



COUNTY of VENTURA
COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Sevet Johnson, PsyD
County Executive Officer

Mike Pettit
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November 7, 2023

Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura
800 S. Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

SUBJECT: Receive and File a Report, and Provide Direction Regarding, the Proposed Use of Arts Community Funds Designated By Your Board on October 11, 2022 in the Amount of \$1,000,000; Authorization for the County Executive Office to Implement the Three Proposed Arts Community Programs Identified in the Report; Approval of, and Authorization for the County Executive Officer or Designee to Negotiate, Execute and Make Minor Agreements with the Ventura County Community Foundation and Other Service Providers in a Total Cumulative Amount Not to Exceed \$100,000 to Support the Administration and Implementation of These Programs Subject to County Counsel Review.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. It is recommended that your Board receive and file a report, and provide direction regarding, the proposed use of arts community funds designated by your Board on October 11, 2022 in the amount of \$1,000,000.
2. Authorize the County Executive Office to implement the three proposed arts community programs identified in the report.
3. Approval of, and authorization for the County Executive Officer or designee to negotiate, execute and make minor agreements with the Ventura County Community Foundation and other service providers in a total cumulative amount not to exceed \$100,000 to support the administration and implementation of these programs subject to County Counsel review.

FISCAL/MANDATES IMPACT:

Mandatory:	No
Source of Funding:	General Fund – Fund Balance Assigned to Fiscal Recovery Projects
Funding Match Required:	No
Impact on Other Departments:	None

<u>Summary of Revenues and Costs:</u>	<u>FY 2023-24</u>	<u>FY 2024-25</u>
Revenues:	\$ 0	\$ 0
Costs:		
Direct	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 0
Indirect-Dept	\$ 0	\$ 0
Indirect-County CAP	\$ 0	\$ 0
Total Cost	<u>\$ 1,000,000</u>	<u>\$ 0</u>
Net County Cost	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 0
Recovered Indirect Costs	\$ 0	\$ 0

FY 2023-24 Budget Projections:

FY 2023-24 Budget Projection for County Executive Office – Division 1050				
	Adopted Budget	Adjusted Budget	Projected Budget	Estimated Savings/(Deficit)
Appropriations	\$80,582,329	\$80,582,329	\$80,582,329	\$ 0
Revenue	\$5,954,000	\$5,954,000	\$5,954,000	\$ 0
Net Cost	\$ 74,628,329	\$74,628,329	\$74,628,329	\$ 0

*Your Board approved appropriations for this item on June 27, 2023, Item #15

BACKGROUND

Collectively known as the arts community, nonprofit arts and culture organizations, not-for-profit arts groups, culture bearers, and individual artists are important contributors to the creative economy of Ventura County. In addition to their economic contributions, these entities provide services that support community beautification, individual wellbeing, social cohesion, and our overall quality of life.

Although one of the hardest hit sectors during the pandemic, the arts community in Ventura County demonstrated marked resiliency. This was due to both prudent operating decisions and emergency funding programs like the Paycheck Protection Program, Economic Injury Disaster Loans, the Shuttered Venues Operating Grant, and expanded unemployment insurance programs. These programs have all concluded and the funding has been exhausted.

The pandemic has also exposed disparities within the arts community. While many volunteer-led organizations, independent artists, gig workers, micro-businesses, and not-for-profit arts activities were severely affected by the pandemic, many were ineligible for pandemic relief programs. Many of these entities were already under resourced and serve as one of the few arts and culture providers in the communities most impacted by the pandemic.

Although some geographic locations and sectors of the creative economy have demonstrated a healthy recovery, recovery for others has either plateaued or seen a continued downtrend, especially in the fine and performing arts sectors. This is particularly true for areas without a major metropolitan center. Socio-economic disparities and limited access to arts and culture opportunities in underserved communities remain.

Countywide public funding for arts and culture, combined with pragmatic technical assistance programs and professional grant administration, is anticipated to accelerate an equitable recovery across the sector and support a geographically dispersed, diverse, and vibrant arts community in the future.

DISCUSSION:

On October 11, 2022, your Board approved the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding Plan for the County, which included a range of recovery focused projects in the areas of: Housing and Homelessness, Infrastructure; Community Parks Recreation and Facility Investments, Mental Health Infrastructure, Public Health and Community Interventions, Emergency Preparedness, Economic Recovery, Early Learning and Childcare, Sustainability, Farmworker Programs, and the Arts Community.

The project name for the arts community is noted as "Countywide Arts and Culture Support", and the Project Description is "funding to provide services and resources in support of arts and culture organizations and projects, emphasizing communities most impacted by the pandemic and activities that align with the County Economic Vitality Strategic Plan's focus on the creative economy."

