



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Marc Elrich
County Executive


Tiffany Ward
Director

MEMORANDUM

March 28, 2022

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

cc: Gabe Albornoz, President
County Council

From: Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice 

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) for Supplemental Appropriation #22-67
Public Arts Trust (No. 729658)

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #22-67 is likely to advance racial equity and social justice in the County. The Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County (AHCMC)—the body managing the vendors and payments associated with this supplemental request—has demonstrated in a series of racial equity principles, and in its artist recruitment and selection process, that it is aware of and taking steps to address the systemic inequities contributing to racial disparities in public art. In addition, available data about vendors and payments suggest that this supplemental appropriation will contribute to reductions in racial disparities in public art.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #22-67 is to fund payments to Public Arts Trust project vendors. Payments to these vendors is part of the County's existing public arts program, which is administered by the County Chief Administrative Officer in consultation with AHCMC, Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery College, and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

To assess the extent to which this supplemental request is likely to advance racial equity and social justice in the County, ORESJ reviewed:

- publicly available information about the organization managing the vendor payments involved with this request—the AHCMC,
- data about the vendor demographics and payments involved with this funding, and
- racial inequities affecting Public Arts Trusts in other jurisdictions

Publicly available information¹ suggest that AHCMC recognizes and is committed to addressing questions of racial equity and access, particularly in the recruitment and selection of artists. The Council's grantmaking statement includes the following:

With the acknowledgment and understanding that access to resources has been historically limited for certain groups of people, AHCMC is committed to cultural equity within all funding activities and to serving communities that have been traditionally underrepresented in mainstream funding, discourse, leadership, and resource allocation including, but not limited to, Black, Indigenous, Native American, Latinx, Chicanx, Arab, MENASA (Middle Eastern, North African, South Asian), Asian, Pacific Islander, and other communities of color, socio-economically disadvantaged communities, differently abled individuals and/or people with disabilities, and Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual constituents. AHCMC recognizes that language is fluid, and the intersectional justice movement is redefining terminology regularly. This list is not exhaustive and will be updated periodically as language continues to shift over time.

Materials accompanying this supplemental request also explained the Trust's efforts to reduce barriers to access for artists, which include:

- providing ample time for responses to RFQs,
- providing information sessions and individual consulting to support artists preparing their applications,
- providing alternative opportunities for submissions other than Internet submissions
- providing alternative options for written components, such as video statements
- requesting biographies as an alternative to resumes
- requesting references that speak to a person's abilities and likelihood of completing a project, rather than their professional experience, and
- allowing for video interviews rather than requiring in person interviews.
- making contract samples available to artists during the artist selection process, so artists can consider their ability to contract as a factor in applying,
- considering payment schedules that are flexible enough to meet an artist's business models / needs, and

¹ The Arts and Humanities Council Montgomery County. AHCMC 5 Year Strategic Plan 2017-2022. December 16, 2016. Available at: https://issuu.com/creativemoco/docs/strategic_plan_final_12_17_16 and The Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County. Racial Equity Principles: A Framework and Shared Commitment. December 18, 2018. Available at: <https://www.creativemoco.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Racial-Equity-Principles-AHCMC-Board.pdf>

- reconsidering insurance and certification requirements that are arbitrary or unrelated to the core purpose of the contract at hand.

In addition to the documented steps AHCMC has taken to apply a racial equity lens to its operations, available information suggests that this commitment also extended to the vendors individuals who identify as Black or Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC). These and payments involved with this supplemental request. Of three vendors, two were led by addition to the diversity of vendors, we looked at the distribution of contract value. The total demographics are comparable to the County population overall, as people of color (Black, Latino, Asian, and Mixed/Other) made up 58% of the total County population in 2020². In contract value across these three vendors is \$157,183, and together the two Black/BIPOC led contractors will receive 52% of total resources. Because People of Color make up approximately 58% of the County's population, we might expect to see the total contract value for the firms owned by people of color be closer to 58%. That said, it is important to note that each vendor is not performing the same project, and therefore variations in contract of resources is conducting interviews with vendors to understand their impression of the value distribution may be somewhat explained by differences in project scope. While it is beyond the scope of this analysis, another method of assessing how equitable this distribution process and its fairness.

The third part of ORESJ's analysis involves a review of racial inequities impacting the Public Arts field and determining whether the activities under this supplemental request align with best practices and/or reduce racial disparities. Research suggests that a lack of artists of color working in public art is the result of multiple inequities, including in public education—particularly in access to Art Schools—and across the economy more generally. These inequities have resulted in stark disparities in who is able to make a living from their art; in the US an estimated 77% of artists making a living from their art are White³. The Office of Arts and Culture in Seattle, Washington identified two categories of barriers contributing to similar disparities in their jurisdiction⁴: 1) requirements of public artists to have previous experience making permanent artwork and managing budgets of a certain size and 2) skills in project management (that often require previous experience or additional education to be able to demonstrate). For both types of barriers, a systemic lack of resources and opportunities has created additional disadvantages for artists of color. To address these systemic issues, research

² National Equity Atlas. Policy Link. "Race/ethnicity Montgomery County, MD". Available at:

<https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Race-ethnicity#/?breakdown=1&geo=04000000000024031>

³ The Office of Arts and Culture. Seattle, Washington. Capacity Building for Racial Equity in Public Art. September 2018.

http://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/Arts/Downloads/Reports/2018_9-WHITEPAPER-PublicArtBootCamp-SCREEN.pdf

⁴ The Office of Arts and Culture. Seattle, Washington.

suggests a focus on empowering oppressed groups and redistributing resources has the greatest potential of advancing racial equity⁵.

For example, Seattle has created capacity-building programs⁶ to help artists navigate structural barriers, but it also acknowledges the critical role administrators can play in eliminating institutional racism⁷ and reorienting the system towards more equitable outcomes: “Public artists who make art should represent the diversity of the residents and communities we serve”⁸. In a Grantmakers in the Arts article about Seattle’s Public Arts Bootcamp, program leaders also explain the need for systemic changes and transformational leadership:

“Municipal funding, and in particular the 1 percent for art programs, is inherently political. When funding is allocated from city capital improvement projects, structural and systematic inequities embedded in those projects are transferred to the public art program”⁹.”

The article also suggests a series of practices¹⁰ that together can systemically change access for artists most burdened by the inequities previously described. In our review of these practices, there is consistent overlap with the practices AHCMC has started using in its artist recruitment and selection process (listed above).

cc: Ken Hartman, Director, Office of Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive
Robin Riley, Director, Department of Recreation

⁵ Kristen Day. Public Art and the Promotion of Racial Equity. 2012. Available at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270761704_Public_art_and_the_promotion_of_racial_equity

⁶ Erika Lindsay. Art Beat Blog. “Seattle Office of Arts & Culture Public Art Boot Camp – Online!” October 5, 2020. Available at: <https://artbeat.seattle.gov/2020/10/15/seattle-office-of-arts-culture-public-art-boot-camp-online/>

⁷ Marcia Iwasaki, Elisheba Johnson, and Erika Lindsay. Grantmakers in the Arts. GIA Reader, Vol 30. “Building Racial Equity in Public Art Funding: A Seattle Story”. Winter 2019. Available at: <https://www.giarts.org/building-racial-equity-public-art-funding>

⁸ The Office of Arts and Culture. Seattle, Washington.

⁹ Marcia Iwasaki, Elisheba Johnson, and Erika Lindsay.

¹⁰ Marcia Iwasaki, Elisheba Johnson, and Erika Lindsay.