



RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

Arts Commission

Recommendation Number: 20260323-14: Arts Commission FY26 Budget Recommendations

Date of Approval: March 23, 2026

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Fully fund AACME for all necessary Full-Time Employees to ensure full capacity for the Division and build a solid foundation for growth. City of Austin General Fund
2. All AACME staffing expenses and administrative fees to be sourced from the General Fund (or any other appropriate source) and **NOT** from limited Hotel Occupancy Taxes designated for Arts. (FY25-26 amount was approx. \$548,000) / City of Austin General Fund
3. Fiscal support for Community Navigators to better support applicants during the cultural funding program application process, in particular for translation service providers. \$1 Million / City of Austin General Fund
4. The addition of a Marketing Representative and a Community Engagement Specialist for each cultural facility: Asian American Resource Center, George Washington Carver Museum & Cultural Center, Mexican American Culture Center, and the Dougherty Arts Center.

JUSTIFICATIONS

REC. 1. The new Division must be fully staffed in order to provide services to the Arts/Culture Community and the City.

REC. 2. Hotel Occupancy Taxes (HOT) are limited in their scope and should be used primarily for direct support of arts organizations, artists, and cultural programming rather than administrative expenses. Moving AACME funding to the General Fund ensures Long-Term Sustainability: Reliance on HOT for administrative costs creates funding instability, as these revenues fluctuate based on tourism trends. Shifting these costs to the General Fund ensures consistent support. This move aligns with Best Practices: Other cities with thriving arts ecosystems, such as San Francisco and Seattle, allocate administrative costs separately to ensure the majority of HOT revenues directly benefit arts organizations and creative workers.

Rec. 3. Improves Equity and Accessibility – Many artists and cultural organizations, particularly those from underrepresented communities, face language and administrative barriers when applying for funding. Providing translation services ensures that all applicants, regardless of language proficiency, have an equal opportunity to access funding. Community Navigators will help to strengthen Grant Success Rates – Many small and emerging arts organizations lack administrative capacity to

navigate complex grant applications. Admin support for grant applications helps ensure more organizations successfully receive funding, leading to a more diverse and inclusive arts ecosystem. Supports Artists' Well-Being – Many artists lack access to affordable healthcare, impacting their ability to sustain creative work. Community support for health services—such as mental health resources and wellness programs—ensures a healthier, more resilient arts community. Aligns with City's Cultural and Economic Goals – Investing in service organizations strengthens Austin's creative economy by ensuring artists and cultural groups receive the support needed to thrive, contributing to the city's cultural and economic vibrancy.

Rec. 4. Marketing representatives may be housed within a central division or public information office, we recommend there's 1 FTE with a dedicated portfolio of serving a given facility.

- a. 1. Marketing Representative A - Communicates via social and news outlets each facility's programs, identifies sharing of related City-wide initiatives needing more input from cultural and arts communities tied to each facility.
- b. Community Engagement Specialist - Seeks community input into public planning processes, attends community events to share about programs, services, and updates on capital projects.

Motioned By: Commissioner Schmalbach **Seconded By:** Commissioner Maldonado

Vote: 9-0

For: Houston, Keys, Maldonado, Schmalbach, Hussaini, Pownall, Kracheni, Anderson, Medicharla

Against: *None*

Abstain: *None*

Absent: Garza, Banskota

Attest: Jesús Varela


