CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL
A STATE AGENCY

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

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

Draft Minutes of Public Meeting
CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL
Wednesday, September 30, 2026
10 A.M. – 12:25 P.M.
On Location/Hybrid Meeting

The members of the California Arts Council convened a public meeting held in six locations and via web conference to discuss various items as listed in the minutes below.

Location	Address	Room	City, State, ZIP
SF Arts Commission	401 Van Ness Ave	Room 125	San Francisco, CA 94102
San Diego County Administration Center	1600 Pacific Hwy	Room 301	San Diego, CA 92101
City Hall City of West Hollywood	8300 Santa Monica Blvd	1st Floor – Community Meeting Room	West Hollywood, CA 90069
San Jose City Hall	200 East Santa Clara Street	11th Floor Tower Room 1132	San Jose, CA 95113
Fresno City College	1101 East University Ave	Rm 102 – Art Dept	Fresno, CA 93741
California Arts Council	2750 Gateway Oaks Dr	Suite 300	Sacramento, CA 95833

Council Members Present In-Person:
Council Chair Roxanne Messina Captor
Council Vice Chair Nicola Miner
Council Member Roque Barros
Council Member Caleb Duarte
Council Member Vicki Estrada
Council Member Leah Goodwin
Council Member Roy Hirabayashi
Council Member Dorka Keehn
Council Member Rick Stein

Council Members Not Present:
Council Member Phil Mercado

Arts Council Staff Present:
Danielle Brazell, Executive Director

Michelle Radmand, Chief Deputy Director
Kristin Margolis, Director of Program Services
Jonathan Estrada, Arts Program Manager
Elisa Gollub, Arts Program Manager
Josy Miller, Arts Program Manager
Megan Morgan, Race & Equity Manager
Carlos Casillas, Arts Program Specialist
Leslie Giovanini, Arts Program Specialist
Macy Mannix, Budget and HR Specialist
Steve Mok, Graphic Designer III
Charles O'Malley, Arts Program Specialist

1. Call to Order
Chair Roxanne Messina Captor called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM.

2. Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum
Arts Program Manager Josy Miller called the roll and quorum was established. Ten Council members were in attendance, with ten members of the Council present in the locations listed above.

3. Land and People's Acknowledgement
Chair Roxanne Messina Captor acknowledged Council member Roy Hirabayshi to present the Land and People's Acknowledgement.

4. Discussion: Allocations Committee
Chair Roxanne Messina Captor introduced Vice Chair Nicola Miner, the Allocations Committee, to present and lead a discussion on the additional appropriation of $10M in local assistance for general operating support in the Budget Act of FY26-27.

5. Discussion: Programs Policy Committee
Chair Roxanne Messina Captor introduced Council members Vicki Estrada and Caleb Duarte, the Programs Policy Committee, to present and lead a discussion on the Cultural Districts program and the additional $4M to support the program in the Budget Act of FY26-27.

6. General Public Comment
All submitted public comment are listed at the end of these minutes. Live General Public Comment begins at minute 1:06:39 and goes until 2:04:07 on the downloadable transcript and recording. Live general public comment was taken from all locations identified above and via zoom.

7. Closing Remarks
Chair Roxanne Messina Captor adjourned the meeting at 12:10 PM.

CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL
A STATE AGENCY

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

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

CAC PUBLIC COMMENT SUBMISSIONS
COUNCIL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 30, 2026

- **Name:** Jacquie Atchison (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: Arts Council for Monterey County, Monterey County
  Current or Former Grantee: State-Local Partnership
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

I encourage the California Arts Council to use the $4 million Cultural Districts appropriation to both strengthen California's 24 existing Cultural Districts and expand this important program into counties that have not yet had the opportunity to participate.
California has made an important investment by designating these districts, but designation alone is not enough. Existing Cultural Districts need meaningful, sustained resources to support coordination, artists and cultural organizations, community engagement, marketing, cultural preservation, creative businesses, and the partnerships necessary to turn designation into lasting economic and community impact.
At the same time, a portion of the funding should be reserved to establish new Cultural Districts, with priority given to counties that currently have no state-designated district. Geographic equity matters. Rural, inland, and historically under-resourced communities should have the same opportunity to use arts and culture as tools for economic development, community identity, tourism, and belonging.
This $4 million provides an opportunity to do both: invest in the success of the districts California has already designated while creating a pathway for more communities to participate. A strong Cultural Districts program should ultimately reflect the extraordinary cultural diversity of our entire state.

