

Appointment Questions: Arts and Culture Interim Director, Gülgün Kayim

Background and Vision:

1. Can you outline your primary goals for transforming Seattle's arts and cultural landscape, drawing from your past experiences and from what you have learned in these couple of months as Interim Director?

My primary goals for transforming Seattle's arts and cultural landscape are to:

- Stabilize and build the capacity of arts and culture organizations that continue to face economic challenges:
 - The COVID-19 pandemic had major impacts on the arts and cultural sector and areas of the creative economy have not recovered from those economic impacts. In the last few months in Seattle, I have learned that while there has been some revenue improvement and return of the workforce, local organizations continue to report that they are operating at 60% capacity. There is still concern around stable employment, the pace of industry rebound and organizational capacity.
 - According to the 2022 COVID Cultural Impact Study, only about half of Washington State art patrons say they have gone back or are prepared to go back to in-person arts events and those that do expect to pay about half of what they did pre-pandemic. Whereas before the pandemic, jobs in the arts and culture sector were becoming a significant driver in Washington, the industry has now seen a dramatic contraction of employment with nearly half (41 percent) of arts and cultural organizations having furloughed staff or significantly reduced hours/or pay. These impacts were mitigated through investments (CLFR funding and others) funneled into the industry by ARTS and other government and philanthropic partners. However, now that the federal funding is no longer available, some organizations are facing a fiscal cliff as their revenues and operating budgets have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. These organizations have seen rapid recent inflation which only compound this issue as their operating expenses rise faster than their revenues can accommodate. The 2024 budget makes a one-time supplemental investment in general operating support for arts organizations, but there is a broader policy question that is emerging about what the ecology of arts and culture businesses and enterprises in Seattle look like after the pandemic and how we support cultural institutions in taking the steps needed to rethink their operations and business models to account for this new reality. Given these immediate pressures, we must not lose sight of the future which is why it is particularly important that the City embark on a cultural planning process at this time. A cultural plan will allow the City to consider the current state of Seattle's creative landscape and develop policies that address its long-term health (more details on this item can be found below).
 - Notably, these decisions will be made in a larger context. Seattle's creative sector funding structures and opportunities in the landscape are changing. King County's proposed *Doors*

Open legislation for cultural access will provide increased funding for arts, science, heritage education, and access for students and families throughout King County. If the legislation is passed, this funding will provide up to \$100 million in new funding to nonprofit arts organizations. ARTS will adapt accordingly in light of this potential future new investment.

- Provide a clear vision for future investments in the city's arts and culture fund through a long-term cultural plan:
 - A cultural plan will allow the City to consider policy questions around support for arts organizations relative to the impact of the *Doors Open* new investments. It will also allow the broader arts community to participate in developing policies that will guide the City's investments and the creative sector's development for the next 10 years.
 - In 2016, I led the development of the *Creative City RoadMap*, a 10-year plan that provides a unified and equitable vision for arts and culture development in Minneapolis. I intend to pull from that experience to prioritize the creative sector by developing a unified cross-sector vision for arts and culture in Seattle. This plan will allow us an opportunity to pause, step back and examine the dynamics that currently drive the local creative ecology and identify what the future might look like and where to focus government investment and on-going leadership in the creative sector.
- Evaluate and address creative sector structural workforce employment instabilities
 - The creative workforce is largely composed of gig workers who are classified by employment law as independent contractors and they frequently have inadequate unemployment support at the federal level. This, combined with low wages, creative workers on the whole, experience precarious employment conditions. Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became clear that creative workers need access to fair and stable incomes, long-term benefits and technical assistance. The City has a role to play in developing policies for creative gig workers that stabilizes employment conditions. A step towards this would be to work with our partners at the federal level to ensure that adequate structural supports exist for this workforce.

2. What is your vision for the creative economy in Seattle? How do you anticipate making that vision a reality? How will you work with other departments?

- My immediate vision for the creative economy is to first stabilize creative workers and enterprises. Larger and midsized nonprofit arts organizations are still facing revenue struggles because they are operating below capacity while also experiencing higher production, labor expenses and lower subscription rates. Due to shifting demographics, many of these organizations are experiencing audience changes that were predicted prior to the pandemic. It is important that they reconsider and adapt their business plans to address these changing conditions.
- The Seattle Center is host to approx. 30 arts, culture, and educational organizations in its facilities and other City-owned facilities, such as Benaroya Hall, are managed by large nonprofit organizations that are struggling to adapt to new operating conditions. In addition, these

organizations are important employers of the creative workforce. Significant investments are needed to assist these organizations in their pivots and the City must consider policy questions regarding its role and investments in these organizations. In order to address these questions, the Seattle Center will be participating in the upcoming cultural planning process.

