

LEADERSHIP PROFILE



SOULSVILLE FOUNDATION

Chief Executive Officer Soulsville Foundation Memphis, TN

The mission of the Soulsville Foundation is to preserve, promote, and celebrate the many unique cultural assets of the Soulsville, USA neighborhood of Memphis, while supporting the development of new educational and community-building opportunities for its residents and stakeholders.

THE ORGANIZATION

“Soulsville USA.” Emblazoned for years on the Stax Records marquee, the name itself invites the listener, reader or visitor to learn more. Soulsville USA evokes the heritage of a local music business that developed a global following and a neighborhood that gave birth to Aretha Franklin and the “Memphis sound.” Thanks to a new generation of local leaders, Soulsville also evokes the vision for revitalization that over the past decade has captured the enthusiasm of thousands of supporters—whether they reside in a part of Memphis or a part of Memphis resides in them.

The geography is the easier part. In the 1960s, Soulsville USA became the nickname for the South Memphis community surrounding Stax Records, a nickname that proudly set it apart from the slicker, more polished style of Detroit’s Motown Records, a/k/a “Hitsville.”

The mood, though, is the more important part. For many years,



“building strong foundations for nonprofits”™



Soulsville was a bustling and thriving community. It was the community where a young grocery sacker named David Porter became one of Stax Records' most famous songwriters, where Aretha Franklin was born, where Calvin and Phinneas Newborn honed their jazz skills, and where Al Green recorded his super hits at Willie Mitchell's Royal Studios in the 1970s. It was a community where Maurice White grew up and grew into Earth Wind & Fire and where Elvis Presley sneaked into Rev. Herbert Brewster's East Trigg Avenue Baptist church as a teenager to listen to gospel music, much of which Rev. Brewster had written for Mahalia Jackson.

Stax Records and the community it served embodied the power of racial collaboration. From the very beginning, Stax was a fully integrated enterprise, and it grew into the largest integrated business in the Southeast at a time when segregation was still very much the norm.

After the 1967 death of Otis Redding (at age 26), the 1968 assassination in Memphis of Dr. Martin Luther King and the 1975 bankruptcy of Stax Records, Soulsville deteriorated into one of the most impoverished pairs of ZIP Codes in the country (38106 and 38126). The music and the musicians who embraced it may have lived on, but the community itself was in an accelerating downward spiral. The Stax building fell prey to the wrecking ball in 1989.

In the late 1990s, several local business leaders, philanthropists and former employees of Stax Records came together with a vision to preserve, strengthen and leverage the Soulsville legacy. Some ten years later, their vision is now embodied in the [Soulsville Foundation](#)¹ and its three component organizations:

- [Stax Music Academy](#).² Since 2000, the Stax Music Academy has been mentoring at-risk youth—initially from the surrounding Soulsville neighborhoods and increasingly from across Memphis—using music as its tool. A highly regarded after school program that is now housed in its own 27,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility, the Academy embodies



¹ <http://www.soulsvillefoundation.org>

² <http://www.StaxMusicAcademy.org>

the spirit of harmony, respect, and cooperation that defined the legendary Stax Records.

- **[Stax Museum of American Soul Music](#)**.³ In 2003, the world's first and only soul music museum opened its doors to the public on Stax Records' original site. Since then, the Stax Museum has welcomed hundreds of thousands of visitors, sharing the story of American soul music—and especially the "Memphis sound"—through special exhibits, events and various community outreach programs. This 17,000-square-foot facility, an exact replica of the original Stax Records home, has more than 2,000 cultural artifacts, music exhibits, video footage, and items of memorabilia, all assembled to preserve and promote the legacy of American soul music.⁴
- **[The Soulsville Charter School](#)**.⁵ Opened in 2005, the Soulsville Charter School is committed to producing students who will be able to read, communicate effectively and possess high-order thinking skills through the interconnectedness of academics and music. Initially set to provide an academically rigorous college preparatory education for boys and girls in grades 6 - 8, the school is adding one grade per year. Now at 240 students, the school expects to enroll 300 students for the 2009-10 school year.



In all of its programs and projects, the Soulsville Foundation strives to build on the unique history and cultural importance of the Soulsville neighborhood and Memphis itself. Key to long-term success of the various initiatives are strong working relationships with local, regional, national, and international partners who share the dedication to making the birthplace of American soul music a safer, stronger and more prosperous place for all.



