

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS
AND SHEILA KUEHL

August 9, 2022

Implementing the Cultural Policy Strategic Plan

Arts and culture play a critical role in the economic and social resiliency of LA County, not just in recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, but also in the long-term vitality of our communities. By declaring April 2022 as Arts Month, we recognized that cultural inclusion is critical to the overall health and well-being of our families.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has devastated the arts sector in LA County. Over 350 applicants of the LA County Arts Relief Fund, the majority of which were small nonprofits serving vulnerable communities, reported over \$230M in aggregate losses and additional expenses due to the pandemic. Fifty-one percent of all eligible organizations had laid off at least one employee, and nearly all applicants saw revenues reduced by 25 percent or more.

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 programs where they learn something new, express their culture, explore ideas, gain new skills, find solace, and connect with their community. Before the pandemic, there were 13.5 million visits to 200,000

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performances, exhibits, workshops, and other events at LA County arts nonprofits organizations each year, and 40,000 people volunteered with them. As recovery ensues, demand for arts and culture continues to run high. A survey of arts audiences in LA County finds that 89 percent of people are eager to return to live, in-person performances. 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.

Long-standing inequities in the arts and culture sector led Supervisor Hilda L. Solis to author a motion passed in 2015 directing the LA County Arts Commission (now the LA County Department of Arts and Culture (Department)) 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 co-authored by Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, voted to fund four of the thirteen recommendations included in the CEII report, which the Department 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 mid-sized 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 LA 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 LA 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.

On June 23, 2020, through a motion by Supervisor Hilda L. Solis and Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, the Board unanimously adopted the Countywide Cultural Policy and directed the Department to develop an implementation plan. On October 23, 2020, the Department filed its report back with the Board. On April 20, 2021, the Board directed the Department to do a Countywide Needs Assessment as well as develop a report back including strategies. On July 1, 2022, the Department delivered the Cultural Policy Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) to the Board. The new Strategic Plan includes 18 actionable strategies that will expand cultural resources across LA County. It represents an ongoing shift—increasing funding for artists, programs, and community-based arts organizations with a cultural equity lens; elevating the arts as a cross-sector strategy, and investing in cultural life for all our people and communities. The development of the Strategic Plan included the engagement of LA County leadership, the LA

County Arts Commission, the CEII Advisory Committee, the arts and culture field, and hundreds of community members. It is a plan that reflects all Angelenos.

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.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt the Cultural Policy Strategic Plan as a road map for implementing the vision of the Countywide Cultural Policy and a set of actionable strategies for activation.
2. Direct the Chief Executive Officer to report in 90 days on the feasibility of funding to implement:
 - a. Strategy 1: Expand Grants to Organizations Serving Diverse Communities utilizing the options in the Cultural Policy Strategic Plan to increase funding for the Organizational Grant Program as previously directed by the Board.
 - b. Strategy 6: (Re)-Establish the Free Concerts in Public Sites.
 - c. Strategy 16: Recognize American Indian and Alaskan Native (AIAN) Communities.

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