



**COUNTY of VENTURA**  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

**Sevet Johnson, PsyD**  
County Executive Officer

**Mike Pettit**  
Assistant County Executive Officer

**Kaye Mand**  
County Chief Financial Officer

**Shawn Atin**  
Assistant County Executive  
Officer/  
Human Resources Director  
Labor Relations

July 25, 2023

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

**SUBJECT: Authorization for the County Executive Officer or Designee to Submit an Application Seeking a Grant in the Amount of \$100,000 from National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Grant Program for the Term of July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2026.**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that your Board authorize the County Executive Officer or Designee to submit an application seeking a grant in the amount of \$100,000 from National Endowment for the Arts Our Town grant program for the term of July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2026.

**FISCAL/MANDATES IMPACT:**

No fiscal impacts or mandates at this time. If the application is awarded staff will return to the Board for approval to receive grant funds and at that time provide a full analysis of the fiscal/mandates impact.

**BACKGROUND:**

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Our Town Grant is a federal creative placemaking grant program designed to support the integration of arts, culture, and design into local community development efforts. Grant awards range from \$25,000 to \$150,000 and require a minimum nonfederal cost share or matching funds equal to the grant amount. Eligible projects are those that are tailored to address unique local conditions, actively involve communities, prioritize equity, promote artistic enrichment, and establish a foundation for lasting systemic change. A community partner is required to be eligible to receive the grant. Applications are due by August 17, 2023. The grant term for this application is July 1, 2024, until June 30, 2026.

**DISCUSSION:**

County Executive Office (CEO) – Office of Arts and Culture has identified the NEA Our Town grant as a potential funding source to support a creative placemaking project, specifically the design and installation of large mural along the south wall of the approximately mile-long Moon Ditch Channel (County of Ventura Jurisdiction), located south of the U.S. Route 101 and north of Leland Street in the City of Ventura, near the Ventura Auto Center. It is tentatively titled as the “Moon Ditch Mural Project” (Project). We anticipate this title will change as a formal theme is developed.

This Project was conceptualized by Board of Supervisors District 1 and Ventura County Watershed Protection District (WPD) staff to support objectives related to graffiti abatement, local artist engagement, community beautification, and economic vitality and tourism through the installation of a community mural in the channel. The concept also includes a work-experience component for justice-involved youth supported by the Ventura County Probation Agency. The Project is intended to serve as a pilot for other graffiti abatement initiatives across the Ventura County Watershed Protection District Channels.

The Project will leverage partnerships between the County's District 1 Office, Watershed Protection District, Probation Agency, County Executive Office, Ventura County Arts Council (VCAC), local artists, and the community to support the design and installation of the mural. The mural design will emerge through a community driven process, with a lead artist serving as the creative director for the Project. Approximately five to 10 other local artists will support the creative director and incorporate their original work. The final design will be subject to a community review process, along with approvals from each of the participating agencies.

WPD staff will prepare the channel for mural installation, and the Ventura County Probation Agency will refer justice-involved youth to gain work experience on the Project. Under the guidance of Probation, the artists will work directly with the youth referrals on all phases of the Project, including design and installation, to ensure a fulfilling work experience program. The VCAC will serve as the required arts organization community partner for the grant and will support the Project through engaging with the arts community and serving as the fiscal receiver for sponsorship and fundraising dollars.

If authorized to apply for this grant, we will request \$100,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts to support this Project. Initial figures estimate the total Project budget to be \$250,000, including design costs and artist fees, labor, materials, staff time, and administrative costs. A dollar-for-dollar cost share is required. Eligible cost share expenses include any salary and benefits for staff assigned to the Project, including Watershed, Probation, District 1, and the County Executive Office. An estimated \$50,000 will be secured via fundraising efforts led by the Ventura County Arts Council and outreach to the business community. All funds raised outside of the Our Town grant will be received by the VCAC and will be applied to meeting the cost share/matching funds requirements. We will include the fiscal impact of this grant when we return to the Board to request acceptance of the grant. Grant awards will be announced in April 2024.

An overarching goal of this project is to demonstrate how community driven public art projects can simultaneously support community and economic development, create a

sense of place and community identity, and expand workforce opportunities for justice involved youth. The Project is anticipated to have a substantial positive impact in the community due to its scale, support of internal and external partnerships, level of community involvement, and high visibility. Receipt of a National Endowment for the Arts grant will not only provide financial support for the Project, but also raise its visibility to the national level.

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 662-6706.

Sincerely,



David Yoshitomi  
Arts and Culture Manager



Sevet Johnson, PsyD.  
County Executive Officer