- **Name:** Anna Penido (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: Whole Mind Symphony (501) (c) (3), Los Angeles County
  Current or Former Grantee: Not a current or former grantee
  RE:

The Art Council should reserve a part of the budget to grant specifically the population that is mostly excluded from everything - which is people with serious mental illness (SMI) especially those with schizophrenia. There are brilliant artists inside institutions without access to music and art. The application for grant - even for specialized non-profits should be easier. Our non-profit is run by mothers of those with SMI and it's difficult to find time for the lengthy paperwork. We did one outstanding concert in 2023 with SMI musicians performing thanks to a CalMHSA community grant during mental health month, but from 2024-26 our application was not granted. There are no grants for those who already have the illness. This is a big gap that the Art Council can fix.

- **Name:** Peter Allen (He/Him/His)
  Organization: Teatro Visión de San José, Santa Clara County
  Current or Former Grantee: Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief;Arts and Accessibility;Arts Education Exposure;Creative Youth Development (formerly Youth Arts Action);Impact Projects;Local Impact
  RE: 4. DISCUSSION: Allocations Committee

Dear Council Members:

I write to you to share my perspective as Board President of Teatro Visión, a Chicanx/Latinx theater company based in San José with more than four decades of service to underserved and underrepresented communities. As you consider how to allocate an additional appropriation of $10M in Local Assistance for general operating support, I encourage you to direct this funding toward the pool of prior CAC grantees, including Teatro Visión, who did not receive funding in the initial FY26-27 budget cycle due to a change in spending priorities.

The loss of this funding has put several of our key programs in jeopardy, including our annual youth production and other initiatives with a proven positive impact on local students and communities. Additional support from the California Arts Council would not only help to sustain these programs, but also relieve the burden placed on our organization by cuts in federal and philanthropic funding for BIPOC-led arts organizations with missions grounded in the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

With the spectre of ICE and the Trump administration looming over our community, the work of Teatro Visión to uplift the voices of Latinxs, create a dignified and empowering sense of identity, inspire action, build respect and understanding, and explore the social and psychological experiences of Latinxs is needed more than ever.

Thank you for your service and consideration.

Peter Allen

- **Name:** Marissa Martinez (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: Teatro Vision, Santa Clara County
  Current or Former Grantee: Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief;Arts and Accessibility;Arts Education Exposure;Creative Youth Development (formerly Youth Arts Action);Impact Projects;Local Impact
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Dear Council Members:

I write to you to share my perspective as a board member of Teatro Visión, a Chicanx/Latinx theater company based in San José with more than four decades of service to underserved and underrepresented communities. As you consider how to allocate an additional appropriation of $10M in Local Assistance for general operating support, I encourage you to direct this funding toward the pool of prior CAC grantees, including Teatro Visión, who did not receive funding in the initial FY26-27 budget cycle due to a change in spending priorities.

The loss of this funding has put several of our key programs in jeopardy, including our annual youth production and other initiatives with a proven positive impact on local students and communities. Additional support from the California Arts Council would not only help to sustain these programs, but also relieve the burden placed on our organization by cuts in federal and philanthropic funding for BIPOC-led arts organizations with missions grounded in the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

With the spectre of ICE and the Trump administration looming over our community, the work of Teatro Visión to uplift the voices of Latinxs, create a dignified and empowering sense of identity, inspire action, build respect and understanding, and explore the social and psychological experiences of Latinxs is needed more than ever.

Thank you for your service and consideration.

- **Name:** Salvador Badillo Rios (He/They)
  Organization: Teatro Visión, Santa Clara County
  Current or Former Grantee: Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief;Arts and Accessibility;Arts Education Exposure;Creative Youth Development (formerly Youth Arts Action);Impact Projects;Local Impact
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

I write to you to share my perspective as a board member of Teatro Visión, a Chicanx/Latinx theater company based in San José with more than four decades of service to underserved and underrepresented communities. As you consider how to allocate an additional appropriation of $10M in Local Assistance for general operating support, I encourage you to direct this funding toward the pool of prior CAC grantees, including Teatro Visión, who did not receive funding in the initial FY26-27 budget cycle due to a change in spending priorities.

The loss of this funding has put several of our key programs in jeopardy, including our annual youth production and other initiatives with a proven positive impact on local students and communities. Additional support from the California Arts Council would not only help to sustain these programs, but also relieve the burden placed on our organization by cuts in federal and philanthropic funding for BIPOC-led arts organizations with missions grounded in the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

With the spectre of ICE and the Trump administration looming over our community, the work of Teatro Visión to uplift the voices of Latinxs, create a dignified and empowering sense of identity, inspire action, build respect and understanding, and explore the social and psychological experiences of Latinxs is needed more than ever.

Thank you for your service and consideration.

