

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR KATHRYN BARGER

October 3, 2023

Galvanizing Communities in Support of the Arts

The arts are inextricably tied to the culture, economy, education, well-being, and daily life of people in every corner of Los Angeles County. The Los Angeles County Music Commission was established in 1947 to support music performances, later turning into the Arts Commission to support all types of art, and eventually led to the creation of the Department of Arts and Culture in 2019. As the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture, with the Arts Commission, celebrates its 75th anniversary, and the Arts Education Collective celebrates its 20th anniversary, we're reminded of the longstanding role of the arts in our neighborhoods.

In 2023 alone, the Department of Arts and Culture has given grants to more than 750 nonprofit organizations. In July, the Department made a historic investment of \$31 million in arts funding to nonprofits, \$26 million of which was through the American Rescue Plan Act, the largest public sector arts grant program in the history of the region. In September, the Department provided an additional \$1.2 million to 40 organizations and individuals in the performing arts sectors. Los Angeles County has invested more than \$100 million in the arts field from 1947 to today through the programs in the Department of Arts and Culture. In addition to the Department's work, each year, the County invests more than \$100 million to support operation of its County-owned museums and cultural venues, including the Hollywood Bowl, The Ford, Los Angeles County Museum of the Arts, Natural History Museum, The Music Center, and LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes. Additionally, as cited in the 2023 Otis College Report on the Creative Economy, California's creative economy added \$507.4 billion in value to the state, \$194.1 billion in tax revenue, and 1.8 million jobs.

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, the arts sector was one of the first to close and the last to reopen. Arts nonprofits and businesses alike are still working to recover from those closures. Despite a historic investment of County dollars in the sector, many arts organizations are still struggling to stay afloat as a result of decreased ticket sales and rising costs of production. According to a report by the National Endowment for the Arts and U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis published in March 2023, “while the total economic value added by arts and cultural industries grew by 13.7 percent from 2020-2021, several core arts industries did not return to pre-pandemic production levels. This group includes independent artists (as an industry), performing arts organizations (e.g., theater, dance, and opera companies, music groups; and circuses), and arts-related construction.” In a 2023 report by CVL Economics on California’s live performing arts sector, state and local governments lost nearly \$1 billion in tax revenue due to pandemic impacts on the performing arts in 2021 alone, and “if current trends continue—that is, Performing Arts employment stagnates or experiences only minimal growth in the coming years—state and local governments could see a combined \$4.1 billion loss in tax revenue over a four-year period (2020–2023).” The report points to the impact of state and local governments’ investments in the performing arts to bolster economic recovery and community revitalization. The Department of Arts and Culture’s Organizational Grant Program is one of the primary ways the County supports the hundreds of performing, visual, literary, education, media, and other nonprofit organizations providing arts and culture activities, jobs, and venues across the County.

When audiences support the arts, it not only directly benefits arts organizations, but it impacts other sectors. As cited in a 2015 report by Americans for the Arts, “the arts, unlike most industries, leverage significant amounts of event-related spending by their audiences. For example, part of the arts experience may include dining out, paying for parking, shopping in local retail stores, enjoying dessert after the show, and returning home to pay the babysitter.” While some aspects of the creative economy have recovered, the Otis College Report mentions, “some industries—especially those in the Fine & Performing Arts sector—are still struggling to regain their footing... The Fine & Performing Arts sector was hit the hardest by the pandemic, as employment levels in 2021 remained 18.9% below where they were in 2018.” The report goes on to cite that ticket subscriptions have significantly decreased, saying “smaller venues like local theaters are facing a longer road to recovery. Nationwide, average ticket sales for performing arts organizations hover around 75% of what they were before the pandemic, and many regional theaters are faring worse.”

As the arts industry regains its footing, the recovery of the sector can also support residents’ mental health. The arts have proven results of positive impacts on individuals’ mental and emotional well-being. For adults, attending arts programs has been found to have psychological benefits, including social engagement and sense of belonging to their community.

For the past 20 years, the County and its partners in the Arts Education Collective have provided school districts with arts education policies, grants, and tools for teachers. When the program was implemented, Los Angeles County recognized research that found children who participated in the arts were four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement and three times more likely to be awarded for school attendance. Students from low-income backgrounds are twice as likely to graduate from college if they are engaged in arts programming, and students' access to the arts has been found to increase social development, creativity, and self-worth.

As the arts sector continues to recover and revitalize, community members can do their part by getting involved with their local arts organizations. When residents attend a performance, visit a museum, or take a class, it is an impactful way they can invest in the arts and in their community. It is valuable for the County to make the arts as accessible as possible for the benefit of both the sector and residents. For the arts sector to thrive, and for community members to make the most of the arts opportunities in their neighborhoods, residents must know how and where to get engaged.

I, THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Recognize the Department of Arts and Culture and Arts Commission's 75th anniversary and the Arts Education Collective's 20th anniversary and encourage Los Angeles County residents to join in our celebration; and
2. Instruct the Chief Executive Officer to work with relevant County departments, including Public Library, Parks and Recreation, and Beaches and Harbors, to promote events, educational materials, and resources related to Arts and Culture in Los Angeles County, including social media content designed by the Department of Arts and Culture.

I, FURTHER MOVE, that the Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Arts and Culture to:

1. Create a social media toolkit with content that encourages residents to share why the arts matter to them and to urge residents to explore and support local arts and culture organizations by attending events or programs, including both free and paid opportunities;
2. Create a virtual map of arts programs, including all grantee organizations, to allow residents to locate arts programming in their neighborhood; and
3. Work with the Center for Strategic Partnerships to explore potential opportunities to support arts programs, including but not limited to the Organizational Grant Program, the Community Impact Arts Grant, arts education, internships, and creative career pathways.

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