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Houston Arts Alliance Receives Largest Grant to Date from Houston Endowment in Support of Houston’s Small to Mid-Sized Arts and Culture Organizations

Houston’s designated local arts agency continues to leverage public monies with private dollars to advance Houston’s broad and diverse arts and culture field

HOUSTON (December 14, 2015) - As the city’s designated local arts agency, Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) is a nonprofit, public-private initiative that invests in Houston’s arts and cultural sector. On behalf of the City of Houston, HAA distributes Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) funds to arts and culture organizations and individual artists through a rigorous peer panel review process. Importantly, HAA leverages these public monies through private partnerships to increase resources for the nonprofit arts and culture sector, as well as individual artists.

In the single largest gift to date to Houston Arts Alliance from Houston Endowment, the foundation recently pledged \$920,000 for HAA’s new “Change Capital” grant program, Pre-Incubator program for arts and culture organizations, an assessment study for HAA’s long-standing Capacity Building Initiative, and HAA’s Folklife + Traditional Arts program.

This partnership with Houston Endowment underscores HAA’s ongoing work to build capacity within the larger arts and culture sector, most particularly among small and mid-sized arts organizations. In this vein, earlier this year HAA announced a new grant program made possible by a single donor, the Jamail Innovation Grant, which encourages arts and culture organizations to explore new artistic and administrative approaches to their work with an emphasis on exploration, experimentation and invention. The grant provides funding for current HAA general operating organization grantees to expand artistic excellence and increase reach, impact and accessibility through strategic organizational partnerships. New partnership models with entities outside the cultural sector, which may reside anywhere in the U.S. or abroad are encouraged. HAA will announce the first round of recipients of this grant category in spring 2016. “Given the constraints on the use of HOT funds, this is an exciting opportunity for HAA grantees to think out of the box and consider partnerships even with for-profit entities, including creative businesses,” said HAA Chairman Marc Melcher.

MORE

Page 2

Earlier this year an anonymous donor made another new grant category possible, the Program Support & Expansion grant, allowing HAA to assist young, emerging arts and culture organizations with program support to develop new or expand existing artistic programming. Recipients were Aperio: Music of the Americas, Apollo Chamber Players, BooTown, and Frame Dance Productions.

“After demonstrating our capacity during the past few years, Houston Arts Alliance is now coming of age as a true public-private initiative in the evolution of the organization as was intended at its inception,” said Jonathon Glus, president + CEO of HAA. “With solid strategic alliances in place, the agency is in an excellent position to leverage hotel occupancy tax (HOT) monies with additional dollars to advance the arts and culture field here in Houston, especially the small and mid-sized organizations, where the most need remains.”

Through the generous support of Houston Endowment, the Change Capital grant category (\$620,000 over two years) is an expansion of HAA’s Capacity Building Initiative, which brings a broad portfolio of resources to small and mid-sized arts and culture organizations, including but not limited to funding. “Our Capacity Building Initiative brings together the work of the Arts & Business Council; a myriad of services such as a database co-op, professional volunteers and workshop training; an in-house incubator program; and grants for strategic planning, arts marketing and other capacity enhancers—all to aid the city’s broad and quickly-expanding nonprofit arts and culture sector,” said Richard Graber, director of Grants, Programs + Services.

The Change Capital grant category will allow organizations to identify plateaus and stagnation in operations because many small and mid-sized organizations lack the resources to assess operations, efficiencies, artistic or programmatic relevance. The ultimate goal will be for Change Capital to provide the opportunity to adopt financial, artistic and operating procedures that will lead to long-term stability and vibrancy. Applying organizations would go through an application and panel review process based on the same national panel review panels the Arts Alliance uses for all grants.

Through this generous gift, Houston Endowment is also funding:

- The Pre-Incubator Program, a grant category that HAA piloted two years ago with initial support from Houston Endowment. This program supports burgeoning arts and culture organizations at their earliest phase, which have already demonstrated artistic excellence, and now need to develop critical administrative infrastructure within four primary competencies: administrative systems, governance, management, and financial resources.
- An Assessment Study to analyze previous Capacity Building Initiative graduates to measure long-term impact of the CBI services.
- Continued funding of HAA’s Folklife + Traditional Arts Program, now in its sixth year. One of only a few similar programs in the United States, this program elevates the visibility of cultural practices of Houston’s global communities, many of which are relatively new to the region.

For more information about HAA, visit houstonartsalliance.com.

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About Houston Arts Alliance

Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) is a nonprofit, public-private initiative that invests in Houston's arts and cultural sector, advances Houston's reputation as an arts and culture destination, and works to elevate the quality of life for all Houstonians through arts and culture. As the city's designated local arts agency, HAA provides programs and services for the arts and cultural sector and awards approximately 225 grants annually to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and individual artists. The Alliance is the custodian of the city's art collection; takes permanent and temporary art to Houston's public spaces; presents free Folklife + Traditional Arts programming; nurtures up-and-coming arts organizations through its capacity building programs; connects the business community with the arts; convenes the field as necessary, and provides the latest information and research on cultural policy, economic development and Houston's folklife.

HAA's primary partner is the City of Houston. Approximately 55% of HAA's budget comes from Hotel Occupancy Tax and 30% from the City of Houston's Percent for Art Program, which supports commissions of new civic art projects as well as conservation of existing artworks. The remaining 15% of HAA's budget comes from private fundraising (grants/contributions/other revenue) for programs and special projects. HAA is committed to raising funds for only those projects and initiatives that the Arts Alliance is uniquely positioned to provide the community.

For more information, visit houstonartsalliance.com. For events in the region, visit Artshound.com.