

# The 2021-22 Budget: California Arts Council

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## Overview of the California Arts Council (CAC)

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**Statutory Goals.** CAC conducts a range of activities in order to support arts in California. The council's enabling legislation directs it to (1) encourage artistic awareness and expression, (2) assist local groups in the development of arts programs, (3) promote the employment of artists in both the public and private sectors, (4) provide for the exhibition of artworks in public buildings, and (5) ensure the fullest expression of artistic potential. In carrying out these goals, CAC focuses its efforts

on the development of various grant programs to support artists and organizations.

**Governor's Proposed Budget.** The Governor's budget proposes \$48 million, mostly from the General Fund, for support of CAC in 2021-22. This amount represents a net increase of \$1.3 million (3 percent) from the revised 2020-21 level. This net change primarily reflects increased funding to establish a new grant program (discussed in more detail below) and other budget adjustments (such as the expiration of funds provided in prior years).

## California Creative Corps Pilot Grant Program

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### Governor's Proposal

**Artwork to Increase Public Awareness About Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).** The Governor's budget proposes \$15 million from the General Fund on a one-time basis (\$5 million in 2020-21 and \$10 million in 2021-22) for CAC to initiate the California Creative Corps pilot grant program. Under the proposal, CAC would provide artists grants to support artwork designed to create public awareness of the methods for stopping the spread of COVID-19. According to the administration, the program would include some type of matching requirement. The administration is requesting that the Legislature take early action on this proposal.

### Assessment

**Key Questions About Proposal Remain Unanswered.** While the general concept of using artwork to promote public health messages could

have some merit, the administration has not been able to provide detailed information about the proposal at this time to determine whether the proposed grant program would effectively achieve its intended outcomes. Specifically, the administration has been unable to adequately respond to the following key questions:

- **Who Would Administer the Grant?** At the time of this analysis, the administration has not specified who would administer the new grant program. The administration indicates that it is considering two options: having CAC administer the grant or having CAC allocate the funds to local and/or regional partners to administer the grant. We note that there could be benefits with either approach. For example, local and/or regional partners could have greater insights into the communities where the artwork would be displayed. In contrast, CAC would be in a position to ensure greater

statewide uniformity in implementing the program.

- ***How Would Funds Be Allocated?*** CAC indicates that funding would be allocated to grantees representing all 58 counties and that it would target funds to certain communities most impacted by COVID-19, including historically marginalized communities. However, CAC has not provided details on how these or other criteria it would consider in selecting grantees would be evaluated or weighed against each other. The absence of such information makes it difficult for the Legislature to assess whether the program would target grants funds in a way that would effectively achieve its goals.
- ***How Many People Will Be Reached?*** According to CAC, it hopes to use the funds to engage around 500 artists and that artwork will be placed in all 58 counties to guarantee the largest possible reach. However, it has not provided estimates of the number of people that would be reached by the resulting artworks. This makes it difficult for the Legislature to compare the proposal to other forms of public health messaging—such as advertising—that the state could support instead.
- ***How Would the Matching Requirement Work?*** At this time, there is very little information available on how the proposed matching requirement would work. This

includes who would provide the match and how much of a match would be required. Without this information, it is difficult to assess whether the matching requirement could negatively impact the program, such as by unnecessarily limiting the number of artists who are able to effectively compete for grants.

## **Recommendation**

***Withhold Action Pending Receipt of Key Details Regarding Proposal.*** While the proposed program could have some merit, given the significant unanswered questions about the proposal, it is difficult at this time to assess whether the proposal would be a cost-effective way to create public awareness of the methods for stopping the spread of COVID-19. Accordingly, we recommend that the Legislature withhold action on the Governor’s proposal until the administration is able to provide sufficient details about how the program would be implemented. If such information is provided demonstrating that the program is consistent with legislative priorities and would be a cost-effective approach in increasing public awareness, we would recommend the Legislature approve the Governor’s proposal. Otherwise, we would recommend the Legislature reject the proposal.

## **LAO Publications**

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This report was prepared by Drew Soderborg, and reviewed by Anthony Simbol. The Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO) is a nonpartisan office that provides fiscal and policy information and advice to the Legislature.