

ITEM #: 19
DATE: 03-24-26
DEPT: ADMIN

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: SUMMER 2026 COMMISSION ON THE ARTS SPECIAL PROJECT GRANT CONTRACTS

BACKGROUND:

The Commission on the Arts (COTA) offers an Annual Grant program, which supports annual operating expenses for arts organizations, and two rounds (fall and spring) of Special Project Grants, which are smaller awards for unique or unforeseen opportunities. Following the award of the Spring 2026 Special Project Grants, a \$6,590.50 balance of unawarded funding remained in COTA's budget. Rather than allow this funding to return to the Local Option Sales Tax Fund balance, COTA elected to initiate a special third round of Special Project Grants. The maximum award amount was increased to \$2,500, and the projects were to be completed between April 1 and October 31, 2026.

On March 2, 2026, COTA finalized its recommendations for Summer 2026 Special Project Grants. Seven grant requests were received totaling \$11,450. COTA has \$6,579.50 in funding available for Summer 2026 Special Project grants. The requests and COTA's recommendations are described in the table below:

ORGANIZATION	REQUEST	PROJECT	RECOMMENDATION
Ames Community Arts Council	\$2,500	Empty Bowls 2026 Bowl Making Workshops	\$760
Friends of Ames Strings	\$2,500	Youth Education and Performance Opportunities	\$1,950
ACTORS	\$1,500	"Come From Away" Set Expenses	\$1,060
KHOI FM	\$700	Documentary Film Series	\$700
KHOI FM	\$1,500	"Map of My Kingdom" Production	\$875
Ames Town & Gown	\$750	Twelfth Night Early Music Ensemble Outreach	\$570
Octagon Center for the Arts	\$2,000	Ames Documentary Film Festival	\$648
TOTAL	\$11,450		\$6,563

Copies of the contracts were sent to the awarded organizations for approval. **On March 12, staff received a notification from Friends of Ames Strings that it had received the contract but would be declining the funding due to a change in programming plans. The notification was received too late for COTA to alter its recommendations prior to the start of the grant period. If the City Council desires, it could redistribute this \$1,950 to the remaining projects. Staff has prepared an alternative recommendation to accomplish this, which is reflected in the table below:**

ORGANIZATION	PROJECT	REQUEST	COTA REC.	CHANGE	STAFF REC.
Ames Community Arts Council	Empty Bowls 2026 Bowl Making Workshops	\$2,500	\$760	\$444	\$1,204
Friends of Ames Strings	Youth Education and Performance Opportunities	\$2,500	\$1,950	(\$1,950)	\$0
ACTORS	"Come From Away" Set Expenses	\$1,500	\$1,060	\$440	\$1,500
KHOI FM	Documentary Film Series	\$700	\$700	-	\$700
KHOI FM	"Map of My Kingdom" Production	\$1,500	\$875	\$443	\$1,318
Ames Town & Gown	Twelfth Night Early Music Ensemble Outreach	\$750	\$570	\$180	\$750
Octagon Center for the Arts	Ames Documentary Film Festival	\$2,000	\$648	\$443	\$1,091
TOTAL		\$11,450	\$6,563	\$0	\$6,563

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve the Summer 2026 COTA Special Project Grant contracts as recommended by staff in the amount of \$6,563.
2. Approve the Summer 2026 COTA Special Project Grant contracts as recommended by COTA in the amount of \$4,613.
3. Refer the contracts to COTA for further information.
4. Do not approve the contracts.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Special project grants help advance participation in and awareness of the arts in the Ames community, which is a key goal of the Commission on the Arts. COTA has reviewed the requests and has recommended the approval of the contracts now presented to the City Council. One of the grant recipients declined the awarded funds. Assuming COTA and the City Council would like to award all of the grant funds, City staff has therefore prepared an alternative recommendation to disburse those unused funds across the remaining requestors. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, as noted above.