



Strengthening arts, culture,
and creative expression as the
tools to cultivate a better
California for all.

Gavin Newsom, **Governor**
Danielle Brazell, **Executive Director**
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**Minutes of Public Meeting
CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL
Friday, April 11, 2025
10:00 A.M. – 2:30 P.M.
On Location/Virtual Hybrid Meeting
Lineage Performing Arts Center
920 E. Mountain Street
Pasadena, CA 91104**

The members of the California Arts Council convened in Pasadena and via web conference to discuss and vote on various items as listed in the minutes below.

Council Members Present In-Person:

Council Chair Roxanne Messina Captor
Council Vice Chair Leah Goodwin
Council Member Gerald Clarke
Council Member Vicki Estrada
Council Member Roy Hirabayashi
Council Member Phil Mercado¹

Council Members Present Remotely:

Council Member Phil Mercado
Council Member Nicola Miner

Council Members Absent:

Council Member Caleb Duarte
Council Member Alex Israel
Council Member Dorka Keehn

Arts Council Staff Present:

Danielle Brazell, Executive Director
Gloriela Garcia, Interim Deputy Director
Kristin Margolis, Director of Program Services
Carissa Gutierrez, Director of Public Affairs
Elisa Gollub, Arts Program Manager
Josy Miller, Arts Program Manager

¹ (Remote 10-12PM, in person 1:20-2:30PM)

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Megan Morgan, Race & Equity Manager
Rebecca Ratzkin, Equity Measures & Evaluation Manager
Kimberly Brown, Public Affairs Specialist
Qiana Moore, Events & Outreach Coordinator
Zachary Hill, IT Specialist
Steve Mok, Public Affairs Specialist
Yaquelin Ruiz, Programs Specialist (remote)

1. Call to Order

Chair Messina Captor called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

2. Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum

Public Affairs Director called the roll, as a majority of the voting body was not present in person, quorum was not established.

3. Land and People's Acknowledgement

Chair Messina Captor invited Council Member Clark to lead the land and people's acknowledgment. Clark introduced artist and Tongva community member Mercedes Dorame, who delivered a heartfelt reflection on Tongva heritage and the significance of Guashna and Tovangar. She emphasized the importance of healing, ancestral knowledge, and the role of art in uniting communities. Dorame highlighted the challenges Native artists face in traditional systems and praised organizations that support Indigenous expression. Her message underscored the richness of Tongva culture and its continued presence through evolving artistic practices. Chair Messina Captor and Clark expressed gratitude for her meaningful contribution.

4. Opening Remarks

Chair Messina Captor welcomed the attendees and acknowledged the interpreters, including Paula DiMuro and Tulip Alfredo (ASL), as well as Aldo G. Renteria and Leticia Reyna (Spanish/English simultaneous translation). She also reintroduced Robert Duitsman, the parliamentarian, to the meeting.

5. Welcome by Rochelle Branch, Cultural Affairs Manager at City of Pasadena and Kristin Sakoda, Director, Los Angeles County Department of Cultural Affairs.

Rochelle Branch, Cultural Affairs Manager at City of Pasadena welcomed Council Members, acknowledging their presence as a positive gesture during recovery from recent wildfires, which significantly impacted residents, employees, and local arts organizations. Over 60 city employees and two arts directors lost homes, with widespread evacuations across Pasadena Unified. Arts and culture were emphasized as vital to community resilience. Kristin Sakoda, Director of LA County's Department of Arts and Culture, echoed this, highlighting regional diversity, shared challenges, and the critical role of arts in addressing climate, equity, and economic issues. She underscored ongoing support through programs like Poetry Out Loud and professional development funding.

6. Chair Messina-Captor's Report

Chair Messina Captor read her report.

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The Chair acknowledged the impact of wildfires and uplifted Poetry Out Loud and Poetry Ourselves competitions held in Sacramento, celebrating youth talent and literary expression. Council Member Estrada shared her moving first-time experience, urging others to attend future events. State Poet Laureate Lee Herrick, Executive Director Danielle Brazell, and supportive legislators were commended. Planning for the Council's 50th anniversary in 2026 is underway.

