

Audit Report

# City Cultural Centers

August 2020



Ineffective strategic direction and inefficient operations threaten the City's ability to increase cultural opportunities. The 2018 voter-approved bond funding was allocated without key strategic documents in place for the majority of the cultural centers. Further, bond funding was awarded to a cultural center owned and run by a non-profit even though there are existing maintenance and accessibility issues at City-owned facilities. Additionally, oversight of the cultural centers' operations did not ensure that services were provided effectively to meet community needs.

We also identified various operational issues which impacted the effectiveness of service delivery to the community at cultural centers. We performed a peer city review and found that nonprofits run the majority of similar City-owned centers, and the majority have a department-level arts and culture agency.

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Cover: Exterior of the Asian American Resource Center (top left), Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (top right), African American Cultural and Heritage Facility (bottom right), and George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center. (AACHF photo by OCA staff; other photos courtesy PARD)

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## Objective

Is the City effectively operating and planning for future space needs of the Asian American Resource Center; Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center; George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center; and African American Cultural and Heritage Facility?

Does the City's governance of City-owned centers align with national best practices?

This audit was requested by Council through Council Resolution No. 20190619-086. The Heritage facility was not specifically identified in the resolution, but was included in the audit since the facility is a cultural center.

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## Background

The City of Austin is dedicated to ensuring that people in Austin are enriched by Austin's unique civic, cultural, ethnic, and learning opportunities. To support achievement of this objective, the Austin City Council in March 2018 set "Culture and Lifelong Learning" as one of its six Strategic Direction 2023 priority outcomes to guide the City for the next three to five years.

Currently, the City owns and operates cultural centers that are dedicated to specific cultures. Cultural centers provide a variety of affordable and accessible cultural arts activities and resources for all members of the community. Exhibit 1 shows the governance structures and missions for these centers.

**Exhibit 1: City of Austin Cultural Centers' governance structures and missions**

|   | Asian American Resource Center  | Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center   | George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center   | African American Cultural and Heritage Facility   |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| Facility opened                                 | 2013  | 2007  | 1980   | 2013  |
| Facility managed and operated by                | Parks and Recreation Department   | Parks and Recreation Department   | Parks and Recreation Department  | Economic Development Department   |
| City boards and commissions involved (advisory) | Asian American Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission   | Mexican American Cultural Center Advisory Board, Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission | African American Resource Advisory Commission  | African American Resource Advisory Commission   |
| Mission   | To provide spaces, services, resources, and programs through an Asian American Pacific Islander perspective | To preserve, create, present, and promote the cultural arts of Mexican Americans and Latino cultures          | To collect, preserve, and share historical and cultural materials reflecting all dimensions of experiences of persons of African descent living in Austin, Travis County, and in the United States | To foster cultural activities, business opportunities, and creative collaboration within the African American community |
| Activities/services                             | Community events, facility rentals, programs  | Community events, facility rentals, programs  | Community events, facility rentals, programs, museum, genealogy center   | Community events, facility rentals, marketing and outreach  |

SOURCE: OCA analysis of City of Austin Cultural Centers, May 2020

**Exhibit 2: City of Austin Cultural Centers' fiscal year 2019 operating budgets and funding sources**

|                         | Asian American Resource Center  | Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center          | George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center                                    | African American Cultural and Heritage Facility               |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Operating budget FY2019 | \$ 1,186,277  | \$ 1,562,145   | \$ 1,253,302  | \$275,625   |
| Funding sources         | General fund, Parkland Dedication fund, voter-approved bonds, Hotel Occupancy Tax (Artist Access) | General fund, Parkland Dedication fund, voter-approved bonds | General fund, Parkland Dedication fund, voter-approved bonds, Hotel Occupancy Tax (Artist Access) | Economic Development Fund, voter-approved bond, federal funds |

SOURCE: OCA analysis of City of Austin Cultural Centers, May 2020

In the City's 2019 community survey, 41% of respondents who provided an opinion said they "strongly agree" or "agree" that Austin is a place that honors and preserves their personal heritage. Also, 73% of respondents indicated they were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the quality of the City of Austin's cultural and learning facilities.

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# What We Found

## Summary

Ineffective strategic direction and inefficient operations threaten the City's mission to increase cultural opportunities. The 2018 voter-approved bond funding was allocated without key strategic documents in place for the majority of the cultural centers. Further, bond funding was awarded to a cultural center owned and run by a non-profit even though there are existing maintenance and accessibility issues at City-owned facilities. Additionally, oversight of the cultural centers' operations did not ensure that services were provided effectively to meet community needs. We also identified various operational issues which impacted the effectiveness of service delivery to the community at cultural centers, including:

- potential misalignment of operations, barriers to using facilities, and inadequate transportation options;
- ineffective management of PARD's program planning process;
- inaccurate and unreliable data used to determine success of services;
- non-compliance with Council-approved fees;
- security issues with a Parks and Recreation IT system; and,
- not fully training staff in customer service and cultural competency.

A peer city review found that nonprofits run the majority of similar City-owned centers and the majority have a department-level arts and culture agency.

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## Finding 1

The City has not consistently planned for current and future space needs of the cultural centers, impacting the City's ability to strategically allocate bond funding. This threatens the City's mission to increase cultural opportunities.

Best practices recommend that organizations that own or manage facilities should do strategic facility planning. Organizations should identify the type, quantity, and location of spaces needed to fully support its initiatives.

A center's master plan provides a roadmap for facilities, including improvement, renovation, replacement, and new construction to address the needs and goals of an organization. Best practices recommend that organizations should update their master plans periodically to reflect current needs.

Only the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center had an updated master plan when the 2018 voter-approved bond funding was allocated by City Council. At the time, the City was in the process of updating the Asian American Resource Center master plan. Some of the funding from the 2018 voter-approved bonds was allocated to address issues in the master plans of these two PARD centers.

However, the George Washington Carver Museum—the oldest of the centers in this report—did not have an updated master plan. Bond funding was provided to this facility for existing maintenance needs, master plan updates, and facility needs that will be identified in the master plan process. In addition, no master plan has been developed for the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility.

Bond funding was awarded to an outside entity even though there are existing maintenance and accessibility issues at City owned facilities.

PARD staff's initial request for 2018 voter-approved bonds did not include funding for the cultural centers in this audit. The Bond Election Advisory Task Force added dedicated funding for each center in its recommendation to Council. The Council-directed allocation later added \$2 million for the Asian American Resource Center and \$12 million for the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center. PARD management asserted that having an advisory board dedicated solely to the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center gives it an advantage over other cultural centers regarding funding.

**Exhibit 3: Cultural Center funding from 2018 voter-approved bonds\***

| Facility   | Bond Task Force Recommendation | Allocated bond funds |
|--|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Asian American Resource Center                                 | \$5 million                    | \$7 million          |
| Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center            | \$15 million                   | \$27 million         |
| George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center | \$7.5 million                  | \$7.5 million        |
| African American Cultural and Heritage Facility                | No funds recommended           | No funds allocated   |

\*The City Council allocated \$15 million for the rehabilitation of the Mexic-Arte Museum. Refer to the Mexic-Arte Contract Monitoring Audit for more details.

SOURCE: OCA analysis of the 2018 voter-approved funding reports, February 2020

Without an updated master plan, it is difficult to accurately articulate a facility's improvement needs. PARD staff noted that the City allocated \$7.5 million to the George Washington Carver Museum, but the City did not have detailed plans on how and where that funding was going to be used. PARD management is responsible for ensuring master plans are created or updated for the three PARD cultural centers.

During this audit, PARD staff indicated that the City would have an up-to-date master plan for the George Washington Carver Museum in the near future. In the fiscal year 2019 budget, Council allocated \$300,000 from the General Fund to develop this plan. PARD hired a consultant with approval from Council to spearhead this project and has begun engaging residents by using allocations from both the General Fund and Bond Funds.

For the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility, stakeholders and some respondents, from the survey of community members conducted during this audit, expressed concerns that the facility spaces are too small for the community to use.<sup>1</sup> The City has not developed a master plan to identify current and future space needs of the facility, and this facility has not received any money from 2018 voter-approved bonds.

<sup>1</sup> We conducted a cultural center community survey as part of this audit to get community feedback on various topics. See Appendix A for the results.



## Finding 2

The City has not timely addressed accessibility and maintenance issues at centers, which could result in injury to patrons and increased maintenance costs in the future.

It is critical to maintain the cultural centers' infrastructure to effectively provide services to the community. In fiscal year 2016, PARD identified compliance issues with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)<sup>2</sup> at the three PARD-managed centers. PARD also identified maintenance needs for the facilities in fiscal year 2019. However, PARD has faced challenges in funding these identified needs in a timely manner.

For the 2018 bond election, the Bond Election Advisory Task Force observed very poor maintenance at PARD-maintained facilities, highlighting the Carver Museum in particular. The Task Force recommended a significant increase in the maintenance budget for PARD facilities.

**Exhibit 4: Estimated costs of deferred ADA and maintenance needs at centers**

|   | Asian American Resource Center | Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center | George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center |
|---|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Number of outstanding ADA-related maintenance items                     | 3                              | 4   | 13   |
| Total estimated or quoted for outstanding ADA-related maintenance items | \$3,550                        | \$2,800   | \$23,100   |
| Number of maintenance items identified                                  | 1                              | 8   | 42   |
| Total estimated or quoted for outstanding maintenance items             | At least \$150                 | At least \$380,400*                                 | At least \$700,866**   |

\* Total represents 6 of the 8 open maintenance items. As of May 2020, there are no cost estimates for the remaining 2 items.

\*\* Total represents 5 of the 42 open maintenance items. As of May 2020, there are no cost estimates for the remaining 37 open maintenance items.

SOURCE: OCA analysis of Parks and Recreation Department's ADA and maintenance reports, May 2020

### Identified ADA issues and maintenance needs have not been addressed timely due to insufficient funding.

PARD hired a new ADA compliance coordinator in December 2019. PARD staff indicated that simple repairs will be addressed by the end of Summer 2020. However, there is no timeline established for addressing many of the remaining issues identified in 2016.

At the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center, six maintenance issues were identified by PARD staff with an estimated cost of \$380,400 in July 2019. The majority of these costs are associated with two 80-ton chillers that need replacement. While none of the eight issues have been addressed, PARD management stated that these issues will be addressed as resources become available. There is no timeline for when these repairs will be completed.

The maintenance and accessibility issues at the cultural centers may result in the community believing that the City does not care about maintaining its facilities.

<sup>2</sup> According to the US Department of Labor, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in several areas, including employment, transportation, public accommodations, communications and access to state and local government programs and services.

At the George Washington Carver Museum, there are 42 items in need of maintenance or repair as of a maintenance report update in May 2020. According to the report, there are an additional 10 items under construction. The report has cost estimates for 5 of the open construction items totaling \$700,866 including replacement of the HVAC system, masonry, and electrical work. No timeline has been set for when the remaining issues will be addressed.

The City has allocated 2018 voter-approved bond funding for facility improvements at the Asian American Resource Center, Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center, and the George Washington Carver Museum. According to PARD staff, a portion of this funding will be used to address some of the existing facility maintenance issues at these centers. During this audit, PARD staff did not have a report to show how many issues or when they will be addressed.

PARD's inability to address ADA compliance and maintenance needs appears to be due to inadequate staffing and insufficient funding from the City. PARD management, center management, and community stakeholders agreed that maintenance issues have not been funded properly.

At the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility, the City's Building Services Department does an inspection of the facility every five years to identify maintenance needs. We found that ongoing maintenance projects were aligned with identified maintenance needs and funded by 2006 bond money. However, we observed maintenance issues not reflected on the list of current projects such as interior ceiling damage from a water leak. In addition, respondents to our community survey stated that flooring in the dance studio needs repair or replacement.

The slow response to center maintenance needs may result in injury to patrons and increased future maintenance costs due to neglect. In addition, community stakeholders may perceive that the City does not care about maintaining its cultural centers.

## Finding 3

Multiple constraints prevent centers from fully using the available space, and the way centers track usage limits their ability to assess and report this data.

