

**AITDC RESOLUTION NO. 2025-151**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE AMELIA ISLAND TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OF NASSAU COUNTY, FLORIDA, RECOMMENDING TO THE NASSAU COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS THE SPONSORSHIP FOR STORY & SONG CENTER FOR ARTS & CULTURE, INC., AND IN SUPPORT OF SAID RECOMMENDATION FINDING THAT THE USE OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX REVENUES FOR SAID PURPOSE WILL ENHANCE VISITOR EXPERIENCES AND PROMOTE TOURISM ON AMELIA ISLAND, IN NASSAU COUNTY, AND IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA; FURTHER PROVIDING FOR CERTAIN LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to Section 125.0104, Florida Statutes, the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), levies and imposes a tourist development tax to promote through marketing and advertising Amelia Island and to increase tourist-related business activities; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to Section 125.0104, Florida Statutes, the BOCC established the Amelia Island Tourist Development Council (AITDC) as an advisory board to oversee the development and marketing of Amelia Island and the expenditure of the tourist development tax revenues; and

**WHEREAS**, the tourist development tax revenues received by Nassau County are restricted funds, and the expenditure of those funds shall comply with Section 125.0104, Florida Statutes, the Florida Administrative Code, Sections 30-61 through 30-68 of the Nassau County Code of Ordinances, and AITDC Policies as approved by the BOCC; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to Section 125.0104, Florida Statutes, the BOCC has contracted with the Amelia Island Convention and Visitors Bureau (AICVB) to execute the marketing of Amelia Island as a world-class tourism destination; and

**WHEREAS**, based upon the recommendation of the AICVB, the AITDC now finds that the sponsorship of STORY & SONG CENTER FOR ARTS & CULTURE, INC., as further depicted in Exhibit "A" attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference, is a tourism-related activity and will assist in the promotion of Amelia Island and Nassau County, Florida.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the AITDC, as follows:

**SECTION 1. FINDINGS.** The above findings are true and correct and are hereby incorporated herein by this reference.

**SECTION 2. USE OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX REVENUES.**

- a.** The AITDC hereby finds that the use of tourist development tax revenues for the sponsorship of STORY & SONG CENTER FOR ARTS & CULTURE, INC., as depicted in Exhibit "A" (hereinafter "Sponsorship"), is a tourism-related activity and

will assist in the promotion of Amelia Island and Nassau County, Florida, and is consistent with Section 125.0104, Florida Statutes and Sections 30-61 through 30-68 of the Nassau County Code of Ordinances.

- b. Based upon the above finding, the AITDC hereby recommends to the BOCC that the BOCC utilize tourist development tax revenues for said Sponsorship) as a means to promote tourism of Amelia Island and Nassau County, Florida, with said amounts to be paid from the AITDC budget as follows:

Story & Song Center for Arts & Culture, Inc.

Dates: January 29, 2026 - February 1, 2026

Amount: \$15,000

**SECTION 3. EFFECTIVE DATE.** This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its passage.

**DULY ADOPTED** this 25th day of August, 2025.

**AMELIA ISLAND TOURIST DEVELOPMENT  
COUNCIL OF NASSAU COUNTY, FLORIDA**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
JOHN F. MARTIN, MBA

Its: Chairman

Date: August 25, 2025

Approved as to form by the  
Nassau County Attorney:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
DENISE C. MAY



# AMELIA ISLAND

COME MAKE MEMORIES®

## Event/Project/Program Sponsorship Funding Application

Please complete the following to be considered for event/project/program sponsorship funding. Attach additional documentation if needed. Be sure to review the requirements before submitting your application.

Each event/project/program host/organizer applying for sponsorship will be required to submit this Special Event/project/program Sponsorship Application. The annual sponsorship application process shall close on June 30 for consideration of support in the next fiscal year (October 1 through September 30). The application must be submitted to the TDC Managing Director by e-mail ([billing@ameliaisland.com](mailto:billing@ameliaisland.com)) or mailed/hand delivered to 1750 South 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 200, Amelia Island, FL 32034.

For questions related to completing the application, please email Mariela Murphy at [mmurphy@ameliaisland.com](mailto:mmurphy@ameliaisland.com) or call 904-277-4369.

