

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS AND SHEILA KUEHL

December 18, 2018

Investing in Justice-Involved Individuals Through the Arts

Arts-based programs have been lifted up by system leaders, philanthropists, and service providers as a means to impact positively those in the justice system. Research has shown that arts-based strategies can improve the environment inside facilities, enhance educational and health-related outcomes, and reduce recidivism for justice-involved individuals. For example, researchers found that a prison theatre program in New York, which costs less than \$1,000 per year per participant, reduced infractions among participants and increased motivation to complete educational programs (State University of New York, Purchase, 2011; John Jay College, 2012). Arts-based programs can also reduce recidivism and result in significant cost savings (University of Notre Dame, 2015; New Philanthropy Capital, 2011).

In addition, the arts can help create pathways to employment, which is critical as unemployment has been linked to an increased likelihood of re-offending (RAND Corporation, 2013). Employment opportunities in the creative economy are a promising way to address the vocational and economic needs of justice-involved individuals. A 2015 Los Angeles County (County) Arts Commission study found that almost half of all

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creative economy jobs do not require a bachelor's degree, and half of those jobs have relatively higher median annual earnings and are more likely to provide on-the-job training opportunities. Given their accessibility for justice-involved individuals, these employment opportunities can be a beneficial part of a broader strategy for re-entry.

Recognizing its importance, jurisdictions across the country and private sector leaders are elevating the arts within their criminal justice systems. The California Arts Council recently funded arts programs in all 35 state prisons, and New York's Council on the Arts is funding programs for justice-involved populations. Additionally, local jurisdictions and non-profit organizations have invested in workforce development programs to prepare and place at-risk individuals in creative economy jobs, such as ManifestWorks, a film industry training and job placement program that targets formerly incarcerated individuals.

The County has similarly made some initial investments in this field. Non-profit organizations, like Inside Out Writers, Unusual Suspects, and New Earth have taught creative writing, theater and music inside the probation camps and halls for a number of years. In alignment with its history and expertise in advancing access to arts education and funding non-profit arts organizations, the Arts Commission also coordinates year-round arts instruction in the County's juvenile facilities with multiple arts partners. Additionally, the Arts Commission, in collaboration with Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network, has been training Probation Department staff in arts-based interventions. Arts-based mental health programs, such as Painted Brain, are provided at interim housing sites to adults re-entering their communities.

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Moreover, in an exciting development, the County recently received the prestigious new Arts for Justice Fund (AJF) grant to launch the Arts Commission Arts and Youth Development Project which aims to expand arts opportunities for youth and to support, heal and develop youth and families touched by the justice system. With this one-year, \$750,000 grant, the County joins 60 grantees who have received more than \$32 million in philanthropic funding to date to address the crisis of mass incarceration. As a result, the Arts Commission will convene an inter-agency youth arts taskforce to collaboratively implement arts-based interventions for youth in the justice system and those at risk of becoming involved with the justice system. The taskforce will develop and implement strategies to embed arts instruction across multiple County systems, with goals of fostering healing, personal transformation, and creating career pathways for youth.

As the County prepares to implement this new AJF grant, there is an opportunity to assess and expand the overall investment in arts for justice-involved individuals, as well as to ensure coordination. Arts programming in the County's jails has been limited, as has arts programming for probation-involved youth and adults in the community. Evaluations and research on this topic has too often been under-resourced. The County is doing important work in this area, but much of it is in its early stages and needs additional infrastructure. Positioning the arts to support not only justice-involved individuals but systems-involved individuals and communities at risk, both helps the County further criminal justice reform and helps the new Department of Arts and Culture expand the arts countywide.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

Direct the Executive Director of the Arts Commission and the Chief Executive Officer, in coordination with the Director of the Office of Diversion and Re-Entry, the Los Angeles County Sheriff, the Chief Probation Officer, the Director of Mental Health, the Director of Children and Family Services, the Department of Public Health, the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council, other County departments deemed relevant, arts-based organizations, community stakeholders, and employers in the creative economy, to report back to the Board of Supervisors (Board) in writing in 180 days with:

1. An update on the implementation of the Arts for Justice Fund (AJF) grant for youth, including the progression of the Los Angeles County inter-agency youth arts task force's work; and,
2. Building on the strategies outlined in the AJF grant, a countywide plan for further elevating the arts as a criminal justice reform strategy, including:
 - a. A landscape analysis of arts programming in Los Angeles County (County) for youth in the justice system, and recommendations for the Board's consideration for expanding and strengthening this programming, in alignment with best practices;
 - b. Recommendations for developing County infrastructure to support arts programs, including consideration for: a County entity to coordinate programming across multiple departments and agencies; the role of the new Department of Arts and Culture in this work; program evaluation and research; staffing needs; training; and necessary funding, including available funding streams and an assessment by the

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Center for Strategic Partnerships on potential philanthropic resources;

and,

- c. Recommendations for developing and supporting County strategies for adult populations similar to those identified in the directives above.

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