Salvador Badillo Rios, PhD

- **Name:** Leigh Henderson (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: Teatro Visión, Santa Clara County
  Current or Former Grantee: Arts and Accessibility;Arts Education Exposure;Creative Youth Development (formerly Youth Arts Action);Impact Projects;Local Impact;Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief
  RE: 4. DISCUSSION: Allocations Committee

Dear Council Members:

I am writing as a current board member, former staff member, and longtime artist of Teatro Visión, a Chicanx/Latinx theater company based in San José with more than four decades of service to underserved and underrepresented communities. As you consider how to allocate an additional appropriation of $10M in Local Assistance for general operating support, I encourage you to direct funding toward prior CAC grantees, including Teatro Visión, who did not receive funding in the initial FY26-27 budget cycle due to a change in spending priorities.

The loss of this funding has put several of our key programs in jeopardy, including our annual youth production and other initiatives with a proven positive impact on local students and communities. Additional support from the California Arts Council would not only help to sustain these programs, but also relieve the burden placed on our organization by cuts in federal and philanthropic funding for BIPOC-led arts organizations with missions grounded in the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

With the spectre of ICE and the Trump administration looming over our community, the work of Teatro Visión to uplift the voices of Latinxs, create a dignified and empowering sense of identity, inspire action, build respect and understanding, and explore the social and psychological experiences of Latinxs is needed more than ever.

Thank you for your service and consideration.

Leigh Henderson

- **Name:** ANONYMOUS

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I am writing to strongly advocate for the new funding appropriation to expand support for prior grantees with a proven track record of success. Our organization successfully administered CAC grants in the past, delivering impactful results for our youth and diverse communities. However, we did not receive funding during the last cycle due to highly competitive, limited resource caps.
When proven organizations face funding gaps, critical community pipelines break. Expanding the appropriation is vital to protect infrastructure since prior grantees have the local trust and staff ready to deploy funds immediately and give existing programs continuity.
We urge you to increase the total appropriation so high-performing prior grantees can resume their critical work.

- **Name:** Naomi Diouf (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: Diamano Coura West African Dance Company, Alameda County
  Current or Former Grantee: Artists in Communities;Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief;Folk and Traditional Arts;Impact Projects
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Thanks to CAC and other arts advocacy organizations for this great opportunity respecting arts dissemination. This a great opportunity to grant to the organizations and individuals that were denied funding in the regular funding opportunities due to insufficient funds. We hope the council would consider that this is an opportunity to forward the societal works worth of other organizations. Thanks for the consideration. With great respect; the struggle continues.
Naomi Diouf
Diamano Coura West African Dance Company

- **Name:** Tonya Suker (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: Playful People Productions, Santa Clara County
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

I strongly encourage the Council to allocate ALL of the new influx of funds ($10M) towards the PAEPF grant. Our org was sidelined due to lack of funds from the first round, even though we qualified and larger orgs in our area got funded. As a small non-profit (under $1M annual revenue), these funds would provide a vital lifeline, which was the intention of the PAEPF program. PLEASE continue down the list of already-submitted applicants!
If you decide to require new applications for the program, please give weight to prioritize applicants who were not funded in the first application process (or even restrict previously-funded PAEPF grantees from applying to a subsequent round, for equity purposes, at least for a year?). Please construct a way to distribute the funds to the broadest set of previously-unfunded recipients possible. Our org is fully-AB5 compliant and spends 2/3 of our budget paying fair wages for local CA artists creating live, local theatre. Please help us stabilize our budget and continue to build our Bay Area arts economy!

- **Name:** Linda Grimes (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: San Pedro Waterfront Arts District, Los Angeles County
  Current or Former Grantee: Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief;California Cultural Districts
  RE:

The San Pedro Waterfront Arts District sends our loud support for granting additional funds to for the California Cultural Districts. We have made good use of the current funding and have detailed plans to continue our work to promote San Pedro artists. We appreciate the CAC's understanding that this is crucial work to keep the arts alive in San Pedro and we THANK YOU!

- **Name:** Emily Waenink
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Dear Council Members:

I write to you to share my perspective as a board member of Teatro Visión, a Chicanx/Latinx theater company based in San José with more than four decades of service to underserved and underrepresented communities. As you consider how to allocate an additional appropriation of $10M in Local Assistance for general operating support, I encourage you to direct this funding toward the pool of prior CAC grantees, including Teatro Visión, who did not receive funding in the initial FY26-27 budget cycle due to a change in spending priorities.

The loss of this funding has put several of our key programs in jeopardy, including our annual youth production and other initiatives with a proven positive impact on local students and communities. Additional support from the California Arts Council would not only help to sustain these programs, but also relieve the burden placed on our organization by cuts in federal and philanthropic funding for BIPOC-led arts organizations with missions grounded in the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

With the spectre of ICE and the Trump administration looming over our community, the work of Teatro Visión to uplift the voices of Latinxs, create a dignified and empowering sense of identity, inspire action, build respect and understanding, and explore the social and psychological experiences of Latinxs is needed more than ever.

