



City Cultural Centers Audit

OFFICE OF THE CITY AUDITOR – AUGUST 19, 2020

Background

	Asian American Resource Center (AARC)	Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (ESB-MACC)	George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center (GWC)	African American Cultural and Heritage Facility (AACHF)
Facility Opened	2013	2007	1980	2013
Facility managed and operated by	Parks and Recreation Department	Parks and Recreation Department	Parks and Recreation Department	Economic Development Department
Square Feet	16,000	34,000	39,000	4,770

NOTE: THIS AUDIT WAS REQUESTED BY COUNCIL THROUGH COUNCIL RESOLUTION No. 20190619-086.

Overall Summary of Findings

Ineffective strategic direction and operational inefficiencies threaten the City's ability to further cultural opportunities.

Finding 1 - Strategic Planning

Finding 2 - Maintenance

Finding 3 - Space Use

Finding 4 - Accessibility

Finding 5 - Program Planning

Finding 6 - Performance Measurement

Finding 7 - Fees

Finding 8 - IT Access Rights

Finding 9 - Staff Training

Finding 10 - Peer Cities

Finding 1 – Strategic Planning

The City did not plan for current and future space needs impacting strategic allocation of bond funding and City's mission to increase cultural opportunities.

Finding 1 – Strategic Planning

Facility	Bond Task Force Recommendation	Allocated Bond Funds	Updated Plan at Time of Allocation
Asian American Resource Center	\$5 million	\$7 million	In-process (now completed)
ESB Mexican American Cultural Center	\$15 million	\$27 million	Yes
George Washington Carver Museum	\$7.5 million	\$7.5 million	No
African American Cultural and Heritage Facility	No funds recommended	No funds allocated	Does not have plan

Recommendation

The PARD Director should ensure facilities have updated facility plans. The EDD Director should work to establish a strategic plan for the Heritage Facility.

Finding 2 – Maintenance

The City has not timely addressed accessibility and maintenance issues at centers, which could result in injury to patrons and increased maintenance costs in the future.

Finding 2 - Maintenance

	Asian American Resource Center	ESB Mexican American Cultural Center	George Washington Carver Museum
Number of ADA items	3	4	13
Estimated cost for ADA items	\$3,550	\$2,800	\$23,100
Number of maintenance items	1	8	42
Estimated cost for maintenance items	At least \$150	At least \$380,400*	At least \$700,866**

* Total represents only 6 of the 8 open maintenance items.

** Total represents only 5 of the 42 open maintenance items.

Recommendation

The PARD Director should work with the City Manager and Budget Office to identify and prioritize necessary funding.

Finding 3 – Space Use

Multiple constraints prevent centers from fully using the available space and the way centers track usage limits their ability to assess and report this data.

Finding 3 – Space Use

Issues noted:

- Some spaces not listed on websites
- Facility issues prevent use of all spaces
- Space use is not effectively tracked
- Potential misalignment of operating hours

Percent of facility use outside operating hours

Asian American Resource Center	ESB Mexican American Cultural Center	George Washington Carver Museum	African American Cultural and Heritage Facility
27%	43%	22%	88%

Recommendation

The PARD and EDD Directors should ensure that the use of facility space is optimized, and the hours of operation meet the needs of community.

Finding 4 – Accessibility

Barriers impact accessibility at cultural centers, which could lead to reduced community use.

Finding 4 – Accessibility

Fees

- Most community members surveyed find fees affordable, some do not



Transportation Options

- Most community members satisfied with the Carver Museum and Heritage Facility.
- Some expressed concerns accessing the Asian American Resource Center and the ESB-Mexican American Cultural Center



Recommendation

The PARD Director should work with stakeholders to resolve barriers to access.

Finding 5 – Program Planning

PARD has not effectively managed the program planning process at cultural centers. This impacts the accuracy and reliability of information and results in the duplication of work.

Finding 5 – Program Planning

PARD

- Community engagement not consistent and belief that planning is done without community input
- Duplicative work processes
- Documents not completed

EDD

- Did not offer internally developed programs

Recommendation

The PARD Director should ensure the program planning process is managed efficiently and effectively.

Finding 6 – Performance Measurement

PARD has established performance measures, but these measures have no targets. Some measures did not provide reliable data and were not reported accurately.

Finding 6 – Performance Measurement

PARD

- No targets for performance measures
- Reliability issues with some key performance measures
- Calculation errors in the reported data

EDD

- No established performance measures

Recommendation

The PARD Director should ensure measures have targets and are accurate and reliable; the EDD Director should establish performance measures and targets.

Finding 7 – Fees

Cultural centers did not charge some fees according to the Council-approved fee schedule, which may result in inconsistent charges to customers and lost revenue.

Finding 7 – Fees

	Asian American Resource Center	ESB Mexican American Cultural Center	George Washington Carver Museum	African American Cultural and Heritage Facility
Amount not charged according to fee schedule	\$16,740	\$4,840	\$2,150	\$134,625

Reasons for undercharges include:

- Using outdated fee-schedule
- Memos outlining different fees than fee schedule
- Offering discounted rates if booked for longer times






Recommendation

The PARD Director should take steps to ensure fees are appropriately charged and tracked; the EDD Director should follow process for waiving fees.

