

Subject: Arts in Arlington

**FY 2023 Proposed Budget
Budget Work Session Follow-up**

4/4/2022

The following information is provided in response to a request made by Ms. Cristol at the work session on 03/10/2022, regarding the following question:

(1) Describe the industry standards for balancing arts programming with local artists relative to arts grants/in-kind grants to arts groups. How do we know that we have the right balance?

(2) Describe how we benchmark what we are doing with local artists compared to neighboring jurisdictions.

(3) Is the new arts programming at 2700 S. Nelson Street an avenue/opportunity to focus on programming with local artists? What is the feasibility of this idea?

(1) Describe the industry standards for balancing arts programming with local artists relative to arts grants/in-kind grants to arts groups. How do we know that we have the right balance?

Arlington Cultural Affairs is one of approximately 4,500 local arts agencies (LAAs) charged with promoting, supporting, and developing the arts in communities across the country. Due to the diversity and unique composition of each community, there is no single industry standard for the optimal balance of County-led arts programming with direct arts grants to local artists. However, there are seven general commonalities that can be made about the function of LAAs according to the Americans for the Arts' 2020 annual survey:

- **Policy:** 100% of LAAs create policies on arts issues and advocate for arts funding
- **Services:** 92% of LAAs provide a portfolio of services to other arts organizations
- **Partnerships:** 91% of LAAs partner with other local organizations
- **Programs:** 84% of LAAs present their own cultural programming to their community
- **Financing:** 76% of LAAs provide grants and other financial support for artists and arts organizations
- **Visibility:** 66% of LAAs leverage their network to drive public goodwill and communicate the importance of the arts
- **Facilities:** 62% of LAAs manage arts facilities and venues

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Arlington Cultural Affairs, like so many other LAAs, provides a balance of the seven themes outlined above. The “right” balance is informed by the collaborative work done with the Arlington Commission for the Arts, the Public Art Committee, and by using participant and audience feedback to make continual improvements to County programs. Throughout this ongoing community engagement process, local artists have played and continue to play a key role in delivering arts to the entire community throughout Arlington’s arts services and programs.

Examples of Arlington Cultural Affairs’s support for local artists and the arts ecosystem include:

- A dedicated **Technical and Facilities unit** that provides in-kind and subsidized services for Arlington arts organizations (3 FTEs and part-time temps),
- An **Arts Enterprise unit** that provides shared studios and equipment professional training, and a community gallery for local artists (2 FTEs and 2 part-time temps),
- Administration of the **arts grant program** for Arlington artists and serving as the department’s cultural equity expert and liaison to the Arlington Commission for the Arts (1 FTE),
- The **Arlington Art Truck** which is staffed by a curator who works with Arlington and DMV-based artists who partner with an Arlington County agency or non-profit to deliver an interactive project throughout the neighborhoods that addresses a civic, historic, or environmental theme of interest to the community,
- The **Public Art unit** which works with local, regional, national, and international artists (3 FTEs),
- **Music concerts** programmed by the Deputy Director in collaboration with the Langston Boulevard Alliance, Clarendon Alliance and Columbia Pike Partnership as well as the three Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), and
- The County’s **Poet Laureate program** and literary programs, featuring local and regional writers and poets, are administered by Cultural Affairs.

Arlington Economic Development offers additional support for local artist-entrepreneurs through the dedicated Creative Economy staff member in the Director’s Office who assists in promoting their products through the [Made in Arlington](#) marketing program. Local artists and arts organizations also have access to the BizLaunch [ReLaunch](#) program, which provides website development and e-commerce tools so businesses can promote and sell their goods and services online.

The Cultural Affairs budget metrics for FY 2020, FY 2021, and FY 2022 reflect an overall decrease in the number of public performances/exhibits by supported artists and arts organizations. The decline is driven by pandemic-related facility closures, not a shift in the County’s commitment to local artists and arts groups. During that time, Cultural Affairs focused on helping organizations survive the pandemic by increasing the flexibility of the art grants program to allow funds to be used as operational support. Additionally, 14 Arlington arts organizations and artists received grants through the County Small Business GRANT programs. As facilities reopen and the public again

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feels comfortable attending events in person, Arlington Cultural Affairs anticipates that the FY 2023 public performance/events metrics will rebound to the pre-pandemic levels.

(2) Describe how we benchmark what we are doing with local artists compared to neighboring jurisdictions.

An informal regional comparison was conducted in 2019 by Arlington Cultural Affairs staff to gain a better understanding of the variation in grant activity, personnel expense, and programming across the region. One of the insights from that analysis was that private non-profit arts councils, for example ARTSFairfax in Fairfax County, spend a larger percentage of their budgets on grants while cultural affairs offices of County/City governments spend a larger percentage of their budgets on staffing and programs. AED believes that our model allows the County to both support local artists and accomplish the broader County equity goals of increasing arts access to a more diverse cross-section of stakeholders throughout the community.

In comparison to a peer local government, Alexandria awarded \$130,250 in its FY 2022 arts grant program and manages a total budget of \$2.8M. Whereas, Arlington awarded a total of \$265,810 in FY 2022 arts grants (including \$50,000 in one-time Arts Resiliency grants) and manages a total budget of \$2.5M. Given the structural differences between arts organizations in the region, and the intricacies of programs in each jurisdiction, staff would need additional time to produce a more thorough analysis for benchmarking.

(3) Is the new arts programming at 2700 S. Nelson Street an avenue/opportunity to focus on programming with local artists? What is the feasibility of this idea?

Yes, although staff anticipates there will be a mix of local, community, and regional events at the 2700 S. Nelson site, the outcomes of the community engagement process for that site will determine the level of programming there. The engagement process will begin in April 2022 with a meeting between a consultant and the Green Valley Civic Association group of residents, artists, and businesses.

All arts facilities and performance platforms include local artists. The County is also able to secure well-known regional and national/international artists for branded festivals, such as Rosslyn JazzFest or Columbia Pike Blues Festival, which are designed to attract visitors and residents alike, and generates direct spending at local businesses and induced economic impact.