Increasing access to cultural experiences: from arts organizations to science centers and zoos

Cultural access is as important as transportation and education investments in building the foundation for a strong economy.

The Prosperity Partnership and cultural organizations across the state are supporting legislation that would enable counties to create special funds which would be used to increase access to cultural experiences.

Benefits:

Increased Public Access

- Reduced or free admission to cultural and scientific educational organizations
- Create new or expanded programs for families and individuals
- Increase cultural activities in both rural and urban areas of the state

Increased Public School Student Access

- Expand experiences at schools or on-site at cultural or scientific educational organizations
- Fund transportation for every public school student to attend or participate in cultural or scientific educational organizations – once a year
- Focus on schools which have high participation in the reduced school-meal programs

Cultural Access Fund Creation:

- Grant single or multi-county regions authority to create Cultural Access Funds as independent taxing districts
- Grant local authority to seek a sales tax increment up to one tenth of one cent or a similarly sized property tax increase
- Present a ballot a measure for citizens to create and fund Cultural Access Funds
- Cultural organizations eligible to participate must be 501(c)(3) or state-designated nonprofit organizations and/or “accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums”
- Community-based organizations would be eligible for grants administered either by counties or the Washington State Arts Commission
- Regional organizations that serve significant populations would be eligible for funds of up to 15 percent of their operating budget
- Ten percent of the Access funds would be set-aside to provide direct grants to:
  o Fund transportation for students to cultural and scientific educational organizations
  o Fund emerging cultural organizations
  o Fund special regional events

Accountability measures:

- Fund would sunset after seven years unless reauthorized by legislature or public vote
- Cultural Access Funds would be overseen by a board of directors appointed by counties, local governments and Governor
- Administrative costs administered by counties would be capped on a graduated scale based on population

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