

2020 GOS GRANT SURVEY FINDINGS

Since 2016, recipients of the General Operating Support (GOS) Grants were asked to complete a survey with information about key indicators. This has helped staff, members of the Arts Commission, and City Council to understand the impacts of the Cultural Grants Program and the health of the cultural community. This year, the extraordinary events of 2020 are the focus. The data below provides look back at the progress of these indicators over time. And, what that can tell us about the impacts of the pandemic and recession.

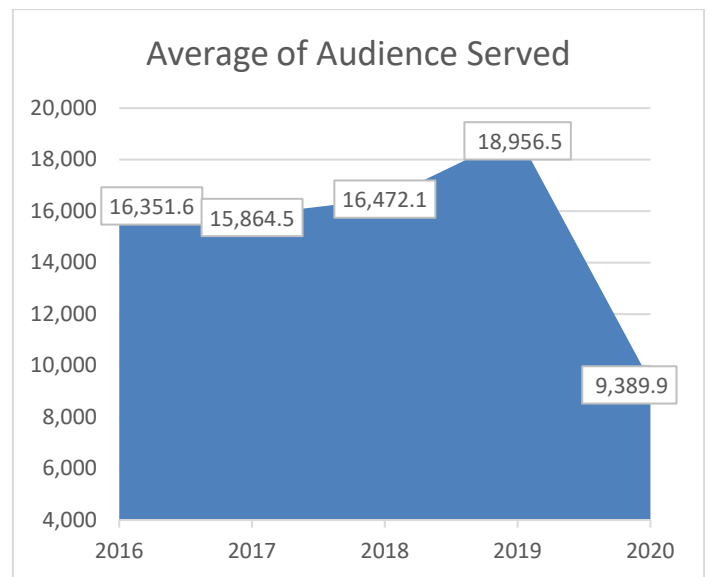
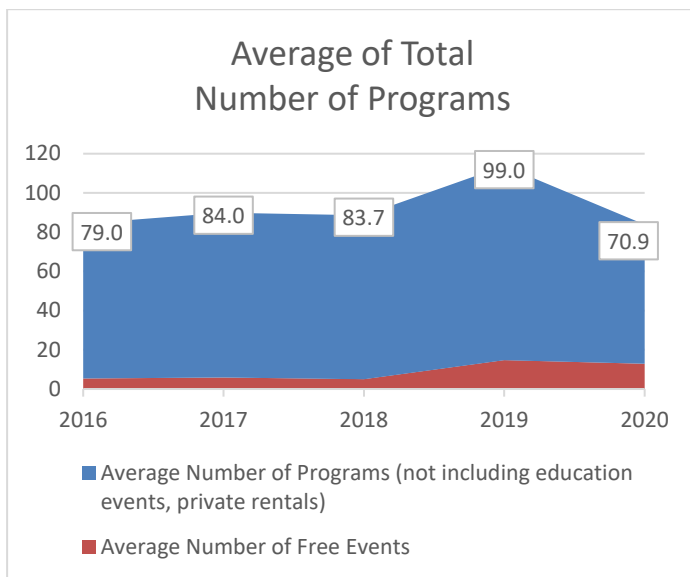
A note: the survey captures general measures. This does not always work the same for every discipline and every type of organization; there is variety in the criteria gathered when evaluating an organization. The data relies on each organization to make some judgments and provide the most accurate information possible.

About the GOS Grants in 2020

- > \$748,000 was distributed for General Operating Support to 37 organizations. Grants were provided in amounts that range between \$8,000 to \$50,000 depending on the size of the organization’s budget.
- > Among small organizations, the portion of an organization’s total budget that comes from this grant is between 22% to 6%. For medium, large and extra-large budgets that number ranges from 7% to 3%.

