



City and County of San Francisco
Daniel Lurie, Mayor

Minutes for Community Investments Committee, June 17, 2026



Minutes

Chair Shiota called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, Agenda Changes, Land Acknowledgment (00:00:01)

Commissioners Present

Janine Shiota, Chair
Suzie Ferras
Nabiel Musleh
Debra Walker

Commissioners Absent

Seth Brenzel
Marcus Shelby

Staff Present

Ebon Glenn, Deputy Director of Programs
Denise Pate, Director of Community Investments

Molly Barrons, Senior Compliance Officer

Anne Trickey, Senior Program Officer

Jonell Molina, Senior Program Officer

Jennifer Chu, Program Officer

Coco Duhon-Kelley, Program Officer

Kingsley Sun, Program Associate

Jax Blaska, Program Associate

Natalia Perez, Program Associate

George Lee, Capital Project Manager

Manraj Dhaliwal, Commission Secretary

No agenda changes were made.

Chair Shiota announced the public meeting instructions.

Program Associate Natalia Perez announced the public meeting instructions.

Commissioner Walker began the meeting by reading the Arts Commission's land acknowledgment statement.

2. General Public Comment

(00:06:13)

Public Comment(s)

Geoffrey Grier, SF Recovery Theatre

Grier expressed concerns regarding the City's grant compliance processes, IRS documentation timelines, and the administrative handling of certain grant funds. He urged the Commission to push back against policies that negatively impact artists and small organizations.

Rachelle Axel, Arts for a Better Bay Area

Axel commented on Prop E allocations and the increase in administrative fees. She stated concern that community organizations now face reduced funding because of staff-related allocations and stressed the need for advocacy by the Commission during the budget process.

Shrey Purohit, Individual Artist and Arts Administrator

Purohit reflected on the financial strain that new disbursement, reporting, and reimbursement policies create for individual artists, and noted that some artists may consider declining grants because of these burdens.

Dre Davis, SOMArts

Davis requested clarity around implementation of new payment policies and asked for greater collaboration with arts organizations during policy roll-out.

There was no additional public comment.

3. Community Investments Grant Program Policy Updates

(00:16:51)

Deputy Director of Programs Ebon Glenn and Director of Community Investments Denise Pate presented an overview of the development of SFAC's new payment documentation and advance disbursement policies, in accordance with new Citywide policy. Staff explained that the Controller's Office has directed all City departments to adopt standardized payment and documentation requirements and that CI staff have been working to create a specialized policy that meets the Controller's requirements while meeting the needs of artist and arts organization grantees.

Staff reported that the proposed policy would require documentation only from 10% of competitive (non-Cultural Center) grantees and would not require receipts for items under \$25. Staff also reported that SFAC's proposed advance payment model would allow up to 50% of grant funds to be disbursed at the start of the grant term, with the remainder on a reimbursement basis, up from 10% of the Controller's baseline model. Staff stated that the policies as presented are still in draft.

Commissioners discussed the challenges facing the arts community, including increasing operational costs and the financial vulnerability of individual artists. Commissioners acknowledged the complexity of aligning Citywide standards with the diverse needs of grantees and commended staff

for their continued work. Commissioners stressed that any policy changes must not unintentionally harm small organizations or individual artists.

Public Comment(s)

Anne Bluethenthal, Individual Artist, ABD Productions, Skywalkers

Bluethenthal stated that the proposed documentation and reimbursement requirements would create significant hardship for artists and small organizations. She expressed concern about increased administrative burdens, limited cash flow, and the risk that artists would be unable to complete grant-funded projects. She urged the Commission to rescind the requirements and involve artists directly in shaping any future policy.

Vinay Patel, Executive Director, Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Center

Patel noted that the 50 percent advance model had already been introduced in 2025 before it was rolled back, meaning that the new policy is not an update, but rather the implementation of the same proposed policy. He commented on additional compliance mandates facing individual artists, including liability insurance requirements, and emphasized that multiple new policies collectively jeopardize the viability of many grantees. He urged the Commission to advocate across City departments for equitable standards.

Kim Acebo Arteché, Executive Director, Brava for Women in the Arts

Arteché described the severe limitations that a reimbursement-based system would impose on fiscally sponsored projects and small arts organizations, many of which operate with little to no discretionary cash. She emphasized that project directors often sacrifice their own pay to sustain programming and that requiring them to front expenses would halt essential community arts activities.

Shrey Purohit, Individual Artist and Arts Administrator

Purohit detailed the financial impact the proposed advance and reimbursement model would have on low-income artists. He shared specific calculations demonstrating that upfront costs, taxes, insurance, and quarterly reporting obligations would render his own grant financially unworkable. He stated that many artists may need loans or credit to remain compliant and

that the policy creates barriers to participation in publicly funded arts programs.

