

# FY 2022 Budget Recommendations

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The following budget recommendations will be considered through separate motions. Example language:

“I would like to make a motion to approve the [recommendation title] (as amended) for submission to the Budget Office for consideration in the FY 2022 Budget.”

## Budget Recommendation #1 – AARC Master Plan Phase 2 Community Engagement Consultant for Design Phase

### Story: What did you hear from the community?

As part of the master planning process for Phase 2 of the Asian American Resource Center (AARC), many community priorities were identified for the future buildout of the property. However, additional performing arts/theatre space ranked as the highest community need. The Commission heard directly from Asian American artists that finding performance space, especially for smaller audiences, has become increasingly difficult in Austin due to the closure of several spaces over the past several years. Additionally, the current ballroom was designed as general event space and does not have a stage or other infrastructure required for performances.

### Problem: What is the problem you identify?

While there is community consensus regarding the need, the community has expressed a range of different needs regarding the function and use of the theatre space. Some representatives of the artist community have requested the space function as a black box theatre for versatility. Others in the community envision a more traditional theatre space with built-in, sloped seating that might attract touring artists. These are just a few examples of the competing ideas for the space under consideration as the project moves from the planning phase into the design and construction phases.

### How does the problem show up in your community? Who is most impacted by the problem?

The AARC is an integral space for Austin’s Asian American community, providing space for meetings, events, cultural arts exhibits and performances, educational activities, festivals, and more. The goal of the upcoming design phase would be to develop a second facility on the site that best serves the needs of the community from the artists to the patrons of the AARC. The reality, however, is that not all community needs can be fulfilled by any one facility, especially one with a limited overall project budget of ~\$7 million. Given the fact that compromises will need to be made and consensus may be difficult to achieve, it is important that the community engagement phase be guided by an experienced and neutral party.

## Considering all of the information you have or have not collected above, how do we solve for this problem?

The Commission requests funding in the amount not to exceed \$64,000 for the Parks and Recreation Department to acquire the services of a community engagement consultant to guide the community in the design of the new facility. A community engagement consultant was recently used to inform the design of the Carver Center. This budget request has been discussed with and has the support of AARC and PARD Cultural Arts Division leadership. PARD staff also assisted with developing the cost estimate.

## Budget Recommendation #2 – Cultural Arts Funding Programs

### Story: What did you hear from the community?

Asian American arts nonprofits and artists in Austin are concerned about available programs and potential decreased cultural arts funding in FY 2022 considering that Cultural Arts Funding programs are funded by Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) dollars and, therefore, dependent on tourism in Austin. Due to COVID-19 and its ongoing negative effects on Austin's tourism industry and HOT revenues for an unknown amount of time, funding will likely not be equal or more than historic average.

### Problem: What is the problem you identify?

While there are some aspects of performance arts that attract tourism, basing Cultural Arts funding on HOT revenues alone is inequitable and does not fully address how arts organizations and artists contribute to the City of Austin's vision of being "a beacon of sustainability, social equity and economic opportunity; where diversity and creativity are celebrated; where community needs and values are recognized; where leadership comes from its citizens and where the necessities of life are affordable and accessible to all."

Citation - Imagine Austin Vision <http://www.austintexas.gov/page/imagine-austin-vision>

### How does the problem show up in your community? Who is the most impacted by the problem?

One immediate problem is that funding programs, such as the final quarter of the FY 2021 Community Initiatives program, are being cut due to the decreased amount of projected HOT dollars. Many cultural performance groups in our Asian communities apply for these since it is one of the few Cultural Arts Funding programs that is open to individual artists and unincorporated groups without the need to have a nonprofit fiscal sponsor. Smaller, community driven events still in their infancy that depend on this funding will not have it available.

A long-term problem is that although Economic Opportunity & Affordability, Culture & Lifelong Learning, and a Government that Works for All are three of the six strategic outcomes the City is working to achieve, the arts funding available is highly dependent on just one sector, tourism, that can be easily impacted or disrupted. Hence, funding the City's Cultural Arts Funding programs with only HOT revenue is not equitable.

