



City of Culver City

Mike Balkman
Council Chambers
9770 Culver Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90232
(310) 253-5851

Staff Report

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Item #: A-1.

CAC - Consideration of (1) a Recommendation from the 2024 Performing Arts Grant Program Subcommittee Pertaining to the 2024 Performing Arts Grant Program Awards; and (2) Make a Recommendation to the City Council

Meeting Date: November 21, 2023

Contact Person/Dept: Lee Lawlor / City Manager - Office of Economic & Cultural Development

Phone Number: (310) 253-5772

Fiscal Impact: Yes ☒ No ☐ **General Fund:** Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Hearing: ☐ **Action Item:** ☒ **Attachments:** Yes ☒ No ☐

Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - Cultural Affairs Commission (11/16/23); Sony Pictures Entertainment (11/16/23); 2024 Performing Arts Grant Program Applicants (11/13/23)

Department Approval: Jesse Mays, Assistant City Manager (11/15/23)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Cultural Affairs Commission consider the recommendation of the 2024 Culver City Performing Arts Grant Program Subcommittee (Subcommittee) and approve a motion that (1) recommends the City Council approve the 2024 Performing Arts Grant Program awards, totaling \$244,960 and related grantee contracts; and (2) recommend that the City Council designate the related performances as City-sponsored.

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

Local arts agencies provide a range of programs and services to strengthen the arts infrastructure in nearly every county across the United States, according to the National Endowment for the Arts. Cultural grants and programs play a central role within an ecosystem of creative workers, residents, visitors, arts and cultural organizations, local municipalities, and other partners. Municipal arts agencies ensure accessible and relevant programming, subsidize free or reduced ticket prices, encourage public cultural participation, and are an investment in the overall well-being of a

community.

The Cultural Affairs Commission and staff have implemented Culver City's Performing Arts Grant Program (Program) since its inception in 1994. Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC) Section 15.06.160 stipulates that no more than 25% of the money deposited into the Cultural Trust Fund (CTF) in the prior fiscal year be allocated for performing arts in the subsequent year. \$135,500 has been appropriated from the CTF for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 and is supplemented with carryover money from prior fiscal year CTF allocations. Sony Pictures Entertainment made a donation of \$25,000 in support of the 2024 Program. The Subcommittee (Tania Fleischer and Jeannine Wisnosky Stehlin) propose total allocations of \$244,960 in grant funding for the 2024 program from all sources.

Staff issued the 2024 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) to the public during the week of August 7, 2023. The application guidelines stated that there was a grant limit of \$15,000 per organization, and applicants must provide matching funds that are equal to, or greater than, their requested grant amount. A copy of the NOFA and application guidelines is attached to this staff report.

The electronic application and instructions were posted on the City's website, and notices were distributed by email, social media, relevant cultural message groups, and other appropriate third-party sites, including the Los Angeles County Department of Arts & Culture. A list of potential performance venues in Culver City was also posted on the City's website. Staff provided one virtual workshop that 12 people attended, an in-person workshop that 3 people attended, and multiple one-on-one consultations with potential applicants. Thirty-one (31) performing arts organizations submitted signed applications electronically via the City's website by the published deadline of September 15, 2023. One additional application was submitted approximately 24 hours past the published deadline. Five of the applicants were applying for the first time.

Staff reviewed all applications to confirm eligibility criteria and requirements of the NOFA. Staff discussed preliminary eligibility questions with the Subcommittee and determined that thirty-two (32) applications would be sent for review and scoring by the Peer Review Panel.

On October 26, 2023, the thirty-two (32) eligible applications were reviewed by a Peer Review Panel. The five distinguished panelists included people with expertise in music, dance, theatre, and/or grantmaking and non-profit management. The members of the Subcommittee joined the panel meeting as observers and as an additional resource for questions.

The 2024 Performing Arts Grant Peer Review Panel included:

- **Mayuri Bhandari** - Actor, Director, Choreographer, Poet, Co-Founder of Bollywood Fitness
- **Stewart Irel** - Writer, Director, Artistic & Creative Director of Grand Performances
- **Holly Leveque** - Actor, Artistic Director of Long Beach Shakespeare, Graduate of Culver City High School Academy of Visual and Performing Arts (AVPA)
- **Wendy Prober** - Pianist, Viklarbo Chamber Ensemble, Chair-Los Angeles Jewish Symphony
- **Brenda Slaughter Reynolds** - Arts Manager, City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs

In advance of the group meeting, panelists were instructed to review electronic copies of the grant applications and to provide preliminary scores. Panelists viewed artistic video samples that were provided by applicants, and viewed budget documents, financial reports and artistic materials that were provided by applicants. The panelists were given a scoring template and criteria. The following

four scoring criteria, with a total possible score of 100 points, were included in the NOFA and provided to the panelists:

1. Artistic excellence and cultural merit of project (45 points)
2. Culver City outreach and engagement (20 points)
3. Realistic project budget and funding (20 points)
4. Contribution to cultural equity and inclusion (15 points)

Members of the Peer Review Panel and Subcommittee gathered for a meeting on October 26, 2023; members attended in-person at City Hall and one individual attended virtually via WebEx due to health considerations. Staff opened the panel discussion by providing a brief overview of the grant program's history, guidelines, contributions to the Culver City community, and goals of cultural equity and inclusion. After the overview, panelists discussed individual applications and some corresponding artistic samples. Panelists took turns in leading the discussion about the individual applications and sharing professional expertise. Panelists were encouraged to ask questions, offer comments, and provide scores for each of the four criteria. An average score for each criterion and a total score for each applicant was determined. The Peer Review Panel continued discussion of overall scores, range of scores, criteria, and eligibility of selected applications. Only the panelists provided scores during the meeting. Prior to reviewing the applications, panelists stated whether they had a potential conflict of interest with any of the applicants. In the event of a conflict of interest, that panelist would leave the meeting during the discussion and would not score that application. For the 2024 grant program, no such conflicts were identified.

After the review of the individual applications was completed, the scores for all applicants were tallied by staff, which resulted in a ranking of the applications from highest to lowest.

On November 8, 2023, the Subcommittee met and reviewed the total panel scores and the requested grant amounts for all applicants. The Subcommittee recommended the following allocations.

Applicants with total scores:

- between 95 and 99 will receive 85% of their requested funding;
- between 90 and 94 will receive 75% of their requested funding;
- between 86 and 89 will receive 65% of their requested funding; and
- between 83 and 85 will receive 55% of their requested funding.

The Subcommittee revised the total score for Jazz Bakery and Orchestra NOVA LA (formerly Los Angeles Doctors Symphony Orchestra) by adding two (2) points to the Peer Review Panel's scores. This adjustment is based on each organization's mission and long history of direct benefit to, and participation within, the Culver City community.

The Subcommittee, taking into consideration discussion with staff and the Peer Review Panel, disqualified two (2) applications and did not recommend them for funding. One disqualified application was submitted after the stated deadline, and another application did not meet all the

eligibility criteria outlined in the NOFA. The Subcommittee supported a recommendation that staff review the application process, deadlines, and eligibility criteria with the organizations not recommended for awards this year. The review would better prepare the organizations for the next grant application cycle. Staff will continue to invite them to apply in the future and will provide additional training and grant workshops.

City Sponsorship: These grant-funded performances meet the criteria for City sponsorship. To be categorized as “City-sponsored,” an event or activity must meet the criteria set forth in Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC) Section 17.330.040.B.7.b.ii confirming that the City is (a) participating in an official capacity in the planning, preparation or promotion of the event or activity; and (b) contributing 25% of the total estimated costs of the civic event or activity or at least \$1,000, whichever is less. This contribution may take the form of funds, labor, staff time, materials, a waiver of fees, or any combination of the foregoing. City Council policy requires that in order for an event to be considered City-sponsored, the City Council determine, by specific action, that the above criteria have been met.

As a requirement of the grant contract, the performing arts organizations must identify the City of Culver City as a sponsor of the event in all promotional materials.

The total amount recommended for all grant awards is \$244,960. Staff will work closely with the grant recipients throughout 2024 on the public outreach and promotional plans for their performances. The City will promote the sponsored performances via its website, email, and social media. Each organization will submit an invoice, audience estimate, and evaluation after their final sponsored performance.

Attached is a chart of the 32 submitted applications, panel scores, recommended grant awards, and a brief description of each proposed performance.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

The Subcommittee recommends that a total of \$244,960 be allocated for the 2024 Culver City Performing Arts Grant Program. Thirty (30) grant contracts will be executed, with amounts ranging from \$1,700 to \$12,750. The funding includes \$219,960 from the Art in Public Places Program (Cultural Trust Fund - 41310400.619800 PZ614) budget as appropriated pursuant to the CCMC. An additional \$25,000 from the 2023 contribution from Sony Pictures Entertainment is also being allocated towards these grants.

ATTACHMENTS

1. 23-11-21_ATT 1_2024 Performing Arts Grant Program Guidelines and Notice of Funding Availability
2. 23-11-21_ATT 2_Overview of 2024 Performing Arts Grant Program Applications and Scoring

The completed 2024 Performing Arts Grant Program electronic applications are available for public review by sending a written request by email to cultural.affairs@culvercity.org

RECOMMENDED MOTION(S)

That the Cultural Affairs Commission:

1. Consistent with the recommendation from the 2024 Culver City Performing Arts Grant Program Subcommittee, recommend that City Council approve the 2024 Performing Arts Grant Program awards and related grantee contracts as outlined in the staff report; and recommend that City Council designate the related performances as City-sponsored.

OR

2. Recommend to the City Council that 2024 Performing Arts Grant awards be allocated as amended.