Each cultural center has spaces available for community and staff use, but the types of space and amount of use varies among centers. However, the community is limited from using space at cultural centers by current operating hours, missing information on center websites, and facility issues preventing full use of community space. Also, the centers do not effectively track space usage, which affects staffing and other resource decisions.

### Available space and usage vary among centers.

Each center has various types of spaces available for use. Center staff can schedule the use of these spaces for educational programming<sup>3</sup> and rentals to the community.

**Exhibit 5: Each center has various types and amount of spaces available for use**

| Room Type     | Asian American Resource Center  | Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center                        | George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center | African American Cultural and Heritage Facility |
|---------------|---|--|--|---|
| Square Feet   | 16,000  | 34,000   | 39,000   | 4,770   |
| Ballroom      | Ballroom  | None   | None   | None  |
| Theater       | None  | Black Box Auditorium   | Theater  | None  |
| Meeting Room  | Conference Room<br>Meeting Room 1*<br>Meeting Room 3<br>Meeting Room 4<br>Meeting Room 5<br>Meeting Room 6<br>Meeting Room 8* | Conference Room<br>Library Music Room<br>Visual Arts Room<br>Raul Salinas* | Conference Room<br>Classroom*<br>Memory/Orientation Room       | Production/Meeting Room                         |
| Outside Space | Great Lawn  | North Lawn<br>Zocalo   | Front Plaza<br>Freedom Plaza                                   | Courtyard                                       |
| Computer Lab  | Computer Lab  | Media Lab  | None   | Computer Lab                                    |
| Lobby         | Foyer (can also be meeting room)  | Lobby  | Lobby  | None  |
| Dance Studio  | None  | Dance Studio   | Dance Studio   | Dance Studio                                    |
| Exhibit Rooms | None  | Community Gallery<br>Sam Z. C. Gallery                                     | Gallery  | Dedrick-Hamilton House**                        |
| Kitchen       | Commercial Kitchen  | Commercial Kitchen   | Commercial Kitchen   | Kitchen***                                      |
| Other         | Zen Garden  | None   | Genealogy Center, Store  | None  |

\*Denotes community room that is available to rent for free

\*\*The City leased out this space to the Greater Austin Black Chamber of Commerce.

\*\*\* AACHF's kitchen is more like a break room and is not required to be reserved for use.

SOURCE: OCA analysis of Parks and Recreation Department's and EDD websites, fee schedules, and RecTrac reservation data, February 2020

<sup>3</sup> Educational programming is both programs developed by cultural center staff and through partnerships with external organizations using collaborations and co-sponsorships.



Staff at each center use Microsoft Outlook to schedule and manage center reservations. We analyzed this Outlook calendar data<sup>4</sup> to determine when and how often each space was used. Usage includes use by staff for meetings and trainings, educational programming, and rentals to the community. Exhibit 6 below shows the number of days each space was used in fiscal year 2019 according to our analysis.

Exhibit 6: Usage varies greatly by room at cultural centers



Number of Days Room is NOT Used    Number of Days Room is Used    Number of Closed Days

NOTE: The horizontal line on the bar graphs for the AARC, ESB-MACC, and the GWC indicate there were 63 scheduled closed days in fiscal year 2019 (52 Sundays and 11 City holidays). The horizontal line on the AACHF bar graph indicates it was closed 115 days in fiscal year 2019 (104 weekend days and 11 city holidays).

SOURCE: OCA analysis of available space at each center, March 2020.

Our analysis shows that certain spaces are used almost daily at each center while other spaces are used less. Rehearsal, performance, and meeting rooms appear to have the highest amount of use. Some are used almost every day the center is open. However, outdoor spaces and kitchens appear to be the least used spaces across all four centers.

<sup>4</sup> During our analysis, we identified minor issues with the completeness of exported Outlook data.

### Space constraints limit center usage.

Constraints limit how much the spaces at each center can be used. These include potential misalignment of operating hours, incomplete facility information on center websites, and limitations related to the buildings themselves.

Centers have significant usage outside normal hours, potentially increasing staffing costs and presenting liability risks.

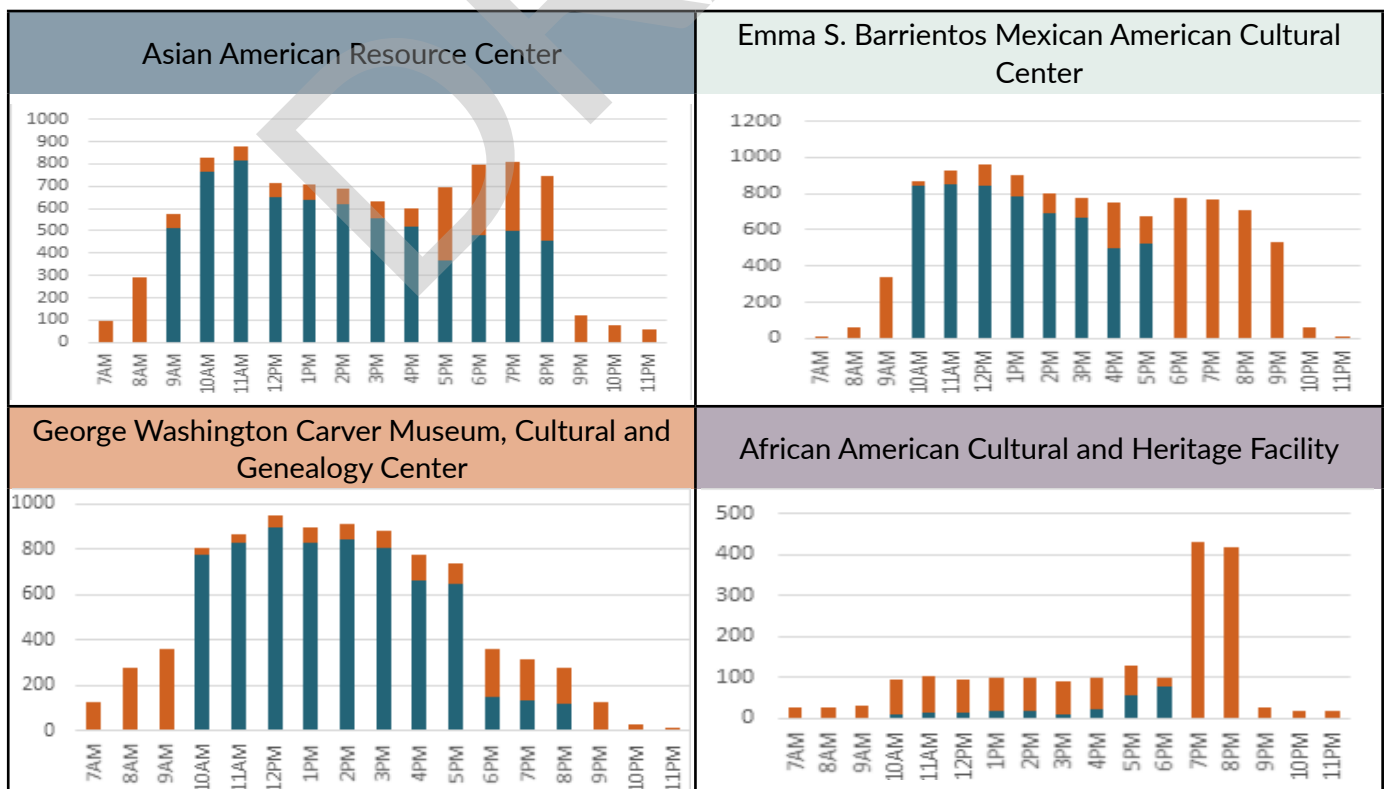
All four cultural centers have different operating hours. While most cultural center educational programming aligns with each center's regular operating hours, some programming extends into evening and weekend hours. In addition, the cultural centers allow external rentals to occur outside regular business hours and on days when the facility is regularly closed.

Our analysis found that at least one-fifth of center usage occurred outside normal business hours at each of the centers. For the centers reviewed for this report:

- the George Washington Carver Museum showed the least amount of usage outside of regular business hours at 22%;
- the Asian American Resource Center was next with 27%;
- the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center had 43% of usage occurring outside normal hours; and
- the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility had 88% of its usage occurring outside operating hours.

**Exhibit 7: At least one-fifth of center usage occurred outside normal business hours**

■ Number of Times Used Outside of Operating Hours ■ Number of Times Used Within Operating Hours



SOURCE: OCA analysis of FY19 Outlook calendar data, March 2020

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Not closely aligning center operating hours with community use, may cost the City and users more and decrease opportunities for use.

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Centers may not efficiently use staffing resources if they are required to staff centers after normal operating hours. After-hour rental fees attempt to capture the approximate cost to staff the facility after it closes, but some rent-free programming with external organizations and community use takes place after hours. For example, the Latino Artist Access Program (LAAP) may require staffing the facility without charging rental fees since this program allows artist free rehearsal and performance space at various sites across the city. Not closely aligning center operating hours with community use, may cost the City and users more and decrease opportunities for use.

Additionally, the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility grants users access to the facility without staff present. This could pose a liability risk to the City.

Some spaces are not listed on center websites, which may reduce community use.

Each center has its own website to display unique information for the facility and available space for rent. However, we compared spaces listed on the website to all the available rental spaces. Some spaces available for rent were not listed on two centers' websites:

- the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center's website does not include the north lawn or the kitchen; and,
- the George Washington Carver Museum's website does not include the gallery, genealogy center, or lawn.

Community members may not know of space availability or associated rental costs if spaces are not listed on the center websites. This may reduce the usage of center space and prevent the community from fully utilizing the center as a resource.

Facility limitations may prevent full use of community space.

At the Asian American Resource Center during fiscal year 2019:

- two meeting rooms were converted to office and storage space when staff was added; and,
- the Great Lawn lacked equipment such as tables<sup>5</sup> and currently does not have electrical service.

At the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center:

- some adjacent rooms cannot be used at the same time due to spillover noise;
- some staff are working out of windowed, converted storage areas because there is a lack of office space; and,
- there are limited rooms appropriate for holding rehearsals.

At the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility:

- the Courtyard is only available for use at certain times to prevent spillover noise; and,

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<sup>5</sup> In FY20 the Asian American Resource Center received picnic tables for the Great Lawn.

- EDD management indicated that the Dedrick-Hamilton House at the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility is not being used effectively. Management attributed this to the dissolution of an organization that was supposed to partner in managing the House. EDD management said they are working to amend the original lease agreement so that EDD manages the House.

Some of these issues appear to be addressed in master plans for the Asian American Resource Center and the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center.

### **Cultural Center staff do not effectively track space usage, limiting analysis of this data**

Cultural centers staff do not effectively track space use. The data staff collects is incomplete and unable to fully inform staff and resource allocation decisions. Staff do not fully use reservation software and they inconsistently track reservation requests and denials by center.

Reservation software is underutilized, limiting data's usefulness in deciding staffing levels and other resource use.

Staff at PARD-managed facilities use a software system called RecTrac to make some facility reservations. Additionally, staff use Outlook to reserve space for both educational programming and external rentals. External rentals include fee-based rentals by other City departments and external organizations, as well as free use of the space by the community. Staff at the EDD-managed African American Cultural and Heritage Facility use Outlook calendars to keep track of space reservations instead of RecTrac.

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Staff are not effectively using RecTrac to track all reservations.

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While RecTrac is the primary facility reservation tool, staff do not enter all reservations into RecTrac. At all three PARD-managed centers, only external reservations and rentals are captured in RecTrac. Centers do not enter their own educational programming into RecTrac. The Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center and George Washington Carver Museum were not consistently using RecTrac to track all types of rentals. Staff did not always document when City departments rented space at the center or when external organizations reserved free community rooms. Without tracking free rentals, centers cannot easily calculate the total benefit they bring to the community.

Staff use Outlook calendars to track all planned facility uses because they are not entering all information into RecTrac. However, space use analysis in Outlook is cumbersome and incomplete. RecTrac's incomplete information and Outlook's limited analysis capability hinder staff's ability to use data when deciding how best to use staff and other resources.

Staff do not consistently track reservation request denials, limiting the ability to determine how many requests were received and granted.

The Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center, the George Washington Carver Museum, and the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility did not systematically track space use requests and denials. The Asian American Resource Center tracked denials and reported denying 55 requests in fiscal year 2019. At the Asian American Resource

Center, the top four reasons for denial were:

- the requesting organization changed their plans (29%);
- space at the Asian American Resource Center was already booked (24%);
- the requesting organization did not respond to follow-up contact (15%); and
- requesting organizations did not continue with the reservation due to rental price (11%).

Because staff at the three other centers did not systematically track denials, we could not determine the number of community requests the various centers received or reasons for denial.

## Finding 4

Barriers impact accessibility at cultural centers, which could lead to reduced community use.

Rental fees are considered less affordable by the community.

The Imagine Austin plan outlines that Austin's buildings and public spaces should be accessible to members of the community. Accessibility includes both the ability to navigate to the center and the ability to participate in programming. We conducted a cultural center survey as part of this audit to get community feedback on various topics. See Appendix A for the results. We sought community members' input on fee affordability, as well as transportation and parking options at relevant centers. Affordability may affect a person's ability to participate in programming and transportation and parking options may affect a person's ability to navigate to the center.

**While the majority of community members believe that fees are affordable, some expressed fee affordability concerns.**

To ensure accessibility, the City needs to price cultural centers' services so that community members can access the centers. The results from our community survey show that the majority people believe fees are affordable. However, there are still many people who either responded neutrally or disagreed that fees are affordable. The survey also shows that rental fees were considered the least affordable of the three types of fees.

**Exhibit 8: The majority of community members believe fees are affordable**

| I think the fees at this center are affordable... |  | Response | AARC | ESB-MACC | GWC |
|---|--|----------|------|----------|-----|
| Q2.a  | ...for renting rooms or spaces.  | Agree    | 56%  | 56%      | 58% |
|   |  | Neutral  | 31%  | 33%      | 29% |
|   |  | Disagree | 13%  | 11%      | 13% |
| Q2.b  | ...for attending performances (e.g. theater, dance, music, or exhibits). | Agree    | 77%  | 85%      | 77% |
|   |  | Neutral  | 19%  | 12%      | 18% |
|   |  | Disagree | 4%   | 4%       | 4%  |
| Q2.c  | ...for attending programs and classes (e.g. camps).                      | Agree    | 72%  | 75%      | 68% |
|   |  | Neutral  | 24%  | 20%      | 26% |
|   |  | Disagree | 5%   | 5%       | 6%  |

NOTE: Totals for questions may sum up to more than 100% due to rounding.

SOURCE: OCA analysis of survey results from OCA community survey conducted in January 2020.

Fees may prevent some individuals and organizations from renting space. However, PARD provides opportunities for community members to pay less. Community members can engage in collaborations and co-sponsorships with the center for programming, participate in the

Artist Access Program or the Latino Artist Access Program, or use free community rooms at each center. Additionally, the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility did not charge fees during fiscal year 2019.

**Most community members were generally satisfied with transit options for the GWC and AACHF. Some expressed concerns accessing the AARC and ESB-MACC.**

In order to ensure that the cultural centers are accessible, the City needs to make sure that adequate parking spaces and various transportation options are available at cultural centers for patrons to access the facilities.

According to the community survey conducted for this audit, there is a high level of agreement that the parking options are adequate at George Washington Carver Museum and that this facility is accessible. In addition, there is a route to travel from the road to the center that is wheelchair accessible. For the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility, respondents generally perceive that transportation options are adequate to access the facility. The results of our community survey about the adequacy of parking and transportation options for the Asian American Resource Center and Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center show lower levels of agreement compared to other survey questions.

**Exhibit 9: Survey respondents noted inadequate transportation and parking options at the Asian American Resource Center and Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center**

| This center's... |   | Response | AARC | ESB-MACC | GWC | AACHF |
|------------------|---|----------|------|----------|-----|-------|
| Q4.a             | ...parking options for attending programs and events are adequate.        | Agree    | 53%  | 52%      | 81% | 59%   |
|                  |   | Neutral  | 10%  | 14%      | 8%  | 12%   |
|                  |   | Disagree | 37%  | 34%      | 12% | 29%   |
| Q4.b             | ...transportation options for attending programs and events are adequate. | Agree    | 37%  | 44%      | 60% | 62%   |
|                  |   | Neutral  | 35%  | 30%      | 32% | 23%   |
|                  |   | Disagree | 28%  | 25%      | 9%  | 15%   |

NOTE: Totals for questions may sum up to more than 100% due to rounding.

SOURCE: OCA analysis of survey results from OCA community survey conducted in January 2020

To better serve the community, the City is currently working on addressing concerns about parking spaces at centers and has taken steps to provide various transportation options.

In fiscal year 2019, the Asian American Resource Center used a shuttle system to help bring a limited number of community members to the center. Some stakeholders reported that the shuttle service did not meet the needs of the community. Staff report the Asian American Resource Center is working to combine its current shuttle service with PARD's senior transportation program. Staff said they think this change will better serve community members. Another concern at the Asian American Resource Center is overflow parking at the City's Rutherford campus. Stakeholders noted that overflow parking is often needed, but access between the Asian American Resource Center and overflow parking is inadequate. The Phase II of the Asian American Resource Center Master Plan envisions a pedestrian bridge between the two facilities, but staff report there may not be enough funding to cover this expense.



The Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center faces transportation, parking, and location challenges. There are no bus stops near the center and parking is limited. For large events, the center works with surrounding schools to allow visitor parking, and shuttles are arranged to transport people to and from the center. Also, the center is in downtown Austin. Due to gentrification, the surrounding neighborhood is now largely made up of restaurants and bars, which further increase traffic and reduce accessibility to the center at peak commute times. The City has taken steps to address these concerns by studying how different mobility scenarios and multimodal transportation infrastructure might improve mobility and safety in the area. In spring of 2019, the City conducted a Shared Streets Pilot, which effectively closed the main road near the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center, Rainey Street, to vehicles. The results of this pilot will help guide future plans for the area.

As noted above, the City has not addressed Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance issues. If ADA issues are not addressed timely, community members with disabilities may not be able to access the facility. Also, facility users could be injured, and the City could be liable for related claims.

## Finding 5

PARD has not effectively managed the program planning process at cultural centers. This impacts the accuracy and reliability of program information used in decision-making and results in the duplication of work.

PARD established a formal process to develop programming for the cultural centers in alignment with each center's mission. Programming appears to align with each center's mission. However, we noted inconsistent implementation of the program planning process across the various centers, resulting in inefficiencies and incomplete information for planning purposes.

### Programming appears to align with each center's mission.

We found programming is generally aligned with each center's mission<sup>6</sup> to promote and support the culture of the communities the center serves. The majority of respondents from our community survey perceive that programs offered at each center reflect the center's mission. Cultural center staff plan programming at the three centers within PARD. Programming includes a mixture of performances, art exhibits, summer camps, and many other types of events to meet each center's mission.

**Exhibit 10: Community perceive cultural center programming aligns with center mission**

| The programs at this center have... |   | Response | AARC | ESB-MACC | GWC |
|-------------------------------------|---|----------|------|----------|-----|
| Q1.a                                | ...increased my understanding or knowledge of cultures served by this center. | Agree    | 85%  | 88%      | 86% |
|                                     |   | Neutral  | 9%   | 6%       | 10% |
|                                     |   | Disagree | 6%   | 6%       | 5%  |
| Q1.b                                | ...had a positive impact on my life.  | Agree    | 83%  | 87%      | 87% |
|                                     |   | Neutral  | 12%  | 8%       | 9%  |
|                                     |   | Disagree | 6%   | 5%       | 4%  |
| Q1.d                                | ...reflected the center's mission.  | Agree    | 89%  | 90%      | 88% |
|                                     |   | Neutral  | 8%   | 4%       | 5%  |
|                                     |   | Disagree | 3%   | 5%       | 6%  |

NOTE: Totals for questions may sum up to more than 100% due to rounding.

SOURCE: OCA analysis of survey results from OCA community survey conducted in January 2020.

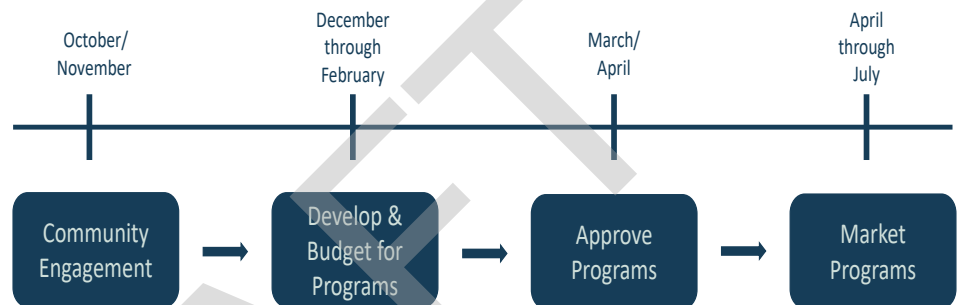
<sup>6</sup> The background section includes the mission for each center

Respondents to our community survey were generally positive about the programming provided by the cultural centers, but some respondents provided suggestions for improvements. The most common suggestion was to increase program offerings and to promote these programs more.

**PARD's process for planning programming is not consistently followed, resulting in duplicative work and missing information for decision-making.**

PARD's process for planning programming includes engaging the community for input, developing programs with this input, balancing PARD's budget, approving programs, and marketing these programs to the community (See Exhibit 11). This audit primarily focused on the first two steps of this process and noted that the process is not implemented effectively by the cultural centers staff.

**Exhibit 11: Parks and Recreation Department Program Planning Process**



SOURCE: OCA analysis of PARD's Program Planning Process for FY19 and FY20, February 2020.

**Community engagement events were not consistently held to inform program planning processes.**

Cultural center staff are responsible for engaging the community annually so community members can share their thoughts about the center's programming for the following year. Based on our review, centers have not consistently held community engagement sessions to gather input for the following year's programming.

**Exhibit 12: Centers have not consistently engaged the community in the program planning process**

| Cultural Center  | Input Event for FY19 Programs ? | Input Event for FY20 Programs? |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Asian American Resource Center                                 | No                              | Yes                            |
| Emma S Barrientos - Mexican American Cultural Center           | No                              | Yes*                           |
| George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center | Yes                             | Yes**                          |

\*The MACC held a community engagement session for FY 2020 program planning, but it only covered the Latino Artist Residency Program.

\*\*George Washington Carver Museum held a community engagement session for FY 2020, but staff only found the meeting notes for the session focused on the theater and not the entire center.

SOURCE: OCA analysis of PARD's Program Planning Process for FY19 and FY20, February 2020.

PARD management said they have focused community engagement

sessions on specific programming areas rather than overall programming to obtain greater feedback from community members. However, only about one-third of respondents to our community survey believe that programs are planned with community input.

**Exhibit 13: One-third of community members believe programming is planned with their input.**

| The programs at this center have... |   | Response | AARC | ESB-MACC | GWC |
|-------------------------------------|---|----------|------|----------|-----|
| Q1.c                                | ...been planned by staff with my input. | Agree    | 36%  | 29%      | 31% |
|                                     |   | Neutral  | 40%  | 36%      | 33% |
|                                     |   | Disagree | 25%  | 35%      | 36% |

NOTE: Totals for questions may sum up to more than 100% due to rounding.

SOURCE: OCA analysis of survey results from OCA community survey conducted in January 2020.

**PARD's program planning process does not provide necessary data for center operations, resulting in multiple tracking documents, duplicate work, and less reliable information.**

PARD directs staff at its various centers to use program planning worksheets to develop and budget for programs every year. These worksheets provide program details and budget information. The worksheets also serve to track information on the program's expenses, attendance, and post-event survey results to provide data for program decision-making.

In fiscal year 2019, cultural center staff did not use the program planning worksheets specified in the PARD operations manual but instead used four different documents to track program and event information. Staff said the Museum and Cultural Programs division manager directed them to use different tracking documents because the program planning worksheets were not specific to cultural centers and lacked necessary information.

For fiscal year 2020 program planning, PARD management directed center staff to use the program planning workbooks in the operations manual. Based on a sample of programs in fiscal year 2020, staff in all three centers are using the workbooks in accordance with the operations manual and management direction. However, staff still use additional tracking documents to capture details on program costs, attendance, and post-event survey results because the workbooks do not provide center-level data.<sup>7</sup> This creates inefficiencies from staff duplicating work and may have also led to data entry errors.

