

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

Friday, December 12, 2025

10:00 A.M. – 3:50 P.M.

On Location/Hybrid Meeting

The Sofia, home of the B Street Theatre
2700 Capitol Avenue
Sacramento, CA

Online meeting access will be provided at:

<https://arts.ca.gov/about/council-meetings>

ASL Interpretation will be provided via Zoom.

Interpretación simultánea en español – transmisión de audio por Zoom.

10:00 A.M.	1. Call to Order	R. Messina Captor
10:00 A.M. (5 min)	2. Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum	C. Gutierrez
10:05 A.M. (2 min)	3. Land and Peoples Acknowledgement	R. Stein
10:07 A.M. (1 min)	4. Community Agreements	R. Messina Captor L. Goodwin
10:08 A.M. (3 min)	5. Opening Remarks	R. Messina Captor
10:11 A.M. (9 min)	6. Welcome by Jason Jong, Cultural & Creative Economy Manager – City of Sacramento, Office of Arts and Culture; Lyndsay Burch, Executive Artistic Director – The Sofia, home of the B Street Theatre	J. Jong L. Burch
10:20 A.M. (5 min)	7. Chair's Report (TAB A)	R. Messina Captor
10:25 A.M. (5 min)	8. Executive Director's Report (TAB B)	D. Brazell

10:30 A.M. (5 min)	9. VOTING ITEM: Meeting Minutes (TAB C) <i>The Council will vote to approve the following minutes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Meeting – October 24, 2025, Hybrid 	R. Messina Captor
10:35 A.M. (5 min)	10. VOTING ITEM: 2026 Council Meeting Dates <i>The Council will vote to approve the proposed 2026 council meeting dates allowing CAC staff to move forward with planning, coordinating and providing timely announcements to the field.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 23, 2026, Los Angeles Region • April 20, 2026*, Capitol Region • May 15, 2026, Northern California Region • June 24, 2026*, Capitol Region • August 14, 2026, Bay Area Region • September 2, 2026*, Capitol Region • October 23, 2026, San Diego Region • December 11, 2026, Central Valley <p><i>*Potential dates to coincide with 50th Anniversary awards ceremony.</i></p>	R. Messina Captor
10:40 A.M. (20 min)	11. VOTING ITEM: Council Elections (TAB D) <i>The Nomination Committee will administer elections for 2026.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation (5 min) • Public Comment (6 min) • Discussion (9 min) 	N. Miner G. Clarke
11:00 A.M. (10 min)	12. PRESENTATION: Creative Economy Report <i>CAC Executive Director Brazell and Data Equity Measures and Evaluation Manager Ratzkin will provide an overview of the Creative Economy of California Strategic Plan.</i>	D. Brazell R. Ratzkin
11:10 A.M. (45 min)	13. VOTING ITEM: PROGRAMS POLICY COMMITTEE (TAB E)	G. Clarke C. Duarte

	<p><i>The Programs Policy Committee will provide recommendations to the Council for a vote on the CAC Grant Guidelines Framework.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Presentation (5 min)</i> • <i>Public Comment (30 min)</i> • <i>Discussion (10 min)</i> 	
12:05 P.M. (30 min)	WORKING LUNCH	
12:35 P.M. (20 min)	<p>14. DISCUSSION: EQUITY COMMITTEE (TAB F)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation • Discussion 	V. Estrada R. Hirabayashi
12:55 P.M. (20 min)	<p>15. VOTING ITEM: AD HOC 50TH ANNIVERSARY ARTS AWARD COMMITTEE (TAB G)</p> <p><i>The Ad Hoc 50th Anniversary will provide an administrative amendment to the Arts Award Criteria and Process.</i></p>	L. Goodwin A. Israel
1:15 P.M. (20 min)	<p>16. COMMITTEE REPORTS (TAB H)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Legislative Committee Ad Hoc 50th Anniversary Committee Ad Hoc 50th Anniversary Fundraising & Sponsorships Committee Ad Hoc Partnerships Committee 	R. Messina Captor R. Stein P. Mercado R. Stein L. Goodwin P. Mercado
1:35 P.M. (70 min)	<p>17. VOTING ITEM: CULTURAL DISTRICT DESIGNATION AND AWARD (TAB I)</p> <p><i>Staff will provide an overview of the cultural district designation process. Council will vote on the 10 finalists to receive state designation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Presentation (15 min)</i> • <i>Public Comment (30 min)</i> • <i>Discussion (25 min)</i> 	N. Miner P. Mercado

2:45 P.M. (40 min)	18. General Public Comment <i>Two forms of general public comment will be offered:</i> 1) <i>Comments will be accepted during the meeting in person or over Zoom.</i> 2) <i>Written comment submissions will also be accepted online prior to and up through 10 a.m. on the second business day following the close of the meeting.</i> <i>Live public comments will be limited to three minutes per person and 30 minutes in total, as allowed by Bagley-Keene.</i>	C. Gutierrez
3:25 P.M. (15 min)	19. Open Council Discussion & Acknowledgement	ALL
3:40 P.M. (5 min)	20. In Memoriam	L. Goodwin
3:45 P.M. (5 min)	21. Closing Remarks <i>Call for agenda items for TBD, Council Meeting – TBD</i>	R. Messina-Captor
3:50 P.M.	22. Adjournment	R. Messina-Captor

**Agenda items included within this public notice may be added, removed or altered until 10 days prior to meeting time.*

- 1. All times indicated and the orders of business are approximate and subject to change.*
- 2. Any item listed on the agenda is subject to possible Council action.*
- 3. A brief mid-meeting break may be taken at the call of the Chair.*
- 4. The CAC retains the right to convene an advisory committee meeting pursuant to Government Code Sec. 11125 (d).*
- 5. Public meetings held featuring a virtual/Zoom component will include online Spanish and ASL interpreters whenever possible. Should you need additional reasonable accommodations, please submit your request no later than Tuesday, December 16 at 5 p.m. Please direct your request to the Public Affairs Specialist, Kimberly Brown, at kimberly.brown@arts.ca.gov.*

6. *Public comment instructions will be provided at <https://arts.ca.gov/about/council-meetings/>*
7. *Arts and cultural organizations or coalitions that wish to be scheduled on an upcoming agenda must submit a request to info@arts.ca.gov outlining a synopsis of their work and their purpose for inclusion at a Council meeting. All requests will be sent to the Council Chair for consideration and may or may not be accepted and subsequently scheduled.*

TAB A

California Arts Council | Public Meeting | 06/22/2021

This agenda item was provided to Council as an oral report. A detailed summary will be included in the record of the meeting's minutes, published to the CAC site following Council's approval at the next scheduled business meeting.

TAB B

California Arts Council | Public Meeting | 06/22/2021



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

Gavin Newsom, **Governor**
Danielle Brazell, **Executive Director**
2750 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 300, Sacramento CA 95833
(916) 322-6555 | www.arts.ca.gov

December 12, 2025

Dear Council Members,

It is my pleasure to provide this report which contains an update on the agency's programs and special initiatives as well as an overview of the roles staff, council, the legislature and governor play in advancing arts, culture, and creativity in California (attached). As the State Arts Agency for California, we are bound to serve the people of California fairly and equitably in accordance with state rules, regulations, executive orders, the council's bylaws, and the agency's strategic framework guides every decision we make.

At this last meeting of 2025, you will discuss, deliberate, hear from the public, and cast a vote on several items such as the **FY26-27 Programs Guideline Framework**, a new cohort of **California Cultural Districts**, **2026 meeting dates**, and **elect a Chair and Vice Chair**. To ensure you are fully briefed on the items that require your attention I urge you to review these materials carefully in advance of the meeting. As the volunteer oversight body of this public agency, you play a critical role in ensuring agency practices are fair, transparent, and effective.

Should you have any questions about any of these items, please contact me or Chief Deputy Michelle Radmand. We are deeply committed to ensuring you are fully briefed in advance of the meeting on December 12, 2025.

OPERATIONS

As reported last month, the agency is operating at full capacity. Staff are collaborating and coordinating work effectively across work units. Staff will continue striving for effective coordination and collaboration with Council to ensure that the policy decisions made by Council are feasible in terms of capacity (resources, staffing and timelines). I'm pleased to welcome two new staff members to the operations team; Macy Mannix, Associate Governmental Program Analyst responsible for supporting human resources and budget management, and Andrea Hatch Accounting Officer (Specialist). We are thrilled that our operations team is now fully staffed.

- **Bagley Keene** - In October, Governor Newsom signed SB470 into law. The legislation extends the teleconference and remote participation provisions of Bagley Keene until January 1, 2030. Considering this extension, and as per Council bylaws, members may continue to participate remotely with advance (of at least 30 days) approval by the Chair.

- **Fiscal Restraints and Efficiencies** - As reported last month, the operating budget of the agency is fixed and undergoes a high degree of fiscal oversight from the Department of General Services. Within the modest operating budget, the agency must continue to identify efficiencies. Our goal is to stretch every dollar. As we look to 2026, our goal is to maximize saving wherever possible. This includes booking travel for public meetings at least two weeks in advance. Additionally, the staff are optimizing the reimbursement process to ensure allowable expenses incurred by Council members during travel to and from meetings are processed in a timely manner.

PROGRAMS

FY2025-26 Grant Award Notifications - Agency staff launched a joint marketing campaign with CAC grantees. The effort significantly exceeded our performance baselines, driven in large part by the CAC Public Affairs team's new interactive media toolkit, which empowered grantees to amplify the message.

Platform	Baseline	Campaign Results	Impact
Website Visits	1,100 / day	7,200	6.5x increase
Email Click Rate	1.2%	8.7%	High intent/engagement
Instagram Views	230 / day	2,566	11x reach
Instagram New Followers	130 / month	268 / day	2 months of growth in 1 day
Facebook Views	100 / day	1,018	10x reach

- **Cultural District Site Visits** – From October 22 through November 8, 2025, I joined agency program managers and specialists on nineteen Cultural District Site visits. My role in participating in this process was to meet and experience the vast cultural resources of our state and to observe the practice of the policies we set forth for the program. There is an abundance of extraordinary individuals working together to advance and protect the cultural heritage of communities. The program design is solid, although some technical amendments should be considered. In addition, this program is unfunded. Meaning there are no dedicated resources other than the agency's local assistance appropriation. For this program to truly be successful, it should have dedicated resources for existing and new Cultural district. In the coming months, staff will collaborate with the Programs Policy Committee to revise the program framework for a 2027 launch.
- **Creative Economy Town Halls** – Upon the successful launch of the Creative Economy strategic plan, CAC has partnered with six regional leads to produce over thirty townhalls

throughout the state. The goals of these regional convenings are to share information about the plan; garner feedback from each region, and to begin developing strategies for each goal. Event dates and locations can be found here (<https://creativeeconomy.arts.ca.gov/>). Council members interested in attending should register in advance. We'd love to see you there.

- **50th Anniversary** – Staff has developed the fundraising materials and processes as outlined in the Council adopted 50th Anniversary Awards Ceremony plan in September 2025. However, funding commitments have stalled. As reported to Council in October, should **insufficient funds be raised, the event will be scaled accordingly and/or considerations should be made for a later event date in 2026.**

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

- **National Association of State Arts Agencies Executive Director Forum** – Omaha, NB – The 2025 Executive Forum was a two-day event that strengthened state arts agency leadership teams and addressed critical issues and challenges facing our field. Discussion topics were developed with direct input from executive and deputy directors to ensure that sessions were timely and relevant to the roles state arts agency directors and deputy directors face.
- **California Forward Economic Summit** – Chief Deputy Director Radmand represented the agency at the annual Economic Summit hosted by California Forward in Stockton, CA. The summit brings together private, public and philanthropic leaders throughout the state focusing on different economic themes each year. This year's summit focused on regional economic development, fiscal resilience, democracy and free speech, and immigration.

CLOSING

As we close this dynamic year, I want to recognize and applaud you, agency staff, and the field for collaborating effectively in service of the people of California. Together, through our prospective roles, we are fulfilling our mission with great skill, integrity, and passion for public funding for the arts. While we have no shortage of areas to grow, we are well positioned to enter our 50th anniversary year stronger than ever.

Respectfully submitted,



Danielle Brazell
Executive Director

TAB C

California Arts Council | Public Meeting | 06/22/2021

**Minutes of Public Meeting
CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL
Friday, October 24, 2025
10 A.M. – 2:30 P.M.
On Location/Hybrid Meeting
San Bernardino County Museum
2024 Orange Tree Ln
Redlands, CA 92374**

The members of the California Arts Council convened in Redlands 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 Vicki Estrada
Council Member Roy Hirabayashi
Council Member Alex Israel**
Council Member Rick Stein

Council Members Present Remotely:

Council Member Gerald Clarke*
Council Member Dorka Keehn

Council Members Absent:

Council Member Caleb Duarte
Council Member Phil Mercado
Council Member Nicola Miner

*Gerald Clarke left the meeting at 12:08PM

**Alex Israel left the meeting at 2:01PM

Arts Council Staff Present:

Danielle Brazell, Executive Director
Julie Estrella, Council Liaison
Carissa Gutierrez, Director of Public Affairs
Josy Miller, Arts Program Manager

Megan Morgan, Race & Equity Manager
Zachary Hill, IT Specialist
Steve Mok, Public Affairs Specialist

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 and quorum was established. 6 Council Members were present in person with 2 members present virtually.

3. Land and People's Acknowledgement

Chair Messina Captor invited Council member Clarke to share about California Indian Day. Council member Clarke informed attendees that various cultural gatherings would be taking place with tribal communities across the state and encouraged participation.

Council member Clarke then delivered the California Arts Council Land Acknowledgement.

4. Community Agreements

Chair Messina Captor and Vice Chair Goodwin lead the Council through the community agreements.

The community agreements read aloud were as follows:

- Practice listening to understand, not just hearing.
- Wait until you are acknowledged to speak.
- When it's your time to speak, state your name and intention clearly.
- Listen to others with an open mind. Try not to project your truth onto others.
- Practice both/and thinking rather than either/or thinking.
- Have a beginner's mind. Take 100% responsibility for one's own learning.
- It's okay to disagree—disagree with ideas, not with the person.

5. Opening Remarks

Chair Messina Captor opened with welcoming attendees and thanking staff and the public.

6. Welcome by Alejandro Gutierrez Chavez, Arts Connection; David Myers, Director of San Bernardino County Museum.

This item opened with a welcome from Alejandro Gutierrez-Chavez of Arts Connection, the local Arts Council, who highlighted the organization's role in administering state policies and funding across the vast region, which is the largest county by landmass in the US and home to 2.2 million people spread across diverse geographic areas including urban centers, mountain communities, the high desert, and the Morongo Basin. He expressed appreciation that the California Arts Council (CAC) fulfilled its promise to hold its meeting there, deepening its connection with the local communities, a sentiment echoed by a warm welcome video from Senator Eloise Gomez-Reyes. David Myers, Director of the San Bernardino County Museum System, then welcomed the attendees to the museum, emphasizing its focus on STEAM education and the arts, noting the recent hiring of the museum's first-ever

Curator of Art as a significant milestone, and thanking Arts Connection for its tireless advocacy.

7. Chair's Report

The [Chair's report](#) can be read in its entirety here.

8. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Danielle Brazel began her report by addressing the arts sector's current challenges, specifically citing the cancellation of National Endowment for the Arts awards which severely strains organizations reliant on grants, noting that the CAC's own grant programs are heavily oversubscribed. She defined the division of labor: the Council sets broad policy, while the staff implements plans, manages programs, and adheres to regulations. To better support the Council, she announced a planned inclusion of staff analysis in policy recommendations starting in December. A major announcement was the launch of the state's first sector-wide strategic Creative Economy Plan, which views arts and culture as vital for a strong, resilient economy.

The discussion shifted to the upcoming Poetry Out Loud competition and the 50th Anniversary Arts Awards. Director Brazell reported that a change in the federal Poetry Out Loud anthology, which is now limited to public domain poems (pre-1929), is causing significant difficulty for State-Local Partners and arts educators. Regarding the Awards, she relayed partner feedback asking for a timeline extension and an amendment to the selection criteria, particularly eliminating the notification of unselected nominees. Chair Messina Captor reiterated that the event's purpose was to honor artists and founding members, not for self-celebration, and confirmed staff would prepare amendments to the awards process for a December vote. The Executive Director also recommended moving the December meeting to Sacramento to ensure sufficient Council quorum.

Read Executive Director Danielle Brazell's [full report](#).

9. VOTING ITEM: Minutes from Previous Meetings

Chair Messina Captor then presented [the minutes from September 26th](#).

As there were no objections from the rest of the Council, the minutes were approved.

10. Staff Presentation: Programs Data Overview

Equity Measures and Evaluation Manager, Rebecca Ratzkin, provided a data review where she highlighted key metrics for FY 2025, confirming that the Council successfully prioritized funding for smaller organizations, with over half of all grantees operating on \$250,000 or less in annual revenue. Most applications sought General Operating Support (GenOPS). While most grants are concentrated in urban areas, the data showed alignment with policy goals, as 87% of grantees met at least one priority criterion (e.g., small budget or serving low HPI communities). Initial analysis of program consolidation revealed a drop in grants to specific entities like State and Regional Networks, a reduction whose true impact on organizational capacity requires further research. To aid future policy decisions, staff were directed to develop geographic mapping of the data and integrate the number of artists served by re-granting partners for a more complete picture of the agency's statewide reach and impact.

The [full data presentation can be viewed here](#).

11. VOTING ITEM: Programs to Open in FY 26-27

The Council proceeded to [Agenda Item 11: on the FY25-26 Grant Programs to open](#).

The Programs Policy Committee presented its recommendations for grant programs to be opened for the next fiscal year (2026). The Committee proposed to reopen the following five programs: State and Local Partners, State-Local Partner Mentorship, General Operating Support, Impact Projects, and Arts and Youth. It was also noted that the Folk and Traditional Arts program is a two-year grant and will remain open, though it was not on the list for renewal discussion.

The Committee's recommendations were based on a review of current year applications, priority and geographical data, a three- to five-year grant history, and field feedback. A key consideration was the need to maintain consistency in available programming to facilitate reliable data collection for better policy-making. The history of fluctuating program offerings and funding levels has made it difficult to rely on past data. The Committee emphasized that given the current budget, reopening individual programs that were previously consolidated under broader umbrellas is not recommended, as it would negatively impact the total number of awards that can be made. The proposed action supports the strategic framework's goal of evaluating funding programs and processes. The Committee acknowledged potential unintended consequences, such as increased competition for funding among dissimilar organizations, but affirmed that maintaining consistency in program guidelines should continue to support small organizations and historically marginalized communities.

Motion:

Made by: Council Member Clarke

Seconded by: Council Member Estrada

The Programs Policy Committee recommends that Council vote to open the following grant programs in 2026:

- State-Local Partners
- State-Local Partner Mentorship
- General Operating Support
- Impact Projects
- Arts and Youth

Public Comment noted below at the end of the minutes.

Discussion:

Council Member Clarke confirmed that if the motion passed, seven programs would be open for the next fiscal year, including the five listed (State and Local Partners, SLP Mentorship, General Operating Support- GenOps, Impact Projects, and Arts and Youth) plus the already continuing Folk and Traditional Arts and Individual Artist Fellowships. A proposed tribal grant program was confirmed to still be in the early development stage and not ready for recommendation. Vice Chair Goodwin

raised concerns, noting that only 18 out of 62 former State Regional Network organizations received funding in the GenOps round. She argued that SRNs should be restored as a separate program. Council Member Clarke acknowledged the difficulty of the funding crisis and the public input, but maintained the recommendation for consistency across program offerings to ensure reliable data collection, stating that not having a separate SRN program does not preclude those organizations from applying to the existing grants. An amendment was formally proposed to add the **State-Regional Networks** program to the list of programs to be opened for the 2026-2027 fiscal year.

Vice Chair Goodwin then motioned an amendment, seconded by Council Member Estrada:

Chair Messina Captor then called for a vote.

Made by: Vice Chair Goodwin

Seconded by: Council Member Estrada

The Programs Policy Committee recommends that Council vote to open the following grant programs in 2026:

- State-Local Partners
- State-Local Partner Mentorship
- General Operating Support
- Impact Projects
- Arts and Youth
- **State Regional Networks**

Vote Tally:

- Clarke – no
- Estrada - no
- Hirabayashi – refusal
- Israel - no
- Keehn - no
- Stein – refusal
- Vice Chair Goodwin – yes
- Chair Messina Captor - no

Result: Motion to amend failed (1 yay – 5 nay – 2 refusal/abstention) 2/3 majority needed for amendment

The Council then proceeded to vote on the original motion.

Chair Messina Captor then called for a vote.

Made by: Council Member Clarke

Seconded by: Council Member Estrada

The Programs Policy Committee recommends that Council vote to open the following grant programs in 2026:

- State-Local Partners

- State-Local Partner Mentorship
- General Operating Support
- Impact Projects
- Arts and Youth

Vote Tally:

- Clarke – yes
- Estrada - yes
- Hirabayashi – recusal
- Israel - yes
- Keehn - yes
- Stein – recusal
- Vice Chair Goodwin – yes
- Chair Messina Captor - yes

Result: Motion passed (6 yay – 0 nay – 2 recusal/abstention) simple majority = 5 of 8

The CAC will reopen the following five programs: State and Local Partners, State-Local Partner Mentorship, General Operating Support, Impact Projects, and Arts and Youth.

**Council Member Clarke left the meeting due to scheduling conflict.*

12:10 P.M. – 12:40 P.M. WORKING LUNCH

12. VOTING ITEM: 50th Anniversary Logo

The Council returned from lunch then proceed [to Item 12: 50th Anniversary Logo](#). Director of Public Affairs, Carissa Gutierrez, presented the logo and treatment designed by CAC's graphic designer, Steven Mok.

The Council received a presentation on the proposed 50th Anniversary logo, following prior feedback from the committee. The staff noted the need for the logo to be creative, functional, and explicitly identify the California Arts Council as a state agency. The logo includes the text "50 Years of Creative Impact" and clearly states "California Arts Council, a state agency" to ensure immediate recognition of the organization and its mission. Staff demonstrated various applications, including a consistent use of the primary logo across all materials (reports, grant forms, websites), and a special, elegant, gold-plated treatment for awards and invitations to honor the legacy of the Golden State for use at the upcoming Awards Ceremony. It was announced that the agency's grantee database would soon go live, and the website's landing page would be updated to feature a timeline of the agency's history and highlight events dedicated to the 50th anniversary. The Council was asked to approve the logo and its treatments for implementation across all platforms.

The motion to approve the Ad Hoc 50th Anniversary Committee logo and design was put forward.

Motion:

Made by: Council Member Estrada

Seconded by: Council Member Hirabayashi

To approve the 50th Anniversary Logo and design treatment.

Public Comment

Public comment was opened to both in-person attendees and virtual participants. No in-person or virtual public comments were received for this item. The public was reminded that written comments could still be submitted online for the Council's review.

Discussion

The Council praised the proposed 50th Anniversary logo design, complimenting the staff and graphic designer for capturing the agency's existing brand while effectively communicating forward movement. The design was described as professional, simple, and clean, with one suggestion to ensure the 1976-2026 timeline is clearly featured in accompanying text. The motion to adopt the logo was then moved to a vote.

Motion:

Made by: Council Member Estrada

Seconded by: Council Member Hirabayashi

To approve the 50th Anniversary Award Logo and Design Treatment.

Vote Tally:

- Estrada - yes
- Hirabayashi – yes
- Israel - yes
- Keehn - yes
- Stein – yes
- Vice Chair Goodwin – yes
- Chair Messina Captor - yes

Result: Motion PASSES (7 yay – 0 nay) simple majority = 6 of 11

The approved logo and design treatment will be issued for the 50th Anniversary celebratory year, beginning January 1st to December 31st of 2026.

13. Discussion & Presentation: Report Out on CAC's Current Strategic Framework and RFP for Next Plan

The Strategic Framework Committee [presented their memo](#).

Equity Measures and Evaluation Manager, Rebecca, Ratzkin, provided an update on the current 2018-2027 Strategic Framework, noting that the goal for the next cycle is to streamline and focus the plan, which was initially perceived as overly broad. The current framework defined six key outcomes, including better identifying local needs, reducing access barriers, amplifying leadership engagement, and comprehensively evaluating programs. An overview of the 28 aspirations linked to these outcomes showed that 29% have been completed (e.g., expanding public comment, program consolidation), 46% are in progress (e.g., technical support, Native American community engagement), and 25% have not yet started (e.g., researching other state funding models, public awareness campaigns).

