



**ARTS AND CULTURAL DESTINATION
ENHANCEMENT FUNDING PROGRAM
The Mane Tour: A Horse Fever™ Public Art
Experience**

The Mane Tour, a ten-month celebration marking MCA's 25th anniversary and honoring the legacy of Horse Fever™, Ocala's first public art initiative. Designed to attract tourists to Ocala/Marion County to tour the public art installations throughout the county.

Jaye Baillie, APR, MCA Executive Director

Authorization Statement for the

Arts and Cultural Destination Enhancement Funding Program

Marion Cultural Alliance, Inc. (MCA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization governed by a volunteer Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors authorizes the Executive Director to enter into contracts, agreements, and grant documents necessary to carry out programs and initiatives approved by the Board. This includes the authority to execute contracts related to *The Mane Tour: A Horse Fever Art Experience* and to act as the organization's authorized representative for all matters pertaining to this project.

Approved by the MCA Board of Directors, November 13, 2025

ARTS AND CULTURAL DESTINATION ENHANCEMENT FUNDING PROGRAM

MARION CULTURAL ALLIANCE PROPOSAL

For

The Mane Tour: A Horse Fever™ Public Art Experience

Section I. Program Event Summary, Organizational Information and Program Management

Project Summary: The Mane Tour: – A Horse Fever™ Public Art Experience

In 2026, Marion Cultural Alliance (MCA), in partnership with the Florida Breeders and Owners Association (FTBOA) will present The Mane Event, a ten-month celebration marking MCA's 25th anniversary and honoring the legacy of **Horse Fever™**, Ocala's first public art initiative. Building on the success of the beloved horse sculptures that have become cultural landmarks, The Mane Tour will highlight the arts as a catalyst for tourism, community pride, and economic growth.

In collaboration with local artists and partners, MCA will host creative programs such as The Mane Stage (live performances), The Mane Press (interactive art), and The Mane Squeeze (community events), culminating in the Applaud the Arts gala. The centerpiece will be a **traveling Horse Fever™ sculpture** by renowned equine artist **Sharon Crute**, (Attachment A) appearing at locations and events throughout Marion County to encourage exploration of Marion County's arts, historic sites, and local businesses.

The celebration launches January 9, 2026, at Brick City Center for the Arts, featuring a month long exhibit of new works by past **Horse Fever™** artists.

By blending art, tourism, and community engagement, The Mane Tour will attract visitors, increase cultural tourism, and strengthen Marion County's reputation as a vibrant arts destination and the Horse Capital of the World.

Organizational Information

For more than two decades, MCA has served as a multidisciplinary arts venue and a consistent source of advocacy, funding, and creative inspiration. What began as a small group of passionate individuals has grown into a thriving nonprofit supported by more than **386 members**, a **14-member Board of Directors**, seven Emeritus members, two **full-time** and four **part-time staff**, dedicated volunteers, and more than 30 Business pARTners.

MCA is formally designated as the **Local Arts Agency** by both the City of Ocala and the Marion County Board of County Commissioners. The organization fulfills all the functions of

an LAA (as defined by the Americans for the Arts) including presenting programming to the public, supporting artists and arts organizations, managing cultural facilities, awarding grants, participating in community cultural planning and policy development, and advocating for the arts.

MCA's home, the **Brick City Center for the Arts**, is located just off Ocala's historic downtown square. Surrounded by shops and restaurants, The Brick functions as a gallery, event venue, and community gathering space. MCA's lease with the City of Ocala for The Brick, underscoring its role as a cultural cornerstone in the community.

With an **annual operating budget of \$332,000** and a **cultural endowment nearing \$900,000**, MCA maintains long-term financial stability. The endowment was established to fund the arts in perpetuity, with its annual proceeds supporting MCA's cultural grants. To date, MCA has provided more than **\$685,000 in direct funding** to over 35 nonprofit arts, cultural, heritage, and historic organizations. MCA also has **\$87,000 in restricted funds** for artist grants. Since its inception, MCA has raised 3.25 million dollars in support of artists, arts organizations for programming, scholarships, stipends, and art sales.

