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## Metro Phoenix Partnership for Arts and Culture calls it quits

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by [Kerry Lengel](#) - Mar. 10, 2010 12:00 AM

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The Metro Phoenix Partnership for Arts and Culture, a 5-year-old non-profit dedicated to strengthening the Valley's arts infrastructure, is closing its doors after being forced to abandon a voter initiative to impose a 1/10th-cent sales tax to provide dedicated funding for arts organizations.

Polls last year indicated a majority of Arizona voters supported such an initiative, said Sandy Werthman, chair of MPAC's board of directors, but more than a year into a historic economic recession, support fell below the key 50 percent mark.

"The January poll dropped like a rock, and it showed that we really could not win a November election," Werthman said. "When everybody is concerned that their schools, their police, their libraries are going unfunded, dedicated arts and culture funding is not going to be popular."

In addition to abandoning the ballot initiative, MPAC had seen donations for its other initiatives dry up, just as other non-profit arts groups have during the recession.

The partnership's leftover funds, in excess of \$1 million, will be returned to the primary funders, the Flinn Foundation and the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust, both long-time funders of Valley arts groups.

"The viability of longer-term sustained funding was in question, and it was that reality that led the three organizations to agree that the remaining funds should be better used to directly assist arts and culture organizations in the community," said Jack Jewett, president and CEO of the Flinn Foundation.

During its five years, MPAC - originally the Maricopa Partnership for Arts and Culture - funded several studies on the local arts market and other efforts aimed at raising metro Phoenix's cultural profile and making the case to business and government leaders that creative industries, including the non-profit arts sector, are an economic driver.

"MPAC has contributed to the arts organizations coming together and working on a common goal," said Judy Mohraz, president and CEO of the Piper Trust.

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