

**Minutes of Public Meeting
CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL
Friday, June 20, 2025
10 A.M. – 2:45 P.M.
On Location/Hybrid Meeting
Chicano Park Museum & Cultural Center
1960 National Avenue
San Diego, CA 92113**

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

Council Members Present In-Person:

Council Vice Chair Leah Goodwin
Council Member Gerald Clarke
Council Member Caleb Duarte
Council Member Dorka Keehn
Council Member Phil Mercado
Council Member Rick Stein

Council Members Present Remotely:

Council Member Nicola Miner

Council Members Absent:

Council Chair Roxanne Messina Captor
Council Member Vicki Estrada
Council Member Roy Hirabayashi
Council Member Alex Israel

Arts Council Staff Present:

Danielle Brazell, Executive Director
Kristin Margolis, Director of Program Services
Carissa Gutierrez, Director of Public Affairs
Elisa Gollub, Arts Program Manager
Josy Miller, 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 had informed the Council of her absence and had appointed Vice Chair Goodwin to preside over the public meeting in her stead. Vice Chair Goodwin 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.

3. Land and People's Acknowledgement

At the start of the meeting, it was noted that Council Member Estrada was unable to attend due to a family emergency. In her absence, Vice Chair Goodwin invited Council Member Clarke to deliver the California Arts Council's Land and People's Acknowledgement. Council Member Clarke recognized that the meeting was being held on Kumeyaay land and expressed gratitude for the Kumeyaay people's enduring political sovereignty, cultural traditions, and vital contributions to the San Diego community. The acknowledgment concluded with appreciation for their continued stewardship of the region.

4. Community Agreements

During Item 4 of the meeting, Vice Chair Goodwin invited Executive Director Danielle Brazell to join her in leading the Council through the Council's 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.

Vice Chair Goodwin concluded the item by acknowledging the significant work ahead and encouraging everyone to remain grounded in these principles throughout the meeting.

5. Opening Remarks

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

She then extended a welcome to Council members, staff, and members of the public attending both in person and via Zoom. Vice Chair Goodwin took a moment to introduce the newest Council Member, Rick Stein, appointed by Governor Gavin Newsom on May

20. She noted that Stein brings decades of leadership as President of Arts Orange County and a long history of advocacy for the arts, including his role in founding Californians for the Arts and California Arts Advocates.

In brief remarks, Stein expressed gratitude for the Governor's appointment and for the opportunity to join the Council. He acknowledged his deep familiarity with the CAC, having attended over 50 Council meetings and worked closely with six former directors. Stein noted his forthcoming retirement from Arts Orange County and emphasized the importance of equitable policy, relationship-building, and advocacy. Stein closed by reflecting on the Council's responsibility to strengthen California's arts ecosystem and uplift the agency's visibility, especially through the upcoming 50th anniversary. He voiced enthusiasm for the work ahead and his role in supporting the Council's mission.

6. Welcome by Valerie Jaimes, Executive Director Chicano Park Museum & Cultural Center; Jonathon Glus, Chief of Cultural Affairs, City of San Diego

Vice Chair Goodwin opened by acknowledging a morning grounding session led by Josie Talamantez, Assemblymember David Alvarez was in attendance. She also thanked Jonathan Glus, Executive Director of Cultural Affairs for San Diego, for their partnership. Glus welcomed the Council and shared updates on San Diego's cultural initiatives, including the city's first cultural plan, priorities around artist affordability and cultural districts, and the transformative impact of Creative Corps. He highlighted that 100% of CAC funds are reinvested into the community and acknowledged key collaborators, including SD Art Matters and the Prebys Foundation, for supporting regional arts infrastructure.

Josie Talamantes, founder and board chair of the Chicano Park Museum and Cultural Center, warmly welcomed the Council to the space, reflecting on her career with the CAC and the museum's community-driven work. She acknowledged museum staff and the park's deep cultural significance. Dr. Alberto Pulido, vice chair, spoke on the importance of arts as accompaniment in times of social struggle and borderland identity. Both emphasized the power of community-centered arts and called on the CAC to consider responses to current social challenges through creative engagement.

At the Chicano Park Museum, Josie Talamantes addressed the urgency of arts in response to current political trauma, particularly targeting immigration raids and efforts to dismantle DEI initiatives. She described community trauma and introduced museum efforts, including legal services for undocumented residents. Executive Director Valerie Jaimes highlighted a youth-led exhibition addressing ICE raids and social justice through art, emphasizing the importance of amplifying young voices. Board member Diane Armenta was introduced, noting her lifelong role in the park's history. The session closed with affirmations of art's role in healing and solidarity, especially within border and immigrant communities.

7. Chair's Report

Vice Chair Goodwin delivered Chair Roxanne Messina Captor's report in her absence. The report covered recent state budget revisions, highlights from the CADEM conference, planning updates for the CAC's 50th anniversary, and key findings from the LA28 Cultural Olympiad convenings. [\[Full Chair's Report.\]](#)

8. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Danielle Brazell delivered highlights from [her full report](#) noting key accomplishments since the last meeting, including the close of the FY25–26 grant cycle, a statewide outreach tour reaching over 800 participants, the relaunch of the Cultural Districts program, and historic application numbers. She praised staff efforts and emphasized the agency's continued values-driven service to all Californians.

