



MEMPHIS ATHLETIC MINISTRIES

THREE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Memphis Athletic Ministries (MAM) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to coach, grow, and lead the youth of Memphis by helping them discover their identity in Christ and their purpose in the community. MAM provides year-round, Christ-centered programs to youth ages 8 to 18 at four locations in underserved neighborhoods. For the past 25 years, MAM has impacted the lives of more than 15,000 youth.

Recent changes in the Memphis area philanthropic landscape have provoked an acute funding need for MAM, as the loss of a major donor resulted in an unexpected revenue decrease of ~65%. MAM has leveraged this challenge as an opportunity to create our first documented strategic plan, charting the course to restore our strong financial position while growing our programs to reach more Memphis youth each year.

THE CHALLENGE

More than ever, youth in Memphis require a safe, nurturing outlet with positive role models to turn to. Mentorship opportunities and extracurricular activities, such as participating in sports or attending an after school program, can be transformational in the lives of young people. Access to these opportunities can even be life changing. However, for youth in underserved communities, these opportunities may be few and far between. Availability, cost, and transportation are often barriers in a youth's involvement in these activities, and for families experiencing poverty or living in underserved communities, such barriers may be nearly impossible to overcome.

Participating in youth sports can lead to immediate and long-term benefits for youth, their families, and communities. Among many positive impacts, research suggests participation in sports is associated with less substance abuse and fewer risky behaviors, increased personal responsibility and self-control, and increased life satisfaction.¹ However, while sports often serve as a positive outlet for youth and teach them critical life skills, such activities may pose a significant financial burden for families.

After-school programs can also play a critical role in the long-term trajectory of a young person, providing them academic enrichment opportunities and trusted adults to lean on. These programs often support social, emotional, cognitive, and academic development, reduce risky behaviors, and provide a safe and supportive environment for children and youth.² Without after-school opportunities, youth may spend their days without the support and resources needed to thrive both inside and outside of the classroom. The cost of childcare services continues to grow, leaving many caregivers with limited academically enriching options.

Furthermore, Memphis and Shelby County have experienced unprecedented levels of major violent crime since 2020, along with increasing juvenile delinquency rates.³ Though nearly every corner of the city has felt the impact of this violence, the effects have been most concentrated in underserved communities. While the impacts of these unsafe conditions are vast and varied, we know the impact on youth's mental and behavioral health is significant. Exposure to gun violence may lead to youth experiencing mental health conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety. Youth exposed to gun violence may experience challenges in their school performance, including increased absenteeism and difficulty concentrating.⁴ More than ever, youth in Memphis require safe spaces with trusted adults to teach them critical life lessons and support them as they grow into positive members of the community.

THE MAM SOLUTION

MAM strives to leave a lasting impact on every youth we serve through comprehensive programming and mentorship from highly trained staff that addresses the physical, mental, social, and spiritual needs of youth. MAM provides year-round sports, after-school, and mentorship programming, each of which are infused with a gospel-centered focus. Through these programs, MAM offers a range of social emotional learning opportunities, including literacy and life skills lessons, field trips throughout the city, bible study sessions and more. MAM provides programming at neighborhood sites and partner schools. Additionally, MAM organizes and administers three seasons of recreational sports leagues which employ trauma-informed and healing-centered techniques from the Center for Healing and Justice through Sport (CHJS).⁵

MAM provides a healing space for youth where all staff are trained in trauma-informed practices to ensure that not only is MAM a physically safe space for youth, but it is also a mentally and emotionally safe space. Our staff are committed to mentoring participants and empowering them to advance beyond their perceived limits in life as they strive to reach their full potential.

Participation in MAM's programming was found to improve literacy rates, increase the likelihood of high school graduation, and reduce instances of delinquency. Additionally, MAM's critical services help fight poverty by providing year-round sports, after-school, and summer programming to children across Memphis at little to no cost to families. According to an April 2022 evaluation conducted by Slingshot Memphis, two primary types of benefits associated with MAM's monetizable poverty-fighting benefits include (1) parental benefits associated with reduced childcare costs and improved opportunities for employment, and (2) academic and behavioral growth due to after-school and summer programming.

MAM firmly believes that all Memphis youth deserve access to high-quality, trauma-informed programming. As Memphis continues experiencing unprecedented challenges, there is an urgent need to nurture and guide youth more than ever before.

THE PATH FORWARD

This 3-year strategic plan details MAM's path in continuing to support youth in finding their identity in Christ and purpose in the community. MAM will raise \$500K in new annual funding in each of the next three years through private philanthropy and public funding which will support our current operations, along with supporting the goals and strategic priorities outlined in this plan. These funds will propel MAM forward as we seek to expand our footprint to critical underserved areas of Memphis, providing youth with a trauma-informed, gospel-centered outlet through sports, after-school, and mentorship programming.



MISSION AND VALUES

MISSION

MAM exists to coach, grow, and lead the youth of Memphis by helping them discover their identity in Christ and their purpose in the community. MAM's vision is to see identity found, hope restored, and lives changed.

VALUES

- **Christ-centered, relational ministry** – MAM models and glorifies Christ in and through the relationships we build.
- **Urban youth focus** – MAM serves youth and their families in underserved neighborhoods.
- **Loving, safe, and fun environment** – MAM creates a safe haven for youth to grow and develop.
- **Holistic development programming** – MAM builds the body, mind, and spirit of our youth.
- **Godly community influence** – MAM impacts Memphis through the power of the gospel.

MAM'S PATH TO STRATEGIC SUSTAINABILITY

AMBITIOUS THREE-YEAR GOALS

By August 2026, MAM will (1) grow our key programs to provide social-emotional, trauma-informed mentorship to a total of 1,000 youth, and (2) broaden our community reach to share the gospel with a total of 6,000 youth.

MAM currently provides social-emotional, trauma-informed mentorship to 250 youth annually. Included in this category are youth enrolled in a MAM sports team, an after-school program, or the mentorship program whose attendance rates put them into a “highly engaged” category of participation. A core tenant of our approach within each program is providing authentic mentorship by building enduring connections to nurture and guide youth through a support system of highly trained staff. To maximize each program's impacts, MAM will focus on boosting participant's weekly attendance rates. Over the next three years, we will grow our key programs to new underserved communities in Memphis and will increase the number of young people that are highly engaged in our key programs each year.

Each year, MAM shares the gospel with 1,500 youth. Every young person who encounters MAM, including

those who play in a MAM sports league or tournament, participate at one of our MAM sites, or enroll in one of our key programs, has the opportunity to hear the gospel each visit. Sports can be a key element in bridging the geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic differences between youth, and they offer an opportunity for our coaches to reach and spiritually invest in a broader youth audience. While we expand our key programs, we will also broaden our reach across the communities we serve to share the gospel with a total of 6,000 youth over the next three years.

