

Overview of the Grants Program of the Cultural Council of Richland and Lexington Counties

Goal: To revise the grants program of the Cultural Council to best meet the needs of the citizens, donors, artists and arts organizations in Richland and Lexington Counties that are addressed in the Council's Community Cultural Plan.

- To develop meaningful partnerships and collaborations with the economic development efforts of the public and private sector to include arts and cultural components and that increase the competitiveness of artists and arts organizations in increasing earned and contributed income as well as increased regional and national recognition.
- To treat the arts and cultural industry as an industry and to develop and enhance programs, services and grants that improve artistic and administrative skills and to increase audience development efforts across and including all demographic sectors of the community
- To enhance and improve short and long term audience development and community recognition of the importance of arts and culture through increased support of arts education K-12, and other community education programs

Background

In 1984, the Cultural Council was formed to "support all the arts" not just a select few disciplines. A United Arts Fund Drive, modeled after united way, was conducted to solicit corporate and individual donations to reduce the number of individual solicitations of these donors and to fairly evaluate requests for support in a centralized organization.

In recent years with the shift of the primarily corporate donations from corporate or social philanthropy budgets to marketing and sponsorship budgets, donors have increasingly supported individual organizations and programs while reducing centralized giving to the united arts fund. The result has created a gap in funding support, primarily in smaller and mid size organizations, that lack the financial or administrative ability to hire or engage professionals in fundraising and marketing.

Concurrently, increased awareness and expansion of arts programs from all demographic sectors of the community (minority arts programs, social service arts programs, outreach to ageing populations, etc.) has resulted in a funding environment that (hinders) the ability of these organizations and programs to compete.

Local government support, formerly from general fund (ad valorem or other sources) has been replaced by Accommodations and Hospitality tax sources which require visitor or tourist attraction to merit funding. Indeed, several of the larger organizations formerly or currently funded through the Cultural Council's grants programs receive designated line item funding from local government. Other current grantees receive significant funding through the competitive

component of the A and H tax grant programs. The City of Columbia has a Community Promotions grant program, but, the City guidelines state that organizations that are eligible for A or H tax support are not eligible for Community Promotions regardless of whether these organizations are funded by A or H tax.

The Cultural Council therefore has a responsibility in meeting its original mission of supporting all the arts to establish a grants program that addresses the historical funding commitments as well as the changing philanthropic environment of corporate and public sector programs.

Recommendation

The Cultural Council's revised grants program shall be a multi-tiered program of technical assistance, funding and overall audience development that also meets the goals of the Community Cultural Plan as noted above.