³ <http://www.StaxMuseum.com>

⁴ In just 15 years, Stax placed more than 167 hit songs in the Top 100 on the pop charts and a staggering 243 hits in the Top 100 R&B charts. Stax launched the careers of such artists as Otis Redding, Sam & Dave, Rufus & Carla Thomas, Booker T & the MGs; and it furthered careers of the Staple Singers, Luther Ingram, Wilson Pickett, Albert King, Big Star, Jesse Jackson, Bill Cosby, Richard Pryor, the Rance Allen Group, and Moms Mabley, among others.

⁵ <http://www.TheSoulsvilleCharterSchool.org>

THE OPPORTUNITY

Among place-based foundations committed to education and economic development, Soulsville Foundation is an unusual entity, combining an after-school academy, a museum and a charter school under one management team.

Other initiatives capitalize on unique local assets as a centerpiece for community progress—Atlanta’s [East Lake Foundation](#)⁶ and Pittsburgh’s [Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild](#)⁷ are prime examples and national models—but Soulsville Foundation is one of the few enterprises that specifically leverage musical heritage for the greater good.



Everyone involved with the Soulsville Foundation knows that the institution is morphing even as the community is changing. The Foundation has already established a national reputation for its successes and a record of real on impact on kids and the community. Leveraging the national audience served by the Stax Museum, the Foundation expects to develop a fully sustainable model that produces winners from the school and legends from the academy.

The exceptional brand, the unique museum, a successful school and first-rate music academy—all combine with Soulsville’s reputation for racial conciliation to provide a compelling platform for community impact.

THE RELATIONSHIPS

Reports to: Board of Directors, Soulsville Foundation

Direct reports: Executive Director, Stax Museum of American Souls Music
Executive Director, Soulsville Music Academy
Executive Director, Soulsville Charter School
Staff of the Soulsville Foundation

⁶ <http://www.EastLakeFoundation.org/>

⁷ <http://www.ManchesterGuild.org/indexflash.htm>

Other key relationships: Current and potential philanthropic partners and supporters
Memphis-area community and business leaders
Individuals and institutions with a shared commitment to Soulsville’s heritage and future

THE LOCATION

Soulsville Foundation is headquartered in its own campus in the heart of Soulsville USA, in South Memphis, TN. Also based on the campus are the foundation’s three operating entities.

Memphis is one of the South’s most vibrant communities, not least because of its international reputation for the “Memphis sound.” It’s no accident that the new logo for the Memphis airport—gateway to a city that is home to Beale Street, Federal Express, AutoZone, St. Jude’s Children’s Research Center, International Paper, Graceland and the National Civil Rights Museum, among other nationally prominent entities—features a musical note. Memphis means music!



For further information on Memphis, visit websites of the [Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce](http://www.memphischamber.com)⁸ and the [Memphis Convention and Visitors Bureau](http://www.memphistravel.com).⁹

THE RESPONSIBILITIES

The next CEO of the Soulsville Foundation will have five overlapping mandates:

- 1. Priorities.** The new CEO will inherit a stable organization with a strong, debt-free balance sheet, despite having experienced its normal share of growing pains, especially in the current economic environment.

The Stax Music Academy is an important feature in the lives of hundreds of talented young students, and essentially all its alumni and current students are in college or are college-bound. The Stax Museum has developed a national following as the only soul museum in the country, and the potential for further leverage is very strong. The Soulsville Charter School is

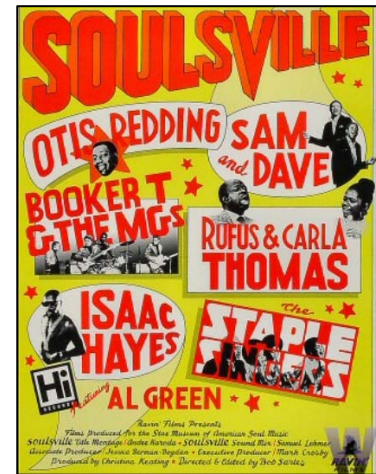
⁸ <http://welcome.memphischamber.com/Welcome.aspx>

⁹ <http://www.memphistravel.com>

delivering impressive results for its students, even in a state environment that historically has not favored charter schools.

