

**Minutes of Public Meeting
CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL
Friday, September 26, 2025
10 A.M. – 2:45 P.M.
On Location/Hybrid Meeting
SOMArts
934 Brannan Street
San Francisco, CA 94103**

The members of the California Arts Council convened in San Francisco 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 Caleb Duarte
Council Member Vicki Estrada
Council Member Roy Hirabayashi
Council Member Alex Israel
Council Member Dorka Keehn
Council Member Phil Mercado
Council Member Nicola Miner
Council Member Rick Stein

Council Members Present Remotely:

Council Member Gerald Clarke

Arts Council Staff Present:

Danielle Brazell, Executive Director
Sylmia Britt, Deputy Director
Kristin Margolis, Director of Program Services
Carissa Gutierrez, Director of Public Affairs
Elisa Gollub, Arts Program Manager
Josy Miller, Arts Program Manager
Jonathan Estrada, Arts Program Manager
Megan Morgan, Race & Equity Manager
Rebecca Ratzkin, Equity Measures & Evaluation Manager
Kimberly Brown, Public Affairs Specialist
Qiana Moore, Events & Outreach Coordinator
Zachary Hill, IT Specialist
Steve Mok, Public Affairs Specialist

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. All 11 members of the council were present.

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 Hirabayashi 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. The Chair acknowledged the recent site tours lead by cultural district leaders for Calle 24 and SOMA Pilipinas. She then introduced Maria Jensen of SOMAarts for her partnership.

6. Welcome by Maria Jensen of SOMAarts and Ebon Glenn, San Francisco Arts Commission (State-Local Partner)

Maria Jensen, SOMArts Maria Jensen welcomed the CAC to Soma Arts on Native American Day, acknowledging the land and the need for mutual respect. She shared two key quotes, one on complex times and an Angela Davis quote on the practice of radical transformation. Jensen highlighted upcoming Soma Arts events, including the Dia de los Muertos exhibition and the

Luminous Ball, while noting the organization's ongoing funding challenges.

Eben Glenn welcomed the CAC on behalf of the SFAC, noting their role as a state-local partner. He highlighted SFAC's success in funding over 150 San Francisco artists and organizations this year. Glenn emphasized that in uncertain times, people turn to the arts, concluding, "We are stronger together" in supporting the arts community.

7. Chair's Report

The [Chair's report](#) can be read in its entirety here and emphasized the arts' vital role in community health and as powerful \$230 billion economic engine for California.

8. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Danielle Brazell delivered highlights from [her full report](#) where she noted the agency's upcoming 50th anniversary celebration in 2026. She then provided staffing updates, the return of Chief Deputy Michelle Radman from maternity leave, and introducing new staff members: Sylmia Britt, as the new deputy director of the agency overseeing internal operations and budget management, and Matthew Canty (Legislative Manager). She also announced the promotion of Jonathan Estrada to Arts Manager. She then concluded by thanking the entire "small but mighty" CAC staff for their hard work in preparing the Council for the day's critical decisions.

9. VOTING ITEM: Minutes from Previous Meetings

Chair Messina Captor then presented the [minutes from June 20th](#). Chair Messina Captor abstained from the vote as she was not present at the June 20th council meeting.

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

10. VOTING ITEM: FY25-26 Grant Cycle Allocations

The Council proceeded to Agenda Item 10: on the FY25-26 Grant Cycle Allocations in which the Allocations Committee presented award strategies for 25-26 grantees. Parliamentarian Robert "Bob" Duitsman reviewed conflict of interest bylaws, citing Robert's Rules of Order and the California State Ethics Code, advising recusal from discussion and voting without requiring council members to leave the dais. [Councilmember Mercado presented two recommended funding scenarios](#) (Scenario 1 and Scenario 2), both incorporating priorities for small organizations, first-time grantees, and those serving low HPI communities, noting a \$10 million state budget reduction impacting the \$19.5 million allocation. A motion was made and seconded to approve Scenario 2, which invests more heavily in General Operating Support for arts and cultural organizations, along with delegating remaining funds to the Executive Director's discretion.