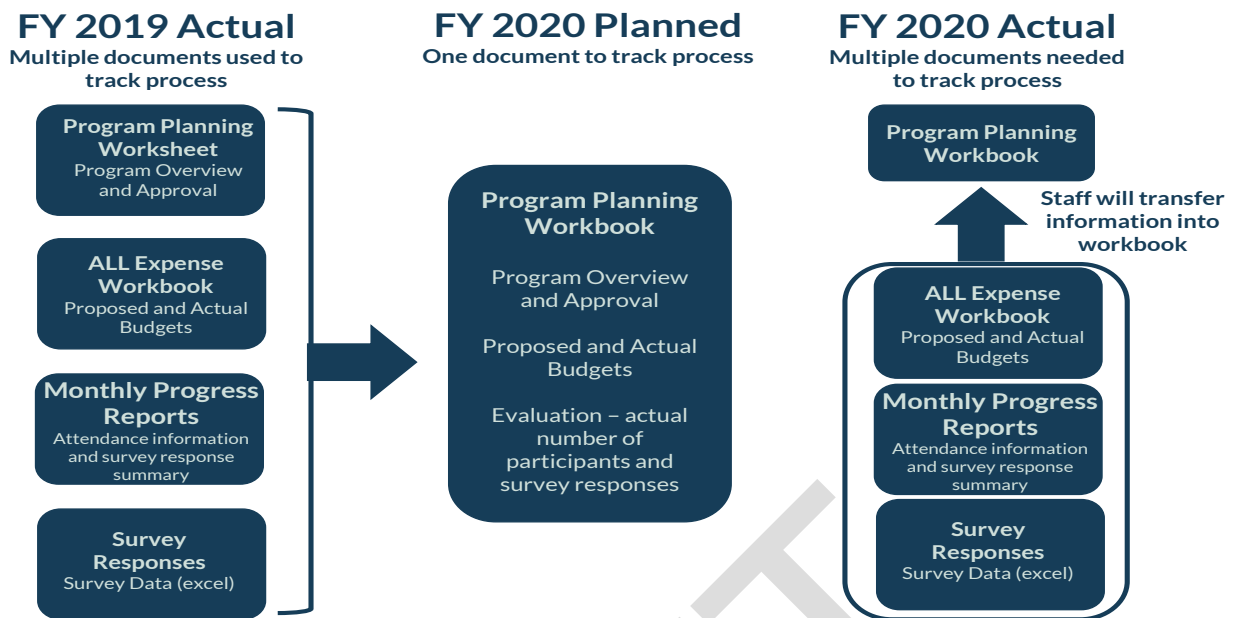
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Program planning worksheets provide information for program decision-making.

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<sup>7</sup> The data from the worksheets is summarized at the division level and not easily available at the center or facility level.

### Exhibit 14: Programming processes used by staff create duplicative workflows



SOURCE: OCA analysis of PARD-managed facilities' program planning process, March 2020.

### PARD's oversight process did not ensure program planning documents were completed for decision-making.

The program planning process requires staff to prepare planning documents for each program and complete them to guide decision-making on future program offerings. We found that Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center program planning documents were either missing or not prepared for some programs. In addition, some program planning documents for centers did not contain all the required information. Our review focused on fiscal year 2019 program planning worksheets.

### Exhibit 15: Documents used for program planning were incomplete or lacked detailed information

| Cultural Center  | % of reviewed programs with planning worksheets | % of reviewed planning worksheets with missing information | % of reviewed programs with detailed budget information |
|--|---|--|---|
| Asian American Resource Center                                 | 100%  | 30%  | 100%  |
| Emma S Barrientos - Mexican American Cultural Center           | 92%   | 17%  | 0%  |
| George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center | 100%  | 100%   | 0%  |

SOURCE: OCA analysis of PARD-managed facilities' program planning documents, March 2020

For the selected programs reviewed we noted the following:

- there were some elements missing in some of the documents related to dates, event categories, and approval signatures.
- for the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center, we found that program planning documents were not prepared or were missing for five programs.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> PARD staff stated that they could not find the program planning worksheets for 3 programs.

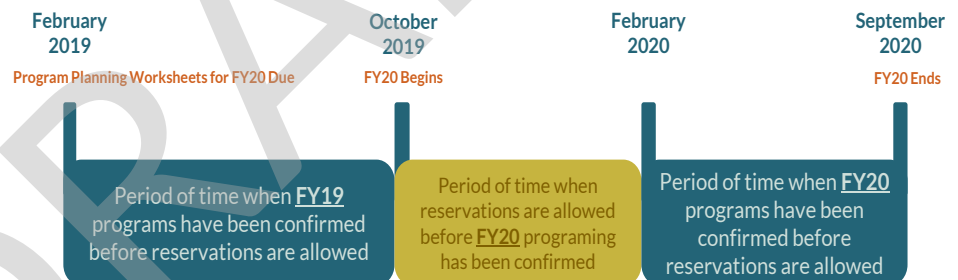
Finally, neither the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center nor the George Washington Carver Museum programs we reviewed had any detailed budget information, making it unclear how management was able to review program costs.

The lack of program planning worksheets and detailed budget information used to plan future programming may lead to ineffective use of staff and budgeting.

**Current rental reservation policies may limit staff's ability to prioritize programs effectively.**

Cultural center staff are required to start the program planning process in October every year for educational programming. In the Spring, staff start to put programs on the center's calendar for the next fiscal year. However, Asian American Resource Center staff reported that while the center attempts to prioritize educational programming first, they allow external organizations to book rentals up to a year in advance. This is true for the George Washington Carver Museum as well. If cultural center policy allows external organizations to reserve space before the programming schedule has been established, centers may be limited in the type and amount of programming offered by each center.

**Exhibit 16: Allowing rentals to book before program planning worksheets are due could create conflicts with scheduling educational programming**



SOURCE: OCA Analysis of Program Planning Processes, March 2020.

This issue was not noted for the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center. The staff at the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center attempt to prioritize educational programming and the Latino Artist Access Program over external rentals, but typically allow outside bookings up to seven months in advance and the community room may be reserved up to three months in advance. This practice reduces the amount of reservations for external rentals before the programming schedule is established.

The Economic Development Department manages the African American Cultural Heritage Facility. This facility did not offer internally developed programming in fiscal year 2019. In the past, the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility did offer educational programming, including business development workshops. This programming ended after federal grant funding requirements ended in 2013. However, staff

stated that the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility currently lacks the necessary resources to offer educational programming. External programming and events at the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility appear to support the mission of the facility.

**Finding 6**  
PARD has established performance measures, but these measures have no targets. Some measures did not provide reliable data and were not reported accurately.

The Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) established performance measures to track the performance of the cultural centers. However, we identified issues with creating, tracking, and reporting these performance measures. These issues limit PARD’s ability to accurately determine the success and impact of the cultural centers’ programs and services.

Performance measures provide information on whether an organization’s objectives and goals are being met. Best practices state performance measure data should be relevant, verifiable, free from bias, and provide an accurate picture of the organization’s performance. Measures should establish clear targets to ensure the organization achieves its strategic goals.

PARD tracks and reports four standard performance measures for its three cultural centers:

- number of participants who increase their knowledge and understanding of culture, history, and art;
- number of participants attending free cultural special events;
- number of visits to educational and cultural facilities; and
- hours of arts and cultural programming provided.

However, PARD has not established targets for these performance measures for each cultural center. Without having targets, PARD cannot tell when cultural centers are meeting their goals.

We also found that some key performance measures do not provide information that is reliable.

**Exhibit 17: Performance Measure Issues Related to Reliability\***

| Key performance measures   | OCA observations   |
|--|--|
| Attendance at free cultural special events   | Results are not verifiable, sometimes based on estimates and could be overstated or understated  |
| Percent of participants who increased their knowledge and understanding of cultures, history and art | Reported results are based on a very small percentage of participants, as such the results could be inaccurate and/or not representative. In fiscal year 2019, the number of surveys collected by the centers ranged between 0.1% and 3% of total participants |

\*Reliability refers to performance information that is verifiable, free from biases, and provides an accurate representation of what it claims to represent.

SOURCE: OCA analysis of Parks and Recreation Department’s FY19 reported key performance measures reports, January 2020

The performance measure reports had some calculation errors in the information reported for the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center. These errors made the results reported for two key performance measures less accurate. These errors were not detected



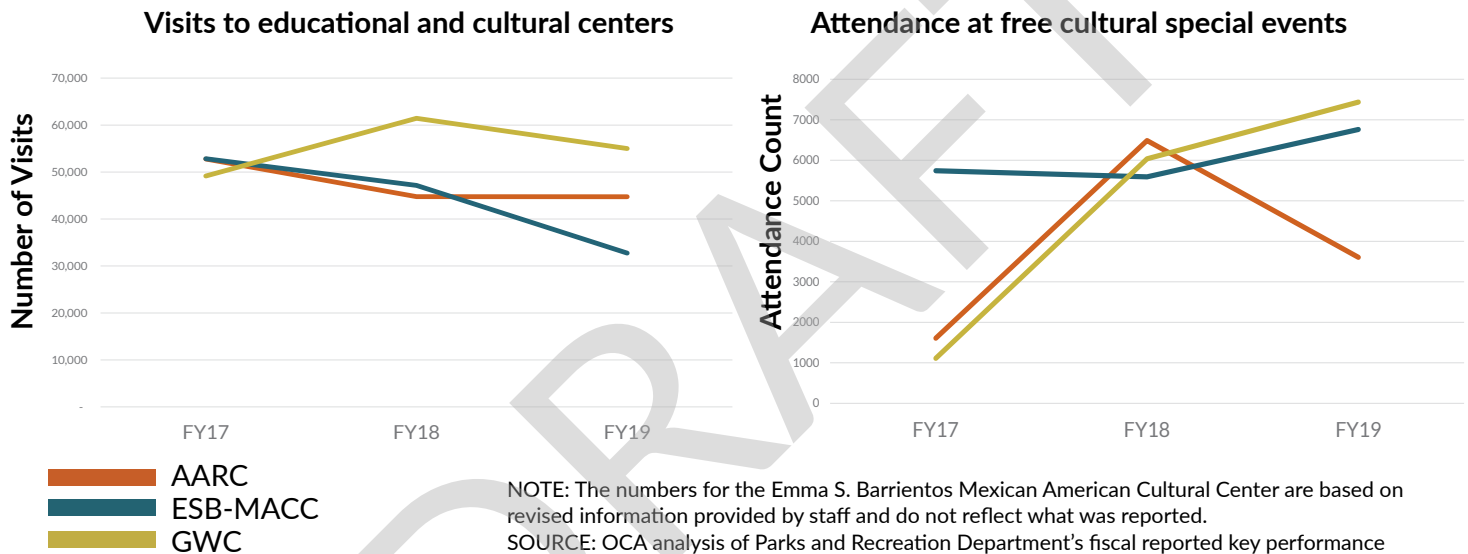
by cultural center staff or by management when reported to PARD. We analyzed the underlying performance measure data<sup>9</sup> and found:

- in fiscal year 2017, staff overreported hours of arts and cultural programming by about 7,700 and overreported the number of facility visitors by 5,687;
- in fiscal year 2018, the number of visitors to the facility was underreported by 4,871; and,
- in fiscal year 2019, cultural center staff did not track drop-in visitors for three months, underreporting the number of visitors.

#### Attendance at two PARD centers has declined recently.

Based on performance measure data provided by cultural center staff, overall visits to educational and cultural facilities have declined at two centers in last three years. The attendance at free cultural special events fluctuated at two centers and generally increased at the third center.

**Exhibit 18: Visits to cultural centers and attendance at free cultural special events have declined for some centers**



PARD staff said that there are several factors contributing to the overall decline in attendance at the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center. In fiscal year 2017, attendance at the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center was abnormally high because of several special events held to celebrate the center's 10-year anniversary. In addition, attendance decreased in fiscal year 2019 because the center did not host SXSW, an event that typically brings a significant number of visitors to the center. Finally, the center increased the number of Latino Artist Access Program participants it hosts, which means there is less availability for facility rentals.

