

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS
AND SHEILA KUEHL

JUNE 23, 2020

Adoption of the Countywide Cultural Policy

Arts and culture play a critical role in the economic resiliency of LA County and in the social resiliency of our communities, not just in recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and in recent civil unrest, but also in the long term. Already, nearly a third of arts nonprofit organizations in LA County have laid off or furloughed staff, while 34 percent have tapped into their financial reserves. Forty-five percent of them are not confident their organization will survive.¹ Individual artists in California have reported average income losses of nearly \$24,000 per person.²

We also know that many organizations in the sector – especially those in the performing arts – will be among the last to come back to full operations. But these closures have had an even greater impact beyond the loss of wages and revenue for artists and organizations. Residents of LA County have lost access to important places and

¹ Americans for the Arts, *The Economic Impact of Coronavirus on the Arts and Culture Sector*, <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/disaster-preparedness/the-economic-impact-of-coronavirus-on-the-arts-and-culture-sector>, data as of June 5, 2020.

² California Arts Council, *COVID-19 California Arts and Culture Sector Early Impact Study*, <https://view.publitas.com/ca-arts-council/covid-19-california-arts-culture-sector-early-impact-survey/page/1>, March 20, 2020.

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programs where they learn something new, express their culture, explore ideas, gain new skills, find solace, and experience joy. Before the pandemic, 13.5 million people visited or participated in nearly 200,000 performances, exhibits, workshops, and other events at arts nonprofits each year, and 40,000 people volunteered with them.³ Supporting this sector's survival will help preserve our creative economy, the cultural identity and vitality of the region, and the well-being of our residents and communities where they live.

Data collected about the arts and culture workforce in LA County show there is much more work to be done. The work that arts institutions, funded by LA County, have already done toward achieving greater diversity constitutes a strong base to build upon, but there is a growing recognition that it is necessary to move beyond simple measures of diversity to address deeper issues of cultural equity, inclusion, and access to the arts. As a County, we have an unprecedented opportunity to maximize assets and diversify resources to make gains in cultural equity and expand access to the arts for all residents.

In addition to being a national leader in arts and culture, LA County is the largest county in the United States and one of the most diverse. People of color have constituted the majority of LA County since the late 1980s. According to the US Census Bureau, 48 percent of residents are Latino or Hispanic, 14 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander, 8 percent are African American, 1 percent are Native American, Alaska Native or other, and 2 percent are of two or more Races. Our communities speak more than 220 languages and reflect various cultures, identities, and characteristics.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a health crisis that became an economic crisis and a crisis of social isolation. LA County's Department of Public Health has helped us see

³ SMU DataArts, *Cultural Data Project*, proprietary data available upon request, <https://www.culturaldata.org/what-we-do/for-researchers-advocates>, 2017.

clearly the racial inequities, showing which communities have been hit hardest by the health crisis. The LA Economic Development Corporation has shown us inequities in terms of which communities have been hit hardest by the economic crisis.

Long-standing inequities in the arts and culture sector led Supervisor Hilda L. Solis and Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas to author a motion passed in 2015 directing the LA County Arts Commission (now the LA County Department of Arts and Culture (Arts and Culture)) to identify constructive ways to “enhance the participation and leadership of individuals from underrepresented communities in the arts,” focused on leadership, staffing, programming and audience composition. This comprehensive analysis resulted in the Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative (CEII).

In June 2017, the Board unanimously adopted the thirteen recommendations set forth by CEII, and, through a motion by Supervisor Hilda L. Solis and Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, voted to fund four of the thirteen recommendations included in the CEII report, which the Department of Arts and Culture subsequently launched. One of those funded recommendations was to establish a Countywide Cultural Policy (Cultural Policy) to provide a roadmap with concrete elements focused on equity, diversity, inclusion, and access, for how all LA County Departments can contribute to cultural life to ensure every resident has access to arts and culture.

LA County has invested meaningfully in arts and culture for more than a century, including through its County-owned cultural venues and support of arts nonprofit organizations through several grant programs. However, more work is necessary to solidify gains made, advance cultural equity, and increase access to the arts and its many benefits for all residents. To make progress toward this goal, historic and existing inequities that have created barriers to participation in arts and culture must be

addressed. For example, small and midsized nonprofit organizations in the arts and those located in and dedicated to serving the most vulnerable underserved communities, such as low-income, communities of color, rural communities and others, are chronically undercapitalized and underfunded. Most grantee organizations of LA County's Organizational Grants Program fall into these categories.