Motion:

Made by: Council Member Keehn

Seconded by: Council Member Mercado

The Allocations Committee recommends that Council approve the following scenario for funding amounts for the seven open grant programs per the attached spreadsheets:

SCENARIO 2:

- **\$3,594,431 – State-Local Partners (2nd Year with one additional grantee)**
- **\$145,000 – State-Local Partner Mentorship**
- **\$6,116,350 – Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Support**
- **\$828,415 – Administering Organizations – Folk and Traditional Arts**
- **\$4,200,000 – Administering Organizations – Individual Artist Fellowships**
- **\$2,696,964 – Arts and Youth**
- **\$1,951,841 – Impact Projects**

The Committee further recommends that the Council approve the Executive Director to award grants at her discretion from any Local Assistance funds not allocated by Council as well as any funds remaining from terminated grants.

Made by: Council Member Keehn

Seconded by: Council Member Mercado

Public Comment noted below at the end of the minutes.

Discussion:

The Council's discussion centered on choosing between two funding scenarios amid a significant shortfall (\$19 million available vs. \$129 million requested). One perspective favored Scenario 2, emphasizing its balanced support for General Operating Support (GenOps), a critical need identified by the community, and its potential to sustain more small organizations. Proponents of this view noted that GenOps funding is typically harder for non-profits to secure than project-based funding. The opposing viewpoint advocated for Scenario 1, which provides more funding to the Arts and Youth Program, seen as a vital investment for future arts engagement. Staff clarified that under both scenarios, the Arts and Youth Program's uncapped awards often benefit larger organizations. Questions were raised about the impact of consolidating the State Regional Network (SRN) program into GenOps and whether a single organization should receive funding from multiple categories, which staff confirmed is currently permissible by policy. Ultimately, a leaning emerged toward Scenario 2 to prioritize keeping the doors open for struggling small organizations across the state.

Chair Messina Captor then called for a vote.

Motion:

Made by: Council Member Keehn

Seconded by: Council Member Mercado

The Allocations Committee recommends that Council approve the following scenario for funding amounts for the seven open grant programs per the attached spreadsheets:

SCENARIO 2:

- \$3,594,431 – State-Local Partners (2nd Year with one additional grantee)
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- \$2,696,964 – Arts and Youth
- \$1,951,841 – Impact Projects

The Committee further recommends that the Council approve the Executive Director to award grants at her discretion from any Local Assistance funds not allocated by Council as well as any funds remaining from terminated grants.

Vote Tally:

- Clarke – no
- Duarte – no
- Estrada - no
- Hirabayashi – recusal
- Israel - yes
- Keehn - yes
- Mercado – yes
- Miner – yes
- Stein – recusal
- Vice Chair Goodwin – abstain
- Chair Messina Captor - no

Result: Motion failed (4 yay – 4 nay – 3 recusal/abstention) simple majority = 5 of 8

NEW MOTION:

Made by: Council Member Duarte

Seconded by: Council Member Messina Captor

The Allocations Committee recommends that Council approve the following scenarios for funding amounts for the seven open grant programs per the attached spreadsheets:

SCENARIO 1:

- \$3,624,721 – State-Local Partners (SLP) (2nd Year with one additional grantee)
- \$145,000 – State-Local Partner Mentorship (SLP-M)
- \$3,559,680 – Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Support (GEN)
- \$828,415 – Administering Organizations – Folk and Traditional Arts (FTA)
- \$4,200,000 – Administering Organizations – Individual Artist Fellowships (IAF)
- \$4,076,626 – Arts and Youth (AAY)
- \$3,098,558 – Impact Projects (PRJ)

The Committee further recommends that the Council approve the Executive Director to award grants at her discretion from any Local Assistance funds not allocated by Council as well as any funds remaining from terminated grants.

