



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

Gavin Newsom, **Governor**
Danielle Brazell, **Executive Director**
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**Minutes of Public Meeting
CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL
Friday, May 15, 2026
10 A.M. – 1:50 P.M.**

**On Location/Hybrid Meeting
Madelyn Helling Library
980 Helling Way
Nevada City, CA 95959**

The members of the California Arts Council convened in Nevada City 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 Member Roque Barros
Council Member Caleb Duarte
Council Member Vicki Estrada
Council Member Leah Goodwin
Council Member Roy Hirabayashi

Council Members Present Remotely:

Council Vice Chair Nicola Miner
Council Member Dorka Keehn

Arts Council Staff Present:

Danielle Brazell, Executive Director
Michelle Radmand, Chief Deputy Director
Sylmia Britt, Deputy Director
Kristin Margolis, Director of Program Services
Josy Miller, Arts Program Manager
Jonathan Estrada, Arts Program Manager
Megan Morgan, Race & Equity Manager
Kimberly Brown, Public Affairs Specialist
Qiana Moore, Events & Outreach Coordinator
Zachary Hill, IT Specialist
Steve Mok, Public Affairs Specialist

1. Call to Order

Chair Messina Captor called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM.

2. Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum

Arts Program Manager Josy Miller called the roll and quorum was established. Five members of the Council were present in Nevada City, and three Council members were present virtually on Zoom.

3. Land and People's Acknowledgement

Chair Messina Captor invited Nevada City Arts Council Executive Director Eliza Tudor to stand in for Shelly Covert, Tribal Spokesperson for the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan and Executive Director of HUSWEJ, to provide the land and people's acknowledgement. Tudor confirmed the meeting was being held on the original lands of the Nisenan and also recognized the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California.

4. Opening Remarks & Community Agreements

Chair Messina Captor and Council Member Goodwin led 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. Welcome to Nevada City

The Council was welcomed to Nevada City and to the library by Nevada County Arts Council Executive Director Eliza Tudor, District 3 Supervisor Lisa Swartout, and Nevada County Librarian Nick Wilczek.

6. Chair's Report

The Chair's report can be read in its entirety [here](#) and emphasized the need for the arts and the demonstrative value of our state's creative economy in uncertain times.

7. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Danielle Brazell presented Council her [full written report](#), covering 50th events, the 2026-27 budget cycle, grant programs and related work, Keep Arts in Schools, and other programmatic updates.

8. VOTING ITEM: Minutes from Previous Meetings

Chair Messina Captor then presented the minutes from [February 6](#). As there were no objections from the rest of the Council, the minutes were approved.

9. VOTING ITEM: 2027-2032 CAC Strategic Plan

Council members Hirabayashi and Keehn [presented the 2027-32 CAC Strategic Plan goal and priority recommendations to Council on behalf of the Strategic Framework Committee](#). The presentation covered the background and review of the committee's activities, framework progress and October 2025 Council discussion, identifying new strategic planning priorities for the Council body's vote.

Motion:

Made by: Council Member Hirabayashi

Seconded by: Council Member Keehn

The Strategic Framework Committee recommends that Council vote to approve the following goal and priorities for the 2026/27 strategic planning process:

The overarching project goal is to reflect on and revise the current strategic framework which expires in 2027. The planning priorities will include:

- Strengths/Weakness/Opportunities/Threats analysis (SWOT), emphasizing current opportunities of CAC.
- Partnership framework for State-Local Partners and other networks to increase support for arts and culture across the state.
- Strategies for inter-agency partnership with state agencies and state-led initiatives.
- Long-term grants strategy that includes a framework for artistic quality.
- Consideration and revised plan for Council committee structure, training, and meetings.
- Approved and detailed strategy, timeline and performance metrics for the next 5 to 7 years that is grounded in equity principles and adheres to the CAC mission and vision.

Discussion:

Council considered but ultimately decided against changing from a SWOT to a SOAR (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results) analysis and talked about the importance of embedding budget fluctuations and incorporating the crossover of work from all committees, in particular the Equity Committee, into the development of the strategic plan.

Chair Messina Captor then called for a vote.

Vote Tally:

- Vice Chair Miner – yes
- Barros – yes
- Duarte – yes
- Estrada – yes
- Goodwin – yes
- Hirabayashi – yes
- Keehn - yes
- Chair Messina Captor – yes

Result: Motion passed (8 yays – unanimous)

10. PRESENTATION: Native American Artist Grant Program

Arts Program Manager Elisa Gollub presented to Council the [current state of development for the Native American Artist Grant Program](#).

13. COMMITTEE REPORTS

This item was moved ahead of item 11 on the agenda. Chair Messina Captor provided Council with both the [Ad Hoc 50th Anniversary Committee](#) and [Legislative Committee](#) reports.

