



## **FY21 Equity Response**

### **Border CrosSing**

733 Portland Ave.  
St. Paul, MN 55104

**Organization Fiscal Year End:** 06/30/2020  
**Organization Annual Income:** \$192,064.49  
**Organization Annual Expense:** \$192,276.78

### **ER21-1-005 Border CrosSing Equipment**

Funding for Border CrosSing to purchase professional equipment and software to create digital performance and educational content in lieu of live concerts and events during the COVID Pandemic.

**Amount Requested:** \$2,500.00  
**Start Date:** 10/20/2020  
**End Date:** 12/01/2020  
**Total Project Expenses:** \$2,700.00  
**Fiscal Sponsor:**

### **Group's Purpose & Background**

Border CrosSing is a choir founded in 2017 with the mission of integrating historically-segregated audiences and musicians through the performance of choral music. Since founding, we have successfully presented three seasons of programming. Despite our small size and newness, we are making a difference in the Twin Cities' musical landscape. Our 2019-2020 season has received excellent reviews, with our 2019 performance of "La Pasión según San Marcos" with the Minnesota Orchestra included in the Star Tribune's year-end list of the Twin Cities' best concerts of the year, and a feature story and glowing review of our end-of-the-year concert "El Mesías". Border CrosSing's 2018-2019 season recently received national recognition, winning the "2020 Adventurous Programming Award" from Chorus America and the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers.

Border CrosSing has four main areas of programming:

- “Puentes”, a concert series in its third season that explores Latinx culture presented in Latinx spaces.
- Community singing events and workshops that alternate with our concerts.
- Educational concerts at K-12 schools and colleges throughout Minnesota.
- “Heritage Choir”, a community chorus in the West Side of St. Paul planned to launch in September 2020 thanks to an MRAC Arts Learning grant.

## Community

Our community is made up of our singers, our audiences, and local choral musicians. Our main focus since founding has been Latinx music, addressing the near total lack of Latinx representation in classical music. In our three seasons, we have found that there is great enthusiasm for this music in Latinx communities. Most importantly, seeing immigrant cultures represented in our events educates and empowers. One of our audience members, a Latina fifth-grader in St. Paul, wrote to us after we performed in her classroom: “It really does feel amazing to have a group represent my culture. Today it is very dangerous just to be a Latina girl. I feel very safe when I hear this music.”

Our audience is far more diverse than that of comparable choral groups; at least 30% of our audience at Puentes concerts identifies as Latinx, and of those that do not, approximately 50% note that they have family or business connections with the Latinx community. Latinxs in our Saint Paul audience are mainly second- and third-generation, most from Mexico and South America, while most of our North and South Minneapolis audience is made up of recent immigrants from Central America. Based on our surveys, our audience’s ages are nearly evenly distributed across the entire spectrum, with a slight majority in the 25 to 35 age bracket, who often bring children to our events. Our audience is also very economically diverse. Our events are attended by families with children of all ages, students, and senior citizens.

The diversity of our community is represented in the artists of the ensemble and our board of directors. Our ensemble has a strong core of Latinx singers that typically make up half of the personnel in a given project, but also quite diverse in other ways, including several LGBTQIA2+ individuals, non-Latinx people of color, several participants over 60 years old together with singers in their twenties. Our founder and artistic director is closely connected to Twin Cities immigrant communities and well respected in the choral community, and is an immigrant himself. Our board of directors has been recruited directly from the communities at our events and from the musicians in the ensemble.

The pandemic has been devastating to choral singing. Musicians are dealing with widespread cancellations and choral singing is regarded as especially unsafe due to the high risk of super spreading events in an enclosed space. Economic and educational needs in the communities where we work have also worsened and we

have been working closely with organizations in our communities to find ways in which we can contribute. We intend to remain connected to our audiences by releasing a variety of video content online. This includes an interview series which pairs our singers with selected Latinx community members, “virtual choir” videos where we premiere new choral music by editing together videos of our singers performing individually, and educational videos.