Discussion

Council discussion began with a focus on the seven aspirations that have not started, with the committee recommending they be removed or postponed due to staff capacity. One member suggested that "researching other state funding models" overlaps with work being done for the recently launched Creative Economy Strategic Plan, and that the Arts Council should study what other states are doing. Another member noted that the "public awareness campaign" aspirations could be naturally covered by the current 50th Anniversary campaign. Additionally, they recommended adding a connection to the ongoing creative economy work and strengthening the commitment to equity and measurable evaluation mechanisms within the next strategic plan. Further discussions were requested for future council meetings.

14. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment

All public comment listed at the end of these minutes.

15. Committee Reports

Chair Messina Captor provided an update on the Ad Hoc 50th Anniversary. The committee has met twice a month since October, has a plan and timeline approved by the Council last June, and reminds the Council that the 50th anniversary starts in January with the awards ceremony hoped for in April.

Council Member Stein provided [an update on the 50th Anniversary Fundraising and Sponsorships Committee](#). The committee is in the implementation phase of their plan, has an excellent toolkit of materials, aims to secure 100% Councilmember support for the event through individual contributions by December 31st, and is launching a public campaign for the April awards event in Sacramento.

Council Member Goodwin provided [an update to the Ad Hoc Partnerships Committee](#). It was noted that there was an error in the memo on the amount raised through the Keep Arts in Schools campaign and a need to make a technical edit for the minutes. The committee is exploring leveraging the Arts license plate and Keep Arts in Schools tax check-off campaigns for the 50th anniversary through public relations and social media to increase non-state revenue for grant programs.

Chair Messina Captor and Council Member Stein provided [an update on the Legislative Committee](#). The committee focuses on educating and informing the legislature about the work and importance of the California Arts Council and addressing the fact that California currently ranks around 37th in per capita state arts support.

16. In Memoriam

Vice Chair Goodwin led a tribute honoring individuals who passed away since September 26, 2025.

The "In Memoriam" section honored the following artists and advocates who have passed:

- **Malcolm Margolin** (August 20): ACTA co-founder, tireless advocate for Native California culture and history, and founder of Heyday Books. (Age 84)
- **Susan Griffin** (September 30): American poet, playwright, and author, known for works like *Woman and Nature: The Course of an Inevitable Partnership* and *A Course of Stones*. (Age 82)

- **Jane Goodall** (October 1): British primatologist, anthropologist, and writer, known for *Through a Window: My 30 Years with the Chimpanzees of Gombe*. (Age 91)
- **Ron Dean** (October 5): American character actor known for films including *The Fugitive* and *The Breakfast Club*. (Age 87)
- **Diane Keaton** (October 11): American Academy Award-winning actress, director, and photographer, known for films such as *Annie Hall*, *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*, and *Father of the Bride*. (Age 79)
- **Drew Struzan** (October 13): American artist, illustrator, and cover designer, known for creating over 150 movie posters, including *Harry Potter*, *Star Wars*, and *Back to the Future*. (Age 78)
- **D'Angelo** (Michael Archer) (October 14): American R&B and neo-soul singer, songwriter, and record producer. (Age 51)
- **Susan Stamberg** (October 16): American radio producer and the first U.S. woman to host a national evening news program, *All Things Considered* on NPR. (Age 87)
- **Ace Frehley** (October 16): The original lead guitarist and founding member of the rock band KISS. (Age 74)

17. Closing Remarks

Chair Messina Captor concluded the meeting by thanking San Bernardino County Museum and the Arts Connection staff for hosting the public meeting and expressing appreciation for all the public comments received, both in-person and via Zoom. She announced that the next Council meeting is scheduled for December 12th in Sacramento, with all relevant information available on the Council's website.

19. Adjournment

Chair Messina Captor adjourned the meeting at 2:08PM.

Public Comment

Item 11. Programs to Open in FY 26-27

- Alma Robinson, Executive Director of California Lawyers for the Arts: "Good morning, council members. I am Alma Robinson, Executive Director of California Lawyers for the Arts. The question was raised in recent meetings about how service and statewide network organizations serve the entire state. As an example from our organization's Arts and Corrections Initiative, I wanted to briefly summarize our evidence-based demonstration project that showed the benefits of arts programs in county jails. We surveyed 193 men and women in 15 counties that included Fresno, Sacramento, Yuba, Sutter, Orange, San Diego, Contra Costa, Riverside, Mariposa, Siskiyou, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Nevada. Benefits reported by the participants, including feeling better about themselves, better communication skills, better able to express themselves, and that they enjoyed better relationships with their peers and staff. This program was an advocacy initiative that was supported by the NEA as well as the CAC and several foundations. And it adds weight to the principle of arts education for all. It also brought the state sheriff's organizations into our,

network as an important ally for the arts. Participating arts organizations included a number of state-local arts agencies around the state who would be eager to continue the projects in their jails if we could secure needed funding. And how we would do that would be to leverage funding that we get from the erstwhile SRN program. Unfortunately, that program has been eliminated, and we urge you to reconsider it in the future, going forward with planning. Thank you very much."

- Griselda Suarez, Executive Director of the Arts Council for Long Beach: "Good morning. I am the Executive Director of the Arts Council for Long Beach, and I want to thank you for your service. I know this is, right now, very difficult work. And distributing limited resources does not help. I must name that, truly, we are at a crisis for local arts infrastructure. I wholeheartedly agree with Director Brazel's comments earlier this meeting. And the unintended consequences, as mentioned in the presentation, does lead to a steeper competition and funding with dissimilar organizations. I believe that is what happened with the Arts Council for Long Beach. The data presentation, was wonderful. I learned a lot, but we can see there that re-granting organizations are not a priority. And we, for example, have granted out millions of dollars in local arts grants, over 200 public art projects, but we remain unfunded for 2 years now, and we're not alone. And this means that the yield that was mentioned earlier is not represented, in... in the grants that you have awarded. The very organizations that we connect to the California Arts Council, your artists are on the ground, are being cut out, because... we are not, I believe, being represented or scored with similar organizations. We are a unique situation. I urge and agree that we should continue with your priorities of your strategic framework. But how can we, on the panel side, work to, uplift the arts organizations that, for over 50 years, we share an anniversary, are really reaching out at the ground level, uplifting the emerging artist, uplifting the emerging organizations, through the re-granting process. When councils lose funding, the harm spreads to solo artists, microorganizations, and neighborhoods that depend on us for access. We ask that the Council, think about our recommendation and restore dedicated funding when it's time to re-establish programs to re-granting organizations or through general operating in similar, scoring. So, thank you so much. Again, California's future is creative. And we must invest in local partners to make that future possible."
- Sean Fenton, Executive Director of Theatre Bay Area: "Good morning, council members. My name is Sean Fenton, and I serve as Executive Director of theater Bay Area, representing more than 200 theater, dance, and music organizations, and thousands of individual artists and arts workers across 9-plus Bay Area counties. Like many former statewide and regional network grantees, Theater Bay Area was not advanced for operating support this year. That loss has meant reducing staff and scaling back programs. Even so, our mission hasn't changed. We continue to strengthen the infrastructure that connects artists, organizations, and audiences across the region. I want to emphasize that art service organizations like theater Bay Area directly support the state's investment in the creative economy. We are the bridge between policy and practice, the systems that turn funding into employment, training, production. This November, we'll host our annual conference, TBA Connect, in San Francisco, bringing together hundreds of artists, producers, and advocates to build creative careers and community. In February, our region-wide general auditions will connect nearly 300 actors in person, and an additional 500 more virtually, with casting directors, theaters, and film projects across Northern California. This is real workforce development in action. These are the spaces where state investment becomes creative opportunity, artists getting paid, venues staying open, communities seeing themselves reflected on stage. So as the Council considers its future programs and next strategic framework, I urge you to explicitly recognize arts service

organizations as essential infrastructure in California's arts ecosystem. We help the CAC deliver on its equity and creative economy goals by training, re-granting, and convening the people who make this work possible. I also echo the call for greater transparency and data on the impact of consolidating the SRN program, and a big thanks and applause to Rebecca Ratskin for today's presentation and recommendations for next steps. I look forward to more engagement with the data. Theater Bay Area really stands ready to partner with you, with the Council and staff in advancing the 50th anniversary and creative economy initiatives, and ensuring that California's arts infrastructure remains as vibrant and resilient as the artists we serve. So thank you all for your leadership, and for taking into account the full ecosystem that powers California's creative life. The artists, the organizations, and the service networks that sustain and support them. Thank you."

- Alexandra Urbanowski, CEO of SV Creates (Santa Clara County Arts Agency, State-Local Partner): "Good morning. Thank you for your time today. My name is Alexandra Urbanowski. I am the CEO of SV Creates, which is the county arts agency for Santa Clara County, and a state and local partner with the CAC. I'm speaking to you today on behalf of the Coalition of County Arts Agencies, which is made up of all the state and local partners, or SLPs, across the state. We appreciate the CAC's commitment to maintaining strong and effective partnerships and reaching every corner of the state through the State-Local Partnership Program. We appreciate the Program Policies Committee recommendation to include SLP grant program and mentorship program in the coming year. As you develop the program guidelines, we encourage you to again make the SLP a two-year grant. The most recent past grant cycle for SLPs has been a two-year grant, and this has been very productive and efficient. As the eligible pool of SLP applicants is already identified and limited to one per county, a multi-year grant provides many efficiencies for the SLPs and for the CAC staff itself. When the SLP grant program is consistent year over year, the two-year cycle allows us to use our time to uplift individual artists, provide data and feedback to the CAC, and serve local arts organizations. Particularly in this next cycle, when so many arts groups are not able to benefit from CAC operating grants, our work at the local level can help to support those groups in other ways. We also ask that you consider moving the SLP grant program away from grant awards based on scoring and ranking, and that every SLP receive flat, full funding. Again, the eligible pool of SLP applicants is already identified by each county and limited to one per county. It is a stable cohort, and so should not really be a competitive grant program. So we encourage you to reconsider the ranking approach to this particular program. I want to thank the Council, the Program Policy Committee, and the CAC staff for the thoughtful and hard work on these recommendations. Doubly thanks for the data, which is so helpful, and we look forward to supporting you and amplifying your efforts in the coming year. Thank you."
- David Reed, Executive Director of Yuba Sutter Arts & Culture (SLP for Yuba and Sutter Counties): "Good morning, David Reed, Executive Director of Yuba Sutter Arts and Culture, the California Arts Council SLP for Yuba and Sutter Counties. Excuse me, I want to strongly urge the Arts Council to reinstate the statewide and regional network program. The SRN has been a vital source of support, connection, and capacity building for arts organizations across California. It strengthens collaboration, equity, and shared resources, especially for rural and underserved communities that depend on these networks for access and opportunity. Eliminating the SRN program weakens the statewide arts ecosystem, making it harder for organizations to sustain programs and partnerships. Reinstating SRN funding would reaffirm the Council's commitment to a vibrant, inclusive cultural landscape that reaches every corner of our state. Please consider restoring this essential program and investment. Yuba Center Arts and Culture has worked with the California Lawyers for the Arts many years, for many

years. You heard from Alma Robinson earlier in the program. Recently, we accessed its legal services regarding a trademark issue with a very successful outcome. We had also participated in its advocacy efforts with a demonstration project, bringing arts programming to both of our county jails. Thanks very much."

- Aki Brahman, Arts for LA: "Hello, my... good afternoon. My name is Aki Brahman, and I'm speaking on behalf of Arts for LA. I appreciate the committee's effort to sustain arts funding, and also in reviewing the Program Policy Committee's 2026-2027 recommendation. We appreciate the desire for sustainability, but are also alarmed by the scale of unmet needs. The committee's own analysis notes that priority application for general operating support, impact projects, and arts and youth totaled roughly \$58 million in qualified requests, while the entire 2025-2026 allocation was about less than \$20 million, meaning eligible demand exceeded available funding by nearly 300%. Service organizations like ours magnify every grand dollars we get when funding shrinks, and thus the committees we serve lose essential infrastructure. The committee also proposes to reopen seven programs, but makes no recommendation to reinstate the service and reach network program. As California launches its Creative Economy Plan, we urge the Council to recognize service organization as a distinct subcategory within general operating support and restore SRN-style funding when resources allow. We also request that the policy and allocation Committee be of at least three members. Small two-member committees allow deliberation to occur outside of public meetings. Adding one more member would trigger the Brown Act requirements and increase transparency. Arts for LA stands ready to partner with you to collect data on your impact on support the creative economy, please keep service organization visible in your funding structures and decision-making process so we can continue building an equitable arts ecosystem. I yield my time. Thank you."
- Jennica Bisbee, Field Engagement Coordinator for California for the Arts: "Good morning, I am Jenica Bisbee, Field Engagement Coordinator for California for the Arts. Thank you for serving the state arts and culture community in the midst of widespread national funding uncertainty. We understand how oversubscribed the CAC is, and will continue advocating for more funding for the agency. CA Arts Advocates co-sponsored SB456 bill was recently signed by the governor, removing barriers for California muralists to access creative work. This wouldn't be possible in part without CAC grant funding to support advocate training and resource development so they are equipped to advocate for arts and culture, steps towards sustainability. The work of our organizations is essential to ensuring that the value of arts and culture is reflected in state policy shaping the future of the arts in California. Like many SRNs, we are surprised to not be awarded a CAC grant this year. As 2026-27 program recommendations are finalized, we ask that you consider. We support the reopening of the Cultural Districts program. SRNs are well-positioned to support given their networks and expertise in training artists. SRNs directly support the state's interest to invest in the creative economy. They bridge access and resources and training for artists, organizations, and the communities they serve. We encourage the Council to consider what is best for the communities we are ultimately serving, which are often communities of color and rural communities. We urge the Council to expand policy and programs committees to 3 or more members in alignment with the Brown Act to allow for transparency. We would like to work with you to gather accurate data on the impact of SRN consolidation. We will make a Freedom of Information Act request for SRN final reports. For future CAC meetings, we will connect with you on SRN site visits by CAC staff in the communities that meetings are taking place. With recent funding cuts, competition for funds among SRNs and their constituents will only worsen, which is a disservice to the communities we are ultimately serving. We hope to collaborate with

you and other grantees to establish a consistent grant structure in order to serve our communities best. Changes from year to year make it difficult to collect accurate data and make sound determinations on program structure changes. We request that the next CAC strategic plan include service organizations. SRNs can respond to crises on the ground where government agencies cannot. Thank you very much."

Item 12. 50th Anniversary Logo

No comment provided.

General Public Comment

Leticia Soto Flores, Acting Executive Director for the Alliance for California Traditional Arts

Good afternoon, Council Members. My name is Leticia Soto-Flores. I'm the Acting Executive Director for the Alliance for California Traditional Arts, joining you today from San Fernando, California, Antavionland. On behalf of the artists and culture bearers that we serve statewide, we'd like to thank the Council and staff for your continued trust in ACTA and to steward the Folk and Traditional Arts program. We're deeply honored to receive the two-year award for 2026 and '27. This investment ensures that artists are rooted in California's diverse communities, and that they can continue transmitting living traditions that sustain belonging, connection and creativity across spaces and generations. So today's data presentation underscored the importance of the Council's ongoing investment in equity, showing how your funding reaches first-time grantees, small budget organizations, and communities across all regions of the state. As a hybrid organization offering both direct programs and intermediary grantmaking, ACTA helps extend that reach. Through the Folk and Traditional Arts program, we've brought in hundreds of individual artists and small organizations. Many are first-time CAC awardees under... maybe some of them under fiscal sponsorship, who might not otherwise have access to other state funding opportunities. These investments act as seeds, allowing artists and community groups and members to flourish in their spaces and their communities. It helps strengthen their cultural presence and even build pathways to support for future public support. So we just want to thank you for recognizing the urgency of this work, for continuing to prioritize those who are most often excluded from public funding, and also for honoring tradition-bearers as essential to California's cultural future. Thank you.

Sabra Williams, Executive Director of Creative Acts

Hi, thank you so much, and thank you to the Arts Council, who have been a partner of, I will just say, my work for more than 20 years. Thank you for your work expanding ways to improve your grant making, so I really do appreciate the intentionality and sincerity with which you're doing that. I will say that, been working using the arts inside prison for more than 20 years. And with Creative Acts, the organization that I co-founded in 2018, I am currently the executive director, but in our founding, we made a commitment to have somebody with lived experience of incarceration in the position in 5 years, and we are... we will have that done by the end of this year, which is exciting. So what I've seen inside, working inside for so long, is that people have really started to understand the power of the arts. And when, with many other people on this call, we worked really hard to get the line item in the state budget for arts and corrections, we've seen an exponential growth in programs inside, and an exponential growth in understanding the arts beyond entertainment. Creative Acts is the first program ever in solitary confinement. We are also the first program in mental health solitary confinement we were invited into. We've seen a 96% drop in infractions for people that do our program for one week, and it's lasted for years. That is the power of the arts. They have been able to close one of four solitary confinement buildings because people have radically reimagine their lives

and change their behavior through an arts-based curriculum. So I just really hope that the Arts Council will continue to expand your view and your vision of the arts, and what the arts can do as medicine, as resources for mental health, and in conjunction with technology, we use virtual reality, which has added in another tool. So, it's being recognized the impact of the work is being recognized in prison. But I think sometimes we're slow as artists to take that on. So, I really hope that, the Arts Council moves further towards trust-based philanthropy. I think there's still a long way to go in that. And part of that is we have always scored in the top few, for impact for our program in the Arts and Corrections grant, and we have not yet received an arts and corrections grant at Creative Acts because of cost points. So programs that have scored lower have been funded, as seen as less impactful, although they're all impactful, simply because they cost less, because tech is expensive. So I asked you to find ways, we've been trying to do that in the Arts Council for at least 5, 10 years. Please find ways to change that. Thank you, and continue your good work. Thanks.

Griselda Suarez, ARTSLB (ella/she/hers)

Good afternoon. I wanna take a moment to, again, say thank you for this difficult work after listening throughout your meeting. There are very, hard decisions, and at this time, not easy at all, to really get involved in the policy making for arts. As an arts service agency, as an arts funder, and someone who brings... as an organization that brings arts to communities that are under-resourced, I want to share that we were one of the organizations that was reviewed by the National Endowment for the Arts. We did not get a defunded letter, we did not get a withdrawn letter, we were a unique, again, experience, and were under review. This entailed, questions about our grantees, questions about the location of our grantees. It was very interesting. I just want to relay our experience so that you have some, knowledge, information about how the federal government is treating some art service agencies. Ultimately, we were found to be compliant, or not... participating in any anti-discrimination... I'm sorry, in discrimination laws, that we were abiding with, anti-discrimination laws. And so, as you move forward, I think it's the role of the California Arts Council to bring organizations together to talk about what is happening to the arts infrastructure at the federal level, at the national level, and how California can really uplift, support, and protect our freedom of expression. Here in Long Beach, we worked with immigrant rights organizations to create messaging created by artists that was culturally relevant to our communities, so that they knew their rights on the bus, on the streets, and that businesses also knew their rights. And so this is the kind of role that we play in the community. The connection, the uplifting, the protection, the building. And as you move forward, please think of ways of bringing us together to talk about this very important topic. I yield my time.

Alexandra Urbanowski, SV Creates

Hi again, thank you. I'm Alexandra Urbanowski with SV Creates, the county arts agency for Santa Clara County, and a state and local partner, a member of the Coalition of California County Arts Agencies. I wanted to just comment briefly on the strategic planning process. We appreciate the work of the Strategic Framework Committee to thoroughly review and assess the results of the CAC's current strategic framework, and the thoughtful recommendations of the planning process to develop a new plan that utilizes data and benchmarks and goals. My county, Santa Clara County, is a demographically and geographically diverse county of nearly 2 million people. It includes the largest Vietnamese population in the United States, and ranges from tech-centric Palo Alto, through the urban center of San Jose, and the economically insecure community of East San Jose, to the rural, agricultural, and predominantly Latinx community of Gilroy. Many of our arts organizations are small and are led by artists and culture bearers who work to preserve cultural heritage and serve distinct cultural communities in the county. I provide this context to acknowledge how important it is that the CAC has a strategic plan that addresses the broad diversity and range of needs of our statewide artistic community. We understand the significant effort and time the planning process will require of the Council and the CAC staff, and want to let you know that your state and local partners are here to

help, and we hope to be a resource to you during the planning process, and look forward to partnering and supporting the CAC in this work. Please call on us as you do the plan. Thank you for your leadership to ensure a strategic plan that articulates the mission and vision of the agency and provides a roadmap for achieving goals that uplift the arts for the entire state of California. I yield my time, and thank you very much for this meeting today.

Robert Jacka (Cadillac Bob), President of the San Bernardino Art Association

Thank you for allowing me this time to speak. My name is Robert Jacka, or sometimes known as Cadillac Bob. I am a lifelong resident of San Bernardino and president of the San Bernardino Art Association, which has been operating in the City of San Bernardino for 93 years. At this time, every time a state and local government comes out to this area, everyone wants to run out and give the secret handshake, money, please. The Art Association has a long standing in the community, helping to foster a culture of creativity, about providing outlets to local artists to show work and to participate into community outreach, by providing scholarships to students in schools, and working with our schools to provide artists into schools itself. We are working with groups such as the Arts Connection and the Garcia Center, and I'm asking that the Council consider that the work that we are doing to enhance the quality of life in the Greater Inland Empire rather, that will benefit, the people in our community, rather than another concrete tilt-up. And I realize that those concrete tilt-ups provide government to our government, but at the same time, they do not provide any kind of cultural identity to the group itself. With funding for these groups, they continue to foster a culture of creativity. And I appreciate the time that you've allowed me to speak, and what a wonderful time it has been. Thank you.

Casey Ball, Non-profit benefiting filmmakers in the Inland Empire

Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you for coming here. My name's Casey Ball. My wife Cindy and I run a non-profit that benefits filmmakers in the Inland Empire, and we wanted to thank you all for coming to speak with us today. So, I wanted to speak about the Arts District and some of the program policy talking points that we've talked about with the Arts Connection, who are our fiscal sponsor. So, first of all, once again, thanks again for your critical lens and conversations on the program's policy. The buckets you all have created meet the needs of the community. However, this is what we're here to work on: is to get all those funds to reach the community equitably and fairly. So, I just want to kind of illustrate what's going on here in the Inland Empire. This is a... this region is a sleeping giant, and it's beginning to rouse as we speak. We're scrappy, we're resilient, and we're making impacts in art, education, and commerce right now. We're one of the fastest growing regions, metro regions in Southern California, all of California. We represent roughly the same population size as San Diego, Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo counties combined, but despite that, the... per capita government arts funding that we receive is only about 40 cents a head, when in the rest of the state, or per capita in the state, it's \$3 per person. So that's kind of how dire the straits are for us right now, and that's how much we could improve. So, despite making up 11.35% of California's population, we're in the bottom 10% of arts funding. So, as I said, me and my wife, we work in film, and we've been making inroads all across the Inland Empire, from Palm Springs to Pomona, Temecula to Corona, the desire to create and to express is everywhere. As Cadillac Bob mentioned, we're kind of only known for warehouses and freeways, and it's time to put a change to that, because everybody's ready to make that happen right now. So, just food for thought, just trying to put it all in perspective for you all. So, thank you so much for your time.

Elena Murillo, San Bernardino Resident and Educator

Hi, thank you. My name is Elena Murillo, and I am a fourth-generation San Bernardino resident, meaning I can date my ancestry back over 106 years to this very city. When I was in high school, an art teacher once told me that I would never make it as an artist, that I would never use, my art and my

future growing up here. And for a long time, I believed her. But years later, my creativity, with the help of community organizations and leaders in our area, such as the Garcia Center and people like Alejandro with Arts Connection, helped me and guide me, and I am currently in an educational role in San Bernardino, where my art and design skills help connect students, families, and communities. So sometimes it takes more than teachers to educate us. And, sorry. I don't blame that teacher, I blame the system that didn't make room for students like myself. Growing up in neighborhoods that weren't expected to succeed, especially when there were a lot of gang-related shootings and killings that happened on the street that I grew up in. And while times have changed, and a lot of that violence is no longer here, as bad as it used to be, today our communities are surrounded by warehouses. Our challenges have shifted. Built, these warehouses are built around our communities, our neighborhoods, our schools, and many of our students see those warehouses as their only path forward. And while those jobs may pay well at times, there are more... There has to be more for our youth. That's why I strongly support any possible increase in funding, like already stated, and resources provided through the California Arts Council to our city. These programs open doors for students who might not have a future or see a future in the arts at this time. They give hope, opportunity, and purpose to the next generation, right here in San Bernardino. Thank you for your time.

