Office of Arts and Culture

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https://www.seattle.gov/arts/

Department Overview

The Office of Arts & Culture (OAC) builds and strengthens community resilience through investments in arts and culture that support artists and cultural institutions in the city. The office promotes Seattle as a cultural destination and invests in Seattle's creative sector to ensure a wide range of high-quality programs, exhibits, and public art are provided throughout the city. Racial equity is central to OAC and is incorporated into department policies, procedures, and practices. Art's program investments are centered around five key program areas: Cultural Investments, Creative Youth, Cultural Space, Art and Cultural Facilities, and Public Art. The office is supported by the 16-member volunteer Seattle Arts Commission appointed by the Mayor and City Council who provide recommendations on the needs of the city's creative sector.

Budget Snapshot

	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Department Support				
General Fund Support	966,690	1,455,000	0	0
Other Funding - Operating	21,146,088	23,563,408	22,895,198	22,751,416
Total Operations	**22,112,778**	**25,018,408**	**22,895,198**	**22,751,416**
Total Appropriations	**22,112,778**	**25,018,408**	**22,895,198**	**22,751,416**
Full-Time Equivalents Total*	43.75	44.75	44.75	44.75

** FTE totals are provided for informational purposes only. Changes in FTEs resulting from City Council or Human Resources Director actions outside of the budget process may not be detailed here.*

Budget Overview

The 2027-2028 Proposed Budget maintains support for core Office of Arts and Culture (OAC) programs including grants, arts education, and public art. It also adds investments in grant funding, cultural districts, public art maintenance, youth arts education and programming, and public space activations. The budget includes technical adjustments to central cost changes, retirement contribution rates, centrally projected revenue forecasts, and positions.

Investments in Cultural Districts

The proposed budget increases investment in the creative economy and supports the development of thriving, livable communities. It includes a 120 percent increase in funding for the city's five cultural districts: Capitol Hill, the Central Area, Columbia City and Hillman City, Uptown, and Georgetown. This expanded support strengthens the cultural districts and enhances their role as vibrant cultural hubs. Increased funding supports cultural events, community art, community advocacy and planning.

Office of Arts and Culture

Adjustments to Grants and Maintenance Budget

Additionally, the proposed budget provides increases for grants, programming, facility maintenance, and Civic Collection maintenance to reflect recent increased cost pressures. Material costs and inflationary factors have outpaced existing programmatic budgets and will receive an increase in 2027 and 2028. OAC has experienced year-over-year increases in grant applications, which have reduced the total award amount being activated in the creative community as the department's goal continues to be to support as many artists as possible. The proposed increase to grants recognizes recent cost pressures to the creatives and will allow OAC to continue to meet existing service levels with increased award amounts.

The City's Civic Art Collection has grown from 290 works in 2005 to 450 in 2025. Maintenance costs have outpaced existing budgets, resulting in as-needed and emergency maintenance calls taking priority over routine scheduled maintenance. Increased funding in the Civic Art Collection maintenance budget will result in regular maintenance for artworks.

Investing in Youth Arts Education

The proposed budget increases funding for The Creative Advantage program, which helps Seattle Public Schools (SPS) provide arts education by funding teaching artists. During the 2024-2025 school year, more than 11,000 students in 54 schools received arts instruction through the program. The Creative Advantage now reaches every single school in SPS, and this budget increases the award for each school from up to $5,000 to up to $8,000.

The budget also reflects ongoing Admissions Tax transfers via the Arts and Culture Fund to Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) for its Teen Summer Musical program, a long-standing free summer program operating out of the Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center with a focus on youth of color that introduces young people to the world of theater. Admissions Tax has supported this program since 2024.

Creative Place-Making and Activating Public Space

The proposed budget further capitalizes FIFA 2026 World Cup arts momentum by extending King Street Station activations into 2027. It also adds a temporary division director to the Creative Placemaking division to help develop the long-term strategy for cultural districts activations, ARTS at King Street Station's public gallery and gathering space, and other place-based activations. Finally, the budget also reflects ongoing Admissions Tax transfers for free arts programming in public spaces to Seattle Center's Winterfest and Folklife, and SPR's Arts in Parks and downtown music buskers programs. Admissions Tax has supported these programs since 2024.