Lastly, a quorum issue was noted—only five of ten Council Members were present in person, preventing voting on agenda items. As there were two members joining remotely, the Chair advised that these votes be moved to later in the agenda once a sixth member arrived in person.

7. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Danielle Brazell delivered a written and verbal report highlighting transparency, public service, and current local and national arts conditions. In Pasadena, the CAC co-hosted a convening with LA County and Pasadena arts departments, engaging 35 local arts organizations. Brazell praised the community's resilience and innovative collaborations amidst ongoing civic trauma. Nationally, she addressed the significant threats to the cultural sector due to federal funding cuts. The elimination of funding from IMLS (Institute for Museum and Library Services) and NEH (National Endowment for the Humanities)—impacting millions—has already resulted in revoked grants and budget deficits, including a \$100K shortfall for a cultural preservation program in California. The NEA (National Endowment for the Arts) remains active, providing \$1.5M to the CAC. Brazell emphasized the urgency of safeguarding arts funding and preserving cultural heritage. She reaffirmed CAC's commitment to community-centered work, closing with a powerful message on the enduring voice of artists despite adversity. The Council expressed support and appreciation for her leadership.

[Read full report here.](#)

8. VOTING ITEM: Minutes from Previous Meetings

Chair Messina Captor moved this item to later in the agenda until in-person quorum was established.

9. PRESENTATION: Peer Review Panels Overview

The Council proceeded directly to Agenda Item 9: Peer Review Panels, led by Director of Program Services Kristen Margolis, Equity Measures and Evaluation Manager Rebecca Ratzkin, and Application and Panel Support Specialist Yaquelin Ruiz. Margolis provided an overview of the peer review process, emphasizing transparency, public participation, and equity in grantmaking. She outlined the shift from in-person to remote adjudication due to the pandemic and the move to independent scoring in 2021 to reduce bias and accelerate funding timelines. Programs Specialist Ruiz presented on panel recruitment, diversity, and training procedures. Panelists are artists, administrators, and public members, selected for professional experience and demographic representation. Each application is reviewed by five panelists. Panelists receive mandatory training, including orientation, program-specific criteria, technical systems, and implicit bias instruction. The panel process remains central to the CAC's fair and inclusive grant allocation model. Two recent panelists shared their experience.

Programs Specialist Ruiz outlined the CAC grant review process, highlighting the orientation, midpoint check-in, and final scoring phases. Panelists assign ranks and select predefined comments, ensuring

transparency and equity. Panelists Celena Flippen and Jenna Harris shared positive experiences, noting strong staff support and valuable insights into the arts nonprofit sector. Harris suggested reinstating direct feedback to applicants. Manager Ratzkin began presenting a comparative overview of CAC's panel process and demographics in relation to other state arts agencies, noting varying practices across states.

The CAC discussed efforts to mitigate bias in grant panel processes, citing practices from states like Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Arizona. Key themes included moving from consensus to compliance-based models, improving staff capacity, and considering prioritization frameworks. Updates on the 2025–26 panelist pool showed increased BIPOC representation and demographic shifts. Discussions highlighted panelist recruitment, review criteria, and how identities (e.g., LGBTQ, disabled, immigrant) contribute to diversity. Geographic representation by county and Healthy Places Index alignment were also reviewed. Collaboration with NASAA and other states aims to standardize and enhance fairness in grant evaluation practices.

The Council reviewed Healthy Places Index data showing increased representation in lower HPI quartiles for the 2025 panelist pool. A breakdown of primary and secondary expertise among panelists revealed significant overlap between practicing artists and arts educators. Discussion followed on panel selection methods, hybrid format benefits, compensation, and accessibility concerns. Council Members emphasized improving equity through broader outreach, scheduling flexibility, and transparency. Council also inquired about geographic equity in funding versus panelist representation.

The discussion focused on panelist selection and geographic representation. Of 964 applicants, approximately 190 served last year, with conflicts and availability influencing final selections. Staff had sent notification letters to those not selected. Program specialists curated final panels, balancing diversity, experience, and geography. Only about 40% of invitees accepted. Virtual panels were preferred for accessibility and cost-efficiency, with panelist feedback gathered through surveys. Concerns were raised about the high number of first-time panelists and the potential loss of institutional knowledge. Staff emphasized the importance of transparency and evaluation.