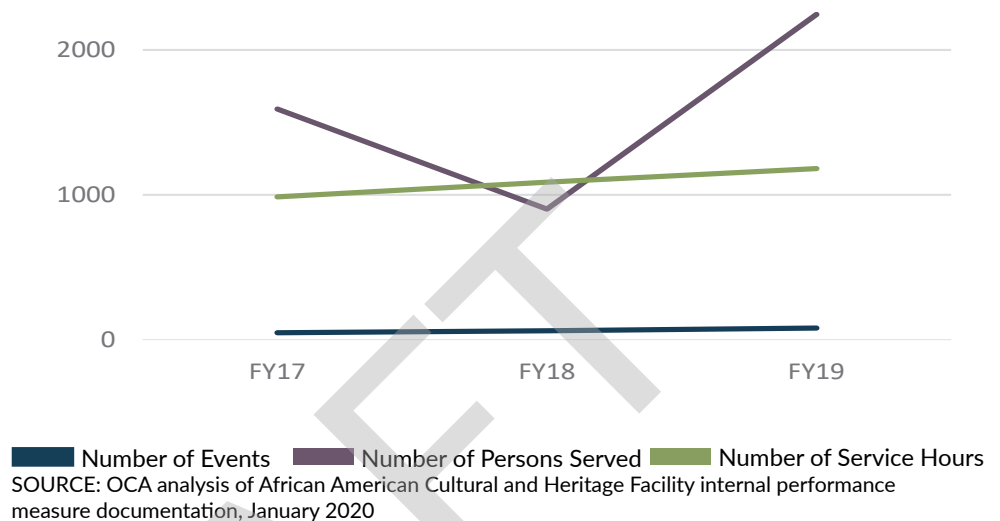
The Economic Development Department (EDD) manages the African American Cultural Heritage Facility (AACHF). EDD has not established any performance measures for the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility. EDD staff said they do track measures for internal purposes and

<sup>9</sup> PARD management reported that the source data for the ESB-MACC's FY17 and FY18 performance measures has been lost.

that these measures are related to the now-lapsed federal grant's reporting requirements. These measures include:

- number of events;
- number of persons served; and,
- total hours of service.

**Exhibit 19: African American Cultural and Heritage Facility performance over the last three years**



We noted an increase in the number of events, service hours, and people served from fiscal year 2017 to fiscal year 2019.

Without providing reliable performance information to decision makers, PARD and EDD may not be able to effectively manage center operations, monitor progress of key initiatives, and achieve the mission of the centers. The lack of clear numerical targets may make it difficult to determine the success and impact of the cultural centers' programs and services.

## Finding 7

Cultural centers did not charge some fees according to the Council-approved fee schedule, which may result in inconsistent charges to customers and lost revenue.

City Council approves an annual fee schedule for facility reservations as part of the budget process. These fees are established to recover the costs associated with staffing and supplying spaces for rent. For the PARD managed centers, we identified various issues related to fee assessments across the centers, including:

- centers did not consistently charge fees as outlined in the Council-approved fee schedule;
- guidance was inconsistent on how to apply fees;
- fees advertised on a center's website were incorrect; and
- fees applied across centers for similar spaces were different.

At the Asian American Resource Center, we noted that their policy directed staff to allow two free hours when renting the Ballroom for more than four hours. This policy does not align with the established fee schedule cost of \$155/hour for the Ballroom. Our analysis of RecTrac data showed that this policy effectively waived about approximately \$16,740 in fees during fiscal year 2019.

Non-compliance with the Council-approved fees in fiscal year 2019 resulted in undercharges of over \$20,000 at PARD managed centers.

At the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center, we noted that staff did not charge the Council-approved fee for renting the auditorium. According to the fee schedule, the auditorium should be rented for \$155/hour, but staff began charging \$67/hour in November 2019 upon direction from PARD management. Our analysis of RecTrac data for fiscal year 2019 showed that this decision from PARD management resulted in the center not collecting approximately \$4,840 for renting the auditorium. In addition, staff did not consistently collect deposit fees. Unlike the Asian American Resource Center and the George Washington Carver Museum, the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center did not appear to provide two hours of free rental time to individuals or organizations using the facility.

At the George Washington Carver Museum, our analysis of a sample of transactions (20%) showed that staff incorrectly assessed and collected fees. These errors resulted in staff not collecting approximately \$2,150 in rental fees. For instance, staff applied the fiscal year 2018 fee schedule for some of the transactions that should have been charged based on the fiscal year 2019 fee schedule. Staff inconsistently used pay codes in RecTrac; and manually entered fees instead of relying on system-calculated fees. Similarly to the Asian American Resource Center, the staff were told they could provide two hours of free rental time to individuals or organizations on a case-by-case basis.

Some Parks and Recreation staff said renters were allowed two free hours to account for “load-in” and “load-out” time. However, since this practice was not consistently applied across all centers, renters at each center paid different rates to rent similar facility spaces. Also, this practice of reducing fees for certain rental types does not comply with the fees specified in the Council-approved fee schedule and reduces the revenue centers receive to fund operations.

A memo was issued to cultural center staff in November 2018 to make fees similar across centers. Three different versions of this memo were provided to auditors over the course of this audit, showing that PARD management does not appear to give the same guidance to staff for charging fees. One memo stated that City departments should be charged a \$20 cleaning fee, but this fee was not in another center’s version of the memo. In addition, some staff were told verbally to begin charging theater rates instead of the Council-approved fee rate for the auditorium at the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center, but this guidance is not included in the memo. This inconsistent guidance to staff may account for some of the issues we observed with the established fee schedule.

#### **Fees were incorrectly advertised on the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center website.**

All the centers utilize their websites to advertise and communicate information about available rental space to the community. However, we noted a difference between the fees for two rooms advertised on the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center’s website and the fees charged to rent these rooms. Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center staff appropriately applied the fees according to the

fee schedule despite miscommunicating these fees on the website. This resulted in customers paying more than the price advertised on the website to rent the dance studio and one of the meeting rooms.

**Centers charged different fees for similar rooms.**

Our review found centers charged different fees for similar rooms.

**Exhibit 20: Despite having similar room types across the cultural centers, rooms have different fees**

| Room Type     | Asian American Resource Center   | Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center                                     | George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center |
|---------------|--|---|--|
| Dance Studio  | Does not have Dance Studio   | \$50/hour   | Free   |
| Meeting Rooms | \$15-50/hour based on room size and two additional community rooms available for free use. | \$30/hour for its meeting room and has a community room that is available for free use. | Free   |

SOURCE: OCA analysis of fiscal year 2019 fee schedule, March 2020

In addition to rental fees, PARD charges program fees for some educational programming. The program fees reviewed in our audit for the three centers are generally in compliance with the established fees.

For the center managed by the Economic Development Department (EDD), we noted that the City's fiscal years 2019 and 2020 budgets contain fee schedules with fees for renting spaces at the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility. However, EDD staff stated they are not charging fees for renting spaces at the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility. One reason given for not charging fees was that facility staff believed the federal grant that partially funded the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility prohibited charging fees. However, during this audit, EDD staff stated they had determined this was not the case. Based on space rental records, we calculated that the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility lost out on at least \$134,625 in revenue in fiscal year 2019. This amount represents almost one-half of the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility's operating budget for that fiscal year (\$275,625).

Non-compliance with the Council approved fee schedule in fiscal year 2019 resulted in undercharges of over \$130,000.

## Finding 8

PARD's processes to manage access to their reservation software are inadequate, increasing the risk of unauthorized access to customer information and that errors and misuse of funds may not be detected.

PARD uses a software system called RecTrac to process fee transactions for facility rentals and program registrations. Cultural center staff use RecTrac to varying degrees and have multiple users with access to the system. Our audit identified several issues related to managing RecTrac access.

Since RecTrac contains the personal information of community members, it is important to ensure the system is secure and access to this information is appropriate. Best practices for user access to IT systems suggest that there should be procedures for granting access to the system, establishing secure password parameters, reviewing user access periodically, deleting user accounts upon separation, granting access rights based on job responsibilities, and monitoring user activities. PARD has established procedures for granting users access to the RecTrac system, but other processes are not fully aligned with best practices.

**Exhibit 21: Review of User Access Rights for PARD's RecTrac System.**

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Granting of Access         | ✓ |
| Password Parameters        | ✗ |
| Periodic Review of Access  | ✗ |
| Deletion of Access         | ✗ |
| Access Based on Job Duties | ✗ |

SOURCE: OCA analysis of PARD process for RecTrac system access management, March 2020.

PARD said they have established a formal process for granting user access to the system which requires supervisor approval and review by PARD's RecTrac system administrative group. However, other processes are less secure.

In PARD's RecTrac system, there are no password parameters, such as requiring a certain number of letters, special characters, or numbers, and there are no requirements to periodically change passwords to ensure security. Center managers are responsible for reviewing the RecTrac access rights of users based on their job responsibilities. However, there is no formal review policy and center managers are not performing this review.

We reviewed permissions in the system for three user groups and the staff assigned to these user groups. As shown in Exhibit 22 below, many staff have the "Customer Service Representative 2" (CSR2) user group access and are given the ability to override preset fields in the system. This override allows the user to potentially change the fees automatically generated by the system. At least five staff at each center have the "Supervisor" status, which gives them all the CSR2 rights as well as the ability to edit past transactions. This could be misused to benefit the employee or favor a particular customer. PARD staff confirmed that the number of staff given the "Supervisor" access level exceeds what is operationally necessary.

**Exhibit 22: Many staff have the ability to override fees in the system**

| User Groups  | Asian American Resource Center | Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center | George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center |
|--|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Customer Service Representative 1: permissions to perform sales  | 0                              | 4   | 2  |
| Customer Service Representative 2: permissions to perform sales, refunds and basic overrides to change age restrictions, date restrictions, and fee amounts charged at their center location | 9                              | 4   | 2  |
| Supervisor: CSR2 rights + permissions to perform corrections and make changes to already performed transactions at their center location   | 5                              | 6   | 5  |
| Total Current Users  | 14                             | 14  | 9  |

NOTE: Some users have multiple user group rights, but only the highest level was counted

SOURCE: OCA analysis of RecTrac system reports, March 2020

Best practices suggest that a user's access should be based on their own job duties and not conflict with other job duties to prevent fraud.

PARD has not deleted accounts of employees who have separated from the City or been transferred to another department, which may increase the risk of unauthorized access to data. According to PARD staff, it is the responsibility of the center manager to notify the PARD system administrator when a staff member leaves their job with the City or transfers to another department.

**Exhibit 23: Terminated employees who have active user accounts**

|   | Asian American Resource Center | Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center | George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center | PARD Central |
|---|--------------------------------|---|--|--------------|
| Number of terminated employees who still have active RecTrac accounts | 10                             | 2   | 1  | 6            |

SOURCE: OCA analysis of RecTrac system reports, March 2020

Other vulnerabilities noted in PARD's administration of RecTrac include:

- audit logs are not enabled in RecTrac to monitor user activities and track transactions from beginning to end;
- RecTrac does not currently produce exception reports that identify errors or unusual user activities; and,
- some center staff may not receive the training necessary to use RecTrac effectively.



## Finding 9

Some cultural center staff did not receive customer service and cultural sensitivity training, which may reduce staff's ability to create positive relationships with the community they serve.

The nature of the services provided by the centers requires staff to have cultural sensitivity and to provide quality customer service. PARD requires all employees to complete customer service training every year and cultural sensitivity<sup>10</sup> training every two years.

In fiscal year 2019, there were two primary trainings provided to staff to develop customer service skills and to ensure facility staff are culturally sensitive to the community. We reviewed available records from the City's training tracking system, TRAIN, to see which cultural center staff employed in fiscal year 2019 attended these trainings.<sup>11</sup> Our review showed that at the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center and the George Washington Carver Museum, the majority of full and part time staff received customer service and cultural sensitivity training. However, at the Asian American Resource Center, only 30% of full and part time staff received customer service training and only 50% received cultural sensitivity training. Few temporary staff at the three centers received these trainings in fiscal year 2019.

