



Commission for Arts and Culture

STAFF REPORT

DATE ISSUED: September 12, 2017

ATTENTION: Policy & Funding Committee

SUBJECT: Summary of Feedback from the FY17 Contractors' Final Reports

STAFF CONTACT: Whitney Roux, Arts and Culture Funding Programs Coordinator

ATTACHMENTS: - FY17 OSP and CCSD Final Report - Pressing Issues
- FY17 OSP and CCSD Final Report Raw Data - Suggestions for Improvement

BACKGROUND

Each nonprofit organization that contracts with the Commission for Arts and Culture (Commission) is required to submit a comprehensive report at the end of the contract period. This “final report” includes a description of the status of their performance on their scope of services and requisite financial disclosures. This reporting requirement is an essential tool the City uses to manage contractor performance and accountability, while also seeking to understand each contractors' current state and degree of sustainability. This reporting tool is reliable for gathering quantitative and qualitative data along with valuable feedback because the submission of the final report is the deliverable that each contractor must provide in order to receive their final payment each year.

In addition to the requisite financial and performance reporting, the final report includes two questions, which are designed to provide the Commission with year-over-year data on both broad and specific issues facing the nonprofit arts and culture community.

1. **Besides financial resources, what does your organization believe are the three most pressing issues facing arts and culture non-profit organizations in San Diego and what indicators lead your organization to believe this?**
2. **Help us to use your time and our time wisely; share any suggestions that could make the application, contract or payment process more user-friendly for your organization.**

As a closing milestone in the Fiscal Year 2017 (July 2016 – June 2017) funding cycle, 133 contractors (both OSP and CCSD combined) submitted their final reports by August 31, 2017. The information collected in these final reports can inform the Commission's approach to the next funding cycle (Fiscal Year 2019).

SUMMARIZED FEEDBACK

Commission staff analyzed each contractors' final report and identified the following recurring themes in the feedback.

The following themes recurred in response to the first question: **Besides financial resources, what does your organization believe are the three most pressing issues facing arts and**

culture non-profit organizations in San Diego and what indicators lead your organization to believe this?

Audience and Arts Patrons

- **Changing demographics, equity and diversity**
Contractors recognized the changes in San Diego's demographics, including a shift towards a minority-majority population and a shift in the age of participants. The ability to engage with people in these demographics and how to represent them on their boards and staffs are ongoing concerns.
- **Audience development and engaging younger generations**
Contractors expressed difficulty in building their audiences, especially in regards to younger participants. Coupled with a lack of capacity or infrastructure to encourage online participation, contractors noted competition with online forms of entertainment such as Netflix. Contractors noted a lack of current arts education opportunities for students, which is anticipated to lead to a decline in arts participation by upcoming generations.

Organizational Capacity

- **Affordable space for performances, working artists, and housing**
With an increase in population density, development of low-cost areas, and increasing rent, contractors articulated challenges in finding affordable space for performances, administrative offices, studio space for working artists and affordable housing for artists and staff.
- **Operations: Cost of Doing Business, Staffing and Board Development**
Contractors expressed challenges with the rising cost of running their businesses and an inability to retain staff. Contractors pinpointed the rising costs of insurance, rent, utilities, maintenance and other infrastructure-related expenses. Contractors are challenged by providing adequate compensation and benefits to compete with for-profit opportunities and the "gig" economy. Contractors also expressed difficulty with board development and engagement, finding it challenging to recruit and sustain a diverse board who can effectively support the organization with expertise and fundraising resources.

Visibility and Non-monetary Support

- **Lack of coverage, inadequate marketing resources and competition for attention**
Contractors said they experience challenges with marketing their programs or events, citing a lack of coverage by the media, intense competition for promotional space, and difficulty managing the growing quantity of social media platforms. Concurrently, competition for people's time attention and income present a challenges for the sector. Competition from other arts groups is cited along with competition from beaches, golf and other outdoor recreation experiences.
- **Lack of public will for arts and culture**
Contractors described a lack of public will and recognition of arts and culture's importance, both locally and nationally. Citing the NEA's and the Commission's near cuts, the contractors voiced the view that individuals, corporations and elected officials do not appear to find arts and culture relevant or vital to a vibrant community.

Responses to the second question (**Help us to use your time and our time wisely; share any suggestions that could make the application, contract or payment process more user-friendly for your organization.**) including both positive feedback and constructive criticism.

Suggestions ranged from ideas for long-term goals and more immediate process improvements.

Things to Continue

Overall, contractors noted that the FY18 funding process was more streamlined than prior years, and they shared favorable opinions of the FY18 application format. Contractors recognized the helpfulness of Commission staff and identified the staff's communication style and frequency as both effective and supportive.

Things to Improve

Overall, contractors identified the following areas for improvement:

Consistency and Longer Lead Times

Contractors expressed dissatisfaction with the frequency with which the funding process changes. They expressed a desire for consistency year to year, and time to become accustomed to the process. In addition, they asked for more time to work on various parts of the application and a requested a consistent calendar year-to-year with concrete deadlines.

Shorter, Smaller Everything

Contractors requested shorter and more concise versions of all elements of the process including the application, the contract, payment and reporting. Ideas included finding a way to minimize the application length (e.g. "shortform"), making it easier to fill out a contract, and instituting online requests for payment. Smaller organizations consistently requested an application that better suits the size and capacity of an organization, instead of "one-size-fits-all."

Online Resources

In order to save resources, contractors expressed keen interest in online webinars instead of in-person technical assistance sessions, using an online payment portal, and any other tools or techniques to reduce paperwork and opportunities that that necessitate in-person attendance.

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