Council discussed panelist experience, training, and transparency. Staff clarified that panelists may have prior service on non-CAC panels and emphasized the importance of comprehensive training. Suggestions were made to publish training webinars online to enhance accessibility and inclusion. Staff responded that this was possible but would require evaluation for cost, consistency, and bias mitigation. Executive leadership highlighted the volume of applications, the generational shift in the arts sector, and the value of convening in person to foster community connection. The need for increased resources and ongoing support for emerging leaders and organizations was also emphasized.

11. PRESENTATION: Vicki Estrada

During the CAC meeting, Council Member Estrada gave a personal presentation as part of a series to help members get to know each other. Estrada shared her professional background as a landscape architect and urban designer, her transition journey, and experiences as a trans Latina. She highlighted key projects including Balboa Park's master plan, community planning, and international work. Her story emphasized resilience, family, creativity in art and music, and advocacy for inclusive design.

Vicki shared insights on her work with artists, emphasizing how collaboration with them transformed her approach to landscape architecture. She highlighted projects including the design of San Diego's

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skate park, the Barrio Logan sign, and various community parks. Council Member Estrada stressed the importance of integrating art in urban design and giving back to the community. Council Member Estrada's closing remarks focused on volunteerism and community engagement.

The session ended with a brief introduction and welcome by Amber Giang, a district representative for State Senator Sasha Renee Perez, 25th Senate District.

12:00-12:30 WORKING LUNCH

10. PRESENTATION: FY 25-26 Cultural Districts

The California Cultural Districts program, established through Assembly Bill 89 in 2015, aims to leverage the state's cultural assets. Director of Program Services Kristin Margolis and Arts Program Manager Josy Miller discussed the program's history and upcoming expansion. The program designates areas with significant cultural facilities to foster economic development, preserve historic structures, and support local cultural identity. The initiative, which includes funding and technical assistance, was first launched in 2017. In 2022, the program received a \$10 million budget increase. The council also voted to reopen the program in December 2023, with \$100,000 allocated for newly designated districts. A 2019 gap analysis highlighted areas for improvement.

The discussion focused on updates to the California Cultural Districts Program, particularly streamlining the application process. Key changes include eliminating the previous letter of interest and moving directly to an open application. Outreach and technical assistance will be provided to ensure support, particularly for newer applicants. The process will also leverage state partnerships to increase the visibility and benefits of cultural districts.

The timeline was proposed, with applications opening May 20 and closing August 7. Panel adjudication will take place in August, followed by site visits from October 20 to November 7. Final recommendations will be discussed and voted on at the December 12 meeting.

Council Members commended the Administration's support for the program and highlighted the flexibility in designating districts without associated funding. Additionally, there was mention of potential informal hearings by the Joint Committee on the Arts to discuss cultural district-related matters.

The meeting included discussions on the criteria for selecting cultural districts, focusing on community engagement, cultural asset elevation, and economic development. Concerns about prioritizing underrepresented communities, such as African American, Native American, and Chinese American districts, were addressed, with technical assistance emphasized for equity. Outreach for the program will be led by CAC staff, with collaboration from the public affairs and race equity teams. A question was raised about the five-year designation limit for districts, which is mandated by legislation, with redesignation considered after that period. The meeting concluded with gratitude for the staff's efforts and ongoing support.

12. PRESENTATION: Poetry Out Loud

During the meeting, Kristin Margolis, Director of Program Services, introduced Charlie O'Malley, the Arts Program Specialist, to provide an update on the 2024-2025 Poetry Out Loud (POL) program. Charlie discussed the 20th Annual California Poetry Out Loud State Finals, which took place on March 16-17, 2024, in Sacramento. The event saw 49 county champions compete, and California Poet Laureate Lee Herrick hosted the two-day celebration, which also featured participation from various state legislators.