Vote Tally:

- Clarke – yes
- Duarte – yes
- Estrada - yes
- Hirabayashi – recusal
- Israel - no
- Keehn - no
- Mercado – yes
- Miner – no
- Stein – recusal
- Vice Chair Goodwin – yes
- Chair Messina Captor - yes

Result: Motion PASSES (6 yay – 3 nay – 2 recusal/abstention) simple majority = 6 of 10

12. VOTING ITEM: 50th Anniversary Fundraising & Sponsorship Plan

Item 11 on the agenda was moved down and Item 12 was presented first.

The Council returned to the agenda to address the vote on the [50th Anniversary fundraising and sponsorship plan](#). A committee, in conjunction with staff, developed a strategy to raise between \$150,000 and \$200,000 entirely through private support to fund the 2026 celebration event. The fundraising effort is designed to invite participation from all Californians, from dollar donations up to large sponsorships, and will leverage outreach to over 100 past Council members. It was stressed that the solicitation process must be launched immediately as the State cannot advance funds for event costs, requiring money to be in hand to pay the event planner and other expenses. To ensure transparency, contributions will be accepted through an established state mechanism, and all solicitations will explicitly state that gifts have no bearing on grant decisions or the donor's relationship

with the agency. Council members will transition from the ad hoc committee to the full Council to participate in the fundraising efforts, with progress updates provided at each future Council meeting.

The motion to approve the 50th Anniversary Awards Ceremony Fundraising Strategy and Plan was put forward for a vote.

Motion:

Made by: Council Member Mercado

Seconded by: Council Member Stein

To approve the 50th Anniversary Award Ceremony Fundraising Strategy and Plan.

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 Chair invited members to discuss. Seeing no hands, the Chair asked for the vote.

Motion:

Made by: Council Member Mercado

Seconded by: Council Member Stein

To approve the 50th Anniversary Award Ceremony Fundraising Strategy and Plan.

Vote Tally:

- Clarke – yes
- Duarte – yes
- Estrada - yes
- Hirabayashi – yes
- Israel - yes
- Keehn - yes
- Mercado – yes
- Miner – yes
- Stein – yes
- Vice Chair Goodwin – yes
- Chair Messina Captor - yes

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

11. VOTING ITEM: 50th Anniversary Awardees Criteria, Process, and Award Design

The 50th Anniversary Ad Hoc Committee [presented their memo](#), plan and budget. The Council reviewed the plan for the 50th Anniversary celebration, which includes honoring up to 10 artists/leaders/organizations via a nomination and Council voting process. The award statuette was presented, designed by a Council member as a symbolic surfboard fin, representing California culture and progress. This event, scheduled for April 2026 in Sacramento, aims to celebrate the agency's 50 years of impact. Finally, three initial logo designs were presented for feedback, focusing on themes of modernity, history, and forward momentum.

Motion:

The Ad Hoc 50th Anniversary Committee recommends the Council approve the following:

- a. **Award Selection Process and Criteria**
- b. **Award Design Concept**

Made by: Council Member Messina Captor

Seconded by: Council Member Miner

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 debated three 50th Anniversary logo concepts, leaning toward the golden/ribbon design but asking for revisions to include the "state agency" designation and different color backgrounds.

Council member Israel proposed simplifying the nomination process by eliminating external partners and limiting nominations to one per Council member. Members defending the original process stressed the importance of transparency and statewide inclusion. A substitution to the original motion was proposed.

SUBSTITUTION:

The Ad Hoc 50th Anniversary Committee recommends the Council approve the following:

- a. **Award Selection Process and Criteria**
- b. The award process and criteria (attached) provide all council members with the opportunity to nominate up to two Californian artists, arts leaders, and/or arts organizations. ~~State and Local partners will also be invited to nominate one from the~~

~~County they represent. Combined, these nominations will generate a pool of approximately one hundred extraordinary nominees. A panel comprised of two council members, and the Executive Director will review and score the nominations based on the CAC's panel ranking process, narrowing the initial list to twenty. A pool of twenty will be presented to the Council, which will vote in a closed session to select the final cohort of awardees at its December meeting.~~

c. Award Design Concept

Made by: Council Member Israel

Seconded by: Council Member Estrada

Vote Tally:

- Clarke – no
- Duarte – no
- Estrada - yes
- Hirabayashi – no
- Israel - yes
- Keehn – abstain
- Mercado – no
- Miner – no
- Stein – no
- Vice Chair Goodwin – no
- Chair Messina Captor - no

Result: Motion failed (2 yay -8 nay – 1 abstain)

The vote then reverted to the original motion. The Chair called for the vote.

