

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HOLLY J. MITCHELL AND
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April 6, 2021

Sustaining and Expanding the Community Impact Arts Grant

The trauma, isolation, and hardship experienced by Angelenos throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has made clear the need for a renewed commitment to enhancing community well-being. Several indicators reveal disturbing trends in the adverse impact of the pandemic on mental health, including a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [finding](#) that 13% of US adults started or increased substance use, and 11% reported seriously considering suicide, a significant concern that is compounded by the increased mortality [risk](#) associated with loneliness and social isolation. In addition, many residents find themselves in a highly vulnerable position: a recent [study](#) by the University of Southern California Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences finds that, in 2020, 1 in 3 residents worried about losing their home; 1 in 3 residents did not receive the medical care they needed; and 1 in 9 adults experienced mild to severe food insecurity. The need to support Los Angeles County’s (County’s) most vulnerable communities in their recovery is clear.

The arts can have a significantly impactful role in enhancing community well-being. A University of Pennsylvania [study](#) finds that in lower-income neighborhoods, cultural resources are “significantly” linked to better health, schooling, and security. The presence of cultural resources was associated with a 14% decrease in cases of child abuse and neglect; a 5% decrease in obesity; an 18% increase in children scoring in the top stratum

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on English and math exams; and an 18% decrease in the serious crime rate. Despite economic challenges, the study found several indications of improved community well-being in areas with cultural resources, and significant work has been done throughout the County to realize this benefit for local communities.

Over the last several years, the County has made targeted investments to bring arts and cultural resources to underserved areas to enhance community well-being and achieve greater equity in funding, programs, and services. The Department of Arts and Culture's (Department) Community Impact Arts Grant (CIAG) provides arts programming [grants](#) to social service and social justice non-profit organizations in the County — including mental health, disability, environmental, homeless, immigrant rights, youth, justice reform, and veteran service organizations — that provide arts and cultural services to advance their organizational missions and serve their communities, many of which are not fully served in traditional arts and culture investments. CIAG grantees serve more racially [diverse](#) communities and significantly more communities with populations that earn less than the federal poverty level. Foster youth, individuals experiencing homelessness, currently or formerly incarcerated individuals, individuals with disabilities and low-income individuals are all being served by a larger [share](#) of CIAG grantees compared to other arts grants. In addition to utilizing the creative power of the arts to address complex social challenges, CIAG grantees reach vulnerable communities that historically suffer from lack of investment.

The creative work of CIAG grantees complements the County's efforts to ensure access to the arts through its role as a public funder of the vital community-based arts and cultural organizations that reflect and serve our County's diverse communities, and efforts to bring innovative solutions to complex social challenges, including an initiative to [place](#) creative strategists in County departments. In addition, the CIAG complements the County's broader efforts to achieve cultural equity and inclusion. In recent years, the Board has advanced and implemented several [recommendations](#) from the Department's "LA County Arts Report: Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative." This includes the establishment of a "Countywide Cultural Policy;" a policy requiring grantees to adopt statements or policies on cultural inclusivity and equity; and an expansion of the Arts

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Internship Program and creation of career pathways for youth. The Board of Supervisors (Board) took further steps by approving a motion that created the “Countywide [Plan](#) for Elevating the Arts as a Criminal Justice Reform Strategy,” an effort to utilize and provide arts-based programs and strategies to support justice-involved individuals and their families and make communities safer. The Board has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring that the County’s diverse communities share equitably in the benefits of the arts and renewing this commitment will advance its efforts at achieving an equitable recovery.

With the end of the COVID-19 pandemic in sight, the work of recovery takes on renewed significance as communities seek healing and restoration after more than a year of tremendous loss and hardship. Making equitable investments in the creative and innovative work of social service and social justice organizations helps to bring critical services to underserved communities and marginalized populations made more vulnerable by the devastating impact of the pandemic. 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. Proclaim the month of April as Arts Month throughout Los Angeles County (County) to recognize the critical role that arts play in supporting the health and wellbeing of communities, our regional identity, neighborhood vitality, education and youth development, career pathways, justice, civic infrastructure, and cultural diversity and inclusion, with the power to uplift the voices of those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, systemic racism, and inequity.
2. Instruct the Chief Executive Officer, in collaboration with the Director of Arts and Culture, and in consultation with the Executive Director of the Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative and other relevant stakeholders, to report back during Final Changes for Fiscal Year 2021-22 to determine what funding sources are available and provide options and recommendations for sustaining and expanding the Department of Arts and Culture’s Community Impact Arts Grant, in order to ensure that funding for arts-based programs and services are equitably

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provided to organizations serving underserved communities and marginalized populations throughout the County, especially those organizations lacking access to traditional arts grants.

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