Office of Arts and Culture

Incremental Budget Changes

Office of Arts and Culture

	Dollars	FTE
2026 Adopted Budget	**25,018,407**	**44.75**
Baseline		
Align Finance General Revenues for the April 2026 Forecast	-	-
Annual Increase in Artist at the Center Funding	23,301	-
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	227,785	-
Reduce SCERS Retirement Contribution Rate	(40,556)	-
Removal of One- and Two-Year Budget Adds from the Previous Biennium	(5,470,120)	-
Technical Adjustment to Add and Correct Coding	-	-
Technical Adjustment to Correct Revenues	-	-
Proposed Operating		
Add funding for Arts Education through The Creative Advantage	557,000	-
Increase Funding for Art Grants and Programming	205,000	-
Support Seattle Cultural Districts	65,000	-
Add Funding for Seattle Civic Collection Maintenance	98,500	-
Add Sunset Creative Placemaking Division Director	209,545	1.00
One-Year Extension of King Street Station Arts & Cultural Activations	500,000	-
Admission Tax Revenues to support City arts programming	1,501,335	-
Proposed Technical		
Align Finance General Revenues for the August 2026 Forecast	-	-
Office of Arts and Culture Fund Balancing	-	-
Public Art Revenue Adjustments	-	-
Remove Vacant Pocket	-	(1.00)
Total Incremental Changes	**$(2,123,209)**	**-**
Total 2027 Proposed Budget	**$22,895,198**	**44.75**

Description of Incremental Budget Changes

Baseline

Align Finance General Revenues for the April 2026 Forecast

Revenues	$89,584

This is a technical adjustment to capture centrally projected and April forecast revenue increments for this department.

Office of Arts and Culture

Annual Increase in Artist at the Center Funding

Expenditures	$23,301
Revenues	$(604)

This item is a 3% increase in appropriation authority for the Artist at the Center funding, which the Office receives from Climate Pledge Arena. This amount is revenue backed from Climate Pledge Arena.

Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures	$227,785

Citywide technical adjustments made in the baseline phase reflect changes to internal services costs, including rates from the Department of Finance & Administrative Services, Seattle Information Technology Department, Seattle Department of Human Resources, and for healthcare and other central cost factors. These adjustments reflect initial assumptions about these costs and inflators early in the budget process.

Reduce SCERS Retirement Contribution Rate

Expenditures	$(40,556)

The City's employee retirement system, the Seattle City Employees Retirement System (SCERS) is a defined benefit pension program funded by a combination of salary-based employer (i.e., the City) and employee contributions, and investment earnings. Based on the updated actuarial valuation for 2026, this item reduces the employer contribution rate from the endorsed rate of 15.06% to the SCERS minimum actuarial required rate of 13.48% for 2027 and 13.52% for 2028.

Removal of One- and Two-Year Budget Adds from the Previous Biennium

Expenditures	$(5,470,120)

This technical item removes one-time Arts and Culture Fund and General Fund authority from the 2025-2026 biennial budget including one-time council adds from 2026.

Technical Adjustment to Add and Correct Coding

Expenditures	-

This is a technical net zero adjustment which adds and corrects chartfield coding within Questica to allow the Office of Arts & Culture to better track its budget and the lines of business to which it is directed.

Technical Adjustment to Correct Revenues

Revenues	$57,366

This technical alignment makes corrections to project revenues.

Office of Arts and Culture

Proposed Operating

Add funding for Arts Education through The Creative Advantage

Expenditures	$557,000

This ongoing item adds $557,000, for a total budget of $1.2 million, to the Creative Advantage program to further invest in providing equitable access to arts programming in Seattle Public Schools (SPS). The Creative Advantage program is committed to eliminating opportunity gaps in access to arts learning for every SPS student by providing high-quality arts instruction by certified arts teachers and through partnerships with community-based organizations and teaching artists. During the 2024-2025 school year the Creative Advantage program provided instruction to 11,204 students in 54 schools, and the program has now expanded to all SPS schools. This increased investment strengthens arts learning for Seattle children and supports teaching artists to further support a thriving creative economy.

Increase Funding for Art Grants and Programming

Expenditures	$205,000

The City projects sustained Admissions Tax revenues that provide an opportunity to make key structural and short-term investments to strengthen Seattle's creative sector. This item adds $205,000 in 2027 and $415,500 in 2028 of ongoing funding to OAC arts and cultural grants programs. This funding will provide a broad adjustment to awards in established grant programs run by OAC recognizing recent cost pressures to creatives. Additionally, it adjusts the budget for front-facing service costs, facility maintenance, collections management, and communications. The funds will allow ARTS to adjust grant awards for programs such as Centering Art & Racial Equity (C.A.R.E.) which supports arts and culture, heritage and arts services organizations.

Support Seattle Cultural Districts

Expenditures	$65,000

This item increases the annual cultural district budget for the five established cultural districts: Capitol Hill, Central Area, Columbia City and Hillman City, Uptown, and Georgetown, by 120%. Georgetown and Columbia City and Hillman City districts were recently established through Resolutions 32200 and 32201 without an increase in budget. This item adds funding to support these new districts and expands existing support for cultural events, community art, and community advocacy and planning.

