



Recommendation for Action

File #: 20-1848, **Agenda Item #:** 63.

4/9/2020

Posting Language

Approve an amendment to a contract with MJR Partners for consulting services to guide the review and evaluation of the Cultural Funding Program in the amount of \$80,000 for a total amount not to exceed \$125,000.

Lead Department

Economic Development.

Fiscal Note

This item has no fiscal impact.

For More Information:

Veronica Briseno, Director/Economic Development Dept. 512-974-7802, Meghan Wells, Cultural Arts Division Manager, 512-974-9314.

Additional Backup Information:

MJR Partners was engaged to guide review and evaluation of the Cultural Funding Program, including examination of program history, operation, structure, peer panel and matrix processes and participation; engagement of a broad community of stakeholders in conversation about program experience, goals and priorities; and preparation of a report on findings, with corresponding recommendations for guiding principles, future program structure and operation. Ultimately, the exercise will result in recommendations for changes to the program that better align with the Austin Strategic Direction 2023, resulting in a higher degree of effectiveness in grant-making and advancing the Division's commitment to equitable access to resources and opportunities to support and serve the community through arts and culture.

MJR Partners contracted with the Economic Development Department in March 2019 for a phased approach for \$45,000 in the timeframe of March 2019 through April 2020. Due to the extensive community engagement and depth and breadth of feedback received from stakeholders during the first three (of five) phases of the process, the Economic Development Department has now extended the timeline for the Cultural Funding Review Process through early 2021, to allow thorough community conversation, and generate and vet recommendations for programmatic changes. In addition, MJR Partners will be executing an expanded scope of service to examine, assist with review and input, and provide recommendations for not only the Cultural Arts Funding Program, but also the Live Music Fund (in development by the Music and Entertainment Division) and the Heritage Tourism Program (currently administered by the Heritage Tourism Division), to align all three programs with a high degree of consistency and equity in conceptual framework and operations. With a new economic forecast for HOT anticipated soon, it is even more critical for EDD to center its strategic investment of these funds around a shared framework of community value and benefit to sustain cultural access citywide.

The Economic Development has adjusted the timeline for this enhanced Review Process, with completion and recommendations to Council expected by February 2021.

Strategic Outcome(s):

Economic Opportunity and Affordability.