

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE February 17, 2026

TO Honorable Members of the Quality of Life, Arts & Culture Committee: Zarin D. Gracey (Chair), Laura Cadena (Vice Chair), Adam Bazaldua, Paul Ridley, Bill Roth, Chad West, Gay Donnell Willis

SUBJECT **Office of Arts and Culture – FY 2026-27 Cultural Organizations Program Guidelines**

On February 25, 2026, City Council will consider a resolution authorizing and establishing the Cultural Organizations Program (COP) and approve the COP guidelines for fiscal year 2026-27. The Cultural Organizations Program contracts with arts and cultural organizations with budgets ranging from \$100,000 to over \$10 million to provide an annual season of programming for residents and visitors of Dallas. In FY 2025-26, City Council authorized contract amounts totaling \$7,164,665 to 65 organizations under this program: the program's largest year to date, both in number of organizations served and in dollar amounts of funding.

In an effort to respond to the ever-growing administrative demands upon Dallas arts and culture organizations, volunteer review panelists, and City staff, last year's FY 2025-26 COP guidelines proposed an administrative change to the execution of the program moving from a one-year cycle to a three-year cycle. This winter, OAC staff held multiple engagement sessions open to all COP organization representatives and heard overwhelmingly that applicants would like to continue with the three-year plan. Therefore, the FY 2026-27 COP application will be open to all eligible new and returning applicants and will serve as year two of the three-year cycle. FY 2027-28 will serve as year three.

This year, returning applicants will complete an abbreviated application process that will not require panel review. All returning applicants will instead submit an updated scope of services for the year, as well as a shortened written application for which applicants will receive updated and more detailed administrative scoring for funding recommendations. Administrative scoring and compliance will hold more significance in the review and funding allocation process for returning applicants to emphasize the importance of the organization's city contract compliance in FY 2025-26, financial stewardship, internal controls, and audiences served.

New organizations wishing to apply for COP may still be eligible to apply during this second and/or third years of the three-year cycle (FY 2026-27 / FY 2027-28). During these interim years, new applicants will complete a similar application process as the full first-year application of a cycle to include a video submission, panel review process, and panel question and answer session to determine eligibility and acceptance into the program. Additionally, even if funded, applicants must repeat a full application when the following year one of the three-year program cycle occurs in FY 2028-29.

Each year of the three-year cycle, City Council will review and approve updated Cultural Organizations Program guidelines and subsequent funding allocations to eligible organizations. This practice is aligned with Cultural Policy and maintains the same level of review and approval from City Council as prior years' COP processes.

Other updates made in the proposed FY 2026-27 COP guidelines are:

- Program timeline
- Access and Impact survey that assesses an applicant's engagement with residents, visitors, and the Dallas arts community
- Additional administrative points and value given to applicants who demonstrated contract compliance (including monthly report submission and financial audit submission) in the previous year
- Additional administrative points and value given to operational management, rewarding organizations with updated internal control documents such as employee handbook
- Additional administrative points and value given to
- Minor wording and document flow updates to improve readability for new applicants, clarify requirements, and update submission deadlines and dates

After the FY 2026-27 COP application and review process, cultural service contracts and related funding allocations are awarded in accordance with Cultural Policy. All funding recommendations will first be considered by the Allocations Committee of the Arts and Culture Advisory Commission followed by the full Arts and Culture Advisory Commission. The Commission's funding recommendations will then be brought to City Council in the Fall of 2026 for final review and authorization to execute the associated cultural service contracts.

Please contact me or the Director of Arts and Culture, Martine Philippe, with any questions.

Service First, Now!



M. Elizabeth (Liz) Cedillo-Pereira
Assistant City Manager

c: Kimberly Bizar Tolbert, City Manager
Tammy Palomino, City Attorney
Mark Swann, City Auditor
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Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge
Baron Eliason, Inspector General (I)
Dominique Artis, Chief of Public Safety
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