Utilizing the arts to inform and enhance service delivery to County constituents, often among the most vulnerable populations in the region, is also critical. Further, incorporating the arts in Countywide plans, initiatives, and projects and leveraging County departments, assets, and infrastructure, will allow the County to advance cultural equity across sectors of civic life from education and child welfare to justice reform and community development to greater cultural inclusion and belonging, in support of Board and County goals.

To ensure that the Cultural Policy represented the needs and opportunities inherent to LA County, Arts and Culture sought input from a diverse group of stakeholders, including community members, arts and culture representatives, as well as leadership and staff from all LA County Departments. As a result, Arts and Culture has developed a Cultural Policy (ATTACHMENT A) that is intended to nurture a culture within LA County that values and celebrates arts, culture, and creativity; strengthens cultural equity and inclusion; and leverages arts and culture in LA County programs, services and strategies, to achieve the highest potential of communities across all aspects of civic life.

The Cultural Policy was approved by the Board's Audit Committee on February 19, 2020. Most recently, the Cultural Policy was presented by the Arts and Culture Sector Work Group of LA County's Economic Resiliency Task Force to the Board, as a proposed recommendation to support the economy while also helping to meet the emotional health,

well-being, and social needs of our residents. Adoption of the Cultural Policy in this moment in time will help recognize the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 in LA County that has magnified underlying structural and systemic inequities; address and dismantle historical inequities in services, investments, and opportunities; and ensure that arts and culture are at the table in LA County's plans related to resilience and recovery.

By getting artists and arts organizations back to work and expanding investments in our communities through the arts in ways that prioritize equity, LA County can continue to support the cultural lives and community resilience of our residents and help them thrive.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt the Countywide Cultural Policy as the first of its kind, with a stated goal of providing a framework for how LA County Departments can contribute to cultural life and advance cultural equity in every sector of civic life;
2. Direct the Department of Arts and Culture, in consultation with the Chief Executive Office, to report back in 120 days with a plan to implement the Countywide Cultural Policy that includes, but is not limited to, an analysis on: 1) the components of the Cultural Policy that the Department can move forward within its existing resources, 2) staffing and resources needed for implementation.

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HLS: ko

3.180 - Countywide Cultural Policy

Effective Date: TBD

PURPOSE

The Countywide Cultural Policy (hereinafter, "Policy") provides direction and guidelines for how Los Angeles County and its Departments will ensure that every resident of the County has meaningful access to arts and culture. The intent of this policy is to foster an organizational culture that values and celebrates arts, culture, and creativity; strengthens cultural equity and inclusion; and leverages arts and culture in strategies to achieve the highest potential of communities across all aspects of civic life.

REFERENCE

December 10, 1948: [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)

September 29, 1965 (amended May 31, 1984, and December 20, 1985): [National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965](#)

November 10, 2015: [Board Motion](#): *Improving Leadership, Work Force, Programming and Audience Diversity in Los Angeles County Cultural Institutions*

April 2016: [County of Los Angeles 2016-2021 Strategic Plan](#): *Creating Connections: People, Communities, Government*

October 2016 (revised): [Statement](#) *Americans for the Arts Statement on Cultural Equity*

April 4, 2017: [Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative \(CEII\) final report](#): *Strengthening Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Arts and Culture Sector for All Los Angeles County Residents*

April 4, 2017: [Board Motion](#): *Los Angeles County Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative*

June 27, 2017: [Board Motion](#) *Establishing Transition of the Arts Commission to a County Department*

November 20, 2018: [Ordinance](#) *Establishing Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture*

United States Conference of Mayors, 86th Annual Meeting: [Resolution Supporting Cultural Equity](#)

DEFINITIONS

Cultural Equity: is defined as the values, policies, and practices that ensure that all people—including but not limited to those who have been historically underrepresented or marginalized based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion—are represented in the development of policy and the fair and equitable distribution of cultural resources. Cultural equity utilizes a strengths-based approach such that diverse forms of artistic and cultural expression are represented and supported, and existing cultural organizations, artists, communities, and artistic practices are valued.