Fundraising events such as **Applaud the Arts**, **Art in the Attic**, **Give4Marion**, **Block Party**, and **Art in Business** generate steady revenue, complemented by gallery rentals, event sponsorships, monthly exhibits, and an artist gift shop. MCA's **2024–2026 strategic plan** prioritizes growing revenue through expanded venue rentals, increased corporate sponsorships, enhanced exhibitions, and the development of a **25th Anniversary Horse Fever™ project in 2026**.

MCA builds a stronger, more inclusive arts ecosystem by implementing innovative strategies that expand minority representation in grants, exhibitions, and performances.

Funding this grant will support the programming, marketing, and activities associated with *The Mane Event*, MCA's ambitious 10-month celebration honoring its legacy and advancing its mission.

Program Management

Mission Statement

Marion Cultural Alliance (MCA) exists to CHAMPION the arts, artists, and nonprofit arts organizations; to CONVENE the community through arts experiences; and to CREATE a thriving, vibrant arts presence in Ocala/Marion County

Economic Impact Information

Using the Americans for the Arts Economic Impact Calculator, MCA has a \$604,549 economic impact. The impact does not take into consideration the impact MCA has on local arts organizations with its annual cultural grant funding.

MCA's Organizational Capacity to Manage the Arts and Cultural Destination Enhancement Funding Program

MCA is uniquely positioned to successfully plan, manage, and deliver *The Mane Event* in 2026. Since its founding in 2001, MCA has established a proven track record of creating, producing, and sustaining large-scale cultural initiatives, including the nationally recognized **Horse Fever™** public art project. Over the past 24 years, MCA has distributed more than **\$635,000 in grants** to local arts organizations, leveraged **National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) matching funds** in consecutive funding cycles, and managed signature events such as **Applaud the Arts**, **Artober Fest**, and rotating exhibits at the Brick City Center for the Arts.

MCA's capacity is strengthened by:

- **Organizational Infrastructure** – MCA is the officially designated local arts agency for the City of Ocala and Marion County, with an experienced professional staff, active Board of Directors, and strong community partnerships.
- **Project Management Experience** – MCA has coordinated multi-month, county-wide initiatives engaging hundreds of artists, dozens of partner organizations, and thousands of community members.
- **Community Trust and Engagement** – MCA's stewardship of Horse Fever created a lasting legacy of public art that continues to drive tourism. MCA has built long-term relationships with artists, cultural institutions, businesses, and local governments, ensuring broad participation and support.
- **Financial Stewardship** – MCA has successfully administered local, state, and federal grants, maintaining full compliance with NEA requirements and delivering measurable impact.
- **Marketing and Tourism Expertise** – MCA has a proven ability to promote arts and cultural events that attract both residents and visitors, driving cultural tourism and economic activity throughout Marion County.

With this foundation, MCA has the vision, leadership, and organizational strength to carry out *The Mane Tour* as a year-long, community-wide celebration. By combining artistic excellence with strong project management and collaborative partnerships, MCA will ensure the project's success while maximizing its cultural and economic impact.

