



January 1, 2022

**Vivian Hua, Co-Chair**  
Artist

**James Miles, Co-Chair**  
Mentor Washington

**Rick Araluce**  
Artist

**Ebony Arunga**  
Arts Advocate & Entrepreneur

**Kayla DeMonte**  
Citizen University

**Holly Jacobson**  
Path with Art

**Yeggy Michael**  
Artist, Yeggy Studio

**Chieko Phillips**  
4Culture

**Vanessa Villalobos**  
Artist, Balorico Dance

**Mikhael Mei Williams**  
Seattle Art Museum

Mayor Bruce Harrell  
City of Seattle  
600 Fourth Avenue, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Mayor Harrell,

The Seattle Arts Commission wishes to express our collective gratitude for your commitment to creative communities and workers during your transition planning. As the community advisory body for the Office of Arts and Culture, two of our focus areas are anchoring communities in cultural space and supporting the individuals in our workforce as part of the creative economy. This letter elaborates on some priorities for the cultural sector during this critical pandemic recovery period that we ask you to pay attention to as you enter office.

The Seattle Arts Commission is committed to economic recovery in a way that centers and champions the arts, as well as equity and inclusion of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities that have historically been disenfranchised. The below initiatives of the Office of Arts and Culture were developed with BIPOC leadership to push for equitable change in our sector.

### **Cultural Space Agency - Building Wealth in BIPOC Communities**

The creation of the Cultural Space Agency PDA in December 2020 was a tremendous victory for the Office of Arts and Culture, the Seattle Arts commission, and the City of Seattle. The Cultural Space Agency has been intentionally designed to build community wealth, especially within BIPOC communities and historically disinvested neighborhoods, through a community-led process that places decision-making authority into the hands of impacted community members. The early work of the Cultural Space Agency in 2021 created an unprecedented groundswell of community excitement—the Agency has already received viable cultural space site acquisition and development proposals from 20 BIPOC-led community organizations. Matching that excitement with support from the City of Seattle will demonstrate your administration's commitment to equitable cultural space development. Your pledge during the campaign to capitalize the launch and ongoing programs of the Cultural Space Agency was an important part of building cultural community support for your campaign, and for your administration. We look forward to working with you and your administration to honor this pledge.



### **Rent Forgiveness for Arts Organizations**

The City currently houses 40 organizations and had previously provided rent forgiveness which has now expired. No funding for rent relief has been allocated in the budget for 2022, but we ask for your support on extending that to arts organizations, to provide short-term stop-gap solutions as many organizations still operate under limited hours and capacity.

### **Hope Corps - Supporting our Workforce**

This initiative was fortunately funded through the last budget process, yet it can serve as a vehicle for additional support to our workforce or inspiration for other sectors. Hope Corps is a strategy which centers the restoration of wealth to those who have been disproportionately impacted physically and financially by COVID-19, people of color, while meeting civic needs. It is a WPA-style program that will employ creatives at scale to address Civic needs such as public health messaging and mental health outcomes; media, journalism, and storytelling opportunities; and food security through urban gardening and food distribution.

Your support is vital to our art and cultural communities who have helped make Seattle a culturally rich tourist destination and economically thriving city. We invite you to stand with the Seattle Arts Commission as we work to create a vibrant arts and cultural sector that addresses historical inequality while prioritizing artistic and cultural sustainability. Please know that you have a standing invitation to join our commission meetings and we look forward to building a partnership with you.

Best,

James Miles

Vivian Hua 華婷婷

Co-Chairs, Seattle Arts Commission