Thank you for your service and consideration.

Emily

- **Name:** CJ DiMento (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: Oceanside Cultural Arts District, San Diego County
  Current or Former Grantee: California Cultural Districts
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

As an initial designee, the California Cultural Districts program has impacted our City and its arts practitioners and organizations in innumerable ways. We were incredibly prideful and grateful for the platform it provided and continue to be. As an emerging district, created via the pilot program, you helped establish and give visibility to an important asset in the state. The funding support from the CA Arts Council has made possible the first arts & culture staff member in our community's history, allowed us to leverage for additional grant funding as well as making possible grants for over 60 artists. Without the funding, none of this would have happened and most likely will not continue at an impactful level. At the Oceanside Cultural Arts District, we are in alignment with the California Cultural Districts Coalition and we support staff's recommendation of funding for existing cultural districts. Thank you for your ongoing advocacy and support of our work in California's greatest sector!

- **Name:** Amber Evans (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: Rotten City Cultural District - City of Emeryville, Alameda County
  Current or Former Grantee: California Cultural Districts
  RE: 5. Discussion of Council's Role with Cultural District Designations and Designation Grants

Rotten City Cultural District as here https://youtu.be/6UYy8fTvpaE is implementing an award-winning District (Helen Putnam Award for Excellence) and leveraged State funding to receive in kind support from a local retail operator ($72,000/year), partners' artist investments and gallery activations, City investment in public art installations ($75,000) and City support for continued RCCD artist residencies ($30,000). At risk from disinvestment or delay in funding to the RCCD include loss of leveraged space, cancelation, or delay of the Emeryville Cinema Festival after two successful years, loss of residency program (due to loss of funds or loss of space) and/or loss of Art and Culture marketing and programming. We ask that the CAC fund the existing 24 Districts at $150,000 each without a delay relating to application and instead release funds ASAP with careful consideration of and minimization of match. Reporting requirements can insure proper use of funds without delaying programming. Questions regarding qualifying match: will in-kind resources be counted, or funding to partners organizations for art programing, or funds paid prior to allocation (these may be critical to bridge to May 2027 leaving less available funds for match after May 2027), and can ticket prices be considered match? Flexibility in timing and sources of in kind and cash and varied parties making match is critical to funding aligning with needs and mitigation of loss of leveraged resources.

CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL
A STATE AGENCY

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

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

- **Name:** Joselyn Wilkinson (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: Grand Vision Foundation, Los Angeles County
  Current or Former Grantee: Artists in Communities;Artists in Schools;Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief;Arts Education Exposure;Arts Integration Training;California Creative Corps
  RE: Agenda item 4 and 5

Thank you to the members of the California Arts Council for this opportunity. As an artist and administrator who works with CAC grantee organization, Grand Vision Foundation, I strongly recommend utilizing all new allocated funding this fiscal year, and putting it into action in the field where it can sustain cultural workers and work. The demonstrated value and needs of our sector are great, but many donors and funders are pulling back at the same moment that costs of doing business are going up. It is critical that our tax dollars are utilized now to support organizations that do vital cultural work in our communities.

Per agenda item 4, we support Council's idea to double the number of GEN applicants, increasing the total awardees in the GEN OPS category from 662 to 1158. These applications are highly scored and vetted. If Council can meet more of the demonstrated need of the field, it strengthens its standing, effectiveness and case for support for future years, as we continue advocating for a $50 million budget for the CAC.

Per agenda item 5, we support Council's recommendation to open new Cultural District designations in 2027, and grant up to $150,000 per existing CD. However, we recommend that if possible, funding be awarded to CDs that have already demonstrated their worthiness and fiscal responsibility for this current fiscal year. This could be done by granting award extensions for existing grants or by making general support awards.

- **Name:** Taran Schindler (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: Grand Vision Foundation, Los Angeles County
  Current or Former Grantee: Artists in Schools;Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief;Arts Education Exposure;Artists in Communities
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Per agenda item 4, Grand Vision Foundation urges the Council to prioritize additional funding for organizations scoring above 4 and supports the proposal to double the number of GEN applicants, increasing the total awardees in the GEN OPS category from 662 to 1158.
Behind every creative and cultural project is administrative infrastructure that keeps nonprofits running. In these more difficult financial times, supporting these already vetted organizations stabilizes important community programming - in our case, our extensive youth music education program and our live music venue located in San Pedro, an area of the city of Los Angeles with limited access to the arts.
It is essential that the Council fully distribute these funds to signal to state leaders that nonprofits are struggling in today's economy. Leaving money unallocated sends a false message that arts organizations are financially stable, making it far easier for decision-makers to justify future budget cuts.