MAM WILL PURSUE THESE GOALS THROUGH FOUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- 1. Operations: Streamline operational processes and communication to improve mission alignment and program fidelity.** To strengthen staff mission alignment at all levels and increase program fidelity across sites, MAM will streamline and enhance our current processes, training, tools, and internal and external communication. This includes clarifying role expectations and establishing team ways of working, documenting all processes and intended outcomes organization-wide, and implementing weekly leadership team meetings. MAM will leverage organization-wide meetings to increase team buy-in, organizational awareness, and mission alignment.
- 2. Sustainability: Secure sustainable funding and community partnerships to support projected growth.** As part of the strategic planning process, MAM developed a separate development plan to support this strategic priority. Included in our fundraising plan is the path towards rebuilding our sustainable financial foundation. To continue leveraging our Board of Directors, in pursuit of this priority, MAM will provide ongoing fundraising training and support. MAM will also engage in city, county, and state-level relationship building. Additionally, to support our projected growth, MAM will continue developing strong community partnerships, allowing MAM to capture a broader youth audience and bolstering MAM's fundraising network. Notably, MAM will partner with Youth Villages' gun violence reduction initiative, Memphis Allies, to provide programming to youth at the highest risk of involvement with gun violence. By diversifying our funding sources, building our fundraising capacity, and expanding our community partnerships, we will ensure MAM continues serving Memphis youth for generations to come.
- 3. Data Infrastructure: Bolster data collection infrastructure to support participant outcomes tracking and enhance program quality.** We will redefine our intended outcomes for each program, along with identifying key performance indicators to measure. Before pursuing our growth goals, we will ensure we understand the outcomes we are pursuing and the drivers of that impact. Bolstering our data collection infrastructure is critical to measuring MAM's impact, as well as to support the ongoing evaluation of our programs so that we may continue enhancing each program's quality. This commitment to continual improvement requires rigorous data collection processes and data literacy training at all levels of the organization. MAM will develop a live dashboard to report progress at both the site-level and organization-level so that staff and leaders have real-time data to drive our work.
- 4. Staff Development: Provide consistent and ongoing staff training and development opportunities, building front-line staff's capacity and strengthening the mid-level leadership core.** Recognizing that training and developing our team is a critical component to growing our programs to serve more youth, we will revamp our training cadence and curriculum. This includes securing external training support to build MAM's capacity to serve youth with more complex mental and behavioral health needs. We will also refine our gospel messaging, bolstering our staff's capacity to share this with all youth we interact with. Additionally, MAM will institute a biannual performance review cycle for all staff and leaders to support the ongoing growth and development of our team.

FUNDING NEEDS

Achieving these ambitious 3-year goals and strategic priorities will require that MAM raises a total of \$500K in new annual funding in each of the next three years through private philanthropy and public funding. These funds will support the operational costs of staff salaries and training, marketing and communications, and program expenses. These funds will be raised by the passionate members of MAM's Board of Directors, Executive Leadership, and Development Team. Additionally, to support our immediate funding needs, MAM will rent out the Grizzlies Center, an existing site in the Alcy Ball neighborhood, for sports team practices and tournaments on weekends.

IMPACT AND PROJECTED GROWTH

PROJECTED GROWTH

Early achievement of our 3-year strategic priorities will set the foundation upon which we will pursue expansion. Upon losing a significant portion of our budget, we closed two of our four neighborhood locations. Recognizing the need for our programs both in the communities where we closed these sites and, more broadly, across Memphis, we are committed to reestablishing our presence in those two communities, along with expanding our reach to additional underserved communities. This will be done through the creation of new MAM locations, along with partnering with schools to provide programming on-site five days a week.

IMPACT BEYOND 2026

While MAM has set ambitious goals to expand our reach over the next three years, we have a longer-term vision to ensure our programs are available to all youth in underserved communities across Memphis. Future endeavors may include creating new sports leagues, after-school programs, and mentorship opportunities to meet evolving community needs and identifying new community partnership opportunities to maximize MAM's impact across diverse youth populations.



DEFINING AND MEASURING PLAN SUCCESS

MAM is committed to defining and measuring our success against this strategic plan and ensuring continuous improvement in all facets of our organization. Measurement and management against a clear set of goals will allow MAM to stay on track and course-correct when needed.

Articulated below are a series of high-level, organization-wide metrics that will allow MAM to manage progress against our stated aspirations.



Impact

- 90% of surveyed participants will demonstrate positive social emotional growth between pre- and post-program assessments
- 95% of surveyed participants will report they have a MAM coach that they trust, can go to for help, and look up to as a role model
- 50% of MAM program participants will meet the “highly engaged” threshold for maximum program impact

Growth and Sustainability

- Expand MAM’s footprint to at least two additional sites
- Fundraise at least \$500K in new annual income from individual donors, community partners, and city, county, and state government funding
- Build and maintain a financial reserve that represents 12 months of projected operating expenses

KEY RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

As with any ambitious strategic plan, there are key risks we may encounter in restoring our financial positioning and growing our footprint to reach more youth every year. With the proper mitigation strategies, MAM is well-prepared to address these key risks in our path towards achieving our goals.