9. VOTING ITEM: Minutes from Previous Meetings

Vice Chair Goodwin presented the minutes from [April 11th](#) and [May 13th](#). Council Member Stein abstained from voting as the meetings took place before his appointment to the Council. There were no objections from council members present. The minutes for both April 11th and May 13th were approved.

10. DISCUSSION: FY25-26 Grant Cycle Allocations

The Council proceeded to Agenda Item 10: a discussion on the FY25-26 Grant Cycle Allocations. Council Members Mercado and Miner presented a comprehensive update on the FY25–26 grant cycle and funding allocation scenarios. The discussion covered seven grant program categories: Folk and Traditional Arts, Individual Artist Fellowships, State and Local Partners, State and Local Partner Mentorships, General Operating Support, Arts and Youth, and Impact Projects. Each program's purpose, grant duration, and maximum request amounts were reviewed.

The Allocations Committee presented an overview of the FY25-26 grant cycle goals and the seven grant categories currently open. These include: Folk and Traditional Arts, Individual Artist Fellowships, State and Local Partners, General Operating Support (Gen Ops), Arts and Youth, and Impact Projects. Various funding scenarios were presented for council's consideration, emphasizing priorities such as applicants from lower Healthy Places Index quartiles, first-time grantees, and small organizations with budgets under \$250,000.

Immediately following the Committee's presentation, the Council engaged in a discussion on how to balance stable operating support with project-based funding to expand impact, while maintaining equity and geographic balance. The council discussion centered on two potential funding strategies for the upcoming fiscal year. The first, referred to as the consistent strategy, would maintain the council's current approach of primarily investing in general operating support. This method is represented

by one of the pie charts shown during the meeting. The second, a complementary strategy, would shift the investment to focus more heavily on project support.

Concerns were raised about eligibility criteria potentially excluding organizations serving priority communities but exceeding budget thresholds. It was requested that additional data on organizations serving communities in the lowest quartiles of the Healthy Places Index would be available at the September meeting. The benefits of two-year funding cycles were noted for promoting stability and reducing administrative burden were also addressed and discussed.

A final point of consideration was a program's specific purpose and intended outcomes. This prompted a discussion on whether to invest more deeply in certain areas to achieve particular goals. These funding scenarios were presented to council members and the public as a framework for the discussion, with the understanding that the final vote would occur at the September 26 meeting. The scenarios were not mutually exclusive; they could be combined to create a hybrid approach.

A review of applications showed a high volume from priority communities, particularly for General Operating Support. The council discussed how to prioritize these applications within various funding scenarios. It was clarified that these scenarios are flexible prompts to guide the committee's recommendations. Additional data will be provided at the September meeting to inform the final decisions.

11. VOTING ITEM: 50th Anniversary Plan

The 50th Anniversary Ad Hoc Committee [presented their memo](#), plan and budget for the California Arts Council's 50th anniversary in 2026. At the meeting, Council Member Nicola Miner presented a proposal to adopt the vision, timeline, and budget for the California Arts Council's 50th anniversary awards ceremony and year-long celebration beginning January 2026.

The plan includes inviting artists and organizations to dedicate existing events to the anniversary, supported by CAC branding and a dedicated website presence highlighting the Council's 50 years of contributions. An awards ceremony, tentatively planned for April 2026, will honor founding and past Council members, with awards presented by the Governor. Ten artists and/or arts organizations will also be recognized based on criteria developed by programs staff and approved by the Council at the September 26, 2025 meeting.

Potential venues include the Governor's Mansion, State Capitol, and State Archives, and the California Museum. Fundraising efforts for the Awards Ceremony will be led by an AdHoc 50th Anniversary Fundraising Committee (P. Mercado & R. Stein) and involve all members of Council. A motion to approve the plan was moved by Council Member Stein, seconded by Council Member Clarke.

Public Comment noted below at the end of the minutes.

Discussion

Following public comment, Council members discussed the 50th anniversary celebration plans. Council member Clark inquired about how arts organizations might dedicate existing events to the anniversary and whether Council members could help initiate contact. Council member Miner suggested contacting staff directly, and staff proposed sending a survey to current and past grantees to gather event information for a public website. A concern was raised about reaching historically excluded communities who might not engage via traditional channels, with a commitment to explore more inclusive outreach methods.

Council member Stein asked about the designated Donation Fund's previous use. Director Danielle Brazell explained the fund has been used occasionally to collect private donations, alongside the Keep Arts in Schools and License Plate funds, which currently receive less attention but hold fundraising potential. She emphasized the important role of balancing fundraising without competing with the arts field.

Council members Duarte and Goodwin proposed collecting and sharing artist testimonials via print and digital platforms to document the Council's impact. Discussion also focused on the challenge of selecting only 10 awardees statewide, with suggestions to involve local partners and possibly honor artists from each county.

Public Affairs Director Gutierrez shared that staff held workshops to envision a multimedia approach celebrating the Council's 50-year legacy and future, emphasizing inclusivity and broad storytelling.

The Council then unanimously approved the motion to establish and implement the proposed funding mechanism for the 50th anniversary fundraising efforts.