- **Name:** Jacob Yoder-Schrock (He/Him/His)
  Organization: Teatro Visión, Santa Clara County
  Current or Former Grantee: Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief;Arts and Accessibility;Arts Education Exposure;Creative Youth Development (formerly Youth Arts Action);Impact Projects;Local Impact
  RE: 4. DISCUSSION: Allocations Committee

Dear Council Members:

I write to you to share my perspective as Managing Director of Teatro Visión, a Chicanx/Latinx theater company based in San José with more than four decades of service to underserved and underrepresented communities. As you consider how to allocate an additional appropriation of $10M in Local Assistance for general operating support, I encourage you to direct this funding toward the pool of prior CAC grantees, including Teatro Visión, who did not receive funding in the initial FY26-27 budget cycle due to a change in spending priorities.

The loss of this funding has put several of our key programs in jeopardy, including our annual youth production and other initiatives with a proven positive impact on local students and communities. Additional support from the California Arts Council would not only help to sustain these programs, but also relieve the burden placed on our organization by cuts in federal and philanthropic funding for BIPOC-led arts organizations with missions grounded in the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

With the spectre of ICE and the Trump administration looming over our community, the work of Teatro Visión to uplift the voices of Latinxs, create a dignified and empowering sense of identity, inspire action, build respect and understanding, and explore the social and psychological experiences of Latinxs is needed more than ever.

Thank you for your service and consideration.

Jacob

- **NAME:** Kristin Fukushima (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: Little Tokyo Community Council/Sustainable Little Tokyo, Los Angeles County
  Current or Former Grantee: California Cultural Districts
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Alongside our fellow Cultural Districts, the Little Tokyo Cultural District strongly supports the expansion of this program to designate additional districts. As a member of the first cohort, we have been able to see how powerful and important this program is, and there are many communities and districts that deserve to be included, recognized, and supported within the program. We hope to see the program continued and expanded. We also are excited to see that with additional funding secured, there are opportunities for the existing Cultural Districts, including the first cohort, to be additionally supported. Unrestricted funding for the Cultural Districts is a key tool to support resiliency and growth of the districts. For any matching requirements, we ask that CAC allow districts to fulfill match requirements through in-kind support and other flexible means.
Overall, we support CAC's proposal, and are excited to continue to partner with CAC on the future of California's Cultural Districts.
Best,
Kristin Fukushima

- **Name:** Anne Viricel (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: San Bernardino Symphony Association, San Bernardino County
  Current or Former Grantee: Arts Education Exposure;Creative Youth Development (formerly Youth Arts Action)
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Dear Members of the California Arts Council,
Thank you for your stewardship and for securing the additional $10 million for General Operating Support. I strongly urge the Council to apply this new allocation toward funding the remaining grant applications that have already been vetted through your rigorous peer-review process.
My organization, the San Bernardino Symphony Orchestra, received a strong panel score of 5.7 out of 6 points, just missing the 5.8 funding threshold. Our score was reduced by 0.2 points due to criteria that inadvertently penalize mid-sized, high-impact institutions: having received a previous grant and maintaining an operating budget over $200,000. Our budget size is a direct reflection of the massive, diverse, and historically underserved populations we successfully serve and which the CAC has generously supported in years past.
By applying the new $10 million to fund highly qualified, down-the-line applications like ours, the Council can immediately fulfill its commitment to broad geographic reach and regional funding equity. The Inland Empire remains one of the most consistently underfunded regions for the arts in California (bottom 5% of funding per capita), despite its massive growth and economic need. Utilizing these funds to absorb highly ranked applications would immediately inject resources where they are needed most.
Thank you for your consideration of this request.

- **Name:** Elise Swanson (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: San Pedro Chamber of Commerce, Los Angeles County
  Current or Former Grantee: California Cultural Districts;
  RE: Item 5

Chair Messina Captor and Members of the Council,

The San Pedro Chamber of Commerce strongly supports ongoing state funding for California's Cultural Districts.

As a founding member of the San Pedro Arts & Cultural District, one of the state's original districts, we have seen the impact of state support firsthand. It has drawn visitors to our waterfront and downtown, supported artists and creative businesses, and strengthened our community's identity. For our members, the arts are an economic engine.

We thank the Governor and Legislature for the $4 million augmentation in AB 113, and we urge the Council to:

Create the proposed Activation Grant Program and release up to $150,000 to each existing district this fiscal year so they can continue this important work. Today there is no mechanism to support districts after designation, and established districts are ready to put these funds to work.

Make this the start of ongoing funding. Cultural districts are long-term efforts that need consistent, predictable support.

Adopt the $20,000 minimum for new designation grants so new districts have a real foundation.

Cultural Districts deliver economic development, creative jobs, and a strong sense of place. Please sustain and grow this investment.