-
- Smaller, BIPOC led organizations and enterprises, on the other hand, are experiencing audience growth, a demand for their programming, and a need for cultural space. These organizations need stabilization through strategic investments that build capacity, leadership, and assist in organizational development. It is important that the City also supports these organizations in their growth and development.
- Based on my previous work evaluating and reporting on the creative economy in Minneapolis, I surfaced serious economic disparities in employment and pay for BIPOC creatives. The Minneapolis Creative Index was a biannual report that measured the scope and scale of the creative sector, identified weaknesses, and tracked progress. I believe the role of government in supporting Seattle's creative sector should be to address sector weaknesses. In order to build targeted programs, we need specific data sets from reliable sources that are disaggregated by race and gender. We also need to develop an asset map of our creative ecosystem so we can better understand where our assets are located and how that impacts the relative health and development of the sector. We need to add to our knowledge through qualitative data on the creative economy through interviews with individuals, groups, and players in the creative ecosystem to better understand the specific issues faced by creative individuals and organizations. ARTS will work with our partners in the Office of Economic Development (OED) to understand the methodology of past creative economy reports and the existing services provided by OED that are targeted for creative sector support. Our goal will be to build on and complement the work established by OED.

3. What do you see as the primary challenges facing the department of Arts and Culture? How do you plan to overcome these challenges?

The following primary challenges face the Office of Arts and Culture:

- Staffing instability and stress – I joined the office with 37% of staff positions either vacant or filled by temporary staff, which has resulted in inconsistency and instability. There have been frequent transitions in and out of positions and long-term vacancies, causing program impacts and workload stress for existing staff. To overcome these challenges, I am working to stabilize our workforce by prioritizing hiring positions that will support and ease staff workload. I and my team are also embarking on an internal strategic planning process in 2024 with the first phase of this effort focused on the office's mission, vision, and values as well as cultural investments and operational needs. The strategic plan will allow the office to stabilize our operations by identifying our priorities and goals for program evaluation, development, and support. One key deliverable of this process will be a staffing plan for the office to provide proper structure for our programs and guide ARTS hiring and job classifications.
- Erosion of arts grants investments - the impact of ARTS community investments has been eroding over time without new money for grants to combat rising prices and historic inflation. To

overcome this challenge ARTS secured additional dollars in the 2024 budget as a first step towards addressing this issue, but the state of funding to ARTS' grant programs are an ongoing policy issue. It is important that these resources be made available to community organizations through our competitive funding programs. The Office of Arts & Culture looks to continue dialogue on this issue with Executive leadership and City Council partners through the Council action ARTS-801S-A-2, requesting that ARTS develop a strategic planning framework for the Arts and Culture Fund, which will guide future investments through competitive applications.

4. The city provides important support for arts organizations. What are your thoughts on how the city can better support *individual* artists and creatives?

- As already noted, the City has a role to play in developing policies and programs in support of creative gig workers. It is important that these policies seek to mitigate the precarious nature of gig employment and provide adequate supports for creative workers. One avenue available to the City is to work with our state and federal partners on policies that impact the creative, gig workforce. ARTS has access to advocacy organizations such as Americans for the Arts which work at the federal level to promote policies for creative workers and nonprofit arts organizations. We can also partner with OIR on identifying policies and federal programs that can support creative gig workers.
- Also mentioned above in my answer to question 2, to better support individual artists and creatives, the City must have detailed information on the creative workforce, which is why we need access to qualitative and quantitative data disaggregated by race and gender. It is important that we understand how many artists live and work in Seattle and the region, the demographic composition of occupations within the creative workforce and the hourly pay of each occupation. We must also understand how Seattle's workforce performs against the national average on employment and pay. This information will help us to understand the gender and racial composition of Seattle's workforce as well as which communities have access to employment opportunities, which are earning livable wages and which will need government intervention or support. That information will guide our future investments to ensure equitable access for both organizations *and* individual artists and creatives.

Executive and Staff Management

5. What strategies have you employed in the past to build cohesive and effective teams within arts and culture organizations?