Motion: Approve the 50th Anniversary ad-hoc Committee's recommendation "authorizing the California Arts Council (CAC) agency to establish and implement the proposed funding mechanisms to fundraise for the 50th Anniversary Celebration and Awards Ceremony, ensuring all actions are in strict alignment with agency and state policy. This vote specifically authorizes the agency to:

- Activate the designated donation fund with the Department of Finance.
- Support the 50th Fundraising Ad hoc Committee to develop and implement a fundraising plan in accordance with the budget outlined in the plan
- Oversee the donation fund in accordance with the Council-approved budget and financial reporting."

Made by: Council Member Stein

Seconded by: Council Member Clarke

Vote Tally:

- Clark – Yes
- Duarte – Yes
- Keene – Yes
- Mercado – Yes

- Miner – Yes
- Stein – Yes
- Vice Chair Goodwin – Yes

Result: *Motion passed unanimously (7-0)*

12. VOTING ITEM: Governance Committee

In the absence of Governance Committee Members Estrada and Israel, Executive Director Danielle Brazell presented the [Governance Committee's memo](#) which included a recommendation regarding quorum, recusals, and abstentions. This item was brought forward following confusion at a previous meeting regarding how recusals impact quorum. After extensive review of the Bagley-Keene Act, Robert's Rules of Order, Council bylaws, and consultation with the Department of Justice, the Governance Committee recommended that quorum be defined by *presence* rather than *participation*.

This means that if a Council member recuses or abstains from a vote, but remains present, they still count toward quorum. Director Brazell clarified that upon adoption of this recommendation, staff will revise the Council's bylaws accordingly and include a glossary of terms for reference.

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

Council member Stein sought clarification on implementation, asking if the revised bylaws could be agendized at the start of the next meeting to ensure the rule would apply before voting items requiring quorum. Director Brazell and Vice Chair Goodwin confirmed that staff would prioritize placing the item early on the next agenda to allow for immediate effect.

No recusals were noted for this discussion, and the motion proceeded without amendment.

Motion: Approve the Governance Committee's recommendation to adopt "the determination that Quorum is defined by presence not participation, meaning recusal and/or abstention by a member for a voting item does not affect quorum at a public meeting of the Council. Upon adoption of this recommendation, staff will revise the bylaws accordingly and include a glossary of terms for reference."

Made by: Council Member Clarke

Seconded by: Council Member Stein

Vote Tally:

- Clark – Yes

- Duarte – Yes
- Keene – Yes
- Mercado – Yes
- Miner – Yes
- Stein – Yes
- Vice Chair Goodwin – Yes

Result: *Motion passed unanimously (7-0)*

12:45-1:15 WORKING LUNCH

13. PRESENTATION: Fair and Equitable Practices of the CAC

Race and Equity Manager Megan Morgan presented an overview of the California Arts Council's equity work, including historical foundations and current observances. She honored the Equity Committee and highlighted the significance of Juneteenth, Pride Month, and Immigrant Heritage Month. Drawing on Governor Newsom's call for "a California for all," Morgan emphasized the agency's commitment to equity and inclusion, rooted in both federal and state mandates. Council members received the presentation warmly and slides will be shared in the meeting follow-up.

Manager Morgan continued her presentation with a review of key federal and state equity legislation, including the Civil Rights Act, ADA, and California-specific laws such as the Equal Pay Act and Prop 209. She highlighted Executive Order N-16-22, which mandates racial equity plans for state agencies, and outlined CAC's ongoing efforts—including its strategic framework, the use of the Healthy Places Index, and the Decision Support Tool—to operationalize equity in grantmaking, policy, and statewide initiatives.

The CAC highlighted four recent equity-driven initiatives: developing a Native American Artist Grant with a woman- and Native-owned firm, relaunching the Cultural Districts program, conducting a 13-site outreach tour to underfunded regions, and advancing the 2025 Creative Economy Workgroup. Manager Morgan reaffirmed CAC's equity commitments, rooted in law and practice, and celebrated progress made.

Director Brazell praised the presentation, underscoring California's legal and moral commitment to inclusion. She affirmed the importance of sharing these materials publicly to inform and empower others.

14. Committee/ Ad Hoc Updates

Council member Keene shared that the [Strategic Framework Committee](#) has begun developing the RFP for a new consultant to update the CAC's strategic plan, aligning

with its 50th anniversary. The RFP will be released in September with selection by year's end.

Council member Mercado reported on the [Partnerships Ad Hoc Committee's](#) focus on boosting revenue from the Arts Plate Fund and Tax Checkoff. Ideas included 50th anniversary tie-ins, promotional strategies, and potentially updating or enhancing the current plate design. Council discussion emphasized the fundraising potential and outreach value of these efforts.

15. Open Council Discussion

During the open Council discussion, members shared recent arts experiences that inspired or uplifted them. Highlights included visits to major exhibitions such as Noah Davis at the Hammer Museum and Ruth Asawa at MoMA, student field trips to the Fowler Museum, and the Whitney's Amy Sberald exhibit. Council celebrated milestones like the approval of a public artwork in San Ramon and reflected on art's role in healing and community, especially through music and cultural festivals. Members also expressed enthusiasm about new leadership at Americans for the Arts and Director Brazell shared her observation of the vibrant creativity seen at the Civic Imagination convening in Toledo.