Respectfully,
Elise Swanson
President/CEO
San Pedro Chamber of Commerce

CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL
A STATE AGENCY

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

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

- **Name:** Bob Lehman (He/Him/His)
  Organization: San Diego ART Matters, San Diego County
  Current or Former Grantee: Statewide and Regional Networks
  RE: Agenda Items 4 & 5

I want to begin by celebrating this significant new investment in California's arts and culture sector. The additional $10 million for General Operating Support and $4 million for Cultural Districts is exciting news and reflects years of advocacy by artists, organizations and communities across California.

As the Council considers how these new resources are distributed, I encourage CAC to make geographic equity and statewide reach important considerations.

A recent CalMatters analysis found that $86 million in the state budget went directly to arts projects, museums and dance troupes, with more than 40% going to San Francisco. It also found that 17 California counties received no earmark funding at all.

That makes CAC's additional General Operating Support funding especially important. This is an opportunity to ensure state arts investment reaches communities throughout California, including San Diego, the Inland Empire, Central Valley, North State and rural communities.

This is an exciting moment for California arts funding. I hope CAC can use these new resources to strengthen our entire statewide creative ecosystem and expand access to organizations regardless of where they are located.

Thank you to the Council, staff and advocates who helped make this investment possible.

CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL
A STATE AGENCY

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

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

CAC PUBLIC COMMENT SUBMISSIONS
COUNCIL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 30, 2026

- **Name:** Cherese Brauer (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: Diamano Coura West African Dance Company, Alameda County
  Current or Former Grantee: Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief;Impact Projects
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Diamano Coura West African Dance Company based in Oakland, California has been a vital contributor to the vibrant cultural arts and well-being infrastructure of Oakland and the Bay Area for over 30 years. Diamano Coura is part of the Malonga Arts Collective which is a cultural pearl of Oakland, the East Bay, and the Bay Area. Diamano Coura has greatly benefited and remained open due to the support of California Arts Council General Operating Support and Impact Project Grants, but this year we were not awarded either grant for the first time in years. Every penny matters to small, community-based arts organizations like us. Like many other traditional and cultural arts organizations, we are struggling to stay alive and open in the current funding climate and economy. For the first time, the Board of Diamano Coura is at an inflection point where we are discussing how to avoid shuttering our company and programming. It is terrifying and sad. We are requesting to be reconsidered to receive funding for the Impact Project Grant and General Operating support for the FY26-27 fiscal year.

- **Name:** Amy Balsbaugh (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: San Francisco Children's Art Center, San Francisco County
  Current or Former Grantee: Artists in Schools;Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

My organization was 1 of 12 that received a panel score of 6.0 on 2026 Gen Ops cycle. But because we did not qualify for either of the 2 extra points, we only rec'd 40% of the total award amount. I advocate that part of this allocation should be used to increase the total award for orgs that the panel unanimously determined were in complete alignment with the grant priorities.
As to the extra point given for HPI priority by office zip code, that point fails to capture the nuance of location of office vs. where programs are delivered. Although we are in a higher ranked HPI zip code, we are here because of a below-market-value rent we receive being part of a larger nonprofit arts and culture complex (fort mason). The majority of our program work occurs serving economically vulnerable students in the city's zip codes with the lowest HPI rankings.

- **Name:** Ruth Nott (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: Consultant and ArtSpan, San Francisco County
  Current or Former Grantee: Not a current or former grantee;Former grantee at Former organizations
  RE: Distribution of $10M

I recommend allocating the entire $10M this fiscal year. I'm concerned about allocating some of the funds to SLP in 2027-28; perhaps those funds could be removed/reallocated by the State/a new governor. Also, I'm aware of a number of organizations that will not make it to the 2027-28 fiscal year, or have made drastic reductions in expenses, and these funds could help them now. We should also pay attention to how the other $67M is being allocated: those grants will be made before the end of 2026.

- **Name:** Andrew Wood
  Organization: San Francisco International Arts Festival, San Francisco County
  RE: $10 Million for General Operating Grants

Dear Council Members,
I agree that it is better to allocate the funds quickly before the end of the current administration to ensure that it is spent on the arts.
I support the committee recommendation to fund applicants that scored 4.0 or above with $5 million of the additional funds. The ability to double the number of grants awarded will support hundreds of California organizations. A grant from the California Arts Council is very important to our operation and will help us in delivering on our mission and keeping our commitments to our artists, audience and community.
Thank you