### Considering all the information you have or have not collected above, how do we solve this problem?

The AAQoL Advisory Commission recommends that the City look into general fund and American Recovery Act dollars to temporarily fund the loss in HOT revenue that has impacted Cultural Arts Funding programs. While the funding available for these programs in FY 2022 is still being calculated by EDD, we would like to recommend that, when a budget or deficit amount is known, the City reinstate FY 2022 funding back to FY 2020 levels. In addition, the Commission recommends that the City develop a long-term solution that diversifies funding for these programs, so they are not solely dependent on HOT revenue.

### Budget Recommendation #3 – Language & Interpretation Services in Response to Emergencies

#### Story: What did you hear from the community?

The Asian American Community with limited English has difficulty accessing COVID-19 pandemic information and vaccinations. This communication difficulty was exasperated during the Emergency Weather response regarding power and water in February/March 2021. The Asian American Community had to quickly identify and activate volunteers to assist the community (see Austin American Statesman article March 12, 2021).

#### Problem: What is the problem you identify?

Time sensitive messaging from the City is often only provided in English or English and Spanish. Asian Americans are the fastest growing demographic in Austin/Travis County and the City must provide timely information in major Asian languages in order to reach the community. The City has responded to previously identified needs by establishing approved vendors for translation in multiple languages, but many Departments are unaware or don't see Asian translations as a priority. Most City offices have been closed during the pandemic and many City staff were also impacted by the weather and water emergencies. Emergency communications to the Community are primarily generated by the City Public Information Office, Austin Public Health and the Emergency Operations Center. Communities of Color and other marginalized communities are most impacted by emergencies, but equity is seldom considered in the initial response.

#### How does the problem show up in your community? Who is most impacted by the problem?

With no system in place, the Asian population contacts the Asian American Quality of Life Commission, the Network of Asian American Organizations (NAAO), the Asian American Resource Center and local non-profits who serve those specific communities. In response, the Commission identified volunteers in the community to translate emergency guides generated from Councilmember Casar's office into multiple languages. Certain Commissioners also worked with the Community to identify translators to

assist individual families in accessing warming centers, food, water and other emergency resources. Assistance is also being provided to help obtain vaccinations.

### Considering all of the information you have or have not collected above, how do we solve for this problem?

1. The Commission recommends that \$100,000 be added to the City Public Information Office so different City Departments have a central pool to access translation and interpretation services. The existence of this pool must be communicated widely to departments.
2. The Commission recommends that the Equity Office, Resiliency Officer and other appropriate community representatives be included in Emergency Planning, Response, and After-Action reports in order to assure that an Equity Perspective is fully integrated into these activities.
3. The Commission recommends that the City establish stand-by contracts with key community organizations who are already connected with Asian communities. In an emergency situation, these organizations can be activated to review translated communications and quickly spread those communications to the community.
4. The Commission recommends that \$100,000 be added to the Emergency Operations Center budget for translations, interpretations and emergency communications to the marginalized non-English speaking communities when needed.
5. The Commission also recommends that all non-profit agencies contracted by the City have access to the pre-screened City vendors for translation services and any interpretation services that become available. This would assist contracted non-profits in serving the entire community.

## Budget Recommendation #4 – Increased Funding for Immigrant Legal Services

### Story: What did you hear from the community?

Increased funding for immigrant legal services is needed to protect and support some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Allocating additional dollars to the organizations that provide these types of specialized, essential services will help fill the gaps by providing services and direct assistance to populations that are traditionally marginalized or face additional barriers to legal assistance, including, but not limited to, asylum seekers, victims of trafficking, and refugees.

### Problem: What is the problem you identify?

There are but a few organizations in Austin that have the ability to provide legal services to our immigrant communities pro bono. Members of Austin's immigrant communities are often left out of essential City services due to a lack of documentation and access to legal remedies. Documentation of members of our immigrant communities will help more of these marginalized residents gain access to essential services such as health care and education, as well as participate in our local government. Pro bono immigrant legal service organizations have shown success in creating community partnerships, engaging our immigrant communities, educating our Austin community about immigration law and process, and educating individuals about their various forms of relief.

