

COUNTYWIDE CULTURAL POLICY STRATEGIC PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Los Angeles
County
**Arts &
Culture**



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Countywide Cultural Policy is to foster a culture that values and celebrates arts, culture, and creativity; strengthens cultural equity and inclusion; and leverages arts and culture in County programs, services, and strategies, to achieve the highest potential of individuals and communities.

The Cultural Policy provides direction and guidelines for the County and its departments to ensure that every resident has meaningful access to arts and culture, and sets forth three main goals:

1. Invest in cultural infrastructure and access to arts and culture.
2. Advance arts and culture in every sector of civic life.
3. Promote cultural equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging.

By linking arts and culture to County plans, initiatives, and practices, the Cultural Policy can serve as not only a roadmap to increasing cultural equity in the arts but as a vehicle for advancing anti-racism and equity across all policy areas.

Arts and culture play a vital and often undervalued role in supporting positive outcomes across human, community, and economic development. From arts education for young people to arts programming for senior citizens, studies have shown that the arts make lives better and improve cognitive skills. Increased cultural resources in communities correlate with better outcomes in educational attainment, public safety, and health. The arts can bring people together across demographic, economic, and social lines; build empathy; and are fundamental to a democratic society. They are also core to the creative economy; according to the Otis 2021 Report on the Creative Economy, the creative industries accounted for 9% of the LA County region's total employment and are a major driver of our economic prosperity.

Los Angeles County is recognized as an arts leader and has invested meaningfully in arts and culture for more than a century, including through its County-owned cultural venues, grants for community-based organizations, and civic artworks. However, there is more work to be done to advance cultural and racial equity, and to increase access to the arts and its many benefits for all residents. With the progress of the Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative and the creation of the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture, a shift in the way Los Angeles County invests in arts and culture is underway, with a focus on providing more support for the region's diverse cultural ecosystem and community-based arts organizations and a deepening understanding of the power of the arts as a strategy for public policy, positive social change, anti-racism, and equitable outcomes. The strategies, recommendations, and ideas included in this Strategic Plan set forth a roadmap for how the County can begin to implement its Cultural Policy and substantially invest in arts, culture, and creativity for all its communities.

The 18 strategies to realize the vision of the Cultural Policy are organized under the following categories: Economic Opportunity and Development, Community Services Investment, Youth Development, and Build County Cultural Infrastructure. More information on the Cultural Policy, an explanation of how the strategies were developed, and details on the funding and staffing required can be found in the full [Strategic Plan](#).

ARTS AND CULTURE ARE FOUNDATIONAL

TO QUALITY OF LIFE FOR VIBRANT AND

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Photo courtesy of Independent Shakespeare Company.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Expand Grants to Organizations Serving Diverse Communities:

The flagship Organizational Grants Program (OGP) provides critical support and stability to arts and culture nonprofit organizations including those that have been historically or are currently underfunded and under-resourced, such as those that represent communities of color, low-income communities, LGBTQ and disabled communities, and other communities experiencing barriers to participation in the arts. The OGP budget has remained flat for over a decade. The proposed increase would address heightened pressure on OGP funds resulting from significant growth of the sector and economic inflation that has gradually chipped away at the impact of grant amounts.

2. Expand Professional Development Programming:

This strategy will expand professional development, technical assistance, capacity building, and training opportunities for individual artists, arts organizations, teaching artists, school district staff, and creative professionals. Increasing resources and staff support will result in reaching more participants, building the capacity of the field more equitably, and providing content that continues to respond to ever-shifting needs.

3. Expand Support to Local Artists to Create Inclusive Civic Spaces:

This strategy will launch a new Art Purchase Program that will expand opportunities for a broader diversity of artists. The program will purchase art from local emerging and underrepresented artists that will be exhibited on rotation in County buildings to create more inclusive and supportive environments for workers and the public.

4. Expand the Community Impact Arts Grant Program:

Research conducted by the Department of Arts and Culture has shown that the Community Impact Arts Grant program (CIAG) is an effective way to reach communities with barriers to accessing the arts. Building on lessons learned from previous grant cycles, this strategy would grow the CIAG program to a \$1M annual allocation and dedicate a staff person to manage the program.

5. Neighborhood Bridges: Expand Grassroots Arts and Cultural Programming in Communities:

The majority of the 88 municipalities in the County do not provide grants funding for the arts, although they often have a closer connection and deeper knowledge of local artists and collectives in their areas. This strategy would implement a LA County grant program to provide matching funds for re-granting to collectives, traditional and folk artists, and individual artists, especially those from communities of color, low-income, LGBTQ and disabled communities, and other communities that are under-represented in the arts.



CELEBRATE THE DIVERSITY OF THE REGION AND

HIGHLIGHT THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THOSE WHO

HAVE BEEN HISTORICALLY EXCLUDED

Photo courtesy of TeAda Productions.