Add Funding for Seattle Civic Collection Maintenance

Expenditures	$98,500

This item increases the total maintenance budget for Seattle Civic Collection by $98,500 in 2027 and $109,000 in 2028 to reflect the increased costs of maintaining the City's art. Seattle Civic Collection has grown from 209 artworks to 450 in a twenty-year period, while inflationary adjustments and increased maintenance costs have outpaced the existing budget. This budget increase will allow Office of Arts and Culture to better balance routine preventative care with emergency triage support, ensuring that all neighborhoods have access to high-quality art.

Add Sunset Creative Placemaking Division Director

Expenditures	$209,545
Position Allocation	1.00

This item adds a 1.0 FTE Division Director to the Office's Creative Placemaking Division which was established in the 2026 Adopted Budget. This position will sunset in 2028 due to the short-term scope of work planned for the role. The Creative Placemaking division was formed to create stronger delineation between lines of business at the Office of Arts & Culture which is distinct from OAC's other programmatic areas like Public Art, Facilities, Partnerships, Education, and Grants. This position will develop overall strategy for the division as well as focus on developing pathways for interdepartmental and external partnerships. While the Admissions Tax forecast currently shows stable revenues, the proposed budget allows for the majority of outyear investments to be directed at services, grants, and programs that directly support the Seattle creative economy rather than making this position permanent. Further, this position is being added temporarily to reflect the transition from World Cup activations work to a smaller portfolio while OAC works on the cultural plan which will better define the future of this body of work for the department.

One-Year Extension of King Street Station Arts & Cultural Activations

Expenditures	$500,000

This item adds one-time funding to extend King Street Stations activations through 2027. In preparation for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, OAC scaled up in-person events and activations in a temporary capacity. This acted as an economic catalyst for the creative economy allowing for place-based activations. This one-year extension will allow the OAC to continue King Street Station arts activations with extended gallery exhibitions openings and plaza events during First Thursday Art Walk in Pioneer Square and Dance residencies like Velocity's SWITCH: Post-failure Potentials. This extension focuses on arts as an economic driver bringing together artists and creative opportunities to build community in and around King Street Station. By capitalizing on the momentum generated by the 2026 FIFA World Cup, this short-term investment will increase public engagement and contribute to a thriving creative economy.

Admission Tax Revenues to support City arts programming

Expenditures	$1,501,335

The General Fund revenue forecast for the City’s budget is insufficient to cover all anticipated citywide costs, and this item reflects the use of Arts and Culture Fund to preserve arts and culture-related programming in other City departments that were previously funded with General Fund.

This item allocates ongoing Admissions Tax revenue from the Arts and Culture Fund to Seattle Center (CEN) and Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR), reflecting the Office of Arts and Culture’s commitment to support arts programming Citywide. This specifically provides funding for CEN’s Folklife and Winterfest festivals, and SPR’s downtown music buskers, Teen Summer Musical, and the Arts in Parks programs; the latter is a program SPR implements in partnership with OAC.

The Arts and Culture Fund budget is appropriated to OAC and both CEN and SPR will seek reimbursement from OAC for program expenditures. As a result, expenditure appropriation and revenues are also reflected in the Seattle Center Fund and Park and Recreation Fund. See companion items in CEN and SPR budget sections.

Proposed Technical

Align Finance General Revenues for the August 2026 Forecast

Revenues	$159,493

This is a technical adjustment to capture centrally projected and August forecast revenue increments for this department.

Office of Arts and Culture Fund Balancing

Revenues	$1,991,829

This is a technical item to record a fund balancing entry for 12010 Municipal Arts Fund and 12400 Arts and Culture Fund, which are primarily managed by the Office of Arts and Culture.

Office of Arts and Culture

Public Art Revenue Adjustments

Revenues	$77,378

This technical item adjusts revenues for the Municipal Arts Fund to reflect the anticipated amount of 1% for the Arts funds collected from capital departments.

Remove Vacant Pocket

Position Allocation	(1.00)

This technical adjustment removes one vacant unfunded Senior Arts Program Specialist sunsetting position. The work associated with this position has concluded.

