



Cultural Council
OF GREATER JACKSONVILLE

Enriching life in Jacksonville by investing in Arts and Culture.

Executive Director Mid-Year Summary
June 2020

The Cultural Council's 2019-2020 fiscal year began on a high note. The organization was able to enjoy a 7% increase in City funding, the first increase in over seven years. Additionally, the Cultural Council initiated its first innovative fundraising event, Art See and Shop pop-up retail store. Art See and Shop launched with four new partners and a surge of support from over 100 artists. The endeavor was a means to diversify income. The Cultural Council was able to see over \$35,000 in new funds during its first quarter from these two sources.

The first six months of the fiscal year have also proved challenging due to events leading up to the involuntary separation of the Finance Director. This separation revealed several long-standing significant weaknesses in the administrative processes and systems of the Cultural Council, along with other challenges in the organization's finances – incomplete files, sloppy bookkeeping, lost or discarded source documents, and hidden IRS fines for late or improperly filed tax documents, which the organization continues to seek a resolution.

A pivot was made to secure a year of outsourced bookkeeping services in an effort to repair two years of improper financial management. Significant time has been focused on recovering data and implementing finance processes. Remote-work due to COVID-19 has slowed down implementing some systems, while other systems related to online work-flows were refined.

The final quarter of the year will reveal how well we have been able to bridge our finances, programs and services between pre and post pandemic, and inform how we move forward in a reality of potentially reduced funding from the City and State and from Individuals and Businesses.

As new processes and ways of working have unfolded due to “safer at home” social distancing, we will continue to prioritize the health safety of employees by moving programs to virtual formats. Alongside a health and economic crisis is racial social unrest. As the arts and culture occupy a special place of communication, dialogue, and social cohesion, we will identify opportunities in this sphere that allow us to continue doing mission critical work of investing in arts and culture to enhance quality of life.

Snapshot of Mid-Year Accomplishments

GOAL: Expand Financial Support

1. Achieve diversified, adequate and sustainable funding.
2. Implement an effective development strategy that inspires more investment in the arts.

Diversified, adequate and sustainable funding

The Cultural Council continues its legacy mission of investing substantial funding to 27 arts organizations and individual artists. We expanded our grant making to 6 new organizations through new program grant funds from the City.

Fee for service projects are providing the Cultural Council a unique opportunity to capitalize on expert staff in the Public Art Program. To date, three public art projects have potential to realize \$15,000 in new funding.

Development strategy

In the midst of COVID-19 and in light of the Cultural Council’s need to shore-up its budget bottom line, it was agreed that filling the position of development associate would be critical for expanding financial support. Filling this position will meet several needs related to: cultivating individual donors; identifying program sponsors; delivering the annual arts awards; and, establishing a comprehensive development strategy to meet the future needs of the Cultural Council.

Planning for the 44th Arts Awards has begun. The theme “BRIDGES: CONNECTING ARTS, BUSINESS & COMMUNITY” is a nod to the connectedness between our work in the arts, business, and the community. This year the awards program has been repackaged as an engaging virtual event due to social distancing because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The People’s Choice, Small Business, and Large Business awards categories have been added to support the theme and intent of this year’s arts awards.

Advocacy is critical for building relationships that can help the organization’s budget. To that end, meetings with 90% of City Council and City officials in Risk Management, Strategic Partnership, Parks, and Public Works have resulted in favorable policies and relationship.

GOAL: Broaden Access to the Arts (Community Development)

1. Advance policies and practices of cultural equity that empower a just, inclusive and equitable city.
2. Serve as a major information resource and promoter of arts and arts related happenings.

Cultural equity

The Cultural Council produces an annual youth engagement program called Cultural Service Internship Program. The program serves youth who are at-risk and participate with Communities In Schools. Due to the pandemic this program will engage a new partner to become the Careers in Arts & Culture: Virtual Exploration & Live Chat with a Professional Artist / Creative Entrepreneur. We anticipate serving 30 youth and including between 4 and 6 professional artists during the four-week program.