Patrice Cooley, Arts Education Coordinator, San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools

Good afternoon. My name's Patrice Cooley. I represent the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools. I'm the Arts Education Coordinator, and I have the good fortune to support our 33 districts in our county, and that's about 400,000 students. So thank you to the Arts Council and the Arts Connection for the work that they do to support arts... arts and culture here in San Bernardino County. I'd like to just take a second to shine a light... shine a light on the great work that Arts Connection is doing in partnership with schools here in San Bernardino. First of all, we have a growing Poetry Out Loud program, that is increasing with students and district participation every year. We also have, we're developing partnerships with our Career Technical Education, to, to strengthen those career pathways, and create that school-to-career pipeline in the creative industry. They're also... Arts Connection is also, a big provider of artists in schools, and especially in light of Prop 28, when schools have really needed additional support outside of credentialed teachers. They've been very, pivotal in supporting that. So, in addition to the work that they're doing to support schools and education and students here in San Bernardino County, it's just been a pleasure to, as a creative myself, and as a member of the community to see how they're working to strengthen the infrastructure, excuse me, throughout the community, the arts and culture infrastructure. So, thank you to the California Arts Council and Arts Connection for building opportunities and connections for our students and for our community.

Marisol Sandoval, Manager of Operations and Patron Services for the San Bernardino Symphony

Hi, my name is Marisol Sandoval. I'm the Manager of Operations and Patron Services for the San Bernardino Symphony. Thank you once again, California Arts Council, for visiting us here in our home, San Bernardino. And also, thank you to Arts Connection for their support and partnership. We currently share our offices with them. The San Bernardino Symphony has received general operation funding from the California Arts Council in the past, so I wanted to personally thank you for this funding, as it is integral for our work in the local community and region. The mission of the San Bernardino Symphony is to foster a love of music, excite the spirit, and enrich our diverse community and region through live orchestral performances and music education. Our orchestral concerts bring together the community and give students hope that they can pursue anything they wish to. I was impacted by the symphony orchestra in my own hometown growing up, and my dream is for the

children of San Bernardino to feel limitless when it comes to what music education resources they have available. As such, we've been working very hard for our San Bernardino Symphony Youth Orchestra and our Intermediate Orchestra, the San Bernardino Symphony Overture Orchestra, which we newly incorporated this year. I've had the pleasure of personally visiting schools in San Bernardino for their annual career days, and have seen how full of potential city pride, and most of all, creativity the students are filled with. Thank you for all you've done for our organization, and for all you do for our state.

Miriam Nicetto, San Bernardino Resident

Hi, everyone. I just want to say thank you so much for being here. I think this is awesome that you guys are here in San Bernardino County, closely to San Bernardino, because I think it is very true what some of our community members have said. The narrative of San Bernardino in this area is very much logistics and cheap labor and cheap land, and I think that that is painful and hurtful to us. But we also understand, so... I think, I was... I was at a conference this past, two days, and they were talking about imagination, and I think that that really resonated with me, because I think that when we have no funds, when we have no resources, when we are told that, we are only good for one thing, I think that, that suppression of our imagination really, it hurts us, it burdens us. And I think that, as a resident of San Bernardino, and as somebody who has seeing imagination take place in a much resilient place like San Bernardino, who really lacks resources, a good system, and many other things. We have seen the artists really just create and imagine. And they are imagining a whole new city. They are imagining a whole new place for our community to be able to live in, for our children to live in, and I do feel like it's part of collaboration. We have been able to collaborate across the tables, across the spaces. The Garcia Center for the Arts has been an amazing place that has opened the doors to many organizations, artists, and community. Arts Connection has been crucial in the way that they have been able to support us through, bringing you guys and lifting the work that San Dino is doing. And the community of... the residents of San Bernardino have just done what we do all the time. We keep it going, we keep it moving, and we keep building, and we keep imagining. So I want to say, please, you know, hear those imaginations, see us, hear us, understand us, and, be part of imagining with us. Thank you.

**CAC PUBLIC COMMENT SUBMISSIONS
COUNCIL MEETING
OCTOBER 24, 2025**

- **Lisa Lightman (She/Her/Hers)**
Petaluma Arts Center, Sonoma County
Current or Former Grantee: Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief
RE: Agenda Item 11. VOTING ITEM: PROGRAMS POLICY RECOMMENDATION
(PROGRAMS TO OPEN IN FY 26-27)

I request a reevaluation of your RFP for Arts-General Operating Funds for next year. Your current application has multiple questions that focus on equity and access. While this is a critical issue for any arts program, the overemphasis on this concern makes it exceedingly difficult for an arts organization whose budget is less than \$250K. Our small arts center produces six exhibitions per year with only two part-time staff, yet two of our six exhibitions focused on marginalized communities. We consulted with local disability organizations to ensure we aligned our programs and access issues with local program needs. Yet, we were unable to receive a grant this year. The feedback was split down the middle: the required info

about access was provided and the info was not. The overemphasis on access and equity seems to supersede other important issues and challenges required to run a small arts organization: actual programming, the infrastructure of volunteers, feedback from the community. It is time to redesign your application. Perhaps compare/contrast with other state arts organizations to address other questions and concerns. I hope you will consider this feedback in your policy discussions next year. With deep appreciation for maintaining these funds in a difficult time.

DRAFT

- **Robert Jacka (He/Him/His)**
San Bernardino Art Association, San Bernardino County
Current or Former Grantee: Not a current or former grantee;
RE: Agenda Item 14. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

To the California Arts Council, I'm president of the San Bernardino Art Association. I'm submitting this statement in hopes that you will consider funding important art programs in my city. We have been in operation since 1933, providing an outlet for regional artists to showcase their art. We have also provided scholarships to students to attend the various colleges. This area has been underrepresented due to it being an inner city. Groups such as Arts Connection and the Garcia Center focus on providing necessary programs which encourage creative and critical thinking. As you consider funding please consider that the money you invest in small communities today will pave the way for bigger investments in our community in the future. I thank you for your time.

- **Anonymous (Prefer not to answer)**
San Bernardino County
Current or Former Grantee: Impact Projects
RE: Agenda Item 14. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

I would like to convey that I find the identity-based preferences and criteria for funding to be hypocritical and, in the long run, quite damaging to the CAC and our communities. I feel that what is wanted and needed is a truly merit-based, and color (gender, etc) blind process for designing and funding programs and projects. To state that a particular group or groups are "strongly encouraged to apply" for funding would not be permissible if other groups were so encouraged. Please understand that I am as far from "conservative" or "right-wing" as a person can be - this is not about politics, it is about acknowledging and remedying hypocrisy. Government should not have those kind of preferences or actively disadvantage persons of ANY color, gender, ethnicity, etc.

- **Sarah Weber (She/Her/Hers)**
Association of California Symphony Orchestras, Los Angeles County
Current or Former Grantee: Statewide and Regional Networks
RE: Agenda Item 11. VOTING ITEM: PROGRAMS POLICY RECOMMENDATION
(PROGRAMS TO OPEN IN FY 26-27);

Hello, my name is Sarah Weber, Executive Director of the Association of California Symphony Orchestras (ACSO), a statewide service organization and former SRN grant recipient that supports hundreds of orchestras and thousands of people working in the performing arts.

ACSO was fortunate to be among the 28% of applicants that received a 2025–26 grant – a frustrating statistic that reminds us of both the tremendous need in our arts community and the California Arts Council’s limited capacity to meet it due to chronic underfunding. Many of our peer service organizations were not as fortunate.

I deeply appreciate the council members and staff for your thoughtful work in allocating scarce funds this year. However, I am concerned that the proposed 2026–27 program structure mirrors this year’s – without reinstating the SRN program. I urge you to bring back the SRN grant in 2026–27 and to expand the Programs Policy and Allocations Committees to at least three members each, to increase transparency and public participation in decision-making.

As Executive Director Danielle Brazell noted, we are in a time of “system-wide retraction of resources.” Eliminating the SRN program is part of that retraction. SRNs multiply the impact of every CAC dollar through advocacy, training, and statewide support networks. As the CAC launches the Creative Economy Plan and approaches its 50th anniversary, investing in service organizations is essential to sustaining California’s creative workforce.

- **Akib Rahman (He/Him/His)**
Arts For LA, Los Angeles County
RE: Agenda Item 11. VOTING ITEM: PROGRAMS POLICY RECOMMENDATION
(PROGRAMS TO OPEN IN FY 26-27)

In reviewing the Programs Policy Committee's FY 2026–27 recommendation, we appreciate the desire for stability but are alarmed by the scale of unmet need. The committee's own analysis notes that priority applications for general operating support, Impact Projects, and Arts & Youth totaled roughly \$58 million in qualified requests, while the entire FY 25/26 allocation was about \$19.5 million—meaning eligible demand exceeded available funding by nearly 300 %. Service organizations like ours magnify every grant dollar through advocacy, professional development, and communication; when funding shrinks, the communities we serve lose essential infrastructure.

The committee proposes to reopen the same five programs (State-Local Partners and mentorship, General Operating Support, Impact Projects, and Arts & Youth) but makes no recommendation to reinstate the Service & Reach Networks program. As California launches its Creative Economy Plan, we urge the Council to recognize service organizations as a distinct sub-category within General Operating Support and restore SRN-style funding when resources allow.

We also request that the policy and allocation committees to at least three members. Small two-member committees allow deliberations to occur outside of public meetings; adding one member would trigger Brown-Act requirements and increase transparency.

Please keep service organizations visible in your funding structures so we can continue building an equitable arts ecosystem.

- **Jennica Bisbee (She/Her/Hers)**
CA for the Arts, Los Angeles County
Current or Former Grantee: Statewide and Regional Networks;
RE: Agenda Item 11. VOTING ITEM: PROGRAMS POLICY RECOMMENDATION
(PROGRAMS TO OPEN IN FY 26-27)

Thank you for your commitment to CA's arts & culture community amid ongoing national funding uncertainty. The Governor signed SB 456, co-sponsored by CA Arts Advocates, removing barriers for CA muralists to access creative work - made possible by our grassroots networks and training/resource development by CA for the Arts. Like many SRNs, we were disappointed not to receive a CAC grant this year. However, as we have every year, we will advocate for increased funding for the agency and in relation to the CAC's 50th anniversary.

SRNs provide networks, resources and training that many artists/small arts organizations need to serve their communities. SRNs respond quickly to crises where government agencies often cannot. We urge the Council to support the organizations that provide the infrastructure for a thriving arts ecosystem. We also ask that you consider:

- Within General Operating, include a subcategory for SRNs - they are well positioned to support the state's interest to invest in the creative economy.
- We urge policy/programs committee meetings to be 3+ members, in alignment with the Brown Act.
- We will submit an FOIA for SRN final reports and propose staff site visits to SRNs in communities where CAC meetings are taking place.
- We hope the next CAC Strategic Plan will include service organizations as key partners in equity and access.
- We look forward to building a more consistent, transparent, and equitable grant structure together with you and other grantees.

- **Jennifer Caballero**
San Diego County
Current or Former Grantee: Statewide and Regional Networks
RE: Agenda Item 11. VOTING ITEM: PROGRAMS POLICY RECOMMENDATION
(PROGRAMS TO OPEN IN FY 26-27)

Hello, I'm Jennifer Caballero, Executive Director of the California Association of Museums (CAM), noting that this Council meeting is taking place at the San Bernardino County Museum, a great example of one the more than 1,200 museums statewide served by CAM to cultivate diverse voices and perspectives, foster a culture of learning by exchanging insights and innovation, and facilitating the power of networks and partnership to advance the impact of California museums.

CAM's work as a service organization across every county in California has been supported by the SRN grant in past years but in 2026 CAM will not be supported by CAC grant funding at all. It's been a tough year for museums with the attacks at the federal level directed at the Smithsonian, and it's getting tougher here in California too. This is particularly true for the mid-size and small organizations that rely on CAM to provide their struggling organizations with resources and skill building. For rural and emerging museum professionals, and those who live and work in areas that are in the lower on the Healthy Places Index, it is primarily through organizations like CAM that those arts workers find growth and support. I hope that the Council will reconsider the extensive reach of SRNs in future funding policy and allocations decisions.

- **Dante Alencastre (He/Him/His)**
Los Angeles County
Current or Former Grantee: Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief

Dear Council Members I am writing to you as an independent LGBTQ+ artist and LGBTQ+ arts administrator based in LA county. As a former grantee I am grateful for the past support of the CAC for our historically underrepresented community of artists and their families, but I am disheartened by not being funded for the last two years. Talks at conference and summits are always around supporting the small and medium sized organizations who have never even to fully recover from the covid shutdown, when our audiences have dwindled and in some cases are too afraid to attend in person events but in reality this is not the case. The community the alliance serves comprises of trans, undocumented, immigrant, non binary and intersex artists who need every kind of support to exist, survive and heal. Art has always been a way to resist and dream of a future without repression, persecution, and invisibility. Not supporting the production and nurture of a group of artists under daily attack seems a betrayal of everything we all say to defend through our diversity, inclusion and equity lens. When we are held in direct competition with organizations with vast grant writing resources and held to standards too high to achieve in a competitive ecosystem we are left to belief that our sustainability and survival does not matter much in the scheme of things. But it does matters to the all the artists and families that the alliance has nurture since the beginning of their careers. Please do better.

- **David Read (He/Him/His)**
Yuba Sutter Arts & Culture, a CAC State Local Partner, Yuba County

Current or Former Grantee: Arts Education Exposure; JUMP StArts; Impact Projects; State-Local Partnership; Veterans in the Arts

I strongly urge the California Arts Council to reinstate its Statewide and Regional Network (SRN) program. SRN has been a vital source of support, connection, and capacity-building for arts organizations across California. It strengthens collaboration, equity, and shared resources, especially for rural and underserved communities that depend on these networks for access and opportunity. Eliminating SRN weakens the statewide arts ecosystem, making it harder for organizations to sustain programs and partnerships. Reinstating SRN funding would reaffirm the Council's commitment to a vibrant, inclusive cultural landscape that reaches every corner of our state. Please restore this essential program and investment. Yuba Sutter Arts & Culture has worked with CA Lawyers for the Arts for many years. Recently, we accessed its legal services regarding a trademark issue with a very successful outcome. We have also participated in its advocacy efforts with a demonstration project bringing art programming to both of our county jails.

Anonymous (They/Them/Theirs)

San Francisco County

Current or Former Grantee: former grantee;

I think the council should be ashamed of its self for its harsh program restrictions and "priorities" in the past year that have cut so many organizations out of the funding conversation (mid-sized organizations that are doing excellent work but now, their programming and the communities they serve are in jeopardy). You are placing RFPs that are tone deaf to the needs of communities and that ask 4-5 labor-intensive questions on equity (ones that require such dynamic responses) before even asking about the project at hand (one could question if you care about equity at all, or if you simply like smelling your own self-righteous farts). You don't seem to care about communities or art, but making people jump through hoop after hoop to satisfy application requirements. In a time where funding is crucial, you have consistently created so many barriers to access. You ask for our advocacy efforts endlessly—you don't deserve it. Shame on you.

- **Alma Robinson (She/Her/Hers)**

California Lawyers for the Arts, San Francisco County

Current or Former Grantee: Statewide and Regional Networks

RE: Agenda Item 11. VOTING ITEM: PROGRAMS POLICY RECOMMENDATION (PROGRAMS TO OPEN IN FY 26-27);

Regarding the elimination of funding for Statewide and Regional Networks:

A question was raised in recent meetings that has prompted me to show how service organizations serves the entire state. As an example from California Lawyers for the Arts' Arts in Corrections Initiative, I wanted to briefly summarize our evidence-based demonstration project that showed the benefits of arts programs in county jails. We surveyed 193 men and women in 15 counties that included: Fresno, Sacramento, Yuba, Sutter, Orange, San Diego, Contra Costa, Riverside, Mariposa, Siskiyou, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Nevada.

Benefits reported by the participants included feeling better about themselves and better communication skills. They also said that they were better able to express themselves, and that they enjoyed better relationships with their peers and staff.

This program, which was an advocacy initiative that was supported by the NEA as well as the CAC and several foundations, adds weight to the principal of arts education for all and brought the State Sheriffs organization and justice serving agencies as an important allies for the arts. Participating arts organizations included state/local agencies around the state who would be eager to continue the projects in their jails if we could secure needed funding.

We urge you to restore funding for SRNs as we advocate for arts funding and engage in creative collaborations with organizations around the state.

Anonymous (He/Him/His)
Amador County

Minutes after the teacher notified the Poetry Out Loud participants that some poems had been exorcised from the anthology, a students sitting next to me slapped his hand on his head saying his choice, titled "Discrimination" was no longer on the site.

A bit ironic.

If it is a matter of artist rights and licensing prohibiting use, I am amenable to the change. If it is a matter of censorship from a source, I question the culling. And yet, if it is a matter that a licensing firm is protesting the idea of certain poems being taken out of the anthology...I also have a problem with the licensing firm protesting the idea of certain poems being taken out of the anthology...I also have a problem with the licensing company by taking an defensive action that has similar effect by sacrificing other poems to stand behind those taken down. More missing poems will just hurt kids' choices more.

If I interpret both sides' actions incorrectly, I apologize. As a performing arts coach, I don't like dealing with immediate depressed morale in a class as this situation is causing.

TAB D

California Arts Council | Public Meeting | 06/22/2021



Policy Memorandum

2750 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 300, Sacramento CA 95833
T: (916) 322-6555 | F: (916) 322-6575
www.arts.ca.gov

DATE: December 12, 2025
TO: All Council Members
FROM: Nominating Committee, Nicola Miner & Gerald Clarke
RE: 2026 Council Elections

Purpose: This memo serves as the report to Council on the nominations received and the process for the Nominating Committee to administer Council elections in accordance with Council bylaws.

Background: Per the bylaws, each year in December the Council will elect a Chair and Vice Chair for a one-year term.

Activities: The Nominating Committee has received and confirmed the following nomination.

- Chair – Roxanne Messina Captor
- Vice-Chair – Floor nomination required

The process to elect a Chair and Vice Chair is as follows:

1. The Nominating Committee announces call for nominations to council members via email.
2. The Nominating Committee staff begins to access form submissions.
3. Members of the Council may self-nominate or nominate another member.
4. Nominating Committee staff will confirm consent with nominees (if they are nominated by someone other than themselves.)
5. The Nominating Committee prepares a report to be included in the December Council book of all nominations for the two positions. The report will not include the number of nominations received.
6. At the December Council meeting, the Nominating Committee administers the process by reading the memo and introducing the slate of nominees (4) for both the Chair and the Vice Chair positions.
7. The Nominating Committee asks the Council if there are any nominations from the floor.
 - a. If there are additions, the Committee will revise the slate.
 - b. If there are no additions, the Committee will move on to the next step.

8. The Nominating Committee will take each position separately but begin with the election of the new Chair.
9. If there is only one candidate for Chair or Vice Chair, and no nomination from the floor, then the prospective positions will be elected by acclamation.
10. If there is more than one candidate for Chair or Vice Chair, the Nominating Committee will ask each candidate interested in serving a Chair to take up to three minutes to make a candidate statement.
11. Once each candidate has had the opportunity to make their candidate statement, the Nominating Committee will then move into a Q&A.
12. The Nominating Committee will facilitate the Q&A and will call on members of the Council to direct their questions to a specific candidate(s). Each candidate will have 30 seconds to respond to the inquiry.
13. After 10 minutes of Q&A the Committee will call for a vote.
14. The vote will be conducted via an anonymous Zoom poll, which the Public Affairs Director will administer.
15. At the culmination of the voting, the Public Affairs Director will tally and announce the number of votes cast and the number each candidate received.
16. If there are three or more nominations and no clear majority winner, the candidate with the least votes will be dropped, and a new vote will be taken from the two finalists.
17. The vote will be retaken if the following vote results in a tie.
18. A coin toss will decide the winner if the third vote results in a tie.
19. Once the Chair has been elected, the other Chair nominees, with their approval, are automatically nominated on the spot for Vice Chair, and the voting process will commence following steps 9-18 until a Vice Chair is elected.

Timeline:

- **November 17, 2025:** The Nominating Committee opens and collects nominations.
- **November 28, 2025:** The Nominating Committee closes nominations.
- **December 12, 2025:** The Nominating Committee reports to the Council on nominations received and administers Council elections as outlined above at the December 12, 2025, public meeting.
- **January 1, 2026:** Terms for the Chair and Vice Chair begin.

Executive Director Danielle Brazell prepared this report in consultation with the Nominating Committee.



CREATIVE
ECONOMY
OF CALIFORNIA

CREATIVE ECONOMY



Strategic Plan Briefing

ESTABLISHING THE WORKGROUP

AB127 2023/24

The council shall establish the California Creative Economy Workgroup, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to develop a strategic plan for the California creative economy, with members as provided in this section.



LEGISLATIVE GOALS FOR THE STRATEGIC PLAN

- Attracting creative economy business
- Retaining talent within the state
- Developing marketable content that can be exported for national and international consumption and monetization
- Reach marginalized communities
- Incorporate diversity of California

THE CREATIVE ECONOMY STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS



PHASED APPROACH

PHASE 1:
Creative Economy Workgroup
Strategic Plan Framework

PHASE 2:
Community Engagement
Implementation Planning
(Operationalization)

PHASE 3:
Implementation
Evaluation

CREATIVE ECONOMY WORKGROUP STATEWIDE CROSS SECTOR OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND INTERESTS

Nonprofit
arts and
culture

Advocacy

Film

Labor

Philanthropy

Government

Economics
and business
development

Gaming

Academia



CREATIVE ECONOMY WORKGROUP MEMBERS

PHASE 1 PROJECT ACTIVITIES

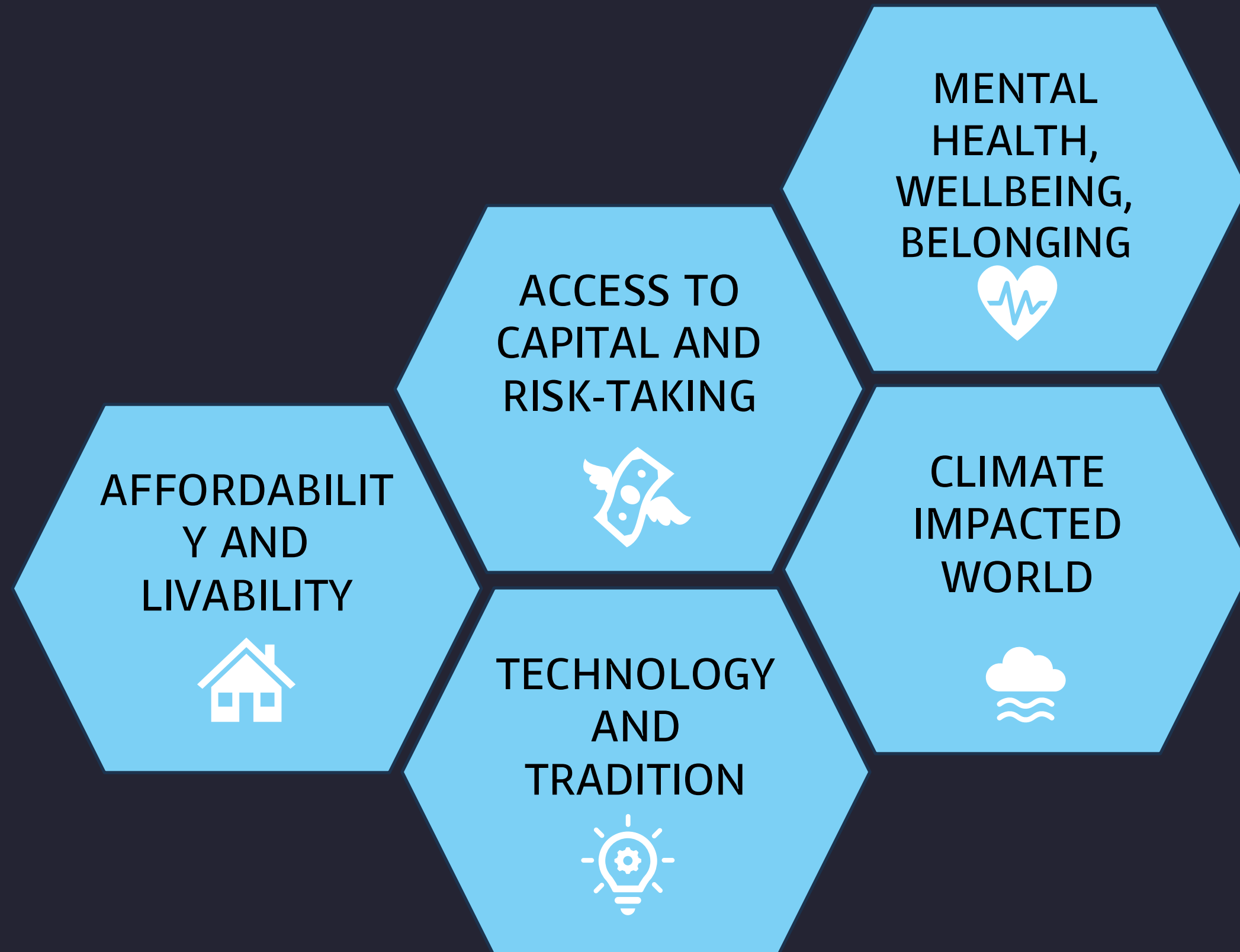


CALIFORNIA'S ARTS AND CULTURE ECOSYSTEM



Source: Markusen, A. and Gadwa, A. (2011), ['California's Arts and Cultural Ecology'](#), James Irvine Foundation.