Selah Johnson from Los Angeles County was crowned the State Champion and would represent California at the national finals in Washington, DC. The "Poetry Ourselves" competition awarded top honors to Erin Levinson, with Anastasia Shark and Anna Khan receiving runner-up and honorable mention awards, respectively.

Arts Program Specialist O'Malley also highlighted the Poetry Out Loud Hero Award, presented to Crystal Rienick, an English teacher in San Diego, for her long-standing dedication to the program. This year, over 17,000 students from 200 schools participated, marking the continued growth and success of the program across California.

At 1:20 PM, Council Member Mercado joined the Council Meeting in person. Public Affairs Director took roll and confirmed that quorum had been established with Council Members Messina Captor, Goodwin, Clarke, Estrada, Hirabayashi, Mercado, Miner (virtual).

15. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment

All public comment listed at the end of these minutes.

14. DISCUSSION: California Arts Council's 50th Anniversary

The 50th Anniversary Ad Hoc Committee discussed preparations for the California Arts Council's 50th anniversary in 2026. Co-chairs Nicola Miner and the chair outlined a year-long event concept, including collaboration with artists statewide and the revival of the CAC Awards ceremony. They emphasized the need for council input and support, acknowledging the significant work ahead. The event will focus on funding through donations, and a fiscal sponsor will be sought. Discussions included involving legislators, selecting artists, and a potential anniversary license plate for fundraising. The committee is focused on planning the event for early November 2026, culminating in an awards ceremony.

8. VOTING ITEM: Minutes from Previous Meetings

The chair asked if there were any objections or discussions regarding the minutes from the February 28th meeting. No objections or discussions were raised. The minutes were automatically approved.

13. VOTING ITEM: Unused FY 24-25 Local Assistance Funds

During the meeting, the chair moved on to Voting Item 13. Council Member Clarke presented on behalf of the Programs Policy Committee as Council Member Duarte was unable to attend due to a personal issue. Before proceeding with the discussion, Council Member Hirabayashi recused himself from the

voting item. This recusal raised concerns as to whether the body still had quorum. This led to a brief pause in the meeting as the chair asked the Parliamentarian for clarification on whether the quorum was still intact. The chair acknowledged that with Council Member Hirabayashi's absence, the quorum would change, and they were awaiting confirmation from the Parliamentarian on the updated quorum status.

The Chair directed Council to move on to Item 16 in the agenda and return to Item 13 once the Parliamentarian had researched the issue and could make an informed recommendation.

16. Committee/Ad hoc Updates

At the meeting, the Equity Committee Report was presented by Council Member Estrada, who shared an update on the committee's progress. The committee had met include dates, focusing on key equity issues that were of national concern. They reviewed several important documents, including the Racial Equity Statement, the Equity Committee Guidelines, and the Strategic Framework.

The committee also revisited the 10 principles of disability justice, which were originally championed by Council Member Raynor before her resignation. These principles were deemed crucial for the committee's work on equity, ensuring that all actions were aligned with the broader goal of addressing equity and inclusion.

Council Member Estrada emphasized that the Equity Committee's role is to support the council's decision-making process by addressing the more nuanced areas of equity, making recommendations as needed. He mentioned that equity would remain a central theme in all of the council's work moving forward.

The committee outlined their next steps, which included providing an update and presentation at the San Diego meeting on June 20th. This presentation would be part of the committee's compliance with Governor Newsom's Executive Order 1622. Additionally, the committee planned to review their adherence to the California Department of Justice's guidance issued in February 2025 regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility best practices. This was in line with ensuring that their work remains compliant with both state and federal civil rights laws.

13. VOTING ITEM: Unused FY 24-25 Local Assistance Funds

The Chair then turned to Agenda Item 13. Parliamentarian, Robert Duitsman, addressed a question regarding quorum. He confirmed that even if a member abstains from voting, they still count toward the quorum as long as they are physically present. He further explained that the council needs a majority of the votes cast to make decisions.

Following this clarification, Council Member Clark proceeded with the presentation on the Programs Policy Committee's proposal. The committee presented two options for utilizing unexpended local assistance funds from fiscal year 2024-2025, which totaled \$57,959. The funds must be allocated before the state's fiscal year-end deadline of May 24th.