### How does the problem show up in your community?

Members of the Asian community in Austin are greatly impacted by immigration policies whether it be in relation to themselves, their family, or friends. Moreover, Austin is home to a number of Asian refugee communities, including those from Syria, Burma, Nepal, and Afghanistan. Often, legal fees are not unaffordable leaving many with no choice other than to go undocumented. Pro bono immigrant legal service organizations help resolve these issues. One case example from American Gateways, a pro bono immigrant legal services nonprofit organization, helps to illustrate the impact: “Ms. S, originally from Nepal, was a victim of family violence by her US citizen spouse. American Gateways assisted Ms. S. and her child to file a Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) case, leading to their legal permanent residency. Most recently, Ms. S. was granted US citizenship.” However, the need greatly outweighs the

### Who is impacted by the problem?

There is a large segment of the Austin Asian population that are immigrants and eligible for asylee, trafficking, visas for survivors of domestic violence, and DACA eligibility. In order to keep our Austin communities safe and to protect our immigrant communities, it is imperative that we provide access to pro bono legal services and provide options for these communities. This especially applies to people who have faced abuse and torture overseas or in America and have no other alternatives. Increased funding for immigrant legal services will help the Austin Asian population with remedies such as improved legal access, financial support, and education opportunities – all necessary to help our immigrant communities understand their rights and take action.

### Considering all of the information you have or have not collected above, how do we solve for this problem?

To address the issues stated above, allocating increased funding for pro bono immigration legal services organizations to help with translation, community outreach, legal fees, and identification of eligible individuals is an essential need in the community. In order to increase access and allow populations in Austin to feel welcome, it is important to have translations documents in Asian languages, conduct outreach in communities that are typically underserved, and further develop partnerships among the few organizations aimed at serving the Asian community . Therefore, the Commission requests x dollars for additional immigrant legal services, which will allow and additional x number of cases to be undertaken in FY 2022.

## Budget Recommendation #5 – Gap funding for Community Health Navigators

### Story: What did you hear from the community?

Community health navigators are providing an essential service for Austin’s Asian community, which has language access needs spanning multiple communities. Since the pandemic hit Austin in March of 2020, the demand for community health navigators has spiked. One-time grant funding has helped meet these needs and allowed for the availability of services in multiple Asian languages, including Arabic, Burmese, Chin Tedim, Mandarin Chinese, Korean, Nepali, Hindi, and Vietnamese. As these one-time funds expire, essential services to vulnerable communities will cease to exist.

### Problem: What is the problem you identify?

Navigating the healthcare system can be a challenging task for native English speakers. For non-native English speakers, this challenge can be near impossible to overcome. Yet, accessing adequate health care services, is an essential service that some may say is a basic human right. Community health navigators assist Austin's non-native English speakers schedule appointments, fill out required paperwork, apply for and understand health insurance benefits, and many more essential services.

### How does the problem show up in your community?

Austin's Asian community is diverse with many non-native English speakers. The lack of language access services isolates a large number of Austin residents, preventing them from participating in civic life, which can lead to feelings of isolation. The lack of language access services is especially acute when dealing with healthcare. The inability to access adequate diagnoses and care can lead to a multitude of poor, but in many cases preventable, outcomes.

### Considering all of the information you have or have not collected above, how do we solve for this problem?

The pandemic has shown that, more than ever, all residents need and deserve access to adequate healthcare. Austin's community health navigators have provided an essential service during this time. Funding in the amount of x would ensure that navigation services will continue to be provided in x languages. Without this funding, it is anticipated that up to x number of residents will go without these services in FY 2022.

### Resolution

WHEREAS, the Asian American Quality of Life (AAQoL) Advisory Commission was created to advise the City Council on issues related to the Asian American Resource Center and will provide on-going guidance and support for the City's Asian American quality of life initiatives, and

WHEREAS, the AAQoL Advisory Commission, as part of its duties, annually submits budget recommendations each spring in support of programs of that promote equity and the quality of life of Asian Americans in Austin, and

WHEREAS, the Business Planning Workgroup is tasked with developing budget recommendations for review and approval by the full AAQoL Advisory Commission, and

WHEREAS, the City's Budget Office has placed a deadline of April 6, 2021 for the budget recommendations to be submitted for consideration in the FY 2022 budget development process, and

WHEREAS, the members of the Business Planning and Community Engagement and Health Work Groups have developed budget recommendations in input from the Joint Inclusion Committee Budget Engagement events, City staff, community service providers, and others,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the AAQoL Advisory Commission grants authority to the Business Planning Work Group to finalize the approved FY 2022 budget recommendations, as amended, and submit them through the Budget Office's online form.