



April 9, 2021

The Honorable Isabella Casillas Guzman
Administrator
U.S. Small Business Administration
409 3rd St., SW
Washington, DC 20416

Dear Administrator Guzman:

On behalf of the nation's museum community, we thank you for the Small Business Administration's support of cultural organizations. The museum sector continues to face an existential threat from the closures required to address the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting loss of income from admissions fees, retail sales, and event rentals. Your agency's support of programs such as the Paycheck Protection Program and the Shuttered Venue Operators Grants have offered a lifeline to museums large and small located throughout the United States.

We recognize that the SBA has faced a formidable task to develop and launch the Shuttered Venue Operators Grants (SVOG) program over the past three months. We are appreciative of the outreach to the museum sector through the auspices of Barbara Carson, Deputy Associate Administrator for the Office of Disaster Assistance and specifically by Robert Steiner, District Director. Our coalition of national museum associations has met regularly with SBA staff since January to provide guidance and insights into the workings of the museum field. They have worked to understand the nuances of the nonprofit museum sector and translate their learnings into this new grant program. The eligible SVOG applicants are a varied group, and the SBA team has made an admirable effort to reconcile the diverse feedback they have received from these stakeholders. This collaborative approach has been an effective one.

We are writing to express our concerns over the launch of the SVOG portal. We have each received many concerned emails and calls from the museum community. Museums are anxious about the evolving and sometimes contradictory guidance, some of which was published as SBA began accepting SVOG applications. We encourage you to **delay the reopening of the SVOG portal and acceptance of applications** until the system aligns with the published guidance, and you are assured it will work as designed, hopefully within one week. While the museum sector's need for these funds is great, we believe that it is vital that the relaunch of the SVOG portal proceed without error.

We believe that SBA staff should use any delay in the relaunch only to refine, clarify, and disseminate the existing published guidance as well as ensure the technical aspects of the SVOG portal work as designed. This is not a time to change grant processes that have been publicized since February. Instead, potential applicants should feel confident that the grant processes and

guidance they have followed over the past few months to prepare their applications **have not fundamentally changed** during this delay.

We appreciate the thoughtful and transparent approach that the SBA team has undertaken to develop a new grant program in just a few months. We encourage you to continue that thoughtful approach by pausing to ensure that the SVOG application process proceeds as designed and communicated by the SBA and through national partner organizations. Our associations stand ready to continue this consultative process with SBA on behalf of the broader museum sector.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Laura Lott
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