In the past, I have used the following strategies to build cohesive and effective teams:

- Develop collaborative goal setting to create buy-in on policies and programs;
- Set clear guidelines and expectations for organizational behavior and expect managers to reinforce these by through example;
- Guide management to work collaboratively with the staff to foster a supportive culture that emphasizes employee engagement through trust, respect, accountability, and clear understanding of the office's defined goals and business objectives;

- Ensure management demonstrates respect and trust of employee's knowledge and expertise by including them in important decision-making processes, especially those that impact them;
- Empower employees to achieve results through delegating responsibility and decision making;
- Use effective change management practices to implement necessary changes such as goal setting, developing a change management plan, communication strategy, setting up KPIs etc;
- Develop a system for recognizing and rewarding good work;
- Support employee professional development.

6. How do you plan to promote a supportive and inclusive environment for staff members from diverse backgrounds within Seattle's Department of Arts and Culture?

- Upon arriving at this office, I've been impressed with the level of inclusion and engagement demonstrated by ARTS program managers for their staff. It is my intention to continue to support these practices and our programming by using data to support decisions and by informing our decisions through the lived experience and professional expertise of our staff. As noted above in my answers to question 5, I will continue to empower and support staff members from all backgrounds to ensure they are involved in decisions that impact them and that their voices are heard.
- The Arts Office is a collaborative team of 41 staff members. In alignment with the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative, we work to eliminate institutional racism in our programs, policies, and practices. ARTS has a long history of commitment to this anti-racist work practice that centers the creativity and leadership of people of color - those most impacted by structural racism - to move toward more equitable systems. As such, it is important to me that our management team reflect these principles, which is why I have chosen to hire a new Deputy Director for ARTS through an open application process that includes participation by staff at all levels of service. I have also strategically moved our Race and Social Justice staff position into the evaluation and policy development team with the goal to ensure that our commitment to anti-racist systems change is consistent both inside our office and in our external work.

7. What is your organizational management approach? How will you review internal operations and promote employee training and growth opportunities? What is your leadership approach?

- I have a democratic or participatory approach to organizational management and would classify my leadership approach as 'servant leadership'.
- While I recognize that there is a clear organizational hierarchy and chain of command, I also welcome feedback and input from staff at all levels.
- I encourage shared decision making, collaboration and teamwork. I am open to and encourage communication and follow an open-door policy for all staff to encourage feedback, questions, and concerns.
- I delegate tasks and decisions when necessary and prefer to gather ideas and feedback from employees before I make important decisions that will impact staff.
- My goal is to support our experienced and talented staff by encouraging their creativity and initiative and supporting opportunities for employee growth and training. I have already taken a step in this direction by reinstating funding for staff development in the 2024 budget.
- I plan to review operations by first developing a strategic plan for the office in 2024. This document will identify internal priorities and set up our business planning process which will

involve developing program goals and workplans. This process will also deliver a staffing plan and other key documents to support internal operations.

- Finally, I also plan to fill the vacant Operations Manager position who will work within the finance team to ensure effective coordination and decision making.

Race and Social Justice

8. Given your initiatives in Minneapolis, how do you intend to address racial and social equity gaps within Seattle's arts and cultural landscape?

- In Minneapolis I developed initiatives to address racial disparities in creative workforce employment and pay by researching the creative sector through a racial equity lens. Using qualitative and quantitative data disaggregated by race and gender, I was able to surface racial disparities and recommend policies and programs that support BIPOC creative workers. As mentioned above, I also plan to use qualitative and quantitative disaggregated data to surface racial and social equity gaps within Seattle's arts and cultural landscape so that City resources can be targeted for specific communities.
- In 2016, I led the development of the *Creative City RoadMap*, a 10-year plan that provides a unified and equitable vision for arts and cultural development in Minneapolis. The plan was recognized by the Journal for Urban Affairs for its diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) goals. The Journal researched the cultural plans of 64 cities and selected Minneapolis along with 3 other municipalities for their DEI goals. The planning process for the Creative City Roadmap centered racial equity in a number of ways:
 - included extensive artist led community engagement with the specific intention of reaching underserved, underrepresented communities.
 - worked closely with Voices for Racial Justice, a nonprofit anti-racist policy and advocacy organization, to analyze our survey data and recommend policies that center racial equity.
 - engaged approx. 1,750 artists and 150 arts organizations, this process surfaced racial disparities in Minneapolis' creative landscape.
 - disaggregated our data by race to better understand the needs of different communities. This information then guided the city's policies and investment strategies to support BIPOC creative workers and enterprises.
- I intend to center racial equity in Seattle's planning process and utilize similar artist led engagement processes with the intention of reaching underserved, underrepresented communities. We will engage and work with communities, organizations and consultants whose mission and practices center anti-racist policies and processes.

