

City Council – Action Request Form

Date: September 12, 2022

To: Mayor, Mayor Pro Tempore, and Members of the City Council

From: Ben Rowe, Assistant City Manager

Council Action Requested:

Resolution Approving a Contribution of \$100,000 to the Film Partnership of North Carolina

Strategic Focus Area: Economic Vitality and Diversity

Strategic Objective: Enhance Skills of Workforce

Strategic Plan Action Item: No

Key Work Item: No



Summary of Information:

The Film Partnership of North Carolina (“Partnership”) is a 501(c)(3) economic development organization structured to grow the film, television, and digital streaming industry in North Carolina through collaboration and to create a pipeline for a diverse, well-trained, and inclusive workforce to support this industry (www.filmpartnershipnc.org). The Partnership’s leadership is a diverse group of members from the industry who work or invest in filmed content across the state.

In the fall of 2021, the Partnership announced a collaboration with the City of Wilmington and the University of North Carolina School of the Arts to launch a new film, television, and entertainment industry training program using a \$400,000 grant from the Wilmington City Council. The City provided the grant from their allocation of Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (i.e., ARPA). An emphasis of the program is to build the skill set of the local and regional workforce, in particular women and minorities who are largely underrepresented in the industry. Since March, the Partnership’s program has provided training for eight interns, four of which are from historically underserved communities. Most of this cohort have graduated and been placed in permanent positions on active productions in the region.

Committee Action:

Committee	<u>Finance 9/12/22</u>	Action	<u>Approval</u>
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For	<u>Unanimous</u>	Against	<u></u>
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Remarks:

The Partnership is requesting \$100,000 from the City of Winston-Salem to administer a new and specific training program with a focus on diversity and inclusion in the production workforce in Winston-Salem and the region. Participants would receive paid, on-the-job training at a salary of \$15/hour, including 10 hours of pre-approved overtime at \$22.50. The Partnership would use the funds to train interns for an average of five weeks on the job, with a focus in historically underserved communities, for regional production positions related to the film and entertainment industries. The Partnership would spend 90% of the funding on the critical mission, DEI recruitment, promotion, and job training. The remaining funds would be spent on administrative services (e.g., payroll) and enable the Partnership to pursue additional grant opportunities and private funding. The Partnership anticipates they will spend the funds over the next three years, by the end of 2024. However, if production activity increases requiring an acceleration in the need for new training cohorts, the Partnership may spend the funds in a shorter time frame.

The Partnership also will continue to seek additional partners to support this program, including the North Carolina Department of Commerce's Workforce Development Division, UNC School of the Arts, Winston-Salem State University, and the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Local 491. The attached letter provides additional information about the Partnership and their request. The goal of the Partnership's effort is to sustain the program financially and not provide this program as a one-time initiative.

According to Partnership staff, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the production industry in multiple ways. Streaming platforms, such as Netflix, have doubled their annual budgets for content development and are aggressively looking for space outside California to shoot. As a result, 2021 was a record year for North Carolina with over \$410 million in direct spending.

During the Finance Committee's discussion of this item in June, Council Members asked about the focus of this program compared to the work of the Piedmont Triad Regional Film Commission. The goals of both organizations are complementary—to grow the film and entertainment industry in the region—but differ in their focus. The Partnership's program is intended to provide on-going training to increase the production workforce, whereas the Piedmont Triad Film Commission promotes and markets the region to recruit and facilitate the production of feature films, television programs, and commercials in the region.

The attached amendment to the FY 2022-2023 Project Budget Ordinance appropriates \$100,000 from local economic development project fund reserves to provide the City's contribution to the Film Partnership of North Carolina, consistent with the public purposes established in G.S. 160A-209. The contribution also is consistent with the City Council's Tier 1 Strategic Priority to focus on job creation and workforce development including small businesses and invigorating the local travel and tourism industry. The attached resolution authorizes the execution of an agreement with the Partnership to allow use of the funds over three years. The agreement will include provisions to ensure proper use of the funds and reporting on outcomes, especially as they relate to providing opportunities for Winston-Salem residents.