**Exhibit 24: Some full and part time staff receive required training, but few temporary staff receive all trainings**

|                                   | Asian American Resource Center* |                 | Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center |                 | George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural, and Genealogy Center |                 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|---|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| Trainings                         | Full- & Part-Time Staff         | Temporary Staff | Full- & Part-Time Staff                             | Temporary Staff | Full- & Part-Time Staff   | Temporary Staff |
| Customer Service**                | 30%                             | 0%              | 88%   | 16%             | 80%   |                 |
| Cultural Sensitivity / Equality** | 50%                             | 25%             | 100%  | 0%              | 70%   |                 |

\*Staff at the Asian American Resource Center said they received training from an outside organization that was not captured in TRAIN.

\*\*This analysis does not include employees hired after the December 2018 training, since training was not available until the next year.

SOURCE: OCA analysis of FY 2019 TRAIN records conducted in March 2020.

Temporary staff are employed to work with customers during programs and events. Sometimes these employees are at centers when permanent employees are not available. It is important to ensure temporary staff have the skills and guidance necessary for interactions with the community. PARD management stated that all temporary staff are required to complete online employee orientation modules that include customer service training. We noted that the online modules include the customer service training module, but we were unable to determine which staff completed the customer service training module<sup>12</sup>. PARD management said that employee training records are not centralized but maintained in several different systems. As a result, some center staff were unable to

<sup>10</sup> We use the term "cultural sensitivity" to refer to any training courses offered to employees about diversity and/or equality.

<sup>11</sup> Once an employee separates from the City, their TRAIN records are removed from the City's system.

<sup>12</sup> PARD staff stated that the online training module is no longer supported by the City's Communication and Technology Management Department and some employees received errors when they completed their training.

provide all the training documents requested.

We conducted a survey of center staff during this audit. More than half of center staff felt that the training received for customer service was useful. However it appears that staff felt the customer sensitivity training they recieved was less useful.

**Exhibit 25: Some staff believe the customer service training was useful. However fewer staff members felt cultural sensitivity training was useful.**

| Staff at this center believe... |   | Response | Asian American Resource Center | Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center | George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center |
|---------------------------------|---|----------|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Q7                              | ... customer service training received was useful     | Agree    | 64%                            | 64%   | 73%  |
|                                 |   | Neutral  | 29%                            | 36%   | 27%  |
|                                 |   | Disagree | 7%                             | 0%  | 0%   |
| Q9                              | ... cultural sensitivity training received was useful | Agree    | 55%                            | 43%   | 36%  |
|                                 |   | Neutral  | 36%                            | 50%   | 64%  |
|                                 |   | Disagree | 9%                             | 7%  | 0%   |

NOTE: Totals for questions may sum up to more than 100% due to rounding.

SOURCE: OCA analysis of survey results from OCA staff survey conducted in March 2020.

The majority of feedback from our community survey was positive. However, some respondents for each center stated that some staff were not welcoming or not well-informed about center operations. Center stakeholders confirmed that some complaints have been received about lack of customer service from center staff. These issues may result from inadequate training for staff on how to communicate with members of the community, resulting in negative interactions between staff and the public.

The Economic Development Department did not offer any cultural sensitivity or customer service training to staff<sup>13</sup> at African American Cultural Heritage Facility (AACHF). While most feedback from our community survey was positive, some noted customer service issues. In our survey of center staff, staff expressed the need for such training. Staff stated that it provides a platform for dialogue that helps achieve goals and missions, improve processes, and create solutions for the betterment of the facility.

<sup>13</sup> The AACHF staff comprised of only one full time and one temporary staff.

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## Finding 10

While the City of Austin operates its four cultural centers, nonprofits run the majority of similar city-owned centers identified in peer cities. The majority of these cities have a department-level arts and culture agency.

The City of Austin operates cultural centers dedicated to a group or culture. We compared the governance models of four City-owned cultural centers to 22 similar<sup>14</sup> cultural centers in seven other cities.<sup>15</sup> We also collected information on who is responsible for managing these centers.

We found that nonprofits run the majority of these cultural centers in peer cities. Also, oversight of most centers falls under the City department primarily responsible for providing culture and art services.

For our comparison, we used four basic models for governance<sup>16</sup> of cultural centers. The four models are:

- Government-run: A government department or agency operates the facility.
- Nonprofit-run: The facility is operated by a nonprofit, most often created specifically for operating the facility.
- User-run: The facility operator is also its predominant user; it is commonly a nonprofit.
- Those run based on fee-for-service structures. A government contracts with a for-profit company or nonprofit that operates the facility.

These governance models have varying advantages and disadvantages. See Appendix B for more information.

The City of Austin runs four centers under the government-run model. However, the majority of peer centers (16 of 22) are run by nonprofits. Of these, 15 are operated utilizing the user-run governance model. Only six other peer centers are managed by their respective cities. See Appendix B for more information on peer city cultural centers.

Three of the City of Austin's cultural centers are managed by PARD's Museum and Cultural Program Division and one is managed by EDD's Cultural Arts Division. Six of the seven cities indicated they have a department-level arts and culture agency, and one city noted it has an arts and culture agency within another department. A department-level arts and culture agency is responsible for oversight of the majority of peer centers (17 of 22). For four of the five cities that have more than one center, we noted that one center is not under the oversight of an arts and culture department.

A majority of peer cities staff indicated that cultural centers are generally funded through the general fund and hotel occupancy taxes, with three cities also citing the use of bond funds. Also, for centers managed by nonprofits, city staff cited the use of private fundraising and city subsidies.

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<sup>14</sup> Like City of Austin cultural centers, these centers are city-owned facilities and have a group- or culture-dedicated mission.

<sup>15</sup> The cities are Dallas, New York, Phoenix, San Antonio, San Francisco, San José, and Seattle. We noted one center each in San José and Seattle.

<sup>16</sup> Information on this subject comes from Webb Management Services, which provides advice on art, cultural, and entertainment facilities and operations. The following link provides more information about the firm: <https://www.webbmgmt.org/>.

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# Recommendations and Management Response: Parks and Recreation Department Management

1

In order to ensure strategic allocation of funding for facility improvements at the PARD-managed centers, the PARD Director should create a process to periodically update facility master plans that reflect their needs and the financial requirements to meet them.

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:** PARD has taken action to begin funding both new and updated master planning documents through Capital Improvement (CIP) funding. Until recently, PARD was unable to utilize CIP funds for facility master planning. The use of CIP funds has proven to be more efficient in securing completed facility master plan documents and providing for appropriate updates. PARD has already established criteria and prioritization criteria for the execution of the facility and park master planning process. PARD will add to the criteria an update process. The regular Bond Development process serves as the mechanism to determine the financial requirements for plan execution. PARD will continue to utilize this process to propose financial investments.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** September 2021

2

In order to ensure that ADA and maintenance issues are timely addressed, the PARD Director should work with City Manager and Budget Office to identify necessary funding.

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:** Currently, funding for ADA and maintenance issues comes from both the General Fund and Capital Improvement Funds, depending on the scope of work. PARD is transitioning to the Maximo Asset Management Software system (a comprehensive data driven asset management system) and will be able to communicate inventory and maintenance needs more efficiently upon completion of the transition. The software will help PARD optimize performance, extend asset life cycles, and reduce operational downtime and costs. The outcome will be a better understanding of our annual maintenance and ADA needs and corresponding funding. With this information, we can then work closely with the Budget office to secure needed funding.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** Budget guidance from Maximo will be available for the FY 2022 General Fund Budget Cycle.

3

In order to ensure that the use of facility space at the three PARD-managed centers is optimized and the hours of operation meet the needs of the community, the PARD Director should:

- a. work with staff to identify which IT applications could be used as a facility reservation tool, enabling staff to determine and analyze trends for facility space use;
- b. analyze space utilization trends of the facility and adjust normal business hours; and
- c. publicize accurate information for all spaces that are available for use/rent on the City's website.

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:** PARD will:

- a. Continue to utilize and refine usage of RecTrac to track facility usage. This will include adjusting operations to reserve all internal programs on the RecTrac calendar. At the same time, PARD will explore the possibility of moving to an alternative software product which may be more efficient.
- b. Analyze data after a refinement of RecTrac calendar usage has occurred.
- c. Use the analysis data to standardize and alter operational hours if needed, and then publicize the proper rental spaces and hours through appropriate channels.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** September 2021

4

In order to ensure that the facilities are accessible to the community, the PARD Director should work with stakeholders to resolve barriers to accessing the cultural centers including, at the minimum:

- a. evaluate current fees and their impact on the target population to determine how services can be made more affordable to target population and adjust, if needed; and,
- b. identify additional accessible parking and transportation options for patrons.

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:** PARD will analyze all programs, services and rentals and then develop pricing based on existing levels of service guides. In addition, PARD will take steps to further publicize the existing PARD Senior Transportation program, Cap Metro Bus Routes, and work internally and with partners to develop long term solutions to areas identified to have accessibility issues.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** September 2021 short term items. Long term solutions will be an ongoing process.

5

In order to ensure the program planning process is managed efficiently and effectively, the PARD Director should:

- a. explore additional means of soliciting and incorporating community feedback into the program planning process;
- b. evaluate the current program planning process and determine how it can best meet the needs of users, ensuring expectations, documentation requirements and accountability for processes are clearly communicated to responsible staff; and,
- c. ensure that the cultural centers' rental practices allow for balance between rentals and educational programming.

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:** PARD engaged the community in the program planning process in 2016. The resulting effort has been refined and improved year over year. PARD will continue to refine this process to allow for efficient use of staff time. In addition, PARD can revisit this process with community stakeholders for additional input. Finally, PARD will continue to seek out off the shelf software that can reduce staff time and duplicate efforts in preparing reports. To date, no such program planning software has been available within the industry.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** February 2022 (Program planning has occurred for 2021 and some of 2022 already)

6

In order to ensure that the cultural centers' performance measures provide accurate and reliable information for decision making, the PARD Director should:

- a. establish appropriate performance measures and set targets to assess performance; and
- b. strengthen accountability processes to ensure the accuracy of reported performance measures.

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:** PARD is currently working with the Office of Performance Management to revise and align performance measures with SD23. Cultural Center performance measures are a part of this alignment process. In the near term, PARD will take steps to automate as many performance measures as possible. PARD will also adjust internal processes to ensure standardization and accountability. Recent re-organization of staff within this Division will afford greater review capabilities.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** September 2021

7

In order to ensure fees are appropriately charged and tracked, the PARD Director should:

- a. publicize Council-approved fees on the City's website;
- b. ensure that fee amounts charged for each facility match the Council-approved fee schedule and any changes follow the City's established process of fee approval;
- c. develop and provide consistent guidance to staff regarding the Council-approved fee schedule; and,
- d. establish consistent rental fees across facilities.

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:** PARD has already taken corrective action to address the improperly aligned charges. In addition, Future fee changes will be communicated to all Division in the same manner. PARD has already standardized rental fees. PARD will develop a process for future fee change communication and publicize fees on the PARD website.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** May 2021

8

In order to ensure that City and customer information is adequately safeguarded, and errors or misuse of funds are detected, the PARD Director should:

- a. develop and implement processes recommended by best practices for access management of the RecTrac system, including setting password requirements, periodic review of system users and their access rights, and deletion of user accounts upon separation or transfer;
- b. provide adequate training to staff on how to appropriately use RecTrac functions; and
- c. enable audit logs and conduct periodic review of exception reports from RecTrac system.

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:** PARD will develop a formal process for separating employees to have RecTrac access disabled. In addition, PARD will build upon and refine existing training print materials and develop online trainings. PARD will also develop and expand on reporting features and training to allow for more internal auditing, analysis, and larger checks and balances system. Finally, PARD will internally evaluate current levels of control within the software to allow best possible management and access by PARD employees.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** September 2021

9

In order to ensure that all cultural center staff have the skills and guidance necessary for interactions with the community, PARD Director should ensure that all cultural center staff receive customer service training and cultural sensitivity training regardless of employment status (including full-time, part-time, and temporary staff). In addition, training records should be easily accessible and tracked to comply with department record retention policies.

