



# Medicine Wheel Productions Prospectus



## overview

**FOUNDED 2000**

**CURRENT REVENUE \$390,000**

**DESCRIPTION:** Medicine Wheel Productions (MWP) engages young people and adults in constructive dialogue through public art to help them build awareness of self, community, and the human condition. The practice of creating, presenting, and witnessing art provides opportunities to experience moments of profound recognition that can be pivotal in transforming an individual's perspective of himself or herself and his or her community. As part of its commitment to inclusion, MWP engages young people who have experienced isolation, addiction, racism, poverty, and court involvement in all aspects of production and presentation of the art. Recognizing, that issues of inclusion and healing know no borders, MWP projects range from the local to the international, from South Boston to the border region of Ireland. Every day, MWP sees the healing and transformative effects of art on individuals and communities and envisions a world where art furthers reconciliation, civic engagement, inclusion, and peaceful coexistence.

**INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY:** MWP Productions is seeking to raise \$700,000 over two years to support its work with individuals and communities through its ongoing public art projects, including the annual Medicine Wheel installation and No Man's Land in South Boston.

### THE NEED

For individuals and communities that have experienced chronic stress or trauma, art provides a uniquely effective approach to healing. Unlike conventional interventions, art reaches beyond the rational to the emotional and spiritual levels, opening up new perspectives and dialogues. MWP's local community, South Boston, is representative of communities worldwide that have struggled over many decades, and where interaction with art provides opportunities for positive change. In South Boston:

- 33% of young people live in poverty.
- The high school dropout rate is twice the rate of Boston Public Schools overall.
- The rates of hospitalization and mortality due to substance abuse are the highest of any neighborhood in the city.

### THE OPPORTUNITY FOR SOCIAL IMPACT

Engagement with art has been shown to improve community connectedness and reduce problems related to delinquent behavior among young people. MWP's model of engaging young people alongside adults to create and experience art is uniquely positioned to positively impact the individuals and communities where it is most needed, both locally and abroad.

- MWP works with a diverse mix of over 300 young people each year, providing them with skills and support.
- Annually, over 3,000 people across Massachusetts experience MWP's public art installations.
- MWP has been honored by the Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center and the Arts & Business Council of Greater Boston.

### TWO-YEAR GOALS

- Continue to increase the number of young people engaged in local projects to 400+ annually: No Man's Land and the Medicine Wheel Installation project for World AIDS Day/A Day Without Art
- Expand employment opportunities for young people (ages 19-25) by moving two hourly assistants to salaried positions
- Continue and expand partnerships with state agencies and partner organizations
- Further develop plan and implementation of Tonnes project
- Build organizational capacity and increase financial sustainability

### WAYS TO INVEST

#### Financial

- \$30,000 – Full-time, salaried assistant from 19-25 year old age group
- \$5,000 – Planting materials for No Man's Land
- \$1,000 – Stipend for one young participant in summer program

#### In-kind

- Office equipment (copier, phone system)
- Printing services and stationery
- Strategy, branding, human resource expertise
- New board members and strategic board support



## SOCIAL INNOVATION IN ACTION – MEDICINE WHEEL PRODUCTIONS MODEL

### The Projects

MWP is organized around its site-specific public art projects, focusing on 3–4 projects per year. MWP’s South Boston studio is active year round, with professional artists, young people, and other community members together creating the elements for upcoming installations. In addition, MWP holds art classes and exhibitions in its studio space. MWP projects respond to an identified need in a community and are developed based on the community’s interest and the capacity of MWP to design and lead a meaningful, creative experience. Projects include annually occurring events, ongoing projects, and one-time installations. Examples of major projects include:

Produced annually since 1992 in conjunction with World AIDS Day (also known as A Day Without Art), “**Medicine Wheel**,” a 24-hour vigil with a major sculptural art installation, brings people from every walk of life and every social class together to commemorate the tragedy of the AIDS epidemic, or any loss, in their own communities and worldwide.

**No Man’s Land** is an ongoing project that grew out of MWP Founder and Artistic Director Michael Dowling’s work in his own South Boston neighborhood. As Dowling began leading the community in using public art to transform an abandoned piece of land where drug use and violence had become rampant, a wave of teen suicides hit South Boston. Friends of those who had died congregated at the lot, called “No Man’s Land.” Dowling invited them to join the project, mentoring them in reclaiming their lives while restoring the land. Work has continued at No Man’s Land for over a decade, and Dowling continues to mentor young people as they add gardens, pathways, and sculpture to the formerly blighted land.

