



**Regular Meeting of the
Cuyahoga Arts & Culture Board of Trustees**

Cleveland Public Library - Main Branch, Louis Stokes Wing, 2nd Floor
325 Superior Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44114
Tuesday, February 25, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.

- 1. Call to order, approval of minutes**
 - a. Call to order
 - b. Call the roll
 - c. **Action:** Motion to approve December 18, 2024 minutes
- 2. Public Comment on Today's Agenda**
- 3. Connect with Culture – Cleveland International Film Festival**
- 4. Executive Director Report**
- 5. Reports – Finance and General Business**
 - a. Finance Report
- 6. Reports and Action – Grantmaking**
 - a. Grantee Connect Series Update
 - b. **Action:** 2026 Grantmaking Objectives
- 7. Public Comment on CAC General Business**
- 8. CAC Board and Staff Work Session**
 - a. Discussion of Financial Forecasting
- 9. