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ARTSFUND RELEASES DATA ON COVID-19 IMPACTS ON ARTS & CULTURAL NONPROFITS

SEATTLE, WA— ArtsFund releases new data from a recent survey assessing the early impacts of COVID-19 on arts and cultural nonprofits in the Central Puget Sound Region. ArtsFund’s findings highlight the impacts to three key operational areas -- finance, programming, and workforce -- and offer data on both immediate and anticipated impacts.

Data collection for ArtsFund’s online survey was conducted March 12, 2020 through March 19, 2020. Primary survey distribution was to ArtsFund’s Cultural Partners Network, a group of nearly 120 arts and cultural nonprofit organizations that operate in the Puget Sound Region. The survey was also shared with science nonprofits in King County. The results include participation from 85 organizations in disciplines including theater, music and opera, visual arts, cultural heritage, film/media, science, dance, literary arts, and multi-disciplinary. 84% of responses are from King County-based organizations, the remainder from Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap counties. Many of the nonprofits have statewide reach.

“The data collected shows staggering and immediate impact to the arts sector. We continue to witness additional facility closures and season and program cancellations, with significant furloughs and layoffs to an already compromised workforce,” said ArtsFund Interim President & CEO Sue Coliton. “These findings underscore the critical need to provide near-term relief to enable arts and cultural organizations to maintain essential functions and retain core staff throughout the current public health crisis so that they are able to reopen when possible. ArtsFund’s [COVID-19 Arts Emergency Relief Fund](#), launched on March 20th, is an effort to galvanize this support from those with the capacity to give.”

Key findings below. Complete survey results can be found here: www.artsfund.org/covid-arts-impacts

Financial Losses

- **Mounting Revenue Losses:** The impact grows as the pandemic continues with losses by arts and cultural organizations through the end of March being projected at approximately **\$21.6M**; through the end of April being projected at **\$43.8M**; and through the end of May being projected at **\$74.1M**.

- Drops in Earned and Contributed Income: Significant decreases in both earned and contributed income are projected across the sector. These projected losses are driven by drop offs in ticket sales, memberships and subscription renewals, and rental income, paired with reductions in grant proceeds, donations, and cancellations of fundraising events and galas.
- Seasonal Factors: **As we approach spring and summer, the sector's high season, many organizations project an uptick in their financial losses, so these projections are on the lower side of overall impact.**

Programming

- Cancellations: **94% of organizations who responded to the survey have cancelled programming**, including those in the areas of educational and community programming. In spite of cancelled events, many are still required to pay contracting fees. Many of the cancellations were not captured in the data as the mandates changed drastically after the survey was distributed. Groups are now cancelling through summer months.
- Slower Ticket Sales and Memberships: Many organizations are uncertain about scheduling future programs, everyone has seen slower overall ticket sales and, where relevant, slower memberships sales. They are concerned that patrons will be reluctant to return to their organizations as they are already seeing slow ticket sales for the upcoming season.

Workforce

- Tough HR decisions: Many organizations are implementing the following next steps: teleworking, hiring freeze, suspending pay, reducing workers' hours, halting contractors, and eventually, furloughs. **The estimated number of furloughs and layoffs already totaled 1,997 employees at the time of the survey.** This includes 611 Full-time employees; 898 Part-time employees, many of whom are individual artists; and 488 Seasonal employees.
- Already precarious workforce stands to lose the most: Early results suggest that part-time workers are more impacted in the furloughs and reduced schedules than full-time and seasonal workers, suggesting that an already vulnerable and often underemployed population is feeling these effects more widely

Initial survey respondents (56.6% of respondents) completed the survey between March 12, 2020 and March 15, 2020 when the social distancing mandates were limited to 250 attendees, which meant for some organizations that operations could continue, however on a smaller scale. The remaining 44% of respondents completed the survey between March 16, 2020 and March 19, 2020 when the social

distancing mandates were limited to 50, which resulted in even more closures, changing operations and effecting program delivery more severely. **These are early estimates and those figures will increase now that many businesses and cultural spaces have been ordered to close as of March 16, 2020.**

“Arts bring economic impacts to the communities they serve, attracting cultural tourists and driving business in restaurants, childcare, transit and retail. These ripple effects will play key roles in rebuilding our neighborhoods and downtowns when the public health crisis is behind us. Perhaps even more central to our community health will be the connection and social cohesion arts will make possible when we are no longer social distancing,” Coliton said. “We know the impacts of the pandemic to our sector, and to our community at large, are continuing to magnify. We also know that we must face the harsh realities this data reveals, and provide relief and recovery support to ensure our region’s cultural nonprofits are there when we will need them the most.”

Thanks to the City of Seattle’s Office of Arts Culture for their partnership in survey review and analysis.

Additional information on ArtsFund’s COVID-19 response can be found here:

<https://www.artsfund.org/covid-19-resources/>

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About ArtsFund:

ArtsFund strengthens the community by supporting the arts through leadership, advocacy, and grant making. Founded in October 1969, the Seattle-based nonprofit has been building community through the arts for 50 years and is one of the nation’s leading United Arts Funds. ArtsFund was originally founded as the United Arts Council of Puget Sound to bring corporate and civic leaders together to help establish and sustain our region’s arts and cultural institutions. 50 years later, ArtsFund has supported nearly 240 arts nonprofits with more than \$84 million in grants, and by providing valuable leadership and advocacy. For more on ArtsFund visit www.artsfund.org.