COMMUNITY SERVICES INVESTMENT

6. (Re)Establish the Free Concerts in Public Sites:

This strategy would re-launch the LA County Free Concerts program and make it permanent through an ongoing allocation of general fund dollars. The program would fund artist fees, and production and promotional costs at parks, libraries, beaches, community centers, street festivals, and other public sites.

7. Invest in the County's Community-Based Cultural Assets and Create the Los Angeles County Mural Program:

This strategy would establish the Community Cultural Asset Investment Fund, which would dedicate resources to the preservation and maintenance of artworks in the LA County Civic Art Collection, including emergency repair, conservation, and restoration of civic artworks.

This strategy will also pursue passage of the Countywide Mural Ordinance and establish the Los Angeles County Mural Program.

8. Expand Arts Programming in Parks and Libraries:

LA County parks and libraries create a vast network of cultural resources and opportunities where arts programming can reach communities that are the least resourced. This strategy would provide funding to increase access to diverse arts and cultural programming Countywide, particularly in communities in areas of LA County with the highest need, as identified by the Arts and Culture Needs Assessment.

9. Support Cultural Anchors and Districts Across the County:

The County provides annual funding to County-owned cultural institutions to support their operations and maintenance of their buildings. These cultural institutions leverage this to raise funds from private philanthropy to support programming and services to County constituents, while serving as anchors for tourism and the creative economy. This strategy would sustain and expand cultural districts across the County by providing ongoing operational support to other legacy arts and cultural organizations identified as cultural district anchors, so that they may also receive the benefits of increased stability and program investment.

**YOUTH SHOULD ENGAGE IN THE ARTS ALL YEAR, EVERY
YEAR, BECAUSE THE ARTS ARE FUNDAMENTAL
TO HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

2015 Arts Education Summit: Building Momentum in LA County at the Skirball Cultural Center
in Los Angeles. Photo by Gemma Cul.



YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

10. Support School Districts to Advance Equity in Arts

Education: The Department of Arts and Culture's Arts Education Division advances the vision of the LA County Regional Blueprint for Arts Education and coordinates the LA County Arts Education Collective, comprised of a coalition of partners that includes the LA County Office of Education, school districts, arts organizations, educators, and philanthropists. The Advancement Grant program offers matching grants to support school districts that are committed to providing quality arts. The program is underwritten by philanthropic support and is subject to significant fluctuations in funding. This strategy would expand, stabilize, and make permanent this long-standing program.

11. Creative Career Pathways for Youth: This strategy will launch an initiative modeled on the Department's long-standing Arts Internship Program to create a new LA County Creative Youth jobs program that provides funding to nonprofit arts organizations and for-profit creative businesses to hire young people (ages 14-24), offering them valuable work-based learning experiences. To address historic and systemic barriers to accessing jobs in the arts and creative economy, this program would be specifically geared toward supporting youth who are under-represented in the field, historically under-served, and either not currently in school, not college-bound, or not college graduates.

12. Creative Wellbeing: Heal Youth Through the Arts:

The Department of Arts and Culture's Creative Wellbeing initiative provides youth at highest risk of justice-system involvement with healing-centered arts education that supports community building, mental wellbeing, social-emotional learning, and healing from trauma. This initiative also provides arts-based, healing-centered programming to the adults who support these young people. Activating this strategy would expand and embed this initiative in County systems of care more broadly and allow the program to reach more foster youth and adult caregivers.

13. Arts and Justice Reform - Sustain Temporary Programs:

This strategy would transition two programs that received temporary funding using American Rescue Plan (ARP) dollars to ongoing County funding and provide new staff positions to continue this work. These programs will: 1) expand funding to community-based organizations to deliver healing-informed arts instruction to County youth impacted, or at risk of being impacted, by the justice system, and 2) provide County youth in communities with least access to career paths in the arts, media, and entertainment with ongoing, community-based career technical education and skills.

ENSURE THAT ARTS AND CULTURE STRATEGIES

ARE INTEGRATED INTO MAJOR COUNTYWIDE

PLANS AND OPERATIONS

The Recovery Garden mural at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center in Downey by Hataya Tubtim.
Photo by Steven Lam.

BUILD COUNTY CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

14. Administer the Countywide Cultural Policy:

The Department of Arts and Culture will play a leading role in implementing the Countywide Cultural Policy, ensuring that policy goals are realized, and that arts and culture strategies are integrated into major Countywide plans and the operations of County departments. This new work will include: 1) connecting departments with arts organizations and individual artists; 2) developing training for County staff on the policy; 3) collecting data, monitoring, and evaluating new and expanded program activities; 4) encouraging County departments to apply for funding from the Productivity Investment Fund to support arts-based projects and interventions; 5) launching and managing projects that recognize artists, culture bearers, and cultural organizations and celebrate cultural heritage and artistic expression of diverse communities as a regular part of the County's annual Heritage Month celebrations. This strategy provides the Department with the staffing and resources needed to take the next step in policy implementation.

15. Place Creative Strategists in Residence in County Departments to Address Social Challenges: The Creative Strategist program places artists, arts administrators, or other creative workers representative of diverse constituencies in LA County departments in paid positions as creative strategists to work alongside local government staff to develop innovative solutions to complex social challenges. This strategy would restore budget cuts made to the program during COVID-19 curtailments and expand and strengthen the program model.

