



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
COMMISSION FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

**COMMITTEE REPORT**

DATE ISSUED: November 13, 2015

TO: Commission for Arts and Culture

FROM: Policy and Funding Committee

SUBJECT: Updating the Annual Funding Process for Fiscal Year 2017

REFERENCE: Council Policy 100-03, Transient Occupancy Tax

STAFF CONTACT: Dana Springs, Executive Director

---

**COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:**

Recommend the following changes to the funding process to take effect for the FY17 cycle:

1. Clarify the independent merit of one year's application from a prior-year application 1) by not asking in the application how applicants responded to prior-year panel comments, 2) by not providing prior-year ranks and awards to application evaluators (a.k.a. panelists) as reference material, and 3) by not allowing panel discussion about prior-year ranks and awards.
2. Improve the helpfulness of panel feedback to interested applicants by providing a contextualized oral summary about the strength of the application, not the applicant. Clarify that the oral summary is intended as constructive technical assistance and is not an implied directive to which an applicant should respond and that a future rank or award is dependent on their response. Following through on this recommendation will naturally lead to the cessation of recording and distributing panel comments, which will no longer be necessary if applicants are not being asked to respond to prior-year panel comments.
3. Clarify the process by which award amounts are determined by removing the "request amount" table from the application.
4. Provide opportunities for applicants to share narrative information about their growth, progress and evolution in the body of the application.
5. Simplify the application and evaluation process 1) by providing a rubric to applicants and panelists to be used in ranking applications, and 2) by eliminating the rank appeals process.

## **BACKGROUND:**

Over the past year, the publication of the City of San Diego Strategic Plan and the commencement of new leadership in both the roles of Executive Director and Commission Chair catalyzed the evaluation of the Commission's funding process using new perspectives and philosophies. Between January 2015 and October 2015 (the most intense period of activity for the annual funding cycle), Commission staff gathered and analyzed data, which led to conclusions that the process needs to be simplified and clarified. While many components of the funding process would benefit from updates, the current focus of the changes recommended by the Policy and Funding Committee is on only the "Award Phase" of the five-phase funding cycle. Changes to the other phases of the funding process will be considered by the Policy and Funding Committee in the future.

To evaluate the Fiscal Year 2016 funding process, Commission staff gathered and analyzed data from the following sources between January 2015 and October 2015:

- 128 FY15 contractors through customer satisfaction surveys
- Interviews with a random sample of grantwriters contracted by applicants to submit FY16 funding applications
- Survey of 13 FY16 application evaluators (a.k.a. panelists)
- 1:1 interviews with 15 Commissioners
- Multiple surveys of the 2015 Policy and Funding Committee of the Commission
- Survey of the March 23, 2015 retreat of the Commissioners
- Interviews with FY16 award appellants
- Tally of the recurrence of certain questions from a random sample of FY16 awardees
- Interviews with a random sample of City Council representatives
- Research on best practices at the annual conference of Grantmakers in the Arts conference, the annual conference of Americans for the Arts, and the annual meeting of the United States Urban Arts Federation

The Commission for Arts and Culture's annual funding cycle encompasses five phases:

### **PHASE 1 – APPLICATION**

- a) Format application and guidelines
- b) Publish and advertise application and guidelines
- c) Provide technical assistance for applicants
- d) Receive and review applications in preparation for award phase

### **PHASE 2 – AWARD**

- a) Evaluate and rank applications
- b) Receive Mayor's proposed budget and determine pools of funding for CCSD and OSP
- c) Determine "cut off" in ranks for funding
- d) Run logarithm to determine award amounts
- e) Receive approval from Mayor and City Council for distribution of funds

### PHASE 3 – CONTRACT

- a) City issues contract to each awardee
- b) City staff manages contract, invoicing and payments for each awardee a.k.a. contractor
- c) City staff monitors contractors' compliance with terms of the contract

### PHASE 4 – PERFORMANCE

- a) Contractors perform scope of services per terms of contract
- b) Contractors submit final reports and financial disclosures

### PHASE 5 - EVALUATION

- a) Gather and synthesize feedback about the prior year's funding cycle
- b) Review outcomes of the prior year's funding cycle
- c) Identify areas for improvement
- d) Propose methods for improvement
- e) Obtain any required approvals for making such improvements

###