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**ARTS + CULTURE CHALLENGE FUND PROVIDES EMERGENCY RELIEF**  
*\$250,000 PROVIDED TO NONPROFITS HARDEST HIT BY COVID-19 ECONOMIC CRISIS*

San Diego – In March, the San Diego Arts + Culture Challenge was created as a community initiative to help stabilize the creative sector, save jobs and help lessen financial losses due to COVID-19. Today, the first phase of grant awards was announced, with 32 grants totaling \$250,000 provided directly to nonprofit arts and cultural groups in need across San Diego County.

Funded by private donors and foundations, grants ranged from \$3,450 to \$10,000 and were awarded to organizations that met the granting criteria established by the Arts + Culture Challenge Steering Committee. A full list of the 32 recipient organizations can be found at [www.sandiegoracc.org/challenge](http://www.sandiegoracc.org/challenge).

“We are pleased to be able to turn around this initial round of funds quickly. We were impressed at the level our arts and culture groups were able to pivot and innovate in response to the current situation. We know the challenge continues ... for the arts and for our donor community. We will continue our efforts to support our creative workforce,” said Lynnette Tessitore, Co-Chair, San Diego Regional Arts & Culture Coalition, and a member of the Arts + Culture Challenge Steering Committee.

Nonprofits are facing unprecedented disruptions in their ability to deliver critical services as well as monumental financial impact. The present crisis is testing the limits of our nonprofit community’s organizational capacities, and the impact is adversely affecting the Arts & Culture sector often the hardest.

According to the recently released *Unprecedented Disruption: COVID-19 Impact on San Diego Nonprofits* [survey](#) by the University of San Diego’s Nonprofit Institute, the Arts and Culture sector is the hardest hit of all nonprofit sections in San Diego County.

- 41% of arts and culture organizations are not operating programs
- As the crisis continues, the number of arts and culture organizations that can fully fund payroll over 8 weeks drops to 19%
- 92% arts & culture – the highest of all nonprofit sectors in San Diego – have experienced a Loss of Earned Revenue (from ticket sales and admissions)

- 66% arts & culture have experienced a decline in individual donations
- 55% arts & culture – the highest of all nonprofit sectors in San Diego – have furloughed or laid off employees

The Challenge relief funds help organizations reactivate their creative staff and pivot programming to meet the needs of the community. These are challenging times for all arts and culture organizations, with cancelled performances and a major shift to online/virtual program delivery. Demand for content and digital engagement remains high, and funds are needed to support these newly developed programs that respond to immediate needs in the community and outreach to schools, jails, prisons, Title 1 schools, underserved communities, and San Diego families sheltering at home. But community engagement programs can only continue if organizations can pay local artists, choreographers, teaching artists, filmmakers, and performers for their skills and creative contributions to virtual programming.

The Arts + Culture Challenge Fund Steering Committee is continuing to fundraise as it gathers more input to gauge the need in the sector. Donations in any amount are still being accepted at [www.sandiegoracc.org/challenge](http://www.sandiegoracc.org/challenge) in partnership with The San Diego Foundation and Classy. News about the next phase of funding will be announced in June.

The goal of the Challenge has been to help stabilize the industry by easing financial losses that are prompting organizations to close their doors and reduce their workforce. More and more, artists and arts institutions are being recognized as “second responders.” These essential workers who are willing to respond to a crisis to rebuild lives, provide hope, inspiration and distraction should be recognized for their work and compensated for their service.

“The arts help fortify the souls and minds of people. It is their creativity that gives us purpose, inspiration and determination to go on. First responders save lives; second responders help put people’s lives back together. Artists are essential workers in our society helping us recover, rebuild and reflect,” noted Victoria Hamilton, President, Californians for the Arts.

Two additional funds within the Challenge and managed by the City of San Diego will be rolled out in the coming weeks.

**SD Practice: Art from Local Artists:** The City's Commission for Arts and Culture will acquire existing artworks by San Diego County artists. This supports local artists through the direct purchase of art and diversifies the City's Civic Art Collection.

**Park Social: Public Art:** The City's Commission for Arts and Culture will invest \$500,000 for San Diego artists to produce temporary art projects for City park spaces. The funds come from a family bequest and contributions made by private developers to the City's Public Art Fund.

Information about these two programs is posted on the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture’s website at <https://www.sandiego.gov/arts-culture>. Organizations that received a grant from phase one of the Challenge Fund may also apply to the city if eligible based on the guidelines to be posted.



**The San Diego Arts + Culture Challenge** is spearheaded by a cohort of local leaders, including the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture, The San Diego Foundation, Clare Rose Foundation and San Diego Regional Arts & Culture Coalition. Donated services are being provided by Classy, TR/PR Public Relations, DeMarco Design, *San Diego Union-Tribune*, *Voice of San Diego*, *Vanguard Culture* and *Times of San Diego*.

Grant applications and eligibility information for phase two of the San Diego Art + Culture Challenge funds will be available in June. Donations can be made [here](#).

## **About the Fund**

**The San Diego Arts + Culture Challenge Fund** offers financial support to the individuals and organizations that make up San Diego County's creative workforce. Undertaken as a collaborative effort to support San Diego's creative sector, the fund is being launched by a cohort of local leaders and advocates committed to the health and recovery of the sector, including The San Diego Foundation, Clare Rose Foundation, San Diego Regional Arts and Culture Coalition, and the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture. The aim of the fund is to help stabilize the creative sector and lessen financial losses that individuals and organizations experience during this crisis.

## **Steering Committee**

Matt Carney – Co-Chair, San Diego Regional Arts & Culture Coalition

Matt D'Arrigo – Director of Creative Youth Development, Clare Rose Foundation

Alex Goodman – Secretary, North County Philanthropy Council

Jonathon Glus – Executive Director, City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture

Jill Hall – Artist, Author and Chair of The San Diego Foundation Creative Catalyst Program

Victoria Hamilton – President, Californians for the Arts

Lee Ann Kim – Founder, Pacific Arts Movement

Susanna Peredo Swap – Founder & Executive Director, Vanguard Culture

Toni Robin – Principal, TR/PR Public Relations & Marketing

Felicia Shaw – Interim Executive Director, Women's Museum of California

Lynnette Tessitore – Co-Chair, San Diego Regional Arts & Culture Coalition

Alan Ziter – Past Co-Chair, San Diego Regional Arts & Culture Coalition

## **SOURCE:**

Unprecedented Disruption: COVID-19 Impact on San Diego Nonprofits

Results from Surveys of San Diego Nonprofit Leaders: March and April 2020

THE NONPROFIT INSTITUTE – University of San Diego

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