

# AAQOL ADVISORY COMMISSION – FY 2023 BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

## SUMMARY

Recommendation	Status	Notes
#1 - AARC Ballroom Divider	Complete	Item also on Museums & Cultural Arts FY 2023 Under Resourced Service list
#2 - Community Engagement & Outreach FTE for Cultural Arts Division Programs	Complete	Estimated cost at \$65,000
#3 – Case Management Tool for Behavioral Health	Complete but needs APH input (requested)	No funding about identified yet
#4 – AARC Staffing	Complete	Two issues: Administrative Assistant FTE & current vacancies
#5 – Mental Health Services	Complete	LGBTQIA+ sent recommendation for continued funding of \$100K (no increase)
#6 – Immigrant Legal Services	Complete	
#7 – Community Health Navigators	Complete	
#8 – Violence Against Asians & Within Families	Complete	Added 3/28

## RECOMMENDATION #1 – AARC BALLROOM DIVIDER

### DESCRIPTION

This recommendation would fund the installation of room dividers in the Asian American Resource Center (AARC) Ballroom. This item is supported by the original Phase 1 Facility Master Plan to accommodate increased demand for mid-sized meeting space. During original construction of building, space was built with metal structure in place for future installation of partitions. The installation of the partitions will allow the ballroom to be separated into two to eight sections of multi-purpose dimensions for increase facility usage and flexibility. This was first proposed by the non-profit that founded the AARC to maximize the use of the ballroom for language classes, and the community continues to communicate the need to AARC staff.

The divider would provide more flexibility in meeting the needs of the community. It would also allow for more efficient use of the space by allowing concurrent use by smaller groups.

The cost to purchase and install the divider(s) is estimated to be one-time funding of \$200,000

## DEPARTMENT

PARD/AARC

## ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Culture & Lifelong Learning: Quality of cultural venues, events, programs, and resources; Quality of lifelong learning opportunities

Government That Works for All: Condition of City facilities and technology; Public engagement and participation; Equity of City programs and resource allocation

Health & Environment: Accessibility to quality health care services; Accessibility to quality parks, trails, and recreational opportunities

## RECOMMENDATION #2 – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH FTE FOR CULTURAL ARTS DIVISION PROGRAM

### DESCRIPTION

Over the past year, members from several different City commissions, led by Arts Commission Chair Castillo, have been informally meeting to discuss issues related to cultural arts finding and facilities. The group members and Chair Castillo have identified a need and opportunity for the Economic Development Department's Cultural Arts Division to have a full-time employee specifically dedicated to Community Engagement & Outreach. Cultural Arts Division program administrators have a full plate of tasks related to executing programs. Having a dedicated staffer, separate from the program administrator role, would allow that person to develop and create deeper connections between the Division and cultural arts community groups. This dedicated position would also help the division better understand the needs of potential cultural contractors that either do not typically access City cultural arts funding resources or are underrepresented in the group of those that do receive funding.

In debriefs with EDD staff, the AAQoL Advisory Commission has learned that Asian American groups are typically underrepresented in the pool of applicants for cultural arts funding rounds.

The cost is TBD but in the \$65,000 range, ongoing.

## DEPARTMENT

EDD/Cultural Arts Division

## ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Culture & Lifelong Learning: Quality of cultural venues, events, programs, and resources; Quality of lifelong learning opportunities

Government That Works for All: Condition of City facilities and technology; Public engagement and participation; Equity of City programs and resource allocation

## RECOMMENDATION #3 – CASE MANAGEMENT TOOL FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

### DESCRIPTION

During a discussion with the Austin Public Health Director and staff, the Commission learned of a need for a single case management tool to track their behavioral health clients. Potentially, in coordination with other JIC/QoL commissions, the Commission would like to recommend funding in the FY 2023 budget for a case management technology pilot/study and, if successful, obtain full funding in the FY 2024 budget.

Several commissions (AAQoL, AARAC, LGBTQIA+) have successfully secured funds for mental health services in past City budget. However, due to the different funding streams, multiple organizations (CoA, ICC, other services providers, etc.), and lack of technology infrastructure at APH, it is difficult to tie funding to outcomes.