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 April 11, 2025.

Memorial Tribute:

The Council honored arts and cultural figures who have passed since the last meeting (April 11, 2025), recognizing their contributions as follows:

- April 15: Joel Krosnick (84) – American cellist and member of the Juilliard String Quartet
- April 16: Anna Hartman (93) – American actress known for *Dan August* in *Terminal Island*
- April 16: Joanne Gilbert (92) – American actress from *The Great Man* and *The High Cost of Living*
- April 21: Will Hutchins (94) – American actor known for *Sugarfoot*, *Spinout*, and *Clambake*
- April 22: Lar Park Lincoln (63) – American actress from *Knott's Landing*, *Friday the 13th*, and *The New Blood*
- April 24: Jack Katz (97) – American comic book artist and graphic novel pioneer

- April 26: Andy Bey (85) – American jazz singer and pianist who played with Horace Silver and Gary Bartz
- April 27: Jiggly Caliente (44) – Filipino-American activist and drag performer
- April 28: Priscilla Pointer (100) – American stage and screen actress known for *Carrie*, *Dallas*, and *Mommy Dearest*
- May 1: Jill Sobule (66) – American singer-songwriter best known for “I Kissed a Girl”
- May 1: Ruth Buzzi (88) – American comedian and actress, known from *Rowan and Martin’s Laugh-In* and *That Girl*
- May 3: Steve Pepoon (68) – American television producer and writer for *The Simpsons* and *The Wild Thornberries*
- May 6: James Foley (71) – American music video and film director
- May 7: Don Baker (89) – American actor known for *Walking Tall* and *Fletch*
- May 7: JoJo Wallace (98) – American gospel singer and guitarist
- May 9: Johnny Rodriguez (73) – American country music singer and songwriter, known for “I Can’t Get Her Out of My Mind”
- May 15: Charles Strouse (96) – American composer of *Bye Bye Birdie*
- May 19: Kathleen Hughes (96) – American actress from *It Came from Outer Space* and *Bracken’s World*
- May 20: Arthur Hamilton (98) – American songwriter best known for “Cry Me a River”
- May 20: George Wendt (76) – American actor famous for playing Norm on *Cheers*
- May 20: Guy Klucevsek (78) – American jazz and free improv accordionist and composer
- May 20: James Lowe (82) – American psychedelic rock guitarist with The Electric Prunes, known for “I Had Too Much to Dream Last Night”
- May 20: Pippa Scott (90) – American actress known for *The Searchers*, *Cold Turkey*, and *Auntie Mame*
- May 23: Sacha Jenkins (53) – American hip-hop journalist, documentarian, and co-founder of *Ego Trip* magazine
- May 25: Foday Musa Suso (75) – Gambian kora player and griot, West African 21-string lute musician
- May 25: Phil Robertson (79) – American television personality from *Duck Dynasty* and founder of Duck Commander
- May 26: Rick Derringer (77) – American guitarist and songwriter, known for “Hang on Sloopy” and “Rock and Roll, Hoochie Coo”
- May 28: Al Foster (82) – American jazz drummer who played with Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, and McCoy Tyner
- May 29: Alf Clausen (84) – American orchestra leader and Emmy-winning film and television score composer
- May 30: Loretta Swit (87) – American Emmy-winning actress, famous as Major Margaret “Hot Lips” Houlihan on *MASH**
- May 30: Valerie Mahaffey (71) – American Emmy-winning character actress known for *Eve*, *Northern Exposure*, and *Desperate Housewives*

- June 1: Jonathan Joss (59) – American comedic actor known for *King of the Hill* and *Parks and Recreation*
- June 9: Chris Robinson (86) – American actor from *General Hospital* and *Another World*
- June 9: Sly Stone (82) – American funk and rock singer-songwriter and musician, influential in Bay Area music scene
- June 10: Harris Yulin (87) – American stage and screen actor known for *Scarface*, *Oz*, and *Ghostbusters*
- June 10: Terry Louise Fisher (79) – American television writer and co-creator of *L.A. Law*
- June 11: Honda Lewis (52) – Native San Diegan, American model and television personality
- June 11: Brian Wilson (82) – American songwriter, singer, producer, and vocal arranger for The Beach Boys
- June 10: Robert Nakamura (88) – Filmmaker and founder of Visual Communications, the oldest community-based Asian Pacific American media arts organization in the U.S.

Vice Chair Goodwin expressed deep appreciation for the contributions of these individuals to arts and culture and affirmed that their legacies continue through their creative works and community impact.

18. Closing Remarks

Vice Chair Goodwin expressed gratitude for the engaging meeting and acknowledged the range of meaningful topics discussed. She extended heartfelt appreciation to the people of San Diego.

19. Adjournment

Vice Chair Goodwin adjourned the meeting at 2:45 P.M.

**CAC PUBLIC COMMENT
COUNCIL MEETING
June 20, 2025**

Public Comment on Item 11: 50th Anniversary

Abe Hughes

Arts Commissioner, City of San Diego; Board Member, California Humanities

“Good afternoon. I’m currently an Arts Commissioner for San Diego as well as a board member of California Humanities. It’s really through that lens that I want to speak briefly about your 50th anniversary plans.