Programming

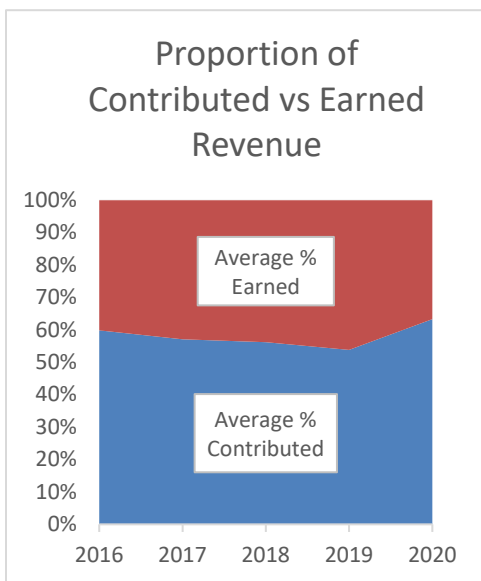
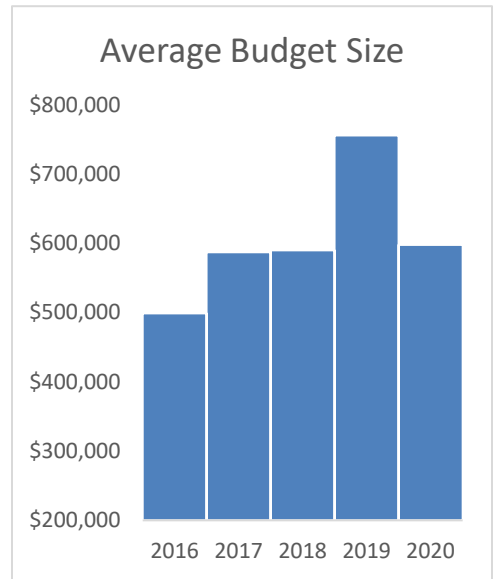
We asked these arts organizations how many programs they offer including performances, exhibitions, participatory events, festivals, screenings, artist talks, and more. Education classes and private functions are separated out. The data shows a steady increase over the years as each organization offered more programming to meet the community need. The pandemic stopped all in-person programming for a time. That was expected to result in a sharp decline in the number of offerings. However, the initiative of most organizations to produce online events and safe in-person programs mitigated the decline. Considering the upheaval, it is remarkable that people continued to turn out for the arts; the average attendance was nearly 50% of 2019 levels.



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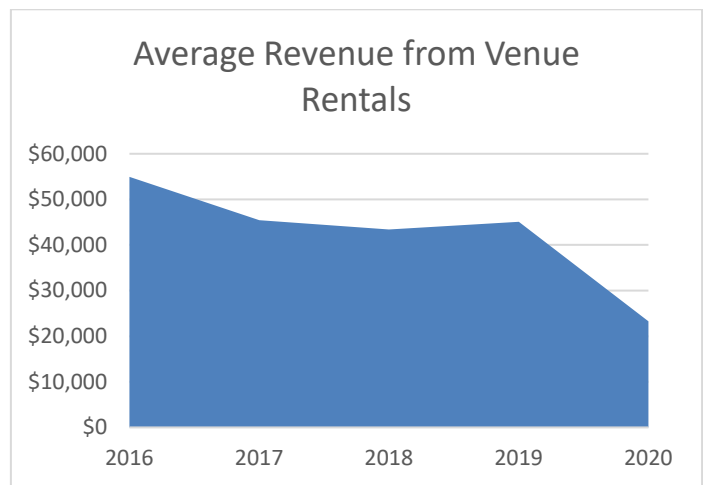
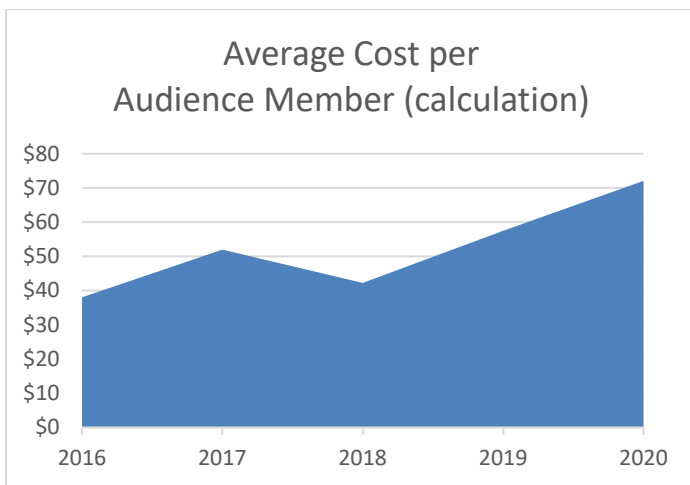
Budget

It is difficult to say that there is an “average” budget for Boulder arts organizations. Compared nationally, most organizations would fit in small or medium categories. However, within that narrow spectrum, there is a stratification: more than half of the organizations surveyed have a budget below \$100,000 and the other half manages between a budget range of \$100,000 to more than \$4 million. Thus, the average budget is included only to give a sense of change over time: steps of growth followed by a retraction in 2020. The retraction was likely mitigated by an increase in contributed revenue, as shown in the second chart. Government rescue grants from local, state, and Federal sources as well as relief grants from private foundations appear to have been effective.