Financial Request: \$10,000

Marion Cultural Alliance Board of Directors

2025 MCA Board Roster & Roles			
Leadership Team			
Cruze	Ginger	2024 & 2025 Chair	Westport High School & Marion County Center for the Arts (Magnet)
		Chair-Elect Treasurer	
Hartley	James	Finance/	Gooding & Batsel, PLLC, Attorney
Navetta	Nick	Endowment	Edward Jones Financial Advisor
		Secretary	
Board Members			
Florentino	Mel	Artist Liaison	Professional Artist, Gallery Director, NOMA
Hammond, PhD	Leslie	Grants Committee	Artistic Eye Art Appraiser
Hutto	Brooke	Marion County School Arts Liaison	Marion County School District, K-12 Fine Arts Supervisor
Hoff	Tammy	Volunteers	City of Ocala Public Information Officer/water Resources
Lacefield	Valarie	Artist Workshop	Arts Educator/Ambleside School
McClain	Matt	Advocacy	Marion County Board of County Commission Liaison to MCA
Manning	Kiah	Applaud the Arts Chair	Hudson Furniture/Designer
Mehring	Michael	Finance Committee	Suncoast Credit Union/Financial Analyst
Prince	Cherrietta	Grants	Owner, Prince Marketing
Van Leuven	Cara	Marketing	Professional Artist
Warren	LuAnne	Membership	Co-Owner Brick City Digital
Emeritus			
Collier	Daryl	Emeritus	CPA
			Philanthropist-LILAC Foundation
Irwin	Lisa	Emeritus	Arts in Health Ocala Metro
McCune	Jessica	Emeritus	Retired Nurse
Kilgore	Trish	2025 Grants Chair	Roberts Realty
Poe	Mary Ellen	Chair	Retired Hospice of MC CEO
Seiffer	Lisa	Emeritus	Senior Analyst, Signature Brands
			Community Outreach, Institute of Human and Machine Cognition
Zink	Laurie	Emeritus	

MCA Emeritus Members

Emeritus			
Collier	Daryl	Emeritus	CPA
			Philanthropist-LILAC Foundation
Irwin	Lisa	Emeritus	Arts in Health Ocala Metro
McCune	Jessica	Emeritus	Retired Nurse
Kilgore	Trish	2025 Grants Chair	Roberts Realty
Poe	Mary Ellen	Chair	Retired Hospice of MC CEO
Seiffer	Lisa	Emeritus	Senior Analyst, Signature Brands
			Community Outreach, Institute of Human and Machine Cognition
Zink	Laurie	Emeritus	

MCA Team

Baille APR	Jaye	Executive Director
Justiniano	Ashley	Chief Arts Officer
McGill	Jonia	Gallery Host/ Social Media
Marques	Chelsey	Administrative Assistant
Rios	Michelle "Micki"	Saturday Host
Upton	Nicole	Gallery Assistant

Section II. Narrative Statement of Program/Events

In 2026, Marion Cultural Alliance (MCA) will launch The Mane Event, an eleven-month celebration designed to strengthen Ocala/Marion County's identity as a premier cultural tourism destination. Commemorating MCA's 25th anniversary and the legacy of **Horse Fever™**—the community's first large-scale public art project—The Mane Event will use art as a powerful driver of visitation, economic activity, and community pride.

Building on the success of the iconic Horse Fever sculptures that have become cultural landmarks and visitor favorites, MCA will collaborate with local artists, cultural organizations, and tourism partners to present a series of engaging programs that playfully incorporate the word "MANE." Pop up offerings include The Mane Stage (live performances), The Mane Press (interactive art and printmaking), and The Mane Squeeze (community art experiences), all culminating in MCA's 19th annual Applaud the Arts gala with the theme: Join Us at the Winner's Circle-A Derby-Like themed event.

A centerpiece of the 10th month long celebration will be a traveling **Horse Fever™** sculpture by internationally recognized equine artist Sharon Crute, who created the first Horse Fever horse. A robust schedule of events and locations throughout Marion County will feature the new sculpture, encouraging repeat visits, extended stays, and exploration of local businesses, galleries, and historic sites. Visitors and residents can follow the sculpture's journey, in person and online and will have the chance to purchase raffle tickets for a chance to win the horse at the event finale in November 2026.

To expand access and preserve the legacy of **Horse Fever™**, MCA will create a **virtual "Mane Tour"** using **360-degree action camera technology**. Each sculpture will be professionally captured in an immersive, high-resolution format, allowing visitors to explore every horse from any angle — anytime, anywhere.

A dedicated **online landing page** will serve as the tour's digital "stable," featuring each horse within its own interactive viewing space. Visitors can learn about the artist, sponsor, and design inspiration while navigating a 360° view of the sculpture. This experience will not only extend the reach of The Mane Tour to audiences beyond Marion County but also ensure that the artistry and community pride behind **Horse Fever™** are preserved long after the physical sculptures have moved on.