We at California Humanities just celebrated our own 50th anniversary in February, and we’re incredibly thankful for the support the California Arts Council has provided to us through the years. But I want to emphasize that we are at a difficult juncture. With cuts in federal funding, including a major reduction to California Humanities, this is a tough time for the arts field.

I urge you to do whatever is possible to make this anniversary a big splash—to remind the state and the public of the vital role the arts play in our communities. The work we all do supports mental health, well-being, and the cultural fabric of California.

Toot your horn. Celebrate your impact. Make this milestone loud and proud. Danielle, I appreciate the work you’ve done alongside Ben to secure additional support from the state—we’re all going to need it.

Godspeed. Good luck. And thank you again for your continued support of California Humanities and for all you do.”

Susie Tanner

Founder and Director, Theater Workers Project

“Hi! I’m Susie Tanner, founder and director of Theater Workers Project. I just want to acknowledge the 50 Year Anniversary Plan.

Forty-two years ago, I received an *Artists in Communities* grant from CAC that allowed me to establish Theater Workers Project by working with a group of unemployed steelworkers in southeast Los Angeles. Juan Carrillo was the director of the Arts Council at the time.

I want to give a shout out to Josie Talamantez, who I’ve known for many years. Without that initial grant, Theater Workers Project may never have become a reality.

I’m delighted there’s going to be a 50th anniversary, and I hope us 'old-timers' will have a chance to reflect on and contribute to the celebration. I still have beautiful videos from the original project—produced by the CAC itself.

Thank you very much. Let’s continue the good work. I look forward to continuing as a CAC grantee. Thank you and rock on.”

Rachel Osajima

Executive Director, Alameda County Arts Commission; Co-Chair, Coalition of County Arts Agencies

“Hi. I’m Rachel Osajima, Executive Director of the Alameda County Arts Commission—one of the CAC’s State-Local Partners—and co-chair of the leadership team for the Coalition of County Arts Agencies, which includes all SLPs across California.

I want to congratulate you on the upcoming 50th anniversary. On behalf of all coalition members and SLPs, we look forward to working with you on this celebration.

The State-Local Partnership Program, founded in 1980, has been a cornerstone of our work statewide. We see this moment as a wonderful opportunity to renew and elevate this partnership and to highlight the impact of the CAC across California.

We look forward to what comes next. Thank you.”

Wayne Cook

Former Staff, California Arts Council

“You all are wonderful. I worked at the California Arts Council for many years, and it brought me into contact with so many incredible artists and people.

Thank you for sticking with this work. Rick—hi! It’s good to see you again. We’ve had some times together, and that’s true for many of us here today.

I just want to thank the CAC for the decades of work you’ve done. Keep up the good work. I really hope we’ll all have a chance to gather for this 50th—please tell me there will be a real event to bring everyone together.

Danielle, I appreciate you. I’m reminded of working with Philip Horn in Pennsylvania years ago, and collaborating across states to support the arts.

And of course, Leah—how are you doing, girl? Rick, great to see you. It’s good to see all of you who’ve been in this field for so long.

Thank you for letting me share. Thank you for everything.”

Bob Lehman

Executive Director, San Diego Museum Council; Vice Chair, San Diego County Arts and Culture Commission; Chair, San Diego Arts Matters

“Good afternoon, Chair, members of the Council, Executive Director Danielle, and the dedicated team in the California Arts Council. I’m Bob Lehman... [Full affiliations listed above].

Today I’m proud to speak to you as the Executive Director of the San Diego Museum Council, representing over 100 museums and cultural institutions, including nearly 30 in

Baja, California.

Together, we represent thousands working every day to make culture accessible. First and foremost—thank you. Thank you for your leadership and for continuing to champion the arts across this great state.

We are here today as cultural partners. We stand with you, advocating for arts funding that reaches from Sacramento to California's most rural corners. We are your eyes and ears on the ground, ready to partner, collaborate, and consult.

We believe in the power of this Council to transform lives and are honored to support that mission in every way we can. Thank you for your leadership—and welcome to San Diego."

Michelangelo Camacho

Director of Government and Field Engagement, San Diego Art Matters

"Hello, everyone. Thank you so much for coming to San Diego. Hello, Mama Lea. My name is Michelangelo Camacho...

Back in November, I made public comment regarding the decision to hold off on rolling state and regional networks into the pool of organizational general operating support.

That was held off, but in the following meeting, it was decided to merge the program.

I've tried to understand why the uniqueness of state and regional networks wasn't apparent to you all. Artists want to focus on cultural practice—what we do as service orgs is support them in doing that.

I hope you will monitor the rollout—if there's a reduction in funding, it hurts implementation partners like us.

When CAC needed field support, we stood in solidarity. We clawed back \$5 million. But we're lean, we're mean, and we're your fighting machines. If you decide not to fund us, we might not be around to help you do your good work. Thank you."

John Hyken

Executive Director and Co-Founder, Fern Street Circus

"Good afternoon. My name is John Hyken... and I'm really, really glad the Council is here in San Diego.

I first wrote a CAC grant in 1992 and was funded that very first year—thanks to Ray Tatter. That helped us launch what's now Fern Street Circus. The afterschool program we started in 1993 is still going, thanks to Artists in Communities.

