



Fees and Charges Report

Date: June 1, 2026

To: City Council

Through: Candace Cannistraro, Deputy City Manager

From: Luis Ruiz, Director for the Department of Arts and Culture
Kelly Farrow, Sr Fiscal Analyst of Arts and Culture

Subject: Department of Arts and Culture Update to Schedule of Fees and Charges

Purpose and Recommendation

The Arts and Culture Department operates 3 units: Mesa Arts Center, the Arizona Natural History Museum, and the idea Museum. Each year the department reviews the fees and charges of these units. Below are recommendations to changes to the Fees and Charges Schedule for the Mesa Arts Center and the idea Museum.

Mesa Arts Center:

The Arts and Culture Department recommends approval to add a new optional service fee titled Mesa Arts Center (MAC) Ticket Refund Protection. This service would allow patrons purchasing tickets to Mesa Arts Center presented performances to optionally add refund protection coverage at the time of purchase.

The recommended fee range for Mesa Arts Center Ticket Refund Protection is 2% to 15% (Exhibit A) of the ticket/order total, consistent with refund protection programs offered by major industry providers such as Live Nation, Ticketmaster, and Scottsdale Arts. If approved, the Mesa Arts Center would set the fee at 8% of the ticket/order total.

The increased admission fee and addition of optional ticket protection were presented to the Museum and Culture Advisory Board (MCAB) on November 20, 2025. The Board voted unanimously in favor of its implementation.

idea Museum:

The Arts & Culture Department recommends an increase to the idea Museum's admission fee range, increasing from \$10 to \$15 (Exhibit A) for attendees aged 1 and up.

The idea Museum's current admission fee for attendees aged 1 and up is \$10 and is at the maximum of the current range. If approved, the idea Museum plans to increase the admission fee in FY 2026/27 to \$12 and in FY 2028/29 to \$15. The purpose of these planned increases is to support increased costs of operations at the museum.

Background

Mesa Arts Center Ticket Protection:

Mesa Arts Center continuously evaluates its guest experience offerings to align with industry standards and customer expectations. In recent years, many performing arts venues have implemented optional refund protection services to increase customer confidence and flexibility while maintaining operational efficiency.

Refund protection provides a full ticket refund for unforeseen and covered circumstances that prevent a ticket holder from attending an event, including illness, injury, family emergencies, vehicle breakdowns, or adverse weather events that meet the coverage criteria.

idea Museum Admissions:

The idea Museum is a vibrant, family-focused institution dedicated to inspiring creativity, imagination, and learning through art and hands-on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) experiences. Operated by the City of Mesa and supported by the i.d.e.a. Museum Foundation, it serves children of all ages and their families with interactive exhibits, workshops, and educational programs.

Originally founded in 1980 as the Arizona Museum for Youth, the museum rebranded in 2014 to reflect its broader mission - "imagination, design, experience, art." It features dynamic spaces, all designed to foster early learning, critical thinking, and creative exploration.

The idea Museum is operated by the City and relies on the Arts and Culture Fund to support operational costs. The Arts and Culture Fund is supported by both a General Fund transfer as well as earned revenue from admission to the idea Museum, among other earned revenue sources from across the Department.

Discussion

Mesa Arts Center Ticket Protection:

The Mesa Arts Center Ticket Refund Protection will be an optional, add-on service available during the online or in-person ticket purchasing process. Patrons may choose to purchase the protection for their entire booking at a small percentage of the total ticket cost.

If a guest cannot attend a performance due to a covered circumstance, they can file a claim online through the Mesa Arts Center website using a Microsoft Form. Refund applications will be reviewed within 48 business hours, and decisions will be communicated to patrons within 24 hours of review completion.

Covered Circumstances:

The Arts and Culture Department will refund the cost of a booking, less Mesa Arts Center Ticket Refund Protection cost, if a patron is unable to attend a booked event due to:

- Unexpected disruption of the public transport network you could not have reasonably known about before the event date.
- Injury or illness affecting you or a member of your immediate family.

- Death of you at any time before the booked event or a member of your immediate family within a 4-week period of the booked event.
- Mechanical breakdown, accident, fire, or theft in route in a private vehicle taking you to the booked event.
- You were unaware of jury service at the time of booking.
- Burglary or fire at your residence within 48 hours of the event requiring emergency services attendance.
- Being summoned to court as a witness, which you were unaware of at the time of booking.
- Being a member of the armed forces and being unexpectedly posted overseas.
- Adverse weather (e.g., snow, frost, fog, or storm) where the Police or a Government agency has issued warnings not to travel, with proof of road closures.

Required Evidence Includes (but is not limited to):

- Original unused tickets or vouchers for all parts of the booking.
- A doctor's report for injury or illness, or a death certificate in case of death.
- Official transport service provider notices for delays or cancellations.
- Reports from vehicle recovery services or repair receipts for breakdowns.
- Police reports with crime reference numbers for burglary claims.
- Jury invitations or witness summons for court appearances.
- Reasonable proof of burden is covered as listed in coverage.
- Any other reasonable evidence requested by Mesa Arts Center Ticket Refund Protection Program.

Approved claims will be tracked and documented through an internal data portal, and the refunded amount, minus the service fee, will be credited to the patron.

Implementing this optional fee aligns Mesa Arts Center with industry standards, improves guest experience, and introduces a small, self-sustaining revenue stream that supports front-line service and guest recovery programs.

idea Museum Admissions:

The idea Museum currently charges a fee of \$10 for all attendees aged 1 and up. To support increased operating costs due to inflationary increases in materials and labor, the idea Museum is planning to increase the admission fee to \$12 in FY 2026/27 and to \$15 in FY 2028/29, representing 20% and 25% increases, respectively. The revenue received from these increases will support the idea Museum's continued success.

The Department of Arts and Culture recognizes the importance of identifying revenue streams to support its institutions' ongoing maintenance and operations costs, without overly burdening our community. To support increases in maintenance and operational costs, the Department Director has recommended a \$2.00 increase in admission fees in FY 2026/27 and a \$3.00 increase in FY 2028/29.

Methodology

Mesa Arts Center Ticket Protection:

Department staff reviewed fees at other institutions for comparison and to ensure that Mesa Arts Center’s proposed Ticket Protection fees are competitive and reasonably priced and competitive.

Benchmarking examples include:

Venue / Provider	Fee Range	Fee Charged	Coverage Provider / Notes
Live Nation / Ticketmaster	2% – 18%	7.5%	Optional add-on at checkout
Scottsdale Arts	2% – 15%	8%	Applies to select events - Optional add-on at Check-out
Mesa Arts Center (Proposed)	2% – 15%	8%	Optional add-on at checkout

Based on current projections for FY 2025/26 ticket sales data, Mesa Arts Center projects ticket revenues of approximately \$6,196,900 for FY 2026/27 for MAC presented performances. Department staff estimate that 20% of ticket purchasers will choose to purchase Ticket Refund Protection when offered.

Applying the proposed ticket protection fee of 8% to the projected revenue would generate \$99,150.40 in gross projected annual revenue.

idea Museum Admissions:

Department staff reviewed fees at other institutions for comparison and to ensure that idea Museum admission fees are competitive and reasonably priced. Even with the increase from \$10 to \$12, the idea Museum is still the lowest-priced option for families.

The idea Museum will continue to participate in the Museums for All program which reduces admission to \$4 per person when attendees show their EBT card. The museum also offers an Access Membership for \$20 for attendees who show their EBT card.

Please see below for that market comparison of admission fees for similar institutions in Arizona and other youth entertainment options in the Greater Phoenix Area.

Admission Fee		
Institution	Children	Adults
idea Museum - Current	\$10.00	\$10.00
<i>idea Museum – FY26-27 Proposed</i>	<i>\$12.00</i>	<i>\$12.00</i>
<i>idea Museum – FY28-29 Proposed</i>	<i>\$15.00</i>	<i>\$15.00</i>
Other Children’s Museums	Children	Adults
Children’s Museum of Phoenix	\$19.00	\$19.00
Children’s Museum of Tucson	\$12.00	\$12.00

Other Local Museums	Children	Adults
Arizona Museum of Natural History	\$9.00	\$16.00
Phoenix Art Museum	\$13.00	\$23.00
Heard Museum	\$10.00	\$26.00

Other Youth Entertainment Options	Children	Adults
Arizona Science Center	\$16.95	\$22.95
Phoenix Zoo	\$29.95	\$39.95
Legoland Discovery Center	\$22.99	\$22.99
SEA LIFE Aquarium	\$16.99	\$16.99
OdySea Aquarium	\$39.95	\$49.95
Desert Botanical Garden	\$19.95	\$39.95

Alternatives

Mesa Arts Center Ticket Protection:

The alternative to approving the optional ticket protection charge would require the Department to request additional General Fund support for the Mesa Arts Center for increasing operational costs.

Taking no action would result in flat revenues and fewer resources to support maintenance and operational costs, forcing the Mesa Arts Center to cut programming. Without additional revenue or General Fund support, the Department would have to reduce services to support increased costs.

The Mesa Arts Center would continue to issue refunds only under existing policies, offering less flexibility to patrons. This could result in reduced customer confidence and missed opportunities for service-driven revenue.

idea Museum Admissions:

The alternative to raising rental fees for the idea Museum's admission fee is to request additional General Fund support for the idea Museum to cover increased labor, maintenance, and operational costs.

Taking no action would result in flat revenues and fewer resources to support maintenance and operational costs, forcing the idea Museum to cut programming. Without additional revenue or General Fund support, the Department would have to reduce services to support these increased costs.

Fiscal Impact

Mesa Arts Center Ticket Protection:

The Ticket Refund Protection fee is projected to generate \$99,150.40 in gross supplemental revenue in FY 2026/27, based on current ticket revenue projection for FY 2026/27 of \$6,196,900 for Mesa Arts Center presented performances. This estimate assumes 20% of ticket purchasers will elect to add Ticket Refund Protection at an average fee of 8% of the ticket cost.

Currently, Mesa Arts Center's Customer Service team provides direct assistance to patrons with refund and exchange inquiries for all performances. These interactions often involve time spent reviewing requests that fall outside existing refund policies. Implementing Ticket Refund Protection will help mitigate the overall volume of refund-related inquiries by clearly defining covered situations and shifting the refund process to a standardized, policy-based system. This allows staff to focus on high-value guest interactions, while still providing patrons with a convenient and transparent path to secure refunds when unexpected circumstances arise.

Because this is an optional, add-on service, the Ticket Refund Protection fee will not impact the established ticket price structure for Mesa Arts Center performances. It provides a revenue generating mechanism that supports both customer service operations and the continued delivery of high-quality guest experience without requiring any additional City resources or General Fund support.

Ticket Refund claims are estimated to be 10% of gross revenue of Ticket Refund Protection Fee, projected at \$9,915, resulting in a net revenue of \$89,235 for implementation of this new service.

idea Museum Admissions:

Increasing the idea Museum's admission fee for attendees aged 1 and up from \$10 to \$12 in FY 2026/27 will generate an additional \$86,800 in revenue to the Arts and Culture Fund. This increase will support increasing operational costs at the idea Museum in FY 2026/27.

Total Fiscal Impact: \$176,035

Coordinated With

Office of Management and Budget.

Fees & Charges Schedule – Key

Heading Configuration

<u>Schedule of Fees & Charges</u>
Department
Contact Information
HEADING 1
HEADING 2
<i>Heading 3</i>
Description of Fee
Description of Fee 2

Font Indications

Font	Font Indications
Regular Font	Existing fee or language
Strikethrough	Fee or language will be deleted from the Fee Schedule
BOLD CAPS	Language is being added to Fee Schedule
Bold	New or increased Fee Amount

Schedule of Fees & Charges

Exhibit A – Arts and Culture

Department: Arts and Culture

Description of Service	Current Fee Range	Proposed Fee Range	Unit	Total Fiscal Impact	Notes
MESA ARTS CENTER					Existing heading
<i>TICKET REFUND PROTECTION FEE, OPTIONAL PER TICKET</i>		8%	OF TICKET/ORDER TOTAL	\$89,235.00	New fee
idea MUSEUM					Existing heading
<i>Admission</i>					Existing heading
Age 1 year & over	\$6.00 -\$10.00	\$6.00 – \$15.00		\$86,800.00	Increase fee

Estimated Total Annual Fiscal Impact: \$176,035.00