9. What actionable steps do you propose to ensure equitable access to arts funding and resources for marginalized communities in Seattle?

- ARTS annually manages a number of grant programs for cultural organizations, artists, and arts programming to ensure equitable access to cultural opportunities, spur neighborhood economic development and support Seattle's creative sector. Revenues for cultural investments come from the Arts and Culture Fund (admissions tax revenues). As noted above, these revenues have been

eroding over time without new money for grants to combat rising prices and historic inflation. To overcome this challenge ARTS has secured additional dollars in the 2024 budget as a first step to addressing the problem and will be engaging elected officials in policy discussions to solve this problem.

- In 2023, ARTS' signature grants supported 275 arts and cultural organizations and 106 individual artists. ARTS is recognized nationally as a leader in creating some of the most inclusive, racially equitable, and innovative grant processes. These processes ensure that public investments support all the communities within the region, especially those that have been historically excluded or under resourced. ARTS' grant processes are more than investments, they are tools that have been instrumental in inspiring the local arts and cultural sector to act in more anti-racist ways such as hiring more BIPOC artists and administrators, examining pay structures through an equity lens and representing a broader diversity of stories and voices in presentations and artistic seasons, and advocating with and for the great diversity of communities throughout our city. It is my intention to continue to support these innovative grants by ensuring and increasing our grant revenues.
- The cultural planning process will provide an important access point for influencing policy decisions for arts organizations and creative workers. To ensure equitable outcomes it is important that the groundwork is laid with equitable policies. As the cultural plan will be the City's primary arts policy document it will be important that the process reach all communities, especially those that have been historically marginalized. My experience leading a cultural planning process that center racial equity will drive the structure of the work I lead in Seattle and will include extensive artist led community engagement with the specific intention of reaching underserved, underrepresented communities.

10. Can you discuss specific programs or strategies you've implemented in the past to ensure equitable access to arts funding and resources?

- A key element of ensuring equitable access to funding and resources involves laying the groundwork for equitable outcomes by establishing equitable policies. These policies must be based on sound research, a diversity of community voice and disaggregated data so that programming developed from these policies can be targeted to communities that are underserved, excluded, and experiencing disparities.
- Next, it is important to develop specific, targeted marketing campaigns that focus on access to funding and resources. My former office in Minneapolis regularly targeted our work to specific audiences for example, for the *Business Support Fund for Creatives*, we targeted small creative businesses and enterprises with revenues under \$250,000 and owned or operated by Black, Indigenous People of Color. Our campaign included:
 - Direct marketing to local creative enterprises through our newsletter and social media using our CRM data base.
 - Leveraging social networks through our partners Springboard for the Arts, Juxtaposition Arts and Artspace.
 - We strategically partnered with the Mayor's office on the Black Business Week initiative to amplify our offerings, application clinics and information sessions.

- We hosted on-line information sessions that were recorded and posted publicly and also sent these recordings directly to all who signed up to attend.
- We marketed availability of translation services for all of our public events and had staff and contractors available to provide translation if needed.
- Finally, the team implementing this work were selected for their cultural competency. This was to ensure that all parts of our processes were intentional and welcoming to the communities we were striving to serve.

With these strategies we surpassed our target for applications by 50% and our open rate and click through onto our newsletter to the website increased by 30%. The processes managed by ARTS are targeted to support all the communities within the region and especially those that have been historically excluded or under resourced. I am working with our program managers to identify funding gaps and learn more about how to increase our reach to underserved communities.

Community Engagement

11. How do you plan to engage various communities across Seattle, particularly those historically underserved, in participatory arts and cultural programs? How do you intend to build long-term, sustainable relationships with local communities, ensuring their active involvement in shaping cultural initiatives?

