



**JOINT INCLUSION COMMITTEE (JIC)  
BUDGET ENDORSEMENTS ON ENGAGEMENT  
RECOMMENDATION #: 20220323-005d**

Date: March 23, 2022

Subject: JIC Endorsements - Recommendations for Engagement

Motioned By: Karen Crawford

Seconded By: Raul Alvarez

**JOINT INCLUSION COMMITTEE BUDGET ENDORSEMENTS – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR  
ENGAGEMENT**

**VOTE**

For: Amanda Afifi, Vincent Cobalis, Raul Alvarez, Karen Crawford, Rebecca Austen,  
Charles Curry, Amy Temperley, Robin Orlowski.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

Absent: Jamarr Brown & Gregory Smith

Attest: Jeremy Garza, Staff Liaison, Equity Office:

x Jeremy Garza

**DESCRIPTION:**

The Joint Inclusion Committee unanimously endorsed the following recommendation submitted by member Commissions. These recommendations address critical issues on engagement that uniquely affects the quality of life for diverse communities represented from each commission member of the Joint Inclusion Committee.

- Commission on Seniors, **Recommendation Number 20220309-04Ci:** Age Friendly Austin Community Engagement Specialist
- Commission on Seniors, **Recommendation Number 20220309-04Cii:** Quality of Life Study of Older Adults in Austin
- Asian American Quality of Life Advisory Commission, **Recommendation Number 20220328-004c2:** Community Engagement & Outreach FTE for Cultural Arts Division Program
- African American Resource Advisory Commission, **Recommendation Number 20220330-002:** Workforce Development and Economic Empowerment

**Recommendation**

Fund an FTE to serve as Community Engagement Specialist to support implementation of the Austin Age Friendly Action Plan.

**Description of Recommendation to Council**

The Commission on Seniors recommends funding an Age Friendly Austin Community Engagement Specialist. The Community Engagement Specialist will support the Age-Friendly Program Coordinator with day-to-day operations including, but not limited to, implementing the Age Friendly Austin Communication and Community Engagement Plan, supporting internal and external aging partners, and engaging in strategic planning efforts.

Duties would include promoting Age-Friendly programs and services at local recreation centers, faith-based centers, and older adult facilities; facilitating trainings related to age-friendly practices; strengthening community partnerships; analyzing community data; and developing educational materials, including an asset map of programs and services. The Commission on Seniors is dedicated to improving equity in programs and services for older adults. To help achieve this goal the Communications and Outreach Coordinator will serve as a liaison between the Age Friendly Austin program and older adults, with emphasis on increasing communication and engagement with People of Color, LGBTQIA persons, low-income communities and other underrepresented or vulnerable older adults.

**Background and Rationale:**

Austin has one of the fastest growing populations of both “seniors (aged 65 and older) and “pre-seniors (aged 50-64). In response to these rapidly changing demographics, Mayor Lee Leffingwell formed the Mayor’s Task Force on Aging in 2012. The task force was charged with building public awareness, analyzing the city’s resources and opportunities for growth, and creating a set of strategic recommendations to accommodate Central Texas’ fast-growing senior population. The Task Force recommended both creating the Commission on Seniors and having Austin join the World Health Organization network of Age Friendly Communities.

Beginning in 2015, Austin’s Commission on Seniors partnered with AARP, AustinUP, regional aging-related service organizations and community members to develop the Austin Age-Friendly Action Plan, a requirement of retaining the Age Friendly designation. In 2016 Council voted to adopt the Age-Friendly Austin Action Plan as an addendum to Imagine Austin.

In May 2018, the Commission on Seniors recommended to the Mayor and City Council that “The city provide adequate personnel resources for a Senior Program Coordinator to coordinate implementation of the Age-friendly Austin Action Plan. The position will focus on the successful implementation of the Age-friendly Action Plan goals and strategies through coordination with other city departments, and where necessary, other units of government and outside agencies.” The City Council approved the request, and the first-ever position was filled in February 2019.

Today, the Age Friendly Austin Program is spearheaded by its Program Coordinator, Tabitha Taylor, in collaboration with the Commission on Seniors, City departments, & other community stakeholders.

The Age-Friendly Program aims to improve the health and well-being of older adults by implementing and advocating for Age-Friendly programs, policies, and practices across the City of Austin. The Age-Friendly Program and its partners challenge the city to do more to prepare for the rapid aging of Austin's population.

Notable examples of age-friendly programming and advocacy efforts include the formation of Austin's Seniors Task Force, Parks and Recreation Department's Varsity Generation Programming, and the Social Inclusion Task Force.

***Seniors Task Force & Emergency Response***


Many Covid response services were led by personnel from the City of Austin's Public Health Department and Travis County Health and Human Services. Age-friendly Program Coordinator Tabitha Taylor helped lead the Austin/Travis County COVID-19 Emergency Operation Center Senior Task Force throughout the pandemic to communicate the needs of older adults including efforts to combat social isolation and access to safe and reliable testing and vaccination sites. The Seniors Task Force has also been vital in elevating the needs of older adult through city-wide emergency preparedness recommendations and resolutions.

Varsity Generation Programming the Austin Parks and Recreation Department offers a variety of Varsity Generation programs and services for people 50 years of age and older. Activities include traveling, pursuing old hobbies and learning new ones, socializing with friends, meeting new people, increasing knowledge, becoming, and staying physically fit, supplementing income, contributing to the community and much more!