The public art program has initiated art projects where special attention to include artists who represent a broad spectrum of diversity across gender, culture and ethnic demographics. Additionally, the public art program has led more than five public processes to ensure that diverse groups have opportunities to engage in public art design for the community.

Information resource and promoter of arts and arts related happenings

A new website has been launched. This new website is more functional than ever, and it will continue to receive tweaks over the next months. Considering the times, the website includes a special page with COVID-19 information about resources and help for artists and nonprofit arts and cultural organizations. It also includes a public calendar and artist directory which are both new.

The dynamic environment resulting from COVID-19 created an opportunity for the Cultural Council to be a convener of the Cultural Service Grantees on calls that included local and national presenters who provided useful insights and updates related to relief and recovery from the pandemic. The Cultural Council has initiated over 15 gatherings of arts leaders to share information and resources.

**GOAL: Engage the Community
(Community Development/Economic Development)**

1. Expand and strengthen our relationships and partnerships throughout the community.
2. Understand and respond to the needs of artists, art professionals and arts educators.
3. Position Grants & City Contracted Programs and Services (CSGP & APP) for growth and sustainable community impact.

Expand and strengthen our relationships and partnerships

Fill the Void: A Fundraising Campaign to Support Artists is being delivered in partnership with the Cultural Council. This launched several other partnerships with Indigo Arts, Nicole Holderbaum, Matt Fris, and a host of new individual donors.

Collaborations with new funders/donors in the Downtown Sculptural Initiative projects has garnered access to new networks and opportunities with VyStar and Farah & Farah through public-private partnerships.

Understand and respond to the needs of artists

Artists expressed a desire for the Cultural Council to focus on their needs as micro-entrepreneurs. In response, the program Every Single Artist Lounge was enhanced to offer a mini-workshop on a topic of interest. Based on interest of the artists, the mini-workshop would become a longer series providing in-depth and useful content.

The Cultural Council has also ensured that the 30 artists who have been engaged for services are paid for their work.

Through a partnership with Community First Cares Foundation, 10 arts educators and artists were awarded grants to implement small projects in their classrooms and/or community.

Position Grants CSGP & APP for growth and sustainable community impact

The Cultural Council initiated advocacy in support of favorable arts policy which resulted in the removal of insurance requirements that were costly to many grantees. The average savings to 27 organizations is an average of \$500.

GOAL: Develop Internal Capacity

1. Implement effective administrative and organizational systems for organizational stability and growth.
2. Strengthen Board Governance through Communication
3. Build Staff Capacity

Administrative and organizational systems

Administrative and organizational systems will continue to mature over the next six months. Full recovery from the past 36 months will take at least another year to realize. Human Resources, Finance, Continuity of Operations, Disaster Recovery, and Emergency Preparedness are among the kinds of plans that need to be either created or updated.

. A special meeting was called in mid-March to discuss various options for managing within a reduced budget. To date, a series of scenarios guide month-to-month budget management. These scenarios include rolling spending cuts that include cuts at the salary and benefits line items. On-going attention will be required for the duration of the fiscal year.

Special attention is being given to the budget to ensure solvency in light of limited fundraising and no sponsorships during the COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturn.

Strengthen Board Governance through Communication

Several steps are being taken to ensure the Board Chair, Committees, and the corporate body are informed. First, regular communications with the board and committee chairs about programming and the strength and viability of the organization is occurring at least monthly. Second, updates are being emailed to the board when

meetings are occurring bi-monthly. Third, programs reporting occurs during most board meetings and is presented by program leads.

The staff have engaged in the first stages of strategic planning or planning to plan for the strategic plan. This is an ongoing process.

Build Staff Capacity

Funds for professional development are no longer available for individual professional development. Staff are understanding, especially given the reduced budget and current economic environment. Webinars and self-development is being supported so that staff have time to learn while doing.

The organization is utilizing technology more than ever to maximize effectiveness and efficiency. New software is purchased as needed by staff.

Exploring the benefits of alternate staffing arrangements with interns and project-based contractors to support programs with important but non-essential tasks