

**CULTURAL ARTS COMMITTEE
CITY OF PALM DESERT
STAFF REPORT**

MEETING DATE: June 11, 2025

PREPARED BY: Erica Powell, Management Analyst

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF 2026 CALIFORNIA DESERT PLEIN AIR FESTIVAL
SPONSORSHIP

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend City Council approve sponsorship for the 2026 California Desert Plein Air Festival.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

The City of Palm Desert received a sponsorship request from Palm Springs Life and the Desert Plein Air Association (DPAA) for the 2026 California Desert Plein Air Festival. The 2025 event, held over three weeks in January, featured four days of paint-outs at scenic locations throughout the Coachella Valley and surrounding desert areas, including multiple locations in Palm Desert. The festival was headquartered at the Artists Center in Palm Desert and included artist workshops, public talks, an exhibition and awards ceremony, and artwork sales. The event attracted top plein-air painters from across the United States with \$15,000 awarded for Best in Show.

The 2025 festival was the first under the new branding as the California Desert Plein Air Festival and successfully positioned itself as a destination art event for the region. Palm Desert served as the core hub for event activity.

The festival exceeded expectations in both attendance and promotional reach:

- **Attendance:**
 - Over 3,000 attendees
- **Media Coverage:**
 - Editorial Impressions/Readers: 241,765, valued at \$32,068
 - Media Impressions/Readers: 1,066,520, valued at \$71,604
 - Total Advertising Impressions (Print, Digital, and Social): 1,308,285, with a total value of \$103,672

The 2025 festival demonstrated strong public engagement and economic impact, justifying continued investment in its growth. Staff supports renewing the sponsorship to build on the festival's momentum and to strengthen Palm Desert's reputation as a premier destination for arts and cultural programming.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Palm Springs Life is requesting continued sponsorship in the amount of \$25,000 for the 2026 California Desert Plein Air Festival, which is the same amount that was awarded for the 2025

event. Staff recommends approval of this sponsorship, with \$12,500 allocated from the Public Art budget and \$12,500 from the City's Marketing budget. The sponsorship will continue to provide Palm Desert with significant marketing value, enhanced public programming, and community engagement opportunities.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 2026 California Desert Plein Air Festival Proposal
2. 2025 CA Desert Plein Air Festival Summary
3. 2025 Plein Air Budget