FUTURE FORCES SHAPING CALIFORNIA'S CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM



NORTH STAR

Lead an **inclusive** and **resilient** creative economy that **empowers** artists, cultural workers, and entrepreneurs to **drive** culture, creativity, and innovation.



SIX PRIORITY ACTION AREAS *for California's Creative Economy 2025–2035*

California's Creative Economy Strategic Plan is the first sector-specific plan to bolster and grow California's creative businesses and workers. Developed by the 2024 Creative Economy Workgroup (CEW), a statewide multi-sector interdisciplinary collective of industry experts, the plan is based on a review of current research on the creative economy, existing financing models and government initiatives, educational and job programs, with considerations for equity and community benefit. Institute for the Future facilitated the process in collaboration with the California Arts Council. The plan was submitted to the Legislature on October 23, 2025.



NORTH STAR

Lead an inclusive and resilient creative economy that empowers artists, cultural workers, and entrepreneurs to drive culture, creativity, and innovation.

FUTURE FORCES

- 1. MENTAL HEALTH, BELONGING, AND WELL-BEING:** Increasing Fragility of Social Fabric
- 2. ACCESS TO CAPITAL AND RISK-TAKING:** Concentration of Capital Is Decreasing Opportunities
- 3. AFFORDABILITY AND LIVABILITY:** Decoupling of Work and Living Locations Is Depleting California's Creative Infrastructure
- 4. TECHNOLOGY AND TRADITION:** Technological Transformation Is Redefining Creative Work and Demand for Creative Products
- 5. CLIMATE-IMPACTED WORLD:** Environmental Changes Are Disrupting Life and Work



CALIFORNIA'S FUTURE IS CREATIVE
Strategies for Cultural Resilience, Economic Growth, and Global Leadership

creativeeconomy.arts.ca.gov



INSTITUTIONS



PLACES



PEOPLE



CREATIVE
ECONOMY
OF CALIFORNIA



CALIFORNIA
ARTS COUNCIL
A STATE AGENCY

PHASED APPROACH

PHASE 1:
Creative Economy Workgroup
Strategic Plan Framework

PHASE 2:
Community Engagement
Implementation Planning
(Operationalization)

PHASE 3:
Implementation
Evaluation

PHASE 1

PHASE 2

PHASE 3

ENGAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- 30+ townhalls across 8 regions
- Participant feedback
- Community survey (intended)
- Multi-media stories
- Dedicated website
- Toolkits
- Peer and field knowledge building
- Piloting/Prototyping

PHASED APPROACH

PHASE 1:
Creative Economy Workgroup
Strategic Plan Framework

PHASE 2:
Community Engagement
Implementation Planning
(Operationalization)

PHASE 3:
Implementation
Evaluation

NEXT STEPS



Thank You



CREATIVE
ECONOMY
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TAB E

California Arts Council | Public Meeting | 06/22/2021

Policy Memorandum

2750 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 300, Sacramento CA 95833
T: (916) 322-6555 | F: (916) 322-6575
www.arts.ca.gov

DATE: December 12, 2025
TO: All Council Members
FROM: Programs Policy Committee (Gerald Clarke and Caleb Duarte)
RE: Guidelines Framework for 2026

The Programs Policy Committee recommends that Council vote to approve the following program guidelines framework for 2026.

Applying the following priorities:

1. Prioritizing the following in the General Operating Support (GEN), Impact Projects, and Arts & Youth Programs:
 - a. Applicants in the lower quartiles of the Healthy Places Index (HPI), to reach historically and systemically underserved communities and work towards greater geographic equity;
 - i. GEN, applicants whose business address falls in the lower two HPI quartiles will meet this priority criteria.
 - ii. Project-based programs (Impact Projects and Arts & Youth), applicants with 50% or more of zip codes served falling in the lower two quartiles will meet this priority criteria.
 - b. First time grantees; and
 - c. Small organizations with annual Total Revenues (TRs) of \$250,000 or under.
 - i. Matching funds will continue to be required only from General Operating Support and State-Local Partners applicants with annual TRs of over \$250,000.
2. Priorities will be weighted as follows:
 - a. Applications ranked 6 should be funded regardless of priority status.
 - b. General Operating Support applications:
 - i. TRs of \$250,000 or under will be weighted 1
 - ii. First-time grantees will be weighted 0.5
 - iii. Business address falling in the lower two HPI quartiles will be weighted 0.5
 - c. Project-based programs (Impact Projects and Arts & Youth) applications:
 - i. At least 50% of zip codes served falling in the lower two HPI quartiles will be weighted 1
 - ii. TRs of \$250,000 or under will be weighted 1
 - iii. First-time grantees will be weighted 0.5

The Following Limits Apply:

1. GEN (same as 2025):
 - a. Grantees may be funded for only two consecutive years, with 2025 counting as Year One. Once grantees have been funded for two consecutive years through GEN, they will not be eligible to apply to GEN in Year Three but may apply again in Year Four.
 - i. This does not impact their eligibility for other CAC programs.
 - b. The maximum TR for arts service and network organizations will be \$5 million.
 - c. The maximum TR for primarily arts producing organizations will be \$1.5 million; and
 - d. Network and arts producing organizations will be funded at levels determined through the allocations process.
2. Arts & Youth:
 - a. The maximum applicant TR will be \$5 million.
3. Organizations may apply for either Arts & Youth or Impact Projects in 2026.
4. TR calculations will not include pass-through or regranting funds.
5. Instructional language will be added to guidelines to facilitate applicants providing better data on zip codes served.
6. Application forms will continue to be streamlined and simplified to the extent possible.

2026-27 Program Purposes, Durations, and Maximum Request Amounts:

Operating Support (1 year, \$30,000) - Direct funding to arts and cultural organizations in support of ongoing operations, prioritizing small organizations.

Arts & Youth (1 year, \$25,000) - Supporting arts education and Creative Youth Development projects serving historically and systemically under-resourced youth in school and community-based settings.

Impact Projects (1 year, \$25,000) - Supporting collaborative projects that center artists and artistic practice in responding to needs identified by California's historically and systemically under-resourced communities.

State-Local Partners (2 year, \$75,000) - Support and technical assistance for county-designated local arts agencies, including support for Poetry Out Loud and travel to an annual statewide convening.

State-Local Partners Mentorship (1 year, \$50,000) - Support for the establishment by an existing State-Local Partner of a county-designated local arts agency in counties in which no such agency has currently been identified.

Purpose: To provide the guidelines framework for FY 2026-2027 grant programs.

Background: At the October 24 meeting, Council voted on the following slate of programs to open in FY 2026-2027:

1. Operating Support Program (consolidated offering);
2. Arts & Youth Program (consolidated offering);
3. Impact Projects;
4. State – Local Partner Program; and
5. State – Local Partner Mentorship Program.

At the October meeting, Council voted to keep programmatic offerings consistent so that the impact of CAC programming on the field could be better evaluated. The Committee emphasized the value in keeping last year's guidelines largely the same not only for evaluation purposes but also for stability for the field. In the proposed guidelines framework, the Committee recommends two clarifications, and one change this year¹:

1. **Application of funding priorities:** The Committee discussed the need to clarify the mechanism by which the funding priorities will be applied, to ensure the intended impact of these priorities is achieved. They reviewed the number of applications that met all three priorities yet were not funded this past cycle (55 were funded out of 349). To address this result, the Committee seeks to specify that priorities be applied to grantee selection, rather than as an increase to award amounts as was implemented in the latest FY25-26 cycle. Further, the Committee wants to ensure the methodology is transparent for the field, supporting potential applicants to have a better sense of the opportunity and make more informed choices. The Committee considered:
 - a. Weighting the priorities such that applications meeting priorities would have greater opportunity to be funded; or
 - b. Articulating rules regarding funding order such as:
 - i. First, fund applications ranked 5 and above that meet all three priorities²;
 - ii. Second, fund applications ranked 5 and above who meet two priorities;
 - iii. Third, fund applications ranked 5 and above who meet one priority; and

¹ The two-year grant term for the State-Local Partners Program proposed in this framework is technically also a change from last year and a reversion to the previous 2024-25 grant term. In 2025, the program was opened for just one mentee to become a new SLP, and the one-year term brought the grantee on cycle with the rest of the cohort. In 2024, the SLP grant term was two years in acknowledgment of the nature and importance of the CAC's perennial Partners.

² See the Ranking Scale: <https://arts.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/RankingGuide.pdf>.

- iv. Fourth, allocate any remaining funds to applications that don't meet priorities in order of ranks.

The Committee strove to find a balanced approach that would honor the integrity of the adjudication process, the expertise of the peer review panelists, and also honoring the funding priorities. Utilizing the FY25-26 allocations as a baseline model, implementing a weighted score for the priorities achieved the desired goal of funding more priority applications, potentially up to double the level funded in 2025. **The Committee therefore recommends “a.” above**, with the stipulation that applications ranked 6 should be funded regardless of priority status. Considerations for this method included:

- a. Weighting each priority equally, at 1 or 0.5 additional weight per criteria; and
- b. Weighting the priorities differently for GEN than for project-based programs, as detailed in the voting item above.

The Committee discussed the different functions these programs serve for the arts and culture landscape. General operating support is the most oversubscribed grant as it is the most flexible type of funding and it is often inaccessible for small organizations, who may not be able to compete with better resourced organizations in grant writing, or may be considered riskier prospects. The Committee believes organizations with the fewest resources should be prioritized for state funding through the General Operating Support Program. Prioritizing the most vulnerable organizations that work in their own communities will help ease the longstanding pressures of neglect and disinvestment for these arts and culture organizations and artists. **The Committee recommends “b.” above**. By assigning highest weight to the Total Revenue priority for GEN, GEN applicants with TRs below \$250,000 will be most advantaged in funding selection.

The purpose and potential reach of project-based programs are unlike GEN. Impact Projects supports lead artists from communities who collaborate to address social issues through artistic practice, while Arts & Youth funding supports vulnerable youth with arts education programming in school and community settings. Acknowledging the impact of these two project-based programs, as well as where CAC funding can be most efficacious, the Committee proposes HPI and TR priorities be weighted most heavily for these programs, with less weight given to the first-time grantee priority.

- 2. **Clarifying the Healthy Places Index (HPI) Priority:** In 2025, the methodology for applying this priority to funding was not specifically defined in the guidelines framework, and all applicants with at least one zip code served in the lower two HPI quartiles were deemed to

qualify. This resulted in almost 90% of all applicants satisfying this priority. The Committee considered:

- a. Leaving this priority the same as last year, without any further clarification;
- b. Adding instructional language in guidelines to facilitate applicants providing better data on zip codes served.
- c. Mandating that organizations should have over 50% of zip codes served in the lower two quartiles to meet this priority criteria; and
- d. Differentiating the HPI requirement for GEN and project-based programs:
 - i. GEN: HPI priority met based on the applicant's business address; and
 - ii. Project-based: HPI priority met based on the zip codes served.

The Committee discussed how Impact Projects and Arts & Youth projects with more than half of their work in zip codes in the lower quartiles demonstrated a clear focus on supporting underserved areas with fewer access points to resources. GEN serves a different function for arts organizations; thus, the proposal is to prioritize GEN organizations based in the communities they serve to elevate the most vulnerable organizations. **The Committee recommends that Council approve “b.”, “c.”, and “d.” above.**

- 3. Adding a Total Revenue Cap for Arts & Youth Applications:** Both GEN and Impact Projects already have TR caps in guidelines. For Arts & Youth, the Committee considered:
- a. Not making a change this year in the interest of keeping everything the same for evaluation purposes; and
 - b. Adding a TR cap to be consistent with the other programs and current priorities (originally taken from the CAC's [Strategic Framework](#)) at \$5 million. This would match the TR cap for arts service and network organizations applying for GEN.

The Committee reviewed this past year's Arts & Youth grantees, of which 11% have TRs over \$5 million. While the Committee recognizes those organizations do important work, they recommend the CAC address the lack of resources for smaller organizations given the CAC's limited budget. **The Committee recommends that Council approve “b.” above.**

Next Steps

Once Council approves the 2026 guidelines framework, CAC staff will create detailed program guidelines that implement Council's direction, conduct outreach, release applications, offer technical assistance to applicants, and support panelists through the adjudication process.

As was the case last year, the proposed guidelines framework is intended to:

1. Reach historically and systemically underserved communities as represented in the lower quartiles of the [Healthy Places Index](#), including in rural areas, inland areas, and areas with low historical CAC investment;
2. Increase support for first-time grantees; and
3. Increase support for small organizations.

Report Prepared by Committee Staff: Kristin Margolis, Director of Program Services, and Elisa Gollub, Programs Manager, in collaboration with the Programs Policy Committee.



CALIFORNIA
ARTS COUNCIL
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“Asking questions, cultivating transparency and being honest is key in the decision-making process.”
– adrienne maree brown

California Arts Council
Decision Support Tool

What is the Decision Support Tool?

The Decision Support Tool encourages us to make decisions that are grounded in our Racial Equity Action Plan. The purpose of the tool is to invite us all with different functions and roles to think and talk through a variety of possible impacts resulting from any decision-making action.

This tool is meant to be used after your initial brainstorming phase to test the action’s alignment within our [Strategic Framework](#) and [Root Cause Rationale](#). Sections can be completed by staff or council, as needed, to complete this exercise.

***Please note that a response is needed in each section of this worksheet**, if the answer is no or you cannot provide an answer, please STOP and reach out to a supervisor or appropriate council member for additional guidance before completing additional questions.

Who is completing this DST?

What is the decision that needs to be made? (1-3 sentences)	
Why is this decision important and what situation or process is informing it? (1-3 sentences)	
When does this decision need to be made? What is the proposed timeline? Is there flexibility on the timeline?	
Where and how does this action live within the agency’s Strategic Framework, specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better identifies and meets local needs• Reduces barriers to accessing CAC funds, programs and meetings• Amplifies leadership engagement with constituents• Focuses on public input• Evaluates funding programs and grantmaking processes	
Do we have the staffing capacity to support this decision and action? If yes, please list who will be accountable for each stage of implementation. If no, please stop here.	
Do we have funding for this decision and action? If yes, please state briefly the source of funding. If no, please stop here.	
Who needs to make the final decision? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Management• Council• Other (Please explain and provide a brief outline of the process.)	
Who is expected to benefit from this decision and action, and what methods have been used to research and/or gather community input?	
What might be unintended consequences, drawbacks, opportunities or domino effects from this decision and action?	
Will this action hinder or help: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small Organizations?• Certain regions of the state?• Communities with disabilities?• People who communicate in languages other than English?• Communities who face social stigma, trauma and/or safety concerns?• Communities with fewer technological resources and/or expertise?• Communities who have been historically marginalized or oppressed? Note that the decision should help at least one of the above . If yes to any hindrance, what adjustments could be made to offset the disadvantage?	

Has a survey of research or best practices been conducted to support this action in a Racial Equity context? For example, this could include research from other institutions or sectors that are related, or a list of relevant articles or policies from similar agencies or organizations. If yes, briefly state this research here in a few sentences. If no, please stop here.	
What is the potential impact on staff at different levels of the organization?	
What is the potential impact on the field?	
Does this action address the following in the long-term? Your response should include at least one of the below options, please briefly elaborate on your answer: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Addresses root causes of inequity• Instills faith in government transparency, accountability and stewardship• Positions CAC as a leader in the field	
Please outline next steps to support the decision-making that is needed to move forward from now.	
How will the decision and progress on the action be tracked and communicated to various audiences both internally and externally?	
How will we know if the expected goal or benefit is achieved?	
What is the support mechanism if progress is stalled or if unexpected consequences, criticism or backlash develops?	

- Thank you for completing this DST!
 - At your next Council Committee Meeting, please discuss next steps for introduction to the wider Council, further plan development and implementation.
 - You can make updates to this form in future if requested by key players and decision-makers. Please save a copy of your responses to refer back to.

This document will be
provided at a later date prior
to the Council Meeting

TAB F

California Arts Council | Public Meeting | 06/22/2021



Policy Memorandum

2750 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 300, Sacramento CA 95833
T: (916) 322-6555 | F: (916) 322-6575
www.arts.ca.gov

DATE: December 12, 2025
TO: All Council Members
FROM: Equity Committee – Roy Hirabayashi & Vicki Estrada
RE: Equity Committee Update

Purpose:

Per the Council Bylaws, the Equity Committee shall ensure that grants invest in the evolving and diverse demographics of California. The Committee defines equitable grant making as fair, accessible, inclusive and effectively serving to dismantle structural racism and other inequities.

Background:

At the June 2025 Council meeting, the Committee shared a presentation on the equitable foundations of its work and reviewed the legal and legislative building blocks at the federal and state level. The Committee also discussed how the California Arts Council (CAC) is both following federal and state law and achieving its mission, vision, values, Racial Equity Statement and Strategic Framework goals which hold racial equity at its core.

Activities:

Since the last Council meeting on October 24, the Committee met on November 13, November 17 and December 3. Discussions centered on:

- Reviewing agency progress and how it is adhering to its [Racial Equity Statement](#).

The Committee reviewed and discussed how the agency is meeting its stated racial equity goals and/or where it may need more attention in the following key areas reflected in the following agency racial equity statements below:

- Our policies reflect democratic principles of equity and justice.

- We identify and work to dismantle discrimination, implicit bias and barriers to access our programs and funding.
- We bring together those with different backgrounds and life experiences to increase opportunities for all.
- We are accountable to our grantees, and we are committed to the just and equitable disbursement of resources.
- We use data to evaluate the impact of our equity goals.
- Racial Equity requires intention and effort, and we invite collaboration, public will and public input.

Recommendations:

The Committee is formally presenting its findings on the above statements and agency work in the public council meeting in December of 2025. The presentation is included in the Council Book for reference for Council Members and members of the public.

- The Committee recommends the use of its Racial Equity review in helping to develop the scope of work for a consultant to help develop the next iteration of the agency Strategic Framework, and to continue to hold racial equity at the core of our work, mission, vision and values.
- The Committee recommends working to develop an agency formal Tribal Consultation Policy.

Anticipated Timeline:

- December 12, 2025: present findings and recommendations to the Council.
- Q1 2026: After review and approval by Executive Director, potentially develop and implement a formal agency Tribal Consultation Policy.
- Q2: Racial Equity Statement findings considered as part of scope of work for Request for Proposal (RFP) for consultant to assist the CAC in developing its next iteration of the Strategic Framework.

Report Prepared by Committee Staff: Megan Morgan, Race and Equity Manager, Rebecca Ratzkin, Equity Measures and Evaluation Manager, Jonathan Estrada, Programs Manager.

RACIAL EQUITY COMMITTEE UPDATE

December 12, 2025

VICKI ESTRADA & ROY HIRABAYASHI CAC Council Members

Staff Support: Megan Morgan, Race & Equity Manager, Rebecca Ratzkin,
Equity Measures & Evaluation Manager & Jonathan Estrada, Programs Manager

“

We will be a “California for all.”

We will not be divided between rural and urban or north and south or coastal and inland. We will strive for solidarity and face our most threatening problems – together. This will take courage. That’s a word that means different things to different people. To me, courage means doing what is right even when it is hard. There’s a spark of California hope, and California courage born in all of us. It’s up to us, what we do with it. The eyes of the world are upon us. Now more than ever, America needs California.

~Governor Gavin Newsom’s 2019 Inaugural Address ~

A California for All.

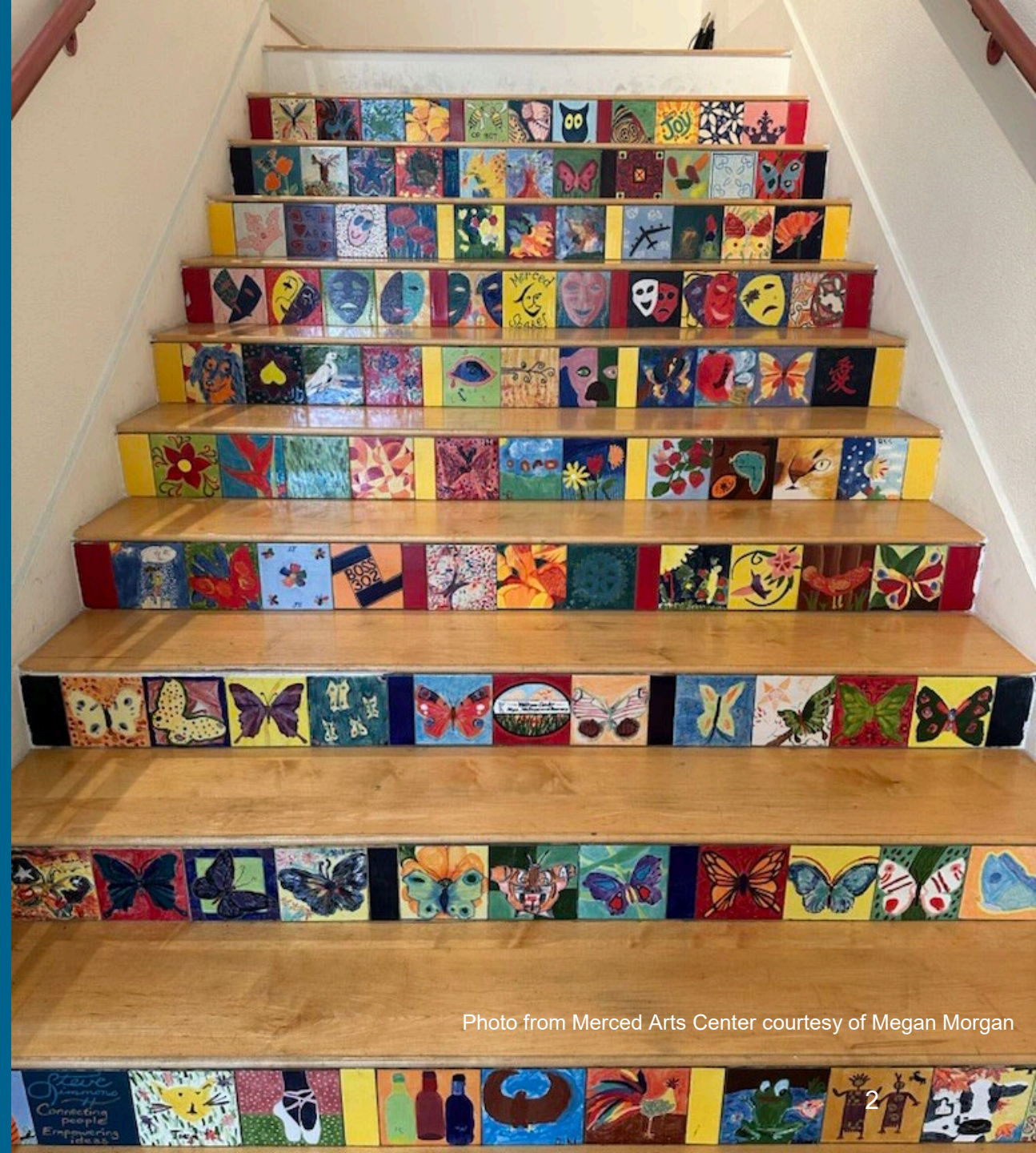


Photo from Merced Arts Center courtesy of Megan Morgan

RACIAL EQUITY STATEMENT

As California's state arts agency, the California Arts Council is committed to racial equity:

- Our policies reflect democratic principles of equity and justice.
- We identify and work to dismantle discrimination, implicit bias and barriers to access to our programs and funding.
- We bring together those with different background and life experiences to increase opportunities for all.
- We are accountable to our grantees, and we are committed to the just and equitable disbursement of resources.
- We use data to evaluate the impact of our equity goals.
- Racial Equity requires intention and effort, and we invite collaboration, public will and public input.

