

# CITY OF LOS ANGELES

CALIFORNIA

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## DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

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DANIEL TARICA  
GENERAL MANAGER

October 23, 2024

The Honorable Karen Bass  
Mayor of Los Angeles  
Room 303, City Hall

The City Council  
C/O City Clerk  
Room 395, City Hall  
Attention: Legislative Coordinator

### **RE: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO RETROACTIVELY APPLY FOR AND ACCEPT A \$20,000 GRANT FROM THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS FOR THE FY24/25 BIG READ PROGRAM**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The General Manager of the Department of Cultural Affairs respectfully requests that the City Council, subject to approval by the Mayor:

1. AUTHORIZE the General Manager of the Department of Cultural Affairs or designee to retroactively submit a grant application to the National Endowment for the Arts for the FY 24/25 Big Read Program;
2. AUTHORIZE the General Manager of the Department of Cultural Affairs or designee to submit all necessary paperwork relative to the grant, subject to City Attorney approval as to form and content;
3. AUTHORIZE the Department of Cultural Affairs to accept \$20,000 in grant funding from the National Endowment for the Arts for the FY 24/25 Big Read Program;
4. AUTHORIZE the General Manager of the Department of Cultural Affairs or designee to negotiate and execute the grant award and agreement on behalf of the City and submit the required reporting relative to the grant, subject to City Attorney approval as to form and legality;
5. AUTHORIZE the Department of Cultural Affairs to receive and expend National Endowment for the Arts grant funds for activities for all eligible purposes for the twelve-month grant period;
6. AUTHORIZE the Controller to:

A. ESTABLISH a new appropriation account within Fund 337, Cultural Affairs Grants, to be labeled “NEA BIG READ FY 24/25”;

B. APPROPRIATE \$20,000 received from the National Endowment for the Arts into the newly established account within Fund 337, “NEA BIG READ FY 24/25”;

7. AUTHORIZE the General Manager of the Department of Cultural Affairs or designee to prepare any Controller’s instructions needed to implement actions approved by the Council and Mayor on matters presented in, or deriving from, the transmittal, and/or to make necessary technical adjustment, and further, request that the Controller implement these instructions.

## SUMMARY

On January 17, 2024, the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) submitted a grant application to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) for the “Big Read” program. As a result of the successful application, DCA received the maximum \$20,000 in funding from the NEA. In accordance with Los Angeles Administrative Code 14.6(b) and 14.8(c), DCA requests authority to retroactively submit this grant application utilizing the recommendations above, and authorization to subsequently accept grant funds.

## BACKGROUND

The National Endowment for the Arts Big Read program -- a partnership with nonprofit organization Arts Midwest -- broadens our understanding of our world, our neighbors, and ourselves through the power of a shared reading experience. Each Big Read program features a single title to be read by all participants, and includes discussion groups along with thematic activities such as: art workshops and exhibitions, in-school reading groups, film screenings, theatrical presentations, museum visits, and community events, among others. The NEA Big Read Program in Los Angeles is celebrating its 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary, with the DCA being a notable NEA awardee having received the grant since the program launched in 2008. To date, DCA has distributed more than 25,000 free books; and offered more than 1,000 public events to reach more than 200,000 participants across Los Angeles.

The **NEA Big Read Program in Los Angeles** (program) has studied an array of topics that include gentrification, homelessness, racism, immigration and assimilation, relationships, the American Dream, wellness, aging and end-of life issues, rights and equity, violence prevention, representation, storytelling through images, social justice and restorative approaches, bilingualism, architecture and landmarks, and much more. DCA’s Big Read celebrates local history and culture while advancing an appreciation of the diversity of our city. This year’s program will feature “*The House on Mango Street*” by author Sandra Cisneros, a coming of age story about a 12-year old Chicana girl who struggles to define herself through her biculturalism and bilingualism while facing challenges maturing into a young woman. This book is a classic, beloved by readers of all ages, now celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

DCA, with the Los Angeles Public Library, will host Sandra Cisneros as the keynote speaker at an opening event to kick off public programming. Her participation will inspire Angelenos with her

experience as a distinguished author, a leading literary figure, and an important Latinx voice. Programming in conjunction with “*The House on Mango Street*” will invite readers of all ages to explore LA’s Latino history, foster cultural understanding, celebrate our diverse neighborhoods, highlight women’s contributions to the growth of our city, empower youth participants to be civically engaged, and to participate in creative art making. Community nonprofit partners include: 1) Boyle Heights Arts Conservatory, 2) CalArts Community Arts Program, 3) Culinary Historians of Southern California, 4) Los Angeles Times Festival of Books, 5) Tia Chucha’s Centro Cultural, 6) Los Angeles County’s Grand Park, operated by the LA Music Center, 7) Collage: A Place for Art and Culture, 8) Libros Schmibros Lending Library, 9) Las Fotos Project, 10) United Voices of Literacy’s Readers are Leaders, 11) El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, 12) the Craft Contemporary Museum, 13) Latino Theater Company, 14) CASA 0101, 15) Self Help Graphics and Art, 16) Skirball Cultural Center, 17) DCA’s Watts Towers Arts Center Campus, Barnsdall Junior Arts Center, City Hall Bridge Gallery; and DCA partner Art Centers - Art in the Park, McGroarty Arts Center, and Center for the Arts Eagle Rock; and 18) Los Angeles artists – author/graphic book artist Joseph Saenz, illustrator Cynthia Navarro, and zinester/printer/teaching artist Rachel Curry, among many others.

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) will involve ten schools, with in-class time to read and study the work of Ms. Cisneros. The program’s core readers are public high school students, with 74% of the students reported by LAUSD as Latinos living in distressed communities. Cisneros’ story about a bilingual and bicultural young Esperanza can inspire and offer personal reflection for our young readers.

The FY24/25 program will be DCA’s 17<sup>th</sup> Big Read, and will run from September 2024 through August 2025. DCA estimates 15,000 people will be directly reached through online activities and in-person events. The upcoming program will be implemented through strategic partnerships to serve residents of the Harbor area, the San Fernando Valley, and the historic communities of downtown LA, and eastern LA neighborhoods such as Boyle Heights and Lincoln Heights.

This grant requires a minimum 1:1 matching contribution. DCA plans to meet the match for this grant through a donation in the amount of \$25,000 from SONY Corporation of America, which has been a funding partner annually.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no impact to the General Fund 100.

*Daniel M Tarica*

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DANIEL TARICA

General Manager

Department of Cultural Affairs