- As a newcomer to Seattle, I recognize the importance of learning about and building relationships with local communities. As I have received many invitations for meetings from a wide variety of organizations and individuals, I have worked with staff to develop a priority list of organizations and individuals for ARTS. This list focuses on relationship building with organizations that serve historically underserved communities, and I have already begun the process by setting up meetings and inviting key staff members to participate in and facilitate these meetings.
- Community engagement in the cultural planning process will be another key method for connecting with and developing long-term relationships with local communities, especially those that are historically underserved in arts and cultural programs.
- Community engagement was an important factor of my work in Minneapolis and, as already noted, I led the cultural planning process for Minneapolis that featured innovative and extensive artist led community engagement with specific strategies designed to reach underserved, underrepresented communities. This process ensured active community involvement in shaping policies that led to cultural initiatives, and also to long-term sustainable relationships with my office.
- The Seattle Arts Commission is a partner to ARTS and provides important community oversight over our programs and initiatives. As noted in question 13, I plan to rebuild SAC membership and develop their capacity to be collaborate on the cultural planning process.

12. Could you provide examples of successful community-driven arts initiatives you've facilitated in the past and how you envision replicating or adapting them in Seattle?

- In 2013 I partnered with Intermedia Arts, a community-based nonprofit arts organization, to collaboratively develop Creative CityMaking (CCM) an artist-in-residence cross sector collaboration. The program paired staff in City departments with experienced community artists to advance the City's goal of eliminating economic and racial disparities. CCM developed new arts-based, field-tested approaches that engage traditionally underrepresented communities and stimulate innovative thinking and practices in government processes. By 2020, CCM embedded 22 artists into 9 City departments to address racial disparities in voter engagement, city planning processes, housing inspections, Census data collection, digital access, and environmental justice. I intend to replicate and offer this model to City of Seattle departments to assist them in engaging underserved communities. ARTS has an artist in residency program what would need to be adapted into the Creative CityMaking model.
- In 2020 I developed the *Creative Response Fund*, a program investing in artists that provide healing for marginalized communities traumatized by racism following the murder of George Floyd. The program responded to ongoing community needs for healing arising from the pandemic and civil unrest in Minneapolis. It used arts and culture assets to alleviate community stress and trauma arising from racism; and supported community-based artists by providing income opportunities. In 2022 the program funded 150 artists and was operated in partnership with Arts Midwest. Artist-led racial healing is an important aspect of this program, and I am interested in exploring with staff how ARTS can integrate this work into our existing individual artist funding programs such as Hope Core.

13. What do you see is the role of the Arts Commission? How will you work to encourage their growth and their voice?

- As stewards of public resources, it is important that ARTS has public oversight of our policies and work. I see the role of the Seattle Arts Commission as providing that oversight and holding our office accountable to the public and broader creative community.
- The Commission has a considerable number of vacancies – currently operating with only 7 members. When operating at full capacity, the Commission typically has 16 members. As an important first step, I will encourage their growth by working with the Commission to rebuild their membership and bring them up to 16 members.
- The next step in their growth is to build the Commission's capacity by educating them on ARTS programs and procedures and building relationships and trust through working together transparently on areas of mutual concern and interest.
- Finally, I see the Seattle Arts Commission playing an important role as sponsors and partners of the cultural planning process. ARTS will collaborate closely with the Commission to develop our planning process and move our work forward. However, they will need capacity in order to be able to support and participate effectively in this process.

Policy Climate and Enforcement

14. How will you work to navigate and advocate for policies that support the growth and sustainability of Seattle's arts and cultural sector?

- As mentioned above, I believe it is important to provide a clear vision for future investments in the City's arts and culture fund and other resources through a long-term cultural plan. A cultural plan will allow the City to consider policy questions around sustainability of Seattle's arts and cultural sector. It will also allow the broader arts community to participate in developing policies that will guide the city's investments and the creative sector's development for the next 10 years.
- The cultural plan will need to center racial equity and be inclusive, engaging diverse community voices. The engagement and communication plans that will be part of the planning process will drive community alignment around the City's policy priorities. And our success will be measured by the level of community advocacy and support for the policies that are recommended in the plan.

15. What is your general philosophy for how to most effectively work with City Council?

- In general, my philosophy is that to work effectively with the City Council, it is important to have regular communication, engagement and information sharing. This, in my experience, is the cornerstone of developing good working relations with Councilmembers. I plan to have regular meetings with the Chair of the Council committee with Arts & Culture in their portfolio. The goal of these meetings will be to identify and collaborate on areas of shared interest and to provide background and updates on ARTS' key strategies and initiatives.