Name of Event/Project/Program: Amelia Island Festival of Stories and Songs

Event/Project/Program Date(s): January 29 - February 1, 2026

Event/Project/Program Location(s): SpringHill Marriott, WildLight, Story & Song Bookstore & Bistro

Funding Amount Requesting: \$15,000

Event/Project/Program Host/Organizer/Applicant: Donna Paz Kaufman, Mark Kaufman, Karen Bowden

Event/Project/Program Host/Organizer/Applicant Address: 1430 Park Avenue, Fernandina Beach, FL

Contact Person: Karen Bowden, Festival Coordinator

Address: Story & Song Center for Arts & Culture 1430 Park Ave Fernandina Beach, FL

Phone: 617-312-6477

Email: Karen.Storyandsongfoundation@gmail.com

### Event/Project/Program Information

Provide names and contact information of all persons, firms, and corporations with a financial interest in the Special Event/project/program or participating in the control of the event/project/program.

Donna Paz Kaufman, Mark Kaufman, 1430 Park Ave Fernandina Beach, FL 904-601-2118

Karen Bowden, 85515 Fall River Parkway, Fernandina Beach FL 617-312-6477

Provide a detailed description of the event/project/program and how it promotes Amelia Island tourism, the proposed goals, objectives, and economic impact of the event/project/program to include dates of the event/project/program (including set up and tear down); anticipated attendance; audience demographic and projected overnight visitation.

The Amelia Island Festival of Stories and Songs is a 4-day Festival featuring storytellers and musicians that appeal to people of all ages, creating meaningful human connections.

Provide a logistics outline (including but not limited to location/site plan, parking/shuttle and traffic plan, security plan, sanitation plan, health and safety plan, and special needs requirements) for your event/project/program.

see Attachment A

see Attachment A

Describe in detail how the special event/project/program sponsorship funds will be used including media plan with advertising schedule; public relations activities; proposed creative materials (including but not limited to display ads, banner ads, websites, flyers, posters); promotional activities to support the event/project/program and the related expense budgets for the marketing activities.

see Attachment A

see Attachment A

#### **Budget**

An event/project/program budget should accompany this application, and contain such items as available:

- amount being invested by the event/project/program host/organizer.
- an expense budget for producing the event/project/program.
- amount of support requested from the TDC and its intended use.
- additional sponsorship revenues.
- anticipated revenue from ticket/ancillary sales.
- any other revenue expected to be generated by the event/project/program.

Event/Project/Program Host/Organizer/Applicant Signature: Karen Bowden Digitally signed by Karen Bowden  
Date: 2025.06.29 16:42:41 -04'00'

Date: 6/29/25

|   |
|---|
| Internal Use Only:  |
| Date Received: <u>7/30/25</u>   |
| Approved: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes / <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Amount: <u>\$15,000</u>   |





CENTER FOR ARTS & CULTURE

1430 Park Avenue  
Fernandina Beach, FL 32034  
904.601.2118

## **Event Sponsorship Funding Application: Amelia Island Festival of Stories & Songs**

### **Introduction**

The rich tradition of telling stories has been part of humankind as long as there has been language, though modern technology has displaced this art form until recently. Today, there has been a renaissance in stories told in a personal, authentic way, bringing people together to remind us of our shared experience. There are now Storytelling Festivals in dozens of states around the country, including one in Mt. Dora, Florida. As an indication of their popularity, more than 10,000 people travel to Jonesborough, Tennessee for the annual International Storytelling Festival ([StorytellingCenter.net](http://StorytellingCenter.net)).

We strive for the Amelia Island Festival of Stories and Songs to become one of the most talked about and well attended storytelling events in the country. In only our second year, several of the 2025 performers told us we could easily become one of the premier Storytelling Festivals in the country. Nationally renowned storyteller and NPR personality Kevin Kling shared our program was "so unusual and original. It's where storytelling festivals are going next." We could not have been happier to be told we are blazing a trail. Building on the 36% increase in attendance and exceptionally positive feedback from the professional storytellers and audience attending the second Amelia Island Festival of Stories & Songs in 2025, we enthusiastically began the planning program for 2026 as we closed the 2025 program. We have all the ingredients for growth in the Storytelling space -Amelia Island is an ideal location for a Festival in Jan/Feb and The Amelia Island Festival of Stories and Songs is programmatically original and trail blazing in its content and delivery. In addition to the program, attendees and performers loved Amelia Island, its easy access to JAX airport, the weather and the warm welcoming Island vibe.

To date, all performers for 2026 are under contract allowing us to begin marketing seven months in advance of the Festival. Currently, the plan is to follow the same 4-day, 8 performance program created in 2025. However, the program and budget have been created to allow for additional programming and venues, dependent upon the amount of sponsorship received as well as the collaborative engagement of lodging partners.

In order to grow out of town attendance, we are holding four (4) programs at the SpringHill Suites by Marriott expanding attendance capacity to 250. We have made inquiries to other Amelia Island Festivals about methods to increase out of town attendance and are adopting the methods used by the Chamber Musical Festival. We are actively working with the SpringHill Suites by Marriott to create and advertise a package of discounted festival tickets for out of town visitors. We are also in talks with several other Island hotels and B&B's to offer discounted ticket packages with evidence of a lodging reservation.

We are very grateful for the support of the TDC. TDC sponsorship is instrumental in helping us put Amelia Island on the national map of world-class Storytelling Festivals enabling us to draw fans from miles around. TDC sponsorship will enable us to invite some of the same professional storytellers who have contributed to the success of other festivals. Combining traditional stroytellers with songwriters who tell stories with their music, we intend to build on our track record of planning and producing successful events by staging a unique program that will give people yet one more reason to visit Amelia Island.

## **About Story & Song**

**Story & Song is a beloved community gathering place to celebrate the arts, fittingly located in the heart of Amelia Island.** In 2022, Story & Song formed a Board of Directors and in 2023 established a 501(c)(3) nonprofit foundation, Story & Song Center for Arts & Culture, and invited the community to support its work with both donations and volunteering.

**The arts have a unique way of bringing people together, bridging differences to allow us to acknowledge and celebrate our common humanity.** Storytelling, whether in spoken or musical form, is an art form that preserves our history, celebrates diversity, and perpetuates important elements of the human experience in an entertaining, engaging form. The founders of Story & Song recognized the growing popularity of this medium and have chosen to host this festival to bring storytellers from near and far to our community.

**1. Name of event:**

Amelia Island Festival of Stories & Songs

**2. Event dates:**

Thursday, January 29 - Sunday, February 1, 2026

**3. Event locations:**

Story & Song Center for Arts & Culture  
SpringHill Suites by Marriott

**4. Funding amount requested:**

\$15,000

**5. Event hosts/applicants and address:**

Donna Paz Kaufman and Mark Kaufman  
Story & Song Center for Arts & Culture  
1430 Park Avenue  
Fernandina Beach, FL 32034  
904-601-2118

**6. Contacts authorized to act on behalf of the event:**

Donna Paz Kaufman, Co-Founder  
Story & Song Center for Arts & Culture  
1430 Park Avenue  
Fernandina Beach, FL 32034  
904-601-2118  
[donna@storyandsongbookstore.com](mailto:donna@storyandsongbookstore.com)

Mark Kaufman, Co-Founder  
Story & Song Center for Arts & Culture  
1430 Park Avenue  
Fernandina Beach, FL 32034  
904-601-2118  
[mark@storyandsongarts.org](mailto:mark@storyandsongarts.org)

Karen Bowden, Festival Coordinator  
Story & Sound Center for Arts & Culture  
1430 Park Avenue  
Fernandina Beach, FL 32034  
617-312-6477  
[Karen.storyandsongfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:Karen.storyandsongfoundation@gmail.com)

**6.1. Persons, firms, and corporations with a financial interest in the event or participating in the control of the event:**

Story & Song Center for Arts & Culture  
Donna Paz Kaufman, Co-Founder  
Mark Kaufman, Co-Founder  
Karen Bowden, Festival Coordinator

**7. Description of event**

The Amelia Island Festival of Stories & Songs is a 4-day Festival featuring storytellers and musicians that appeal to people of all ages, creating meaningful human connections.



**Program as of 6/28/25:**

**Thursday, Jan 29, 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Opening Night**

**Opener: TBD**

**Main: The Rough & Tumble** - Scott Tyler and Mallory Graham  
Winner of the 2023 Official Showcase Artist – Southeast Regional Folk Alliance

**Location: Story & Song**                      **Tickets \$35**

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**Friday, Jan 30, 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Story Telling Workshop**

**Andy Offut Irwin : “Humor, Wit, Storytelling and Cognitive Connections for Deep and Enduring Learning and Serious Business”**

Andy will open his humor theory tool bag and help you build wit-filled stories for your listeners.

**Location: Story & Song**                      **Tickets \$ 35**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Friday, Jan 30, 2-4:00 p.m. “Mad, Mad Wonderland” and Tea Party**

**Reading from “Alice in Wonderland” by Ron Kurtz**

**Jason Woods performs “Mad, Mad Wonderland”**

Followed by a Catered Tea Party

**Location: Story & Song**                      **Tickets \$50**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Friday, Jan 30, 7:30-9:30 p.m. The Main Event featuring:**

**Christine Lavin** - a New York City–based singer-songwriter and promoter of contemporary folk music. She has recorded numerous solo albums, and has also recorded under the name Four Bitchin' Babes. She is known for her sense of humor, which is expressed in both her music and her onstage performances. Many of her songs alternate between comedy and emotional reflections on romance.

