

October 30, 2023

Dear Council Member Morales,

The Seattle Arts Commission (SAC) wants to thank you for considering Councilmember Tammy Morales' walk-on amendments that use the surplus Admissions Tax revenue to support our requested \$143,000 in increased funding for the Office of Arts and Culture's grantmaking programs, as well as additional allocations to fund an African cultural and arts center and to support public art projects recognizing the history of Chinese exclusion in Seattle.

We are proud to know that our City Council seeks to prioritize public art and grantmaking for artists and arts organizations in this year's budget. *Thank you.* This sends an important signal to artists and arts organizations that our city values them and recognizes that the arts sector is a vital part of fostering a healthy civic and economic ecosystem in Seattle—and deserves support.

That said, we have three requests in response to these walk-on amendments.

1. We would like to better understand the rationale for these two particular earmarks and how they were chosen. In an effort to support transparency and established, community-based processes for decision-making around surplus Admissions Tax revenue, we aim to understand from Council how funding for these particular efforts was decided upon, and which specific organizations these earmarks are designed to be allocated towards (if any).
2. We also noted that the amount for the \$500,000 amendment in particular is still being refined. We applaud the commitment to support this important project, and recommend that the earmark for this project be set at \$250,000, and the remaining \$250,000 be added to the allocation for the Office of Arts and Culture general grantmaking.

As we mentioned in our previous letter to the Council, ARTS has a number of grants—such as [CityArtist](#), [Arts in Parks](#), [Youth Arts](#), and [smART Ventures](#)—which are a lifeline for many artists and organizations in our city. While we whole-heartedly believe in the importance of the earmarked project, we recognize that the city's own Office of Arts and Culture has expertise in creating equitable processes around grantmaking through the above and other well established grant programs, and that the processes developed and executed by the team at ARTS is designed to ensure all of our underserved and marginalized communities receive a fair and equitable opportunity for city support, which we know is a goal that you all share. One-time funding for public art for singular organizations and singular purposes can play an important role, but does not sustain the whole of our artistic community, which is why we are recommending distributing the \$500,000 surplus allocation in this way.

3. Finally, in the future, **we request that both the Office of Arts and Culture and the Seattle Arts Commission play an integral role in shaping an equitable process for distributing surplus funding to arts organizations and individuals.** In the coming year, the Arts Commission is

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eager to deepen our relationship with Councilmember Morales and her exceptional team to support these efforts and conversations year round, and act in service to the good work being carried out through Neighborhoods, Education, Civil Rights & Culture Committee.

We are happy to discuss these points further, and thank you for taking our recommendations under advisement.

Respectfully,

Vanessa Villalobos and Vee Hua 華婷婷
Co-Chairs

With the support of the Seattle Arts Commission