POLICY

Preamble:

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) recognizes that arts and culture are foundational parts of quality of life and vibrant and resilient communities. Arts and culture have the power to enhance diversity, inclusion, and belonging, and contribute to positive outcomes across dimensions of civic life in the human, community, and economic development of the County. The right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community is recognized globally as a basic human right. This is defined as the right to:

- Access, participate in, and enjoy the benefits of arts and cultural activities;
- Learn about, maintain, and develop one's cultural expression and heritage; and
- Share in the cultural expression and heritage of others.

In US federal policy, the arts are valued as reflecting America's rich cultural heritage and fostering mutual respect for the diverse beliefs and values of all persons and all groups.

Despite the many benefits of the arts, due to historic and systemic inequity and disinvestment, not all communities have had equal access to cultural resources, representation, public sector investments, and opportunities to participate in cultural life through the arts. Ensuring access to the arts and cultural equity is important for the long-term viability of the cultural sector and quality of life for all in the County.

The policy will serve as a road map for how all County departments can contribute to cultural life, with a focus on cultural equity, diversity, inclusion and access. It serves to solidify and expand on the gains made through the Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative (CEII) process and board adopted recommendations, and positions the County as a national arts leader in advancing cultural equity and inclusion in every sector of our civic lives.

Policy: All County departments will strive to provide services, conduct internal operations, allocate resources, establish regulations, and operate facilities in a manner that supports cultural equity and ensures that all individuals and communities can participate fully and equitably in cultural life through the arts. County commissions, agencies and authorities, municipalities, and private sector partners of the County are also encouraged to incorporate the principles of this policy.

The Department of Arts and Culture (hereinafter, "Arts and Culture") will provide leadership, accountability, and coordination across County departments and agencies to support implementation and ensure arts and culture are utilized in the pursuit of goals articulated in this policy. Arts and Culture will establish target goals

and benchmarks, and identify areas of need, to measure progress on the policy and report at regular intervals on such progress to the Board of Supervisors.

In addition, the County will:

1. Invest in cultural infrastructure and access to arts and culture

- a. Invest in cultural infrastructure that supports artists and nonprofit cultural organizations in a manner and at levels that ensure Countywide access to the arts and opportunities for all County residents.
- b. Expand equity-focused arts and culture investments to increase support for community-based organizations and cultural resources, particularly those that represent and serve historically marginalized and low-income communities and communities of color.
- c. Diversify the means of County support for arts and culture to include facilities, land use, funding, policies, and other means, and identify ways that each County Department can contribute to cultural life to assist in eliminating barriers to access.

2. Advance arts and culture in every sector of civic life

- a. Foster cross-sector and interdepartmental collaboration to leverage arts and culture as a County strategy to support positive outcomes across every sector of civic life, including but not limited to:
 - i. Making every effort within the scope of its reach to ensure equity and access to quality arts education and creative learning for public school students.
 - ii. Incorporating arts, culture, and creative placemaking in equitable development and sustainability.
 - iii. Stimulating a robust and inclusive creative economy with access to career pathways and opportunities for diverse county talent.
 - iv. Integrating civic art and design in the creation of public spaces, transit, and infrastructure.
 - v. Including arts-based strategies in criminal justice reform, child welfare, and prevention.
 - vi. Promoting cultural exchange, cultural heritage, and diplomacy through the arts.
 - vii. Utilizing arts to support health, address trauma, promote healing, and well-being for all communities.
- b. Assess the impact to arts and cultural assets as part of County land use and development plans to limit displacement and support cultural resources in communities.
- c. Include arts and culture in Countywide strategic plans, major initiatives, and resources to address Board Directed Priorities and the Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative (April 4, 2017).
- d. Incorporate arts and culture in County community engagement practices to engage diverse and underserved communities in the development of County plans, initiatives, and projects.

3. Promote cultural equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging

- a. Identify ways to acknowledge Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land at County public events and ceremonial functions and celebrate the contributions of culture bearers and traditional arts practices of diverse communities.
- b. Incorporate arts and culture in County employee engagement, equity initiatives and training, and County facilities to create inclusive and inviting spaces for County workforce and the public.
- c. Encourage and continue to expand cultural equity, diversity, inclusion and access within the cultural sector of the region and increase coordination across County-owned cultural venues in support of key policies and initiatives.

RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENTS

All County Departments and Chief Executive Office; Arts and Culture will provide leadership in implementation and technical assistance to other Departments.

DATE ISSUED/SUNSET DATE

Issue Date:	Sunset Review Date: