



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The Need

1) Why do we need a Cultural Access Program?

Economic Development

- Our economy is changing from a manufacturing based economy to one that is more dependent on ideas and innovation.
- Creativity and education is tied directly to the vitality of our economy.
- In 2006, the Prosperity Partnership, led by the Puget Sound Regional Council, established cultural (arts, heritage and science) opportunities and organizations as one of the five elements needed to strengthen the foundation of our economy and ensure its competitiveness.
- Increasingly, many corporations seek the presence of cultural organizations as a determining factor when making investment decisions about where to locate and expand - strong, high quality cultural, science and heritage organizations are part of a sound economic development strategy.
- Attracting and retaining highly skilled and creative employees is key to being competitive in today's global economy.

Equity and Access

- While many cultural, science and heritage organizations provide education and outreach programs and offer free access to their facilities, they are constrained by limited funding.
- Funding from a Cultural Access Program would dramatically increase the resources available to these organizations to provide access to students and the public.

Community Pride and Spirit

- Cultural organizations form the centerpiece of many communities, and are valued public assets. Among the significant benefits that these organizations provide to communities across the state are:
 - Venues to provide performances and exhibits that enrich and enliven communities, and also serve as civic centers and meeting places.
 - Programs that allow millions of visitors to attend free or discounted performances.
 - Education and outreach programs that serve hundreds of thousands of students every year.
 - Access to programs that allow low income youths and adults to enjoy the variety of programs and exhibits that these organizations offer.

General Questions

2) How broad would a Cultural Access Program be; geography, size, and type of organization?

- Signed into law on July 6, 2015, the law authorizes any county in the state to create a cultural access program to improve access to non-profit cultural, science and heritage organizations.
- This authorizes any county council to place on the ballot for voter approval 0.1% of sales tax or an equivalent amount of property tax (except in King County) to support access to cultural, scientific, and heritage organizations in that county.
- The proposal includes two basic models: one for King County and another for the rest of the state. The statewide model is much more general as to governance and more permissive with respect to how funds are used in order to give regions outside King County more flexibility to design their own approaches. The King County model is very specific and follows the pattern of similar programs established in other major metropolitan regions around the country.
- In King County, the proposal would allow the creation of a Cultural Access Program that would provide funding to organizations in King County. The cultural, science and heritage organizations that would be eligible range from large regional organizations, such as the Woodland Park Zoo, to small community organizations such as local dance companies or community theaters.

3) Does the proposal fund small alternative organizations, or just the big mainstream organizations with a general audience?

- A significant amount of the funding generated under the proposal would be allocated to smaller community-based cultural organizations. This is true for both models authorized under the proposal. Cultural access programs outside of King County have the most flexibility in this regard.
- A cultural access program in King County must follow certain rules with respect to funding large regional cultural organizations, with budgets over \$1.25 million annually. For instance, such organizations would receive sustainable funding under this proposal capped at 15% of their annual operating budgets.
- The community-based funds could be used more broadly than funds provided to regional organizations. Funds for community-based cultural organizations could be used to fund organizational activities, such as:
 - Start-up and ongoing funding for new cultural organizations, such as new historic heritage sites, museums, or community theaters.
 - Capital expenditures or acquisitions, as well as technology, equipment and supplies.

4) Does the creation of the Cultural Access Program require a state-wide vote?

- No, creating a Cultural Access Program does not require a statewide vote. However, funding through taxes would require a public vote in the county that creates a cultural access program.

5) Who has funded the effort to advocate for Cultural Access?

- The funding for this effort has come from those cultural organizations that would potentially benefit from creation of a Cultural Access Program.
- The Puget Sound Regional Council, ArtsFund and several professional services firms have also contributed staff time and resources.

6) What are the funding alternatives, and which require public votes?

- When developing this proposal several tax sources were considered, including the sales, B&O and property taxes. Ultimately, the sales or property tax was recommended because it allowed counties to choose which type of funding they would ask the voters to approve.
- Either one would require a public vote.

7) In King County, didn't the Legislature already pass a similar bill that does the same thing as the Cultural Access Program?

- The 4Culture proposal adopted by the Legislature in 2011 continued existing funding to more than 250 arts and heritage organizations in King County. Under the bill the Legislature passed, 4Culture has assurance of long-term funding beginning in 2021. These funds would be used for operations, individual artists and heritage specialists, capital projects, new construction, on-going facilities maintenance and educational programs.
- The Cultural Access Program is much broader in that it is statewide and would allow single counties to fund cultural, science and heritage organizations.

8) Why spend money on this rather than on education, health care or transportation?

- A strong cultural community contributes to the economic vitality that allows our region to succeed.
- A Cultural Access Program enhances education and contributes to our economy.
- The law requires any cultural access program formed anywhere in the State to dedicate a priority portion of its revenues to public school access to cultural experiences. This addresses a very serious problem facing public education that has been compounded as resources for education have diminished during the recent recession.
- Cultural organizations actually generate economic activity, by employing people and attracting new investment and economic activity. A 2014 study by Dr. William Beyers, a University of Washington professor, found that science and cultural organizations in King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish counties have regional economic impacts of approximately:
 - \$2.4 billion in business activity
 - 35,376 jobs supported
 - \$996 million in employment income
 - \$105 million in state and local tax revenue
 - 13.4 million visits in 2014
- Research shows that many people make choices about where to live based on the quality of life in the region, and then search for employment in that area – rather than being driven by employment opportunities alone.
- For this region to be vital and attractive, it must have a strong cultural life, in addition to excellent education, health care and transportation infrastructure.

Impact on Cultural Organizations

9) **What accountability measures are included to ensure that funds are used for public access to the services from these non-profit organizations, rather than being spent entirely on administrative costs or salaries?**

- Under the law, each cultural access program must establish a specified range of public benefits that cultural organizations (large and small) must provide in order to be eligible to receive funding. For instance, such benefits may include:
 - Increasing scholarship funding for classes.
 - Subsidizing programs like free days and lower prices for low-income attendees.
 - Enhancing educational programs or expanding access to more students.
 - Making facilities “pay as you can” - allowing people to pay whatever admission rate they are able to afford.
- All recipients of funds will be subject to annual audits or other financial oversight.
- Under this proposal, distributing agency administrative costs for the program cannot exceed more than 1.25% of the total value of the fund.

10) **Won't this make it harder for organizations to raise money from private sources?**

- The cost of this program to the average household is extremely modest – approximately \$25 per year or \$2.50 per month. Current donors are unlikely to view such a small sum as a replacement for their existing charitable giving. In addition, in the Central Puget Sound region, such donors will understand that revenues from this proposal will be spread across more than 360 scientific, cultural, and heritage organizations.
- One of the reasons that dedicated funding provided to large cultural organizations in King County may not exceed 15 percent of an organization's operating budget is to ensure that it does not become too dependent upon public funding and fail to continue to raise private funding. This was a concern that emerged from our study of other models across the country, some of which provide a much greater share of funding to such organizations.

11) **Is there enough of an education component of this program?**

- The law includes a Public School Student Access Program that:
 - Increases public school student access by expanding curriculum aligned educational experiences in-school or on-site at cultural, scientific or heritage organizations.
 - Provides increased benefits to schools in economically-disadvantaged areas.
 - Provides educational opportunities as a specific public benefit that regional organizations receiving funding under the bill must agree to provide as a condition of being funded.
- Recognizing that transportation is more of a challenge, especially in rural counties, the law also provides funding so that ALL public schools in ALL participating counties can provide transportation for every public school student to attend or participate in cultural or scientific educational organizations, at least once a year. Schools with a high percentage of students participating in federally funded school lunch programs receive highest priority.

- Education and outreach programs already in place at cultural organizations can be greatly expanded providing increased access to many more students than are currently served and at little or no cost to the student.

Similar Efforts in Other Regions

12) Do other states use taxes to fund cultural organizations?

- Yes, special taxing districts help support cultural organizations in a number of major cities across the country, including Salt Lake County, Pittsburgh, Portland, San Francisco and Denver.
- The Cultural Access Program is most similar to Denver’s Scientific and Cultural Facilities District.

13) What evidence do you have that the cities with this kind of tax are doing better, either culturally or economically?

A 2004 Study of Metro Denver Culture found that the creation of the District bolstered Denver's cultural community substantially:

- In the District’s first three years, the number of cultural opportunities increased by 45%, and the total number of admissions also increased by 45%.
- The economic impact of cultural activities grew from \$500 million in 1995 to \$1.31 billion in 2003.
- Attendance grew from more than 7 million visitors in 1995 to more than 11 million visitors in 2003.

Fairness

14) In King County, why does the bulk of this money go to the largest organizations?

- The Cultural Access Program funds all types of organizations, both large and small. In addition, in King County, funding for larger regional organizations is capped at 15 percent of their Operating budgets to ensure funds are available to smaller organizations.
- This program relies on public funds; therefore, the major objective is to fund those that serve the greatest number of residents.
- Another objective of the program is to support new and emerging cultural organizations, and increase the total number of organizations and people enjoying them throughout the region. Thus, the program allocates funds specifically targeted at new and emerging cultural organizations, including start-up and ongoing funding for new organizations, such as new historic heritage museums, or community theaters and capital funding for new projects. Additional requisite public benefits include programs for economically or geographically underserved areas within a program.

	SMALL & MID-SIZED Organizations	LARGE Organizations
Combined annual budget (Estimated. King Co.)	\$57 Million	\$400 Million
New funding	\$14.1 Million	\$35.8 Million
Restrictions	No limit on award size	15% of budget limit on award

	SMALL & MID-SIZED Organizations	LARGE Organizations
Use of Funds	Allowed to use funds beyond access, education and communication programs to include capital projects, property acquisition and improvements.	Restricted use of funds to access programs like cultural & education activities, initiatives, communications, and basic operations. Not for capital.
Opportunities	Greater opportunity to fund emerging organizations that enrich our cultural ecosystem and allow for increased funding in other 4Culture programs	Greater opportunity to fund those organizations that have larger impacts on the economy, help drive tourism, and create or sustain jobs in King County and beyond
Guidelines for Funding	Likely to be administered by 4Culture who will create and administer guidelines tailored to the needs of smaller organizations	Additional criteria established by 4Culture and requirements for audits, and annual reports

15) Who uses these institutions? Why should I pay if I don't go?

- The benefit of cultural organizations to the community far exceeds their cost in terms of contributed support. Currently, with an extremely limited amount of public support they provide tens of thousands of children with educational opportunities they otherwise would not enjoy. Many organizations provide free access to the general public, and discounted and free tickets to low income individuals.
- A recent study of Central Puget Sound cultural organizations found that over 2.5 million visitors were admitted for free annually.
- By helping cultural organizations to increase education and outreach programs, and to do so at less cost to the visitor, this program aims to increase access to all organizations. When asked how they would invest these additional funds, Central Puget Sound cultural organizations overwhelmingly point to further investment in outreach and education programs, saying they would invest in:
 - Additional scholarship funding for education programs.
 - Expanding education programs.
 - Improved quality and effectiveness of outreach and education programs.
 - Making admission "Pay as you Can"
 - More performances and more free and discounted performances.

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