OUR POLICIES REFLECT DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES OF EQUITY & JUSTICE

- Voting items assessed via Decision Support Tool (DST)
- Public meetings are ADA compliant
- Website accessibility improvements under way
- Committee considerations and recommendations for deepening Tribal Relations policy



Photo taken at Merced Arts Center during the 2025 Statewide Outreach Tour courtesy of Megan Morgan

WE IDENTIFY & WORK TO DISMANTLE DISCRIMINATION, IMPLICIT BIAS & BARRIERS TO ACCESS OUR PROGRAMS & FUNDING.



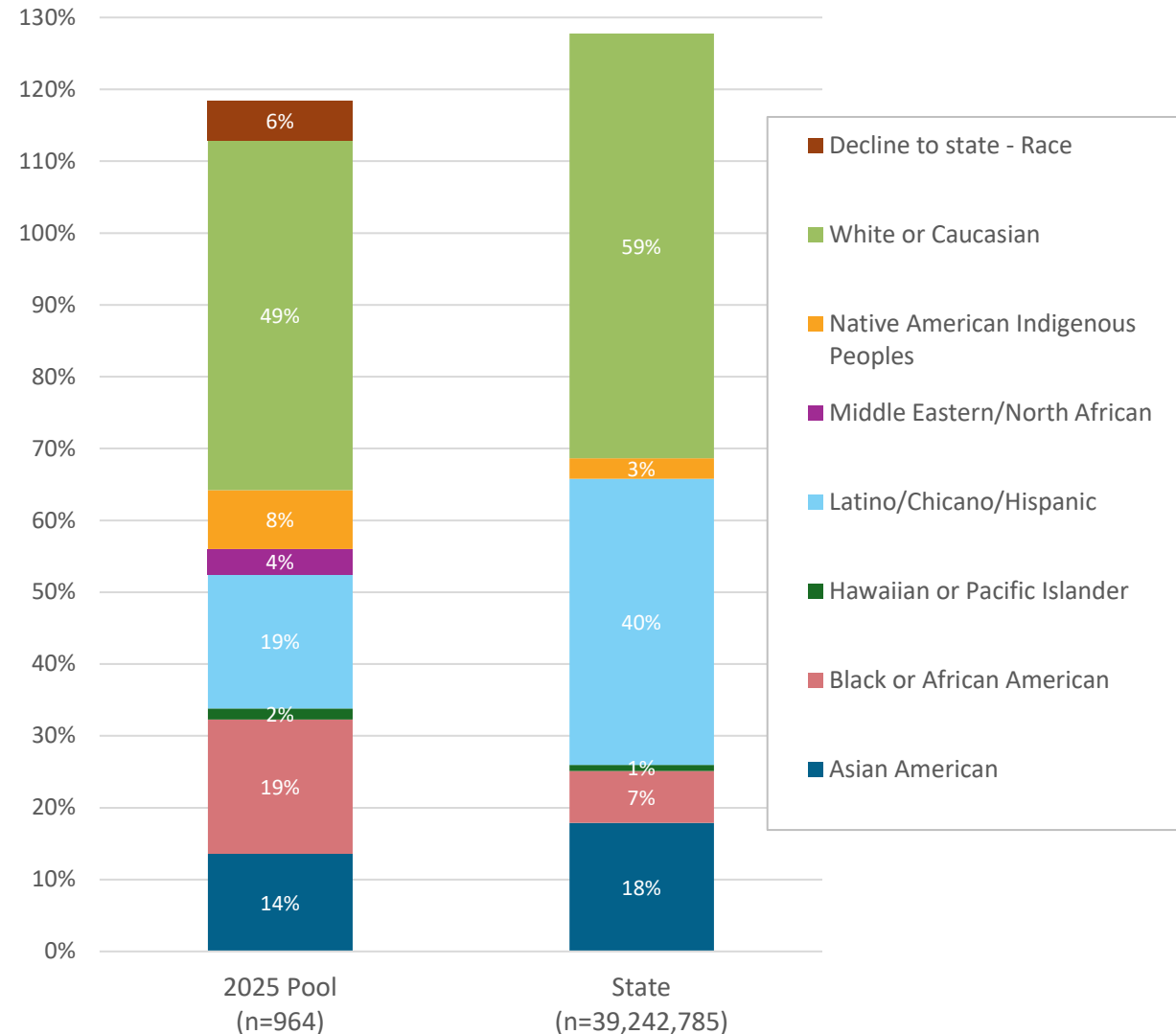
CAC Council Member & Professor Caleb Duarte.
Photo courtesy of Megan Morgan

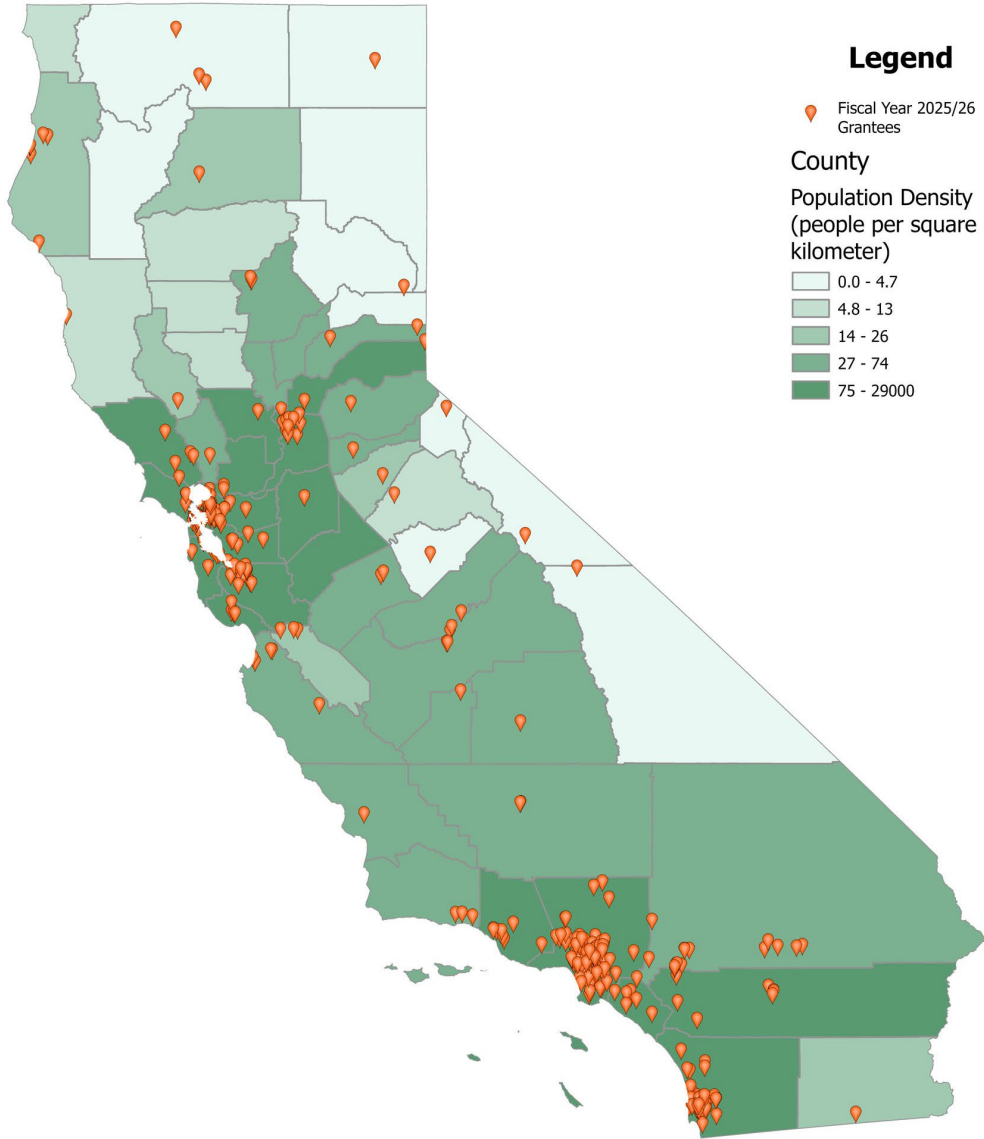
- Implicit bias training for all CAC panelists.
- Opensource equity, learning and engagement materials on CAC website.
- Co-creation of a CAC Program for Native American artists to specifically address specific systemic barriers and inequities.
- Program policy priorities to fund small organizations, first-time grantees and those serving lowest HPI quartiles.

WE BRING TOGETHER THOSE WITH DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS & LIFE EXPERIENCES TO INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL.

- Panelist recruitment aims to ensure representation of CA's diverse geography and demographics.
- The California Cultural Districts Program recognizes and uplifts community, culture and place.
- Program policy priorities highlight organizations serving under resourced communities.

2025 Panelist Pool Comparison - Race/Ethnicity Identities
(note: multiple responses allowed)

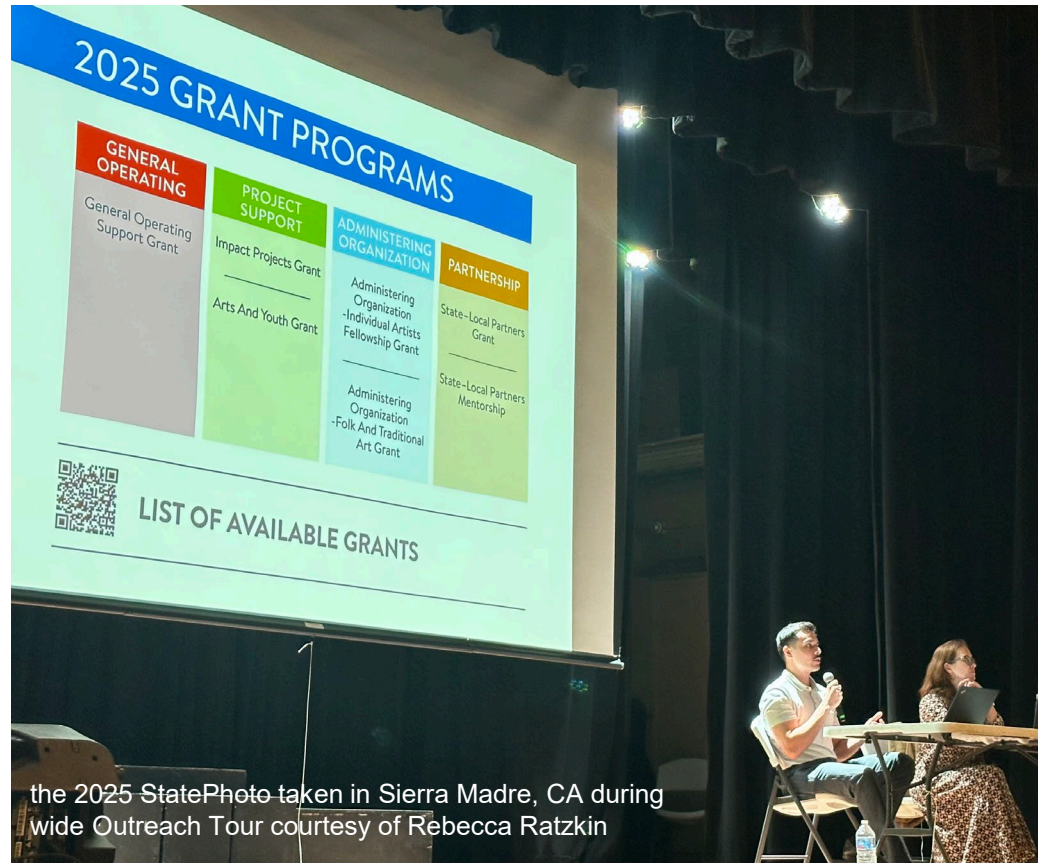




WE USE DATA TO EVALUATE THE IMPACT OF OUR EQUITY GOALS.

- Analysis, data visualization and presentation of distribution of grants and funding.
- Actively creating a culture of inquiry.
- Utilization of data to inform committee work and recommendations around program policy, strategic planning, equity, etc.
- Plans to focus and deepen evaluation of specific constituents and programs in 2026.

WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO OUR GRANTEES & WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE JUST & EQUITABLE DISBURSEMENT OF RESOURCES.



- Public engagement through Council meetings, webinars and 2025 Outreach tour.
- Establish practice of deep review and reporting on interim and final reports, along with ongoing data presentations on grant cycle.
- Reviewing and assessing application, interim and final report questions to ease burden where possible without compromising data collection.
- Planned assessment of unsuccessful applicants to identify opportunities for assistance and improvement.

RACIAL EQUITY REQUIRES INTENTION, EFFORT & PUBLIC WILL. WE INVITE COLLABORATION & PUBLIC INPUT

- Partnership with 50+ State-Local Partners to support local infrastructure, access and public input throughout the state.
- Creative Economy Statewide Tour will highlight regional stories and public input on the Creative Economy Strategic Plan.
- Ongoing investment to support individual artists and folk and traditional arts through intermediaries.
- Statewide Native American Advisory Committee and listening sessions to inform grant program design that honors the unique needs of Native American artists.

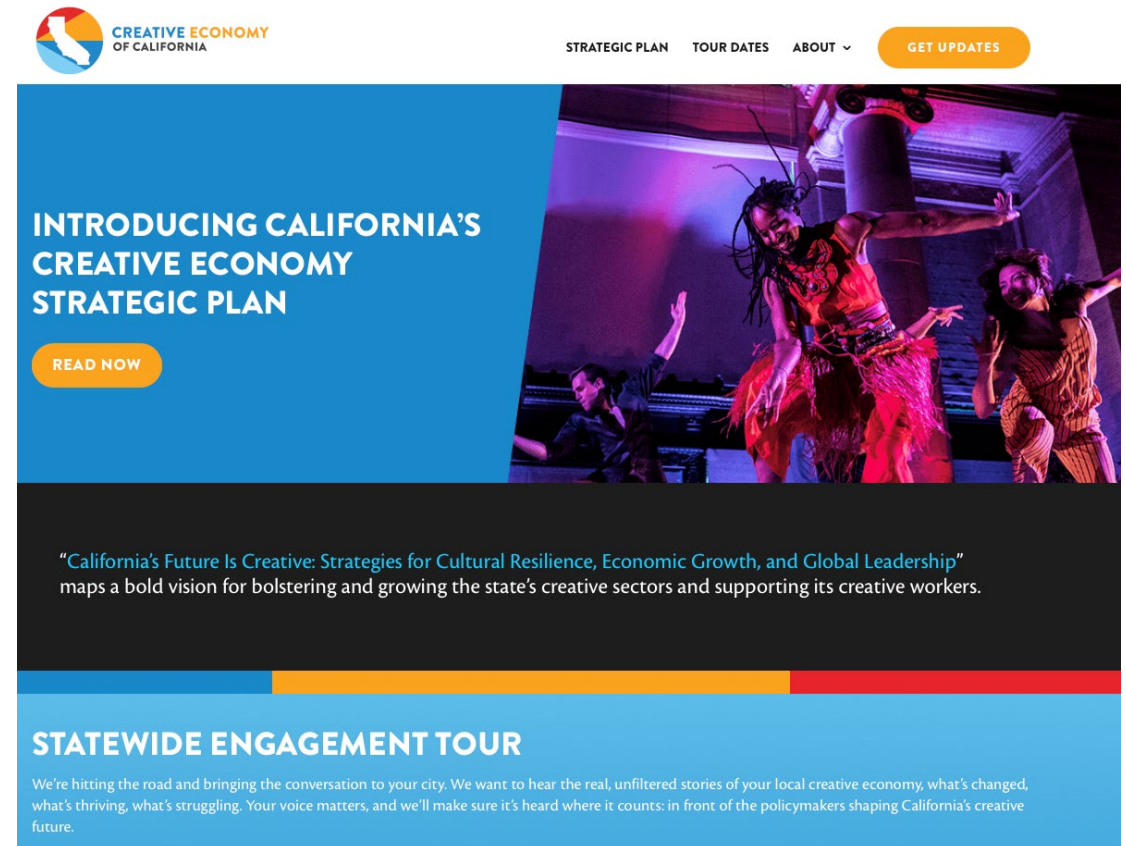


Image courtesy of Dancers Group



WHY DO WE LEAD WITH RACIAL EQUITY?

QUESTIONS

THANK YOU

arts.ca.gov | [#ArtsCA](https://twitter.com/ArtsCA)

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TAB G

California Arts Council | Public Meeting | 06/22/2021



Policy Memorandum

2750 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 300, Sacramento CA 95833
T: (916) 322-6555 | F: (916) 322-6575
www.arts.ca.gov

DATE: December 12, 2025

TO: All Council Members

FROM: Ad Hoc 50th Anniversary Arts Award Adjudication Committee, Vice Chair
Leah Goodwin and Alex Israel.

RE: **VOTING ITEM:** Technical Amendment to the Process & Report on Activities

Purpose: This report is an update on the newly formed Ad Hoc 50th Arts Award Adjudication committee. It also contains an technical amendment to the Award Process and Criteria, which was approved by the Council on September 24, 2025, to eliminate publicly naming semi-finalists.

The chair formed the ad hoc committee to serve as the panel for the Artist Award Nominations and recommend to the Council a slate of 20 for a final vote of 10 to be honored at the Arts Awards Ceremony on April 20, 2026. The goals also include:

- Advising the staff on the communication process and strategy with award recipients.
- Provide recommendations to Council for future awards.

Activities: The ad hoc committee was formed on November 10, 2025, and met on December 5, 2025, for a panel orientation.

Timeline: The Committee is scheduled to meet again on December 17, 2025, and in early January 2026 to finalize the ranks, advise on the communication process and strategy for panelists and develop recommendations for Council's consideration should it wish to continue with this program. Once the committee completes this process, it will be disbanded in accordance with the CAC's bylaws.

This report was written by staff in collaboration with the committee.

TAB H

California Arts Council | Public Meeting | 06/22/2021



Policy Memorandum

2750 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 300, Sacramento CA 95833
T: (916) 322-6555 | F: (916) 322-6575
www.arts.ca.gov

DATE: December 12, 2025
TO: All Council Members
From: Legislative Committee – Rick Stein and Roxanne Messina Captor
RE: Legislative Committee Report to Council

Purpose:

To discuss and review updated legislative materials. The committee additionally discussed strategies for next year's budget and policy priorities.

Background:

The Legislative Committee shall develop materials and strategies for Council's engagement with the Governor and Legislature, provide updates on CAC government affairs activities, and make recommendations to the Council.

Activities:

The Legislative Committee met Wednesday, November 5, to review the updated legislative tracking spreadsheet developed by the Legislative Affairs Manager. The legislative tracking spreadsheet includes a list of all current Senate and Assembly members ("members"), relevant budget and policy committee membership, caucuses, members of the Creative Economy Workgroup and/or members that have been engaged with the Creative Economy Workgroup, and Capitol staff information for both the Senate and Assembly. This spreadsheet was updated to include specific legislative staff information based on the policy areas they manage for the legislator they work with.

CAC agency staff additionally provided a swimlane chart that outlines legislative processes such as trailer bill language, budget change proposals, enrolled bill reports, and hearings, and how that process flows from various bodies such as agency staff, the 11-member appointed council body, Department of Finance, Legislature, and the Governor's Office. That swimlane chart is attached to this memo.



Policy Memorandum

2750 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 300, Sacramento CA 95833

T: (916) 322-6555 | F: (916) 322-6575

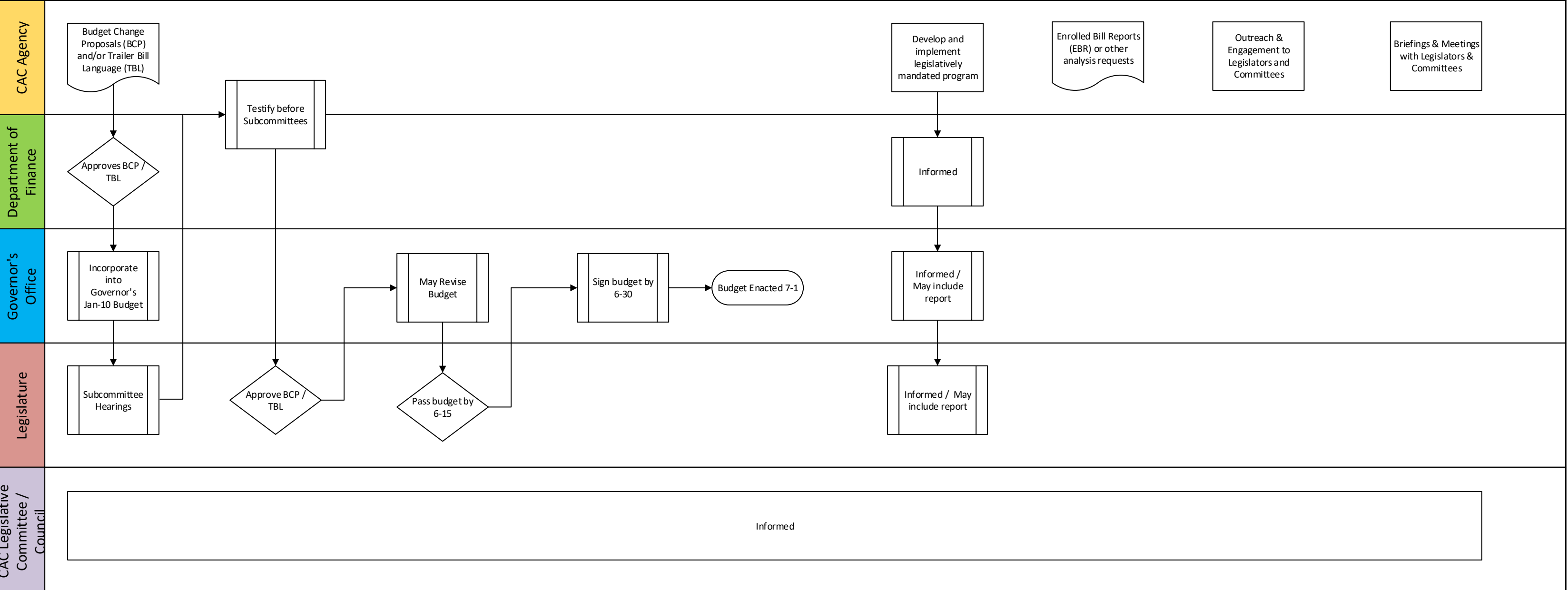
www.arts.ca.gov

Council additionally agreed to the following action items:

- Update and add relevant legislative staff/deputies to legislative committee tracking documents.
- Send a memo to all council members that identifies their respective senate and assembly members for awareness by December 12, 2025.

Report prepared by: Legislative Manager, Matthew Canty, with Chief Deputy Director Michelle Radmand

Legislative Affairs



This agenda item was provided to Council as an oral report. A detailed summary will be included in the record of the meeting's minutes, published to the CAC site following Council's approval at the next scheduled business meeting.

Policy Memorandum

2750 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 300, Sacramento CA 95833
T: (916) 322-6555 | F: (916) 322-6575
www.arts.ca.gov

DATE: December 12, 2025

TO: All Council Members

FROM: Ad Hoc 50th Anniversary Sponsorship & Fundraising Committee: Phil Mercado and Richard Stein

RE: Report on Activities

Purpose: This report is an update on the fundraising plan that was unanimously approved by Council at its meeting on September 24, 2025.

Background: As stated in the Committee Charter, revised on October 5, 2025, the Ad Hoc 50th Anniversary Sponsorship and Fundraising Committee's goal is to:

Support the approved fund-development strategy for the agency to support the 50th Anniversary of the CAC and report to council on the progress of the campaign.

Activities: The committee met on November 17, 2025, to review Council commitments and funder prospects. It also reviewed the list of past council members and staff confirmed that all engagement letters have been sent with the fundraising toolkit. The Executive Director has received confirmation from one former member's commitment to attend the 50th Anniversary Awards Ceremony tentatively scheduled for April 20, 2026.

To date the committee has received personal commitments from all but a few council members. The total amount confirmed and/or pledged is 11,300.00. An additional pledge has been made by a staff member bringing the total amount received or pledged to 12,300.00:

The donor prospect list was completed by one member of the Council. The committee sent a follow up email urging council member to complete the online submission form by Friday, December 1, 2025. This will ensure that staff can process the donation request letters on or before December 15, 2025.

Timeline: The committee will continue to meet as needed to advance its goals.

This report was written by staff in collaboration with the committee.



Policy Memorandum

2750 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 300, Sacramento CA 95833
T: (916) 322-6555 | F: (916) 322-6575
www.arts.ca.gov

DATE: December 12, 2025

TO: All Council Members

FROM: Ad Hoc Partnerships Committee – Leah Goodwin and Phil Mercado

RE: 2026 Outreach Goals and Strategies for Keep Arts in Schools and the Arts License Plate Fund

Purpose:

To provide an update on the committee's strategy development since the October 24, 2025 memo and present the outreach goals and strategies for 2026.