**Don White** – has opened for Arlo Guthrie, Ritchie Havens, and shared a bill with David Bromberg, Janis Ian, and Lyle Lovett. White has been featured in storytelling festivals around the country including the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee

**Location: SpringHill Marriott.**                      **Tickets \$45**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Saturday, Jan 31, 10:30 - 11:30 a.m. “Story Time with Ms. Dearsha”** for children and families featuring nationally recognized storyteller Carmen Deedy.

**Carmen Agra Deedy** is an award-winning author of sixteen books for young readers, including *The Rooster Who Would Not Be Quiet!*, *Martina the Beautiful Cockroach*, *Rita and Ralph’s Rotten Day*, and *14 Cows for America*, a New York Times Bestseller. Her latest books are *Wombat Said Come In*, released in October 2022, *Carina Felina*, released in August 2023, and *The Peanut Man*, released in March 2025. She hosts the four-time Emmy-winning children’s program, *Love That Book!*

**Location: Story & Song                      Tickets Free**

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**\*Saturday, Jan 31, 2-4 p.m. “Amelia Island: Where the Wild Things Are”**

One of the many things that unites us as a community is our respect for and love of nature. From the beaches to Egan’s Creek, sea turtles to right whales, we are sounded by life. Come celebrate the release of Story & Song’s new book about our natural world, listen to stories from caretakers of our animals, and be there for a remarkable and rare appearance of Cumberland Island’s Carol Ruckdeschel in conversation with Pat Foster-Turley.

Emcee: Craig Pittman

First hour

Right Whales - Nick Williams, confirmed

Naturalist & Author - Dan Lorber, confirmed

Tree Conservancy – Diana Herman, confirmed

1 additional storyteller from: Sea Turtles / Keep Nassau Beautiful

Second hour

Pat Foster-Turley in conversation with Carol Ruckdeschel

**Location: SpringHill Marriott                      Tickets \$35**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Saturday, Jan 31, 7:30-10 p.m. Headliners** featuring

**Don White** - There is no one-word description for what Don White does. He’s an award-winning singer/songwriter, a comedian, an author, and a storyteller. He’s been bringing audiences to laughter and tears for thirty years, released ten CDs, three live DVDs, and a book, *Memoirs of a C Student*.

**Andy Offit Irwin** - is an American storyteller, singer-songwriter, and humorist. Born and raised in Covington, Georgia, Irwin began his career in 1984 with an improvisational comedy troupe at Walt Disney World. After five years he shifted to performing as a singer-songwriter, touring the Southeast.

**Carmen Deedy** – Carmen’s personal stories first appeared on NPR’s All Things Considered. Funny, insightful, and frequently irreverent, Deedy’s narratives are culled from her childhood as a Cuban refugee in Decatur, Georgia

**Location: SpringHill Marriott                      Tickets \$55**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Sunday, Feb. 1, 2-4 p.m. “Bits & Pieces” featuring :**

**Rev. Robert Jones, Sr.** - is a renaissance man. He has been a professional musician for more than forty years. He has been a Pastor for more than 20 years, and he has been a nationally recognized storyteller for more than fifteen years. All of those experiences have allowed him work in a variety of ways and to apply his speaking and musical skills to educate, entertain, and inspire. At the heart of his message is the belief that our cultural diversity tells a story that should celebrate, not just tolerate.

**Christine Lavin** – is an iconic singer/songwriter who has earned her legendary status through years of tireless performing, doing shows at once quirky, hilarious and touching. Her songs have a wordsmith’s eye for detail, with a comic’s vision for the absurd, and a huge a fearless heart that will go anywhere.

**Location: Springhill Marriott                      Tickets \$45**

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**Festival VIP pass for admission and prime seating to full festival is \$250.**

#### **7.1. Goals, objectives, and economic impact**

##### **Goal 1: Establish Amelia Island Festival of Stories and Songs as a nationally recognized Festival**

###### *Objectives*

- Host nationally recognized professional storytellers from a variety of cultural backgrounds
- Promote The Amelia Island Festival of Stories and Songs in the biggest Storytelling Festival programs
- Seek stories that expand and connect our worlds of understanding
- Draw visitors from other states



- Interact with arriving passengers at JAX through digital advertising in arrival terminals and cell phone lot.

## **Goal 2: Create meaningful human connection through the Arts**

### *Objectives*

- Feature artists who combine art forms like storytelling and music, storytelling and the visual arts
- Use food and the community table to bring people together to meet and have face-to-face conversations

## **Goal 3: Promote Amelia Island Tourism with Story & Song's unique venue and year-round programming**

### *Objectives*

- Use food and the community table to bring people together to meet and have face-to-face conversations
- Partner with local hotels to offer a packaged program – Discounted Festival tickets and hotel rooms in January/February 2026
- Promote Amelia Island Festival of Stories and Songs at the International and Florida Storyteller Festivals. Market the program in targeted locations as marketing funds allow.
- Educate visitors about the rich and unique heritage of Amelia Island, and encourage repeat visits and produce recurring hotel revenue even after the festival
- Utilize our guest celebrities' marketing platforms to promote Amelia Island and the celebrity's appearance at the Amelia Island Festival Stories and Songs

### **7.2. Dates of event**

4 days -- January 29 - February 1, 2026

### **7.3. Anticipated attendance: 1140**

Thursday, 1/29 – “Opening Night” : 115

Friday, 1/30- Workshop: 65

Friday, 1/30- “Mad, Mad Wonderland” & Tea: 100

Friday, 1/30- “The Main Stage”:185

Saturday, 1/31 – “Story Time”: 100

Saturday, 1/31 – “Where the Wild Things Are”: 205

Saturday, 1/31 – “Headliners”: 185

Sunday, 2/1 – “Bits & Pieces”: 185

### **7.4. Audience demographic**

**Adult Programs:** Storytellers with diverse backgrounds will attract a diverse audience, regardless of age. Anyone interested in authentic stories and original music will enjoy the Festival.

**Family Program:** Local and visiting families with children ages 1 to 7 with an interest in education combined with entertainment.

**7.5. Projected overnight visitation**

We plan to include links to the accommodation and Festival package on the Amelia Island Festival of Stories and Songs website, offering a discounted early bird block room rate, in partnership with the Courtyard and SpringHill Marriott and in collaboration with other Amelia Island hotels and B&B's. Early marketing outreach to targeted locations, promotion in the International Festival program, collaborative promotions with our performers, as well as offering a discounted VIP pass to key events will encourage overnight stays. Overnight stays in 2025 from performers and attendees tracked at 61. Tracking package sales through our lodging partners and the SpringHill Marriott will provide us more accurate information and will allow us to increase attendance from more distant locations.

**7.6. Location/site plan**

- Story & Song Center for Arts & Culture -2<sup>nd</sup> story art gallery/event space (with elevator access), 125 capacity
- Ballroom at Marriott/SpringHill Suites, theatre style 250 capacity
- Add venue locations and expand programs offered as ticket sales grow and funding allows

**7.7. Parking/shuttle and traffic plan**

Adequate parking available on-site at all locations

**7.8. Security**

FBPD with visible presence for security at large evening events

**7.9. Sanitation**

Provided by Story & Song Center for Arts & Culture and SpringHill Suites by Marriott

**7.10. Health and safety**

Elevator access provided by Story & Song Center

**7.11. Special needs requirements**

Elevator access and personal assistance. Reserved handicapped seating available at all events.

**7.12. Other logistical information**

None

## **8. Media Plan**

### **8.1. Advertising schedule**

July – August:

- Festival schedule posted on Story & Song Website – tickets available
- Festival of Stories and Songs Facebook page updated with details about the Festival. Early bird Festival VIP tickets with/without lodging available
- Half page advertisement for Amelia Island Festival of Stories and Songs placed in International Storytelling Festival program in October in Jonesborough, TN

September – October:

- Website feature at [StoryandSongArts.org](http://StoryandSongArts.org) will offer sponsorship opportunities to Center for Arts & Culture donors
- Social media posts with boosts to Jacksonville, Gainesville, Orlando, Atlanta
- Half-page advertisement for Amelia Island Festival of Stories and Songs placed in the International Storytelling Festival in Jonesboro, TN in October, 2025, and the Florida Storytellers Festival program held in January, 2026 in Mt Dora, FL

November - December:

- Calendar listing: *AmeliaIsland.com*
- Social media posts with boosts to Jacksonville, Gainesville, Orlando, Atlanta
- Marketing through Story & Song's weekly e-newsletter, 9,000+ contacts
- Holiday print newsletter delivered to 6,600 News-Leader subscribers
- Rack cards at The Depot and Chamber of Commerce
- Festival Schedule and story as center insert in The Islander Magazine

January:

- 34 pole banners and 2 street banners hung on Centre Street announcing the Festival
- Month long advertising 24/7 at JAX arrivals electronic billboards and screens in cell phone lot
- Calendar listings: *The Islander*, *News-Leader* and *Observer*
- Social media posts with boosts to Jacksonville, Gainesville, Orlando, Atlanta
- Story & Song email newsletter
- NPR announcements
- Ad in the *News-Leader*

### **8.2. Public relations activities**

- Feature story in *The Islander* magazine



- Feature articles in the *Fernandina Beach News-Leader* and the *Fernandina Beach Observer*
- *Mouth of Amelia* email blast
- Enlist support from Hayworth PR for article placement in *Southern Living*, *Garden & Gun*, *AAA magazine*.

**8.3. Proposed creative materials**

- Festival branding - print and digital
- Bookmarks
- Full-color ad
- Full-color poster
- Pole banners Center Street

**8.4. Promotional activities**

- In-store signage & displays at Story & Song Bookstore Bistro
- Posters distributed around town
- Nationally known guest storytellers to add link to their own websites and communicate with their follower

**8.5. Marketing budget \$19,450**

**Proposed budget**

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| <i>EXPENSES</i>                             |                 |
| Operating costs                             | \$31,127        |
| Marketing budget                            | \$19,450        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                | <b>\$50,577</b> |
| <i>REVENUE</i>                              |                 |
| <b>Amount of support requested from TDC</b> | <b>\$15,000</b> |
| Additional sponsorship revenues             | \$2,000         |
| Anticipated revenue from ticket sales       | \$32,209        |
| Host sponsorship                            | \$1,368         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                | <b>\$50,577</b> |

**9. Associations or individuals/events seeking sponsorship/conflict of interest statement**

The applicants have no conflicts of interest.

Applicant Signature Karen Bowden

Date 6/29/25



## POST EVENT/PROJECT/PROGRAM SUMMARY REPORT

**Name of event:** Amelia Island Festival of Stories & Songs

**Event dates:** Jan 30- Feb 2, 2025

**Event locations:** Story & Song Bookstore/Bistro and Springhill Marriott

**Funding amount:** \$10,000

**Event host:** Story & Song Center for Arts & Culture

**Event host address:** 1430 Park Ave. Fernandina Beach, FL 32034

**Contact person:** Karen Bowden, Festival Coordinator, Story & Song Foundation

**Address:** 1430 Park Ave., Fernandina Beach, FL 32034

**Phone:** 904-601-2118

**Email:** [Karen.storyandsongfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:Karen.storyandsongfoundation@gmail.com)

1. Describe how you used the community sponsorship funds. If approved funds exceed the actual cost of the service or item, you must document the variance.

|   | Actual    |
|---|-----------|
| Expense budget (original)                     | \$ 42,975 |
| Amount to be invested by event host/organizer | \$ 2,000  |
| Amount of support received from TDC           | \$ 10,000 |
| Additional sponsorship revenues               | \$ 3,500  |
| Anticipated revenue from ticket sales         | \$ 27,475 |



**2. Describe estimated attendance and method used to calculate.**

Attendance numbers were calculated by weekly tracking a reporting of ticket sales and comps. The chart below shows attendance records we tracked weekly based on tickets sold and comps which include sponsors, volunteers, performer's family, cookbook contributors.

There were 1002 attendees at all events. This was a 36% increase in attendance over 2024's attendance of 737.