Rachelle Axel, Arts for a Better Bay Area

Axel expressed concern that staff statements about these policies still being in draft conflicts with public presentations, written guidelines, and grant intake processes already in progress with grantees, causing confusion in the community. She urged the Commission to engage its full authority in advocating directly with the Controller's Office, City leadership, and Supervisors, noting that community members have already been in contact with these offices. She also emphasized the desire for true co-creation of policy rather than presentation of predetermined frameworks.

Stella Adelman, Dance Mission Theater

Adelman stated that the proposed reimbursement and documentation requirements would place an untenable burden on small arts organizations and the individual artists they serve. She explained that many organizations would be unable to front costs for multiple months, and may be forced to take out loans or else halt programming entirely for groups without financial reserves. She urged the Commission to advocate forcefully with City leadership to prevent policies that would disproportionately harm low-income artists and community-based organizations.

Geoffrey Grier, San Francisco Recovery Theatre

Grier expressed a lack of clarity surrounding the source and justification of the proposed financial policies. He stated that artists and small organizations feel unsupported and obstructed by increasing administrative demands, and he urged the Commission to intervene directly with the appropriate City departments. He emphasized the need for equitable treatment and stated that the burden of past financial mismanagement should not fall on the arts community.

There was no additional public comment.

4. Cultural Center Seismic Retrofit Update **(01:13:55)**

Capital Project Manager George Lee presented an update on the seismic retrofit projects at the African American Art & Culture Complex (AAACC) and the Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts (MCCLA). He explained that both buildings require significant seismic upgrades that will necessitate temporary relocation. Lee reported that construction is scheduled to begin in January 2027 and that both centers retain the right to return to their facilities upon completion.

Lee reviewed major components of the work, including seismic structural updates, roof replacement, HVAC modernization, electrical upgrades, accessibility improvements, and select interior repairs. He noted that relocation planning is underway and that both centers received relocation grants to support the move. Staff indicated that operating grants will continue through the relocation period.

Commissioners asked about relocation options for programming, including potential space in the Fillmore for AAACC. Staff confirmed ongoing coordination with other City departments and community partners to identify temporary space and stated that staff are working closely with both centers to support their transition.

There was no public comment.

5. Cultural Ambassador Program Update **(01:29:04)**

Senior Program Officer Jonell Molina and Program Officer Jennifer Chu presented an update on the Cultural Ambassador Program. Staff announced that applications for the FY27 cohort are open through July 15 and that four ambassadors will be selected. Staff reviewed the program's outreach goals and described how ambassadors extend staff capacity by conducting community-based outreach during the fall grant season.

Ambassadors typically work approximately 85 hours between September and November. Staff noted that a recorded webinar and related application materials will be available online and encouraged Commissioners to refer potential applicants.

Commissioners asked about eligibility and whether ambassadors may return for additional cycles. Staff stated that ambassadors may reapply each year but generally serve no more than two cycles.

Public Comment(s)

Shrey Purohit, Individual Artist and Arts Administrator

Purohit commented on the importance of the program and suggested that ambassadors receive a portion of their stipend upfront to better support their participation.

There was no additional public comment.

6. Arts Impact Endowment Grant – International Art Museum of America (01:40:40)

Director Pate reported that one organization that was previously recommended for funding dissolved after the application period. Staff recommended awarding the next highest-scoring organization in the panel ranking: International Art Museum of America, \$50,000.

Commissioner Walker, seconded by Commissioner Musleh, moved to approve the funding recommendation.

There was no public comment.

The motion was unanimously approved.

7. Staff Report (01:42:56)

Director Pate announced that Program Officer Jennifer Atwood would be leaving the agency on June 30 and that Maysoun Wazwaz, currently with SFAC Galleries, will transition to the Community Investments team to support individual artist grants and art vendor programs.

Pate reported that Cultural Center presentations will continue at Full Commission meetings and that staff are finalizing novation agreements for MCCLA's archive grant and relocation funding. She stated that FY27–28 grant guidelines will be released in mid-September and that the grant category previously titled Special Project Grants, which disburses money from outside of the Arts Commission's endowments, will be renamed Defined Scope Grants, and will include Dreamkeeper Initiative funds.

There was no public comment.

8. New Business and Announcements

(01:51:21)

Chair Shiota invited new business and announcements. No Commissioners brought new business or announcements to the Committee.

There was no public comment.

9. Adjournment

(01:51:21)

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Minutes posted 7/8/26, JB.