



September 18, 2020

Jannet Walker-Ford
Chairperson, Board of Directors
Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville
300 West Water Street, Suite 201
Jacksonville, Florida 32202

Dear Janet,

We write to you as stakeholders with an interest in the Cultural Council's success, to share our perspective on the search for a new Executive Director. Many of us signed a similar letter two years ago, and while it is regrettable that the successful candidate from that search was ultimately not a good fit, these issues remain relevant today.

This is a critical moment. Two years ago, our concern was making sure that the Council kept pace with an improving citywide economy, and development in and around the urban core, where the majority of CSGs are located. We wanted a candidate who could move the Cultural Council to the center of the action, and help the Council and the CSGs increase their impact. We still need that person.

However, six months into a pandemic that has forced many of our cultural organizations to close, and with other organizations operating under restrictive conditions, we also need a forceful advocate for the sector.

- The single most important skill that the successful candidate needs to demonstrate is the ability to successfully campaign for more city funding. We need the strongest possible advocate who is skilled at navigating politics.

We also see these attributes as critical qualities for the successful candidate to have:

- A professional from the nonprofit arts field, preferably with experience at an arts council, or an arts service/advocacy organization.
- Experience as the executive leader of an organization, versed in working with a board, and supervising staff.
- A business minded manager who can keep the organization focused on a daily basis.
- Passionate about the arts and culture, and able to articulate its relevance to both quality of life and economic development.





- A strategic thinker with governance skills who can help the board define the organization's areas of focus, and articulate a consistent mission.

Of primary concern to us is the health of the CSG program. We believe that the City's funding of the CSG program is not the priority that it should be. The new Executive Director must be a fierce advocate for the program, and able to strengthen the relationships surrounding the program, including the Mayor, the City Council and the 27 current CSG recipients.

A close second concern is the strength of the Cultural Council itself. At various times over the last few years, the Cultural Council has appeared to be a quasi-city agency, a re-grant agency, a funding agency, a producer of its own public programs, a professional development organization, a visual arts organization, and an arts education organization. We believe that a premium should be placed on finding someone who can help the Council resolve these competing priorities, and articulate a coherent picture of the organization and what it does.

Toward these ends, we have four strong recommendations:

1. Hire an arts administration professional, not just a generic nonprofit manager.
2. Cast a wide net, and conduct a national search. The ideal candidate may not be someone from Jacksonville.
3. Engage a national search consultant to guide the process. (We would be happy to make recommendations of firms specializing in the arts.) A typical part of such a firm's process is to help the client define their organizational goals, before writing a job description tailored to those needs. We believe that this exercise will help the Cultural Council resolve its inconsistencies, which will help to hire the best candidate.
4. Ask a member of the CSG community to join the search committee. The CSG leaders cumulatively possess hundreds of years of experience. Many are nationally recognized in their fields. All of this experience could be available to the search process for free.

We believe that if catalyzed by the right person, the Cultural Council and the Jacksonville cultural community have great potential, far greater than is being realized today, and that the right investments in this process will have a significant





return for years to come. We are ready, willing and able to assist you, individually or collectively, in whatever manner you may be deem appropriate. We all hope to look back at this moment as a significant turning point.

We thank you for your consideration of these thoughts.

Sincerely,

1. Numa Saisselin, Florida Theatre
2. Kathy Wallis, Beaches Fine Arts
3. Darren Dailey, Jacksonville Children's Chorus
4. Kimberly Hyatt, Cathedral Arts Project
5. Gwen Owens, Don't Miss a Beat
6. Chris Hoffman, Beaches Museum
7. David McGowan, WJCT Public Media
8. Katie McCaughan, Jacksonville Dance Theatre
9. Steffani Fletcher, Hope at Hand
10. Kerrie Slattery, Cummer Museum
11. Steven Libman, Jacksonville Symphony
12. Ed Malesky, The Art Center Cooperative
13. Eric Becher, Friday Musicale
14. Bruce Fafard, Museum of Science and History
15. Kelly Rich, Springfield Preservation and Revitalization
16. Nadine Terk, Civic Orchestra of Jacksonville
17. Alan Bliss, Jacksonville Historical Society
18. Sandy Arpin, Mandarin Museum
19. Sarah Boone, Theatre Jacksonville
20. Caitlin Doherty, Museum of Contemporary Art