The first option proposed using the funds to subsidize travel for state and local partners from counties in the lower quartiles of the Healthy Places Index (HPI) with organizational revenues under \$250,000. This would help them attend the Capacity Building SLP Annual Convening. The second option suggested

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augmenting Folk and Traditional Arts Grants to support individual artists with urgent or emergent needs, offering up to a 5% administrative fee for the administering organizations (AOs).

The committee outlined that both options align with the strategic framework of prioritizing capacity-building, geographic equity, and support for small organizations or individual artists in need. They noted that both options were feasible, with no anticipated drawbacks, and would result in the funds being used effectively rather than being returned to the state.

During the discussion, Council Member Estrada motioned to approve Option 2 (augmenting the Folk and Traditional Arts Grants), emphasizing the benefits this option would have for less well-known folk and traditional artists. The motion was seconded by Council Member Goodwin.

The motion was to approve Option 2, which involves augmenting the Folk and Traditional Arts grants for administering organizations to regrant to individual artists with urgent or emergent needs, with an up to 5% administrative fee for the AOs.

Two public comments were received in person, with none from Zoom attendees. Alejandro Gutierrez-Chavez, Executive Director of Arts Connection Arts Council of San Bernardino, see below in the minutes.

Following the public comments, the council discussed quorum issues, with the Parliamentarian confirming that abstained members do not count towards quorum. Due to the lack of quorum, the motion did not proceed, and the Council suggested the possibility of a special meeting in May to address the matter.

16. Committee/ Ad Hoc Updates

Chair Messina-Captor directed Council to return to the previous item. Council Member Hirabayashi provided a brief report on behalf of the Strategic Framework Committee. He noted that the current strategic framework covers the period from 2020 to 2027 and highlighted that its development process began in 2018, taking approximately two years. Given that only two years remain in the current framework, he emphasized the importance of initiating planning now for an updated or new framework.

He also noted the opportunity to align this process with the CAC's upcoming 50th anniversary, making it a timely moment for reflection, assessment, and potential revision. Council Member Hirabayashi praised the original framework's built-in flexibility and timeline structure, which allows for updates. He concluded by encouraging the Council to begin reviewing and preparing for this effort over the next two years.

17. In Memoriam

Vice Chair Goodwin led a tribute honoring individuals who passed away since the last meeting on February 28, 2025.

Notable Individuals Remembered:

- **David Johansen**, 75 – Singer-songwriter, composer, and actor; lead singer of the New York Dolls.
- **Angie Stone (Angela Laverne Brown)**, 63 – American R&B singer and songwriter; known for hits like "No More Rain (In This Cloud)" and "Wish I Didn't Miss You."
- **Roy Ayers**, 84 – American jazz, funk, and world music vibraphonist; composer of "Everybody Loves the Sunshine."

- **Pamela Bach**, 62 – Actress known for roles in "Baywatch," "Young and the Restless," and "Cheers."
- **D'Wayne Wiggins**, 64 – American R&B guitarist from Tony! Toni! Toné!; known for songs like "Anniversary" and "Feels Good."
- **Athol Fugard**, 92 – South African playwright known for anti-apartheid themes.
- **Robin Ann Brailsford**, 71 – Artist known for work in stained glass, metal sculpture, ceramics, jewelry, and photography; established Brailsford Public Art.
- **Mark Dobies**, 65 – Actor who appeared in television series including "The Net," "Melrose Place," and "Guiding Light."
- **Bruce Glover**, 92 – Television, film, and Broadway actor; appeared in "Route 66," "Gunsmoke," and "Kojak."
- **Jesse Colin Young**, 83 – American folk-rock singer-songwriter from The Youngbloods; known for "Get Together."
- **Jack Lilley**, 91 – Actor, animal wrangler, and stuntman; appeared in "The Magical World of Disney," "Zorro," and "Bonanza."
- **Ron Sossi**, 85 – Founder and artistic director of the Odyssey Theatre in Los Angeles for over 50 years.
- **George Foreman**, 76 – Actor and professional boxer; starred in his own sitcom "George" and appeared in "The Six Million Dollar Man."
- **Denis Arndt**, 86 – Actor known for roles in "Basic Instinct," "S.W.A.T.," and "L.A. Law."
- **Richard Chamberlain**, 90 – Actor and singer; starred in "Dr. Kildare," "The Thorn Birds," and "Shōgun."
- **Sian Barbara Allen**, 78 – Actress who appeared in "Gunsmoke," "The Waltons," and "Ironside."
- **Patti Maloney**, 72 – Actress recognized for roles in "Far Out Space Nuts" and "The Little Rascals."
- **Johnny Tillotson**, 86 – American singer and songwriter; known for "Poetry in Motion."
- **Val Kilmer**, 65 – Actor recognized for roles in "Comanche Moon," "Knight Rider," and "The Spoils of Babylon."
- **Elvis Ramone (Clement Bozowski)**, 67 – American drummer with the Ramones in 1987.
- **Jay North**, 73 – Actor best known for his role as the title character in "Dennis the Menace."
- **Francisco Duarte** – Poet and father of Arts Council Member Caleb Duarte