- **Name:** Amy Eriksen (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: Arts United San Pedro, Los Angeles County
  Current or Former Grantee: Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief
  RE: Cultural Districts ;6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Thanks to the Council, Staff and all of the Advocates. I want to make sure and share that this is a great inflection point, with the necessity to keep advocating that these funds keep being added to the budget for districts. By the number of people on this quickly added meeting happening today, we see how important these districts have been to our artists across the state.
We must support all 24 districts going forward equally with the knowledge, resources and funding. Helping districts without a clear organization that runs the district to pay for staff to do the projects is very important. Smaller districts, even in urban areas, need this support. We also need more districts to be designated so that the entire legislature starts to see the importance of arts and artists as economic drivers in our neighborhoods.
And a reminder that no match was requested for the first small funding of $10,000 for the first or second round of designations. That small funding gave us a year to figure out what the priorities were for the artists in our district and get ready to hit the ground running when funding could come a year later. We hope that you will designate 20 new districts, especially those already visited. This would help save staff time and get funds to artists quickly, wth the last $400,000, each of those districts could receive $20,000 to start a new precedent for new districts.I agree with everything that Peter Comiskey and Tracy Hudak shared as well.

- **Name:** Joshua Lamont (He/Him/His)
  County: Los Angeles County
  Current or Former Grantee: California Cultural Districts
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Thank you to the Council members, staff, and supporters who have committed to equity in the arts for residents here. The work is seen, felt, and respected.
I write to agree with recommendations set forth today and also acknowledge Ms. Brazell's and Ms. Margolis' statements around funding. As this is a one-time $4M gift, the goal should be to spend the money. Spend the money because there's no telling if funding will come again. So spend the money. I would also caution some Council members fears around designation without funding. If you have the designation, you can always apply for funding. Either now or later, but if you are not designated, you are missing a big portion of funding. I also agree with Tracy Hudack's comments on bypassing organizations/businesses that are already earmarked with legislative funding.
Lastly, I would focus as much funding on general operating expenses as possible. Arts organizations are already programming and will continue to do so with limited to no budget. That work will never stop. What cannot happen is arts organizations having to leave a district altogether because they do not have the general operating support to stay open. It would defeat the purpose of having a cultural district to begin with. And I would include CAC in that. Ensure that there is organizational capacity for this work because the goal is to scale this. If the Council cannot provide for its own needs, how can it provide for us?
Thank you for your work and time!

- **Name:** Jah-Yee (She/Her/Hers)
  County: Alameda County
  Current or Former Grantee: Folk and Traditional Arts
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

I am someone who has greatly benefitted from the arts, especially the deep, transformative work from Diamano Coura West African Dance Company. For over 20 years, I have witnessed the arts heal people, connect people to build community, and be a force for change in our society. In our current climate, it is even more important for funding to be invested in the arts which we know is incredibly powerful tool in education, health, and empowerment. I urge to you to approve the additional appropriations. Thank you.

- **Name:** David Sauer (He/Him/His)
  Organization: Arts Council for Long Beach Board of Directors, Los Angeles County
  Current or Former Grantee: California Creative Corps
  RE: 4: General Operating Support

Hi, I'm David Sauer with the Arts Council for Long Beach Board of Directors. I'm here to support the Allocations Committee's strategy of directing the $10 million in extra operating support toward organizations with a score of 4.7 or higher. Since those applicants have already gone through the panel review process, we can get this money out to communities without unnecessary delays. Local arts councils play a huge role in making these state dollars go further by channeling them straight to the artists and smaller organizations that need them most. I'm proud to be part of that. Thank you so much!

- **Name:** Marc Davidson (Prefer not to answer)
  Organization: Arts Council for Long Beach, Los Angeles County
  Current or Former Grantee: Not a current or former grantee
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

"My Name is Marc Davidson, and I serve on the Board of Directors of the Arts Council for Long Beach. Thank you for the new $4 million investment in the California Cultural Districts program. I encourage the Council to use a portion of this funding to designate additional finalists from this year's cycle. These communities have already been reviewed by the Council, and designating them now would put this investment to work right away while continuing to support the existing districts. Thank you for your consideration.

- **Name:** Lex Leifheit (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: FIELDWAVE, San Francisco County
  Current or Former Grantee: State-Local Partnership;Former SLP grantee, current year review panelist
  RE: Cultural Districts Activation Grants

Dear Council leaders and Commissioners, thank you for providing the public forum and thoughtful discussion regarding the $4 million enhancement budgeted to support California's Cultural Districts.

I am writing as a longtime cultural strategist and grantmaker to recommend that the Cultural District Activation Grant prioritize flexibility, equity, and long-term capacity.

Specifically, I encourage CAC to avoid a mandatory match that could disadvantage districts with less fundraising infrastructure; provide grants as general operating or broadly flexible support rather than project-restricted funding; allow a two-year grant period; recognize regional differences in the cost of doing business without reducing support for lower-cost communities; and evaluate outcomes across three areas—narrative and cultural identity, equitable economic development, and district capacity/strategic planning.