The **Ocala/Marion County Visitors and Convention Bureau** will be able to integrate this virtual tour into its website and promotional efforts, enhancing cultural tourism marketing and offering visitors an engaging preview of the in-person experience.

Through this digital component, **The Mane Tour** will connect global audiences to Ocala's creative spirit while strengthening the region's reputation as an innovative arts and tourism destination.

The Mane Tour initiative launches January 9, 2026, with a *month long exhibit: 25 Years of Creativity-Horse Fever Artist Now*-a special exhibition at Brick City Center for the Arts celebrating the artists who helped make **Horse Fever™** an enduring symbol of Ocala's artistic spirit. The opening event is free and will attract media attention and draw residents and visitors to downtown Ocala.

Through this innovative fusion of public art and tourism activation, The Mane Event will:

- Increase overnight visitation and visitor spending.
- Drive foot traffic to downtown Ocala and cultural districts.
- Enhance the county's reputation as the "Horse Capital of the World™" and an arts destination.
- Generate measurable economic impact through cultural tourism.

The Mane Event celebrates both heritage and innovations showcasing how art, creativity, and community can work together to shape a more vibrant and economically resilient Marion County.

Past Horse Fever Projects: Examples of Community Impact

Since its debut in 2001, **Horse Fever™** has transformed public art in Ocala/Marion County, creating vibrant cultural landmarks and engaging thousands of residents and visitors.

Notable projects include:

1. Original Life-Size Horse Sculptures (2001–2004)
 - Four iconic horse sculptures installed throughout downtown Ocala.
 - Designed by local and regional artists, these works became permanent cultural symbols.
 - Engaged community through public unveilings, school programs, and artist talks.
2. Horse Fever II (2005)
 - Expanded the project with additional horse sculptures and interactive public art stations.

- Encouraged exploration of downtown Ocala and increased foot traffic to local businesses.
3. Horse Fever III & IV (2008–2015)
- Introduced themed sculpture trails, including equine art reflecting local history and culture.
 - Partnered with schools and arts organizations to host educational tours and workshops.
 - Generated local media coverage and attracted out-of-town visitors, boosting cultural tourism.
4. Artist Exhibits and Legacy Programs
- Ongoing exhibitions celebrating **Horse Fever™** artists' contributions, maintaining community engagement beyond the sculptures.
 - Example: The January 2026 exhibit unites past **Horse Fever™** artists connects past projects to new works, demonstrating lasting artistic impact.

Impact: Over two decades, **Horse Fever™** has become a cultural touchstone, encouraging community pride, supporting artists, and driving measurable tourism and economic benefit for Marion County.

Section III: Tourism Generation/Marketing Plan

Why and How The Mane Tour Attracts Tourists

The Mane Tour: A Horse Fever™ Art Experience is designed to be a compelling cultural tourism attraction by offering visitors **unique, interactive, and memorable experiences**. The tour showcases a series of artist-designed horse sculptures across Marion County, encouraging exploration of downtown Ocala, galleries, cultural landmarks, and local businesses. The **traveling sculpture program** invites repeat visitation, as tourists follow each horse to a new location every month.

Signature experiences like **The Mane Stage** (live performances), **The Mane Press** (hands-on workshops), and **The Mane Squeeze** (community art projects) provide **immersive engagement** for visitors of all ages, making the tour more than just a viewing opportunity—it is an interactive cultural journey.

The addition of a **360-degree virtual tour** allows potential visitors to preview the experience and plan their visit, increasing regional and out-of-town tourism appeal. By combining **art, equine heritage, and community engagement**, The Mane Tour

enhances Ocala/Marion County's reputation as a **vibrant arts destination**, drives foot traffic to local businesses, and generates measurable economic impact.

Timing and Virtual Experience of The Mane Tour

The Mane Tour: A Horse Fever™ Art Experience will run from **January through October 2026**, offering seasonally tailored programs to engage visitors both in-person and online. The celebration launches in **January**.

Winter and spring (February–October) will feature sculpture rotations tied to cultural events local events and activities, encouraging exploration of downtown and cultural sites. Pop up events around the horse will be created to maximize visitor and resident engagement.