On December 13, 2022, your Board approved the use of General Funds, instead of the ARPA allocations, to fund all the programs and projects previously identified as ARPA funded projects, which included the \$1,000,000 to support arts and culture organizations.

Today, we are presenting three programs funded by this \$1,000,000 allocation that will invest in the arts community in Ventura County and support recovery across the sector.

The process for developing these programs included gathering input from the arts community and consultations with experts in the field, including professionals experienced in grant-making, leading municipal arts agencies, and arts advocacy efforts, as well as arts proponents providing street-level programming. It also included research, analysis, and comparison of contemporary local government grantmaking practices to support arts and culture. A total of six different funding models were initially considered and vetted via internal consultations and further consultation with experts in the field.

While each of the six models had their respective merits, one was deemed the best option based on the immediate needs of the arts community, project timelines, and overall feasibility.

The model being presented today includes three programs that align with the project description of the ARPA Funding Plan and its emphasis on supporting an equitable recovery from the pandemic. The model provides resources to the arts community through a grant funding program and grant match set aside, and services through a series of workshops and a professional outreach campaign. These programs are anticipated to:

1. Accelerate the recovery of the arts community by supporting activities aligned with the County's Economic Vitality Strategic Plan.
2. Emphasize recovery in communities most impacted by the pandemic.
3. Support the full spectrum of the arts community, with funding tiers that support the activities of individual artists, small to medium arts organizations, and arts organizations with budgets of \$1,000,000 or more.
4. Increase the impact of the funding through an expeditious distribution process and a matching grant requirement for awards in the first tier.
5. Support the sustainability of the arts community through providing organizational development workshops.

The three programs proposed in this model include grant funding to support non-profit arts organizations and artists; funds to support a series of technical assistance workshops and the costs of administering the funds; and a contingency fund to support grant match requests or similar opportunities that are aligned with the arts community project description in the ARPA Funding Plan.

Program Overview:

1. Arts and Culture Investment Fund Grant Program	\$800,000
2. Technical Assistance to Grantees and Administrative Costs:	\$100,000
3. Matching Grant Contingency Fund	\$100,000

We are proposing partnering with the Ventura County Community Foundation (VCCF) to serve as the lead administrator of the grant program. This partnership will allow for the most expeditious distribution of the grant funds through the VCCF's existing systems and years of grant making experience in Ventura County, also providing the necessary due diligence and fiduciary oversight. We are also proposing that the Ventura County Arts Council (VCAC) serve as a subcontractor to provide smaller grants directly to individual artists.

Program 1: Ventura County Arts and Culture Investment Fund

This program will allocate \$800,000 to provide direct funding to arts organizations and projects, aligned with activities found within the County Economic Vitality Strategic Plan and serving the communities most impacted by the pandemic. These activities include:

- Community programs and events
- Arts education

- Creative placemaking
- Entrepreneurship and workforce development
- Promotion and marketing of arts and cultural events
- Operating costs for organizations already doing work in the above areas.

Three grant tiers will accommodate for the varying needs of the arts community, separated primarily by operating budget size, capacity, and type of entity. The eligibility criteria, application requirements, and funding caps will vary according to grant tier.

Tier 1:

\$400,000 designated to nonprofit 501 (c) (3) arts and cultural organizations with operating budgets averaging \$1,000,000 and above for three years prior to 2020.

- Funding requests of up to \$200,000, with final award amounts based on number of eligible applications received, application score, and final ranking.
- 1:1 cash match

Tier 2:

\$300,000 to nonprofit 501 (c) (3) arts and cultural organizations and fiscally sponsored projects with budgets of \$999,999 or less in operation for at least three years.

- Funding requests from \$5,000 to \$30,000, with final award amounts based on number of eligible applications received, application score, and final ranking.
- No requirement for matching funds

Tier 3:

\$100,000 to independent artists and art projects with at least three years of documented history of artistic or cultural practice between the years of 2017 through 2023.

- Funding requests from \$1,000 to \$5,000
- No requirement for matching funds

Each tier will have a customized application process. The final amounts for each awarded application will be determined through a competitive review process, subject to the number of eligible applications received for each tier. Any funds remaining from undersubscribed tiers will be reallocated to support fully or oversubscribed tiers.

The County Executive Officer or her designee will work with the VCCF and the VCAC to develop the final eligibility criteria appropriate for each tier. At a minimum, we anticipate eligibility criteria to include:

- Letter of IRS Determination of 501(c) (3) status
- Current with IRS 990 filings
- Registration with the California Secretary of State Registry of Charitable Trusts
- Current business license
- Individual artists will instead submit work history documentation

The program will emphasize arts organizations and projects that serve communities that were most impacted by the pandemic. These communities have been identified as the lowest two quartiles of the Vulnerability Index as indicated in the Economic Development Collaborative's 2021 report: [Profile of COVID-19 Community, Business, Nonprofit, & Worker Impacts](#) (EXHIBIT 1). This includes areas of:

- Camarillo
- El Rio
- Fillmore
- Nyland Acres
- Ojai
- Oxnard
- Piru
- Port Hueneme
- Santa Paula
- Simi Valley
- Ventura

Organizations that do not directly serve these areas but can demonstrate service to other communities in need in the county (e.g., arts programs for older adults, people with disabilities, schools in lower income areas, etc.) will also be eligible for this grant program.

