ARTSWA

Impact of the Proposed Budget Reduction on the Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA)

The proposed budget reductions would compromise ArtsWA's statutory role to conserve and develop the state's artistic resources, which WAC 30-01-040 identifies as "essential to the social, educational, and economic growth of the state of Washington." As a result, ArtsWA's ability to deliver equitable services statewide and effectively support communities and partners would be significantly reduced.

REDUCTION TO ADMINISTRATIVE FUNDING

$8,000 reduction from administrative expenses (travel and goods & services)

IMPACT ON TRAVEL

Travel funding is essential to the agency's relationship-building, oversight, and program delivery. Without adequate travel support, the agency's understanding of on-the-ground conditions is diminished. This weakens program effectiveness and accountability.

The proposed cuts would:

- Limit the ability of staff to assess community health and program outcomes.
- Reduce face-to-face engagement that is critical for building trust with local partners and constituents.
- Directly affect programs such as Creative Districts, which rely on site visits to evaluate infrastructure, readiness, and long-term sustainability.

IMPACT ON GOODS & SERVICES

Goods and services expenses were thoroughly assessed and reduced for the 2025-27 biennium to retain only necessary, recurring operational and technology costs (e.g., software licenses).

The proposed additional cuts would:

- Limit access to professional and operational support services.
- Reduce the agency's ability to meet regularly with the Office of the Attorney General at a time when legal counsel is increasingly necessary.
- Undercut core operational services that enable staff to administer grants, provide guidance, and ensure compliance.

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REDUCTION TO GRANT FUNDING

$600,000 reduction from grants (approx. 33% of the total grant budget)

This reduction would have broad and inequitable impacts across the state. Three of ArtsWA's key granting programs – Arts in Education, Grants to Organizations, and Wellness, Arts, and the Military – would be cut, deepening reductions that were applied during the last budget reduction exercise. Together, these three grant programs distributed approximately $7.6 million in FY23, but funding declined to $3.9 million in FY24 and fell again to $1.6 million following the first budget reduction exercise. Funded applications showed a similar shift over time, rising from 262 in FY23 to 347 in FY24 before dropping to 199 in FY25.

The proposed cuts would:

- Affect both large and small communities, including rural and urban areas statewide.
- Disproportionately impact schools, small and rural communities, and Veterans and their families

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC IMPACTS

Wellness, Arts, and the Military (WAM): Previously reduced from $1 million to $500,000, forcing ArtsWA to end a partnership with WDVA that provided vital services at Veterans Homes. Further cuts would impact individual Veterans, their families, and organizations that provide them with programmatic support.

Folk and Traditional Arts (WACultures): Previously reduced by 5%, further reductions would significantly impact programs that primarily serve marginalized and historically underrepresented communities.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

The scale of the grant reductions may necessitate cuts to granting staff.

- The agency's staffing model is already lean and has been structured for efficiency.
- Each staff position supports work that is economically additive to the state through community investment, program oversight, and partnership development.
- Staff reductions would compound the impacts of grant cuts by reducing capacity to administer programs effectively and equitably.

SUMMARY

The proposed budget reductions would constrain the agency's operational capacity, weaken oversight and community engagement, and disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. Collectively, these impacts would limit the agency's ability to fulfill its mission and deliver equitable, effective services across Washington.