18. Closing Remarks

Chair Messina Captor expressed gratitude for the engaging meeting and acknowledged the range of meaningful topics discussed. She extended heartfelt support to the communities of Pasadena and the Palisades, highlighting the healing power of art and the enduring resilience of artists.

19. Adjournment

Chair Messina Captor adjourned the meeting at 2:57 P.M.

Public Comment by Jenica Bisbee, Field Engagement Coordinator, California for the Arts

Jenica Bisbee addressed concerns regarding the recent grant consolidations that have led to the elimination of a District SRN program. She expressed uncertainty about how the grant panelists will differentiate between service organizations and their constituents. Jenica also noted that some stakeholders, particularly those with revenues exceeding \$250,000, do not plan to apply for the grants and encouraged the Allocations Committee to prioritize smaller budget organizations. She shared excitement about the reopening of the cultural districts grant program, mentioning that California Arts Advocates is working to secure funding. Jenica also expressed appreciation for the Arts Council's service to arts and culture and the importance of continued support and funding, especially in light of federal funding uncertainties.

Tatiana, Nonprofit Leader

Tatiana, who runs a nonprofit serving the Russian-speaking community, requested that the Russian-speaking community, which includes individuals from 15 nationalities of the former Soviet Union, be included in the Arts Council's programs. She emphasized the importance of representing the growing Ukrainian community and other diverse populations, mentioning successful concerts organized by her nonprofit, including events with the Armenian and Spanish communities. She asked the Arts Council to consider including the Russian-speaking community in their plans and initiatives.

Nefesha Israel, Director of Programs, California for the Arts

Nefesha Israel spoke on behalf of California for the Arts, detailing the organization's efforts to highlight the value and impact of arts through initiatives like Arts and Culture Month. She shared the upcoming 3rd Annual Arts and Culture Summit and its theme of "Health, Healing, and Hope." The summit will address the role of arts in community resilience and other vital topics. Nefesha also noted the success of Arts Advocacy Day, which had a record number of registrants, and mentioned their efforts to provide accessible toolkits for community engagement. Additionally, Nefesha extended gratitude to the city of Sacramento and Los Angeles Metro Arts for their continued support.

Laura O'Connor, Cross-Sector Strategist

Laura O'Connor expressed appreciation for the proposal to increase representation in the cultural districts process. She also relayed a message from Takoa Kadara of the Allensworth Progressive Association (APA), highlighting the potential for a cultural district in Allensworth, a historic town in Tulare County. Laura spoke about the vision of the Allensworth community, founded by escaped slaves,

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and their hope to submit a proposal for the cultural districts program. She also endorsed the proposal for a \$5 million allocation to cultural districts and museum grants.

Carolyn Moreno Mullen, Executive Director, Oxnard Performing Arts Center Corporation

Carolyn Moreno Mullen advocated for the inclusion of Oxnard in the cultural districts program, highlighting the city's cultural vibrancy, diversity, and strong community presence. She noted that Oxnard, with a population of over 200,000, has significant cultural assets, including being home to the largest Mexican indigenous community outside of Mexico. Carolyn emphasized the lack of representation from the central coast and central valley in the cultural districts program and urged the Council to prioritize these underserved regions. She also mentioned that Oxnard would actively apply for the cultural district designation when the process opens.