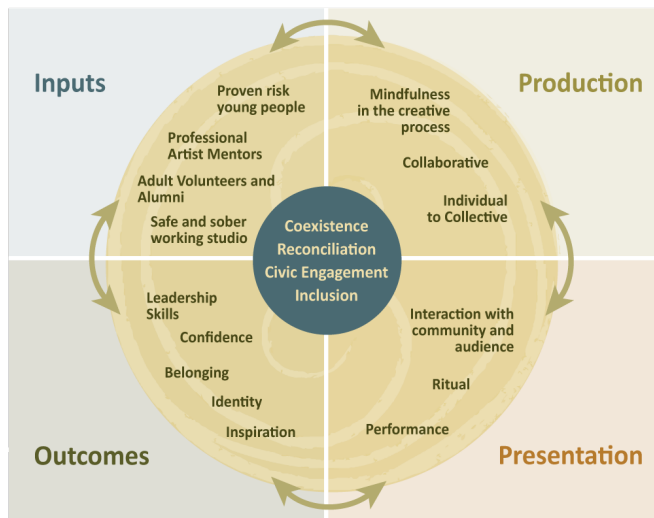
Recognizing that many communities around the world experience challenges similar to those in South Boston, MWP has embarked on a journey to work along the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Scheduled to run through 2013, **The Tonnes: a Meeting of the Waters** invites communities into dialogue through poetry and sculpture. The project will involve a series of workshops where individuals are invited to create poetry reflecting their own experiences. Later, through a public ceremony, participants will engage in a ritual that connects their experiences to those of their fellow community members.

### The Process

MWP engages diverse groups of people in the creation and presentation of its artwork not just because of the life-changing effects it can have on the participants, but also because their involvement shapes the art into something more meaningful than it would have been without them. It engages people emotionally and makes them feel a part of something larger, and the work then reflects their life experiences. According to Artistic Director Michael Dowling, “the essential element that completes the work is the experience of the people who participate in it.”

**Inputs:** The vast majority of MWP’s young people are “proven risk,” not just at risk, having already experienced poverty, discrimination, violence, addiction, and/or court involvement. In order to reach young people who would benefit from their work, MWP has established ongoing referral relationships that include local high schools, the juvenile court system and Department of Youth Services, and Cushing House, a recovery program for addicted young people. In addition, some young people find their way to MWP on their own, looking for an experience that might change their lives.

**Production and Presentation:** MWP engages participants in both production and presentation of its projects. Production takes place in the MWP studio and in the community and is an individual and collective endeavor. Throughout the act of production, participants are encouraged to be mindful of their creative process. As they present the piece to the public, participants engage in a ritual or set of symbolic actions (such as placing stones in the installation), an essential step that provides opportunities for self-reflection and awareness. Interaction with the audience broadens the experience further, as participants can envision their place in the community.





*“Arts and cultural work can restore and nourish people's capacities to listen, to empathize, to communicate, to receive, to hope, to imagine, to trust, and to act compassionately—the very capacities required for sustainable coexistence and reconciliation.”*

*–Creative Approaches to Coexistence*

Lesley Yalen and Cynthia Cohen, Brandeis University

**Outcomes:** Through the process of creating and presenting public art, individual voices are combined to become the collective. People learn to imagine, rather than imitate. They become inspired and develop a work ethic that comes from the valuable skills they acquire. They learn to recognize and value their individualism and personal agency, while also gaining a deeper understanding of their role in the broader community.

## TEAM AND GOVERNANCE

MWP is led by Founder and Artistic Director Michael Dowling and Managing Director Tabatha Flores. Michael, known as one of the commonwealth's most innovative and courageous artists, established MWP in 2000 after leading several significant public art projects in the Boston area. Michael holds a BFA and MFA from Boston University. Tabatha has a background in art and business; she has senior management experience in both the museum industry and in the private sector. Tabatha holds an ALB with a concentration in the History of Art and Architecture from Harvard University and an MA in Art Business from the Sotheby's Institute of Art, London, UK. She has also participated in executive business courses at Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College. MWP's Board of Directors includes members from diverse backgrounds, including the business and arts communities.