Background:

The Ad Hoc Partnerships Committee current objective is to develop a strategy to raise donations from the existing ***Keep Arts in Schools Voluntary Tax Contribution Fund*** and sales from the ***California Arts Plate***.

The committee seeks to leverage the momentum of the 50th anniversary of the agency in 2026 to promote fundraising efforts for these two funds. The committee supports the Council's broader goals by identifying potential partnerships, outreach efforts, and fundraising strategies.

Activities:

The Ad Hoc Partnerships Committee met Wednesday, November 19, 2025 and discussed the projected goals and proposed strategies for boosting contributions to the Keep Arts in Schools (KAIS) Voluntary Tax Contribution Fund and the Arts Plate Fund. Overall, the committee agreed to await the onboarding of a contracted publicist to review the committee's suggestions and then provide a strategy to the Council at an upcoming public meeting.

Recommended Deliverables:

- **Unified Media Kit:** Ensure the kit contains the high-resolution license plate image, clear graphic showing the KAIS check-off (e.g., Line 434), and at least one quote/audio interview clip from Wayne Thiebaud to honor the 50th year.
- **Social Media Tactics:** Prioritize creating simple, highly shareable infographics (KAIS) and short, engaging videos (plate ordering process) for platforms like TikTok/Reels. Allow for multiple engagement points for the field.
- **Paid Social Strategy:** Use Q1 for KAIS targeting (finance/education interests) and deploy retargeting ads year-round for users who abandoned a license plate purchase.
- **Explore partnerships:** i.e. AAA to support License Plate fundraising

Timeline:

- December 12, 2025: Committee update
- January 23, 2026: provide an update on a development campaign and media kit for KAIS and License Plate fund, share KPI threshold and projected milestones
- Ongoing quarterly updates at Council Meetings in 2026

Report Prepared by Committee Staff: Carissa Gutierrez, Director of Public Affairs, Matthew Canty, Legislative Affairs Manager in collaboration with the Ad Hoc Partnerships Committee.

TAB I

California Arts Council | Public Meeting | 06/22/2021

Policy Memorandum

2750 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 300, Sacramento CA 95833
T: (916) 322-6555 | F: (916) 322-6575
www.arts.ca.gov

DATE: December 12, 2025
TO: All Council Members
FROM: Allocations Committee – Phil Mercado & Nicola Miner
RE: Recommendations for Cultural District Designations and Grant Awards

The Allocations Committee recommends that Council approve designations of the 10 new statewide Cultural Districts as listed in the presentation for an initial five-year designation period and approve grants of \$10,000 to each designee for a two-year grant activity period.

Purpose:

The purpose of this memo is to provide recommendations for 2025 Statewide Cultural District designations and accompanying grant awards. As a legislatively mandated program, Council's role in designating Cultural Districts is to ensure that the agency implements a fair and equitable selection process as published in the review criteria.

The Allocations Committee met on November 20, 2025 to discuss the panel's recommendations and to prepare a presentation for the Council that details the selection process and all 53 eligible applicants.

Background:

[Government Code § 8758](#), states, "state-designated cultural district" means a geographical area certified pursuant to this chapter with a concentration of cultural facilities, creative enterprises, or arts venues that does any of the following:

- (1) Attracts artists, creative entrepreneurs, and cultural enterprises.
- (2) Encourages economic development and supports entrepreneurship in the creative community.
- (3) Encourages the preservation and reuse of historic buildings and other artistic and culturally significant structures.
- (4) Fosters local cultural development.
- (5) Provides a focal point for celebrating and strengthening the unique cultural identity of the community.
- (6) Promotes opportunity without generating displacement or expanding inequality.

In 2019, The CAC commissioned an external evaluation of the Cultural Districts pilot program, which was conducted by Moxie Research. The evaluation resulted in a Gap Analysis (attached) of the program, highlighting the geographic areas, cultural communities, and district typologies that had not been designated in the pilot cohort.

In December 2023, Council voted to reopen the Cultural Districts program for the first time since 2017 with the intention of designating up to ten new cultural districts. In September 2024, the Allocations Committee proposed, and the Council voted to approve the amounts for 2024-25 programs, including \$100,000 of Local Assistance funds for the Cultural Districts Program.

Application and Adjudication Processes

At the April 2025 Council meeting, staff presented the following processes for application, adjudication, and designation of the 2025 Cultural Districts cohort in accordance with [Government Code § 8758](#), which the agency has since implemented:

- **Open Application Phase:** *Interested nonprofit arts organizations will submit an application including evidence of partnership with local government, individual artists, and artistic and cultural organizations; cultural assets maps; and evidence of community support.*
 - The Cultural Districts application was open from May 27 – August 7, 2025. During this time, staff provided robust technical assistance to support the field in preparing successful applications. Technical assistance strategies included a program overview webinar, regular office hours, and one-on-one support via phone and email to applicant organizations.
 - CAC received a total of 74 applications from across the state, of which 53 were deemed eligible after staff review (ineligible applications did not include one or more of the required application materials or were requesting project support rather than designation).
- **Round 1 Panel Adjudication:** *An external panel of field experts will independently review and rank all eligible applications in accordance with the published review criteria and identify semi-finalists.*
 - To ensure adherence to the outcomes articulated in the Cultural Districts legislation, the CAC staff reached out to specific statewide and national organizations to curate a review panel of eight professional arts and culture experts, each of whom brought specific skills and knowledge bases crucial to the success of the program. Panelists represented the fields of nonprofit arts management, state cultural district program management, global cultural district support and development, municipal arts administration; small business advocacy; urban planning, tourism, and equity practice and research.
 - On August 18, 2025, the panel received a two-hour-long virtual orientation on the Cultural Districts program, including modules on understanding the program goals and criteria, confronting implicit bias, and identifying conflicts of interest. Panelists were then given access to the eligible applications in the Grants Management System (GMS).

- On September 2, 2025, the panel had a virtual check-in meeting midway through the adjudication window to ensure consistency in ranking and review processes, including alignment of notes and ranks in each application section.
- On September 12, 2025, the panel submitted their initial ranks in GMS to identify 15-20 semi-finalist applicants.
- On September 16, the panel met virtually again. To support the greatest level of geographic equity – one of the aspirations of the CAC’s Strategic Framework – the panel selected the top two scoring applicants from each region. The Capital region only received one eligible application and there was a tie between the second and third scoring Bay Area applicants, so both of those applicants moved on. From there, the panel included the highest scoring applications that also spoke to communities not yet served by the current Cultural District cohort, per the Gap Analysis.
- **Site Visits by Agency Staff:** *Agency staff will conduct site visits for all semi-finalist applicants according to a standard site visit protocol and will complete formal reports for panel review.*
 - From October 20 to November 7, two members of the Programs staff attended a site visit for each semi-finalist district. Each site visit consisted of a community meeting during which artists, arts organization staff, residents, local business owners, and municipal staff and local elected officials had the opportunity to share their vision for the district and what benefits they anticipated from designation, as well as a tour of key cultural assets. Site visits were permitted to last a maximum of three hours.
 - After each site visit, the Programs staff consolidated notes and completed the standard Site Visit Report (attached). Site Visit Reports were uploaded to GMS for panelist review.
 - Executive Director Brazell also attended the site visits as the lead ambassador for the agency but did not take part in the preparation of the Site Visit Reports.
- **Round 2 Panel Recommendations:** *The review panel will reconvene in person in Sacramento to hear reports from staff on site visits and determine a cohort of up to ten new Cultural Districts to recommend for state designation, in alignment with the program goals and recommendations from the Gap Analysis.*
 - From November 12-14, 2025, the panelists convened in person in Sacramento to discuss the semi-finalist applicants and site visit reports before entering their Round 2 ranks into GMS. Their Round 2 ranks were based on the Round 1 review criteria, as well as the criterion of “Expected Contribution to Cultural Districts Cohort” as listed in the guidelines (attached). Expected contribution takes into account geographic region, communities served, and district typologies to ensure that the recommended slate is as representative as possible of the state of California.
 - The Round 2 ranks were tallied and the panel confirmed that the slate was geographically representative, responded to the issues identified in the Gap Analysis, and that all districts were prepared for and would significantly benefit from statewide designation.

- **Vote by Council on 2025 Cultural District Designations:** *Council will discuss and vote to ratify designation for the new districts.*

Considerations for Council

The Cultural District applicants being presented to Council for approval are recommended by a group of highly qualified external reviewers that engaged in a thorough, rigorous, and transparent process. The resulting slate of recommendations includes districts from all previously unrepresented geographic regions, as well as districts serving communities not specifically represented by the initial cohort.

The Committee also notes that the demand for this program is very high. The panel observed that there were additional applicants that may have been successful had the panel been able to recommend more than ten, and they encouraged the agency to reopen the program on a regular basis.

Report Prepared by Committee Staff: Kristin Margolis, Director of Program Services, and Josy Miller, Programs Manager, in collaboration with the Allocations Committee.

Other Supporting Documents:

Map of Current Cultural Districts

Cultural Districts Guidelines

Gap Analysis

Site Visit Report Template

List of Cultural Districts Applicants

California

Cultural

Districts

DESIGNATION VOTE

ALLOCATIONS COMMITTEE: Phil Mercado & Nicola Miner



VOTING OBJECTIVES

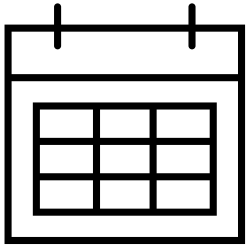
- To ratify ten new Cultural District designations as recommended by the external panel
- To ensure the agency implements a fair, equitable selection process that is rooted in the published review criteria

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The Allocations Committee recommends that Council **approve designation of the ten new statewide Cultural Districts** as listed in the presentation for an initial **five-year designation** period and approve grants of **\$10,000 to each designee for a two-year grant activity period.**

BACKGROUND & PROCESS

BACKGROUND



December 2023: Council voted to reopen the Cultural Districts program for first time since 2017, with the intention of designating up to ten new districts.

September 2024: Council voted to allocate \$100,000 of 2024-25 Local Assistance funds for the Cultural Districts Program.

April 2025: Staff presented the process for application, adjudication, and designation for the 2025 Cultural Districts cohort in accordance with Government Code § 8758.

May 27 - August 7, 2025: Cultural Districts application window

PANEL PROCESS

1 ROUND 1 Panel Adjudication

- CAC staff reached out to specific statewide and national organizations to curate a review panel of eight professional arts and culture experts with backgrounds in cultural district management, arts administration, urban planning, tourism, and equity practice.
- Panelists participated in:
 - A two-hour-long orientation on Cultural Districts program (August 18)
 - A virtual check-in meeting midway through the adjudication window to ensure consistency in ranking and review process (September 2)
 - A meeting to determine 15-20 semi-finalists (September 16)
- To determine the group of semi-finalists, panelists selected the top two scoring applicants from each region and then included the highest scoring applications that spoke to communities not yet represented in the current cohort per the 2019 Gap Analysis report.

PANEL PROCESS

2 SITE VISITS by Agency Staff

- All semi-finalists were invited to host a three-hour-long site visit, which included:
 - A community meeting where interested and affected parties (artists, residents, local businesses, local officials, etc.) shared their vision for the district and what benefits they anticipated from designation
 - A tour of key cultural assets
- Two members of Programs staff attended the site visits **October 20-November 7**, consolidated notes, and completed the standard Site Visit Report, which was added to the Grants Management System for panelist review.
- Executive Director Brazell attended the site visits as lead ambassador for the agency but did not take part in the preparation of Site Visit Reports.

PANEL PROCESS

3 ROUND 2 Panel Recommendations

- Panelists convened in person in Sacramento November 12-14 to discuss the semi-finalist applicants and site visit reports before entering their Round 2 initial ranks.
- Round 2 ranks were based on criteria outlined in the guidelines, including:
 - Round 1 review criteria
 - “Expected Contribution to Cultural Districts Cohort” (geography, communities served, district typologies, etc.)
- Round 2 ranks were tallied and the panel confirmed the slate was:
 - Geographically representative
 - Responded to the issues identified in the 2019 Gap Analysis
 - Districts were prepared for and would significantly benefit from statewide designation

PUBLIC COMMENT



2017 California Cultural Districts Finalists



The logo for California Cultural Districts is composed of four stacked, overlapping rectangular blocks. The top block is light blue and contains the word "California" in white. The second block is red and contains the word "Cultural" in white. The third block is orange and contains the word "Districts" in white. The bottom block is yellow and is empty.

California

Cultural

Districts

Moxie Research
With The Cultural Planning Group

GAP ANALYSIS REPORT

California Arts Council Cultural Districts Program Evaluation
May 2019

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Executive Summary

Gaps in current cohort of designated California cultural districts include:

- At least one African American district or Black “umbrella” district that serves several culturally specific communities within it
- Districts that represent Latinx, Asian American generally and Chinese American specifically, and Native American communities
- Lower-income counties
- Areas of the state underfunded or not funded by the Arts Council

To address these gaps:

- Prioritize designation of African American/Black, Native American, and Chinese American cultural districts in the next cohort.
- Support the development of applications that promote equity.
 - Cultivate relationships with African American/Black districts, Chinese American districts, and California tribes to promote the cultural districts program and lay the foundation for successful applications. The district formation process may look different in non-dominant communities and may have a non-linear, grassroots, and/or bottom-up approach to organizing. Developing culturally appropriate methods for supporting nascent districts would align with the Arts Council’s GARE implementation.
 - Promote the Cultural Districts Program through engagement adapted to specific communities, including less-well-served counties in the state.
 - Over time, consider a broad definition of “representativeness” to include categories other than race, such as national origin, LGBTQ, disability, veterans, etc.
- Provide pre-application and application technical assistance.
- Build inter-state agency partnerships to identify and support diverse districts.
- Revisit and refine the selection criteria for the program with an equity lens.
- More strongly make the case to communities for the importance of the state designation.

Introduction to the Gap Analysis Report

Moxie Research, in collaboration with The Cultural Planning Group, was engaged by the California Arts Council in December 2018 to conduct an evaluation of its pilot Cultural Districts Program. The purpose of the evaluation is to enhance the initial success of the pilot program by measuring areas of strengths as well as opportunities for growth, and the value of the program to establish a clear direction moving forward. One element of the evaluation is a gap analysis: a research brief about communities missing from the initial cohort of 14 districts, taking into account geographic areas, cultural communities, and/or other missing representation from California's population. The gap analysis also includes recommendations on how to make the application and review processes more accessible to those communities missing from the current cohort, as well as an approach to engaging those communities in the program.

Authorizing Legislation

Cultural diversity is a key part of the Arts Council's Cultural Districts Program. The program's 2015 authorizing legislation, AB 189, includes the following as its first goal:

To encourage the development of a broad array of authentic and sustainable cultural districts that reflect the breadth and diversity of California's extensive cultural assets.

This gap analysis is intended to better equip the Arts Council to fulfill its legislative mandate.

Gap Analysis Methodology

The data for this gap analysis are generated from:

- Interviews with key informants: managers of state and city cultural district programs, applicants who were not designated, authors of the 2016 *Cultural Districts Program Development Report*, and other content experts
- Review of selected relevant literature, both practitioner-focused and academic
- Review of 2017 cultural district designation applications both accepted and rejected
- Online survey of applicants who were not designated

Additionally, the gap analysis examined the cultural district data in comparison with state-level data to better understand the ways in which the districts do or do not represent the state population in race/ethnicity, median household income, and location. Finally, the district data was compared with the California Arts Council 2017/18 grantee data to better understand how the districts reflect other grantees. These analyses included:

- Comparison of the cultural districts' demographics with the State of California's demographics
- Comparison of cultural districts' location with the location of Arts Council grantees from the 2017/18 funding year¹
- Comparison of cultural districts' median income with the median income of California counties as well as with the Arts Council grantees from the 2017/18 funding year

¹ California Arts Council funding allocations from the 2017/18 fiscal year were used as that was the same year that the cultural districts were designated.

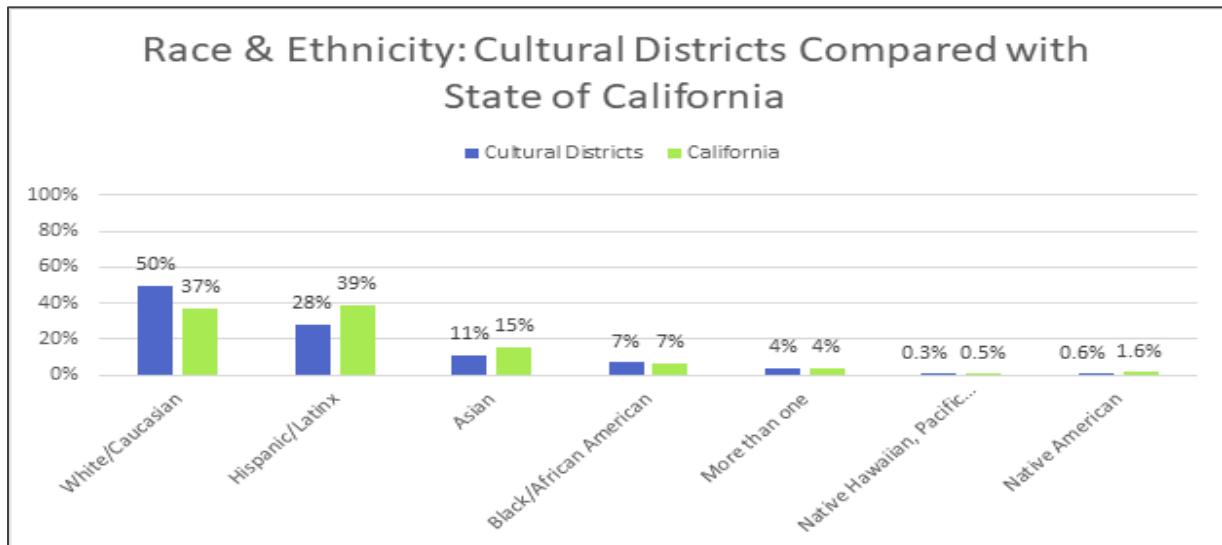
Findings

Demographic Analysis

Race and Ethnicity

The analysis began with the comparison of the 14 cultural districts' demographics to the overall demographics of California. A comparison based on race and ethnicity² shows that:

- Non-Hispanic White Californians are over-represented in the communities of the current cohort of cultural districts. The cultural districts on average are located in and serve populations that have a higher percentage of White Californians than the overall state average.
- Conversely, Latinx, Asian American generally and Chinese American specifically, and Native American communities are under-represented by the current districts.
- African Americans are the largest racial or ethnic demographic group without a culturally specific district.
- The demographic differences are more acute when comparing rural, suburban and urban demographics. As expected, the urban and suburban districts are diverse, and the rural cultural districts are in areas where the demographics are heavily non-Hispanic White. (See graph on page 22 for the full comparison.)

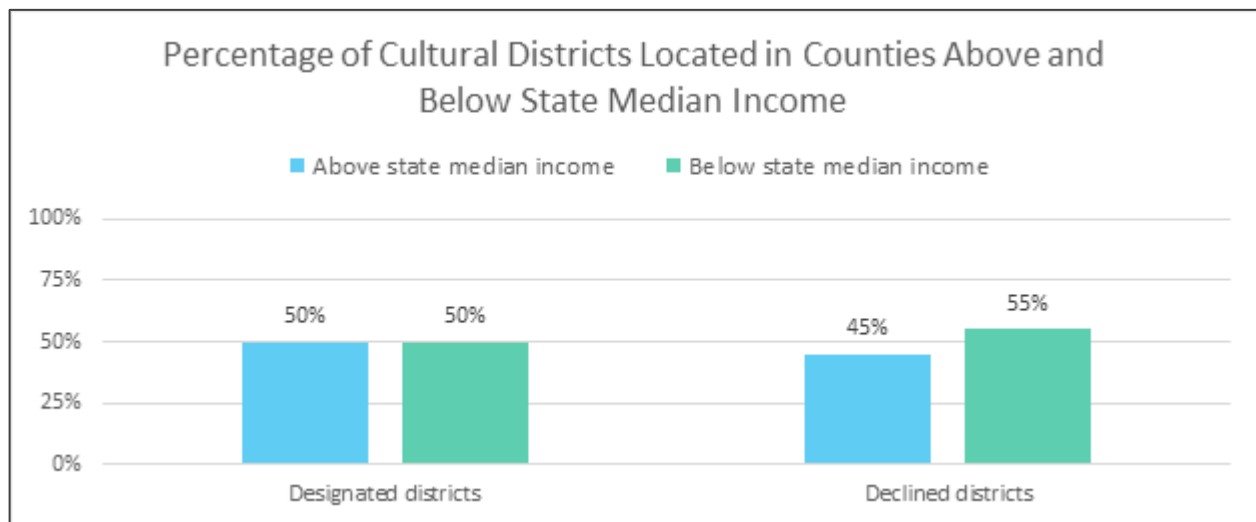


² Race and ethnicity data were self-reported by the districts and cross-referenced with census data published by the State of California Department of Finance. The statewide data is also sourced from the Department of Finance.

Household Income

A comparison of California counties based on household income was conducted to understand the distribution of the districts. Sixty two percent of the state's population lives in a county where the median income is below the state's median household income. The comparison showed that:

- Half of the 14 cultural districts are located in counties above the state's median household income and half are below.
- More of the non-designated applicants were from counties whose median income was below the state's median household income than were above it.
- In 2017/18, more Arts Council grants were awarded to organizations in counties where the median household income was above the state's median than below it (54% above, 45% below).



Geographic Analysis

In order to address what communities might be missing from the cultural district designation, our analysis also considered the location of the cultural districts in California. Eight (14%) of the 58 California counties are home to a state-designated cultural district.

Additionally, we compared them to the counties served by the Arts Council. We wondered what areas of California were currently served or underserved by the agency and how this might inform future decision-making about the cultural district designation program. To do this, we compared the percentage of 2017/18 funding per county. The largest share of Arts Council funding (60%) went to California's largest urban areas: Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego and Alameda counties in that order. In three of these four regions, the percentage of Arts Council grantees as well as the percentage of grant funds exceeded their percentage of the state's population. Only Los Angeles' percentage of funding was matched with their percentage of the state population. Additionally, eight (57%) of the 14 designated districts are in these four counties.

The table below highlights that while the cultural districts are located in counties that are home to over 40% of Californians, it also shows that over 70% of Arts Council funding went to the eight counties that are home to cultural districts.

Home Counties to Cultural Districts	% of state population	% of all 17/18 CAC funding	% of all 17/18 CAC grantees
Alameda	4.2%	9.9%	10%
Humboldt	.3%	1.3%	1.1%
Los Angeles	25.8%	25.7%	27.6%
Marin	.7%	1.3%	1.5%
Nevada	.2%	.7%	.6%
San Diego	8.4%	10.2%	11.9%
San Francisco	2.2%	15.0%	18.4%
Shasta	.4%	.4%	.1%
Total	42.2%	64.5%	71%

Review of Other Cultural District Programs and the Literature

As part of our analysis, we identified state cultural district designation programs that were well-established and had a robust reach across their state. We identified five state programs and interviewed representatives from four: Maryland, Louisiana, Texas, and Massachusetts. Colorado did not respond to our request for an interview. Additionally, we spoke to three representatives from the City and County of San Francisco's cultural districts designation program, which is relatively new but echoes some of the Arts Council's goals.

Key findings from discussions with staff at the Maryland, Louisiana, Texas, and Massachusetts state designation programs:

- These programs have a liberal designation approach. They accumulate many, rather than fewer, districts. All districts that meet their eligibility requirements are accepted.
- That said, all four states invest staff time in pre-application assessment and technical assistance as an integral part of the program. Technical assistance comes in many forms: pre-application telephone consultations, site visits, and other information and referrals; online tools and resources; and sustained promotion of the program outside of conventional state arts council networks.
- Economic development is the foundational purpose for these programs, as is true in the other state programs that we reviewed but did not interview. Other placemaking, anti-displacement, and cultural goals are a part of each program, but success metrics remain primarily economic.
- All believe in the value of activating their network of districts and encouraging peer-to-peer information sharing and assistance. However, they have not yet devoted significant resources to this purpose and sharing is done on an informal, ad hoc basis.

Key findings from the City and County of San Francisco's cultural districts designation program:

- The purpose of the program is to be a tool for social and racial equity. Designation is intended for marginalized communities which are threatened by displacement.
- All districts are focused on cultural heritage. There are six districts currently designated, with four or five more in the process of applying. The current districts are Japantown, Chinatown, Calle 24, SOMA Pilipinas, Compton Transgender, and the newest, Bayview-Hunters Point (an African American district).
- Designation allows the districts access to the resources of city/county government in the form of economic development, historic preservation, urban planning, health services, public works and other services. City agencies are authorized by the legislation to devote resources to the cultural districts and the program has an explicit goal to promote interagency cooperation.