Finding 8 – IT Access Rights

PARD's processes to manage access to their reservation software are inadequate, increasing the risk of unauthorized access to customer information and that errors and misuse of funds may not be detected.

Finding 8 – IT Access Rights

IT Security Procedures	
Granting Access	
Password Requirements	
Periodic Review	
Access removal	
Job based	

Recommendation

The PARD Director should take steps to increase IT security for its RecTrac application.

Finding 9 – Staff Training

The lack of fully trained staff in customer service and cultural competency may reduce the City's ability to create positive relationships with the communities it serves

Finding 9 – Staff Training

PARD

- Few temporary staff receive customer service and cultural sensitivity training
- Usefulness of training: Staff Survey
- Community feedback

EDD

- No cultural sensitivity or customer service to the staff

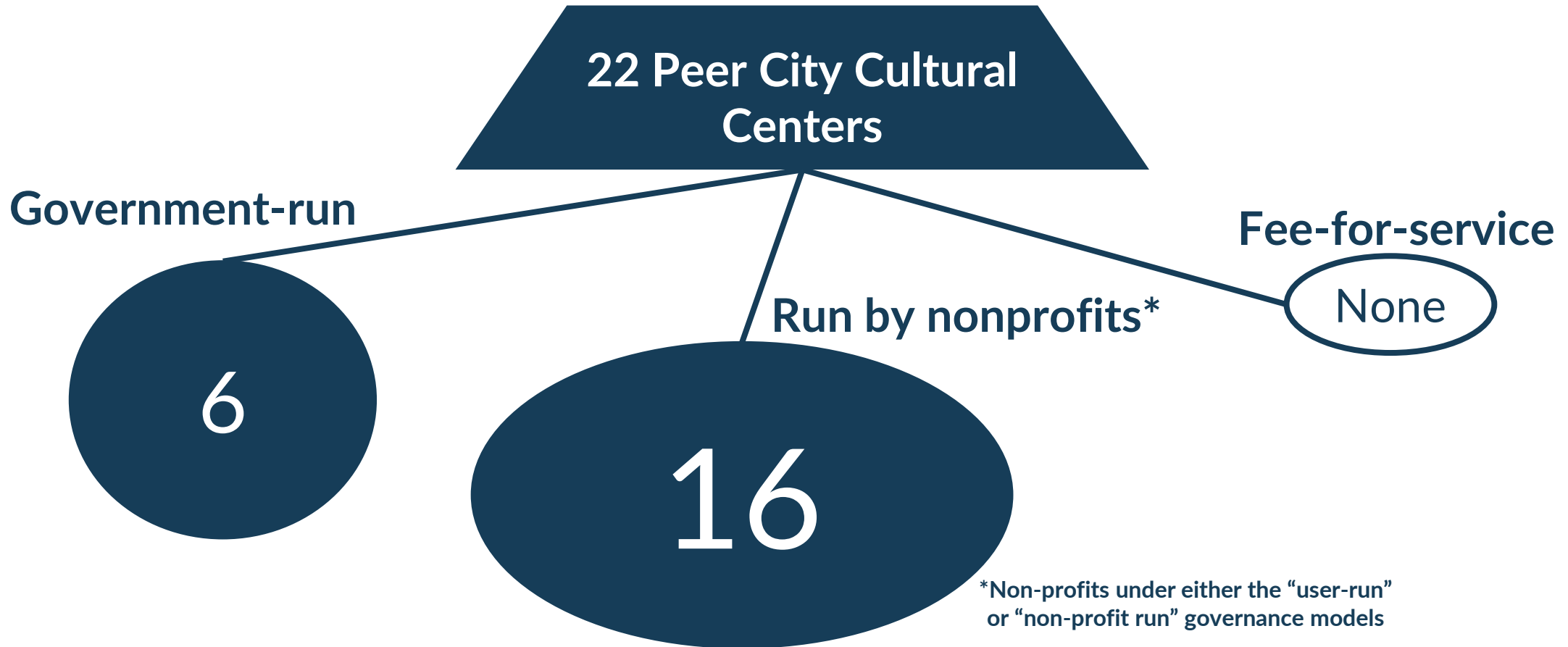
Recommendation

The PARD and EDD Directors should ensure that all cultural center staff receive customer service training and cultural sensitivity training to better serve the community.

Finding 10 – Peer Cities

While the City of Austin operates its four cultural centers, nonprofits run most city-owned centers in peer cities. In addition, most of these cities have a department-level arts and culture agency.

Finding 10 –Peer Cities



Finding 10 –Peer Cities



6 of the 7 cities have a department-level arts and culture agency

Recommendation

The City Manager should assess the existing governance structure for each center and determine whether governance structure change is needed.



Conclusion



PARD, EDD, and City Management has agreed with all of our recommendations