Motion:

The Ad Hoc 50th Anniversary Committee recommends the Council approve the following:

- a. **Award Selection Process and Criteria**
- b. **Award Design Concept**

Made by: Council Member Messina Captor

Seconded by: Council Member Miner

Vote Tally:

- Clarke – yes

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

Result: *Motion passed unanimously (11 yay – 0 nay)*

12:45-1:15 WORKING LUNCH

13. DISCUSSION: 2026 Programs

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.

14. Committee/ Ad Hoc Updates

Council members Keehn and Hirabayashi shared the [Strategic Framework memo](#).

Council members Estrada and Hirabayashi reported on [Equity Committee’s activities](#).

15. DISCUSSION: 2026 Council Meeting Dates

Chair Messina Captor had asked the Council to review the dates provided in the council book but in the interest of time, this item has been tabled for a future council meeting.

16. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment

All public comment listed at the end of these minutes.

17. In Memoriam

Vice Chair Goodwin led a tribute honoring individuals who passed away since June 20, 2025.

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

- Cara Q. Smith (June 17): Cultural policy expert and former Manager of Programs for California Arts.
- Walter Scott (June 26, age 81): American R&B singer, member of The Whispers.
- Patricia Rodriguez (June 30, age 80): Trailblazing Chicana muralist, artist, and educator.
- Michael Madsen (July 3, age 67): American actor (*Reservoir Dogs*, *Kill Bill Vol. 1*).
- Carla Maxwell (July 6, age 79): American dancer and Artistic Director of the José Limón Dance Company.
- Andrea Gibson (July 14, age 49): American performance artist and poet.
- Alan Bergman (July 17, age 99): Academy Award-winning lyricist ("The Way We Were").
- Connie Francis (July 17, age 87): American singer ("Where the Boys Are").
- Malcolm-Jamal Warner (July 20, age 54): American actor and director, notably Theo on *The Cosby Show*.
- Chuck Mangione (July 22, age 84): Grammy-winning jazz flugelhorn player ("Feels So Good").
- Ozzy Osbourne (July 22, age 76): English heavy metal vocalist from Black Sabbath.
- David Avalos (July 23, age 78): Chicano activist, artist, and Professor Emeritus of Art.
- Ebony McKinney (July 27, age 41): Tireless advocate for arts diversity and community unity.
- Jeannie Seely (August 1, age 85): American country music singer ("Don't Touch Me").
- Kelly Mack (August 2, age 33): American actress (*The Walking Dead*).
- Loni Anderson (August 3, age 79): American actress (*WKRP in Cincinnati*).
- Eddie Palmieri (August 6, age 88): American Latin jazz pianist, bandleader, and composer.
- Bobby Whitlock (August 10, age 77): Rock singer and keyboardist from Derek and the Dominoes.
- Dave Ketchum (August 10, age 97): American character actor (*Get Smart*).
- Sheila Jordan (August 11, age 96): American jazz singer and songwriter.
- Tom Shipley (August 24, age 84): American folk rock singer and songwriter.
- Mark Volman (September 5, age 78): Singer-songwriter from The Turtles ("Happy Together").
- Rick Davies (September 6, age 81): British rock vocalist and keyboardist from Supertramp.
- Polly Holliday (September 9, age 88): American actress, known as Flo Castleberry on *Alice*.
- Bobby Hart Harshman (September 10, age 86): American pop singer ("I'm Not Your Stepping Stone").
- Robert Redford (September 16, age 89): Actor, Academy Award-winning director, and climate activist.
- Brett James (September 18, age 57): Grammy-winning country music songwriter.
- Sonny Curtis (September 20, age 88): Guitarist and singer-songwriter from The Crickets.
- Agnes Gund (N/A date or age): Arts patron and former Board Chair of the Museum of Modern Art.