## Proposed Project

Our 2020-21 season will be taking place entirely online, until it is deemed safe to return to in-person choral singing. We were forced to cancel most of the final events of our 2019-20 season, and those that were not cancelled were presented online. Examples of these online performances include a live-stream Mother’s Day community sing in collaboration with a local mariachi band and the production of short educational videos to substitute a cancelled performance at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Throughout this process, and looking ahead at the video and audio production needs that will be involved in our upcoming season, we are aware that we lack essential equipment and software needed to present productions that can compete in quality with larger, more resourced organizations.

At the moment, we have been operating with microphones and cameras borrowed from friends and employers, and have been using free software that is not rated for professional-level video and audio production. We are also dealing with access issues, as not all singers and staff have regular access to good quality microphones or a computer capable of these sorts of tasks. Our lack of access to the equipment we need has affected our capacity to remain connected to our audiences and community, and also bars our musicians without access to this equipment from participating in productions that require them.

This grant would be used to purchase a laptop computer, professional-grade audio and video editing software, a USB microphone, and a ring light. This equipment would be crucial in producing our own virtual choir and educational videos and is portable, meaning that it can be loaned to our musicians that do not have access to this sort of equipment. Having professional-grade equipment and software of our own would significantly improve the production quality of our projects and would be essential for continuing to create art and connecting with our community during this period where most choral live performance is deemed unsafe.

This equipment would be used in projects for Border CrosSing’s 2020-21 season. We have researched the equipment we’ll need and will order the laptop with pre-installed professional audio/video software, USB microphone, and ring light on October 20, 2020. Our Artistic Director, Heritage Choir Director, and Operations Coordinator will finish making purchases by early November and spend that month familiarizing themselves with the this equipment, which will then be used to create, edit, and distribute our educational and performance content online for the

remainder of the season and in the future. Some of these projects include online educational presentations for students of all ages, the creation of several “virtual choir” performance videos to premiere new music we have already commissioned, and producing interviews with singers and community members as part of our Heritage Choir program.

We expect the \$2,500 to cover most of the cost of this equipment, and are prepared to cover the remaining cost using unrestricted funds in our operating budget.

## **Board of Directors / Advisory Committee**

Dr. Ahmed Anzaldúa, Conductor, Artistic-Executive Director

Bethany Battafarano, Freelance Musician

Dr. Carrie Henneman Shaw, Freelance Musician & Educator, Board Treasurer

Dan Digre, Business owner

Gilberto Vazquez Valle, Musicologist & Radio Host

Jack Vishneski, Analytics Coach, Board Chair

Jake Endres, Freelance Musician

Lisa Sass Zaragoza, Community Organizer & Professor, UMN

Miluska Novota, Lawyer, Board Secretary

Natalia Romero, Freelance Musician & SPPS Educator, Heritage Choir Director

## **Amount Requested**

\$2,500.00

## **Project Budget Expense**

Powerbook Pro - \$2000

Pre-installed Final Cut Pro - \$300

Pre-installed Logic Pro - \$200

USB microphone - \$150

Ring light - \$50

## **Total Project Cash Expenses**

\$2,700.00

## ***(Important!)* Additional Fields Required**

Please note that in the full application there are additional fields that will need to be completed and are not shown to panelists:

- Type of group
- Legislative MN House District
- Legal Status

- Type of institution
- Organization's arts discipline
- ADA Plan status
- Individuals in leadership (for help filling out this section, please download the ER21 Organizational Leadership Worksheet on the [Equity Response page](https://mrac.org/grants/equity-response) [mrac.org/grants/equity-response])
- Annual participants in the organization's activities
- Project's arts discipline
- Populations benefiting from the project

Depending on your organization and/or project, you may also need to upload:

- Fiscal sponsor letter
- Property owner permission letter