I also recommend a learning-oriented evaluation approach that emphasizes contribution over attribution, allows locally relevant measures, and treats evaluation and capacity-building costs as allowable expenses. These recommendations align with CAC’s Creative Economy Strategic Plan and existing State-Local Partners practices.

In consideration of the public comment form's word limit I've linked to a longer memo:
https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/xjsssn49crbswwljb4u8g/FIELDWAVE_CAC_CulturalDistricts_memo10012026.pdf?rlkey=29vcsp8clz3m3qs9hl51df6rn&st=kdganea0&dl=0

- **Name:** Letitia Ivins (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: The Music Center, Los Angeles County
  Current or Former Grantee: Arts Education Exposure;Arts Integration Training;Artists in Schools;Creative Youth Development (formerly Youth Arts Action);
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT;

After participating in FY27 budget advocacy efforts, we, The Music Center, are heartened by this state budget win! At the table in Sacramento with a truly representative group of fellow arts non-profits: new, legacy, traditional, large, mid-size and smaller arts organizations representing the full breadth of our ecology, we affirmed our symbiotic and mutually supportive way of being.
At The Music Center, we fundraise to employ and/or support over 220 individual artists and upwards of 50 arts organizations per year. We work at scale. Meanwhile, the performing arts field is struggling. Many of us have not bounced back from pre-pandemic levels of activity. Arts production fuels our local economy however surging costs are a barrier to sustaining and growing programs in service of and in response to public need. Compounding this, the loss of state funds prevents The Music Center from reaching numerous LA communities.
We urge the California Arts Council to consider a nuanced approach to state funding – one that acknowledges both the broad reach and impact of all organizations, as well as the costs borne by larger arts-producing organizations, by creating funding opportunities to organizations with budget sizes above the current $3-5M threshold. This is not a zero-sum game; it is the sum of our diverse and interconnected field that deserves state support.

- **Name:** Italia Bautista (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: Teatro Visión
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Dear Council Members:

I write to you to share my perspective as a staff member of Teatro Visión, a Chicanx/Latinx theater company based in San José with more than four decades of service to underserved and underrepresented communities. As you consider how to allocate an additional appropriation of $10M in Local Assistance for general operating support, I encourage you to direct this funding toward the pool of prior CAC grantees, including Teatro Visión, who did not receive funding in the initial FY26-27 budget cycle due to a change in spending priorities.

The loss of this funding has put several of our key programs in jeopardy, including our annual youth production and other initiatives with a proven positive impact on local students and communities. Additional support from the California Arts Council would not only help to sustain these programs, but also relieve the burden placed on our organization by cuts in federal and philanthropic funding for BIPOC-led arts organizations with missions grounded in the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

With the spectre of ICE and the Trump administration looming over our community, the work of Teatro Visión to uplift the voices of Latinxs, create a dignified and empowering sense of identity, inspire action, build respect and understanding, and explore the social and psychological experiences of Latinxs is needed more than ever.

Thank you for your service and consideration.

Italia Bautista Barcenas

- **Name:** Naima Orozco-Valdivia (She/Her/Hers)
  Organization: Center Theatre Group, Los Angeles County
  Current or Former Grantee: Arts & Cultural Organizations General Operating Relief
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

I'm writing on behalf of Center Theatre Group to urge the CAC to allow organizations above the current $3 million threshold to be eligible for the additional funding received.
The California arts ecosystem does not operate in isolation. Organizations of every size depend on one another to collaborate, provide platforms for artists, create employment, and develop audiences. Organizations like CTG play an important role, not only through our own programs, but by connecting artists, organizations, and communities to resources and opportunities. For CTG this has taken various forms including but not limited to providing free rehearsal space for nonprofits in our region. In Los Angeles, where access to space is difficult and costly, this support of local artists uplifts the regions' arts ecosystem.
Excluding organizations based solely on budget size risks reducing the reach of public investment and limiting programs that have introduced generations of people to the arts. CAC support for CTG's Storytelling Residency Program has allowed us to build multi-year relationships with high schools and provide consistent opportunities for students and teaching artists. That continuity creates meaningful, lasting impact and requires stable, diverse funding.
We ask the CAC to recognize the interconnected nature of California's arts ecosystem and expand eligibility above the $3 million threshold so public funds can support collaboration, access, and impact across the full sector.

- **Name:** Amanda Fruta (She/Her/Hers)
  RE: 6. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Item 5: Cultural Districts
"My Name is [Name], and I serve on the Board of Directors of the Arts Council for Long Beach. Thank you for the new $4 million investment in the California Cultural Districts program. I encourage the Council to use a portion of this funding to designate additional finalists from this year's cycle. These communities have already been reviewed by the Council, and designating them now would put this investment to work right away while continuing to support the existing districts. Thank you for your consideration."