I've served on CAC panels. When I worked in Salina, Kansas, I leaned on my CAC experiences. In recent years, with leadership and staff turnover, I've had concerns—especially with multiple grants due the same day.

Grants have been less skillfully written, more stressful to complete. I say this with deep

admiration for CAC. My hope is that future arts workers have the same meaningful opportunities I had. Thank you again for being here.”

Llewellyn Crane

Director of Philanthropy, San Diego Opera

“Good afternoon and welcome to San Diego. I'm Llewellyn Crane... former Kansas State Arts Agency Executive Director.

I now work at a major—but not large—arts organization and want to highlight the value of larger-budget organizations in the funding landscape.

Opera productions employ hundreds—musicians, craftspeople, union workers. We partner with small and large orgs, engage diverse artists and audiences, and reach thousands every year.

San Diego Opera created *El Último Sueño de Frida y Diego*, which went on to LA Opera, SF Opera, and will soon be at the Met—written and performed by California Latine artists.

Larger doesn't mean we don't need support. Even small grants matter. CAC recognition helps show our audiences that California values this work.

I also urge you to standardize grant programs and timing to support better planning. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.”

Cecilia Kuma

Executive Director, Playwrights Project

“Hi! I'm Cecilia Kuma, the Executive Director of Playwrights Project, and I am so grateful to have the California Arts Council here in San Diego. Thank you so much—so many staff members and council members—I really deeply appreciate it.

I, too, want to speak to the importance of funding organizations that are not at the \$250,000 level or lower. When I started at Playwrights Project 25 years ago, we would have qualified then.

We've benefited from CAC support for many years—it kept us afloat during the recession when funding was minimized. At that time, funding went to general operating support, and that nod of approval to all the organizations doing important work was really helpful.

I appreciate the current consideration of larger organizations. Every penny counts. We put it to good use. I'm looking at our budget and thinking, who do I have to lay off to make this work? I don't want to let anyone go—we need to keep the support going. Most of our employees—teaching artists, clerical staff, program managers—about 98%—are artists. They do managerial work so they can continue their art and support others in the field.

That's an important factor when considering funding. I appreciated the consistent

strategy over the complementary—it seemed to take that into account more. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration. Thank you very much.”

Aria Proctor

Managing Director, Playwrights Project

“Hello! I’m very happy to be here. My name is Aria Proctor, Managing Director of Playwrights Project. You just heard our Executive Director speak.

I am also urging you to reconsider the prioritization for these grants. Mid-sized organizations like Playwrights Project serve a lot of artists directly—as Cecilia said, almost every single person working with us is an artist, and we help support their livelihood.

I’m sure we can all relate to the struggles of being an artist, going gig to gig.

Organizations like ours help stabilize the economy for them—we provide monetary security.

Most of our budget goes directly to personnel. It’s hardest to get general operating support, and all of our funds go straight into programs. Even if our budget looks higher, none of that money sits—it’s going directly to artists and the people we serve.

I hope you’ll reconsider these priorities, and lean into operating support. Trust organizations to know where the money should go to help keep programming going. Thank you.”

Jennifer Laine

Executive Director, San Benito County Arts Council; Co-chair, Coalition of County Arts Agencies

“Good afternoon. Chair and members of the Council—this is Jennifer Laine, Executive Director of the San Benito County Arts Council, a State-Local Partner.

I’m pleased to report on a few items. First, we had a successful SLP convening in April in Sacramento, as Executive Director Brazil mentioned. It was a strong opportunity for networking, peer learning, and partnership-building with CAC—also a great primer for the CA Arts & Culture Summit and Arts Advocacy Day.

In May, we helped coordinate and co-host CAC’s grant workshops, which led to increased first-time applicants and more applications from rural and disinvested areas. On advocacy, we’re working with California for the Arts on policy priorities like the Performing Arts Equitable Payroll Fund, protecting CAC local assistance funding, and supporting SB 456 (Mural Licensing).

We’ve shown up at budget hearings, public meetings, and other forums to protect funding during these turbulent times. These are activities that don’t always show up in CAC grant reports—but they’re vital to the sector’s sustainability across California.

Lastly, I wish to congratulate Rick Stein on his appointment. He's an incredible leader, and we're pleased to see him joining you on the Council. Thank you."

Sean Fenton

Theatre Bay Area; On Behalf of California Arts Advocates

"Good afternoon. Vice Chair Goodwin, Council members, Executive Director Brazil. I'm Sean Fenton from Theatre Bay Area, speaking on behalf of California Arts Advocates. First, thank you for your commitment to equity and innovation—especially in support of first-time grantees and small-budget orgs. We know it's hard to balance priorities in a resource-limited environment.

That said, we are concerned that recent program changes—combined with reductions in federal funding—may destabilize longstanding organizations with deep community roots. Some may be forced to cut programming or close entirely.

Sustainability must be part of the conversation. Organizations with track records, community ties, and infrastructure are often best equipped to deliver sustained impact and employ artists.

We respectfully urge that the FY25–26 grant cycle allocate a percentage of funding to organizations with budgets over \$250,000. The majority can still support priority groups, but CAC must serve the whole sector.

With the SRN program eliminated, we also ask for more clarity on how grant panelists are trained and what criteria will assess art service organizations' unique value.

