



TO: Hyun Kim, Interim City Manager
FROM: Council Member Kristina Walker, Council Member Jamika Scott, and Christina Caan, Policy Analyst
COPIES: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Resolution – recognizing the City Council's support for ensuring underspent Tacoma Creates funds get into community without delay; and endorsing the Tacoma Creates fund balance above reserves spending plan for eligible organizations in the 2026-27 program year and extending it to the 2027-28 program year through the process and criteria in TMC 1.55, which follows state law.
DATE: March 25, 2026

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE

A resolution recognizing the City Council's support for ensuring underspent Tacoma Creates funds get into community without delay; and endorsing the Tacoma Creates fund balance above reserves spending plan for eligible organizations in the 2026-27 program year and extending it to the 2027-28 program year through the process and criteria in TMC 1.55, which follows state law.

COUNCIL SPONSORS

Council Member Kristina Walker, Council Member Jamika Scott, and Mayor Anders Ibsen

LEGISLATIVE INTENT

Background: Tacoma Creates is a beloved citywide Cultural Access Program designed to help eligible nonprofit organizations that have a primary purpose to advance arts, culture, heritage, and science expand their programming offerings and reduce barriers to participation. Originally created with overwhelming voter support, Tacoma Creates is funded by a one tenth of one percent sales and use tax.¹ In 2025, the City Council reauthorized the sales and use tax to continue Tacoma Creates for the next seven years due to the popularity and impact of this program.²

- Since 2019, Tacoma Creates has provided over \$30 million in funding to more than 100 cultural organizations, who in turn have produced more than 5,000 programs and events, reaching more than four million participants. Funded organizations consistently stress that Tacoma Creates is a vital lifeline and a key tool for helping young people “develop skills that will serve them far beyond the classroom.”³

Since Tacoma Creates started collecting revenue in 2019, some funding is contracted out each year but underspent. Those underspent funds remain in the Tacoma Creates Fund and have accumulated to approximately \$2.5 million. Tacoma Creates has previously been dispersing some of these underspent funds, with fiscal responsibility and continuity of services as a core consideration for spending these one-time dollars.

- Starting in the 2027-28 program year, Tacoma Creates staff are required to use underspent funds as available to fund capital expenditures through the process and criteria in TMC 1.55, which follows state law.⁴

¹ [About Tacoma Creates — Tacoma Creates](#)

² [City of Tacoma - File #: ORD29057](#)

³ [TC 2024-25AnnualReport.pdf](#)

⁴ [Title 1 - Administration and Personnel](#)



Resolution: This resolution aims to recognize the City Council's support for ensuring underspent Tacoma Creates funds get into community without delay; and endorsing the Tacoma Creates fund balance above reserves spending plan for eligible organizations in the 2026-27 program year and extending it to the 2027-28 program year through the process and criteria in TMC 1.55, which follows state law. To do so, this resolution would provide for the following:

- Provide recognition of the City Council's eagerness to ensure underspent Tacoma Creates funds are getting into community without delay in support of programming efforts; and
- Provide City Council endorsement for the Tacoma Creates staff recommended fund balance above reserves spending plan for eligible organizations in the 2026-27 program year and extending it to the 2027-28 program year. This would include allocating up to an additional \$500,000 for both 2026-27 and 2027-28 in underspent Tacoma Creates funding to provide one-time support for eligible organizations through the process and criteria in TMC 1.55, which follows state law. This one-time support may be used to help increase funding amounts to previously funded organizations and/or increase the total number of organizations funded. No organization may receive funding beyond the allowable amount of their selected category of funding. Organizations shall be informed of the one-time nature of these additional funds and that the expectation is that once these one-time fund balances are spent, the funding levels will return to sustainable levels supported by recurring revenues within the Tacoma Creates Fund.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Council Member Kristina Walker and Council Member Jamika Scott met with the Tacoma Creates Advisory Board and Tacoma Creates Reauthorization Committee in 2025, as well as multiple non-profit organizations that received Tacoma Creates funding. Many people shared their concerns that federal and state funding for cultural organizations is decreasing. These one-time funds can provide some temporary relief until non-profit and cultural organizations can identify other sustainable funding sources.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Equity and Accessibility: Tacoma Creates advances the City Council's goals to nurture a vibrant creative economy, improve community members' ability to access arts, culture, heritage, and science programming, and bolster access to out of school time learning for young people. In addition, Tacoma Creates funding goals and criteria are informed by Resolution 40622 and the City's Equity Index.⁵ Tacoma Creates aims to enhance equity and accessibility in cultural programming by supporting free programming, discounts, and scholarships, ensuring programming occurs citywide, and expanding disability access, such as opportunities for ASL-interpreted performances, low-sensory concerts, museum tours for people with vision impairment.⁶

Economy/Workforce: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity
Increase positive public perception related to the Tacoma economy.

Education: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

⁵ [Equity Index | City of Tacoma](#)

⁶ [Program Locations — Tacoma Creates](#)



Increase the number of quality out of school time learning opportunities distributed equitably across the city.

Civic Engagement: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Increase the percentage of residents who believe they are able to have a positive impact on the community and express trust in the public institutions in Tacoma.

Livability: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts
Do not release one-time fund balance above reserves in 2026-27 or 2027-28.	Tacoma Creates would maintain the current fund balance above reserves dollars.	Nonprofit cultural organizations would not be able to benefit from increased one-time funding, potentially limiting their programming, impact, and sustainability.
Release one-time fund balance above reserves at a higher amount in 2026-27 and 2027-28.	Tacoma Creates might be able to increase nonprofit cultural organizations' programming and impact to a greater extent.	Cultural organizations would likely struggle to absorb a higher amount and the fund balance above reserves would be depleted at a faster pace and might not contribute to sustainability for cultural organizations.

EVALUATIONS AND FOLLOW UP

The Arts and Cultural Vitality Division of the City's Community and Economic Development Department will continue to provide updates to the City Council on funding for Tacoma Creates. This includes continuing the Tacoma Creates annual report and providing the high-level budget overview of the five core spending areas to City Council prior to the allocation of funding.

SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION

Sponsors recommend advancing this resolution.

FISCAL IMPACT

This resolution would decrease the Tacoma Creates fund balance above reserves by endorsing the allocation of up to \$1,000,000 in 2026-27 and 2027-28 program years.

What Funding is being used to support the expense?

Tacoma Creates Fund Balance Above Reserves

Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium's current budget?

2026 expenditures and revenues are partially budgeted but will be adjusted at Year-End if necessary. 2027 and 2028 expenditures and revenues will be budgeted in the 2027-2028 Proposed Budget.

Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?

NO



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?

The legislation will have a recurring fiscal impact for the 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 Tacoma Creates program years.

Will the legislation change the City's FTE/personnel counts?

NO