18. Closing Remarks

Chair Messina Captor concluded the meeting by thanking SOMArts for hosting the event 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 October 24th in San Bernardino, with all relevant information available on the Council's website.

19. Adjournment

Chair Messina Captor adjourned the meeting at 2:45PM.

Public Comment

Item 10: 25-26 Grant Allocations Public Comment

Public Comments on Funding Scenario 2 Motion

Liz Luke, Executive Director of Living Jazz

"Good afternoon, Council, and thank you for your time and your careful consideration. There's no win-win in this scenario. My name is Liz Luke, I'm the Executive Director of Living Jazz, and I also serve on the Board of California for the Arts and Arts Advocates, but today I'm here with my Living Jazz hat on.

We are currently in 16 schools—last year, that was 21 schools—where we provide free jazz-rooted music and dance education, at the intersection of social justice. We've had to make cuts like many organizations over the last year, especially when forecasting. In addition to the schools that we serve, we provide two summer camps, one for youth, one for adults.

Just echoing what Chair Messina Kaptur was saying, our country's under attack right now. It is freedom of speech, but it's also places for people to have different opinions to come to the table. That is the difference between entertainment and culture. Today, I ask that you consider Scenario 2 to fund the most number of these places where people of differing opinions can come together, because in my opinion, that is what is under attack, and if we share those same values as a council, as a community, as the state of California, we need to protect as many spaces as possible with this, and in my opinion, Scenario 2 backs that. So, thank you for your time."

Jenny Belisle, Executive Founding Director of Arts CCC (Arts Contra Costa County)

"Hello, my name is Jenny Belisle, and I am the Executive Founding Director of Arts CCC, which is Arts Contra Costa County. Just last year, on February 6th of 2024, our Board of Supervisors designated ArtsCCC and our fiscal sponsor, Independent Arts and Media, to serve as the county's arts agency. As we move forward, our top priority is an equitable and sustainable arts foundation for Contra Costa.

As the new arts agency, we are so grateful for your support for the State-Local Program. It has made our work possible. We have created a comprehensive county arts profile, highlighting artists, art organizations, venues, public artworks, and we encourage the arts community to create a profile. Our signature programs include a poetry series program for Juvenile hall youth, our Poetry Out Loud program, our District Arts Partner Program, where we are supporting directly art organizations. We also have a Cultural Corridor project connecting artists, community members and venues, and our

Youth Arts Connection Library workshops in Pittsburgh, Antioch, and Brentwood. And we also facilitate exhibitions.

Moving forward, we're working on a Youth Arts Connection Strategic Plan, and it's to integrate art into diversion programs by partnering with artists, art organizations, and cultural leaders. And as we build and grow, we thank you for the hard decisions you're going to have to make today, and for your support in the work you do."

Stephanie Dignum, Development Manager at Living Jazz

"Hi everyone, thank you so much for your time. I'll be very brief. As Development Manager at Living Jazz, I support Scenario 2 because it ensures that more organizations can access funding at a time when arts nonprofits face shrinking public investment and limited reserves. Expanding the reach of support is the most effective way to keep the field strong. While individual awards may be smaller, Scenario 2 maximizes impact by sustaining more organizations across the state. Again, thank you for your thoughtful work and commitment to supporting the arts ecosystem. I appreciate all of you. Thank you."

Ann W. Smith, Board Member of Chanticleer

"Hi, everyone. I'm Ann W. Smith. I'm speaking today as a board member of Chanticleer in support of their application to the Arts and Youth Program. I welcome you here to the Bay Area, as always. During my first year in reviewing applications for the touring program in the early 80s, one group was, and still is, a total jaw-dropper: San Francisco Chanticleer. Then and as now, except during the COVID pandemic, their sound has thrilled, amazed, enlightened, soothed, and satisfied audiences in schools, colleges, communities, and concert halls, from home seasons in the Bay Area, California, the North American Hemisphere, and all over the world. Plus, we reach countless fans online with YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok. You just support the importance of Chanticleer in music education. Thank you, Anne."

