

ASIAN AMERICAN QUALITY-OF-LIFE ADVISORY COMMISSION FY 2023-24 BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY		
Recommendation	Amount	Notes
AARC Front Desk Administrative FTE	\$63,000 ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JIC: No Recommended previously (not approved)
AARC Senior Language Access	\$44,000 ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JIC: No New recommendation
AARC Ballroom Lighting Installation	\$15,000 one-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JIC: No New recommendation
Immigrant Legal Services (APH)	\$250,000 ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JIC: Yes, Safety Recommended previously (one-time funding approved last year)
Community Health Navigators	\$150,000 ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JIC: Yes, Health Recommended previously (not approved)
APH Supplemental Language Access Funding	\$50,000 ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JIC: Yes, Health New recommendation
Mental Health Services	\$250,000 ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JIC: Yes, Health Recommended previously (not approved)
APH Contracts FTE	\$101,727 ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JIC: Yes, Health New recommendation

RECOMMENDATION – AARC FRONT DESK ADMINISTRATIVE FTE

DESCRIPTION

The Parks and Recreation Department (PARC), Museums & Cultural Programs has an FY 2023-24 Under Resourced Service Expectation for an FTE at the AARC. The Commission would like to request consideration and review of this unmet need for the Asian American community in Austin – a full-time administrative assistant to staff the facility's front desk and other duties. A permanent staff member will ameliorate the trend of constant turnover in this position that has been filled by temporary contract staff. Having a stable employee in this position will serve to provide better access to city services and quality of customer service for all AARC visitors.

By continuing to provide front desk support without a permanent employee, the Center and its staff will continue to experience the negative consequences of duplicative training of temporary staff, piecemeal scheduling of front desk duties, and double tasking of AARC staff.

The Commission recommended funding for this position last year, but it was not funded. Since then, the need has only grown due to the diversity of the Asian-American community in Austin as well as increased levels of AARC programming, events, and exhibits.

The cost is \$63,000 for salary and bilingual pay, ongoing.

DEPARTMENT

PARC/Museums & Cultural Arts/AARC

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

RECOMMENDATION – PARD SENIOR LANGUAGE ACCESS

DESCRIPTION

PARD's current contract spending authorization for language access (interpretation and translation Master Agreements) is insufficient. This restricts AARC's use of our language access budget and services. The AARC must then turn to CPIO for contract spending authorization to meet language access needs. The contract spending authorization for language access must be increased to allow the AARC and other PARD centers to use their language access budget to meet the need more effectively.

The AARC senior program has a diverse group of program participants with differing levels of English proficiency, physical abilities, and interests. To accommodate most participants needs, the program offers a variety of wellness activities such as Tai Chi, Yoga, meditation, dance fitness, ping pong, bingo, mahjong, and playing cards. Its health and education workshops include diabetes education, health screenings with Austin Public health, advance care planning, wills and probate, technology class, ESL support classes, and gardening. From these activities, seniors learn new information, apply it to their life, and connect to resources for themselves and their family members. These programs typically require interpretation in multiple languages.

There are limited number of translation vendors on the current Master Agreement, and the vendors provide inconsistent translation quality. For quality assurance, the AARC has asked community members review the vendor's work and reviewers commonly identify and correct the translation errors. Because of the Master Agreement, AARC staff are unable to use outside translation vendors or reimburse our community reviewers for their time.

The major interpretation challenge PARD consistently encounters is the overall interpretation contract authority of about \$6,000 per fiscal year from the Interpretation Master Agreement (NA19*202). The AARC alone has spent more than \$21,000 per fiscal year since 2021 for interpretation. When PARD reaches the spending limit, PARD purchasing staff are required to seek increased spending authority approval from Central Purchasing, a process can that can span from weeks to months. While awaiting approval, AARC staff is forced to limit spending on interpretation funds, which reduces the quality of the AARC senior programming offered. At times, the AARC is only able to provide interpretation to Mandarin Chinese speakers. With increase in PARD's spending authority on the Master Agreement, the AARC can increase its interpretation funds, which will provide an opportunity to share and expand programs, resources, and outreach to the surrounding Asian communities.

Cost is \$44,000 PARD language access funding.

DEPARTMENT

PARD

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

RECOMMENDATION – AARC BALLROOM INSTALLATION

DESCRIPTION

Provide funds to install the inherited theater lighting system from the Carver at the AARC.

The AARC has acquired the recently deinstalled Carver Theater lighting system, which has been replaced with an upgraded system. Providing this system for the AARC ballroom will provide flexibility not currently available and allow AARC to enhance the quality of theatrical and stage performances. Utilizing the theater lighting system can also prepare AARC for the anticipated Performance Center in future years under AARC Phase 2. The AARC currently has front lighting, used primarily for key lighting and spot lighting during events and small stage performances. The installation of select Carver theatre lighting will provide opportunity for the AARC to host professional theatrical performances by allowing dynamic key lighting, back lighting, and effect lighting, all of which are required to produce dynamic sets and performances. The AARC anticipates the installation of this system will meet community needs for a performance arts space until the AARC Phase 2 350-seat performance art theatre is built.

The Commission recommends that the installation of the inherited Carver Theater lighting system at the AARC be funded in the FY 2023-24 budget at an anticipated cost of \$15,000.

Cost is \$15,000 one time.

DEPARTMENT

PARD

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.

RECOMMENDATION – IMMIGRANT LEGAL SERVICES

DESCRIPTION

The Asian American Quality-of-Life Advisory Commission would like to recommend that the City provide on-going funding for immigrant legal services.