Working with the board, the CEO will be expected to examine the available gifts, skills, experiences to develop an action-based plan that addresses how best to build on the successes to date. To be fully successful, the new leader must be both mentor and implementer, helping to move the organization from clarification of its vision to effective action, with regular evaluation and accountability.

- 2. Fundraising.** As Soulsville's most senior executive, the CEO must also be its most visible champion in the Memphis community and beyond. The CEO must embody the foundation's mission with all relevant audiences—whether neighbors across the street, CEOs across town or supporters across the country.



To broaden its existing support base and attract the resources required by the mission, the Foundation will likely launch a capital campaign in 2010. Accordingly, the CEO will have to have a high degree of cultural competence to close gaps in the current funding streams, strengthen existing relationships and forge new ones. In short, the CEO must be a compelling magnet for the resources the Foundation needs to further its mission.

- 3. Communications.** Similarly, the CEO must be the Foundation's key spokesperson. Soulsville's musical heritage is an easy sell—the Foundation and its components have been the subject of front-page articles in the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the *Irish Times* and others—but there is enormous competition for share-of-mind, even in Memphis, where other outlets for attention may enjoy more support and visibility.



Through an enhanced program of media management and public engagement, the CEO will be expected to carry the Soulsville message to new audiences and new markets, while preserving and enhancing the connections already in place.

- 4. Management.** The new leader will manage a collective budget of about \$3 million and a staff of committed colleagues who pride themselves on their passion and performance. The CEO must lead the team in promoting a

culture that nurtures creative and productive relationships with Soulsville's partners, while establishing and achieving goals that reflect excellence in all areas. In short, the vision is secure, but expansion and growth will require caring and determined management.

- 5. Governance.** The CEO will inherit a small board of leading citizens, each of whom has a special connection to Soulsville or to one of its operating components.

Recently, the board has needed to take a more proactive role in day-to-day operations, but its goal is to govern, not manage. The board will remain fully engaged in a constructive partnership with the CEO, especially on issues of mission, culture and finance, but it expects the new CEO to take responsibility for planning and execution.



Transparency, integrity and a shared sense of purpose should inform the working relationship with this high-profile group of experienced leaders, as together the CEO and the board find ways to build and promote a thriving Foundation for the community it serves.

THE CANDIDATE

The ideal candidate will be an experienced leader who has played a material role in the transformation of a community or an enterprise with a mission of significance. He/she must demonstrate an active commitment to the culture and vision that make Soulsville so special. Qualities of innovation and inspiration should pervade a candidate's career and persona. Ideally, a candidate should combine international reach with respect for Memphis' roots.

The Soulsville Foundation has followed an unusual path to its current state (*after-school music academy → America's only museum of soul music → charter school*), and thus we are open to candidates whose own path may be unusual. A deep-seated commitment to education and lifelong learning is essential, however, and a candidate should certainly have music in the soul.

The Soulsville community and the people served by the programs and initiatives of the Soulsville Foundation are predominantly African American. Clearly, it will be essential for the next CEO, regardless of his or her race, to identify with the Foundation's constituents.

The next CEO of Soulsville Foundation should be

- An energetic fundraiser and a magnet for support—someone with solid experience in fundraising on an ambitious scale
- A collaborator who is expert at building constructive partnerships, both internally and externally
- A leader who inspires and challenges others to seize uncommon opportunities and rise to uncommon levels of performance
- A bridge-builder possessed with contagious enthusiasm
- A self-motivated lifelong learner
- A leader comfortable with environments of accountability
- A CEO who is trusting but demanding, respectful of the mission and its cultural heritage
- A superb listener and communicator who is appreciative of colleagues and the community
- A thoughtful but decisive CEO who is financially astute and able to sort through competing priorities in an atmosphere of scarce resources and unlimited opportunities
- A tenacious executive who intuits the Foundation's ambitions and opportunities.



The next CEO should have

- A proven record as the public face of a dynamic institution
- A history of success at the helm of a compelling, community-based nonprofit, or a record of transformative board service in such an entity
- A demonstrated feel for the overarching mandates at hand
- A record of reinvention
- A real sense of community, broadly construed
- A demonstrated record of effectiveness with a racially and ethnically diverse community.

**For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect,
please email**

Soulsville@BoardWalkConsulting.com

or call

**Sam Pettway, Joan Schlachter or Michelle Bufkin
at 404-BoardWalk (404-262-7392).**

**For the status of this and other assignments, please visit
www.BoardWalkConsulting.com**



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