Julie Baker, CEO of California for the Arts and California Arts Advocates

"Good morning, everyone. Julie Baker, CEO of California for the Arts and California Arts Advocates. I'm sorry to report that we are among several statewide service organizations that did not make the cut today to be put forward for funding. While this is largely due to the underinvestment in your agency and the oversubscription—over \$90 million in eligible applications and less than \$20 million in funds—there is an ongoing critical need for sustained funding for a sector that is reeling from a confluence of uncertainty and attacks on freedom of expression.

California for the Arts stands here committed today, and for all the days, to be a trusted partner to the agency and council to advance arts, culture, and creativity in California. While we were strongly against eliminating the SRN program and absorbing it into general operating, we need more data to understand if this will cause harm to the field we all serve.

Your support plays a truly critical role in helping strengthen the arts ecosystem across our entire state. While no longer a CAC program, the SRN Coalition continues to meet. We see ourselves as a valuable resource and collaborator. Our SRNs are ready to serve as vital connectors between the Council and the incredibly diverse communities throughout California.

While we will do our own research to gain an even more comprehensive understanding of this funding's impact, we ask the CAC to also collect and share data related to service organizations and other categories and the Council priorities that may impact who applies and is funded during this

grant and future cycles. Finally, we would love the opportunity to share these findings, both from the CAC and the SRNs, in a joint presentation to the Council in the future. We see this as an excellent opportunity to demonstrate accountability, highlight the significant impact of arts service organizations, and underscore the value of sustained support for the arts in California. Thank you."

Nathan Cottam, Artistic and Executive Director of Mannequin Theater and Dance

"Good morning, Council. Thank you so much for having me here. My name is Nathan Cottam. I'm Artistic and Executive Director of Mannequin Theater and Dance. My organization is in the funding on Scenario 3 for Arts and Youth, and in Scenario 2, for General Operating Support.

With not knowing until I arrive today how the scenarios are going to be playing out, I do appreciate the presentation. I would actually like to, raise my voice against the interest of my company, and against Scenario 2 and for Scenario 1. The reason I want to do that is because it is very difficult to grow an organization in the climate of the California arts milieu, as it were.

There is a great deal of what might seem like appropriate support for small organizations, but one of the consequences of that is that there's a penalty to growth, in a way. Looking at the amount that my organization will receive in Scenario 2, it's just not enough to support the growth of my organization. We would have served \$12,000 in Scenario 2. I need more than that, frankly, in order to grow, support salaries, support rent, to grow so that we can do more. I frankly would rather have received the arts and youth funding, which was \$18,500, to support the outreach ballet program that I unfortunately had to close this year because I could not fund it anymore.

I want to encourage Scenario 1, and hope that we encourage growth in larger organizations, rather than such a strong emphasis on small organizations. Thank you so much."

Rachel Osajima, Director of the Alameda County Arts Commission

"My name is Rachel Osajima. I'm the director of the Alameda County Arts Commission, and for those of you who don't know, Alameda County is on the east side of the San Francisco Bay Area. I'm here making comments on behalf of the Coalition of County Arts Agencies, which is comprised of all of the state-local partners.

We would like to thank the Allocations Committee, the council members, and staff for all of your thoughtful and dedicated hard work. Thank you for supporting the State-Local Partners Program, and we very much appreciate the second-year grant funding and your support for the SLP convening, which will take place in Sacramento in April 2026, in conjunction with CA Arts and Culture Summit and Arts Advocacy Day. So, thank you again, we appreciate all that you're doing."

