

CITY OF PALM DESERT STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: August 28, 2025

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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE 2025 CALIFORNIA DESERT PLEIN AIR FESTIVAL
SPONSORSHIP

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive an update on the 2025 California Desert Plein Air Festival sponsorship.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

The 2025 California Desert Plein Air Festival was presented in partnership by Palm Springs Life and the Desert Plein Air Association (DPAA) from January 8 through February 2, 2025, with the City of Palm Desert serving as the title sponsor. Together, these partners rebranded and launched the inaugural festival with the goal of establishing Palm Desert as the center of plein-air painting in the Coachella Valley.

Headquartered at the Artists Center in Palm Desert located at 72-567 Hwy 111, Palm Desert, the three-week event included four days of outdoor paint-outs at scenic locations, along with artist workshops, public lectures, gallery exhibitions, and art sales. More than 40 nationally recognized artists participated, competing for a \$15,000 Best in Show prize.

Prior to this inaugural year with the Palm Springs Life partnership, the Desert Plein Air Association's 2024 festival attendance was 125 attendees. With the addition of a targeted marketing campaign, the 2025 festival exceeded expectations, drawing over 3,000 attendees and significantly expanding promotional reach. The event contributed to increased tourism, local economic activity, and strengthened regional cultural branding during the peak winter season. The Palm Springs Life campaign alone generated more than 1.3 million media and editorial impressions, with an estimated advertising value of over \$100,000. These outcomes establish a strong baseline for future festivals and demonstrate the impact of sustained marketing support.

The 2025 festival established a solid foundation for future events and contributed to Palm Desert's role as a regional hub for arts and cultural programming.

The City of Palm Desert provided a \$25,000 sponsorship for the inaugural 2025 California Desert Plein Air Festival. At the January 9, 2025, study session on the Outside Agency Funding Program, the City Council directed that marketing sponsorships like this one which are outside the Community Event and Outside Agency funding guidelines be considered separately. Accordingly, staff will present a formal request at the September 11, 2025, meeting for City Council consideration of a \$25,000 sponsorship for the 2026 festival.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no direct financial impact with this presentation.

ATTACHMENT:

Summary of 2025 California Desert Plein Air Festival by Palm Springs Life