

October 10, 2023

Dear Councilmember Tammy Morales,

The Seattle Arts Commission (SAC) wishes to express our gratitude for your support of our local creative communities and artists. A thriving arts sector is a central component of what makes Seattle a great place to live and work, as well serving as a [core economic driver in our region](#). We write today in response to the Mayor's budget proposal, and to share our recommendations for how this budget can effectively support our essential arts sector, in turn contributing to a healthy and thriving Seattle.

Firstly, we are pleased that the Mayor's budget will continue to incorporate dedicated funding for Hope Corps, fostering essential workforce development for local artists that enrich our shared downtown spaces. **We thank you for the inclusion of these funds, and will continue to champion this city program.**

Second, we are pleased to see a budget adjustment of \$257,100 in the funding allocated to the Office of Arts and Culture to support local artists and organizations, to account for recent inflation. ARTS funding programs—which include [CityArtist](#), [Arts in Parks](#), [Youth Arts](#), and [smART Ventures](#)—are a lifeline for many artists and organizations in our city. While we appreciated this increase to the Office of Arts and Culture, this would be the first adjustment to these funds in 12 years. This stagnation in funding fails to adequately address the rising costs of living and operating in the city, [which has led to artists being pushed out, draining the city of creative talent](#). **We strongly advocate for an increased allocation to address inflationary pressures, and recommend this figure increasing from \$257,100 to \$400,000.**

Thirdly, as you may know, Arts Commissioners, along with Seattle Film Commissioners and others, have recently been in conversations regarding SIFF's purchase of Cinerama, and the allocation of excess "windfall" city funds to do so. While we are overjoyed that this cultural institution will live on, we note that neither the Seattle Arts Commission nor the Office of Arts and Culture were made aware that there had been excess funds that were being considered for an arts focused grant in the city. The Office of Arts and Culture has expertise in creating equitable processes around grantmaking; **we request that, in**

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Ricky Graboski
Vera Project

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the future, 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. The grant-making process developed and executed by the experienced team at the Office of Arts and Culture is designed to ensure underserved and marginalized communities are getting a fair and equitable opportunity for city support, which we know is a goal that you all share.

Lastly, as the Seattle City Council knows, the SAC has repeatedly advocated for funding related to the [Culture Space Agency PDA](#), as well as funding for arts institutions and the preservation or creation of cultural spaces, in general. While the Mayor's budget includes \$650,000 in one-time support for arts and cultural organizations recovering from the pandemic, it is essential to recognize that **one-time support does not build sustainability, or provide a sense of security that supports sustainable employment, essential programming, or innovative work. We are advocating to change this one-time funding to multi-year funding for arts and cultural organizations**, such that we can support our arts organizations and institutions in being able to plan for a future in which they are contributing to the vibrancy of our city for years to come.

The Seattle Arts Commission would love to meet with you in the coming weeks to share more about why we see these budget requests as essential for supporting a healthy city, and to further build our relationship and offer our support to you as community liaisons.

Again, the entire Seattle Arts Commission thanks you, not only for your ongoing support of this vital sector, but for supporting the tens of thousands of Seattleites that work as artists and arts administrators and staff, as well as the hundreds of thousands more who are enriched by what they bring to our city.

Respectfully,

Vanessa Villalobos and Vee Hua 華婷婷
Co-Chairs

With the support of the Seattle Arts Commission