

April 09, 2024

**MOTION BY SUPERVISOR LINDSEY P. HORVATH**

**Proclaiming April as “Arts Month” in Los Angeles County**

Los Angeles County is the most populous county in the United States with nearly 10 million people sprawled over 4,751 square miles, and is ethnically and culturally diverse. Our arts and creative sector is unparalleled, enriched with the many benefits of the arts. However, not everyone has access to the arts, and it is our responsibility to ensure that all the benefits of the arts are available and accessible to all residents, no matter who they are or where they live.

From arts education for our youth to arts programming for older adults, the arts have been proven to make individual lives better and strengthen communities. They improve health and well-being, including improving cognitive skills. More importantly, the arts can bring people together across demographic, economic, and social lines, creating places where people can both see and express themselves, their communities, and their cultures in public performances, cultural activities, and exhibitions.

LA County is home to many arts nonprofit organizations, businesses, artists, and creative workers comprising the creative ecosystem. The region features 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. Collectively, the arts and creative sector contributes greatly to our human development, our communities, and our

MOTION

SOLIS

MITCHELL

HAHN

BARGER

HORVATH

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

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

The mission of Arts and Culture is to advance arts, culture, and creativity throughout LA County. The department provides leadership, services, and support in 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 such as youth, justice, homelessness, infrastructure, health, and job creation to name a few. All of this work is framed by a longstanding commitment to fostering access to the arts, and the County's Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative.

Among its core programs, Arts and Culture provides grants to nonprofit arts organizations to deliver cultural services to County residents and to support arts and culture throughout the region. Grants to nonprofit organizations in visual, media, literary, film, music, and performing arts provide virtual and live concerts, theatre productions, exhibitions, and arts education programs that increase access to the arts and quality of life for residents throughout the County.

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. OGP supports hundreds of cultural organizations countywide from small budget grassroots organizations with annual operating budgets less than \$20,000 to major cultural institutions. Every dollar the County invests in OGP is matched one-for-one from other sources. Nonprofit arts organizations under budget size \$5M are challenged by structural inequity and are chronically underfunded and many of the organizations that reflect and serve communities of color, historically marginalized, and rural communities are part of this group. In 2014, the number of grantees was approximately 350. In the two-year OGP cycle for FY2022-24 the number of grantees had increased to a total of 461, a record high. Arts and Culture anticipates continued growth of the pool.

As the number of OGP applicants and grantees has risen to its highest levels, the amount of County funding has remained flat for nearly two decades. As of 2023, economic inflation had chipped away at the impact of grant funding by over the last two decades, with no account for rising costs of operations, artist fees, cost of living, wages, or facilities in the OGP grant funding pool available. Since 2007 the total number of OGP grantees has increased by 60 percent. As a result, the average OGP grant has declined by 38 percent, from \$28,415 in 2007-09 to \$17,718 in 2023-25. Taking inflation into account, the average OGP grant purchasing power has declined by 57%. "Expanding funding for Arts and Culture grantees" is Recommendation #9 of the Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative (CEII) Report and has been identified by the CEII Advisory Committee as a priority for funding. Additionally, "Expand Grants to Organizations Serving

Diverse Communities” is Strategy 1 of the Cultural Policy Strategic Plan which was adopted by the board in August 2022. This grant is especially important to strengthen our nonprofit cultural sector as we look ahead to the Olympic and Paralympic Games, which will be held in Los Angeles County in 2028.

Furthermore, prior to the pandemic, LA County grantees reported annual visitors at nearly 10 million, but a survey of approximately 430 grantees saw 6.4 million in-person visitors and served 66.3 million virtual attendees in between 2021-2022. This represents a significant return on investment for LA 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. Our Department of Arts and Culture programs are leading the way in changing that dynamic, but increases are needed.

**I, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the County of Los Angeles:

1. Direct the Chief Executive Officer to fund Cultural Policy Strategic Plan Strategy 1: “Expand Grants to Organizations Serving Diverse Communities” and report back during the supplemental budget on options to begin stepping up funding to double OGP from \$4.5 million to \$9 million over the next few years starting in FY2024-25.
2. Recognize the value of arts and culture and the contributions of artists, arts administrators, arts organizations, culture bearers, and arts educators throughout the County; reaffirm the County’s commitment to promoting the arts, cultural equity,

and inclusion; and promote the work of the Department of Arts and Culture by declaring April 2024 as Arts Month in the County of Los Angeles.

3. Encourage County Departments to share information about Arts and Culture opportunities with their constituents and on their social media throughout the month in partnership with Department of Arts and Culture.

# # #

**LPH:rf**