Victor Payan, Founding Director of Media Arts Santa Ana (MASA)

"Hello, this is Victor Payan, Founding Director of Media Arts Santa Ana. We're a grassroots media arts organization currently celebrating our 10th anniversary this year. MASA is an important presenter of independent and international artists, including underrepresented communities such as students, females, BIPOC, API, Menasa, LGBT, and Orange County artists, and state funding has been critical to our success.

Regarding the funding allocations, I would like to recommend Scenario 2 first, and then Scenario 1 for this year's funding. General operating support is the most critical and rarest type of funding, alongside individual artist funding, which is also included in that section for this scenario. I'm glad to hear Scenario 3 is not being considered, as it has been noted that the largest number of applications in this funding cycle were for general operating support, and Scenario 3 leaves this vastly underserved.

I hope the tremendous number of unfunded proposals serve to steer the conversation in the state regarding the dire need for more funding for the arts. The work of these organizations is more critical now than ever in promoting diversity and defending democracy, and cutting their funding across the board is part of the strategy to silence and disempower our communities. The arts sector is also a major revenue generator, employer, and provider of critical services that form a social safety net. Please support Scenario 2. It was heartbreaking to see how many important organizations were not funded this year, and I hope the state legislature is moved to restore and increase arts funding in light of this. Thank you."

John Henson, Arts Tours Director for the Morongo Basin Cultural Arts Council

"Good morning, my name is John Henson. I'm the Arts Tours Director for the Morongo Basin Cultural Arts Council. I'm also a practicing artist working in the area for 12 years. I'm deeply committed to our rural region and have served on the board for 10 years.

As a lean non-profit, less than a \$150,000 budget, we operate the second largest open studio art tour event in California, representing the gateway communities of the Joshua Tree National Park. This will be our 24th year of presenting this event, and we have 225 artists participating this year. All of the art sales from this 3-week event go directly into the pockets of our local artists. I want to thank the Council for the years of support, which has helped our organization grow.

Today, I'm here to advocate that the Council consider funding allocations that serve the general operating support needs of our communities and across the state. With funding cuts across sectors, this vital support from the Arts Council will keep our organization running and able to pay our vital part-time staff. Scenario 2 is what the field needs. It is also the most equitable path. Scenario 2 is the most equitable, giving half to the field through fellowships and project support, and half to general operating needs. Scenario 1 forgets that the general operating needs of small organizations like ours can't run projects without this support. Thank you for your time. I know this is a challenging position to be in."

Akib Rahman, Policy Associate at Arts for LA (RS4LA)

"Good afternoon, Councilmembers. My name is Akib Rahman. I am the Policy Associate at RS4LA (Arts for LA), and I want to start by expressing my gratitude for your hard work. As an SRN and service organization, we remain ready to partner with you as connectors between the Council and diverse community we serve. We know the folding of SRN funds into general operating support has already impacted the number of eligible applicants, and will have ripple effects in our communities that are under-resourced.

While some networks receive support under Scenario 2, others do not, limiting our capacity to serve artists, arts workers, and organization. At the same time, we celebrate that many small and first-time grantees are benefiting under this scenario, and we support Scenario 2 for this broader impact it enables.

We are currently collecting data to compare this allocation with past SRN funding and to measure the ripple effects on communities. We urge the CAC to collect and share parallel data so we can combine findings for future picture of impact, which could be presented jointly to the Council in the future.

Finally, we encourage expanding community membership beyond two members for policy and allocation, and request greater clarity on how priority points are assigned and weighed in the review process. We also ask that the next strategic framework include a focus on service organizations. Thank you so much for your leadership and for standing us within building a more equitable and

resilient arts ecosystem."

Chris Maikish, Executive Director with Celebration Theater

"Good morning, I'm Chris Maikish, Executive Director with Celebration Theater, Southern California's longest-running LGBTQ plus theater, and the second oldest in the world. Like others, I can also appreciate the challenges at hand.

