



FAQs

What are you advocating for?

The King County Council has an opportunity to create **transformative access to science, heritage, and the arts for its residents**. With a focus on geographic equity, this investment would reach underserved communities, create new programs for youth and seniors, and expand educational programming for schools and students.

To achieve this, we are requesting the King County Council to vote in favor of the *Doors Open* bill to enact a 0.1% sales tax, totaling a penny for every \$10 spent. This would raise more than \$90 million each year and would be distributed through a grant pool administered by 4Culture, a trusted, well-organized funding agency with 45 years of experience.

Why do we need this?

Study after study shows strong links between arts-science-and-culture education and **positive outcomes for young people, aging adults, and neighborhood vitality**. These impacts range from mental health and self-esteem to overall school performance, improved graduation rates, greater civic participation, neighborhood cohesion, and pride.

The pandemic accelerated the siloing of our county's populations. An MIT study tracked cellphone data in Seattle and its suburbs and found that people in under-served communities are 15% more isolated now and are not returning to the same civic spaces they once did. King County's economic growth and recovery is tied directly to the strength of our community network. This tax would support and transport, helping to bring people together once again, which would be a win for our residents, our communities, and our small businesses.

Who will benefit?

Kids. Seniors. Underserved communities. Small businesses. Every resident, in every district of King County.

15% of *Doors Open* funding will be directed to public school students. This would mean approximately \$12 million dollars to fund school partnerships. This will help support the programs being cut to balance school budgets. Currently, our schools are making heart-breaking decisions to try to make ends meet. *Doors Open* will help. Beyond that 15%, significant additional program funds for public school students will be available in the form of field trips; before and after school programs; student transportation and admission costs; youth internships; free or reduced cost ticket programs; and more.

More than 500 science, heritage, and arts organizations will receive this funding, and every one of them have programs that reach out beyond their buildings and into their communities throughout King County. These programs, like The Ailey Camp in Des Moines, can be life-changing in their impact. Ailey is a free, 6-week, personal development camp using dance to teach key life skills to 60 middle schoolers from all over the

county. They were forced to trim one week of Ailey camp this summer because transportation costs had risen so drastically: from \$30,000 in 2019 to \$70,000 in 2023. *Doors Open* could cover that funding gap and could expand their camp to include more youth and teens.

How will *Doors Open* help our economy?

Local businesses rely on science, heritage, and arts organizations to drive tourism and revenue – and to produce an innovative workforce. The Arts & Culture sector represents 10.8% of the state’s Gross Domestic Product, contributing \$72.8 billion to Washington’s economy, and supports nearly 190,000 jobs statewide. (Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis – 2023)

The Washington State Department of Commerce actively courts new companies by touting our state’s “Creative Economy.” This unique economy, they say, is a hotbed of innovative minds and encompasses more than 100 creative professions – from sound designers to 3D printing technologists and digital animators. Science, heritage, and arts programming in schools and communities feeds that pipeline of innovative minds that makes Washington’s workforce so coveted.

Why now?

The sooner we fund, the sooner King County residents benefit.

The pandemic set off a scramble for survival as organizations were forced to close their doors and shutter their community outreach. These cuts and closures disproportionately impacted already-disadvantaged communities, schools, communities of color, and people with disabilities. We have an opportunity to build back stronger, restart furloughed programs, launch new endeavors, and bring together communities isolated by the pandemic. The best time to provide transformative access to science, heritage, and arts programs is now.

Is a sales tax really our best option?

We understand that Washington’s tax system is flawed and ties the hands of elected officials who want to help underserved communities. Without another tool available though, it is necessary to rely on a 0.1% sales tax to fund essential programming. Though a sales tax is regressive in some ways, its impacts are far more modest because it is so broadly distributed. The average family will pay \$40 per year on this tax, but their return on that investment will be evident in their schools, communities, and neighborhood vitality. And that is one of many reasons the program is committed to geographic equity: to get those dollars back into the communities that need them.

What is geographic equity and why is it so important?

Where a person chooses or is able to live has a direct impact on their ability to access health, safety and opportunity. Proximity to metropolitan areas often determines communities’ access to infrastructure, resources, and influence. With this vote, the King County Council will open doors to science, heritage, and arts experiences for all King County residents, creating life-changing opportunities for economically and geographically underserved populations and others who face barriers to accessing diverse cultural experiences. This step toward equity would provide public benefits to all.

In 2017, a public vote showed incredible support for this sales tax, but the initiative stumbled by less than one percentage point. The message from the public was clear: equitable distribution of funds was essential. In that initiative, 70% of funds raised were slated to be spent on the largest regional organizations. Today, that ratio requirement has been eliminated and funding will instead flow to more than 500 organizations of every size, in every district.

From Shoreline to Auburn, Des Moines to Duvall, everyone benefits.

How are these funds allocated?

The King County Council will decide the final spending plan as they deliberate. At this time, allocations are laid out as follows:

Doors Open (75% of overall funding, focused on geographic equity throughout King County)

- **Programmatic Support (50%)** Programmatic Support awards are grants to meet the day-to-day needs of arts, preservation, heritage, and science organizations. The funds provide support for both operations and delivery of access programs.
- **Public School Access Program (15%)** A special fund that expands access to arts, heritage, and science education for public school students in each of King County's 19 public school districts. Awards in this program go to arts, heritage, and science nonprofits that provide activities in schools; bring local artists, historians, and scientists into the classroom; and provide field trips to cultural venues for students.
- **Public Free Admission (15%)** Arts, heritage, preservation, and science organizations are reimbursed to cover the costs of providing free access to the public for science and cultural experiences. Funds may also be used to reduce or eliminate travel-related costs incurred by organizations, which can help financially support transportation for visitors who live further away, taking them to science and cultural venues or events.
- **Building for Equity (10%)** Awards that help organizations acquire, build, or renovate brick-and-mortar buildings as well as purchase the essential equipment that makes cultural and scientific experiences possible.
- **Countywide Initiatives and Projects (7%)** A special fund for taking advantage of unique opportunities and making proactive investments in countywide initiatives, public programs, individual cultural practitioners, limited time events, or unmet community needs.
- **Launch Funding (3%)** A fund for the creation of new organizations to help ensure all geographic areas of King County and all communities have access to science and culture.

Cultural Infrastructure Capacity (22% of overall funding)

- A fund dedicated to building cultural infrastructure capacity for communities and emerging organizations outside of Seattle. This fund will help them build the capacity, programs or projects needed to better serve their missions and communities.

Administrative Costs (3%) Funds to support 4Culture to administer the program, as stated in the legislation.

Note: 2024 would differ from the allocations above as the program ramps up in its first year: 2% for 4Culture and County startup costs, 3% for administration, 67% for capital and operating grants pool, and the remainder reserved for future Doors Open programming in 2025 and beyond. The remaining six years would be allocated as listed above.