



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: May 1, 2025
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Meeting Date: June 4, 2025
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TO: Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities
FROM: General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services
SUBJECT: Theatre Rental Grant Allocations – Fall 2025 and Spring 2026

Recommendations

- A. THAT Council approve Theatre Rental Grants totaling \$1,278,350 from the 2025 Cultural Grants Operating Budget to the 47 organizations listed in Table A of Appendix A for the amounts recommended in the “Sept 1 – Dec 31, 2025 Recommendation” column to allow organizations to use the Civic Theatres for the September 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025 season.
- B. THAT Council approve, in advance of the 2026 operating budget, Theatre Rental Grants totaling \$1,902,525 from the 2026 Cultural Grants Operating Budget to the 61 organizations listed in Table B of Appendix A for the amounts recommended in the “Jan 1- Aug 31, 2026 Recommendation” column to allow organizations to use the Civic Theatres for the January 1, 2026 - August 31, 2026 season.
- C. THAT Council delegate its authority to execute grant agreements that include terms and conditions that are consistent with this report, that satisfy the City’s Director of Legal Services, and that disburse the grants described in this report to the City’s General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services (or their designate).
- D. THAT, pursuant to Section 206(1)(j) of the *Vancouver Charter*, Council deems any organization listed in Appendix A of this report that is not otherwise a registered charity with Canada Revenue Agency to be contributing to the culture of Vancouver.

- E. THAT no legal rights or obligations will arise or be created by Council's adoption of these Recommendations unless and until all legal documentation has been executed and delivered by the respective parties.

Recommendations A and B require two-thirds affirmative votes of all Council members pursuant to section 206(1) of the Vancouver Charter.

Purpose and Executive Summary

This report recommends a total of \$1,278,350 to 47 cultural organizations for use of the Vancouver Civic Theatres (VCT) during the Fall 2025 performing arts season that runs from September 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025.

This report recommends a total of \$1,902,525 to 61 cultural organizations for use of the Vancouver Civic Theatres (VCT) during the Spring 2026 performing arts season that runs from January 1, 2026 to August 31, 2026.

The recommendations support the key civic policy and strategic directions including *Vibrant Vancouver*, *City Council's Strategic Priorities*, *Culture|Shift: Blanketing the City in Arts and Culture*, the City's 10-year culture plan, including the *Vancouver Music Strategy* and *Making Space for Arts and Culture*.

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

On May 29, 2024 (RTS 16264), Council approved 45 Theatre Rental Grants totalling \$1,275,294 for the period of Sept. 1-Dec. 31, 2024 and 66 Theatre Rental Grants totalling \$1,866,975 for the period of Jan 1-Aug. 31, 2025.

On November 26, 2024 (RTS 16477) Council approved new rental rates for VCT that included both commercial and not-for-profit rental rates for the performing arts season that runs from September 1, 2025 to August 31, 2026.

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

Context and Background

The City of Vancouver has a long history of supporting the role that arts and culture play in elevating the distinct characteristics of the city. For the City as local government, that support has been provided through the long-standing Council-approved Cultural Grants program that provides cash and/or space grants to arts and culture non-profits. This granting program includes providing below-market access to Vancouver Civic Theatres (VCT), a portfolio of City-run performance venues, offering arts and culture non-profit organizations (NPOs) the

opportunity to produce and present local and international artists and creators to residents and visitors of the city.

About the Vancouver Civic Theatres (VCT)

VCT, a department within Arts, Culture, and Community Services, operates four major performance venues: the Orpheum (2,672 seat concert hall), Queen Elizabeth Theatre (2,765 seat proscenium theatre), Vancouver Playhouse (668 seat proscenium theatre), and Annex (191 seat multi-purpose performing arts space). In 2024, VCT worked with commercial promoters, NPOs, and community groups to host 843 events across all four venues, with 824,668 patrons and a diverse range of disciplines, performing arts genres, and event types.

VCT enhances the performing arts experience and strengthens the cultural fabric of the city. Through state of the art professionally equipped theatres, supported by experienced professional staff, VCT plays an integral role in the cultural and economic health of the city. VCT provides culture enthusiasts with access to an array of arts and entertainment productions, including concerts, theatre, classical music, opera, dance, film, lectures and many other varied event types.

Many performing arts centres across the country operate as NPOs and thus have access to multiple sources of funding or revenue: earned revenues such as ticket sales, facility levies, gift shop sales; public funding such as tax contributions; and private funding, such as philanthropic donations). VCT, as a municipally owned and operated business, primarily relies on earned revenues from the following areas: venue rentals, VCT programming, food and beverage, facility fees, ticket surcharge, merchandise commission, and parking.

About Theatre Rental Grants (TRG)

The TRG program is designed to support Vancouver-based, professional arts and cultural NPOs that have a mission to develop, create, produce, present, and disseminate artistic work for the benefit of the public and the arts sector, in any artistic discipline (e.g. Indigenous arts, community arts, dance, interdisciplinary, literary, media, multidisciplinary, music, theatre, and visual arts).

The TRG are “offset” grants that support eligible cultural non-profit producers and presenters to use VCT’s iconic, civic venues and associated spaces at below market rates. As a result, these organizations animate the City’s theatres and present a range of culturally diverse performances to the community at lower ticket costs than would be required were the theatre rental rates set at market value.

As an offset grant, the TRG provides rental subsidy and assistance for certain VCT costs (including a portion of event staff labour costs and in-house technical equipment) and serves a range of organizations, from large-scale year-round users to small-sized occasional users. The program objectives are to assist organizations with artistic development, to increase their profile, and to expand their audiences.

The theatre rental grant Program Guide is found online: <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/theatre-rental-grant-information-guide.pdf>

Discussion

Recommendations in this report are for 2025/2026 Performing Arts Season that runs from September 1, 2025 to August 31, 2026 and seek to support the implementation of key directions in *Culture/Shift* and build on previous City support and investment in the cultural diversity and economic vitality of the city. If the recommendations are approved, for the 2025/2026 TRG Season, VCT will provide access to a diverse range of programming in all disciplines and across many local and global cultures, representing Indigenous, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Asian, African diaspora, Middle Eastern cultures, and others.

TRG Assessment Process

The applications were evaluated by a staff team using the published application criteria, while also cross-checking applicants' bookings and theatre availability. The review considers the organization's capacity to produce the event as proposed and the anticipated community impact of the presentation. Grants are being recommended to applicants as listed in Table A Section A (Sept. 1 – Dec. 31, 2025) and Table B (Jan. 1 – Aug. 31, 2026) of Appendix A.

TRG recommendations are awarded on a per usage basis and are based on Council-approved NPO rental rates. Funds from any grants that cannot be partially or fully used are reallocated to eligible but unfunded applicants or new initiatives that meet the TRG funding guidelines.

The recommendations are based on the published program criteria, which include:

- Equitable access to programs and services;
- Confirmed booking at a VCT venue within the 2025/2026 Season;
- Respectful and safe working conditions for artists, staff, volunteers, and contractors;
- Participation, Access and Impact (audiences and participants reflect the diversity of the city; accessibility plans and practices are in place; there is demand for the programs);
- Leadership and Administration (skilled leadership, working with artists and creative collaborators with the relevant lived experience, permission, knowledge, skills, and expertise to lead and contribute to the work); and,
- Mix of revenue sources (earned, private and public) for the project.

Grant Recommendations

The TRG program works within established budgets to both make space for equity deserving and new NPOs while at the same time continuing to support existing groups in their annual programming to provide access to VCT and support operational health.

There is growing pressure on the TRG program as a result of increasing growth and diversity in the creative community: past and current TRG recipients are seeking to expand their level of activity, 13 new NPOs are requesting support for the first time, and staff continue to seek to support increased access for equity-deserving groups. Overall, applications for grants have been increasing and – like with other grants programs – the associated cumulative funding requests exceed available funding (see metrics highlighted in Table 1). As a result, the TRG process is highly competitive and while all groups did receive a grant, not all requests meet the evaluation criteria to the same degree as other applicants and, therefore, not every organization can be recommended for funding to the level of their request.

Table 1 – Key Metrics: Requests vs Recommended

TRG Funding	Requested #	Recomm. \$	%	Requested \$	Recomm. \$	%
Fall 2025	47	47	100	\$1,787,395	\$1,278,350	71
Spring 2026	61	61	100	\$2,417,342	\$1,902,525	79

Financial Implications

As an offset grant program, TRG is an internal transfer from the Arts & Culture Grants budget to the VCT Operating Budget. Council-approved TRG cover the costs of approved, eligible event costs and are applied as rental revenue to the VCT Operating Budget. TRG events generate other revenue for VCT such as Food and Beverages sales, ticket surcharges, and parking that are used to offset costs and reduce or eliminate the VCT's reliance on property tax revenue to support operations. On average, TRG rental revenues represent approximately half of VCT's annual rental budget.