A **360-degree virtual tour** of each sculpture will be available on a dedicated landing page, allowing visitors worldwide to explore the horses interactively. This digital experience preserves the legacy of Horse Fever, extends tourism reach, and provides the Ocala/Marion Visitor and Convention Bureau with a tool to promote the county's arts and cultural attractions year-round.

The celebration culminates in **November** with the final sculpture display, raffle announcement, and the 19th Annual **Applaud the Arts – Grand MANE Event**. By offering the raffle, a visitor or resident has a chance to own a piece of public art or donate it to the county for display in one of their parks.

Objective:

To attract local, regional, and out-of-town visitors to **The Mane Tour: A Horse Fever™ Art Experience**, driving cultural tourism, economic impact, and community engagement in Ocala/Marion County.

Target Audiences:

- **Primary:** Cultural tourists, families, and art enthusiasts from Central Florida, neighboring states, and equine-tourism markets.
- **Secondary:** Residents of Ocala/Marion County seeking local arts experiences.

Marketing Channels & Strategies:

1. Digital Marketing:

- **Social Media Campaigns:** Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X (Twitter) targeting arts, culture, and equine communities. Paid ads will be geo-

targeted to Central Florida and major nearby metro areas. Estimated reach: 200,000–250,000 impressions over 11 months.

- **Email Newsletters:** MCA subscriber base and partner lists, including tourism partners. Expected open rate: 25–30%, with click-through to event pages.
- **Landing Page & 360° Virtual Tour:** Dedicated site showcasing each horse (approx. 30 still installed), event schedule, and travel planning resources, driving web traffic and extending visitor engagement globally.

2. Partnerships & Cross-Promotion:

- **Ocala/Marion County Visitors & Convention Bureau:** Feature on bureau website, digital newsletter, and visitor guides.
- **Local Businesses & Cultural Institutions:** Promote sculpture stops and workshops through co-branded flyers, and social media shares.

3. Traditional Media:

- Local and regional print media (tourism magazines, lifestyle publications).
- Media releases newspapers, radio, and TV for key events, including the launch, venues, events, and the Applaud the Arts MANE Event. Estimated media impressions: 150,000–200,000.

4. Signage & Wayfinding:

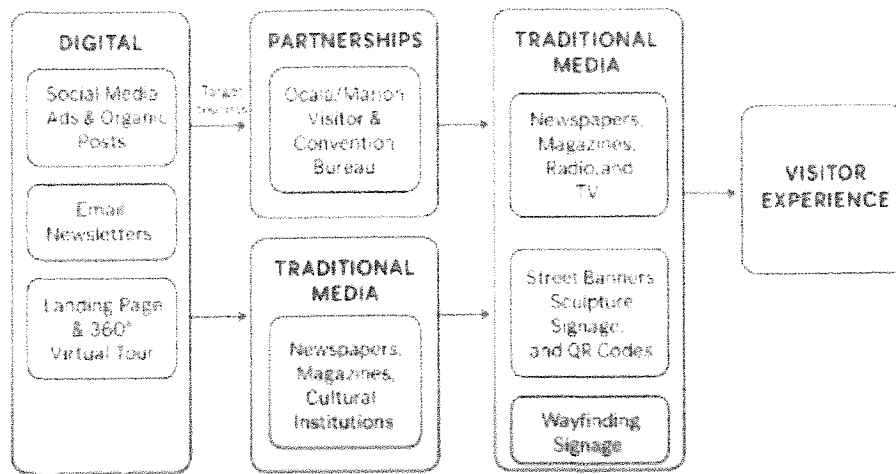
- On-site signage at sculpture locations with QR codes linking to the virtual tour and landing page.

Expected Outcomes:

- Over **350,000 combined impressions** via digital and traditional media.
- Increased tourist visitation to downtown Ocala, cultural sites, and partner businesses.
- High engagement with the virtual tour, extending reach beyond the local region and providing a lasting resource for promoting Marion County arts and tourism.

