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Current 4Culture Equity Practices

In 2018, under the leadership of the new Executive Director Brian Carter and the 4Culture Board of Directors, 4Culture made systematic changes to advance equity practices. "Equity" is defined within 4Culture's grant criteria as pertaining to organizations, projects, and programs located or primarily serving populations outside of Seattle or in Communities of Opportunity. Communities of Opportunity are defined by 4Culture according to the [King County Communities of Opportunity Composite Index](#) (COO), with 4Culture's equity criteria applying to King County communities located in census tracts with a composite COO score of 60 percent or greater (the top two quintiles on the COO index). 4Culture's equity-related changes built on the equity conversations and ideas that surfaced during Access for All deliberations in 2017.

According to 4Culture, these changes included:

- Values: The 4Culture Board developed and adopted mission, vision, and value statements focused on racial equity.¹
- Grant criteria and equity-based awards:
 - [Sustained Support](#) grant applications ask applicants for narratives on the benefits of their programs to "marginalized communities" which, according to 4Culture staff, is intended to boost merit awards to applicants based on innovation in programming addressing underserved populations such as racial and ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.²
 - Building 4Equity (facility/capital grants) applicants must complete an "equity in development and construction assessment" as an application requirement. This assessment is designed to help applicants consider how racial equity-focused priorities will be addressed in their project development and construction.
 - Additionally, all 4Culture grant programs include equity investments, which provide an additional increment to the amount of grant funding awarded to organizations and projects located in or serving a community outside of Seattle or a Community of Opportunity.

¹ [Mission, Vision, Values – 4Culture](#)

² 4Culture's Sustained Support grant programs, which are general operating grants broken down into categories such as arts, heritage, and historic preservation, ask applicants to provide a narrative describing whether the organization is led by and serving "marginalized communities, especially communities that are disproportionately impacted by structural racism?" The quality of an applicant's response to this question and others determines whether an organization receives merit awards on top of base award. An organization's base operating award is determined mostly by program size, with tiers for larger and smaller organizations to help prevent larger organizations from receiving too large of a share of the total grant dollars available.

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- Equity-based grant programs:
 - In 2019, King County and 4Culture revamped 4Culture's facilities grants into [Building for Equity](#), which includes \$2 million for a mentoring program for organizations serving marginalized communities, and \$10 million for facilities grants awarded through a process that prioritizes organizations serving marginalized communities.³
 - [Open4Culture](#) is a grant program specifically designed for first-time applicants, with an emphasis on applicants outside of Seattle or in Communities of Opportunity within Seattle.
 - 4Culture's [ARC Artist fellowship](#), established 2018, provides funding and networking to artists from communities historically underrepresented in 4Culture funding.
 - 4Culture's [Beyond Integrity initiative](#), offers paid internships to assist organizations in elevating equity in preservation standards and practices.⁴
 - 4Culture created a new [Public Free Access](#) program increase access to cultural experiences for King County residents, particularly underserved communities.
- Language and technical assistance:
 - Grant listings are available in Spanish and Chinese, and 4Culture makes technical assistance available for grant applicants in English plus the five most common spoken languages in the county.
 - Technical assistance to help organizations and individuals apply for grants is offered in the form of in-person, virtual, and recorded workshops.
- Training and performance tracking:
 - Racial equity outcomes are included in 4Culture's annual reports.
 - All new and existing 4Culture staff and board members undergo required racial equity training.
 - All grant review panelists undergo anti-bias training.
 - Demographic information on grant review panelists is collected for an annual equity analysis.

³ Ordinance 18939

⁴ [Beyond Integrity – 4Culture](#)

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- Building4Equity applicant review panelists must have a racial equity lens through lived experience, work experience, or training.⁵

Fiscal Analysis of 4Culture's Equity-Based Grant Allocations

In the 2023-2024 grant cycle, eight percent of the Arts Sustained Support program (operating grants) was reserved for equity investments. Equity investments were available only to organizations with annual budgets under \$3.5 million and were distributed as a \$1000 increase to the grant award of each qualifying agency. A total of 230 organizations received Arts Sustained Support awards in the 2023-2024 grant cycle. Additionally, an additional three percent of the Arts Sustained Support program was set aside for merit awards, distributed as bonuses to organizations for equity-based innovation in programming.

2023-2024 Arts Sustained Support equity awards = \$230,000 (8% of total award \$ and 51% of applicants)

2023-2024 Arts Sustained Support merit awards = \$80,500 (3% of total award \$)

2023-2024 Arts Sustained Support total \$ towards equity = \$310,500 (11%)

For 4Culture's Building for Equity program (facilities grants), 25 percent of the funding pool was allocated for equity investment awards in 2023. Additionally, according to 4Culture staff, a project applicant's response to an "equity in development and construction assessment" accounts for 20 percent of the applicant's composite score. An applicant's composite score determines whether the organization's application is funded and helps determine the size of the grant award. In 2023, 20 percent of the total Building for Equity grant requests were funded (19 out of 66 applications).

2023 Building for Equity equity investments = \$273,900 (25% of the total \$ and 58% of applicants)

2023 Building for Equity grants awarded to equity-qualified applicants = \$2,498,000

2023 Building for Equity total \$ towards equity = \$2,772,000 (51%)

Table 1 shows the portion of 4Culture's grant funding that was awarded to organizations based on equity considerations in 2023 (or in some cases 2023-2024).

Overall, Doors Open would represent an approximately 625 percent increase in annual funding available to 4Culture, suggesting that equity investments could potentially increase by more than six times above what is shown in Table 1.

⁵ [Participant Interest Sign Up - 4Culture](#)

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However, it is difficult to analyze what that might mean for the amount of funding from Doors Open would go towards advancing equity due to the following issues:

- 4Culture does not separate racial equity from geographic distribution in equity investment awards, making it difficult to determine whether grant awards are increasing equity for marginalized communities or increasing the geographic distribution of cultural programming or both.
- 4Culture does not yet have specific targets for how the amount of grant awards that should go towards equity investments or equity-based grant programs, so those amounts can vary from year to year. Because many of 4Culture's equity-based programs and grant criteria has been implemented within the past few years and during the disruption of the pandemic, historical data has limited analytical value.
- Doors Open would require that 22 percent of grant awards go towards organizations and projects outside of Seattle but does not have specific requirements regarding grant awards for organizations serving Communities of Opportunity.

Table 1.

Program	Equity amount	Total
ARC Artist Fellowship	\$36,000	\$36,000
Open 4Culture	\$42,000	\$42,000
Free Public Access	Not available	Not available
Arts Sustained Support	\$310,500	\$2,862,400
Heritage Sustained Support	Not available	Not available
Preservation Sustained Support	Not available	Not available
Building for Equity Facilities Grants	\$2,772,000	\$5,435,300
Building for Equity Project Development and Capacity Building Expenditures	Not available	Not available
4Culture's total planned 2023 and 2023-2024 grant awards	Not available	Not available