16. Recognize American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) Communities: Should the Board of Supervisors mandate a County-adopted Land Acknowledgment, this strategy would provide funding for the Department to work with the LA City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC) to develop toolkits and training resources for County employees to understand the Land Acknowledgment and the importance of tribal engagement. This strategy would also establish standards and protocols through signage and/or recognition on websites and establish a fund, in collaboration with LANAIC, to hire AIAN artists and culture bearers to provide land acknowledgments and other cultural and educational services at County events and ceremonies.

17. Investing in Arts Communications Infrastructure:

Many arts organizations do not have funds to support even a minimal marketing and communications effort to reach and sustain audiences from underserved communities. To support arts organizations and more effectively connect audiences to the local programming, this strategy would establish a Countywide communications initiative that shares information about the arts with all LA County residents, taking into account language needs, barriers to arts participation, the digital divide, and geographical concerns that require customized and equitable forms of outreach.

18. Create Access to County-Owned Creative Space and County-Owned Cultural Centers:

Access to affordable creative space in Los Angeles County is a major challenge for artists and arts organizations. The Department has conducted an Arts and Culture Needs Assessment that will result in a list of County-owned space that is available to the public for artistic programming or creative workspace. This strategy will allow the Department to create a centralized and searchable list of existing spaces on the Department's website. This strategy would also provide funding for the Department to engage a consultant to develop a proposal that would analyze all spaces identified by the Needs Assessment as potentially usable for the arts and develop recommendations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

FIRST DISTRICT:

Hilda L. Solis, *Supervisor*. Kim Ortega, *Acting Communications Director/Arts and Culture Deputy*
Arts Commissioners: Leticia Rhi Buckley, Tim Dang, Helen Hernandez

SECOND DISTRICT:

Holly J. Mitchell, *Supervisor*. Chris Ah San, *Arts and Culture Deputy*
Arts Commissioners: Pamela Bright-Moon, Patrisse Cullors, Randi Tahara,
Eric Hanks (former Commissioner)

THIRD DISTRICT:

Sheila Kuehl, *Supervisor*. Sophie Freeman, *Environment and Arts Deputy*
Arts Commissioners: Madeline Di Nonno, Constance Jolcuvar, Rosalind Wyman

FOURTH DISTRICT:

Janice Hahn, *Supervisor*. Mark Baucum, *Chief Strategist*, and Greg Cesena, *Assistant Arts and Culture, Library, and Museums Deputy* (former). Arts Commissioners: Eric Eisenberg, Sandra Hahn, Anita Ortiz, Darnella Davidson (former Commissioner), Elizabeth Schindler-Johnson (former Commissioner)

FIFTH DISTRICT:

Kathryn Barger, *Supervisor*. Gina Ender, *Special Assistant*. Arts Commissioners: Alis Clausen Odenthal, Jennifer Price-Letscher, Liane Weintraub

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURE:

Kristin Sakoda, *Director*; Heather Rigby, *Chief Deputy*; Kim Glann, *Cross Sector Manager*;
Megan Moret, *Board Liaison/Special Assistant*; Bronwyn Mauldin, *Director of Research and Evaluation*; Kristin Friedrich, *Director of Communications and Public Affairs*. All staff contributed by providing input and staffing Advisory Committee and Commission meetings.

CULTURAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION INITIATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS:

Mike Che, Helen Hernandez, Karen Mack; Tim Dang and Maria Rosario Jackson, *Co-Chairs Emeritus*

CULTURAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION INITIATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Allison Agsten, Allison Tanaka, Amy Ericksen, Angela Johnson Peters, Aurora Anaya-Cerda, Ben R. Caldwell, Carla Corona, Charmaine Jefferson, Constance Jolcuvar (*Commissioner*), Cynthia Fuentes (Ford Theater), David Mack (past member), Dawn Jackson, Debra J.T. Padilla, Dellis Frank, Diana Vesga (LACMA), Eric Eisenberg (*Commissioner*), Fabian Debora, Glenna Avila, Griselda Suarez, Hayk Makhmuryan, Joe Smoke, Julia Diamond (Grand Park), Kiki Ramos Gindler, Koji Steven Sakai, Larissa Nickel, Leslie Ito, Leticia Buckley (*Commissioner*), Letitia Fernandez Ivins, Liane Wientraub (*Commissioner*), Madeline Di Nonno (*Commissioner*), Margaret Aichele, Miguel Luna, Natalie Marrero (former member), Pamela Bright-Moon (*Commissioner*), Renae Williams Niles (Los Angeles Philharmonic), Rick Noguchi, Sabrina Burris (Natural History Museum), Shannon Daut, Thor Steingraber, Windy Barnes Farrell, Ximena Martin (LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes).

CONSULTANTS:

Diane Burbie/The Aspire Group, Evonne Gallardo, Soluna Group