With General Operating Support now consolidated, please treat this as a pilot. Evaluate how the new structure impacts the field.

With \$129 million in requests and only \$20 million available, CAC is clearly oversubscribed. Yet, you support a workforce delivering essential services—creating jobs, fueling downtown revitalization, and strengthening communities.

California Arts Advocates will continue fighting for greater investment and resources for CAC. Thank you for your time and leadership."

Rachel Osajima

Executive Director, Alameda County Arts Commission; Co-chair, Coalition of County Arts Agencies

"Good afternoon. I'm Rachel Osajima, Executive Director of the Alameda County Arts Commission, a State-Local Partner. I'm also co-chair of the Coalition of County Arts Agencies, a former board member of California for the Arts and California Arts Advocates, and currently co-chair of their Advisory Council.

First, congratulations to Rick Stein. Rick, thank you for your outstanding leadership—I've worked with you for 18 years and know you'll represent us well on the Council. I want to echo Jennifer Lane's comments and highlight a few things. In April, we co-

presented an Arts, Culture, and Creativity Month event with California for the Arts at the Oakland Museum—bringing together many artists and leaders.

On April 23rd, over 50 Alameda County and East Bay community members traveled to Sacramento for Arts Advocacy Day—an essential opportunity to communicate CAC’s value to legislators.

We also hosted a CAC Grant Workshop in Oakland. Thank you to staff—their presentation was excellent, and community members appreciated it.

Lastly, I invite everyone to the California for the Arts Regional Conversation in Oakland on July 11. Alameda County is proud to partner on this East Bay event.

Council members and staff—thank you for your ongoing dedication, leadership, and partnership.”

Patricia Frischer

Coordinator & Founder, San Diego Visual Arts Network; Chair, North County Arts Network

“Good afternoon. I hope you can all hear me. I’m Patricia Frischer, coordinator and founder of the San Diego Visual Arts Network. We represent 2,500 visual arts resources from Fallbrook in the north of San Diego County to—yes, including—Baja Norte. I’m also the chair of the North County Arts Network.

Today was a first for me—it’s the first time I’ve managed to listen to all four hours of your California Arts Council meeting. It was so fascinating, and I will definitely be reporting on this and spreading the word across our network about how important it is to sit in on these meetings and understand the incredible job your team is doing.

I want to let you know that, because of your presentation slide on racial equity, I’ve already added the referenced certification materials to our website’s About page. Thank you for sharing that resource.

We are one of those groups that have never applied for a CAC grant before. As a virtual organization with a very small budget—but a very large reach—we’ve existed for over 20 years. This is the 19th year of the San Diego Art Prize, and this is our first time seeking support from the Council.

I’m proud to say Jonathan Glus and Felicia Shaw are both serving on our San Diego Art Prize Committee. We would be surprised to be selected for a grant—but of course, we would welcome it!

I know competition is intense for these funds. Regardless of the outcome, I just want to say thank you for all the work you’ve done for us in the past.

I’m glad to be the last speaker today—and I hope everyone has a safe journey home. Thank you again.”

**CAC PUBLIC COMMENT SUBMISSIONS
PRE-COUNCIL MEETING
JUNE 20, 2025**

- **Jennifer Caballero (She/Her/Hers)**
California Association of Museums
Current or Former Grantee: Statewide and Regional Networks;

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comment about the 25-26 Grant Cycle allocations. Being part of a small statewide service organization has taught me that even the timing of a grant notification such as this one can create seismic shifts in what we are able to do. With a 30% increase in applications for this cycle, I applaud the success of the staff in making significant outreach happen in a very limited timeframe.

Many organizations are operating on slim margins, and a healthy arts ecosystem needs to continually iterate. With this new grant framework as a pilot program for the current fiscal year, I am hopeful it will go a long way in ensuring that we have a future of maintaining the cultural life of California. My question now is if the council will direct the CAC staff to require a survey all grant recipients (or also a series of focus groups) about the process, both of applying and of managing their grant, and sustaining this capacity in future years? It's a learning opportunity for all involved. Will this type of deep inquiry be a priority for the Council?

We in the sector want to help the Council have impact across the state, and the statewide and regional networks stand ready with ongoing support to help CAC achieve its goals. With such a large number of applications, the organizations that have a well-established track record may have insights about how to ensure continuous improvement of the process. I look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

- **Jennica Bisbee (She/Her/Hers)**
CA Arts Advocates

CA Arts Advocates acknowledges the CAC's commitment to equity and innovation through its support of first time grantees and small budget organizations. We will continue to fight for investment in the arts and the CAC. However, recent program changes and reductions in federal funding may jeopardize the stability of longstanding arts organizations. Many face scaling back essential programs or closing their doors.

Organizations with proven track records, deep community relationships, and established infrastructure are often more equipped to deliver sustained impact, jobs and drive the state arts economy forward. We urge the Council to appropriate a percentage of funding for organizations with budgets \$250,000+. While the majority of funds should go to priority groups, the CAC must remain inclusive of the full sector.

With the elimination of the SRN program, we ask the Council to clarify 1) How will panelists now be trained? 2) What criteria will be used to assess service vs. producing organizations? 3) Would you consider it a pilot year and evaluate the impact of consolidating service organizations?