Pam Hogarth, Co-President, Elite Theatre Company

Pam Hogarth echoed Carolyn's comments and expressed support for the inclusion of Oxnard in the cultural districts program. Pam, who is involved with several local arts organizations, noted the challenges faced by all-volunteer nonprofits and emphasized the importance of support from the California Arts Council. She also highlighted Oxnard's diversity, cultural wealth, and the potential for the city to be recognized as a vibrant cultural destination in the state.

Karen Tromer, Chair of the Advisory Board of Esmoa (Experimentally Structured Museum of Art)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment today. My name is Karen Tromer, and I am the chair of the Advisory Board of Esmoa, a nonprofit located in Lawndale, in the heart of the South Bay. We bring arts access, education, and programming to a community that has historically lacked access to such resources.

Esmoa partners with the city to host events that embrace and celebrate the local culture, heritage, and ethnicity. In addition to our exhibitions, we host workshops, panels, and art talks. We also take our programs into schools, offering educational opportunities and field trips for students. Beyond our immediate community, we collaborate with organizations like El Camino College to broaden the reach of arts education.

We also engage and support local artists by including them in our activities, further expanding the accessibility of the arts. Today, I would like to express our gratitude to the California Arts Council. As with most nonprofits, we rely on volunteers, sponsors, and donors to make our work possible. Your support is crucial, and we want to express our deep appreciation for the work you do.

We are encouraged by the council's unwavering commitment in light of the current political climate, and we stand with you in your efforts. We will continue to do our part in supporting the communities we serve. Thank you again for everything you do.

Gaidi Finney, Executive Director of the San Diego African American Museum of Fine Art

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Hello, I'm Gaidi Finney, the executive director of the San Diego African American Museum of Fine Art. A little over two years ago, the city of San Diego designated nine city blocks as a Black Cultural District and appointed our museum as the manager to develop it.

While we have a large committee of community residents who advise us, this designation came without any funding. As a result, the museum has been self-sponsoring and supporting the development of the Black Cultural District. We are hopeful that in the future, we may receive state designation, which would help secure necessary funding for our efforts.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Alejandro Gutierrez-Chaves, Executive Director of Arts Connection Arts Council of San Bernardino County; Item 13: Unused Funds

Good afternoon, madam Chair, Council Members, and CAC staff. My name is Alejandro Gutierrez-Chaves, and I am the Executive Director of Arts Connection Arts Council of San Bernardino County, a State local partner for communities in San Bernardino County. I'm here on behalf of the Coalition of Arts County Arts Councils, just to express our deep gratitude to the Program Policy Committee for the suggestion of using some of the unused funds to support our SLPS with under \$250,000 in revenue to help them attend the convening in Sacramento, as well as those supporting the lowest quartile communities across California. We are one of them, where all our programming goes to the lowest quartile communities in San Bernardino County. I want to express my gratitude for this being an option, and we also see the value in supporting the folk and traditional arts programs and individual artists. It's amazing, and both support the California Arts Council's mission to elevate, empower artists, culture bearers, and support the creative expression of all Californians. Thank you for your time, energy, and continued leadership.

Leticia Soto Flores, Deputy Director for the Alliance for California Traditional Arts; Item 13: Unused Funds

Thank you. Good afternoon, Council Members. My name is Leticia Soto Flores, and I serve as Deputy Director for the Alliance for California Traditional Arts. Since 2022, we've had the honor of serving as an administering organization for the CAC's Folk and Traditional Arts program. I'm here to speak in support of Option 2, which would augment the FTA program to allow immediate grants to individual artists with urgent and emergent needs. This builds on a tested and trusted infrastructure that would allow the CAC to quickly distribute funds to culture bearers facing challenges like displacement, natural disasters, and the loss of elders. The demand for this program continues to far outpace available funds. This past year, ACTA received an unprecedented 386 applications from 42 counties, totaling over \$3.4 million in requests, but was only able to award just over \$622,000. These numbers show the urgent need for funding. By choosing Option 2, the Council can restore some lost funding and ensure it directly reaches artists who are sustaining California's rich and diverse cultural expressions. Thank you for your time and commitment to equity in the arts.

