



Boston City Council

Committee on Arts, Culture and Special Events

Councilor Gabriela Coletta, Chair

March 1, 2023

Dear Councilors:

The Boston City Council's Committee on Arts, Culture and Special Events to which was referred the following:

Docket #0118 - Message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Two Hundred Ninety-Seven Thousand Two Hundred Dollars (\$297,200.00) in the form of a grant, for the FY23 Local Cultural Council Program, awarded by the Massachusetts Cultural Council to be administered by the Office of Arts and Culture. The grant will fund innovative arts, humanities, and interpretive sciences programming that enhance the quality of life in our city.

This matter is sponsored by the Mayor and was referred to the Committee on Arts, Culture and Special Events on January 11, 2023.

The Committee on Arts, Culture and Special Events held a public hearing on February 27, 2023 in the Iannella Chamber, to take testimony and consider the same.

Councilors Present: Chair – Councilor Gabriela Coletta

Letters of support/attendance were sent for the record by Council President Ed Flynn and Councilor Erin Murphy

Kara Elliot Ortega - Chief of Arts and Culture, Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture; Naida Faria - Director of Administration and Finance, Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture and Fenny Mascary - Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture made a presentation on the particulars of this grant and responded to questions from the Councilors.

The presentation included: the specific use of these funds and the various other related components – the background, history, jurisdiction and processes of outreach, applications, selections, allocations and management by the Boston Cultural Council and the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture.

The Boston Cultural Council (BCC), under the umbrella of the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture, helps to ensure that grant making responds to the needs of the cultural community and that best practices for grant solicitation, review and disbursement are followed. The BCC annually distributes general operating funds allocated by the City of Boston and the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency, to support innovative arts, humanities, and interpretive science programming that enhances the quality of life in our city.

The council members are Boston residents appointed by the mayor for up to two consecutive three year terms. Council members are selected on the basis of their demonstrated commitment to Boston's cultural community and their knowledge of various arts disciplines. The BCC reviews applications to evaluate the quality of proposed programming and potential benefit to diverse audiences in Boston.

Boston Cultural Council Equity Statement

To truly thrive, Boston must be an equitable city. For the Boston Cultural Council, equity means equal access to resources and equal value of all cultural traditions and expressions. Equity operates as an out-loud process of actively reflecting, including, and rewarding cultural, economic, and racial diversity in the arts.

The BCC actively encourages the creativity and engagement of all. We do this through our grant making guided by the Boston Creates cultural plan. Our grants emphasize fair opportunity, accessibility and understanding of Boston's arts and cultural communities. Our programmatic, financial, and informational resources also pro-actively encourage equity and inclusion within the organizations supported.

BCC Grant Strategy

Ensuring BCC grants contribute towards the goals above requires intentional effort to fund organizations that promote cultural equity in the Boston arts ecosystem. It is for this reason that the BCC made a shift in its grant making strategy in 2019. Rather than grant to organizations within any budget range, the BCC will be more intentional in supporting small to mid-sized arts organizations in the Boston arts ecosystem by focusing on organizations with annual budgets under \$2 million.

BCC Grant Categories and Eligibility

Grant Categories

Organizations may apply for grants up to a set limit, based on their organizational size (total expenses from the most recently completed fiscal year). If an organization is selected as a recipient, they will receive the total amount they are eligible in their budget category. The categories are:

- Organizations with budgets less than \$100,000 may apply for a grant of \$5,000
- Organizations with budgets between \$100,000 and \$500,000 may apply for a grant of \$3,500
- Organizations with budgets between \$500,000 and \$2,000,000 may apply for a grant of \$2,000

Eligibility - Who is Eligible to Apply?

- Non-profit cultural organizations with budgets under \$2 million whose mission and programming is focused in the following disciplines: Music, Film and Video, Traditional and Folk Art, Visual Art, Theater, Dance, Humanities, Literary Arts, Performing Arts, Social/Civic Practice, Multidisciplinary Arts.
- Organizations not based in the City of Boston, but whose primary programming takes place in Boston, are eligible. Reviewers will be looking for specific examples of public benefit to the people of Boston.
- Unincorporated groups can apply with a fiscal sponsor as long as they meet the rest of the eligibility criteria. This includes: artist collectives, volunteer groups, publications, and any other group jointly working toward common goals.
- Organizations can submit only one proposal per funding cycle.
- Non-profits with L3C designations are eligible to apply.

FY23 Applicant Overview - Total applicants: 255

Applicant Budget Size	Number of Applications
Less than \$100,000	142
Between \$100,000 and \$500,000	72
Between \$500,000 and \$2,000,000	40

FY23 Granting Numbers - Total grantees: 160

Grant Sizes	Number of Grants	Funding Amount
\$5,000	76	\$380,000
\$3,500	52	\$182,000
\$2,000	32	\$64,000

FY23 Boston Cultural Council Program - Total Funding \$626,000

Funding – Massachusetts Cultural Council Grant and City of Boston \$547,000, Red Sox Grant \$64,000

The Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture is actively engaged in continuous efforts to facilitate and promote the access, participation and inclusion of historically underserved neighborhoods and communities.

The Boston Cultural Council Program has made updates to the application questions, performed an equity audit of the process and added questions, specifically: How are you serving the communities that you say you are serving? How is that reflected in the makeup of the organization, including staff and leadership? How are you thinking about access, inclusivity and serving people of all abilities? We have questions to try to understand how the organizations are positioning themselves in their work, through an equity lens.

Capturing demographics data is important in order to look at what we are doing now and what we are going to do in terms of funding the arts in an equitable way in the City, for all populations and demographics.

We are currently in the process of collecting demographic data for ARPA grant projects, that is the first time that we've done that and it will be an interesting kind of pilot that we can see if it's possible to expand to other grants also.

This Two Hundred Ninety-Seven Thousand Two Hundred Dollars (\$297,200.00) grant, for the FY23 Boston Cultural Council Program, will fund innovative arts, humanities, and interpretive sciences programming that enhance the quality of life in our city.

Based on the testimony and information presented at the hearing and having considered the same I respectfully recommend that this matter ought to Pass.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gabriela Coletta', written over a horizontal line.

**Councilor Gabriela Coletta, Chair
Committee on Arts, Culture and Special Events**