



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and Council

**FROM:** Rebecca Giello, Interim Director  
Economic Development Department 

**DATE:** April 12, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Art Space Assistance Program Update

On June 8, 2017, City Council approved the Art Space Assistance Program (ASAP), to be administered by the Cultural Arts Division within the Economic Development Department (EDD). This memo serves to update Mayor and Council on the Art Space Assistance Program.

The Economic Development Department's response to the Music and Creative Ecosystem Omnibus Resolution (20160303-019) identified affordable space for artists as a priority area of concern. The Art Space Assistance Program was created to provide emergency financial assistance, supported by \$200,000 in one-time funding approved in the Fiscal Year 2017-2018 City budget. ASAP provides grants to nonprofit arts organizations facing permanent displacement, those previously displaced, or those facing facility costs at substantially higher rates amidst a volatile real estate market.

The Art Space Assistance Program Request for Proposals released in August 2017 generated more than \$500,000 in funding requests. A selection panel of arts and finance professionals and a representative from Austin Code Department met on August 30, 2017, to review and score submitted applications. The following organizations received grants in these amounts:

Austin Creative Reuse - \$9,708	Imagine Art - \$25,200
Austin School of Film - \$17,500	Latinitas - \$13,500
Austin Visual Arts Association - \$4,000	Rude Mechanicals - \$18,000
Ballet Afrique - \$9,000	Tapestry Dance Company - \$9,065
Conspirare - \$12,159	VORTEX Theatre - \$35,000 (to be matched 1:1)
Dimension Gallery - \$6,300	

Contracts are currently in place for all of the awardees listed above. All of the currently contracted organizations above except for VORTEX are using their grants to reduce rent expenses. VORTEX is using its grant to reduce building code compliance related expenses.

Because of the funding assistance that ASAP provided, the contracted organizations listed above have reported that they have been able to improve financial stability.

Please find below some specific examples provided by the awardees describing how ASAP has assisted them, to date:

- **Austin Visual Arts Association**

The Austin Visual Arts Association reported the program allowed the agency to keep their space and enter into a new 3-year agreement with their landlord. ASAP also helped to stabilize their finances following unexpected rent increases during the summer of 2017 and allowed the agency to continue programming without having to raise fees or rents of their artists.

- **Tapestry Dance Company**

The Tapestry Dance Company reported that ASAP allowed Tapestry Dance Company to retain their current roster of professional artists. ASAP has also been crucial to the agency's financial stability, allowing them the financial ability to focus on their core mission as a full-time, professional tap dance company. ASAP also allows the agency to continue offering performances and education that otherwise would have been cut or reduced.

- **VORTEX Theatre**

VORTEX Theatre reported that ASAP provided the Theatre with the financial ability to make the necessary improvements to their space that has allowed them to grow and thrive. Without the financial assistance provided by ASAP, they would have had to take funding from their artistic programming to make those space improvements.

Staff is currently evaluating the ASAP Pilot Program for continuation, as directed by City Council Resolution 20180215-082 and in response to feedback from the arts community. Additional information on ASAP, including program guidelines, is available at <http://austintexas.gov/page/art-space-assistance-program-asap#overlay-context=page/art-space-assistance-program-asap>.

Should you have additional questions, please contact me at 512-974-3045 or Meghan Wells, Cultural Arts Division Manager at 512-974-9314.

xc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager  
Elaine Hart, Chief Financial Officer  
Greg Canally, Deputy Chief Financial Officer