All marketing will include the OMCVCB/MCBCC logo block in each of its marketing platform platforms, coupled with integrated marketing spend.

The Mane Tour Marketing & Distribution Map



Evaluation Plan

MCA will evaluate ***The MANE Tour: A Horse Fever™ Art Experience*** using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods designed to measure tourism impact, visitor engagement, and return on investment.

1. Quantitative Evaluation

- **Visitor Attendance and Origin:** MCA will collect attendance data through ticketing, guest sign-ins, and online participation metrics. Zip code data will identify out-of-county and out-of-state visitors, allowing us to determine the percentage of tourist attendance.
- **Economic Impact:** Partnering with the Ocala/Marion County Visitors and Convention Bureau and local hospitality partners, MCA will estimate direct visitor spending on lodging, dining, and retail.
- **Marketing Reach:** Digital analytics will track impressions, click-through rates, and audience reach from social media, website traffic, email campaigns, and paid advertising. Results will measure the effectiveness of promotional efforts in attracting tourists.
- **Engagement Metrics:** Website and virtual tour analytics will measure unique visitors, session duration, and repeat engagement, providing insight into how the virtual component extends tourism visibility beyond the event itself.

2. Qualitative Evaluation

- Visitor Experience: On-site and online surveys will gather visitor feedback on satisfaction, likelihood of return, and perceptions of Marion County as a cultural destination.
- Partner and Business Feedback: Local partners, hotels, and restaurants will be invited to share observations on increased visitor activity and customer traffic during the event period.
- Media and Community Response: Press coverage, testimonials, and social media commentary will be reviewed to assess public perception and brand enhancement for Marion County as an arts and tourism destination.

3. Reporting and Continuous Improvement

Following the event, MCA will compile data into a comprehensive Tourism Impact Report summarizing visitor demographics, spending estimates, media reach, and community outcomes. This report will be shared with tourism partners and funders and will guide strategies for future event marketing, scheduling, and visitor services.

4. Key Indicators of Success

- At least 10% of attendees from outside Marion County
- Documented increase in overnight stays and local business activity
- 85% or higher visitor satisfaction rating based on survey results
- 10% growth in digital engagement and marketing reach
- Positive regional media coverage positioning The MANE Tour and adjacent activities Marion County as an arts destination

Organizational Capacity and Community Support

Marion Cultural Alliance (MCA) has a proven record of success in producing large-scale public art projects that engage the community, attract visitors, and strengthen Marion County's cultural identity. ***The Mane Tour: A Horse Fever™ Art Experience*** builds upon more than two decades of accomplishment through MCA's signature **Horse Fever™** initiatives, each of which has demonstrated our ability to plan, fund, and execute complex community projects with lasting impact.

Since the inaugural **Horse Fever™** in 2001, MCA has coordinated the design, production, and installation of more than 100 life-sized horse sculptures throughout Marion County. Each project has united artists, sponsors, and civic partners to celebrate Ocala's equine

heritage while raising significant funds for the arts. The first *Horse Fever* project generated over \$1 million for the local arts community through sponsorships and art sales, and subsequent projects in 2011 and 2021—*Horse Fever in Motion* and *Horse Fever 20/20*—have continued this legacy of creativity, collaboration, and economic return.

MCA's capacity to deliver *The Mane Tour* is grounded in this extensive experience. Our organization has established systems for artist recruitment and management, sponsor coordination, public art installation, and marketing to both local and tourist audiences. Partnerships with the Florida Thoroughbred Breeders and Owners Association, the Ocala/Marion County Visitors and Convention Bureau, corporate sponsors, and local government ensure broad support and alignment with tourism goals.

This **one-time grant request** will support the development of a **Horse Fever™ Tour Map**—available in both physical and digital formats. The promotion of a new **Horse Fever™** and **showcase of existing Horse Fever™ statutes** will spark new and renewed interest in the beloved public art project, extending its tourism and cultural impact well beyond the 10 months of ***The MANE Tour: A Horse Fever™ Art Experience***.