- Funding and technical assistance are a key component of each district. The legislation allocates a portion of the Hotel Occupancy Tax to the districts and, in the first year, each will receive approximately \$500,000.
- The program does not have a formal goal to reflect the overall demographics of San Francisco City/County. Rather, the goal has been to recognize the history and current challenges of disenfranchisement. There is also a dialogue taking place about representation and equity as new communities contemplate applications. For example, one potential new district is considering identifying itself as multicultural, since its population is and has been multiethnic. Up to this point, districts are identified by a single culture, rooted in a history of racial segregation or other oppression. And the city developed a citywide LGBTQ strategy that highlights the fact that defining one geographic area for this population may not be feasible.

Analysis from academic scholarship:

- In addition to searching for practitioner materials related to cultural districts, we also conducted a search of academic research and scholarship. We identified Yolanda Hester, whose graduate work at UCLA in African-American Studies resulted in a study analyzing Leimert Park, a Black cultural hub in Los Angeles. Ms. Hester's research offers important insight into the specific challenges of African American cultural districts.³ This study documents the lack of African American cultural districts in the U.S. and "...examines the historical, cultural and economic considerations that can emerge when Black communities pursue cultural tourism and seek the formal establishment of an ethnically branded cultural district." It suggests several barriers to designation these communities face: "...consensus building in naming of new districts, the challenges of reframing community cultural assets for cultural tourism, the dilemmas of markets and capital access, and issues of gentrification." The naming challenge is illustrated by Los Angeles' Leimert Park, the original name of a racially segregated community that, over time, transitioned to a Black neighborhood but whose name carried the taint of racism. Residents and other stakeholders in Leimert Park differed as to whether to keep the name or create a new one that was more Afrocentric. The challenges related to market and access to capital reflected the rising real estate prices in and near Leimert Park, and the resulting displacement that occurred as rents increased and local businesses were forced out. African American communities have relatively few major Black-owned corporations and investors available to participate in a cultural district. In other cultural districts, such as Koreatown or Little Tokyo, there are

³ "Leimert Park, An African Village: The Possibility of an Ethnically Branded Cultural District," Yolanda Yvette Hester, Master of Arts in African American Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, 2017. The evaluators wish to express their thanks to Ms. Hester for permission to use her thoughtful study and for her insights offered in a telephone interview.

also potential international relationships with the home country that can be leveraged for investment in the cultural district.

Analysis of the Application Process

To better understand the application process, we:

- Examined applications from designated and non-designated districts
- Surveyed the non-designated applicants for more insight into their experience
- Analyzed the applications in relationship to Arts Council funding
- Interviewed two representatives from non-designated districts

District Typology

In their *Cultural Districts Program Development Report* (2016), Cusick & Rosario Jackson developed a district typology for the Arts Council to use in the application process. District applicants self-identified in each of the three categories: context, focus and life cycle.

Context	Focus	Life Cycle
Urban	Cultural production	Emerging
Suburban	Cultural consumption	Mid-point
Rural	Cultural heritage	Established

Context of Applicants

The contexts of designated and non-designated districts were nearly identical. 50% of the designated districts were from urban settings as were 52% of the non-designated applicants. 21% of both designated and non-designated applications were from suburban contexts. 29% of the designated districts were rural as were 28% of the non-designated districts.

Focus of Applicants

Applicants could choose more than one focus area for their district and most did. The emphasis in the applications was on cultural consumption, however districts with a cultural consumption focus were less likely to be selected than districts with a cultural production focus. The cultural heritage focus was the least frequent on the applications.

Life Cycle of Applicants

Over half of the applicants self-identified as emerging and the majority of designated districts (57%) identified as “emerging”. “Midpoint” and “established” applicants were less likely to be designated than “emerging” applicants. Applicants who did not identify where they were in the life cycle were not designated.

Designated Districts in the Typology	% of Districts
Context	

<i>Urban</i>	50%
<i>Suburban</i>	21%
<i>Rural</i>	29%
Focus	
<i>Cultural production</i>	50%
<i>Cultural consumption</i>	50%
<i>Cultural heritage</i>	36%
Life Cycle	
<i>Emerging</i>	57%
<i>Mid-point</i>	29%
<i>Established</i>	21%

Non- Designated Districts in the Typology	% of Districts
Context	
<i>Urban</i>	52%
<i>Suburban</i>	21%
<i>Rural</i>	28%
Focus	
<i>Cultural production</i>	24%
<i>Cultural consumption</i>	59%
<i>Cultural heritage</i>	28%
<i>Not indicated</i>	10%
Life Cycle	
<i>Emerging</i>	31%
<i>Mid-point</i>	21%
<i>Established</i>	28%
<i>Not indicated</i>	21%

Non-Designated Applicant Survey

A brief online survey was sent to the districts whose application was not designated. Eight (28%) of the non-designated applicants responded to the survey in May 2019. Two of the respondents reported that they would likely reapply for the designation.

Barriers/Challenges in the Application

- Five of the eight respondents reported that building community buy-in was a major challenge they faced in putting together their application. They encountered a lack of community understanding about what cultural districts are and what the benefits of that designation might be. Communicating effectively across diverse stakeholder groups was a challenge. One respondent observed:

“While granted it is a pilot program, the application seemed like a lot for organizations without a lot of tangible benefits. Merchants have asked what they will get out of a state-level cultural designation looking for very tangible things. It is hard to try to bring diverse business interests together for a program in name only. Cultural districts get confused with historic districts which have a perceived ‘preservation’ emphasis scaring business and property owners that they will have to adhere to strict preservation standards that will limit them on what they can do in a property.”

- Two of the applicants noted that rural communities may need a different structure than an urban setting. One respondent asked,

“Is there some way to acknowledge the network of communities that may form a ‘cultural district’? Lack of physical cohesion/proximity in rural communities is a challenge. Unlike distinct districts, for example Chinatown in SF or Fisherman's Wharf, many rural communities have sparse cultural assets in any given community but as a region have a fantastic offering of cultural assets. While taking into account that the districts must be definable, this was one of the greatest challenges in a rural setting. There is no way a few cultural/historic assets in a small town, with one or two vibrant businesses, could compete against a cohesive and significantly developed district in an urban area but this is what rural California often looks like.”
- Two respondents found the application itself was the challenge. It was reported to be long and gathering the needed information was a challenge.
- Two respondents reported that the selection process was unfair and problematic.
- One respondent found the application requirements to be nebulous.
- One respondent came from a county underfunded by the Arts Council. They applied in large part to better leverage Arts Council funding in the future.
- One of the eight respondents reported that gentrification was an issue for their community.

Discussion and Synthesis

The Arts Council's Commitment to Equity

At the California Arts Council, access, equity, and inclusion are an integral part of our vision for California, and a priority of our programs and services.

Arts Council website blog excerpt (January 2019)

Racial and cultural equity are central to the California Arts Council. The Arts Council has made a number of specific commitments that provide a context for this gap analysis. They illustrate why the agency wishes to understand how its Cultural Districts Program can best reflect the racial and cultural diversity of California, and pursue diversity, equity, inclusion and fairness throughout its actions.

The Arts Council's vision statement – the agency's definition of future success – includes several relevant elements related to diversity and access:

...the lives of all Californians are enriched by access to and participation in a diverse spectrum of artists and arts and cultural experiences...

...the arts ecosystem reflects contributions from all of California's diverse populations...

Similarly, the Arts Council's values statement includes the following passages, adding the dimension of fairness:

This agency has a role to play in increasing access to the arts for Californians who live or work in areas where the arts are scarce, nonexistent, or vulnerable.

Diversity is embraced as a source of vibrancy for the State of California.

Distribution of funds and services must be fair and transparent.

The Equity Committee of the Arts Council has developed a draft equity statement that calls out the specific challenge of race:

The California Arts Council (CAC) has a strong commitment to advancing race equity and acknowledges that structural racism is one of the most pressing issues of our time. Recognizing that historically marginalized communities of color suffer barriers of inclusion in the arts such as funding, job opportunities, policy making, exhibitions and performances, the CAC is committed to racial equity in our policy development and grantmaking.

In addition, the Arts Council has developed a racial equity plan to operationalize its commitments. In 2018 the Arts Council was one of 19 state agencies working together to learn about and pave the way for racial equity within state government, through a program led by the Government Alliance on

Race and Equity (GARE). The overarching goal of the Arts Council's 2019 Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) is to advance the agency in a first step of racial equity progression, from its current developing organizational state of transactional to an implementing state of culture shift. In this plan, two of the phases are particularly relevant to this gap analysis:

Culture shift (2020): Policies and practices [of the Arts Council] call out race and seek to eliminate racial bias. There is intentional review of existing policies and practices to understand barriers towards achieving racial equity goals. Policies and practices begin to shift so that there is broad ownership of racial equity initiatives.

Institutional evolution (2021): Institutional barriers that inhibit progress towards racial equity policies and practices are removed and racial equity proactively advanced. No longer uses race-neutral approach for targeted strategies.

This gap analysis can be considered as part of the implementation of the Racial Equity Action Plan because it contributes to an "intentional review of existing policies and practices to understand barriers towards achieving racial equity goals."

Policy Issues for the Cultural Districts Program

The gap analysis highlights the issues in advancing racial and cultural equity through the Cultural Districts Program. The demographics show that despite the presence of four districts focused on cultural heritage – Barrio Logan, Little Tokyo, Calle 24 and SOMA Pilipinas – the districts as a cohort do not yet reflect California’s racial and ethnic populations. Cultural heritage as a district focus is under-represented within the current cohort.

The geographic assessment shows that despite the presence of several rural districts, the cultural districts are not often located in regions of the state that are underserved by the Arts Council, especially the northeastern, southeastern, and Central Valley counties of the state.

While the counties that are home to designated cultural districts are evenly balanced in being above and below the state’s median income, non-designated applicants were disproportionately more likely to be in a county below the state’s median income. This is further complicated in that a number of districts, including Calle 24, SOMA Pilipinas and Barrio Logan, are located within high-income areas but are aiming to serve middle- and lower-income communities fighting displacement and gentrification. There is a clear opportunity for the Cultural Districts Program to better serve lower-income and rural people in California.

Discussions with other state cultural district designation programs, and a review of relevant literature, suggests that other states face similar issues of equity. The great majority of other district programs prioritize economic development and, while they may acknowledge racial and cultural equity as an issue, they do not appear to have set the same goals as the Arts Council. Many states have cultural heritage districts in their rosters, but “representativeness” and recruitment to achieve equity are not express goals of their district programs. It appears that the Arts Council may be a leader in this area by virtue of its intentions and that other programs will be watching its efforts. Many interviewees share the value of racial and cultural equity and seek a greater understanding of how to make progress in this arena.

The City and County of San Francisco’s cultural designation program is intended to address many of the challenges facing the California Arts Council and offers useful ideas for how to proceed. It has an explicit focus on redressing past inequity and is designed to provide a range of tools and resources to disenfranchised communities for self-help, as well as new partnerships in self-determination and placekeeping. This program is certainly structured to give communities new ways to engage in and shape the development occurring so rapidly throughout San Francisco, and to counteract displacement. It is also structured to celebrate the city’s storied cultural diversity.

The review of applications revealed a wide continuum of readiness to successfully prepare an application. Some applicants had well-established organizations that were able to effectively write the application as well as coordinate and host a successful site visit. Other applicants

were able to do one of these functions but not the other. And still a third group struggled to even get the application together. Nearly all the designated districts are located in areas of the state that are already well-served by the Arts Council and this may have contributed to the designees' greater readiness. More fully representing California through the cultural district designation likely requires more support and technical assistance during the front-end of the application phase to develop readiness in more diverse applications.

In the first round of applicants, there were none from Native American groups and places. Discussions with Native Americans highlighted specific issues for these populations in relation to the cultural districts program. First, the definition of "place" and "cultural district" are different for Indigenous peoples. Ethnic heritage districts for other groups – African American, Chinese American, Latinx – are often defined by a history of racial segregation. Segregation produced in many places a collection of neighborhoods with a concentration and legacy of a specific population. Even the names reflect that history: Chinatown, Barrio Logan, Filipinotown. Native Americans are the first Californians to have been displaced and, for some tribes, reservations provide a physical and cultural home. Still, the majority of California's Indigenous peoples live separately from their heritage places. California is home to 169 tribes (both federally recognized and not federally recognized) but also to a population of Native Americans from out of state tribes. For example, San Francisco has a multi-tribal population that is in the process of exploring creation of a Native American district and cultural center in the city. With the rich abundance of Indigenous peoples in the state, there is a clear potential to create California tribal (and multi-tribal) cultural districts. However, identifying and encouraging successful applications will require in many cases attention to the specific circumstances of a tribe. In particular, tribes have very distinct identities, cultures and governing bodies, so communication on a tribal level is needed to assess the potential for an application. Debbie Pilas-Treadway of The State of California Native American Heritage Commission recommended that the Arts Council consider geographic diversity and suggested including Indigenous communities from northern, southern and central California. In addition, the Commission maintains a list of all California tribes and is willing to assist in communications regarding the cultural districts program. There is also a California Indian Heritage Center under development in West Sacramento that will represent all California tribes and is a potential resource.

Yolanda Hester's research about Black cultural districts highlighted the challenges of the race and ethnicity "umbrella" terms, meant to identify a broad diversity of people in one category. Hester's research revealed the tensions in Leimert Park among African Americans and their African immigrant neighbors in developing and naming an African-identified cultural district. The pan-African scope of the community pitted stakeholders against each other in support of singular visions of what a cultural district could be.

Lastly, we encourage the Arts Council to take a broad view of equity that encompasses racial and cultural diversity as well as income and location. Californians living in parts of the state below the median income and those in more rural or distant communities may not yet have

equitable access to arts and cultural districts. Furthermore, racial equity is an imperative and there is a broader set of cultural identities that can be considered for cultural districts.

Demographics provide one essential set of racial and ethnic definitions. California's cultural diversity encompasses far more. Cultural identity includes many ethnicities and national origins that have neighborhoods and special places: Little Italy as well as Armenian, Hmong, and Haitian neighborhoods. LGBTQ, disability, Jewish, and veteran populations are still more examples of communities that could be (and often already are) vital cultural districts.

Recommendations

1. **Prioritize designation of African American/Black, Native American, and Chinese American cultural districts in the next cohort** to fill specific gaps and promote racial equity within the cultural districts program. These are the largest populations of color not yet represented in the program.
2. **Support the development of applications that promote equity.** This will require engaging with specific communities and promoting the cultural districts program more widely, to identify and support successful applications. The Arts Council can also focus on making individual contacts and paying attention to equitable forms of communication.
 - Cultivate relationships with African American/Black districts, Chinese American districts, and California tribes to promote the cultural districts program and lay the foundation for successful applications. The district formation process may look different in non-dominant communities and may have a non-linear, grassroots, and/or bottom-up approach to organizing. The Arts Council's processes will align with the GARE implementation as culturally appropriate methods for supporting nascent districts are developed.
 - Promote the cultural districts program through engagement adapted to specific communities. Consider that the Arts Council may need to make the case to communities about what distinguishes this designation and the ways it can be a useful resource for a neighborhood. Reexamine communication channels to more specifically reach underserved communities. Both African American and Native American interviewees reported little to no knowledge about the program application or designation and recommended this as an area to be strengthened.
 - Consider the complexities of the racial and ethnic categories and consider new ways forward in cultural responsiveness. For example, rather than designating one Black district, consider Yolanda Hester's suggestion to create a Black "umbrella" district with multiple smaller culturally specific districts within it. In Los Angeles a Black cultural district might be home to Little Ethiopia and Little Belize, among others. Four Los Angeles' Asian-specific districts modeled this a few years ago when they garnered a national designation by working together to create a larger umbrella district.⁴
 - Encourage more applications from cultural heritage districts.
 - Cultivate relationships with less-well-served counties in the state, including through networks such as the Arts Council's state/local partners, the California Main Street Program, chambers of commerce, and city-level cultural district designation programs.

⁴ <https://preservation.lacity.org/news/ohrs-asian-american-initiatives-added-national-register>

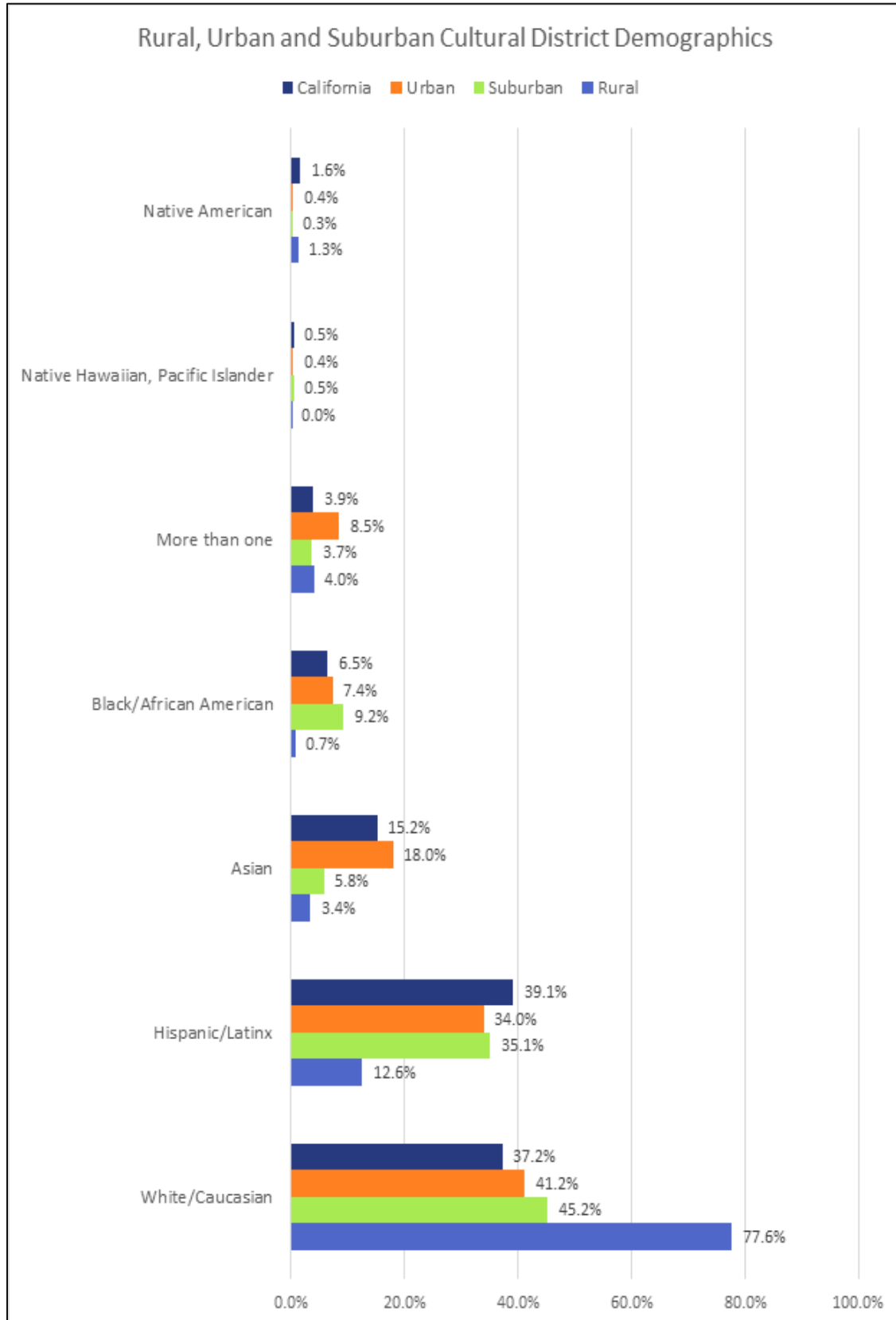
- Over time, consider a broad definition of “representativeness” to include categories other than race, such as national origin, LGBTQ, disability, veterans, etc.
 - Reconsider the physical boundaries for rural districts to be more responsive to local needs.
3. **Provide technical assistance to communities considering an application and to applicants.** As a part of Recommendation 2, engage with potential applicants to understand their circumstances; provide advice, information and referrals that can assist them to become ready for a successful application; offer pre-application site visits; and generally support a process leading to sound decision-making for the district. Develop online tools and resources available to all potential applicants.
 4. **Build inter-agency partnerships to identify and support diverse districts.** Develop partnerships with other state agencies to expand engagement with specific communities. Consider the State’s GARE cohort as potential partners in this effort.
 5. **Revisit and refine the selection criteria for the program with an equity lens.** Consider referring this to the GARE task force and/or the Arts Council’s Equity Committee. Provide updated definitions and expectations for applicants, with special attention to criteria for readiness and the definition of “culture” to qualify as a cultural district for the purposes of this program.
 6. **More strongly make the case for the importance of the state designation.** Don’t assume everyone understands its value and potential impact. A number of non-designated applicants and other stakeholders reported that the importance of the designation was not clear. One non-designated applicant from a community of color noted, “Unless the program is expanded not just to have additional districts, but also other programmatic benefits, i.e. funding for marketing or community programming, our organization would not do the work that it takes to build consensus in our neighborhood and would decline to apply.”

Appendices

Interviewees

Name	Affiliation
Shelley Caltagirone	Senior Planner/Preservation, Planning Department, City and County of San Francisco
Luis Edgardo Cotto	Cultural Districts Program Manager, Massachusetts Cultural Council
Jessica Cusick	Co-author of <i>Cultural Districts Program Development Report</i>
Erica Gee	Community Planner, San Francisco Chinatown Community Development Center
Yolanda Hester	Author, <i>Leimert Park, An African Village: The Possibility of an Ethnically Branded Cultural District</i>
Alex Marqusee	Legislative Analyst, Oakland City Councilmember Lynette McElhaney
Kelsea McCrary	Director of Civic Design and Cultural Districts, Louisiana Office of Cultural Development
Jim Bob McMillan	Deputy Director, Texas Commission on the Arts
Barbara Mumby	Director, Community Investments, San Francisco Arts Commission
Debbie Pilas-Treadway	Director, Environmental and Cultural Department, California Native American Heritage Commission
Maria Rosario-Jackson	Co-author of <i>Cultural Districts Program Development Report</i>
Julia Sabory	Cultural Districts Program Manager, City and County of San Francisco
Steven Skerritt-Davis	Deputy Director, Maryland State Arts Council

Race/Ethnicity Breakdown of Arts Council Cultural Districts by Location



Arts Council Funding by County

In the table below, the 12 counties in orange received Arts Council funding during the 2017/18 funding cycle, and this funding was proportionally the highest of all the counties. The counties in blue received Arts Council funding during the 2017/18 funding cycle, but this funding was proportionally the 12 lowest of all counties.

County	% of state population	# of grantees	% of all grantees	% of all funding
1. San Francisco	2.2%	190	18.4%	15.0%
2. Alameda	4.2%	103	10.0%	9.0%
3. San Diego	8.4%	123	11.9%	10.2%
4. Santa Cruz	0.7%	19	1.8%	1.7%
5. Humboldt	0.3%	11	1.1%	1.3%
6. Mariposa	0.05%	8	0.8%	1.0%
7. Santa Barbara	1.1%	18	1.7%	2.0%
8. San Benito	0.1%	7	0.7%	0.9%
9. Marin	0.7%	10	1.2%	1.3%
10. Yolo	0.6%	10	1.0%	1.2%
11. Siskiyou	0.6%	710	1.0%	0.7%
12. Inyo	0.05%	3	0.3%	0.6%
48. Ventura	2.2%	11	1.1%	1.3%
49. San Mateo	1.9%	8	0.8%	0.9%
50. Contra Costa	2.9%	21	2.0%	1.8%
51. Fresno	2.5%	11	1.1%	1.3%
52. Stanislaus	1.4%	4	0.4%	0.2%
53. San Joaquin	1.9%	4	0.4%	0.3%
54. Kern	2.3%	2	0.2%	0.5%
55. Santa Clara	4.9%	32	3.2%	2.8%
56. San Bernardino	5.5%	5	0.5%	0.6%
57. Riverside	6.1%	11	1.3%	0.9%
58. Orange	8.1%	12	1.2%	1.0%



California

Cultural

Districts

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Designation Period: January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2030

Apply at: calartscouncil.smartsimple.com

Please refer to the California Arts Council [Grants Manual](#) for all policies, procedures, and resources for applicants and grantees.

