



Civic Arts Commission

CONSENT CALENDAR

June 17, 2025

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Civic Arts Commission

Submitted by: Cameron Woo, Chairperson, Civic Arts Commission

Subject: Civic Arts Commission Funding Request - Additional \$41,685 from the General Fund in FY26 for Festival Grants

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the City's Budget process an increased budget allocation of \$41,685 of general fund monies to bring the total allocation for Festival Grants to \$200,000 in FY26.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

The fiscal impact of the recommendation is \$41,685 from the General Fund in FY26.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The baseline budget allocation for Festival Grants in FY26 is \$158,315. Every year since FY22, the differential amount to bring the total allocation for this grant category to \$200,000 has been added from the general fund during the budget process. For FY26, the Civic Arts Commission is requesting the same consideration - \$41,685 of general fund support to bring the total budget allocation for Festival Grants to \$200,000.

BACKGROUND

Prior to FY20 there was no formal grant program available to Berkeley's festival producers, instead festival funding was delivered through direct general fund budget allocations by Berkeley's City Council. On average, prior to FY20, 17 Berkeley festivals received funding in this manner annually. Although the City of Berkeley supported several high quality and beneficial festivals, the lack of a formal grants program created an uneven playing field for all Berkeley based festival producers.

In 2019, a *Community Festival Grants* program was established for FY20, when the City reallocated the funds (\$158,315) that had been historically provided directly to 17 Berkeley festivals. That year the Civic Arts Grants Program administered the first annual *Community Festival Grant* program (the third of three grant categories, which include *Grants for General Operations*, and grants to *Individual Artists*) with a general fund budget allocation of \$158,315. Due to the pandemic, the festival grants allocation in FY21 was reduced to \$80,000, which allowed some festivals to pivot to virtual formats. In FY22 the baseline allocation of \$158,315 for Festival Grants was restored and the

Mayor added funds during the budgeting process to bring the total Festival Grants allocation to \$200,000. For FYs23-25, the baseline budget includes an allocation of \$158,315 for Festival Grants, which has later been increased during the budgeting process to \$200,000 per Fiscal Year. To address both budget scenarios, the Civic Arts Commission approves two funding scenarios each fiscal year for proposed awards: one for a \$200,000 Festival Grants allocation, and a second for a \$158,315 allocation. At the \$200,000 allocation level, approximately 30 to 36 Berkeley festivals are funded annually through this program. In FY25 the Civic Arts Grant *Community Festivals* category received 43 applications, a 16% increase over the last cycle which had 37 applications.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

None.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Civic Arts Commission requests that the City Council allocate an additional \$41,685 of general fund dollars for the *Community Festival Grants* category to bring the allocation for these grants to \$200,000 in FY26. The Civic Arts Commission understands that this is a difficult budget cycle, however, \$41,685 is a small request relative to the overall budget. This additional investment on the part of the City can have a huge impact to the ability of festival producers to cover the increased costs of doing business. Festivals are an important part of the economic and social infrastructure that makes our city a great place to live, work, and visit.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

None.

CIVIC ARTS COMMISSION APPROVAL

The Civic Arts Commission took the following action at their regular meeting on April 23, 2025: M/S/C (Bullwinkel / Blecher) to approval Budget Referral Request for an increased budget allocation of \$41,685 for Festival Grants, bringing the allocation for these grants to \$200,000 in FY26. Vote: Ayes — Bachrach, Blecher, Bullwinkel, Covarrubias, Pineda, Scott, Woo; Nays — None; Abstain — None; Absent — None.

CITY MANAGER

The City Manager has recently initiated a hiring freeze and is currently implementing a number of balancing measures to address the projected General Fund structural deficit, including efforts to take pressure off of the City's general fund, which underwrites the bulk of our city's public safety efforts and several other local critical services. In addition, the city staff team that permits and coordinates Special Events citywide is understaffed and unable to keep up with current level of demand for Special Events which has increased in recent years without a commensurate increase in either event permit fees or staff support. Increasing the budget for festival grants without providing corresponding support for the programs and processes in place to review festival

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Grants (\$41,685 General Fund) for FY 26

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applications worsens the problem. The City Manager is not supportive of this budget referral request.

CONTACT PERSON

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Attachments: None