***Social Inclusion Task Force***

The Austin Social Inclusion Task Force is a collaborative working group composed of representatives from local and national senior services organizations, the City of Austin, and the University of Texas at Austin. The Task Force, led and organized by the Aging Services Council, came together to explore ways to bridge the digital divide for older adults isolated by the Covid- 19 pandemic. Today, the group is dedicated to equipping vulnerable populations at higher risk for social isolation with technological resources by advocating for policy changes, increasing funding, supporting further research, and increasing collaboration and awareness among government agencies, organizations, and businesses.

Despite the success of the Age Friendly program and partnerships, the Commission frequently hears from older adults who are frustrated with trying to find information about programs and services. This is especially true for older adults in communities of color. For example, the Commission drafts and widely distributes an annual budget survey as a tool to get community input on budget recommendations. However, the majority of survey respondents are white women aged 65-74. The Commission on Seniors prioritizes equitable access to resources for older adults across the community and we believe this goal will be accomplished with a staff person dedicated to community outreach and education.

Attest:   
Janee Briesemeister, Chair of the Commission on Seniors

**Recommendation**

Fund a Quality of Life Study of Older Adults in Austin.

**Description of Recommendation to Council**

In order to improve the quality of life for older adults, Austin must better understand the experience of these individuals and how intersections between age, race, ethnicity, and other demographics impact those experiences. The Commission on Seniors recommends allocating \$250,000 to conduct a study to evaluate the quality of life of older adults in Austin. \$250,000 is the amount allocated for two recent Quality of Life Studies (People with Disabilities and LGBTQIA)

**Rationale:**

There has never been a proper quality of life study of older adults. Nearly 10 years ago then Mayor Leffingwell's task force conducted a survey as part of the [Mayor's Task Force on Aging](#). However, 77% of respondents were white and this survey did not break down findings by race, ethnicity, or gender identification. According to the 2010 Census the Austin area is one of the fastest-growing areas for both seniors (age 65 and older) and pre-seniors (age 55-64). The city demographer has not yet released detailed demographics on age from the 2020 Census, but it is expected these trends will continue. The Commission is well aware that we hear primarily from older adults who are already active and engaged in the community. We want to know what other members of the community need; indeed, we want to understand how to better engage will all segments of the community. As an example, the Commission drafts and widely distributes an annual budget survey as a tool to get community input on budget recommendations. However, the majority of survey respondents are white women aged 65-74.

The Commission is seeking updated information about the community and granular information about the needs of diverse populations of older adults. A Quality of Life Study will enable the Commission, Council and City departments to:

- Understand how city programs and services are serving older adults and where there are gaps
- Identify and remove barriers to participation
- Ensure programs and services for older adults are equitable and inclusive

Per Austin Code Section 2-1-132 the Commission on Seniors shall serve as an advisory board to the council concerning the quality of life for senior citizens in the Austin area and to help ensure older adults are productive, independent, and healthy. To fulfill this mission the Commission needs current information on the needs and experiences of older adults in Austin, as described above. Further, the city must provide an updated assessment, including data, to renew its Age Friendly City designation in a few years.

Attest:

  
Janee Briesemeister, Chair of the Commission on Seniors

RECOMMENDATION 20220328-004c2: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH FULL-TIME EMPLOYEE (FTE) FOR CULTURAL ARTS DIVISION PROGRAM

**Description:**

Over the past year, members from several different City commissions, led by Arts Commission Chair Castillo, have been informally meeting to discuss issues related to cultural arts finding and facilities. The group members and Chair Castillo have identified a need and opportunity for the Economic Development Department's Cultural Arts Division to have a full-time employee specifically dedicated to Community Engagement & Outreach. Cultural Arts Division program administrators have a full plate of tasks related to executing programs. Having a dedicated staffer, separate from the program administrator role, would allow that person to develop and create deeper connections between the Division and cultural arts community groups. This dedicated position would also help the division better understand the needs of potential cultural contractors that either do not typically access City cultural arts funding resources or are underrepresented in the group of those that do receive funding.

In debriefs with EDD staff, the AAQoL Advisory Commission has learned that Asian American groups are typically underrepresented in the pool of applicants for cultural arts funding rounds.

The cost is TBD but in the \$65,000 range, ongoing.

**Department:**

EDD/Cultural Arts Division

**Alignment with Council Strategic Priorities:**

Culture & Lifelong Learning: Quality of cultural venues, events, programs, and resources; Quality of lifelong learning opportunities.

Government That Works for All: Condition of City facilities and technology; Public engagement and participation; Equity of City programs and resource allocation.

Attest: x Jeremy Garza  
Jeremy Garza, Staff Liaison, Equity Office:

**Recommendation to Council:**

This recommendation looks to ensure equitable resource and opportunities are available to African Americans in the City of Austin where persons can increase their education and earning potential through programs in Technology Healthcare and STEM. We recommend intentional continued funding and the inclusion of African American partners like the African American Youth Harvest Foundation, Black Leaders Collective, Black Professional Alliance, The Greater Austin Black Chamber of Commerce and The Austin Revitalization Authority.

**City Department**

Austin Public Health, Economic Development

**Justification & Alignment with Council Strategic Priorities**

Economic Opportunity, Engagement & Affordability

Attest: Daryl Horton, Chair