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:** PARD is in the process of developing an online, onboarding training for all programs related staff members which will also keep records of training completion. PARD also schedules and tracks a variety of trainings throughout the year. PARD will take steps to ensure Customer Service trainings are offered to existing employees on an annual basis and attendance is tracked.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** May 2021



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## Management Response: Parks and Recreation Department

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# Recommendations and Management Response: Economic Development Department

10

In order to ensure, strategic allocation of funding for facility improvements, and to bring the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility in line with the City's other cultural centers, the EDD Director should develop and implement long term strategic plan that at the minimum:

- a. reflects the needs and the financial requirements to meet those needs; and
- b. ensures program offerings at the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility meet community needs.

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:** Under the direction of EDD Director, EDD Executive Leadership and African-American Cultural and Heritage Facility Staff will draft long term strategic plan that will:

- a. Measure current facility needs;
- b. Create and implement process for stakeholder communication to ensure program goals are in alignment with community need; and,
- c. Include a funding matrix that will consider program development, facility maintenance, and operational efficiency.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** Conclusion of Fiscal Year 2021.

11

In order to ensure that ADA and maintenance issues are timely addressed at the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility, the EDD Director should work with stakeholders to identify additional current and future maintenance needs for the facility, and the financial requirements associated with them so capital planning can be addressed more fully.

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:** Under the direction of EDD Director, EDD Executive Leadership and African-American Cultural and Heritage Facility Staff will document facility maintenance feedback from the community. EDD will take those community findings to City of Austin's Building Services Department. A plan between both departments will be drafted to make sure capital improvement funds are properly accounted for, allocated properly and in a timely fashion.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** Conclusion of Fiscal Year 2021.

12

In order to optimize the public use of facility space at the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility, and that the hours of operation meet the needs of the community, the EDD Director should:

- a. work with staff to explore if IT applications could be used as a facility reservation tool enabling staff to determine and analyze trends for facility space use;
- b. analyze space utilization trends at the facility; and
- c. adjust normal business hours and/or assign additional staff, if necessary.

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:** Under the direction of EDD Director, EDD Executive Leadership and African-American Cultural and Heritage Facility Staff will review usage data to assess current usage trends. The usage data will also take into consideration all reservation request including those that have not been met due to lack of facility capacity and staff availability. Once the facility capacity data has been collected a staffing plan will be drafted to ensure the African-American Cultural and Heritage Facility is operating as efficiently as possible with current staff and resources. The staff plan will also provide data used to forecast the needs of the community. In addition, African-American Cultural and Heritage Facility staff will conduct research analyzing various reservation tools/software, and work with CTM to create a plan of implementation. Reservation Data will be taken into consideration for future budget allocation forecasting.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** Conclusion of Fiscal Year 2021.

13

In order to measure African American Cultural and Heritage Facility performance, and for accurate and reliable information for decision-making, the EDD Director should:

- a. establish measurable performance measures and set targets to assess performance; and,
- b. develop and communicate accountability processes to ensure the accuracy of reported performance measurement.

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:** Under the direction of EDD Director, EDD Executive Leadership and African-American Cultural and Heritage Facility Staff will review current programs and objectives. Once the review is complete tangible performance measures will be drafted by EDD Director and EDD Executive Leadership. There will also be a section in the African-American Cultural & Heritage Facility's Annual Work Plan that documents those performance measures that meet Strategic Direction 2023 outcomes. Within the performance measures section of the annual work plan a process for communication and accountability included for reporting accuracy.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** Conclusion of Fiscal Year 2021.

14

In order to ensure compliance with the Council approved fee schedule, the EDD Director should evaluate the current fee schedule and waiver practices. If the current fee waiver practices are recommended to continue, EDD management should follow the City's established process for waiving fees.

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:** Under the direction of EDD Director, EDD Executive Leadership and African-American Cultural and Heritage Facility Staff will review the Council-approved fee schedule and evaluate waiver practices. Per direction from EDD Director and EDD Executive Leadership proper communication and documentation in regard to fees going forward will be submitted to appropriate city departments.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** Conclusion of Fiscal Year 2021.

15

In order to ensure that staff at the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility have the skills and expertise necessary for delivering support and service to the community, the EDD Director should:

- a. identify existing training courses that AACHF facility staff could attend; and,
- b. ensure all AACHF facility staff members complete relevant training offered by the City for their positions regardless of employment status (including full-time, part-time, and temporary staff).

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:** Under the direction of EDD Director, EDD Executive Leadership and African-American Cultural and Heritage Facility Staff will conduct research to explore training possibilities. First, we will review City of Austin's TRAIN resources for training opportunities. Second, we will seek out other cultural facilities nation-wide with a similar mission and focus. EDD will reach out to those facilities to discuss various types of training and how training ties into increased community service and staff efficiency. Those findings will be included annual African-American Cultural and Heritage Facility work plans and staff SSPR's.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** Conclusion of Fiscal Year 2021.

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## Management Response: Economic Development Department

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## Recommendations and Management Response: City Manager

16

To promote effective governance and operation of City of Austin cultural centers, the City Manager should assess the existing governance structure for each cultural center to determine whether changes are needed. If so, the City Manager should assess what governance model would be most effective and efficient in managing the centers.

**Management Response:** Agree

**Proposed Implementation Plan:** PARD will work in cooperation with the City Manager's office and other Departments to determine the best, most efficient governance structure for the City of Austin cultural centers.

**Proposed Implementation Date:** September 2021

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## Management Response: City Manager

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## Appendix A: Cultural Centers Customer Survey

We surveyed members of the Austin community using a survey developed by the audit team. Survey questions generally asked respondents' opinions on cultural center programs, staff, fees, and facilities. The survey opened January 3 and closed January 27, 2020. Austin community members were invited to take the survey through social media outreach and direct email invitations. The survey and outreach materials were written in English and translated into Spanish, Vietnamese, and Simplified Chinese. A total of 1,330 community members responded to the survey. Respondents were asked only to respond for centers they had visited in the last two years and could respond for more than one center. In the table below, those who selected "strongly agree" or "agree" were included in the total for "agree" and those who selected "strongly disagree" or "disagree" were included in the total for "disagree". Totals for questions may sum up to more than 100% due to rounding. The dataset containing analysis of multiple-choice questions can be found [here](#). The dataset containing open-ended responses can be found [here](#).

### Number of responses by center\*

| Asian American Resource Center (AARC) | Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (ESB-MACC) | George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center (GWC) | African-American Cultural and Heritage Facility (AACHF) | Millennium Youth Entertainment Complex (MYEC)** | Individuals who stated they had not visited a center |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|--|
| 282                                   | 549  | 269  | 61  | 106   | 320  |

\*Total of all responses by center (1,587) is greater than total respondents to survey (1,330) because respondents could take the survey for more than one center.

\*\*MYEC responses are not included in the tables below since MYEC is addressed in a separate audit report.

### Programming

| The programs at this center have... |   | Response | AARC | ESB-MACC | GWC | AACHF* |
|-------------------------------------|---|----------|------|----------|-----|--------|
| Q1.a                                | ...increased my understanding or knowledge of cultures served by this center. | Agree    | 85%  | 88%      | 86% | 74%    |
|                                     |   | Neutral  | 9%   | 6%       | 10% | 11%    |
|                                     |   | Disagree | 6%   | 6%       | 5%  | 14%    |
| Q1.b                                | ...had a positive impact on my life.  | Agree    | 83%  | 87%      | 87% | 74%    |
|                                     |   | Neutral  | 12%  | 8%       | 9%  | 13%    |
|                                     |   | Disagree | 6%   | 5%       | 4%  | 13%    |

\*The AACHF did not offer internally developed programming in FY19. These survey responses are for the programming and events held at the facility in FY19.

## Programming (continued)

| The programs at this center have... |   | Response | AARC | ESB-MACC | GWC | AACHF* |
|-------------------------------------|---|----------|------|----------|-----|--------|
| Q1.c                                | ...been planned by staff with my input. | Agree    | 36%  | 29%      | 31% | 42%    |
|                                     |   | Neutral  | 40%  | 36%      | 33% | 30%    |
|                                     |   | Disagree | 25%  | 35%      | 36% | 28%    |
| Q1.d                                | ...reflected the center's mission.      | Agree    | 89%  | 90%      | 88% | 79%    |
|                                     |   | Neutral  | 8%   | 4%       | 5%  | 8%     |
|                                     |   | Disagree | 3%   | 5%       | 6%  | 13%    |

### Please let us know if you have any additional thoughts about your experiences with programs and events.

| AARC  | ESB-MACC  | GWC   | AACHF*   |
|---|---|---|--|
| 63 respondents provided open-ended responses about AARC programming. The majority of open-ended feedback was positive and included general praise about AARC programs. The most common suggestion was for AARC to increase their program offerings. | 161 respondents provided open-ended responses about ESB-MACC programming. The majority of open-ended feedback was positive. Many respondents specifically praised the events and arts programming. The most common recommendations for improvement were for MACC to increase their program offerings and better publicize their events. | 87 respondents provided open-ended feedback about Carver programming. The majority of open-ended feedback was positive and included general praise about Carver programs. Other positive comments specifically praised the Center's youth programs, artwork, theater, genealogy classes, and events. Some respondents provided suggestions for improvement, which tended to focus on increasing program offerings and center promotion. | 18 respondents provided open-ended responses about AACHF programming.* The majority of open-ended feedback contained general comments related to advertising and outreach. Other comments specifically identified a need for more staffing resources. Some respondents provided suggestions for improvement that focused on increasing program offerings at AACHF particularly for Black community members who are not African American. |

\*The AACHF did not offer internally developed programming in FY19. These survey responses are for the programming and events held at the facility in FY19.

# Fees

| I think the fees at this center are affordable... |  | Response | AARC | ESB-MACC | GWC | AACHF* |
|---|--|----------|------|----------|-----|--------|
| Q2.a  | ...for renting rooms or spaces.  | Agree    | 56%  | 56%      | 58% |        |
|   |  | Neutral  | 31%  | 33%      | 29% |        |
|   |  | Disagree | 13%  | 11%      | 13% |        |
| Q2.b  | ...for attending performances (e.g. theater, dance, music, or exhibits). | Agree    | 77%  | 85%      | 77% |        |
|   |  | Neutral  | 19%  | 12%      | 18% |        |
|   |  | Disagree | 4%   | 4%       | 4%  |        |
| Q2.c  | ...for attending programs and classes (e.g. camps).                      | Agree    | 72%  | 75%      | 68% |        |
|   |  | Neutral  | 24%  | 20%      | 26% |        |
|   |  | Disagree | 5%   | 5%       | 6%  |        |

## Please let us know if you have any additional thoughts about fees.

| AARC   | ESB-MACC   | GWC  | AACHF* |
|--|--|--|--------|
| 35 respondents provided open-ended responses about AARC fees. An equal number of open-ended responses said fees were too high and that fees were reasonable. | 68 respondents provided open-ended responses about MACC fees. A slight majority of open-ended responses said fees were too high, but a nearly equal number said fees were reasonable. Some respondents indicated that camp scholarships could be more widely publicized. | 34 respondents provided open-ended feedback about Carver fees. Several respondents said the fees were too high, but others said the fees were reasonable. Some respondents suggested ways to make the museum more affordable, such as implementing a sliding fee scale or offering scholarships. |        |

\*AACHF did not charge fees during the scope period for this audit as outlined in the council-approved fee schedule.