The 2025 TRG budget is \$3,018,713. In May 2024 (RTS 16264), Council approved in advance of the 2025 budget, grants totalling \$1,866,975 for Spring 2025 events at VCT venues. This leaves \$1,151,738 to be allocated in the 2025 TRG budget. The 2024/2025 season continues to show some challenges due to increased production and travel costs and economic impacts from the global market, reduced revenue opportunities from corporate sponsorship, and reduced public funding. These impacts affected numerous granted organizations in 2024 and forced some organizations to cancel or reduce the number of events or move to smaller capacity venues. In an effort retain these events at VCT, \$39,104 of un-allocated TRG has been carried forward to 2025 to maintain utilization of VCT. As of May 1, 2025, 11 granted organizations have cancelled or will underuse their Spring 2025 approved bookings, thereby making \$88,105 available for reallocation in the Fall 2025 season. This will essentially fully utilize available funding for 2025, leaving a forecasted total of \$597 of TRG to be allocated at the end of 2025, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Summary of 2025 Theatre Rental Grants funding

2024 Underused or cancelled Theatre Rental Grants carry forward	39,104
2025 Theatre Rental Grants Budget	3,018,713
2025 Theatre Rental Grants (Jan. – Aug.) (RTS 16264)	(1,866,975)
2025 Theatre Rental Grants Spring 2025 cancellations or underuses (forecast as of May 1, 2025)	88,105
TOTAL FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR ALLOCATION	1,278,947
2025 Theatre Rental Grants recommended in this report – Sept. – Dec.	(1,278,350)
2025 FORECASTED THEATRE RENTAL GRANTS BALANCE	597

Staff are therefore recommending 47 grants totalling \$1,278,350 for Sept. 1 - Dec. 31, 2025. The source of funds is the 2025 TRG budget.

This report also requests approval of grants to 61 organizations for VCT uses from Jan 1-Aug 31, 2026, totalling \$1,902,525 in advance of Council's confirmation of the 2026 operating budget. The source of funds is to be the 2026 Cultural Grants Operating budget. These grants are summarized in Table 3 and listed in Appendix A, Section B. Should the 2026 TRG budget remain the same as 2025 at \$3,018,713, a balance of \$1,116,188 in TRG funds will remain to be allocated for the rest of the year.

Table 3 – Summary of 2026 Theatre Rental Grants Projected Funding

2026 Theatre Rental Grants Budget (projected to be the same as 2025)	3,018,713
2026 Theatre Rental Grant Recommendations in this report (Jan. – Aug.)	(1,902,525)
2026 TOTAL THEATRE RENTAL GRANTS BUDGET AVAILABLE TO ALLOCATE FOR Sept. 1 - Dec. 31, 2026	1,116,188

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report's recommendations.

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APPENDIX A

A. Sept. 1 – Dec. 31, 2025 Theatre Rental Grant Recommendations		
Organization	Sept 1 - Dec 31, 2025 Requested	Sept 1 - Dec 31, 2025 Recommendation
Afro Van Connect Society	1,660	1,660
All My Relations Indigenous Society*	82,730	82,730
Amexem Reggae Cultural Society*	5,025	5,025
Arts Umbrella Association	31,990	19,450
Asian-Canadian Special Events Association	7,515	5,025
Blackout Art Society	6,640	1,660
Caravan World Rhythm Society	5,025	5,025
Circus 3 Arts Society (Sophisticated Laughter Theatrical Society)*	14,785	7,550
Compaigni V'ni Dansi Society	4,980	4,150
Erato Ensemble Society	1,660	1,660
Friends of Chamber Music	15,075	5,025
Greater Vancouver International Film Festival Society	154,645	127,070
Kokoro Dance Theatre Society	6,640	1,660
Lions Gate Chorus	16,575	12,305
Music on Main Society	3,320	1,660
Nahualli Folklore Society	5,025	5,025
Native Hip Hop Society*	3,320	3,320
New Old World Music Society	15,030	3,320
Pacific Ballet British Columbia Society (Ballet B.C.)	165,365	132,375
Raven Spirit Dance Society	3,320	3,320
RE:Naissance Opera	9,960	5,810
Rosario Ancer Flamenco Arts Society	5,025	5,025
SeeYa Youth Fraternity Foundation	5,025	5,025
Seismic Shift Arts Society (DanceHouse)	33,900	15,075