### Festival Attendance Seat Planning

| Dates                      | Bing ! | workshop | Historical Figures | I Like This town | Story Time #1 | Story Time #2 | Kitchen Talk | Headliners | Bits & Pieces |
|----------------------------|--------|----------|--------------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|------------|---------------|
| 12/6/24                    | 17     | 6        | 5                  | 7                | 0             | 0             | 97           | 40         | 12            |
| 12/13/24                   | 23     | 9        | 9                  | 11               | 0             | 0             | 126          | 44         | 15            |
| 12/20/24                   | 47     | 9        | 9                  | 11               | 0             | 0             | 136          | 47         | 15            |
| 12/27/24                   | 51     | 12       | 11                 | 11               |               |               | 147          | 49         | 19            |
| 1/3/25                     | 60     | 16       | 13                 | 13               |               |               | 150          | 57         | 19            |
| 1/12/24                    | 100    | 21       | 18                 | 19               | 4             | 0             | 169          | 71         | 23            |
| 1/17/25                    | 109    | 22       | 24                 | 27               | 4             | 0             | 177          | 90         | 24            |
| 1/20/25                    | 116    | 24       | 24                 | 33               | 15            |               | 179          | 120        | 33            |
| 1/22/25                    | 116    | 25       | 28                 | 38               | 16            | 0             | 185          | 123        | 34            |
| 1/24/25                    | 123    | 25       | 31                 | 57               | 18            | 6             | 193          | 134        | 45            |
| 1/26/25                    | 131    | 25       | 32                 | 63               | 18            | 6             | 197          | 139        | 50            |
| 1/27/25                    | 137    | 25       | 32                 | 69               | 18            | 6             | 197          | 139        | 51            |
| 1/28/25                    | 144    | 27       | 34                 | 75               | 24            | 6             | 197          | 145        | 57            |
| 1/29/25                    | 148    | 30       | 35                 | 79               | 25            |               | 200          | 149        | 60            |
| 1/30/25                    | 158    | 37       | 50                 | 106              | 31            |               | 204          | 151        | 86            |
| Total seats filled on date | 193    | 42       | 62                 | 113              | 39            | 6             | 242          | 189        | 122           |
| Capacity                   | 250    | 25       | 75                 | 250              | 75            | 75            | 250          | 250        | 250           |
| budgeted ~62%              | 155    | 15.5     | 46.5               | 155              | 46.5          | 46.5          | 155          | 155        | 155           |
| % Capacity to date         | 77%    | 168%     | 83%                | 45%              | 53%           | 0%            | 97%          | 76%        | 49%           |

**Total Attendance: 1002**

**3. Summarize advertising placed to promote the event (include all placed, trade, and in-kind).**

- **Social media:** Set up Festival Facebook page and cross-posted to Story & Song Facebook page
  - Dozens of Facebook posts, including videos of performers, plus additional posts to other groups, including
    - Florida East Coast Events, Festivals, and Happenings
    - Amelia Island Fernandina Beach Network
    - Newcomers Club of Amelia Island
    - AICP newsletter
    - Florida Events and Festivals
    - What's Up Fernandina?
    - Amelia Island Newcomers and Visitors
    - Fernandina Beach and Yulee Good Stuff Network
    - Fernandina Beach New Friends Group
    - Amelia Arts & Culture
    - Amelia Island Artists
    - Florida Storytelling Association
  - Engaged social media influencers to share invitations to specific events to their followers
- **Collaborative promotions:** Most of the performers have their own websites, YouTube channels, and social media channels with a national following and they helped promote the festival extensively.
  - Email invitations to regional FL and Georgia Quilters Groups
- **Print advertising:**
  - News-Leader (in kind sponsor)
  - Florida Storytelling Association print and online program
  - International Storyteller Program (in Jonesboro, TN) print and online program. Unfortunately cancelled due to Hurricane Helene.
  - National Storytellers website and calendar
- **Radio advertising:**
  - WJCT promotional spots (CVB in kind sponsorship valued at \$5,000)
  - WJCT – “First Coast Connect” interview with Connie Regan-Blake (National Storyteller) and Mark & Donna Paz Kaufman
- **Electronic Public Billboards**
  - **Jax Aviation Authority (in-kind sponsorship valued at \$5000)– program advertisement displayed on:**
    - 24 electronic billboards in JAX airport main hallway for 30 days (Jan 4<sup>th</sup> - Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>)
    - Electronic billboard in Cellphone lot for 30 days (Jan 4<sup>th</sup> – Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>)
    - Electronic welcome board in arrivals for 1 week prior to Festival (Jan 27<sup>th</sup> – Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>)
    - TVs in gate areas for 1 week prior to Festival (Jan 27<sup>th</sup> – Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>)



- **Banners**
  - Story & Song balcony
  - 8<sup>th</sup> & Centre (Jan 27<sup>th</sup> – Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>)
  - 34 Pole banners on Centre St. (Jan 27<sup>th</sup> – Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>)
  - Vertical retractable banners at events and Story & Song
  - Electronic sign, rack cards and poster in Amelia Island Welcome Center
- **Posters:** Island (all over island in addition to downtown) retail stores and hotels distributed by Story & Song volunteers
- **Bookmarks** – Festival bookmarks were placed in every book purchased from Story & Song from early December through the Festival.
- **Rack cards:**
  - Amelia Island Visitor Center, Story & Song, hotels and B&B's all over the island
  - Wildlight YMCA and HOA center
- **Publicity:** Articles in local magazines and e-newsletters
  - Islander Magazine – cover and 3-page story (in-kind sponsor)
  - Fernandina Observer story (in-kind sponsor)
  - The Porch Newsletter
  - Story & Song weekly e-newsletter
  - Story & Song monthly print newsletter
  - Wildlight HOA website and Newsletter
  - Wildlight Elementary Schools