Narrative questions for organizations will elicit responses related to the programs or projects of the applicant, history of service to the community, financial health, and governance. Questions for individual artists will be work history and project focused.

Anticipated Outcomes: Program 1*

1. Stimulate the recovery of Ventura County arts community and those communities most impacted by the pandemic through the alignment with the County's Economic Vitality Strategic Plan.
2. Diversification and expansion of the capacity of the arts community via widespread support of both one-time projects and ongoing programs and operations.
3. Matching grant requirement will increase overall impact of the funding for the highest grant tier.
4. Strengthening the County's knowledge of, and relationships within, the arts community across Ventura County.

*More specific outcomes will be included in the grant request proposals.

Program 2: Administrative Costs and Technical Assistance to Grantees

This program area will allocate \$100,000 to support fund administration costs, professional development for the arts community, and community outreach efforts.

Funding for this program area will support the VCCF's estimated \$25,000 fee for administering the grant funds. The VCAC's fee is estimated at \$10,000. Examples of the services provided by these organizations include finalizing application criteria,

development of an application process and portal, convening advisory committees and review panels, communications with applicants and awardees, distribution of awards, grant monitoring, and final reporting. Each organization has existing systems in place that will accelerate the grant process and distribution of funds.

The professional development activities will support the sustainability of grantee organizations to ensure viable future operations. These will include workshops on capital management and governance, along with capacity building elements. Individual artists will receive a specialized workshop on working in communities. The intent behind these workshops supporting the long-term recovery and sustainability of the grantees, maximizing the impact of this capital infusion. Workshops will be provided by experts in the field, and selected by the County, in collaboration with the VCCF.

This program area will also support an outreach and awareness campaign to ensure countywide awareness of the funding opportunity, the activities it supports, and its impact. The workshops and outreach campaign will utilize the remaining \$65,000. If any funds remain available, they will be distributed in a second round of grant funding.

Anticipated Outcomes: Program 2

1. The VCCF and the VCAC, in collaboration with CEO staff, will provide professional grant administration for the entire process, including application development and review, grant distribution, reporting, and evaluation.
2. Increased project, program, or organization sustainability through participation in technical assistance workshops led by experienced professionals.
3. Full community awareness of the granting program, including the announcement of the funding opportunity, recognition of the awardees, and communication of program outcomes via a professional outreach campaign.

Program 3: Contingency Fund for Grant Match Requests for the Arts Community

This program area will reserve \$100,000 to support future matching grants or similar opportunities to support the arts community. Potential qualifying grant match requests include grants programs offered by the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, and private foundations. Grant match requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and subject to the approval of the County Executive Officer or her designee and in accordance with all County policies, with priority given to opportunities that are aligned with the project description of the ARPA Funding Plan. If this reserve is not fully utilized within one year, the remainder of the funds will be distributed through a second round of grant funding.

Anticipated Outcomes: Program 3

1. Expansion of the grant opportunities available to the arts community through this set-aside of dedicated matching funds.

2. Leveraging the Board allocated funding to bring in additional outside dollars to support arts and culture in Ventura County.
3. Overall development of the Ventura County arts community through supporting and funding grant match requests.

CONCLUSION:

The Ventura County Arts and Culture Investment Fund and programs proposed today represent the largest arts community grant opportunity in the history of the County. These programs will provide widespread services and resources to both artists and arts organizations, emphasizing arts and culture activities, programs, and operations that support recovery in the communities most impacted by the pandemic. These programs also align with the County's Economic Vitality Strategic Plan and its focus on the creative economy.

By supporting a range of activities from independent artists to big-budget arts organizations, this investment will help to strengthen the creative economy and enhance the quality of life for residents of Ventura County. It also allows for the County to deepen its relationship with the arts community and gain a greater understanding of funding impact and needs for future programs. CEO staff will return to your Board with a final report on grant recipients, activities, and outcomes.

This Board letter has been reviewed by the County Executive Office, County Counsel, and the Auditor-Controller's Office. If you have any questions, please contact David Yoshitomi, Arts and Culture Manager, at 805-662-6706.

Sincerely,



David Yoshitomi
Arts and Culture Manager



Sevet Johnson, PsyD.
County Executive Officer

Attachment:

EXHIBIT 1: EDC Report: Profile of COVID-19 Community, Business, Nonprofit, & Worker Impacts