A technology-based case management system, like the one the city currently uses to track clients that are experiencing homelessness, would allow APH to better track outcomes and facilitate communication between organizations. Easily accessible data on behavioral health clients and outcomes would ultimately enable APH staff to more effectively allocate funds and achieve better outcomes for clients.

The cost is TBD in one-time funding. It is anticipated that additional funds would need to be recommended for the FY 2024 budget for full rollout of the case management tool.

## DEPARTMENT

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## ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Health & Environment: Accessibility to quality health care services, both mental and physical

## RECOMMENDATION #4 – AARC STAFFING

### DESCRIPTION

**Issue 1: Administrative Assistant**

The Parks and Recreation Department (PAR), Museums & Cultural Programs has an FY 2023 Under Resourced Service Expectation for an FTE at the AARC. The Commission would like to request consideration and review of this unmet need for the Asian American community in Austin – a full-time administrative assistant at the AARC. A permanent staff member will ameliorate the trend of constant turnover in this position that has been filled by temporary contract staff. Having a stable employee in this position will serve to provide better access to City services for Asian/Asian-American Austin residents.

The cost related to Issue 1 is \$63,000 ongoing.

**Issue 2: AARC Unfilled Positions**

The AARC currently has several vacant positions that remain unfilled:

- Marketing Rep A
- Cultural Arts Specialist
- Admin Specialist
- Facility Manager

The Commission recently received word from AARC staff that the City’s Human Resource Department (HRD) has initiated the hiring process for the Marketing Rep A position in conjunction with the Carver and MACC, which have similar vacant positions. However, three other positions remain unfilled with no timeline for future action. With the reopening of the facility and anticipated upcoming City of Austin fiscal challenges, it is imperative that the HRD prioritize the filling of vacant positions at the AARC.

There is no cost associated with Issue 2 of this recommendation.

**DEPARTMENT**

PAR/Museums & Cultural Arts/AARC

**ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

Culture & Lifelong Learning: Quality of cultural venues, events, programs, and resources; Quality of lifelong learning opportunities

Government That Works for All: Condition of City facilities and technology; Public engagement and participation; Equity of City programs and resource allocation

**RECOMMENDATION #5 – MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

**DESCRIPTION**

The Commission would like to request continued or increased funding of existing Asian Pacific Islander (API) focused mental health services at \$100,000 annually through APH’s Health Equity contracting portfolio.

For the FY 2020 City Budget, the AAQoL Advisory Commission submitted a budget recommendation for mental health education, outreach, and service provision in the amount of \$200,000. This item was funded in the FY 2020

Approved Budget along with a similar recommendation from the LGBTQIA+ Commission in the total amount of \$200,000 (\$100,000 each). This funding is ongoing.

Data from the City’s Asian American Quality of Life Initiative (Quantitative Study) showed higher levels of mental distress and serious mental illness across all of Austin’s largest Asian American ethnic groups when compared to the general U.S. population. In addition, these groups also exhibited low utilization levels of psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health professionals (counselors, marriage therapists, social workers).

There is no additional cost related to this recommendation unless the City can fund the Commission’s full FY 2020 recommendation amount of \$200,000, which would be an increase of \$100,000 ongoing.

## DEPARTMENT

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## ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Health & Environment: Healthy conditions among individuals (absence of unhealthy conditions); Accessibility to quality health care services, both physical and mental

## RECOMMENDATION #6 – IMMIGRANT LEGAL SERVICES

### DESCRIPTION

The AAQoL Advisory Commission would like to recommend that the City increase funding for immigrant legal services.

Travis County is experiencing an urgent need for immigrant legal services for low-income immigrants. The latest US Census data shows that 17.8% of the total population of Travis County is foreign born. Many of these individuals are low-income and do not have full legal status. Stress, fear, and heightened anxiety are constant companions for those in the immigrant community without legal status. Anxiety regarding deportation, family separation, and securing gainful employment are widespread concerns.

Although many of these immigrants have a pathway to legal immigration status, they do not have the ability to secure it. Navigating a complex and opaque immigration system to secure legal status is often impossible without legal assistance and is cost-prohibitive to many low-income Austin/Travis County residents.