FINANCIAL RISK

Philanthropy

In experiencing the loss of ~65% of MAM’s budget due to the changing philanthropic landscape in Memphis, we must reevaluate our approach to securing sustainable philanthropic funding. MAM has capitalized on this experience by creating our first documented development plan. Most notably, we will focus our efforts

on increasing our recurring annual giving, rapidly expanding our donor base, and diversifying our funding streams. Due to our previous positive financial positioning, many major donors in Memphis may have perceived MAM as not needing significant philanthropic support. We will continue to increase our media presence and will work closely with our Board of Directors to strengthen existing relationships and build new relationships with potential MAM partners. Our Executive Leadership, Development Team, and Board of Directors will build their capacity to adhere to both the strategic plan and development plan, as the processes included in both are critical to MAM's long-term sustainability.

ORGANIZATIONAL RISK

Impact

MAM has experienced barriers in measuring the youth-level impacts of our programs due to inconsistent data collection methods across sites and varying perceptions of program success. Before pursuing our growth goals, it is critical that we define each program's intended outcomes and the key drivers of this impact. MAM will provide individualized support to existing staff to ensure they understand each program's impact and their role within supporting youth to achieve the identified outcomes. Additionally, MAM will provide ongoing training for all staff and leaders on new data collection processes, as well as continual data literacy training to support data-driven decision making.

Recruitment and Retention

As with many other similar organizations in this sector, MAM has experienced challenges in recruiting high-quality staff. Recruiting and retaining high-quality staff who are deeply aligned with MAM's mission is critical to the scaling of MAM's programs across Memphis. To combat these challenges, we are creating our first documented recruitment plan. We will also begin instituting a biannual performance review cycle for all staff and leaders to strengthen our staff retention rates and support the ongoing growth and development of our team.

CONCLUSION

Over the last 25 years, MAM has provided a safe, healing environment to more than 15,000 youth. Infused in everything we do, the gospel is the foundation of MAM's programs. Over the next 3-years, we will build our capacity to serve more youth across all our programs and multiply our impact within the communities we serve. By August 2026, we will grow our key programs to provide social-emotional, trauma-informed mentorship to a total of 1,000 youth and broaden our community reach to share the gospel with a total of 6,000 youth. Supporting MAM will ensure that we are well established to continue empowering youth to find their identity in Christ and purpose in the community.

Citations

¹*Benefits of Youth Sports (President's Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition Science Board, 2020)*

²*Supporting Social and Emotional Development Through Quality After-school Programs (Beyond the Bell: American Institutes for Research, 2015)*

³*Memphis Crime Statistics (The Memphis Shelby Crime Commission, 2023)*

⁴*The Impact of Gun Violence on Children and Adolescents (KFF, 2022)*

⁵*How We Work (Center for Healing and Justice Through Sport, 2023)*

APPENDIX

THREE-YEAR PLAN SUMMARY

MISSION

MAM exists to coach, grow, and lead the youth of Memphis by helping them discover their identity in Christ and their purpose in the community

THREE-YEAR GOALS

Grow key programs to provide social-emotional, trauma-informed mentorship to a total of ~1,000 youth

Broaden community reach to share the Gospel with a total of ~6,000 youth

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Streamline operational processes and communication to improve mission alignment and program fidelity

Secure sustainable funding and community partnerships to support projected growth

Bolster data collection infrastructure to support participant outcomes tracking and enhance program quality

Provide consistent and ongoing staff training and development opportunities, building front-line staff's capacity and strengthening the mid-level leadership core

TACTICS

Clarify role expectations and team ways of working

Document and disseminate processes and intended outcomes

Create a formal development plan, including donor communication strategies

Fundraising training and support for Board members

Reevaluate intended outcomes per program and key metrics to track

Create a key metric dashboard

Revamp ongoing training cadence and curriculum, including Biblical training

Create a staff recruitment strategy

