



ARTS COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 20200624-5.a

Date: 6-24-2020

Subject: Arts Commission Recommendation on Austin Non-profit Arts Organizations' request for \$5M in additional funding specifically for non-profit arts organizations of all sizes to retain jobs and sustain operations and remain open during this pandemic and economic crisis.

Motion By: Commissioner Lulu Flores

Seconded By: Commissioner Bears Rebecca Fonte

Recommendation

Request that City Council approve an emergency appropriation of \$5 Million additional funds for Austin non-profit arts organizations for job retention and sustaining operations during the pandemic to be allocated to, and distributed by, the COA Cultural Arts Division under the guiding principal of working toward equity.

Description of Recommendation to Council

The Arts Commission, in support of the Arts community, recommends that Austin City Council designate \$5 Million in emergency funding to Austin non-profit Arts organizations for their use in retaining jobs, and to assist them in sustaining their operations in this time of economic crisis during the COVID 19 pandemic. Acknowledging the support the creative sector has already received from the City of Austin, this funding would be in addition to the \$5M CARES Act funding for the Creative Sector already approved by Council on 5/28/20 which is specific to individual artists, musicians and creatives. Without this dedicated funding, Austin risks dramatic losses to one of its most valuable assets, the broad and diverse creative arts sector.

The \$5 Million in emergency funds would be allocated to COA Cultural Arts Division for process and distribution. The guidelines would incorporate an equity-driven process as outlined by the City of Austin Equity Office ensuring that historically underserved (ALAANA/BIPOC) and marginalized (LGBTQIA/Disability) non-profit arts organizations are equitably served. Guidelines for eligibility and distribution would be developed by the Cultural Arts Division staff with the advice of the Arts Commission.

Rationale:

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated an unforeseen and unparalleled economic crisis in our community, our state, our country, and the world. Its tolls have been not only on human life, but also on the economic life of our businesses and organizations. Austin arts organizations, already reeling from displacement due to the rapid growth and development of our city, are now faced with unprecedented financial challenges brought on by the necessary but drastic responses at stemming the spread of the pandemic, including closures, stay at home orders and social distancing. Arts organizations of all sizes have lost their traditional revenue streams and are bearing huge losses and are struggling to survive. Furthermore, historically underserved (ALAANA/BIPOC) and other marginalized organizations and communities (LGBTQ and Disability) often already in economic distress due to systematic prejudice, are especially hard hit. In addition, the pandemic has dealt a blow to an important source of funding for the

Arts. The HOT Funds, which are a dedicated source of funding for the Arts, has seen a 45% reduction and non-profit arts organizations funded through the COA Cultural Arts funding will be significantly impacted by these cuts in the coming fiscal year. Funds appropriated now to these organizations will help them weather the current crisis by helping them keep their doors open and keep critical personnel on board to continue their operations now and assist them prepare for the future.

Vote 7-0-2

For:

Commissioner Jaime Castillo, Chair
Commissioner Michelle Polgar, Vice Chair
Commissioner Lulu Flores
Commissioner Felipe Garza
Commissioner Amy Mok
Commissioner Celina Zisman
Commissioner Brett Barnes

Against:

none

Abstain:

Commissioner Rick Vandyke and Commissioner Bears Rebecca Fonte

Absent:

Commissioner kYmberly Keeton

Attest:

Anne-Marie McKaskle-Davis,
Arts Commission Staff Liaison