Southeast Asian Cultural Heritage Society	3,320	1,660
The Society of We Are Canadians Too	4,980	3,320
The Vancouver Bach Choir	20,520	20,520
The Vancouver Chopin Society	11,295	3,765
The Vancouver International Writers Festival Society	26,625	5,025
The Vancouver Men's Chorus	23,875	13,825
The Vancouver Out On Screen Film and Video Society	10,050	10,050
Time Will Tell Arts Society	1,660	1,660
Turning Point Ensemble	6,640	1,660
Urban Ink Production Society	42,760	27,635
Vancouver Academy of Music	24,610	24,610
Vancouver Chamber Choir	24,790	24,790
Vancouver Chinese Film Festival Association	2,490	1,660
Vancouver Choral Arts Society	24,855	12,305
Vancouver Metropolitan Orchestra	12,305	12,305
Vancouver New Music Society	5,810	1,660
Vancouver Opera Association	113,690	105,475
Vancouver Recital Society	27,615	16,320
Vancouver Seniors' Singing Club Association.	1,660	1,660
Vancouver Symphony Society	781,945	521,855
VSO School of Music Society	8,345	3,320
West Coast Harp Society	1,660	1,660
Yarilo Contemporary Music Society	1,660	1,660
Total	1,787,395	1,278,350

*SUBJECT TO CONDITION

B. Jan. 1 – Aug. 31, 2026 Theatre Rental Grant Recommendations		
Organization	Jan 1 - Aug 31, 2026 Requested	Jan 1 - Aug 31, 2026 Recommendation
Allegra Chamber Orchestra Society*	2,490	1,660
Arts Umbrella Association	62,860	40,200
Asian-Canadian Special Events Association	12,305	12,305
B.C. Chinese Music Association	1,660	1,660
Belle Spirale Dance Projects Society	6,640	6,640
Blueridge Chamber Music Society	8,300	3,320
Canadian Music Competitions of British Columbia Society	2,490	1,660
Chor Leoni Choral Society	830	830
Circollective Society for Circus Artists	3,320	1,660
Circus 3 Arts Society (Sophisticated Laughter Theatrical Society)*	4,150	4,150
City Opera of Vancouver Society	8,300	5,810
Erato Ensemble Society	1,660	1,660
Friends of Chamber Music	31,395	31,395
Indian Summer Arts Society	19,225	19,225
Inverso Productions Society	4,980	4,980
Karen Flamenco Dance Society*	10,060	10,060
Little Mountain Lion Productions Association	5,810	4,150
MENA Film Festival Society	5,025	5,025
Movement Dance Productions Society	17,600	10,050
Music on Main Society	5,025	5,025
Musica Intima Society	2,490	2,490
Muzewest Concerts Society	6,640	6,640
Opera Unbound	8,300	3,320
Pacific Ballet British Columbia Society (Ballet B.C.)	173,515	140,525
Pro Musica Society of Vancouver (Vancouver Pro Musica)	1,660	1,660

PuSH International Performing Arts Festival Society	48,530	34,280
Raagaverse Cultural Society	1,660	1,660
Raven Spirit Dance Society	3,320	3,320
Rosario Ancer Flamenco Arts Society	1,660	1,660
RunNGun Filmmakers Society	24,855	16,575
Seismic Shift Arts Society (DanceHouse)	70,420	60,320
Sound of Dragon Society	5,810	4,980
TAFF Art Society*	4,980	3,320
Taiwanese Canadian Cultural Society	6,640	4,980
The Coastal Jazz and Blues Society	93,632	30,150
The Documentary Media Society	5,025	5,025
The Standing Wave Society	1,660	1,660
The Vancouver Bach Choir	25,785	25,785
The Vancouver Chinese Singers Society	5,025	5,025
The Vancouver Chopin Society	35,905	16,070
The Vancouver Men's Chorus	1,660	1,660
Time Will Tell Arts Society	10,050	5,025
Turning Point Ensemble	4,980	4,980
Vancouver Academy of Music	39,430	24,610
Vancouver Asian Film Festival Society	7,550	5,025
Vancouver Cantonese Opera	2,490	2,490
Vancouver Choral Arts Society	24,855	16,575
Vancouver Dancing Club	5,025	5,025
Vancouver Independent Music Centre Society	1,660	1,660
Vancouver International Burlesque Festival Association	10,050	10,050
Vancouver International Dance Festival Society	16,600	16,600
Vancouver Metropolitan Orchestra	17,330	12,305
Vancouver New Music Society	5,810	4,980
Vancouver Opera Association	295,725	254,650

Vancouver Recital Society	51,470	51,470
Vancouver Seniors' Singing Club Association.	5,025	5,025
Vancouver Society for Early Music	22,580	18,395
Vancouver Symphony Society	1,132,575	904,400
Vancouver Tap Dance Society	5,810	3,320
VSO School of Music Society	13,370	11,710
Yarilo Contemporary Music Society	1,660	1,660
Total	2,417,342	1,902,525

*SUBJECT TO CONDITION