

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC

Arts Commission recommendations for the 2025 Eastside Arts Partnership Support Grant and Project Grant allocations.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**ACTION**

Staff seeks Council action on the Arts Commission's recommended funding allocations for the 2025 Eastside Arts Partnership Support Grants and Project Grants, which provide grant funding to artists and arts groups serving Bellevue.

RECOMMENDATION

Move to approve the Arts Commission's recommendations for the 2025 Eastside Arts Partnership Support Grant and Project Grant allocations.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Since 2001, the City Council has allocated annual grant funding generated by the General Fund to support artists and arts organizations that provide arts, cultural, and heritage programs and services. In 2022, Council streamlined granting programs based on feedback from the arts and culture community and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion best practices. The two grant programs are now called Eastside Arts Partnership (EAP) Support grants and Project grants.

Eastside Arts Partnership Support and Project Grants

The EAP Support grants have a two-year funding cycle, which is now starting its second term spanning 2025-26. City staff have received positive feedback on the first cycle, highlighting the time and money saved by organizational staff and grant writers who previously had to apply every year. EAP grants provide operational support to organizations that offer arts and cultural programming to Bellevue residents and visitors. Many organizations provide supplemental opportunities to school children, from band camps to art therapy. Other offerings include many types of performance art, from Indian classical dance to ballet and live music.

Project grants have a yearly funding cycle and support independent artists and organizations with art and cultural projects. Proposals range from film screenings to temporary art installations, offering a variety of interactive opportunities for people to engage in the vast array of arts and culture that celebrates Bellevue's diversity.

Bonus Grants: PowerUp for Equal Access and the BelRed Bonus

PowerUp for Equal Access aims to fill arts and cultural gaps for underserved communities. When applying for an EAP Support Grant, applicants can choose to add on an application for this bonus grant. The bonus amount is set at \$5,000 and awarded to compelling applicants.

To incentivize activation of the BelRed Arts District, applicants can choose to add on an application for the BelRed Bonus when applying for a Project grant. This bonus grant opportunity is a set \$1,000 award given to compelling applicants whose projects will take place in the BelRed Neighborhood.

Allocation Process

Award recommendations for both grants are developed through an in-depth application process administered by the Arts Program and evaluated by an Allocations Committee. When reviewing the EAP grant applications, the Committee considers creative engagement, public access and benefits, and organizational capacity and sustainability. For Project grants, the Committee evaluates the quality and extent of public benefits offered to Bellevue residents, artistic innovation, and the proposed project's feasibility.

2025 Recommended Allocations

At their meeting on November 6, 2024, the Arts Commission accepted the Allocation Committee's recommendation that \$350,000 sourced from the General Fund and supplemented with grant funds from 4Culture be allocated between two funding programs: Eastside Arts Partnership Support and Project grants. This amount represents 61 percent of the total funding requests. Arts organizations and artists working in Bellevue submitted 66 grant applications totaling \$573,250 in funding requests, a 26 percent increase from 2023 requests (the last time both grant programs were open for new applications; only Project grants were open for applications in 2024). A list of each proposed allocation and a brief description is included in Attachment A, along with the allocations for each bonus grant opportunity. These recommendations are consistent with previous years' recommendations approved by Council.

Eastside Arts Partnership Support grants: 40 applications were submitted, and the total funds requested was \$354,250. The applicant pool included 33 organizations funded in previous years and seven new applicants. The Committee and Arts Commission recommend funding 37 of the 40 applications for a total of \$259,000. This would represent 74 percent of the total grant allocation budget. The average award would be \$7,000, which is 79 percent of the applicants' average request of \$8,856 and a 62 percent increase from the 2023 average award. Please see Attachment A for more information on specific allocations.

A total of 25 of the EAP applicants applied for the PowerUp for Equal Access add-on grant opportunity. The Committee and Arts Commission recommend funding four of the 25 applications for \$20,000, which would represent six percent of the total grant allocation budget.

Project grants: 26 applications were submitted, and the total funds requested was \$74,000. The applicant pool included nine organizations and artists funded in previous years and 17 new applicants. The Committee and Arts Commission recommend funding 24 of the 26 applications for a total of

\$68,000. This would represent 19 percent of the total grant allocation budget. Please see Attachment A for more information on specific allocations.

Twenty of the Project grant applicants applied for the BelRed Bonus add-on grant opportunity. The Committee and Arts Commission recommend funding four of the 20 applications for \$3,000, which would represent one percent of the total grant allocation budget.

Access, Public Benefits, and Results

Artists and arts groups funded by the City will serve an estimated 1.6 million residents and visitors in 2025 through in-person and virtual programs, performances, cultural festivals, and arts education. City support will ensure over 275,000 people have access to these opportunities through free or reduced admissions. Overall, grantees will offer programs designed to increase access for people experiencing disabilities, youth or seniors, low-income, limited-English speaking, immigrants and refugees, Black, Indigenous, or People of Color, and LGBTQIA+. These arts and cultural organizations and projects will also support higher levels of creative civic engagement. An estimated total of 2,727 paid artists and 3,867 volunteers will have the opportunity to contribute their creative talents to Bellevue in 2025.

PROPOSED RESULTS (based on estimates for the grant year)	2023*	2024	2025
Participation: Total people served through a live experience	1,192,574	1,096,884	1,614,834
Participation: Bellevue residents served through a live experience	683,258	495,201	506,035
Creative Engagement: Paid Artists	2,947	2,613	2,727
Creative Engagement: Volunteers	5,766	4,766	3,867
Creative Engagement: Volunteer hours	149,796	110,064	117,792
Public Benefits: Total free or reduced tickets offered	237,327	595,614	283,569

*2023 is higher than average due to additional funding from a National Endowment for the Arts pass-through grant and a one-time conversation of CIP to general funds made by Council on November 14, 2022.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

These recommendations implement elements of the Comprehensive Plan's Urban Design & Arts and Economic Development. Specifically, policies UD-13, 14, 16, 17, and 19 and ED-14 and 22 support developing, displaying, and performing various artistic expressions. These policies also recognize the economic development benefits of art and culture and how they support community activity and gathering. The City's Diversity Advantage Plan also supports this grant program through creative engagement and cultural competence in the community.

Fiscal Impact

The grants are funded from the General Fund in the 2025-2026 City budget. Sufficient funding is included in the adopted 2025-2026 General Fund budget to cover these recommendations. A Sustained Support grant from King County 4Culture provides additional funding.

OPTIONS

1. Approve the Arts Commission's recommendations for the 2025 Eastside Arts Partnership Support Grant and Project Grant allocations.
2. Do not approve the Arts Commission recommendations and provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. 2025 Arts Grants Allocations

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N/A