

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HOLLY J. MITCHELL
AND SHEILA KUEHL

April 5, 2022

Advancing Equity in Grant Funding for Cultural Organizations

Everyone deserves to have equitable access to the many benefits of the arts. The County of Los Angeles (County) is the largest and most diverse county in the nation. Therefore, it is the County’s responsibility to ensure that all the benefits of, and opportunities provided by, the arts are available and accessible to all residents, no matter who they are or where they live.

From arts education for young people to arts programming for senior citizens, the arts have improved the quality of life for many and strengthened communities. The arts have also increased health outcomes and cognitive skills. In addition, the arts can bring together people of differing demographic, economic, and social backgrounds. The arts provide spaces where people can both see and express themselves, their communities, and their cultures through public performances, cultural activities, and exhibitions.

The arts and creative sector in the County is unparalleled. With arts nonprofit organizations, businesses, artists, and creative workers comprising the creative ecosystem, we have hundreds of museums, theaters, galleries, art centers, and music venues, and tens of thousands in our creative workforce across industries including fine and performing arts, design, film, and screen industries, and literary arts. Collectively, the arts and creative sector contributes greatly to our human development, our communities,

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and our economy. In short, the arts bring joy, transformation, quality of life, and vibrancy to our County.

The Los Angeles County Arts Commission (Commission) was established in 1947 to support local music performances. Its role has grown to support diverse art forms and functions as a full-service local arts agency. In 2019, the Board of Supervisors transitioned the Commission to the newly created Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) with a charge to develop comprehensive programs and policy on arts and culture on behalf of the County.

The [mission](#) of DAC is to advance arts, culture, and creativity throughout the County. It provides leadership, services, and [support](#) in several areas, including grants and technical assistance for nonprofit organizations, Countywide arts education initiatives, commissioning and care for civic art collections, research and evaluation, access to creative pathways, professional development, free community programs, and cross sector creative strategies that address civic issues. This work is framed by a longstanding commitment to fostering access to the arts, and the County's Cultural Equity and Inclusion [Initiative](#).

DAC provides [grants](#) to nonprofit arts organizations in visual, media, literary, film, music, and performing arts, including virtual and live concerts, to deliver cultural services to County residents and to support arts and culture throughout the region. *Investing in the arts is investing in our communities*. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, DAC grantees reported annual visitors at nearly 10 million and a survey of approximately 500 arts nonprofit organizations in the County reported 13.5 million annual visitors. This represents a significant return on investment for the County – yet many of these organizations and the arts nonprofit sector broadly are under-resourced and have historically faced structural inequity in the sector nationwide. DAC programs are leading the way in changing that dynamic, but funding increases are needed.

The Organizational Grant [Program](#) (OGP) is one of few grant programs that provides general operating support to the field, which translates into job opportunities for arts administrators and artists. Every dollar the County invests in OGP is matched one-for-one from other sources. OGP supports hundreds of cultural organizations Countywide

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from small budget grassroots organizations with annual operating budgets less than \$20,000 to major cultural institutions. Nonprofit arts organizations with budgets less than \$5M are challenged by structural inequity and are chronically underfunded. Many of these organizations are in rural communities, reflect and serve communities of color, and are historically marginalized.

In 2014, the number of grantees was approximately 350; however, the number of grantees increased to 448 in Fiscal Year 2021-22, which is a record high. In addition, DAC anticipates continued growth of the pool of grantees. As the number of OGP applicants and grantees have risen to its highest levels, the amount of County funding has remained flat for over a decade. As of 2021, economic inflation had chipped away at the impact of grant funding by 19% over the last decade, with no account for rising costs of operations, artist fees, cost of living, wages, or facilities costs in the available OGP grant funding pool. Expanding funding for OGP grantees is Recommendation #9 of the Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative (CEII) [Report](#) and has been identified by the CEII Advisory Committee as a funding priority.

With the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the work of recovery takes on renewed significance as communities seek healing and restoration after more than two years of tremendous loss and hardship. Making equitable investments in the creative and innovative work of our artists, arts organizations, and cultural community helps to bring critical services to underserved communities and marginalized populations made more vulnerable by the devastating impact of the pandemic as well as restores our arts ecology and audiences. The celebration of April as Arts Month in the County affords an opportunity to meaningfully recognize the central role of the arts in the work of equitable healing and recovery.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Instruct the Chief Executive Officer, in collaboration with the Director of the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC), to report back in writing during Supplemental Budget for Fiscal Year 2022-23 with options for doubling funding for the Organizational Grant Program, from the current annual amount of \$4.5 million to \$9 million, phasing it in over multiple years; and

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identify additional staffing and resources needed.

2. Recognize the contributions of artists, arts administrators, arts organizations, culture bearers, and arts educators throughout Los Angeles County (County) and solidify the County's commitment to promoting the arts, cultural equity, and inclusion, and the first ever DAC by declaring April 2022 as Arts Month in the County.
3. Instruct County Departments, and request that the Assessor, District Attorney, Sheriff, and the Superintendent of the Los Angeles County Office of Education, share information about the DAC to their constituents and on their social media throughout the month in partnership with DAC.

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