



COMMUNITY INVESTMENTS COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE ARTS COMMISSION

Tuesday, August 26 2025
1:00 p.m.
City Hall, Room 416
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
Minutes

Chair Collins called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, Agenda Changes, Land Acknowledgment (0:22)

Commissioners Present:

Charles Collins, Chair
Seth Brenzel
Marcus Shelby
Debra Walker

Commissioners Absent:

Janine Shiota
J. Riccardo Benavides
Nabiel Musleh

Staff Present:

Ralph Remington, Director of Cultural Affairs
Ebon Glenn, Deputy Director of Programs
Sarah Hollenbeck, Deputy Director of Finance and Administration



Denise Pate, Director of Community Investments
Anne Trickey and Jonell Molina, Senior Program Officers
Jennifer Atwood, Jennifer Chu, and Coco Duhon-Kelley, Program Officers
Jax Blaska, Kingsley Sun, and Natalia Perez, Program Associates
Manraj Dhaliwal, Commission Secretary

Also Present:

Destiny Muhammad, Cultural Ambassador

There were no changes to the agenda.

Chair Collins announced public meeting instructions.

Program Associate Perez announced public comment instructions.

Commissioner Brenzel read the Arts Commission's land acknowledgment statement.

2. General Public Comment (6:41)

There was no public comment.

3. GLBT Historical Society SPX Amendment (7:32)

Director of Community Investments Denise Pate and Senior Program Officer Jonell Molina presented the item.

The amendment extends the grant term through December 31, 2026, and adds \$400,000 in funding for a total of \$800,000. The grant supports operations and programming for the GLBT Historical Society (GLBTHS)'s transition to a new permanent location at 2280 Market Street.

Director Pate shared that this is a sole-source grant from the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development, and that GLBTHS has a



partnership with Community Arts Stabilization Trust (CAST) to help the transition to their new permanent space.

Senior Program Officer Molina shared that members of the Community Investments staff visited GLBTHS during Pride Month, and GLBTHS leadership led a tour of the museum's current exhibitions.

Chair Collins requested discussion, comments, or questions from commissioners.

Commissioner Walker asked to clarify the reason for the increase in grant funds. Director Pate shared that it is to continue to support their operations, planning, and the transition to the new building. Commissioner Walker emphasized the need for coordination and resource sharing among cultural centers.

Commissioner Brenzel asked for the address of the new location.

Deputy Director of Programs Ebon Glenn shared that it is 2280 Market Street. Deputy Director Glenn provided additional context on the lease and long-term planning for the site, including plans for other organizations sharing the space, and maintaining an ongoing programmatic relationship between the Commission, other City departments, and GLBTHS.

Commissioners discussed the importance of interdepartmental collaboration, multi-organizational efforts, and long-term sustainability for arts organizations in San Francisco.

Seeing no additional questions, Chair Collins shared the following:

Motion to approve an amendment of grant 25SPX01 Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society (GLBTHS) to extend the grant term through December 31, 2026 and add \$400,000 of additional funds, for a grant total of \$800,000, to support operations and programming; including operational and programmatic readiness to transition the GLBTHS to a new permanent location as the nation's first full-scale, co-located LGBTQ+



history museum and archive in San Francisco, and to authorize the Director of Cultural Affairs to enter into a grant amendment of \$800,000 at this time.

Commissioner Shelby, seconded by Commissioner Walker, moved to approve the amendment of grant 25SPX01 to the GLBT Historical Society as described.

There was no public comment.

The motion was unanimously approved.

4. American Indian Cultural Center Grant (20:13)

Director Pate and Senior Program Officer Molina presented the item. The recommendation is to award a FY25–26 grant not to exceed \$284,572 to SOMArts, with The American Indian Cultural Center of San Francisco as sub-grantee. The grant consolidates two years of support following compliance efforts.

Chair Collins requested discussion, comments, or questions from commissioners.

Commissioner Brenzel asked for clarification on which two years of support this grant funding consolidates. Director Pate clarified that this grant consolidates the funding for the 2024-2025 fiscal year and the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

Commissioners applauded the efforts of Program Officer Coco Duhon-Kelley and Senior Compliance Officer Molly Barrons to bring the American Indian Cultural Center back into compliance with the City.

Commissioner Walker discussed the importance of supporting and visiting cultural centers.

Seeing no additional questions, Chair Collins shared the following:



Motion to approve the Cultural Center fiscal year 2025-2026 grant amount not to exceed \$284,572 to SOMArts with sub-grantee The American Indian Cultural Center of San Francisco to support the operation and programming of this virtual cultural center and to ensure that this cultural center remains a vital contributor to the cultural life of the City; and to authorize the Director of Cultural Affairs to enter into a grant agreement not to exceed \$284,572 at this time.

Commissioner Walker, seconded by Commissioner Brenzel, moved to approve the grant as described.

There was no public comment.

The motion was unanimously approved.

5. Update to Appeals Procedure (30:17)

Director of Community Investments Denise Pate and Senior Program Officer Anne Trickey presented an update to the Arts Commission's appeals procedure, which had not been revised since its original adoption in 1994. The update was prompted by recent feedback from applicants and community members seeking greater clarity on what constitutes an appealable issue and how to navigate the process. The revised policy is intended to reflect current practices and ensure transparency and fairness in the grantmaking process.

Director Pate explained that the updated procedure now clearly outlines the types of issues that are eligible for appeal, such as receiving incorrect information from staff or identifying a conflict of interest during the panel process. It also clarifies what is not appealable, including dissatisfaction with panel scores or dissatisfaction with funding recommendations as a



whole. The revised language replaces outdated terminology and aligns with how the department currently communicates with applicants.

Senior Program Officer Trickey added that the original appeals policy was developed in response to community advocacy during the early years of the Cultural Equity Endowment. While the core principles remain intact, the updated version provides more accessible language and a step-by-step explanation of the process. Applicants are now encouraged to first contact their Program Officer to resolve concerns before escalating to higher levels of review. This approach is intended to foster better communication and reduce confusion.

Chair Collins requested discussion, comments, or questions from commissioners.

Commissioner Walker emphasized the importance of having a clear and fair process and asked for clarification about who can appeal. Senior Program Officer Trickey confirmed that only the applicant can appeal.

Commissioner Walker requested a redlined version of the changes for reference, and Senior Program Officer Trickey confirmed that the updated policy would be made available on the Commission's website.

Seeing no additional questions, Chair Collins shared the following:

Motion to approve an update to the Appeals Procedure approved by
RESOLUTION NO. 0502-94-244.

Commissioner Brenzel, seconded by Commissioner Shelby, moved to approve the updated appeals procedure.

There was no public comment.

The motion was unanimously approved.



6. Arts Impact Endowment Year One Survey

Findings (39:41)

Senior Program Officer Jonell Molina presented findings from the Year One Survey of the Arts Impact Endowment (AIE) program. The survey was conducted to gather feedback from applicants and grantees who participated in the FY25 grant cycle, with the goal of improving the program's clarity, accessibility, and effectiveness in future years. The survey received 89 responses, representing approximately 39% of the total applicant pool.

Senior Program Officer Molina explained that the survey responses were analyzed through a collaborative process by staff, who identified recurring themes and areas for improvement. A significant portion of respondents reported difficulty understanding the distinctions between the Arts Impact Endowment and the Cultural Equity Endowment, as well as confusion around the Arts Impact Endowment's three funding channels. Many also noted that the application language was overly technical and could be made more accessible.

The survey also revealed that while technical assistance sessions were helpful, applicants would benefit from more targeted outreach and clearer communication about eligibility and funding priorities. Concerns about displacement and the challenges of maintaining creative practice in San Francisco were also raised, reinforcing the relevance of the program's theme, "Keeping Artists in San Francisco."

In response to the feedback, Senior Program Officer Molina shared that the Community Investments team is implementing several improvements for the FY26 grant cycle. These include simplifying application language, refining funding area descriptions, and expanding outreach strategies. The team is also enhancing its internal data analysis capacity to better track applicant demographics and engagement trends.



Commissioners expressed appreciation for the thoughtful approach to community feedback. Commissioner Walker emphasized the importance of using data to inform equitable grantmaking, and Commissioner Collins requested a clear summary of the distinctions between the two endowments to support public communication.

There was no public comment.

7. Preview of FY25–26 Guideline Changes (55:36)

Senior Program Officer Anne Trickey presented an overview of the upcoming changes to the FY25–26 grant guidelines. They began by noting where Commissioners and members of the public could find information about SFAC's upcoming grants opportunities, on the [grants landing webpage](#). They also shared that, due to the City's Behested Payment Policy, Community Investments staff are not permitted to share any information, such as when grant applications are going live or what grant categories will be available, with individuals or small groups before that information is announced publicly, via public meetings, or SFAC's website, newsletter, and social media channels.

Senior Program Officer Trickey highlighted that all changes to this year's guidelines would be rolled out with a robust suite of technical assistance webinars during which staff will make themselves available to connect with members of the community and answer questions.

Senior Program Officer Trickey then shared continued successes from the last grants cycle, such as the consolidation of all grant guidelines into a single, streamlined document to improve clarity and accessibility for applicants.

The major change this year is that the Arts Commission will offer only two primary grant categories: the Arts Impact Endowment and the Artistic



Legacy Grant. All available funding from both the Arts Impact and Cultural Equity Endowments will be distributed through these two categories, though the funding sources remain distinct. All applicants who would otherwise have been eligible to apply to the Cultural Equity Initiatives or the San Francisco Artist grant categories will still be eligible to apply to either the Arts Impact Endowment or the Artistic Legacy Grant. Applicants will have to choose only one grant category for their application and are not allowed to apply to both. Organizations will still be able to apply to Special Project Grants, which is a separate category whose funding comes from a different source than either of the Endowments.

Senior Program Officer Trickey explained that the three funding channels under the Arts Impact Endowment have been renamed and clarified based on community feedback from the Year One Survey. The new names for the three funding channels are: General Support 1: Ongoing Work, General Support 2: Growth and Planning, and Project Support. These changes aim to reduce confusion and better align with applicants' needs. For example, General Support 1 will provide general operating support for organizations and basic needs for artists, while General Support 2 will focus on planning, growth, and equipment-related needs. Project Support will fund time-limited, creative initiatives.

An update to the Artistic Legacy Grant is that this year the award is increased to \$100,000, up from \$75,000 last year.

To improve the applicant experience, the application process in SmartSimple has been redesigned to separate artist and organization applications. The team has also introduced a new visual "donut chart" to illustrate the weight of each scoring criterion, such as racial equity, project design, and community impact. These changes are intended to help applicants better understand how each section of their application will be evaluated as one whole, cohesive proposal, and to support more equitable outcomes.



A significant policy update this year is the implementation of a new payment policy for grantees, in compliance with new guidelines from the Office of the Controller, Accounting Policies and Procedures Section 4.4.4.1. Grantees will be able to request up to half of their grant amount upfront, with the remainder disbursed through quarterly reimbursements. An informational session on this policy will be held on September 9, 2025, 6pm, over Zoom ([external link: Zoom meeting launch](#)), and will include leadership from across the Arts Commission to answer questions and gather community feedback.

Commissioners expressed support for the changes and emphasized the importance of continued outreach and transparency.

Commissioner Walker asked for clarification about the Advance Payment Policy's relevance to future grant cycles after the fiscal year 2025-26 cycle. Deputy Director of Finance and Administration Sarah Hollenbeck shared that the current Advance Payment Policy is the approved plan, and there is no planned sunset of this policy.

Commissioner Brenzel asked for clarification about what the previous policy was regarding upfront payments of grant awards. Director of Community Investments Denise Pate responded that previously, the amount awarded upfront depended on the grant category and ranged from 50-90% of the total grant award.

Commissioner Collins asked about providing definitions for terms used in the grant application and guidelines, to support applicants' understanding of what is meant by each term. Senior Program Officer Trickey confirmed that there is a glossary of terms included in the guidelines document, and that staff provide detailed explanations during technical assistance webinars.