Office of Arts and Culture

Expenditure Overview

Appropriations	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
ARTS - BO-AR-2VMA0 - Public Art				
00100 - General Fund	-	400,000	-	-
12010 - Municipal Arts Fund	3,594,342	4,715,693	4,687,419	4,712,942
12400 - Arts and Culture Fund	404,624	443,393	386,198	406,998
Total for BSL: BO-AR-2VMA0	**3,998,966**	**5,559,086**	**5,073,616**	**5,119,940**
ARTS - BO-AR-VA150 - Leadership and Administration				
12010 - Municipal Arts Fund	1,156,620	1,181,607	1,213,277	1,209,249
12400 - Arts and Culture Fund	3,212,063	4,289,288	4,479,955	4,593,808
Total for BSL: BO-AR-VA150	**4,368,683**	**5,470,895**	**5,693,232**	**5,803,057**
ARTS - BO-AR-VA160 - Arts and Cultural Programs				
00100 - General Fund	966,690	955,000	-	-
12400 - Arts and Culture Fund	11,946,395	11,259,047	9,566,240	9,369,991
14500 - Payroll Expense Tax	303,508	-	-	-
Total for BSL: BO-AR-VA160	**13,216,593**	**12,214,047**	**9,566,240**	**9,369,991**
ARTS - BO-AR-VA170 - Creative Placemaking				
00100 - General Fund	-	100,000	-	-
12400 - Arts and Culture Fund	528,536	1,674,379	2,562,110	2,458,428
Total for BSL: BO-AR-VA170	**528,536**	**1,774,379**	**2,562,110**	**2,458,428**
Department Total	**22,112,778**	**25,018,408**	**22,895,198**	**22,751,416**
Department Full-Time Equivalents Total*	**43.75**	**44.75**	**44.75**	**44.75**

** FTE totals are provided for informational purposes only. Changes in FTEs resulting from City Council or Human Resources Director actions outside of the budget process may not be detailed here.*

Office of Arts and Culture

Budget Summary by Fund Office of Arts and Culture

	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
00100 - General Fund	966,690	1,455,000	-	-
12010 - Municipal Arts Fund	4,750,963	5,897,300	5,900,696	5,922,191
12400 - Arts and Culture Fund	16,091,617	17,666,108	16,994,503	16,829,225
14500 - Payroll Expense Tax	303,508	-	-	-
Budget Totals for ARTS	**22,112,778**	**25,018,408**	**22,895,198**	**22,751,416**

Office of Arts and Culture

Revenue Overview

2027 Estimated Revenues

Account Code	Account Name	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
341900	General Government-Other Rev	3,673,494	-	-	-
360020	Inv Earn-Residual Cash	471,232	-	-	-
360210	Oth Interest Earnings	-	112,200	250,000	270,528
360420	Other Judgments & Settlements	35,000	-	-	-
360900	Miscellaneous Revs-Other Rev	10,000	20,400	20,400	20,400
397000	Operating Transfers In Summ	-	4,072,499	4,012,077	4,061,111
Total Revenues for: 12010 - Municipal Arts Fund		**4,189,726**	**4,205,099**	**4,282,477**	**4,352,039**
400000	Use of/Contribution to Fund Balance	-	1,692,201	1,618,219	1,570,152
Total Resources for:12010 - Municipal Arts Fund		**4,189,726**	**5,897,300**	**5,900,696**	**5,922,191**
308000	Beginning Fund Balance	-	1,411,565	-	-
316020	B&O Tax-Admissions Rev	24,664,981	24,000,778	25,640,856	26,324,982
318050	Admission Tx Penalties & Inter	144,352	-	-	-
337080	Other Private Contrib & Dons	196,964	-	-	-
341900	General Government-Other Rev	36,400	-	-	-
350190	Nsf Check Fees	20	-	-	-
360010	Investment Interest	-	150,000	-	-
360020	Inv Earn-Residual Cash	-	350,000	575,000	575,000
360210	Oth Interest Earnings	-	50,000	-	-
360300	St Space Facilities Rentals	80,531	-	-	-
360900	Miscellaneous Revs-Other Rev	-	221,632	208,959	215,228
397000	Operating Transfers In Summ	-	40,000	105,000	90,000
Total Revenues for: 12400 - Arts and Culture Fund		**25,123,247**	**26,223,975**	**26,529,815**	**27,205,210**
400000	Use of/Contribution to Fund Balance	-	2,599,133	622,688	102,015
Total Resources for:12400 - Arts and Culture Fund		**25,123,247**	**28,823,108**	**27,152,503**	**27,307,225**
Total ARTS Resources		**29,312,973**	**34,720,408**	**33,053,199**	**33,229,416**

Office of Arts and Culture

Appropriations by Budget Summary Level and Program

ARTS - BO-AR-2VMA0 - Public Art

The purpose of the Public Art Budget Summary Level is to fund the Public Art Program, which develops art pieces and programs for City facilities, and the Artwork Conservation Program, which maintains the City's permanent art collection.

