September 25, 2023

Delivered Via Email

Her Excellency Maura Healey

Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Secretary Matthew Gorzkowicz

Executive Office for Administration & Finance

The Honorable Karen Spilka

President of the Massachusetts Senate

The Honorable Michael Rodrigues

Chair, Senate Committee on Ways & Means

The Honorable Paul Mark

Chair, Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts & Cultural Development

The Honorable Ronald Mariano

Speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives

The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz

Chair, House Committee on Ways & Means

The Honorable Mindy Domb

Chair, Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts & Cultural Development

*Re: Uncommitted ARPA Funds and the Commonwealth’s Creative and Cultural Sector*

Dear Governor Healey, Secretary Gorzkowicz, President Spilka, Chairs Rodrigues and Mark, Speaker Mariano, and Chairs Michlewitz and Domb:

Mass Cultural Council read with great interest a media report on Friday regarding the Massachusetts Taxpayer Foundation’s estimate that the Commonwealth still has approximately $300 million in uncommitted federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds on hand, and about a year to decide how to spend it.

Mass Cultural Council continues to be very grateful for the unprecedented pandemic recovery investment you, our partners on Beacon Hill, made in the creative and cultural sector through Ch. 102 of the Acts of 2021, *An Act relative to immediate COVID-19 recovery needs*. As [reported](https://massgov-my.sharepoint.com/personal/bethann_steiner_mass_gov/Documents/Steiner/Reports/FINAL%202023%20MCC%20PRF%20Grant%20Legislative%20Report.pdf) in June, Mass Cultural Council employed these monies to develop and administer two one-time pandemic recovery grant programs, for [cultural organizations](https://massculturalcouncil.org/organizations/cultural-sector-recovery-grants-for-organizations/) and [individuals](https://massculturalcouncil.org/artists-art/cultural-sector-recovery-grants-for-individuals/) employed or working in the sector, as well as to supplement the FY22 Cultural Facilities Fund grant round, and support the Commonwealth’s humanities organizations through a regranting arrangement with Mass Humanities.

While this historic $60.1 million allocation of pandemic recovery monies allowed us to make 1,218 [grants](https://massculturalcouncil.org/blog/mass-cultural-council-celebrates-51m-in-cultural-sector-pandemic-recovery-grants/) of $5,000 to $75,000 to every eligible cultural organization who applied to our program, we fell well short of being able to approve a $5,000 award to every eligible individual who submitted an application.

Our program data shows that during the grant cycle, *one of out every 1,000 Massachusetts residents* self-identified as an artist, cultural practitioner, teaching artist, interpretative scientist, humanist, cultural worker, culture bearer, or creative gig worker. We received 7,593 applications to the Cultural Sector Recovery Grants for Individuals program and awarded $20 million to 4,000 creative individuals. Unfortunately, this means that 45% of the individual applicants were unfunded due to lack of resources. It would take an additional $16 million to fully fund this program.

As you continue your deliberations on how to invest the remaining $300 million in ARPA funds, please consider helping us address the $16 million unmet need demonstrated by our Cultural Sector Recovery Grants for Individuals program.

While it may not be possible to approve this amount of funding, Mass Cultural Council wishes to explore the possibility of additional pandemic recovery monies for the individuals who work in the creative and cultural sector across every community statewide. We know these workers continue to deal with various issues such as increasing costs due to inflation, wary audiences who may not wish to attend largescale group events, rising housing costs, etc. Any additional ARPA funds received by the Agency would be deployed to support these creative workers and further assist in their economic recovery from the pandemic.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request, as well as for your steadfast support of the Power of Culture. Mass Cultural Council stands ready to partner with you to further this conversation. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or Senior Director of Public Affairs [Bethann Steiner](mailto:bethann.steiner@mass.gov), if we can offer additional information or to schedule a meeting.

Sincerely,

Text, letter

Description automatically generated

Michael J. Bobbitt

Executive Director