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Pandemic has slowed Regional Arts and Culture Council strategic planning

News Article



This is a two-year follow-up to our 2018 report, "Regional Arts and Culture Council: Clear City goals aligned with strong Arts Council strategy will improve arts and culture services."

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The City and the Arts Council have continued to make modest progress in implementing our five audit recommendations from two years ago. The cancelations, closures and physical distancing requirements of COVID-19 have affected Portland's artists and stalled or changed the Arts Council's and City's work to address recommendations. The City reduced funding to the Arts Council as part of pandemic-related budget cuts. Additionally, the Arts Council halted projects related to arts and culture planning and long-term strategic planning to help address the effects of the pandemic on the arts community. Work remains for the City to assess needs and goals for arts and culture, and for the Arts Council to complete its strategic planning process.

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Related

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Recommendation Status: In Process

2018 Recommendation

The Arts Commissioner and the Mayor work with the Arts Council, City leaders, City agencies involved with arts and culture, and community stakeholders to:

- A. Assess the state of arts and culture in Portland;
- B. Identify needs; and
- C. Develop clear goals, vision, and strategy for arts and culture for City Council adoption.

2020 Auditor's Status Update: Recommendation in process

The City Arts Manager synthesized goals from past plans to create current arts and culture draft goals, and City Council allocated \$35,000 for the initial phase of a cultural mapping project last year. The City and Arts Council said in 2019 that based on the mapping project, a community-driven cultural planning process to identify needs and articulate a strategy for arts and culture would begin in 2021.

Phase one of the cultural mapping project was completed in December 2019. The Arts Council created an [interactive map](#) with locations of Arts Council funded organizations, arts venues, and City and County-owned public art. The Arts Council delayed the two remaining elements of the mapping project to address the effects of COVID-19 on the arts community.

The City rejected a budget request for one-time funding for the community-driven cultural planning project slated to start in 2021. The City Arts Manager and the Arts Council still plan to start the cultural arts plan development in 2021 by identifying funding and assessing the effects of COVID-19 on local artists, venues and audiences.

Recommendation Status: In Process

2018 Recommendation

The Arts Council conduct a strategic planning process to clarify the organization's mission, goals and vision for arts and culture. Update bylaws to reflect governing agreements.

2020 Auditor's Status Update: Recommendation in process

The Arts Council completed strategic planning research in 2019, and as a result, reorganized in early 2020. The Arts Council plans to complete a two-year strategic plan by the end of June 2020, as opposed to the long-range

plan originally envisioned. The Arts Council intends to set short-term priorities and understand the effect of COVID-19 on local arts before completing its long-range strategic plan.

Recommendation Status: In Process

2018 Recommendation

City Council review the intergovernmental agreement with the Arts Council, and in conjunction with other jurisdictions that are a party to it, recommend changes that reflect the appropriate level of board representation and funding from each jurisdiction.

2020 Auditor's Status Update: Recommendation in process

The City Arts Manager and the Arts Commissioner reviewed the agreement last year. They decided to revise the intergovernmental agreement as part of the cultural planning process, because that may help identify changes needed to the agreement.

The City Arts Manager confirmed that this is still their plan, but the timeline will be extended. The City and the Arts Council intend to revisit the intergovernmental agreement with the other jurisdictions later this year, after they secure funding and City Council support for the Cultural Arts Plan. In the interim, the Arts Council updated its bylaws to reflect the addition of two non-voting board members representing the City.

Recommendation Status: In Process

2018 Recommendation

The Arts Commissioner, Mayor and the Arts Council Executive Director update the contract, consistent with the City's goals for arts and culture, to:

- A. Clearly define desired services, measures, and reporting;
- B. Clarify the arts education objectives and outcome measures required of districts and programs, and the oversight role of the Arts Council;
- C. Identify the organization responsible for art valuation, and determine which assets' values should be updated, and the responsible party carry out the necessary work;
- D. Identify priorities and goals for grant funding.

2020 Auditor's Status Update: Recommendation in process

The contract between the City and the Arts Council reflects work done in 2019 to define current services, performance measures and reporting

requirements, and to restructure the Arts Council's largest grant program to be more equitable.

Work that the Arts Council and City Arts Manager have done to define arts education and arts valuation responsibilities have not been included in the City's contract with the Arts Council. Doing so will help ensure that parties to the agreement are clear on their responsibilities over time.

Recommendation Status: Implemented

2018 Recommendation

The Arts Commissioner and Mayor appoint a contract administrator to:

- A. Monitor compliance with the contract;
- B. Provide technical assistance to the Arts Council;
- C. Review the annual budget submitted by the Arts Council;
- D. Develop a consistent mechanism to track all City funding to the Arts Council;
- E. Develop procedures for Arts Council reporting so that there is consistency over time.

2020 Auditor's Status Update: Recommendation implemented

The City created a Project Manager position in 2018 responsible for administration of the City's contract with the Arts Council and program oversight. The City Arts Manager is working with the Arts Council to delineate and track funding and Arts Council time spent on City programs to help align services with contract requirements. The Arts Council has not yet submitted their FY2020-21 budget, but the Arts Manager said they review the Arts Council's financial statements regularly. All City Percent for Art projects are now routed through the Arts Manager, and the City is creating a cost center for bureaus to use for these projects. Additionally, the Arts Manager and the Arts Council anticipate having streamlined the Arts Council's performance reporting to the City by August 2020.

View the [original 2018 audit report](#).

Visit our online dashboard to track the status of recommendations from other reports