Program Expenditures	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Artwork Conservation	411,012	470,353	413,042	433,846
Public Art	3,587,954	5,088,733	4,660,574	4,686,095
Total	**3,998,966**	**5,559,086**	**5,073,616**	**5,119,940**
Full-time Equivalents Total*	13.65	14.65	14.65	14.65

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The following information summarizes the programs in Public Art Budget Summary Level:

Artwork Conservation

Expenditures/FTE	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Artwork Conservation	411,012	470,353	413,042	433,846
Full Time Equivalents Total	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50

Public Art

Expenditures/FTE	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Public Art	3,587,954	5,088,733	4,660,574	4,686,095
Full Time Equivalents Total	12.15	13.15	13.15	13.15

Office of Arts and Culture

ARTS - BO-AR-VA150 - Leadership and Administration

The purpose of the Leadership and Administration Budget Summary Level is to provide executive, financial, human resource, and business support to the Office and to support the Seattle Arts Commission, a 16-member advisory board that advises the Office, Mayor, and City Council on arts programs and policy.

Program Expenditures	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Citywide Indirect Costs	992,083	1,265,549	1,323,406	1,370,063
Departmental Indirect Costs	2,459,442	2,518,616	2,536,080	2,520,947
Pooled Benefits and PTO	917,158	1,686,730	1,833,746	1,912,047
Total	**4,368,683**	**5,470,895**	**5,693,232**	**5,803,057**
Full-time Equivalents Total*	11.00	11.00	11.00	11.00

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The following information summarizes the programs in Leadership and Administration Budget Summary Level:

Citywide Indirect Costs

Expenditures/FTE	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Citywide Indirect Costs	992,083	1,265,549	1,323,406	1,370,063

Departmental Indirect Costs

Expenditures/FTE	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Departmental Indirect Costs	2,459,442	2,518,616	2,536,080	2,520,947
Full Time Equivalents Total	11.00	11.00	11.00	11.00

Pooled Benefits and PTO

Expenditures/FTE	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Pooled Benefits and PTO	917,158	1,686,730	1,833,746	1,912,047

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ARTS - BO-AR-VA160 - Arts and Cultural Programs

The purpose of the Arts and Cultural Programs Budget Summary Level is to invest in Seattle's arts and cultural community.

Program Expenditures	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Activations Equity and Youth Development	1,901,659	1,873,222	2,498,498	2,353,195
Communication Outreach and Events	686,816	679,808	678,105	681,017
Cultural Facilities Operations	2,257,000	1,220,859	1,159,790	1,004,230
Funding Programs & Partnership	8,371,119	8,440,158	5,229,846	5,331,550
Total	**13,216,593**	**12,214,047**	**9,566,240**	**9,369,991**
Full-time Equivalents Total*	18.00	16.00	16.00	16.00

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The following information summarizes the programs in Arts and Cultural Programs Budget Summary Level:

Activations Equity and Youth Development

Expenditures/FTE	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Activations Equity and Youth Development	1,901,659	1,873,222	2,498,498	2,353,195
Full Time Equivalents Total	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00

Communication Outreach and Events

Expenditures/FTE	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Communication Outreach and Events	686,816	679,808	678,105	681,017
Full Time Equivalents Total	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00

Cultural Facilities Operations

Expenditures/FTE	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Cultural Facilities Operations	2,257,000	1,220,859	1,159,790	1,004,230
Full Time Equivalents Total	8.25	7.25	7.25	7.25

Office of Arts and Culture

Funding Programs & Partnership

Expenditures/FTE	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Funding Programs & Partnership	8,371,119	8,440,158	5,229,846	5,331,550
Full Time Equivalents Total	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75

ARTS - BO-AR-VA170 - Creative Placemaking

The purpose of the Creative Placemaking Budget Summary Level is to invest in opportunities that bring together arts and cultural strategies to advance economic and community development.

Program Expenditures	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Creative Placemaking Programs	-	100,000	1,611,220	1,130,135
Cultural Space	528,536	1,674,379	950,890	1,328,293
Total	**528,536**	**1,774,379**	**2,562,110**	**2,458,428**
Full-time Equivalents Total*	1.10	3.10	3.10	3.10

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The following information summarizes the programs in Creative Placemaking Budget Summary Level:

Creative Placemaking Programs

Expenditures/FTE	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Creative Placemaking Programs	-	100,000	1,611,220	1,130,135
Full Time Equivalents Total	-	-	-	-

Cultural Space

Expenditures/FTE	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Cultural Space	528,536	1,674,379	950,890	1,328,293
Full Time Equivalents Total	1.10	3.10	3.10	3.10