Public enthusiasm for **Horse Fever™** remains exceptionally strong. The horses have become iconic symbols of Ocala/Marion County—frequently featured in travel guides, social media, and regional tourism campaigns. Past projects have attracted thousands of visitors who followed the “**Horse Fever™ public art sites**,” exploring downtown Ocala and surrounding areas to experience each sculpture. Local businesses have reported increased customer traffic and spending during Horse Fever launches and events, confirming the project's economic benefit and its role in positioning Ocala as a vibrant arts destination.

With professional staff, experienced volunteers, and an engaged Board of Directors, MCA is uniquely positioned to manage *The Mane Tour* from concept to completion—ensuring artistic excellence, broad community participation, and measurable tourism outcomes. Building upon 20 years of sustained success, this project represents both a celebration of Marion County's artistic legacy and a forward-looking investment in its continued cultural and economic vitality.

Event-Specific Income and Expense Budget

Project Title: *The Mane Tour: A Horse Fever Art Experience*

Total Project Budget: \$15,000

Funding Request (ACDEP): \$10,000

MCA In-Kind Match: \$5,000

Income

Source	Description	Amount
Anonymous Sponsor	Cash contribution in support of The Mane Tour	\$5,000
Arts and Cultural Destination Enhancement Program (ACDEP) Grant	Requested project funding	\$10,000
MCA In-Kind – Staff	Event coordination, marketing support, volunteer management	\$3,000
MCA In-Kind – Venue	Use of Brick City Center for the Arts gallery/event space for January launch exhibit	\$1,500
MCA In-Kind – Volunteer Support	Estimated value of volunteer time for events and outreach	\$500
Total Income		\$20,000

Expenses

Category	Description	Amount
Advertising & Publicity	Print, radio, online media, posters, brochure/map, and landing page on mcaocala.org	\$7,500
360 Camera	Equipment purchase for virtual/interactive tour	\$600

Category	Description	Amount
Graphic Design	Design of promotional materials, Horse Fever Tour map, and online assets	\$1,900
Total Grant-Related Expense (ACDEP Funded)		\$10,000

Notes

- **In-kind contributions** from MCA total **\$5,000**, demonstrating strong organizational commitment and community support.
- This is a **one-time funding request** to support the launch and promotion of *The Mane Tour: A Horse Fever Art Experience*.
- The project's impact will extend beyond the 11-month tour through continued public engagement with the physical and online components.

Attachment A

Marion Cultural Alliance Announces Featured Artist Sharon Crute for

The MANE Tour: A Horse Fever™ Art Experience

Marion Cultural Alliance (MCA) is proud to announce that internationally recognized equine artist **Sharon Crute** will be featured as part of ***MANE Tour: A Horse Fever™ Art Experience***, a ten-month celebration of art, community, and equine heritage.

A dynamic force in the world of equine art, Crute is known for her expressive depictions of horses in motion. Drawing from years spent working within the Thoroughbred racing industry, her paintings radiate authenticity, energy, and emotional depth. Her bold compositions and distinctive use of color have earned her exhibitions in galleries and museums across the United States and abroad — including the **National Sporting Library and Museum** in Middleburg, Virginia, and **SPA Fine Arts** in Saratoga Springs, New York. Her work enjoys a devoted following among collectors and horse enthusiasts alike.

Crute has been part of the *Horse Fever* public art project since its inception in 2001. Her artistic vision helped define the visual legacy of Marion County, celebrated worldwide as the **Horse Capital of the World®**. Through her artwork and continued engagement with Ocala's thriving arts community, Crute exemplifies the intersection of art and equine culture that lies at the heart of the *Horse Fever* legacy.

"Sharon's work has become part of the cultural fabric of Marion County," said **Laurie W. Zink**, Co-Founder of the ***Horse Fever™*** public art project. "Her vision and artistry have shaped *Horse Fever* from the very beginning, helping to capture the spirit of our community and its deep connection to the horse. In fact, she created the original prototype — *Champ*, *World Champ*, and *Cultural Champ*. We're honored to celebrate her contributions through *The MANE Event*."