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Program Timeline

Application Opens	May 27, 2025
Application Deadline	August 7, 2025
Round 1 Panel Review	Approx. August-September 2025
Semi-Finalist Site Visits	Approx. October-November 2025
Round 2 Panel Review	Approx. November 2025
Funding Decision	Approx. December 2025
Funding Notification	Approx. December 2025
Grant Activity Start	January 1, 2026
Estimated Arrival of Funds	Approx. March – May 2026
Grant Activity End	December 31, 2027
Interim Report Deadline	January 31, 2027
Final Report Deadline	January 31, 2028

Eligibility

Only organizational partnerships are eligible to apply.

- At a minimum, the partnership must include three organizations: an arts and/or cultural nonprofit or collective; a local business, business association, and/or a community development corporation; and the branch of local government that oversees land use for the proposed district.
- The majority of organizations in the partnership must be located in the district.

Lead applicants eligible to apply include:

1. Nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3), California organizations
2. Units of municipal, county or Tribal governments
3. Fiscally sponsored organizations

Non-eligible applicants include:

1. Organizations that are registered and primarily operate as for-profit corporations/entities, even if they have a fiscal sponsor.

- a. This includes LLCs and any for-profit entities (including ‘charitable arms or branches’).
2. Individuals
3. State agencies
4. Federal agencies
5. Elementary and Secondary Schools (Public, Private, Charter)
6. School districts
7. County Offices of Education
8. Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs)
9. Booster Clubs

Eligibility Requirements

. Applicant organizations and fiscal sponsors must meet the requirements below:

1. Have a principal place of business in California and a California address.
2. Have a minimum two-year history of consistent arts programming and/or services **prior** to the application deadline.
3. Demonstrate proof of nonprofit status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or section 23701d of the California Revenue and Taxation Code.
 - Eligible applicant organizations without nonprofit status, please see *Fiscal Sponsor Requirements* in the 2025 Grants Manual.
4. Have “active status” with the California Secretary of State (SOS) showing evidence of “good standing” at the time of application.
 - All applicants must upload their California SOS certificate noting good standing at time of application.
 - Unincorporated Nonprofit Associations (UNAs) must supply an Entity Status Letter from the California Franchise Tax Board (FTB).

Eligible Request Amounts

- Applicant organizations can request up to \$10,000 for a two-year grant period.

Funding Restrictions

- For applicant organizations or fiscal sponsors with total revenue **below** \$250,000, the sum of requests during the same year of funding cannot exceed the total revenue from the most recently completed fiscal year.
- For applicant organizations or fiscal sponsors with total revenue **above** \$250,000, the sum of requests during the same year of funding cannot exceed **50%** of the total revenue from the most recently completed fiscal year.

Matching Funds

- A one-to-one match is required for this grant. See the [2025 Grants Manual](#) for clarification on eligible match sources.

Background & Purpose

Enacted in 2015, the California Cultural Districts program created a new tool for the development, support, and preservation of California’s extensive and diverse cultural assets. In 2017, the initial group of 14 statewide Cultural Districts was designated after an open and

competitive application process to identify a well-rounded group of communities diverse in make-up, geography, and purpose.

"State-designated cultural district" is defined as a geographical area with a concentration of cultural facilities, creative enterprises, or arts venues that accomplishes one or more of the following outcomes:

- (1) Attracts artists, creative entrepreneurs, and cultural enterprises.
- (2) Encourages economic development and supports entrepreneurship in the creative community.
- (3) Encourages the preservation and reuse of historic buildings and other artistic and culturally significant structures.
- (4) Fosters local cultural development.
- (5) Provides a focal point for celebrating and strengthening the unique cultural identity of the community.
- (6) Promotes opportunity without generating displacement or expanding inequality.

Program Goals

The CAC's California Cultural Districts program aims to cultivate authentic and sustainable cultural districts that reflect the breadth and diversity of California's extensive cultural assets. A cultural district is generally understood as a well-defined geographic area with a high concentration of cultural resources and activities. The California program seeks to identify, support, and connect centers of arts and cultural activity through the designation and certification process.

The CAC will designate a cohort of up to 10 emerging Cultural Districts to expand the original cohort of statewide cultural districts that was designated in 2017. For the purposes of this program, "emerging" districts are those new to statewide designation. The CAC recognizes that emerging districts may already be locally designated and may have long histories of community-based arts and cultural activity. Designation will take place through an open application process. Selected districts will receive a host of benefits including:

- Official state certification
- California Cultural Districts branding materials
- Technical assistance
- Joint marketing support
- Stipend of \$10,000 two-year grant to support Cultural District activities

Designated statewide cultural districts collectively represent rural, urban, and suburban districts and will include a focus on both cultural production and cultural heritage. Districts will be asked to identify according to these broad typologies during the application process. (A glossary of terms is available at this link: <https://www.caculturaldistricts.org/glossary>.) For example, a district might be rural and focused on cultural heritage. At each stage of the process, applicants will be grouped and reviewed separately by distinct district types based on the following:

1. CONTEXT

- urban
- suburban
- rural

2. FOCUS

- cultural heritage
- cultural production
- cultural heritage and cultural production

Urban, Suburban, and Rural geographic boundaries are described as such:

- **Urban and suburban** cultural districts are generally expected to be a contiguous geographic area.
- **Rural** districts do not need to be contiguous but will need to make the case for how the participating areas/entities are complementary and synergistic.

Districts will be selected for designation based on the strength with which they demonstrate the following:

- Diversity, capacity, and commitment of participating partners
- Authentic community engagement from diverse stakeholders
- A strong understanding and concentration of the cultural assets present
- Clarity and thoroughness of vision, goals and objectives, and budget
- Clearly defined leadership
- Anticipated impact of the cultural district designation
- Expected contribution to cohort

Grant Application Questions, Review Criteria, & Designation Process

Application questions and required documents pertaining to each review criterion are included below. The CAC highly recommends drafting responses in a Word or other text-based document prior to entering them into the online portal. This will allow you to utilize spell- and grammar-check functions and to track word count.

Please note that all narrative questions have a maximum 300-word response limit.

Detailed instructions are available at calartscouncil.smartsimple.com.

Centering Equity and Accessibility

The application must demonstrate your organization's experience, capacity, and ongoing commitment to engaging and uplifting historically and systemically under-resourced, excluded, and erased artists, communities, and cultural practices. This experience, capacity, and ongoing commitment should be reflected throughout the proposal.

The application must also demonstrate that the programs, services, information, and facilities where funded activities are to take place, including online spaces, will be accessible for individuals with disabilities, including but not limited to individuals who are Deaf, Hard of

Hearing, Deaf-Blind, have difficulty speaking, have a physical disability, visual disability, developmental disability, learning disability, mental illness, or chronic illness.

Application Questions and Required Documents

1. Describe your organization's equity and accessibility goals.
2. What does your organization do to achieve these goals?
3. How does your organization determine progress in achieving these goals?
4. Describe your organization's approach to ensuring that people with disabilities are able to fully participate in all programs and services.

Partnerships

The application must demonstrate significant diversity, capacity, and commitment of all participating partners.

Application Questions and Required Documents

1. Explain the background, role, and resources contributed to the district by the non-profit arts organization.
2. What was the Total Revenue of the nonprofit arts organization in its most recently completed fiscal year?
3. How many staff are employed by the nonprofit arts organization?
4. Explain the background, role, and resources contributed to the district by the local government partner.
5. Explain the background, role, and resources contributed to the district by the local business association or community development corporation.
6. What was the Total Revenue of the local business association or community development corporation?
7. How many staff are employed by the local business association or community development corporation?
8. List any anticipated district community members beyond the core partners and how you intend to collaborate with each.
9. Identify the personnel who will be dedicated (full or part-time) to district operations and planning. Provide the name, affiliation, experience, and role of each individual.
10. Complete a two-year budget snapshot table. Provide revenue and expense amounts. Address any significant changes in line items from one year to the next.
11. Letters of agreement signed by lead applicant and partner organizations

Community Engagement and Social Impact

The application must demonstrate authentic community engagement from diverse stakeholders and anticipated positive impact of the cultural district designation.

Application Questions and Required Documents

1. Cultural District Type: Urban/Suburban/Rural; Cultural Production/Cultural Heritage/Both
2. Provide a Cultural Asset Inventory for your proposed district as an xls. file using the template provided: ([hyperlink](#))
3. Provide a District Boundary Map for your proposed district as a PDF. Please consult the instructions and example maps provided: ([hyperlink](#))
4. Three letters of support from individual community members or artists located in the proposed district.

5. Provide information on any district overlap with other local, regional or federal designations.
6. Describe the types of space for artists, arts organizations, and cultural activities currently present in the district. Include the facilities, activities, events, and history that make the district distinct.
7. Describe the ways in which the community is currently engaged in the district and its activities.
8. Please describe the process your team used to identify and compile your cultural asset inventory. Include how you engaged the community and ensured a comprehensive and inclusive representation of cultural assets.

District Vision and Planning

The application demonstrates clarity and thoroughness of vision, goals and objectives, and budget.

Application Questions and Required Documents

1. Identify the key issues and opportunities facing the district and how the cultural district designation will address them.
2. Describe how the community's existing residents will benefit from district designation.
3. Describe vision for the next five years for the district and how designation would support the realization of that vision.
4. Complete a project budget, including all expenses relevant to the stated project activities. Consult the What We Do Not Fund (hyperlinked) resource.
5. Complete a matching funds table. Indicate the source type, identify the source, enter the amount, and indicate the status of matching funds (Committed, Pending, or Projected).

Expected Contribution to Cultural District Cohort

[NOT INCLUDED IN INITIAL SCORE]

This criterion will be assessed by the panel as a group during the second round of the panel review meeting. The panel will evaluate the top-ranking applications in each context group (urban/rural; cultural heritage/cultural production) – considering additional factors of district focus and overall geographic reach. This criterion will be utilized to ensure the cohort collectively represents a diversity of districts.

Once applications have been submitted, the adjudication process will take place as follows:

- **Round 1-Panel Adjudication:** An external panel of field experts will independently review and rank all eligible applications in accordance with the published review criteria and identify semi-finalists.
- **Site Visits by Agency Staff:** CAC staff will conduct site visits for all semi-finalist applicants according to a standard site visit protocol and will complete formal reports for panel review.
- **Round 2-Panel Recommendations:** The review panel will reconvene in person in Sacramento to hear reports from staff on site visits and determine a cohort of up to ten new Cultural Districts to recommend for state designation, in alignment with the program goals.

- **Vote by Council on 2025 Cultural District Designations:** Council will vote on designation of the slate of new districts.

Staff Assistance

If staff assistance is still required for guidance or clarification, email is the best way to contact Program Specialists. **We recommend that you contact staff well in advance of the deadline to ensure you can be accommodated.** People who identify as Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf-Blind, or have difficulty speaking may dial 711 to reach the California Relay Service (CRS). Large print is available upon request. Translation services are also available upon request.

Organizations seeking technical assistance should contact:

Gabrielle Rosado

(she/her)

Arts Programs Specialist

California Arts Council

culturaldistrictsgrant@arts.ca.gov



2025 SITE VISIT REPORT

Name of CAC Staff #1: _____

Name of CAC Staff #2: _____

Name of District: _____

Region/County: _____

Context (Urban/Suburban/Rural): _____

Focus (Cultural Heritage/Cultural Production/Both): _____

Site Visit Date: _____

2025 SITE VISIT REPORT

SITE VISIT RUBRICS

To be completed collaboratively by both Programs staff. Identify whether each review criterion is effectively demonstrated, somewhat demonstrated, or not demonstrated during the site visit.

1. REVIEW CRITERIA #1: CENTERING EQUITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Observation Focus: How equity and accessibility show up in practice during the site visit through communication, the physical spaces visited and visible inclusion.

Assessment	Criteria Not Demonstrated	Criteria Somewhat Demonstrated	Criteria Effectively Demonstrated
Is there demonstrated awareness of local inequities in the district? Is there data to support their response?	<input type="checkbox"/> Partners do not demonstrate or articulate a clear understanding of local inequities during the visit. Little to no data to inform inequities described.	<input type="checkbox"/> Partners make some mention of inequities present, but integration into planning or storytelling is limited. Some data to inform to support inequities described.	<input type="checkbox"/> Partners clearly name local inequities during the visit and consistently reference how these disparities are factored into the district's planning. Prevalent data to support inequities described.
How accessible are activities and spaces to a diverse range of community members including individuals with disabilities? How are CD's adapting to post-COVID norms such as sidewalk events and displays?	<input type="checkbox"/> Assets and spaces toured show significant accessibility barriers with little proactive effort evident.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some spaces showed consideration for accessibility, though gaps remain.	<input type="checkbox"/> All or most assets toured are accessible to a diverse range of community members including individuals with disabilities with proactive efforts to remove barriers (physical, linguistic, perceptual).
Are there strategies to include and engage historically underserved communities in meaningful ways?	<input type="checkbox"/> Few or no examples demonstrate intentional engagement of underserved groups.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some engagement strategies are mentioned but are not central or consistent.	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear and intentional strategies engage underserved communities, and equity is embedded throughout the presentation and tour.

Accompanying notes:

2025 SITE VISIT REPORT

2. REVIEW CRITERIA #2: PARTNERSHIPS

Observation Focus: How the strength, alignment, and representativeness of core partnerships are demonstrated during the site visit through partner roles, attendance, shared stories and observed dynamics.

Assessment	Criteria Not Demonstrated	Criteria Somewhat Demonstrated	Criteria Effectively Demonstrated
What is the nature of the core partnerships?	<input type="checkbox"/> Partnerships appear inconsistent; conflicting visions or unclear roles are observed.	<input type="checkbox"/> Partners demonstrated a functional working relationship, with some alignment on district goals presented.	<input type="checkbox"/> Partners presented a unified voice, demonstrated trust, shared leadership and showed clear alignment on goals.
Are the selection of partners representative of the district makeup and goals? (Goals of the district can be artistically, economically or culturally motivated)	<input type="checkbox"/> Partners present do not reflect the district's diversity and goals.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some aspects of the district's identity and goals are represented amongst the partners, but gaps remain or are unbalanced.	<input type="checkbox"/> Presenters reflect the full range of communities and priorities.
Do the roles of the partners indicate quality connection to and experience working with the community?	<input type="checkbox"/> Partner roles appear disconnected from meaningful community engagement. Little to no evidence of authentic ties or credibility with the community.	<input type="checkbox"/> Partner roles demonstrated some relevant community experience and existing relationships. Some collaboration was referenced and certain roles defined but coordination limited.	<input type="checkbox"/> Partner roles appear authentic with ongoing connections to the community. Strong collaborative practices are demonstrated.
Is there partnership sustainability?	<input type="checkbox"/> Partners do not have MOUs or plans for sustainable relationships with new or existing partners.	<input type="checkbox"/> Partners have identified new or existing relationships, but ongoing and targeted collaboration are not clear.	<input type="checkbox"/> Partners are strategically engaged with agreements and/or identified long-term plans.

Accompanying notes:

2025 SITE VISIT REPORT

3. REVIEW CRITERIA #3: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL IMPACT

Observation Focus: How the district's identity, community input and needs are demonstrated during the visit through process, responsiveness, and community presence.

Assessment	Criteria Not Demonstrated	Criteria Somewhat Demonstrated	Criteria Effectively Demonstrated
Are the needs of the local community (i.e. businesses, artists, residents) incorporated in the decision making of the district?	<input type="checkbox"/> Decision-making appeared disconnected from residents, artists, and/or businesses.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some input and consideration are acknowledged, but engagement appeared limited or inconsistent.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong evidence that community needs are central to decision-making, with inclusive processes that actively involve businesses, artists and residents.
Is there a distinct character and identity represented by the district?	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal visible or articulated history; unique identity not expressed.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some aspects of identity and history are observable and mentioned but lack depth or cohesion.	<input type="checkbox"/> The district visit reflects its history, assets and community in a distinct and recognizable way. Identity is clearly expressed through cultural markers, storytelling, and spaces.
To what extent does the community understand the potential economic, social, and cultural and benefits of the district? (Benefits include increased access to the arts, cultural preservation, support for local businesses, artists and tourism.)	<input type="checkbox"/> The community articulated little or no awareness of the economic, social or cultural benefits of the district.	<input type="checkbox"/> The community demonstrated some awareness of economic, social and cultural benefits though understanding is inconsistent.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong, consistent understanding and awareness based on data, studies, and surveys of benefits across community members was articulated.

Accompanying notes:

2025 SITE VISIT REPORT

4. REVIEW CRITERIA #4: DISTRICT VISION AND PLANNING

Observation Focus: How financial resources, impact and buy-in are demonstrated during the site visit through physical environment, community narratives and partner presentations.

Assessment	Criteria Not Demonstrated	Criteria Somewhat Demonstrated	Criteria Effectively Demonstrated
To what extent did the district demonstrate that its existing resources (financial and infrastructure sustainability) align with its long-term vision and planning?	<input type="checkbox"/> Resources appeared disconnected from the district's stated long-term vision and planning. Observable conditions (i.e. programming and facilities) suggest short-term focus.	<input type="checkbox"/> Resources appeared generally aligned with the district's long-term vision and planning. Observable conditions suggest adequate support for facilities and programming.	<input type="checkbox"/> Resources were diverse, well-managed and clearly aligned with the district's long-term vision and planning. Observable conditions (facilities, programming, upkeep) demonstrated strong resource management and clear investment.
Is there an alignment of vision and planning amongst all interested and affected parties?	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflicting visions or unclear priorities observed by interested and affected parties present.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some alignment of vision and planning observed among interested and affected parties, though gaps remain in coordination or shared priorities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Interested and affected parties present communicated strong alignment of vision and planning with clear priorities and coordinated strategies for the district's future including co-designed programs.
To what extent do the district's future development plans minimize displacement of current residents, artists and cultural organizations?	<input type="checkbox"/> Plans show little consideration for displacement, with significant risk to current residents, artists and cultural organizations.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some measures mentioned, but strategies to mitigate or limit displacement were underdeveloped.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong, proactive strategies to minimize displacement are described. Plans clearly prioritize residents, artists and cultural organization and protect the unique cultural history and identity.

Accompanying notes:

2025 SITE VISIT REPORT

5. DISTRICT BOUNDARY MAP

Observation Focus: How the physical boundaries of the proposed district are experienced and understood during the tour, including how they align with cultural assets, community geography and sense of place.

Assessment	Criteria Not Demonstrated	Criteria Somewhat Demonstrated	Criteria Effectively Demonstrated
Does the district boundary map accurately reflect the concentration of cultural assets provided?	<input type="checkbox"/> Boundaries observed do not match the location of key assets marked on map. Clear omissions were present.	<input type="checkbox"/> The boundaries observed include some assets, but inconsistencies of concentration were present.	<input type="checkbox"/> Boundaries accurately reflect the concentration of cultural assets observed.
Does the proposed district accurately reflect the selected geographic context? (i.e. urban, suburban or rural)	<input type="checkbox"/> The district feels disconnected from its geographic setting and boundaries were not contiguous or complementary and synergistic.	<input type="checkbox"/> The proposed district matches the selected geographic context, but some gaps were present in terms of synergy or proximity.	<input type="checkbox"/> The proposed district strongly reflects the selected geographic context. Boundaries are clearly contiguous for urban and suburban or complementary and synergistic for rural.
How do the boundaries of the district translate in person?	<input type="checkbox"/> Boundaries are confusing, too large to navigate on a tour and do not translate well when visiting this district in person.	<input type="checkbox"/> Boundaries are somewhat understandable in person but lack cohesion.	<input type="checkbox"/> Boundaries are clearly defined and translate seamlessly in person, creating a strong sense of place that is inviting and easy to navigate.

Accompanying notes:

2025 SITE VISIT REPORT

6. CULTURAL ASSET INVENTORY

Observation Focus: How well the assets included in the district reflect its stated cultural focus, how they support cultural production or heritage and the types of spaces available for different community uses as seen during the tour and through storytelling.

Assessment	Criteria Not Demonstrated	Criteria Somewhat Demonstrated	Criteria Effectively Demonstrated
Do the assets accurately reflect the cultural focus of the district? (i.e. cultural heritage or production or both?)	<input type="checkbox"/> Assets observed do not align with the stated cultural focus of the district.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some assets reflect the focus, but alignment uneven.	<input type="checkbox"/> Assets strongly and consistently reflect the cultural focus of the district, reinforcing its identity and vision.
Are most assets toured spaces that support:			
Artists?	<input type="checkbox"/> Few or no spaces support artist activity.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some artist spaces are shown, though access limited.	<input type="checkbox"/> A variety of active, accessible artist spaces are shown.
Arts organizations?	<input type="checkbox"/> Few organizations are presented.	<input type="checkbox"/> Several are present.	<input type="checkbox"/> The assets outlined in the application responses are represented in the site visit.
Businesses?	<input type="checkbox"/> Few local businesses are presented.	<input type="checkbox"/> Several are present.	<input type="checkbox"/> A healthy number of local businesses is observable and aligns with district vision.
Other? (Name and describe)			
Other			
Other			
Other			

2025 SITE VISIT REPORT

SITE VISIT SYNTHESIS

To be completed collaboratively by both Programs staff.

7. OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE DISTRICT:

What are strengths that you see present in this district?

8. OBSERVED CHALLENGES OF THE DISTRICT:

What are challenges that you see present in this district?

2025 Cultural District Eligible Applicants

Organization	City	County
WEST END ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT	ALAMEDA	Alameda
City of Berkeley	Berkeley	Alameda
SOA VILLAGE HOUSING INC	OAKLAND	Alameda
City of Chico	Chico	Butte
PARADISE ARTS THEATRE AND CULTURE HUB	PARADISE	Butte
Richmond Renaissance	Richmond	Contra Costa
Grassroots Poetry	San Francisco	Contra Costa
CATALINA ISLAND MUSEUM	AVALON	Los Angeles
CAMBODIA TOWN INC	LONG BEACH	Los Angeles
CENTRO C H A INC	LONG BEACH	Los Angeles
LONG BEACH FILIPINO FESTIVAL	LONG BEACH	Los Angeles
ATHENS BLVD BLOCK CLUB	LOS ANGELES	Los Angeles
LA Commons	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY	Los Angeles	Los Angeles
The City of Pomona	Pomona	Los Angeles
City of Santa Monica Cultural Affairs	Santa Monica	Los Angeles
City of Mill Valley	Mill Valley	Marin
CANAL ALLIANCE	SAN RAFAEL	Marin
MERCED COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL INC	MERCED	Merced
MONO ARTS COUNCIL	MAMMOTH LAKES	Mono
RAD NAPA	NAPA	Napa
City of Anaheim	Anaheim	Orange
ARTS ORANGE COUNTY	Irvine	Orange
ROCKLIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY	ROCKLIN	Placer
THE ARTS COUNCIL OF PLACER COUNTY	Rocklin	Placer
City of Desert Hot Springs	Desert Hot Springs	Riverside
City of Hemet	Hemet	Riverside
MUSIC CHANGING LIVES	MORENO VALLEY	Riverside
City of Palm Springs	Palm Springs	Riverside
City of Riverside	Riverside	Riverside
NOAH PURIFOY FOUNDATION	CULVER CITY	San Bernardino
INSTITUTE OF MENTALPHYSICS	JOSHUA TREE	San Bernardino
City of Ontario	Ontario	San Bernardino
ARTS CONNECTION	San Bernardino	San Bernardino
HILLCREST BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION	SAN DIEGO	San Diego
NTC FOUNDATION	SAN DIEGO	San Diego
American Indian Cultural District	San Francisco	San Francisco
Castro LGBTQ Cultural District a fiscally sponsored project of the SF LGBT Center	San Francisco	San Francisco
KOHO	San Francisco	San Francisco
SAN FRANCISCO AFRICAN AMERICAN ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICT	SAN FRANCISCO	San Francisco
The Transgender District Company	SAN FRANCISCO	San Francisco
WAH MEI SCHOOL	SAN FRANCISCO	San Francisco
SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL	San Luis Obispo	San Luis Obispo
LOMPOC THEATRE PROJECT CORPORATION	LOMPOC	Santa Barbara
San Jose Taiko Group Inc.	San Jose	Santa Clara
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND CULTURE AT MHP	SAN JOSE	Santa Clara
City of Watsonville	Watsonville	Santa Cruz

SOLANO COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL	Vallejo	Solano
City of Sonoma	Sonoma	Sonoma
CENTRAL CALIFORNIA ART LEAGUE INC	Modesto	Stanislaus
STUDIO CHANNEL ISLANDS ART CENTER	Camarillo	Ventura
OXNARD PERFORMING ARTS CENTER CORPORATION	Oxnard	Ventura
YUBA COUNTY SUTTER COUNTY REGIONAL ARTS COUNCIL	Marysville	Yuba