thus the Bridge Stipend program is in the initial stages of development. As the organization grows and creates a strong reputation within the local and national community, we plan to develop this program further.

7. Outreach – BELTÀ will work together with other arts organizations as outreach opportunities arise. We are also in the initial stages of developing an online speaker series on topics related to arts career development.

8. Artists in Need – The BELTÀ team will create a dedicated fund on which artists can draw during times of serious financial hardship. This program is in the initial stages of development.

9. Feedback and Response - BELTÀ is committed to communicating openly and often with artists and musicians to identify the needs of the community and areas where our programming can help fill in the gaps. We will communicate with artists in person, through online surveys, and by hosting group discussions to gather information which will be used to improve and expand programs.

Timetable: Our first feedback initiative, an online survey to which over 100 artists responded, was completed in April 2011. In response to requests and ideas from these artists, BELTÀ organized a seminar on tax preparation and offered it free of charge to Austin area artists in May 2011. Ongoing feedback and response initiatives are planned.

SUSTAINABILITY –

The BELTÀ team has designed our organizational structure and programming with the issue of sustainability at the forefront of our minds.

We have a strong commitment to keeping overhead costs low. To that end, we have no real estate costs and minimal equipment expenses, and will maintain a commitment to in-kind services whenever possible (donated accounting and legal services are already secured). We have designed our master timetable to launch programs with the lowest cost - such as the events publicity platform, LaunchPad, and the internship experience – first and establish success in those endeavors before moving to more ambitious programs.

As we encourage our artists to be creative and multifaceted in their approach to building careers, we will endeavor to embody the same qualities as we build our organization. Benefit concerts/exhibitions are an exciting possibility in community of artists, and the BELTÀ team will continually seek creative and varied strategies for financial longevity.

It is challenging to adequately express the amount of appreciation the BELTÀ team has for the time your organization has taken to review our proposal and consider our request. We are a group of people deeply committed to our mission. We share a passion for the fine arts and respect for artists and musicians with the members of your organization. We join the nonprofit sector with a clear vision, a solid understanding of the actions needed to make that difference, and an eager enthusiasm to do the work. We would be honored to have your help in moving forward.