SRNs directly support artists, local arts organizations, and advocacy, acting as vital infrastructure. They foster regional collaboration, reduce service duplication, increase efficiency, and maximize community benefit. We hope you consider these questions for the FY25-26 Grant Cycle Allocations discussion.

- **Sean Fenton (He/Him/His)**
Theatre Bay Area, San Francisco County
Current or Former Grantee: Statewide and Regional Networks; Impact Projects

Dear Council Members:

Thank you for centering equity by prioritizing first-time applicants and organizations with annual budgets under \$250k. These are, overwhelmingly, the artists and companies that Theatre Bay Area (TBA) serves across nine Bay Area counties, many of whom have never before received CAC support. However, I fear the current priority structure also inadvertently sidelines arts-service organizations. Most service providers, by necessity, maintain budgets larger than \$250k to support programs that serve the field at scale. Additionally, service organizations typically have years of operating history and are unlikely to qualify as first-time CAC applicants.

If service organizations lose operating support, I fear the impact will boomerang directly back onto the communities you aim to uplift.

Key questions for the Council:

1. How will grant panelists be instructed to differentiate and appropriately score arts service organizations?
2. In a framework built around first-time access, how will long-term sustainability and field-wide impact be weighted?

3. Will the Council consider an alternate scoring rubric, alternative priority criteria, or a proportional set-aside within General Operating Support to ensure service organizations are not unintentionally defunded?

4. What mechanisms will the CAC use to assess the effects of these new priorities on the larger ecosystem and to adjust if unintended harm emerges?

Thank again for your service and commitment to the arts.

- **Ricky Abilez (They/Them/Theirs)**

Arts for LA, Los Angeles County

Current or Former Grantee: Statewide and Regional Networks;

Arts for LA supports the goals of prioritizing first-time grantees, organizations in the lowest quartiles of the HPI, and those with budgets under \$250,000. We are concerned, however, about the lack of clarity on how these priorities are weighted. Are they treated equally, or does one take precedence? Each represents a broad, overlapping group of applicants, and without a transparent framework, applicants and the public are left guessing.

We are especially concerned about the focus on organizations with budgets under \$250,000. What is CAC's long-term vision for sustaining California's creative economy if small to mid-sized and long-established organizations are deprioritized? Many with budgets under \$1 million are at risk of closure amid steep public funding cuts. These groups have proven infrastructure, employ artists, and drive systemic change—especially in regions hardest hit by COVID and other crises.

Arts for LA brings 18 years of experience advocating for equity in LA County, home to approximately 10 million residents—half of which are Latine. Many neighborhoods we serve fall in the lowest HPI quartile, yet our ability to support them is now at risk due to narrowing criteria.

We respectfully request that CAC:

Clarify how funding priorities will be weighted.

Explain how funding amounts will be determined.

Evaluate this year as a pilot and report its impact.

Recognize service/advocacy organizations as essential infrastructure.

- **Kristin Reese (She/Her/Hers)**

Mono Arts Council, Mono County

Current or Former Grantee: Artists in Schools; Arts Integration Training; Creative Youth Development (formerly Youth Arts Action); JUMP StArts; State-Local Partnership

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Dear California Arts Council,

First, I would like to thank you for supporting the many grant programs that helped fund arts education over the years. I would like to address the allocations for the Arts and Youth Program and the discussion over the funding priority for communities in the Lowest Quartile of the Healthy Places Index. At our very productive SLP convening in April, Eliza Tudor, from Nevada County Arts Council stated that she had provided the Council with a report about the HPI and that it isn't necessarily a helpful tool for some of our rural counties. I wholeheartedly agree with this assessment. I have been living in and working in Mono County for nearly fifty years and can I tell you that there are areas that do not fit the criteria of the HPI, yet the people and youth are, and have been, systemically underserved and have other factors that greatly impact their quality of life, not included in the data.

I urge to reconsider using the HPI as part of your decision support tool, especially when you are factoring our unique and diverse rural counties.

Respectfully,
Kristin Reese
Executive Director
Mono Arts Council

- **Felicia Shaw (She/Her/Hers)**

San Diego ART Matters; California for the Arts; San Diego County Arts and Culture Commission, San Diego County
Current or Former Grantee: Statewide and Regional Networks

Thank you for holding your meeting in San Diego and for being here for us for nearly 50 years. I want to commend the leadership of your staff and board, many of whom are seasoned arts administrators who have practical work experience in our field and understand how our world works - not just in theory but in practice. Their guidance and perspectives are appreciated.

While the CAC will continue prioritizing small budget organizations for funding, we see an interesting change in our community. More small budget organizations are struggling to stay in business with such limited funding and are close to folding. Instead of closing their doors, they are recognizing that they are too small to go it alone and are seeking to merge with larger budget organizations that have the infrastructure and expertise they need to sustain operations.

I think this phenomenon will continue as sources of funding for the arts become more scarce and small budget organizations are challenged to keep their doors open due to the high cost of doing business in California. San Diego ART Matters is considering proposals from four organizations that wish to merge with us as we speak. But we can't help if sources of funding like the CAC are not available to us.

We will keep you apprised of how we navigate this challenging time, and if you hear of others with similar issues, let us know. This is new territory for us and we are learning.