11. PRESENTATION: Folk and Traditional Arts Program

In anticipation for the Programs Policy Committee's recommendation to select which programs to open for funding in 2026, Director of Programs, Kristin Margolis, and Arts Manager, Elisa Gollub [provided a presentation](#) and facilitated a conversation to collect inquiries from the Council. Director of Programs, Margolis noted that due to the drop in successful grant applications from 77% in 2022 (with one-time funds) to just 22% in 2024, future decisions face tough trade-offs between stability and reach. To support these upcoming decisions, Council members requested a wide range of program data, specifically focusing on geographic distribution, re-granting activity, and the impact of consolidating programs like the State-Regional Networks.

Staff collected feedback and an assessment of the data requests will be made and shared at the next public meeting of the Council.

12:20-12:50 WORKING LUNCH

12. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

All public comment listed at the end of these minutes.

14. Open Council Discussion

15. In Memoriam

Council member Goodwin led a tribute honoring individuals who passed away in April

and early May of this year:

- Donlyn Lyndon, Sea Ranch architect (died April 5, age 90)
- Afrika Bambaataa, DJ & hip-hop pioneer (born Lance Taylor, died April 9, age 68)
- Flo Oy Wong, Chinese American artist born in Oakland, California (died April 11)
- James Hayward, San Francisco-born abstract painter (died April 16)
- Michael Tilson Thomas (died April 22), American conductor, pianist, and educator who served as the music director of the San Francisco Symphony
- Ruth Slenczynska (died April 22), celebrated pianist and teacher
- Dean Tavoularis, an Oscar-winning art director and production designer (died April 23, age 93)
- George Herms, one of the last Beat Generation artists, practitioner of California assemblage (died on April 24, age 90)
- Alex Ligertwood, Scottish vocalist best known for his 15-year tenure with Santana (died April 30, age 79)
- Ted Turner, American businessman, television producer, media proprietor, and philanthropist (died May 6)

16. Closing Remarks/17. Adjournment

Chair Messina Captor adjourned the meeting at 1:53PM.

Public Comment

- **KYONG LEE (She/Her/Hers)**
KWANG MYUNG MISSION and THE CITY, Los Angeles County
RE: Agenda Item 9. VOTING ITEM: 2027-2032 CAC Strategic Plan

Subject: Comment on 2027-2032 Strategic Plan: Sun Village Cultural Infrastructure

To the CAC Members,

On behalf of KWANG MYUNG MISSION (501(c)(3)) and THE CITY, I submit this comment on the 2027-2032 Strategic Plan.

We are developing the “SUN VILLAGE PRAYER & RETREAT GARDEN PARK” in Antelope Valley (CA 93543). This \$5 million project will be a cultural and spiritual landmark for an underserved region.

We urge the CAC to:

- Establish Large-Scale Capital Grant Categories: Create funding for physical infrastructure projects beyond small-scale grants.
- Prioritize Regional Equity: Focus on high-impact projects in unincorporated areas like Sun Village.
- Empower Lasting Legacies: Support permanent cultural assets for future generations.

[Question]

Does the 2027-2032 Strategic Plan include a specific funding stream for large-scale capital infrastructure projects—like the Sun Village Garden Park—to create permanent cultural assets in underserved regions?

Sincerely,

Dr. Kyong S. Lee (Mary)

kyongusa77@hotmail.com

- **Joti (She/Her/Hers), San Francisco County**
Current or Former Grantee: Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief; California Relief Fund for Artists and Cultural Practitioners; Impact Projects; Local Impact
RE: Agenda Item 12. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

My organization is a former grantee. We are fiscally sponsored. In the past couple of years, we changed our structure from sole proprietorship to LLC, following legal and accounting advice. We are still fiscally sponsored by Dancers' Group. This structure works very well for us, as we are able to accept earned income from performances and classes through our organization, while also applying for grants through our fiscal sponsor. We are a small, bipoc/immigrant led dance organization, and we have been the kind of organization CAC has been proud to support. However, because of the LLC status, we are no longer eligible to apply. I ask that you reconsider this restriction. We are fulfilling the mission of CAC. We use all of our earned and contributed income to bring art to our communities. The LLC restriction is keeping out some organizations that exemplify the kind of work that CAC aims to support. Thank you.