- **Sarah Weber (She/Her/Hers)**
Association of California Symphony Orchestras, Los Angeles County
Current or Former Grantee: Statewide and Regional Networks

Given the decision to consolidate the SRN program into General Operating Support, training and preparing the panelists will be vitally important for them to be able to make distinctions between arts service orgs and arts presenting orgs. The missions, operating models, and constituents are very different between the two types of orgs.

I cannot find any information about how the orientation and training for grant panelists will be modified this year to ensure that they know the differences between arts service orgs and arts presenting orgs when they evaluate and rank applications.

Therefore, I urge Council and Staff to separate the applications from service orgs from the presenting orgs and ask them to review like against like. It would be a heavy lift to provide reviewers with a mix of applications from both presenting orgs and arts orgs and ask them to adequately evaluate apples and oranges. Additionally, there are real ethical concerns amongst service orgs about being put into the same pool in direct competition with those that we serve. Please find a way to separate the two types of organizations into sub-categories of general operating support grants and evaluate them accordingly. Also, it is unclear why the Council has shifted to a “two consecutive years on, one year off” model of funding. I respectfully ask the Council to provide more background on this decision and what is the expected outcome. Thank you.

- **Susana**
San Francisco County
Current or Former Grantee: Local Impact; Arts & Cultural Organizations
General Operating Relief

Greetings. We are struggling as an organization because we still have not received our funding for the second year of funding from our general operating support grant.

The second year began Oct 1. We were originally told funding for the second year would arrive Dec-Jan 2025. Then the dates were changed to Jan-March 2025. It is now April and we have still not received funding. We asked our program director and they said that the check was still being processed and to give it 3-6 weeks - even though we are in year 2. So we might not receive funding until... June?!

This grant is supposed to support small orgs, but the delay in payment makes it hard for a small organization like us to function as we don't have the cash flow to cover a delay in government funding. All stability that a two year grant was supposed to provide has since evaporated.

And yes, we submitted everything on time.

Please adjust the timing of grants so that checks are distributed closer to the beginning of grant periods, like how it used to be.

Thank you!!

- **ALyssa Villaire (She/Her/Hers)**
Create CA, Los Angeles County
Current or Former Grantee: Statewide and Regional Networks

Now that the guidelines have been rolled out for the new GOS program, it would be really helpful if the CAC hosted a webinar going through the guidelines and taking questions from applicants. This would preferably happen at least two weeks before the deadline on June 5th.

Additionally, since the SRN program has been abolished, it would be a really helpful data point if the CAC tracked how many SRNs apply for the GOS program. Create CA is a long-time SRN grantee, and now that we have to apply to the GOS program, we'll be competing with the very organizations we support. I expect this is the same for many previous SRN grantees. If the CAC can track SRNs and other types of organizations, it will give the people of California some insight into how grant funds are being allocated through the CAC. We would greatly appreciate this transparency.

Thank you!

- **Valerie Badgett (She/Her/Hers)**
LuLur Curvism Experiences, Marin County

I am carefully bringing together various elements aiming to create a unique program that integrates seamlessly into a broader strategy of creating sustainability for the arts community and the earth's biosphere as a whole. I offer skills to open up and bring the arts into areas that directly support revenue generation long-term instead of depending on grants to be sustainable. I design and build programs that offer the opportunity for artists to be introduced into industries that are open to creative concepts and who purchase them ongoing.

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Yes, I am open to being a grant review person as I have been a buyer of creative arts for over 3 decades. I scout new talent.

My main goal is to work with the largest selection of artists who are serious about building a career that involves generating ongoing revenue and opening up pathways for that to be possible.

I am in a position to set up programs that can gift back to the California Art Council a way to bring in funds in light of recent cut-offs, if there is the creative opening to do so.