Funding is needed to provide dedicated immigrant legal services to low-income Asian immigrants and others in Austin to address the large number of individuals seeking services for deportation defense and consultations. The immigrant Asian population in Austin is diverse and has specific language access needs, and, without additional funding, low-income individuals will not be able to access the protection and services they need. Additional ongoing funding in the amount of \$100,000 would provide 50 one-on-one consultations to Asian immigrants as well as take on full representation of one new immigrant case per month. Outreach and education to the immigrant community could also be increased by five additional events.

Cost is \$100,000 ongoing.

DEPARTMENT

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ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Safety: Fair administration of justice

RECOMMENDATION #7 – COMMUNITY HEALTH NAVIGATORS

DESCRIPTION

The AAQoL Advisory Commission would like to recommend that the City increase funding for community health navigator (CHN) services.

CHNs are providing an essential service for Austin’s Asian community, which has language access needs spanning multiple communities. Since the pandemic hit Austin in March of 2020, the demand for CHNs has spiked. One-time grant funding has helped meet these needs and allowed for the availability of services in multiple Asian languages, including Arabic, Burmese, Chin Tedim, Mandarin Chinese, Korean, Nepali, Hindi, and Vietnamese. As these one-time funds expire, essential services to vulnerable communities may cease to exist.

Navigating the healthcare system can be a challenging task for native English speakers. For non-native English speakers, this challenge can be near impossible to overcome. Yet, accessing adequate health care services, is an essential service that some may say is a basic human right. Community health navigators assist Austin’s non-native English speakers schedule appointments, fill out required paperwork, apply for and understand health insurance benefits, and many more essential services.

Austin’s Asian community is diverse with many non-native English speakers. The lack of language access services isolates many Austin residents, preventing them from participating in civic life, which can lead to feelings of isolation. The lack of language access services is especially acute when dealing with healthcare. The inability to access adequate diagnoses and care can lead to a multitude of poor, but in many cases preventable, outcomes.

One-time Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) funding through Texas A&M University has allowed the City’s current service provider to hire three additional CHNs focused on COVID-19 outreach. These CHNs have expanded the services provider’s language portfolio to include Mandarin Chinese, Arabic, and Vietnamese speakers. This one-time funding is set to expire on December 31, 2022. The Commission requests funding to cover the remainder of FY 2023 (January 1 to September 30) so that these critical services can continue.

Cost is \$112,500.

DEPARTMENT

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ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Health & Environment: Healthy conditions among individuals (absence of unhealthy conditions); Accessibility to quality health care services, both physical and mental

## RECOMMENDATION #8 – VIOLENCE AGAINST ASIANS & WITHIN FAMILIES

### DESCRIPTION

The AAQoL Advisory Commission recommends ongoing funding that enables nonprofits to continue to provide services and other resources to underserved individuals and families, particularly Asians and Immigrants hindered by language and cultural barriers.

Few agencies provide services focused on Asian American and immigrants. One such agency, AFSSA, has been a trusted, critical partner in Austin to reach underserved individuals and families for over 29 years. There are few nonprofit organizations in Austin/Travis County focused on the growing Asian and Immigrant populations, the fastest growing demographic in Central Texas, their services clearly align with the City’s Strategic Direction 2023 goals.

AFSSA was originally focused on family violence and continues those services effectively, given adequate staffing. Other agencies serving these communities include AACHI and American Gateways. These agencies have been a conduit to bring other resources to families in communities hindered by language and cultural barriers.

To meet the growing service demand the City should consider ongoing or increased investments in service contracts for professional human services that address the wellbeing and safety of AAPI and immigrant communities.

In 2021 a portion of the funding from State of Texas was reduced and the City Council and Travis County augmented one agency’s funding, with the City adding \$200,000 to maintain existing programs and meet the growing demand for services.

The Commission recognizes the important role of these agencies serving AAPI and immigrant communities and supports their need for reliable funding to continue to meet the growing need in the Community. The Commission recommends that \$200,000 added to the budget to support ongoing or increased investments in service contracts to offset potential federal and state funding cuts. This would enable existing agencies maintain support to underserved individuals and families, particularly Asians and Immigrants hindered by language and cultural barriers.

Cost is \$200,000 ongoing.

### DEPARTMENT

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### ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Health & Environment: Healthy conditions among individuals (absence of unhealthy conditions)