- **Anonymous, San Francisco County**
Current or Former Grantee: Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief; Artists in Communities; Impact Projects; Local Impact

I see that the California Arts Council is focussing on equity. I encourage you to also make the grant application process equitable. This means:

- 1) less writing (organizations need to have a professional grant writer in order to answer the questions.
- 2) allow applicants to submit videos over three minutes and give time stamps (this is standard and means that smaller orgs who don't have someone whose full time job is to write grants can still apply.)
- 3) Orgs that are fiscally sponsored are often LLCs or S-Corps. They should be able to apply

- **Nancy Heins-Glaser (She/Her/Hers)**
Independent arts advocate and member of Fallbrook Art Association, Fallbrook Center for The Arts, TACA/founding member : The Arts And Culture Alliance, San Diego County
RE: Agenda Item 9. VOTING ITEM: 2027-2032 CAC Strategic Plan; 12. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

As a general public comment it has been noted that inland arts groups throughout San Diego County now have leadership for Inland North County. as a resident of an unincorporated community how can we be assured that smaller groups receive at least review of their submissions for arts advocacy? As to voting on itemd 2027-2032 it is my undersrtanding the county already visited the arts budget and that Todd Gloris's influence was primarily on the city arts budget.

I understood the economic development council's in each area were being consulted regarding a percent of that re-development pool of money should be given to the arts as exists in states like New Mexico. With the arts being such an income generator how is this even being discussed? It seems counter-intuitive for any group, mayor, city, entity to fight the arts funding given the economic return on investment. Is there a formula being used based on regions we average citizens don't know about?

- **Kimberly Parker**
Nevada County Economic Development Office, Nevada County
RE: Agenda Item 12. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

I am Kimberly Parker with Nevada County's Economic Development Office. Thank you for the CAC's investment in rural communities where the creative economy serves as a significant economic driver for our region. I want to thank Eliza Tudor for her leadership in our county. Her work at the local, regional, and state level helped elevate the role of arts and culture as an important part of rural economic vitality.

Arts and culture are not simply amenities. They are part of our economic infrastructure. Nevada County is home to two of California's cultural districts, Grass Valley/Nevada City and Truckee. Those designations strengthen community identity, support local artists and creative businesses, and create the kind of authentic places that draw visitors, residents, and entrepreneurs.

Impact findings show the creative sector annually contributes \$66 million to our economy supporting 1,400 jobs. That impact also benefits restaurants, retailers, lodging, event producers, and small businesses that depend on vibrant downtowns and year-round activity.

For rural counties like Nevada County, cultural districts help us compete. They support placemaking, talent attraction, entrepreneurship, and quality of life, all of which matter to long-term economic resilience.

I want to thank the CA Arts Council for recognizing that arts and culture are essential economic infrastructure, and for partnering with rural communities like ours to strengthen both local identity and local economies.

- **Rory O'Farrell (He/Him/His)**
Tahoe Truckee Media, Nevada County
RE: Agenda Item 12. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Is this the best we can do? When I join this May 15 meeting in Nevada County, the zoom view is at the back of a library room. The zoom meeting is on a tiny screen on the far wall. There is nothing accessible about the meeting at all. The audio is fine, but why do you not give out the link to actually JOIN the meeting?

- **Courtney Wadman (She/Her/Hers)**
Nevada Union High School Dance Department, Nevada County
RE: Agenda Item 12. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak today, and thank you for everything this Council does to support and strengthen the arts in our communities. My name is Courtney Wadman, and for the past sixteen years, I have been the full-time Director of Dance at Nevada Union High School. For several years, our program has provided students with rigorous dance training, performance opportunities, and leadership development within the public school setting. We also have a vibrant community enrichment program, offering classes that are open to the public as a fundraiser for our program. Furthermore, we have created a new Performance Ensemble Honors course, focused on leadership, community service, and work-based learning. Students will have opportunities not only to perform, but also to serve as teaching assistants, rehearsal assistants, production interns, and arts leadership trainees. We're especially excited about building stronger partnerships with local studios and arts organizations, so students can gain real-world mentorship and professional experience within our local arts community. Every dollar raised through our community programs goes directly back to supporting students through scholarships, free training opportunities, cultural experiences, and future paid apprenticeship pathways. We truly see this work as part of a larger vision for strengthening arts access and arts education here in Nevada County.

- **Dominique Johnson (She/Her/Hers)**
Stanislaus Arts Council, Stanislaus County
Current or Former Grantee: California Creative Corps; California Cultural Districts; Artists in Schools; State-Local Partnership
RE: Agenda Item 12. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

PT 1 Dominique Johnson, Executive Director of the Stanislaus Arts Council, one of your State-Local Partners representing Stanislaus County, home to one of the newly designated Cultural Districts the Dos Rios Arts & Culture District, as well as more than 550,000 Californians, where the creative economy is not theoretical; it is deeply human, community-centered, and essential to both economic vitality and quality of life.

I first want to express sincere gratitude to the California Arts Council and its dedicated staff for their continued partnership, leadership, and investment in communities, specifically rural communities like ours across California.

In addition to my role at the Stanislaus Arts Council, I actively serve in the California Creative Corps Working Group, the North Valley Creative Economy Working Group, and serve as Vice Chair of my communities' local Culture Commission. Across each of these collaborative efforts, I can attest there is strong alignment with the priorities identified in this strategic plan, particularly around workforce development, cultural infrastructure, and ensuring that rural and Central Valley communities are not left behind in California's broader creative economy conversations.