Commissioner Collins commented on the use of the term Racial Equity as a scoring area and questioned whether it was a broad enough term to capture what was meant by that scoring area. Senior Program Officer



Trickey shared that that category came out of the Arts Commission being the first City agency to implement a Racial Equity statement. They shared that Racial Equity is used as a framework to understand equity in an intersectional way. They reiterated that these terms are discussed in depth with prospective applicants during technical assistance webinars.

Commissioner Walker advocated for increased communication, engagement, and accessibility. She asked for a date that the grant guidelines would be made public. Senior Program Officer Trickey said that staff is targeting a mid-September launch date, but that staff cannot be more definitive because the guidelines are still in the approvals process.

There was no public comment.

8. Cultural Ambassador Update (1:25:01)

Senior Program Officer Jonell Molina and Program Officer Jennifer Chu presented an update on the FY26 Cultural Ambassador Program. They introduced the four selected ambassadors: Ebtí, Destiny Muhammad, Nihan Roth, and Sequoya Waukazoo-Nakai. Each ambassador brings a unique artistic background and community connection, representing disciplines such as music, curation, performance, and cultural craft. The ambassadors will focus on outreach to underrepresented communities, including Bayview-Hunters Point, Native and Indigenous communities, and the disability and SWANA (Southwest Asian and North African) communities. The honorarium for ambassadors was increased this year to \$3,145, reflecting a commitment to equitable compensation for their time and expertise.

Program Officer Chu described the outreach strategies being implemented in partnership with the ambassadors, including in-person grant information sessions, hybrid events, and social media engagement. Two in-person sessions are scheduled: one at the San Francisco Disability Cultural Center



and another at the Southeast Community Center in Bayview-Hunters Point. The team is collaborating with the Office on Disability and Accessibility and the African American Arts and Cultural District to strengthen community ties and improve accessibility. Flyers, social media content, and Instagram Live sessions will be used to promote grant opportunities and panelist recruitment.

Cultural Ambassador Destiny Muhammad addressed the Commission and shared her personal journey as an artist and advocate. She emphasized the importance of bridge-building between the Arts Commission and communities that have historically lacked access to public funding. Cultural Ambassador Muhammad spoke passionately about the transformative power of grant funding for working artists and emphasized her commitment to helping artists navigate the grant process.

Commissioners expressed deep appreciation for her remarks and voiced strong support for the continued growth of the Cultural Ambassador Program. Commissioner Walker expressed support for the development of arts outreach programs to different communities and neighborhoods of San Francisco.

Commissioner Brenzel asked for a flyer to share widely when the grant applications are public and suggested that Commissioners can also serve as ambassadors for the grants. Commissioner Collins suggested forwarding the SFAC newsletter on to their colleagues and contacts.

There was no public comment.

9. Staff Report (1:49:50)

Director of Community Investments Denise Pate delivered the staff report, beginning with the formal introduction of Dr. Jonell Molina as the newly promoted Senior Program Officer.



Director Pate reported that all Dream Keeper Initiative (DKI) grants administered by the Arts Commission have been successfully closed out or amended to allow grantees to complete their projects. She emphasized that these grants were already under contract and had received their initial disbursements prior to the City's broader review of DKI funding. Many of the projects have concluded, and final reports are being submitted.

She also shared that the Community Investments team is preparing for a virtual community meeting on the City's new advance payment policy, which will allow grantees to request up to 50% of their grant amount upfront. The meeting will include a presentation, live polling, and opportunities for public comment. Staff is working closely with the Communications team to ensure broad outreach and accessibility.

In addition, Director Pate noted that a separate meeting with Cultural Center directors is scheduled for September. This meeting will provide space for directors to share feedback on the advance payment policy and discuss operational updates. Given the size and scope of Cultural Center grants, the department is prioritizing direct engagement with these organizations to ensure a smooth transition to the new disbursement structure.

Commissioners expressed appreciation for the staff's efforts and reiterated the importance of clarifying the Commission's role in both funding and programming, particularly in relation to the City-owned cultural center buildings.

There was no public comment.

10. Adjournment (2:01:09)

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:01pm.