## Experience with Staff

| Staff at this center are... |  | Response | AARC | ESB-MACC | GWC | AACHF |
|-----------------------------|--|----------|------|----------|-----|-------|
| Q3.a                        | ...welcoming (this could include whether staff greeted you, answered questions, etc.). | Agree    | 87%  | 88%      | 90% | 82%   |
|                             |  | Neutral  | 9%   | 7%       | 7%  | 9%    |
|                             |  | Disagree | 5%   | 5%       | 3%  | 9%    |
| Q3.b                        | ...respectful of the cultures served by this center.                                   | Agree    | 88%  | 93%      | 93% | 88%   |
|                             |  | Neutral  | 10%  | 4%       | 5%  | 5%    |
|                             |  | Disagree | 2%   | 3%       | 2%  | 7%    |
| Q3.c                        | ...knowledgeable about programs, events, and the facility.                             | Agree    | 86%  | 87%      | 88% | 86%   |
|                             |  | Neutral  | 9%   | 8%       | 8%  | 9%    |
|                             |  | Disagree | 4%   | 5%       | 4%  | 5%    |

### Please let us know if you have any additional thoughts about staff.

| AARC  | ESB-MACC   | GWC  | AACHF  |
|---|--|--|--|
| 39 respondents provided open-ended responses about AARC staff. The majority of open-ended feedback was positive and praised customer service. However, some respondents indicated customer service could be improved. | 93 respondents provided open-ended responses about MACC staff. The majority of open-ended feedback was positive and praised customer service. Some respondents indicated staff could be better informed about center programs. | 47 respondents provided open-ended feedback about Carver staff. The majority of open-ended feedback was positive and praised customer service. A few respondents suggested improving accessibility of staff or staff training. | 7 respondents provided open-ended responses about AACHF staff, most of which was positive. |

# Facilities

| This center's... |   | Response | AARC | ESB-MACC | GWC | AACHF |
|------------------|---|----------|------|----------|-----|-------|
| Q4.a             | ...parking options for attending programs and events are adequate.        | Agree    | 53%  | 52%      | 81% | 59%   |
|                  |   | Neutral  | 10%  | 14%      | 8%  | 12%   |
|                  |   | Disagree | 37%  | 34%      | 12% | 29%   |
| Q4.b             | ...transportation options for attending programs and events are adequate. | Agree    | 37%  | 44%      | 60% | 62%   |
|                  |   | Neutral  | 35%  | 30%      | 32% | 23%   |
|                  |   | Disagree | 28%  | 25%      | 9%  | 15%   |
| Q4.c             | ...operating hours meet my/ my organization's needs.                      | Agree    | 74%  | 76%      | 80% | 63%   |
|                  |   | Neutral  | 18%  | 17%      | 13% | 21%   |
|                  |   | Disagree | 7%   | 6%       | 7%  | 16%   |
| Q4.d             | ...rooms and spaces are clean.  | Agree    | 92%  | 92%      | 93% | 90%   |
|                  |   | Neutral  | 3%   | 5%       | 3%  | 3%    |
|                  |   | Disagree | 4%   | 3%       | 4%  | 7%    |
| Q4.e             | ...rooms and spaces are well maintained.                                  | Agree    | 94%  | 91%      | 91% | 85%   |
|                  |   | Neutral  | 5%   | 7%       | 4%  | 7%    |
|                  |   | Disagree | 1%   | 3%       | 5%  | 8%    |

## Facilities (continued)

| This center's... |   | Response | AARC | ESB-MACC | GWC | AACHF |
|------------------|---|----------|------|----------|-----|-------|
| Q4.f             | ...rooms and spaces meet my/ my organization's needs. | Agree    | 76%  | 82%      | 61% | 70%   |
|                  |   | Neutral  | 15%  | 13%      | 35% | 13%   |
|                  |   | Disagree | 9%   | 6%       | 3%  | 17%   |

### Please let us know if you have any additional thoughts about facilities.

| AARC   | ESB-MACC   | GWC  | AACHF   |
|--|--|--|---|
| 55 respondents provided open-ended responses about AARC facilities. While some responses were positive, many responses provided suggestions for improving facilities. The most common suggestions were related to expanding the facility with larger and more flexible space. Other respondents suggested parking and public transportation options to the facility could be improved. | 88 respondents provided open-ended responses about MACC facilities. While some responses were positive, more than half of the responses expressed concerns. Many respondents noted limited parking availability or nearby public transportation options, and others noted facility maintenance could be improved. Several respondents commented that the development on Rainey Street has negatively affected the MACC, noting an impact on transportation, parking, and increased maintenance issues. | 42 respondents provided open-ended feedback about Carver facilities. Feedback was mixed. Some responses were positive, while others expressed concerns with maintenance or upkeep of the facilities. Some respondents provided suggestions about the facility, which generally involved making renovations or expansions to the space. | 8 respondents provided open-ended responses about AACHF facilities. There was not a consistent theme in these responses, but a couple noted the facility spaces are too small and that the facility needed better maintenance and upkeep. |



## Other

|      |  | AARC | ESB-MACC | GWC | AACHF |
|------|--|------|----------|-----|-------|
| Q5.a | I did not know this cultural center existed.               | 15%  | 7%       | 11% | 22%   |
| Q5.b | The rental fees are too high here.                         | 2%   | 2%       | 1%  | 1%    |
| Q5.c | The location is not convenient.                            | 6%   | 6%       | 3%  | 3%    |
| Q5.d | Operating hours do not work for me.                        | 1%   | 2%       | 1%  | 1%    |
| Q5.e | Spaces or rooms are unavailable to rent.                   | 1%   | 1%       | 1%  | 1%    |
| Q5.f | Spaces or rooms are not large enough to rent.              | 2%   | 2%       | 1%  | 1%    |
| Q5.g | The type of room/space or equipment I need is unavailable. | 1%   | 1%       | 1%  | 1%    |

### If you have not visited a cultural center, please provide some feedback about why you have not visited any of the centers.

205 respondents provided feedback on this question. The most common reason respondents noted for not having visited a cultural center was a lack of awareness. Respondents indicated they were either unaware the centers existed or did not know what kinds of programming and events were offered by the centers. The second most common reason noted was a lack of interest in visiting the centers. These comments indicated some awareness of the centers and program offerings, but the respondents indicated they were not interested in visiting. The third most common reason noted was that respondents had not had a specific reason to visit the centers. These respondents indicated they had not visited centers because of issues such as a lack of time, rather than being disinterested.

## Appendix B: Governance Models and Peer Cities Facilities

### Information on governance models of cultural centers

For the purpose of this audit, “governance” is defined as a City’s direct or indirect involvement in the promotion, administration, and funding of programs and activities of City-owned cultural centers.

There is no single nationally accepted best practice governance model for cultural centers. Literature on cultural centers notes four basic models for governance of cultural centers. Each governance model has advantages and disadvantages.

**Governance Models for Cultural Centers, Including Advantages and Disadvantages**

| Model  | Advantages  | Disadvantages  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Government-run</b> (a government department or agency operates the facility)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively stable funding</li> <li>• Public service aspect can mean low fees</li> <li>• Sharing of resources among various City-operated facilities</li> <li>• Transparency</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk of potential political interference, for example when deciding on programming</li> <li>• Public less inclined to make donations, since their taxes fund the facility (having a separate foundation could draw donations and lessen this impact)</li> <li>• Public sector pay grades may limit the quality of candidates</li> </ul> |
| <b>Nonprofit-run</b> (the facility is operated by a nonprofit, most often created specifically for operating the facility) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public service is valued—mission-driven</li> <li>• At least some level of transparency</li> <li>• Ability to fundraise, which can reduce reliance on earned revenue</li> </ul>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding sources may not be guaranteed</li> <li>• There may be competition for donations between a nonprofit established to run a facility and the organizations who use it</li> <li>• Nonprofit’s success is dependent on its board oversight</li> </ul>  |
| <b>User-run</b> (the facility operator is also its predominant user; its commonly a nonprofit)                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organization that uses facility the most is well-positioned to care for it</li> <li>• High level of programming aligned with mission</li> </ul>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential shortage of facility management skills</li> <li>• Could be less equitable for other organizations wanting to use the facility</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Fee-for-service</b> (government contracts with for-profit company or nonprofit that operates such facilities)           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be skilled in putting together events, promotion</li> <li>• Process to hire outside operator is efficient and transparent, based on a Request for Proposal process</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facility users, for-profit operator may develop strained relationship</li> <li>• Costs do not necessarily decrease for the government since it pays a fee to the operator and forgoes receiving any possible rent</li> </ul>  |

### Governance Models of Austin and Peer Cities Facilities

| City          | Group-dedicated cultural centers   | Governance Model  |
|---------------|--|---|
| Austin        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>African American Cultural and Heritage Facility</li> <li>Asian American Resource Center</li> <li>Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center</li> <li>George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center</li> </ul>   | Government-run  |
| Dallas        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>African American Museum</li> <li>Black Academy of Arts and Letters</li> <li>Dallas Black Dance Theatre</li> <li>Juanita Craft Civil Rights House</li> <li>Latino Cultural Center</li> <li>South Dallas Cultural Center</li> </ul>         | Hybrid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 Government-run</li> <li>3 Nonprofit (user-run)</li> </ul> |
| New York      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clemente Soto Véllez Cultural and Educational Center</li> <li>Dance Theatre of Harlem</li> <li>El Museo del Barrio</li> <li>Museum of Jewish Heritage</li> <li>Puerto Rican Traveling Theater</li> <li>Studio Museum in Harlem</li> </ul> | Nonprofit<br>(5 user-run, 1 nonprofit-run)  |
| Phoenix       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Black Theater Troupe</li> <li>Irish Cultural Center and McClelland Library</li> </ul>   | Nonprofit (user-run)  |
| San Antonio   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centro de Artes</li> <li>Carver Community Cultural Center</li> <li>Guadalupe Theater</li> </ul>   | Hybrid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Government-run</li> <li>1 Nonprofit (user-run)</li> </ul> |
| San Francisco | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>African American Art and Culture Complex</li> <li>Asian Art Museum of San Francisco</li> <li>Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts</li> </ul>   | Nonprofit (user-run)  |
| San José      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School of Arts and Culture at the Mexican Heritage Plaza</li> </ul>   | Nonprofit (user-run)  |
| Seattle       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute</li> </ul>  | Government-run  |

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## Scope

The audit scope included FY19 processes and activities in place for the:

- Asian American Resource Center (AARC)
- Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (ESB-MACC)
- George Washington Carver Museum, Culture and Genealogy Center (GWC)
- African American Cultural & Heritage Facility (AACHF)

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## Methodology

To complete this audit, we performed the following steps:

- interviewed stakeholders and key personnel in the Parks and Recreation Department and the Economic Development Department;
- interviewed members of related City commissions;
- reviewed Parks and Recreation Department and Economic Development Department policies, procedures and operational guidelines;
- surveyed community members to obtain their perceptions on how well cultural centers are serving the community;
- surveyed a sample of peer cities regarding their governance structure;
- researched best practices for governance of cultural centers;
- reviewed access management processes for the RecTrac system
- At the AARC, ESB-MACC, GWC we:
  - selected and reviewed a sample of programs to determine the accuracy and completion of program information in program planning worksheets;
  - selected and tested fee calculations for compliance with the City Council-approved fee schedule for transactions invoiced to customers;
  - reviewed cultural center staff training records;
- Additionally, at the AARC, ESB-MACC, GWC, and AACHF we:
  - reviewed City Code, City budget documents, and internal policies and procedures relating to the charging of fees by the cultural centers;
  - analyzed space use at the center using Outlook data;
  - reviewed and analyzed reported performance measures for the cultural centers;
  - surveyed cultural centers staff to obtain their input on center operations;
  - reviewed center maintenance plans;
  - reviewed center master plans and the allocated bond funding;
- evaluated Parks and Recreation Department and Economic Development Department internal controls related to the processes and procedures for cultural centers; and,
- evaluated the risk of fraud, waste, and abuse regarding the processes and procedures of the cultural centers included in the scope of the audit.

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## Audit Standards

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

DRAFT

The Office of the City Auditor was created by the Austin City Charter as an independent office reporting to City Council to help establish accountability and improve City services. We conduct performance audits to review aspects of a City service or program and provide recommendations for improvement.

#### **Audit Team**

Neha Sharma, Audit Manager  
Henry Katumwa, Auditor-in-Charge  
Matthew Clifton, Co-Auditor-in-Charge  
Kathie Harrison, Co-Auditor-in-Charge  
Kate Murdock, Co-Auditor-in-Charge  
Tyler Myers, Co-Auditor-in-Charge  
Andrew Scoggin  
Anna Morris  
Michael Sim  
Zarin Ahmed

#### **City Auditor**

Corrie Stokes

#### **Deputy City Auditor**

Jason Hadavi

#### **Office of the City Auditor**

**phone:** (512) 974-2805

**email:** [AustinAuditor@austintexas.gov](mailto:AustinAuditor@austintexas.gov)

**website:** <http://www.austintexas.gov/auditor>



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