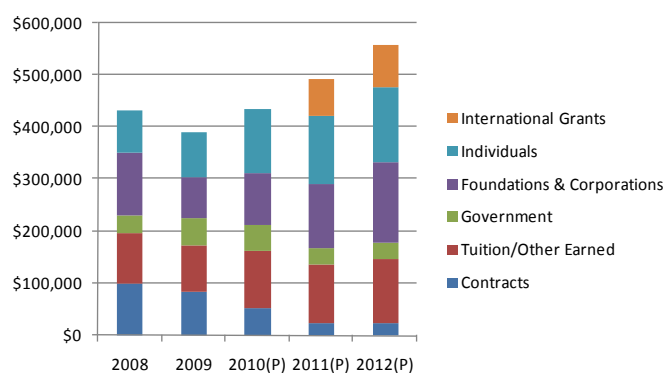
## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Throughout its history, MWP has had a diverse revenue base, with significant amounts coming from both earned and contributed sources. Earned revenue sources include school and social service contracts that support young people's participation in MWP's projects. In addition, MWP runs a Studio School and biannual artist retreats that provide tuition revenue to the organization. MWP receives contributed revenue from individual, government, corporate, and foundation sources. In order to support its current projects and invest in The Tonnes, MWP plans to increase revenue from individuals and foundations, both locally and in the European Union. Funding has already been secured from the EU Peace III for Phase I of the Tonnes, and MWP will continue dedicated efforts to raise funds for the project in the United States and internationally. To ensure its work is sufficiently funded, MWP leadership will work closely with the organization's current grant writers and will hire additional development staff with expertise in major gifts and international fundraising.

## KEY SOCIAL IMPACT INVESTORS

- Clowes Family Foundation
- Lenny Zakim Fund
- Amelia Peabody
- Gillette HOPE Grant
- Hyams Foundation
- Shapiro Foundation
- Barr Foundation – Culture for Change Project
- John W. Alden Trust
- Cabot Family Charitable Trust
- NE Grassroots
- Foley Hoag LLP
- Cushing House
- Commonwealth Corporation
- Massachusetts Cultural Council

## Revenue Sources and Projections





*“The philosophy I learned here has never left me. Every problem I solve is because of something I learned here.”*

– 20-year-old young man who participated in MWP for five years

## PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

**Program Performance and Organizational Health:** Below is a summary of the key measures that MWP will be tracking to demonstrate progress, capture lessons learned, and make course corrections as needed. *Note: Fiscal year is January 1 – December 31.*

	FY 2010	FY 2011 (P)	FY 2012 (P)
<b>Program Performance</b>			
Artistic programming: exhibitions, openings, and performances	30	30	30
Number of proven-risk and high-risk young people engaged in artistic production	300	350	425
Public participation in all public art projects	3,000	3,500	4,000
Employment opportunities for young people (ages 19–25)	2 hourly	2 salaried	2 salaried
Progress on Tonnes project	Continued planning	Phase I Completed	Phase II Completed
<b>Organizational Health/Capacity Building</b>			
Add development staff	Search and hire		
Increase foundation support	\$89,500	\$115,000	\$145,000
Increase support from individual donors	\$123,500	\$130,000	\$140,000
Add 4 new board members	2 new members	1 new member	1 new member
Total revenue	\$436,000	\$492,000	\$557,000

**Social Impact:** MWP’s social impact occurs on many levels and is often difficult to measure. For participants and audiences, engagement with public art presents numerous opportunities for self-reflection and interaction with others that can lead to healing, peace building, and transformation over time. MWP is one of five organizations chosen for the Boston Youth Arts Evaluation Project (BYAEP), funded by the Barr Foundation. This project is developing new evaluation tools to capture the impact of arts programming on high-risk youth and has helped MWP to shape its data collection and evaluation processes. The following data are from MWP’s 2009–10 BYAEP surveys:

<b>Percentage of MWP youth participants who agree or strongly agree that MWP contributed to their ability to...</b>	
Understand more about the arts	90%
Build relationships with mentors and other adults	89%
Work well with people of other racial/ethnic groups	78%
Take education seriously and work hard	74%
Work to solve problems in the community	68%

## Success Story: Richie, South Boston – 23 years old

Richie came to MWP through the court system. Richie had served time in jail and needed to complete 300 hours of community service as part of his probation. He began working at No Man’s Land, planting and laying tile every day throughout the summer. Soon, he began helping with administrative tasks at the MWP office. Today, Richie works full-time as MWP’s administrative assistant. He is also enrolled in a summer accounting class, and he will be traveling to Italy to assist with MWP’s spring artists’ retreat. For Richie, choosing to stay out of jail was the “harder path.” MWP has helped him to continue on that path and look toward the future.