"Being part of ***Horse Fever™*** has been one of the most meaningful experiences of my career," said **Sharon Crute**. "Each project reflects how deeply our community values both the arts and the horse. Revisiting ***A Horse Fever™*** through ***The MANE Tour: A Horse Fever™ Art Experience*** feels like coming full circle — celebrating how far we've come and the creativity that continues to thrive in Ocala."

The MANE Tour: A Horse Fever™ Art Experience launches in **January 2026** with an exhibit at **Brick City Center for the Arts**, featuring a new *Horse Fever* statue by Crute. All past *Horse Fever* artists have been invited to showcase their work throughout the month. The exhibit will celebrate the evolution of Ocala's iconic public art project and its lasting impact on the region's cultural identity.

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Hotel Accommodations for the MANE Tour: Horse Fever Arts Experience

Issued by: Marion Cultural Alliance (MCA)

Project: MANE Tour: Horse Fever Arts Experience

RFP Release Date: TBD

Proposal Due Date: January 9, 2025

1. Introduction

Marion Cultural Alliance (MCA) is preparing for the MANE Tour: *A Horse Fever Arts Experience*, an 11-month celebration showcasing public art, community engagement, and Ocala/Marion County's equine heritage. As part of this initiative, MCA anticipates hosting visiting artists and visitors who may require overnight accommodations.

MCA invites area hotels to submit proposals for preferred lodging partnerships to support these stays throughout the duration of the tour.

2. Project Overview

The MANE Tour will highlight Marion County's iconic Horse Fever public art program through special events, tours, and educational experiences. To support the success of this initiative, MCA seeks hotel partners who can provide:

- Comfortable and reliable accommodations
- Consistent pricing throughout the tour period
- Favorable group rates and/or corporate rates
- Added-value amenities and guest services

3. Scope of Services Requested

Hotels are invited to submit proposals that address the following:

A. Room Rates & Availability

- Standard room rate offered to MCA guests
- Rate validity period (ideally for full 11 months)

- Blackout dates, if any
- Availability of suites or upgraded rooms
- Group block availability (estimated range: 5–25 rooms per event)

B. Amenities & Inclusions

- Complimentary breakfast options
- Parking availability and fees
- Wi-Fi access (preferably complimentary)
- On-site restaurant/bar offerings
- Shuttle transportation (if available)
- Fitness center, pool, or other guest amenities

C. Added Value for Partnership

- Flexible cancellation or modification policies

D. Reservation Process

- Dedicated booking link or promo code
- Direct point of contact for MCA guest services
- Payment arrangements (direct billing, credit card guarantee, etc.)

4. Estimated Usage

While exact numbers may vary, MCA anticipates the following:

- **Individual visitors stays:** 1–2 nights per visit

5. Proposal Requirements

Please include the following in your proposal:

1. Overview of hotel property and amenities
2. Proposed room rates and availability
3. List of included amenities and added-value considerations
4. Contact information for primary hotel representative
5. Any additional information that distinguishes your property as a partner

6. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Competitive and transparent pricing
- Value-added offerings
- Proximity to MCA, Downtown Ocala, and Horse Fever sites
- Flexibility and ease of booking
- Overall alignment with MCA's guest experience expectations

7. Submission Instructions

Please submit proposals electronically in PDF format to:

Jaye Baillie

Executive Director, Marion Cultural Alliance

Email: Jaye.Baillie@mcaocala.org

Phone: 352.369-1500

Proposals must be received by **(January 9, 2026)**.

8. Timeline

- **RFP Released:** December 5, 2025
- **Proposal Submission Deadline:** December 29, 2025
- **Hotel Partner Selection:** January 7, 2026
- **Partnership Effective:** Beginning of MANE Tour period-October 31, 2026

9. Contact Information

For questions or clarifications, please contact:

Jaye Baillie, Executive Director, Marion Cultural Alliance 352-369-1500 jaye.baillie@mcaocala.org

Thank you for your interest in partnering with Marion Cultural Alliance to support the MANE Tour: *A Horse Fever Arts Experience*. We look forward to reviewing your proposal.