The practice of maintaining a standard operating reserve may be the key for a nonprofit to stay resilient through tough times. One quarter of the organizations surveyed reported a deficit or the need to use reserves in 2020. Most reported no or only modest surplus. A few maintained healthy operating reserves. While in normal circumstances that might be a sign of organizational health, during the pandemic it may simply be due to the precipitous decline in costs due to cancelled programs.

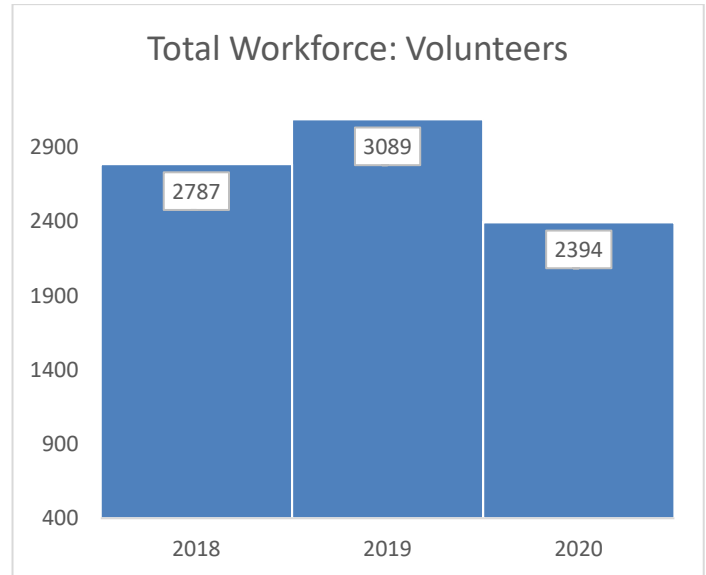
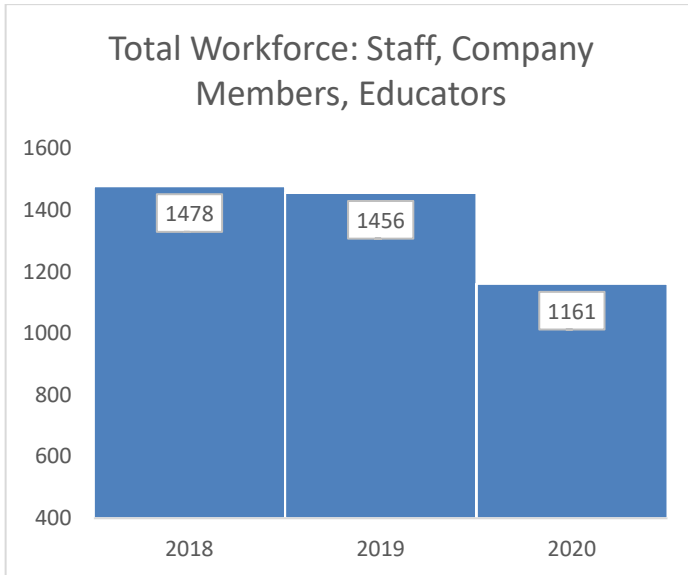
Another measure of financial health is cost per person. This is a simple calculation of the annual budget divided by number of people served. The steep rise shows how the shift to online and safe in-person events did not imply reduced costs: the opposite is true. Also, among theaters and museums, the revenue from renting spaces fell precipitously. This important revenue source was decimated by pandemic restrictions.



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Workforce

The professional workforce in arts nonprofits retracted in the pandemic. This loss of workforce was the critical impact of the pandemic. The loss of ~300 in these 37 organizations aligns with other issues in the workforce: artists lost contracts as performances, concerts, and exhibitions were cancelled, classes were cancelled putting educators out of work, and support contractors such as theater technicians and caterers lost contracts.



More Perspective

Below are other studies and assessments on the impacts that the pandemic, restrictions, and recession had on the arts and the creative sector of the economy:

- Scientific and Cultural Facilities District
COVID Impact Survey (September 2020)
<http://scfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/SCFD-2020-COVID-Impact-Survey.pdf>
- Colorado Creative Industries / Colorado State University
2020 Colorado Creative Economy Report (October 2020)
https://oedit.colorado.gov/sites/coedit/files/2020-10/2020_colorado_creative_economy_report.pdf
- Americans for the Arts
Impact of COVID 19 Data Dashboard (ongoing)
<https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/disaster-preparedness/the-economic-impact-of-coronavirus-on-the-arts-and-culture-sector>