



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

April 2011

Q1: What is the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture and why was it created?

A: The City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture (Commission) was established in 1988 to advise the Mayor and City Council on promoting, encouraging and increasing support for the region's artistic and cultural assets, integrating arts and culture into community life and showcasing San Diego as an international tourist destination. The Commission is composed of 15 volunteers nominated by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council, and is supported by a staff of six. As ratified within the City's Municipal Code, the Commission is responsible for advocating for the role and value of arts and culture in civic life, managing the City's public art collection, and promoting greater participation and access to arts and culture for all San Diegans. In addition to the 15 appointed Commissioners, the Commission utilizes over 60 additional volunteers per year on panels, committees, and in the service of inter-agency coalitions.

Q2: How is the Commission funded?

A: The Commission receives a portion of the City's Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) Special Promotional Fund, paid by tourists and other visitors to San Diego. The Commission seeks and frequently wins grants from the California Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts to augment the budget. One program administered by the Commission, the Public Art Program, uses funding from certain Capital Improvement Project budgets as well as funds from non-City agencies, as directed by City.

Q3: How does public art get selected?

A: With oversight from the City's Purchasing & Contracting Department, Commission staff administers a competitive call for artists' qualifications. Then a panel of diverse members nominated by the community and selected by the Commission reviews the artists' applications and uses established criteria to recommend one artist for the contract award. The City negotiates a contract with the artist to design, fabricate and install an artwork. Then the artist conducts research and gathers community input to develop an art proposal. The artwork is built and installed only after the art proposal is reviewed and approved by a wide range of stakeholders invited to participate in public presentations, charrettes, committee, and Commission meetings.

Q4: How does the Commission use its funding?

A: In FY11 the Commission managed contracts with more than 110 arts and culture and other non-profit organizations that provide programs and services to every city council district throughout the year. The Commission also manage an operating budget that supports six staff positions and all programs and services such as workshops, technical trainings, and application review panels, as well as special initiatives and partnerships with The National Endowment for the Arts, California Arts Council, Americans for the Arts, Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the San Diego Foundation. Additionally, the Commission is responsible for managing the 1,100 pieces of artwork which comprise the Civic Art Collection.

Q5: What is the City's return on investing in arts and culture?

A: Commission staff and the programs they manage are self-funded through a revenue stream which grows as result of the Commission's work. TOT funds invested by the Commission through its rigorous application process generate a positive financial return. In fiscal year 2010, 1.5 million visitors participated in arts and cultural activities funded by the Commission. According to the San Diego Visitor Profile Study conducted by CIC Research, tourists who participated in an arts and culture activity are likely to have a longer stay (3.8 vs. 1.8 days for all visitors) and nearly 60% of these visitors use hotel accommodations. In addition, these visitors spend \$561 per trip, as compared with the average tourist's \$235. And by staying in hotels, these cultural tourists give back to the TOT revenue that is used to support the very activities they travel here to experience. Additionally, the 70 OSP-funded organizations that produce these activities

stimulated the local economy with over \$173 million in direct expenditures. Furthermore, they support a workforce of over 7,000 and pay approximately \$99 million in salaries.

Q6: How do citizens benefit from what the Commission does?

A: The Commission provides prudent oversight of taxpayer dollars through a fair, equitable, and open process that assures arts and culture is accessible to the largest number of citizens. This is accomplished with the Commission's leadership in developing criteria to review the applications for funding from the more than 110 nonprofit organizations it funds and to review proposals for works of art located in public areas. Without this process, that provides financial stability to arts programs, festivals, and parades in local communities, schools, community centers, and senior facilities would be far less available. In addition, funding from the City through the Commission allows cultural organizations to provide free or discounted tickets for many of their performances or exhibits.

Q7: Who decides what organizations get funding and how?

A: Each year, utilizing an open process with public input, the Commission revises, reviews, and adopts policy changes and then publishes a set of updated guidelines for each of its two funding programs. Nonprofit organizations submit an application by the deadline, and those applications are subsequently reviewed and ranked by a panel comprised of Commissioners and other diverse community members with special expertise. Funding for each organization is based on a formula that includes the amount of funds allocated by the Mayor and City Council, the size of the organization's budget, and the rank an organization receives from the panel.

Q8: Who makes up the Commission board and how are they selected?

A: Potential nominees for the fifteen-member Commission are drawn from San Diegans who are arts and culture patrons, artists, educators, business professionals, those with expertise in a particular arts and culture field, and the general public. Efforts are made to gather nominees who represent a diversity of backgrounds including gender, age, socio-economic class, geographic location, religion, sexual orientation, skills and abilities, ethnicity, political affiliation and/or professional background. The Mayor directly appoints seven members and selects the remaining eight members from a list of nominations submitted by each Councilmember. A schedule of all Commission meetings for the year is posted on our website and the public is welcome to attend.

Q9: Who are the Commission staff and what do they do?

A: The six Commission staff bring more than 150 combined years of experience in art production, arts administration, education, non-profit and government work. They manage allocations programs, a public art program, and produce educational and technical support programming for San Diego's arts and culture community. The work of the Commission requires the annual support of over 60 community volunteers who collectively work approximately 3,000 hours per year, for a Full Time Equivalency of 1.4. All these volunteers are trained and managed by staff to execute the complex responsibilities of application reviews, adjudication of proposals, management of the City's art collection and collaborating with affiliated arts and culture coalitions throughout the region. Without the work of Commission staff and the recruitment, training, and management of our qualified volunteers, the City's arts and culture funding would lose its standardized, transparent, and objective process, managed with the necessary level of expertise. The result would be a return to the "everyman for himself" non-process of the 1980s in which individual applications would be evaluated by Council staff, lacking rigor and with the potential conflicts of interest that caused the City Council to form the Commission in the first place.

Q10: What do arts organizations think of the Commission overall?

A: In fiscal year 2010, 100% of all OSP-funded organizations ranked the Commission good or very good in their level of overall satisfaction with the program.

Q11: What do other agencies think of the Commission's application and contracting process?

A: The Commission's rigorous and transparent application, review, and contract-award process is held as a model by other City departments. For example, the Community and Economic Development Department utilized Commission guidelines when developing their own TOT funding program, used to promote general tourism. And the City Council was so positively impressed by the Commission's process, they directed them to absorb the management of the City's Festivals program from the Financial Management Department in the mid 1990s.

Learn More about the Commission and all its functions
by visiting our website at: www.vibrantculturevibrantcity.com