I want to speak today about the Impact Projects, which center historically marginalized communities, and disadvantaging this support to the degree that Scenario 2 does endangers project feasibility and dollars that go directly to such artists. In our case, where we have been edged out of general operating support, our only possibility for critical support is for our Trans Lineage Project. Our transgender and gender-diverse artists and community are, of course, under incredible stress and threat of violence right now. Scenario 2, in our case, would leave them out in the cold. And I can imagine that there are several other marginalized communities, many whose artists do not always benefit directly from general operating funds, who'll experience the same. I ask you to consider Scenario 1 for this reason, and I thank the Council for your past support and your time today."

Alma Robinson, Executive Director of California Lawyers for the Arts (CLA)

"Good morning, council members. Thank you for your support, and staff as well. We do appreciate your detailed analysis of the scenarios that were presented. However, the Council has made a very short-sighted decision to eliminate the funding category for statewide and regional networks. We should not have to compete."

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT:

General Public Comment Summary

Jennifer Lane, Executive Director of the San Benito County Arts Council and Co-chair of the Coalition of County Arts Agencies (State-Local Partner)

"I want to underscore that we are stronger together and highlight the regional and local collaborations happening because of CAC grants. State-Local Partners (SLPs) are organizing Creative Economy Town Halls for community outreach and are securing California Jobs First grants (like a Tri-County effort to build an arts education workforce for Prop 28). Thank you for funding the SLP convening; we will use that energy to advocate for more funding for local assistance, given the difficult decisions you had to make today. Think of us as your partners for the strategic plan and the 50th anniversary; we strengthen the trunk like intertwined branches of a tree."

Dominique Johnson, Stanislaus Arts Council (State-Local Partner)

"I extend our sincere gratitude for your overall support for the state-local partnership. Without your support, I would not have a job, and my county would not have visibility in the arts. You are actively putting people to work within our communities. As an artist and mother of artists, I greatly appreciate everything you're doing. The support for the upcoming SLP convening is so appreciated; it opens doors for rural arts councils like mine that can't often afford to travel. I'm greatly inspired by you all, and I hope to attend more meetings."

Sean Fenton, Executive Director of Theatre Bay Area, Board Member of Californians for the

Arts, and President of California Arts Advocates

"Thank you for your service and support, even with programs severely oversubscribed. Theatre Bay Area, which serves over 200 organizations and thousands of artists across nine counties, is proud to continue its work, including re-granting to small companies. As a former long-time SRN grantee, Theatre Bay Area has not been advanced for operating support this year, and we've had to reduce our staff from six to five full-time employees. This is why we support the request to publish data on this year's process and explicitly include arts service organizations in your next strategic framework. I also urge the Council to consider designating more than 10 new cultural districts this cycle to increase the program's value to legislators and unlock more opportunities for affordable housing for artists."

Natalia Nedera, Cultural Worker of mixed heritage (based in Oakland, CA)

"I am here today with a different hat to thank the Council as a first-time recipient of the Folk and Traditional Arts program (administered by ACTA). This grant makes it possible to uplift Indigenous knowledge by resourcing Mapuche culture bearers and creating spaces for traditions to be passed down. Specifically, we have a rare opportunity to learn Mapuche weaving (withral) from two-spirit Mapuche weavers based in San Diego. When well-resourced, culture bearers provide solutions to urgent societal challenges by building lasting networks of mutual aid and helping us resist cultural erasure. Please keep supporting culture bearers as you consider the cultural districts program."

Alexander Finn, Founder and Executive Director of In My Section

"I am a poet, teacher, husband, and father, and head coach of the Pittsburgh Prodigies, one of the most successful youth poetry teams in the country, based in Pittsburgh, California. Our organization, In My Section, serves a low-income community where 95% of youth are Black, Brown, or Indigenous. I'm urging this Council to support emerging organizations because gentrification has displaced historically marginalized families, shifting the energy of young artists eastward. Our youth often travel hours to perform because Oakland and SF organizations no longer accommodate where Black, Brown, and low-income families actually live. We need an arts infrastructure for us, by us, in cities like Pittsburgh, Antioch, Fairfield, and Stockton, where the greatest needs—and brightest youth artists—are found."