**4. Describe your general assessment of the event including strengths and weaknesses; and address any concerns or recommendations for changes.**

**Strengths:**

- Building on lessons learned from our Inaugural Festival in 2024, Story & Song hosted several Storytelling pre-events that were well received and allowed us to generate interest in storytelling. This gave us an opportunity to promote the Festival and get people excited.
- Excellent main stage performers who wowed their audiences generating word of mouth advertising within the community. We also saw an uptick in attendees purchasing tickets for subsequent programs.
- To increase ticket sales, we focused on special interest groups and created special group invitations for events that included reserved VIP seating for Newcomers, Theatre groups, regional quilters, and gourmet enthusiasts that matched the theme of the show. We also offered comp tickets to Kitchen Talk along with a free cookbook to every contributor to the Amelia Island Cookbook, which benefits Barnabas.



- Feedback from participating National Storytellers was extremely positive. Every one of them shared that they could not believe this was only our 2<sup>nd</sup> Festival. Several shared that we could easily become one of the premier Storytelling festivals in the country. Nationally renowned storyteller Kevin Kling shared, “I loved the programming, the mix — the chefs, the quilt man, the music, etc. So unusual and original. It’s where storytelling festivals are going next”. We could not have been happier to be told we are blazing a trail. The word is out about Amelia Island as we have had a number of storytellers reach out to us already for consideration at our next Festival.
- Ticket sales were strong with five (5) of the nine (8) events held exceeding 75% seating capacity.
- Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive. We made a point of getting feedback immediately after each show. Without exception, the audience loved the programs. Crowds gathered afterwards to meet the performers, some staying nearly an hour post-show. Even those who had not been familiar with the art of storytelling said they thoroughly enjoyed the performances and can’t wait for next year.
- We tracked out of town visitors by listing anyone who purchased a ticket with an out-of-town zip code on our check-in list. When attendees checked in, our volunteers asked if they were staying in a hotel or B&B. The Festival purchased a total of 17 nights at the Courtyard Marriott for our performers. Our data was far from perfect as we used volunteers to collect information. We had 4 people who stayed at the Marriott Courtyard for 4 nights (16 nights), 4 people at the Hoyt House for 2 nights each (2 rooms, 2 nights) and 20 out-of-town attendees who stayed in an “Airbnb”, Plantation Condo or VRBO rentals for an unknown amount of time. The many others with non-local zip codes were people with 2<sup>nd</sup> homes on the island.

#### **Weaknesses:**

- Corporate sponsorships resulted in less operating funds than hoped for in our initial budget plan. As a result, we had to adjust our plan to reduce costs, primarily impacting an extensive advertising campaign plan and eliminating all catering plans.
- We could not generate interest for a free Saturday Children’s event at Wildlight despite heavy advertising (TVs at the YMCA, rack cards, Wildlight HOA Newsletter and notifications to the elementary schools). The conclusion was Saturday was not the best day to offer an afternoon program. We cancelled this program when only 6 attendees expressed interest.
- Three weeks before the start of the Festival our Headliner Rick Bragg, cancelled due to illness. We could not afford to replace him at that late date with another “high caliber” star as replacements were significantly over our budget. Instead, we asked 3 scheduled performers to extend their stay (for additional compensation) on the island and created a Headliner show with 4 performers to replace Rick Bragg and the opening act. The show was well received but likely impacted overall ticket sales as we had to remove a well-known storyteller and substitute with three performers who were in our line up on other days. Despite performing new material, some people asked, why would I go to see that person on Saturday, when I saw them Friday? The upside is that the cancellation resulted in a net savings of approximately \$4500 which enabled us essentially break-even.

- While totally out of our control, the cancellation of the International Storytelling Festival prevented us from getting our Festival promoted at the largest Festival in the US.
- As we think about growing the Amelia Island Festival of Stories and Songs into a nationally recognized event and increasing attendance, we are limited by available/affordable indoor meeting space on the island.

**Future Programming**

We embrace the idea of becoming the model of the future of storytelling festivals and will continue to combine stories, music, theater, comedy, children's programming, local features, and book releases to make each Amelia Island Festival of Stories & Songs unique with an interesting mix of entertainment styles.

The event/project/program host/organizer must submit a Post Event/Project/Program Summary Report within forty-five (45) days of the ending date of the event/project/program. Failure to do so may impact future sponsorships.

**Submitted by:** Karen Bowden, Festival Coordinator

**Date:** March 10, 2025