Travis County is experiencing an urgent need for immigrant legal services for low-income immigrants. The latest US Census data shows that 17.8% of the total population of Travis County is foreign born. Many of these individuals are low-income and do not have full legal status. Stress, fear, and heightened anxiety are constant companions for those in the immigrant community without legal status. Anxiety regarding deportation, family separation, and securing gainful employment are widespread concerns.

Although many of these immigrants have a pathway to legal immigration status, they do not have the ability to secure it. Navigating a complex and opaque immigration system to secure legal status is often impossible without legal assistance and is cost-prohibitive to many low-income Austin/Travis County residents.

Funding is needed to provide dedicated immigrant legal services to low-income Asian immigrants and others in Austin to address the large number of individuals seeking services for deportation defense and consultations. The immigrant Asian population in Austin is diverse and has specific language access needs, and, without additional funding, low-income individuals will not be able to access the protection and services they need.

The city's FY 2022-23 budget included one-time Budget Stabilization Reserve Funds in the amount of \$250,000. The Commission respectfully recommends that \$250,000 be included in the FY 2023-24 budget on an on-going basis.

Cost is \$250,000 ongoing.

DEPARTMENT

APH

ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Safety: Fair administration of justice

RECOMMENDATION – COMMUNITY HEALTH NAVIGATORS

DESCRIPTION

The Asian American Quality-of-Life Advisory Commission would like to recommend that the City increase funding for community health navigator (CHN) services.

CHNs 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 CHNs 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 may cease to exist.

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.

Austin’s Asian community is diverse with many non-native English speakers. The lack of language access services isolates many 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, and in many cases preventable, outcomes.

During the pandemic, a Texas A&M COVID contract supported a local provider in the hiring three bilingual Community Health Navigators that served the Arabic, Chinese, and Vietnamese speaking communities. The expiration of the funding period has resulted in less 150 clients and no dedicated bilingual CHN for the Chinese speaking community.

The Commission recommends that the city provide an additional \$150,000 in one-time funding to support navigation services for language specific communities no longer being covered after the lapse of one-time grant funding. These communities demonstrated a growing need for language supported navigation services.

Cost is \$150,000 one-time.

DEPARTMENT

APH

ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Health & Environment: Healthy conditions among individuals (absence of unhealthy conditions); Accessibility to quality health care services, both physical and mental.

RECOMMENDATION – APH SUPPLEMENTAL LANGUAGE ACCESS FUNDING

DESCRIPTION

The Asian American Quality-of-Life Advisory Commission recommends additional funds for language access to address gaps in APH's service provider coverage related to non-native English speakers. There is an expectation that contracted service providers provide services that are linguistically and culturally appropriate. This funding will help keep up with the increasing costs of interpretation and translation services as well as the growing diversity within the communities being served.

For community health workers serving clients with limited English proficiency, it is estimated that up to 50% of their total time and 100% of their client-facing time is dedicated to providing language access services.

The Commission suggest that the funding for language access be used to provide supplemental contract dollar amounts to other APH service contracts serving Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) populations that are designed for language access activities, such as translation, interpretation, language line, bilingual pay, etc.

DEPARTMENT

APH

ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Health & Environment: Healthy conditions among individuals (absence of unhealthy conditions)

RECOMMENDATION – MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

DESCRIPTION

The Asian American Quality-of-Life Advisory Commission would like to request increased funding of existing Asian Pacific Islander (API) focused mental health services at \$250,000 annually through APH's Health Equity contracting portfolio.

For the FY 2020 City Budget, the Commission submitted a budget recommendation for mental health education, outreach, and service provision in the amount of \$200,000. This item was funded in the FY 2020 Approved Budget at \$100,000. This funding is ongoing. The need in the community is increasing and the Commission recommends ongoing funding of \$350,000 ongoing, an increase of \$250,000.

Data from the City's Asian American Quality of Life Initiative study showed higher levels of mental distress and serious mental illness across all of Austin's largest Asian American ethnic groups when compared to the general U.S. population. Growing political tensions with China results in increased need for mental health services in the community. In addition, these groups also exhibited low utilization levels of psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health professionals (counselors, marriage therapists, social workers).

According to data from APH's community surveys, respondents consistently rank additional access to behavior health services as a top need. An increase of funds would allow APH to identify and potentially contract with additional behavioral health providers that provide services, especially in underserved communities.

Cost is \$250,000 ongoing (total ongoing cost of \$350,000 inclusive of the current \$100,000 funding level).

DEPARTMENT

APH

ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Health & Environment: Healthy conditions among individuals (absence of unhealthy conditions); Accessibility to quality health care services, both physical and mental

RECOMMENDATION – APH CONTRACTS SPECIALIST FTE

DESCRIPTION

Austin Public Health (APH) has a need for an additional Contracts Specialist FTE to assist current staff in the Health Equity and Community Engagement Division, Social Services Agreements Administration with the increasing volume of APH service contracts. Over the past five years, the amount of funding for social services managed by APH has increased by 50%. Similarly, APH has seen the volume of its contracts increase significantly while staffing levels have not risen accordingly. Some of this increase can be attributed to the continued advocacy work and successful recommendations made by the various quality of life commissions and the JIC. During the pandemic, COVID funds were used to hire temporary staff to handle the increasing workload. However, those funds have now expired.

An additional FTE would allow the Social Service Contracts Division to right-size the workload given the significant increase in funding and related contracts over the past five years. If these funds are not provided to staffing assistance to APH, solicitations and contract awards for important social services to Austin's most-vulnerable community members could be delayed.

Cost is \$101,727 ongoing.

DEPARTMENT

APH

ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Health & Environment: Healthy conditions among individuals (absence of unhealthy conditions); Accessibility to quality health care services, both physical and mental