- **Dominique Johnson (She/Her/Hers)**
Stanislaus Arts Council, Stanislaus County
Current or Former Grantee: State-Local Partnership
RE: Agenda Item 12. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Pt 2 I acknowledge and thank the Council for the thoughtful and intentional work that has gone and is planned to go into the Creative Economy Strategic Plan. The commitment to listening, engaging stakeholders across regions, and developing a framework grounded in equity, workforce sustainability, and regional inclusion is both meaningful and necessary.

The plan accurately recognizes that much of California's creative workforce is made up of freelancers, cultural workers, nonprofit organizations, and sole proprietors navigating economic instability, limited access to benefits, and rapidly evolving technologies that increasingly impact creative ownership and sustainability.

In communities like ours, these are lived realities affecting artists, educators, performers, and nonprofit leaders every day.

The work being advanced through the Creative Economy Strategic Plan is deeply aligned with the conversations and collaborative efforts already taking place across many of our regions and networks. Through the California Creative Corps Adminstrating Organizations Working Group, the North Valley Creative Economy Working Group, and our local and regional cultural initiatives, we are actively engaging in discussions around workforce sustainability, cultural infrastructure, economic impact, and equitable access to opportunity within the creative sector.

- **Dominique Johnson (She/Her/Hers)**
Stanislaus Arts Council, Stanislaus County
Current or Former Grantee: State-Local Partnership
RE: Agenda Item 12. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Pt 3 We look forward to inviting the California Arts Council staff into these important conversations as partners in this work, particularly as we collectively explore how data is being gathered, interpreted, and utilized to better understand the needs, challenges, and economic contributions of creative communities throughout California's central valley. We know this data is essential in helping guide future investment, inform policy, strengthen regional strategies, and ensure that rural and historically underrepresented communities are meaningfully included in the state's creative economy framework.

What this strategic planning process reinforces is that investment in the arts is also an investment in jobs, workforce development, small businesses, tourism, cultural identity, and the long-term resilience of California communities. We are grateful for the California Arts Council's leadership, vision, and continued commitment to advancing this work in partnership with communities across the state.

Thank you for your time and leadership.

- **Tsal'gyur Starbuck (She/Her/Hers)**
Nevada Union Dance, Nevada County
RE: Agenda Item 12. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

I am Tsal'gyur Starbuck, founder and director for the Nevada Union Dance community enrichment program at the Grass Valley Museum and Cultural Center. I performed as a soloist with the San Francisco Ballet. Beginning this year, this program will offer year-round pre-professional ballet training alongside performances, community enrichment and all-abilities dance and movement classes for all ages. At the heart of this work is collaboration. Arts grow stronger when organizations, educators, performers, and community members actively support one another. We are inspired by the belief that art belongs to everyone. Our responsibility as educators and cultural stewards is helping more people meaningfully participate in the arts. Classical ballet has often been viewed as exclusive, but many leading companies are working toward greater inclusion across race, gender, body diversity, and ability. We are excited to contribute to that movement through accessibility, mentorship, and healthy training practices. As we build this program, we reflect on how we can meaningfully support

Indigenous communities whose ancestral lands we live and create on, here in Nevada County. We hope these studios become places of connection, creativity, mentorship, and shared inspiration throughout our community. We are building something meaningful through collaboration, dedication, and community support. We are deeply grateful for your support of the arts in our public school and greater community.

- **Colton Dennis (He/Him/His)**
Merced County Arts Council, Merced County
Current or Former Grantee: California Creative Corps; California Cultural Districts; State-Local Partnership
RE: Agenda Item 12. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Dear Chair and Councilmembers. My name is Colton Dennis, executive director of the Merced County Arts Council, a State-Local Partner of the California Arts Council, a member of the Coalition of County Arts Agencies, and a newly designated Cultural District—one of only two in our region.

I wish I could be with you in Nevada County today. However, we are a very small arts council with a lot happening on the ground—arts programs, cultural celebrations, and community events—which, in many ways, is a good problem to have. Your investment has helped create that momentum.

CAC funding supports organizations like ours as well as cultural partners such as the Vatthanatham Lao Foundation, whose Lao New Year celebration is among the largest in the state. Events like this show how arts and culture bring together people of all ages, viewpoints, and backgrounds—from recent immigrants to longtime residents. Our new Cultural District designation, the Downtown Merced Arts & Culture District, has sparked a renewed sense of energy and pride among our culture bearers and local artists, connecting us more deeply and making us stronger as a community.

Your partnership has made a significant difference in Merced County, a historically under-resourced region. I hope you will continue—and deepen—this investment so that our communities can keep growing, creating, and thriving through the arts. And finally—happy 50th birthday to the California Arts Council!