



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

Gavin Newsom, **Governor**
Danielle Brazell, **Executive Director**
Roxanne Messina Captor, **Council Chair**
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**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 – recusal
- Israel - no
- Keehn - no
- Stein – recusal
- Vice Chair Goodwin – yes
- Chair Messina Captor - no

Result: Motion to amend failed (1 yay – 5 nay – 2 recusal/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 Nictto, 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.

- **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 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.