

STAFF REPORT: SOLE SOURCE GRANT WAIVER REQUEST

General Operating Support for a Historical Museum and Archive Focused on LGBTQ+ History

Date: September 18, 2024

To: Members of the San Francisco Arts Commission

From: Lisa Zayas-Chien, Capital Program Manager, San Francisco Arts Commission

Re: Award of a sole source grant of up to \$400,000 to the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Historical Society (GLBT Historical Society), the sole operator of an existing museum of LGBTQ+ history and culture and the sole owner and operator of the Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives and Special Collections, to support operations and programming, including operational and programmatic readiness to transition to a new permanent location as the nation's first full-scale, co-located LGBTQ+ history museum and archive in San Francisco.

Background

In 2021, Mayor London N. Breed announced a \$12 million commitment to a permanent location for the nation's first full-scale, LGBTQ+ history museum and archive in San Francisco, followed by a \$5.5 million commitment of funding from State Senator Scott Wiener in 2022. In addition to celebrating and recognizing the history of the LGBTQ community, this museum is also expected to serve as a community gathering space for lectures and events, and as an economic driver for San Francisco, bringing in visitors from around the world.

In consideration of the local and state funding commitments, City staff have worked to identify potential opportunity sites, each of which required substantial due diligence to determine appropriateness for the museum and archive prior to site acquisition. On April 1, 2024, in keeping with the community-focused vision of this museum, the Arts Commission approved a sole source pre-development grant in the amount of \$240,000 to be awarded to the GLBT Historical Society to coordinate neighborhood and site-specific due diligence efforts. The GLBT Historical Society is actively conducting predevelopment-related due diligence activities at a potential opportunity site.

Proposal

Arts Commission staff propose a sole source award of \$400,000, with the intent to award this grant to the GLBT Historical Society to support operations and programming at their current sites, and to support operational and programmatic readiness to transition to an eventual permanent location for the nation's first full-scale, LGBTQ+ History Museum and Archive in San Francisco.

Sole Source Justification

Administrative Code Section 21G.8 provides that a Granting Agency may award a Grant without conducting an open and competitive process in certain circumstances and in accordance with the Purchaser's rules and regulations. Per Administrative Code Section 21G.9, sole source Grants shall be permitted when a Public Purpose may reasonably be accomplished by one particular Grantee.

Why is this the only entity that can fulfill this Public Purpose? What is it that the entity offers that is essential to fulfilling the Public Purpose?

- Public Purpose.

Awarding this grant will substantially advance the intent to develop and sustain the nation's first full-scale LGBTQ+ history museum and research center, celebrating and recognizing the history of the LGBTQ community. This museum will also serve as a community gathering space for lectures and events, and as an economic driver for San Francisco, bringing in visitors from around the world.

- Grantee Can Reasonably Accomplish Public Purpose.

The GLBT Historical Society is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, the sole local operator of the City's GLBT Historical Society Museum located in the Castro (4127 18th Street), and the owner and operator of a unique and publicly accessible San Francisco LGBTQ archive located in the downtown/Mid-Market area (989 Market Street). The GLBT Historical Society Museum is the first stand-alone museum of LGBTQ history and culture in the United States, offering regular exhibitions, research and programming. The Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives and Special Collections of the GLBT Historical Society are among the largest and most extensive holdings in the world of materials pertaining to LGBTQ people, including a collection of over 1,000 items spanning more than 100 years of queer history and 4,000 linear feet. The collection includes personal papers, organizational records, periodicals, oral histories, photographs, audiovisual recordings, ephemera, artifacts and works of art. Four hundred educators, researchers, and artists annually engage with the archives for free.

Through its past feasibility study, the GLBT Historical Society demonstrated the ability to work with multiple subcontractors and community stakeholders to advance the vision of an LGBTQ+ museum and research center, and to attract and secure funding commitments.

What steps were taken to verify that this is the only entity that can fulfill this Public Purpose? Has the department contacted other entities to evaluate their ability to fulfill the Public Purpose, and if so, describe the entities and explain why they cannot meet the department's needs.

Arts Commission staff spent approximately six hours reviewing:

- 1) Existing SFAC grantee organizations with a self-identified LGBTQ+ affiliation

SFAC staff reviewed a list of 389 grantees from Fiscal Year 2021 to Fiscal Year 2023 and identified GLBT Historical Society as the sole museum with a mission focused on LGBTQ people.

- 2) Registered not-for-profit organizations operating an LGBTQ+ museum and archive

Using the Guidestar nonprofit database, Arts Commission staff found no evidence of a registered, active nonprofit LGBTQ+ museum and archive in northern California with employees other than the GLBT Historical Society. The Society confirmed it is the largest museum of its kind in the 9-county Bay Area.

- 3) The feasibility study for an LGBTQ+ Museum & Research Center published in 2019

As the commissioner of the feasibility study, conducted with ehdd, Gallagher & Associates, and AECOM, GLBT Historical Society is uniquely positioned to leverage its previous work that includes space planning and programming scenarios to build from.

Since 2019, Arts Commission staff have engaged with city agencies including the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development, the Real Estate Division and the Office of Economic and Workforce Development on this project, during which time no other operator has been suggested by community stakeholders in numerous meetings with LGBTQ+ organizational leaders and residents present.

- Verification.

Staff can confirm through online research that the GLBT Historical Society museum and archive are a unique publicly available resource, referenced by innumerable arts, cultural and educational institutions as a "National Resource". In addition, in 2022, the Arts Commission conducted a public solicitation for Citywide Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) Services for capacity building for a historical museum focused on LGBTQ history for which the GLBT Historical Society was ultimately selected as the grantee.

Because of its unique knowledge of the LGBTQ+ community and history paired with operation of a museum and archive, GLBT Historical Society is uniquely qualified to manage the tasks associated with due diligence of sustainably operating a new museum on this scale, paired with the evaluation of potential sites.

Grant Amount: Up to \$400,000

Grant Duration: 12-24 months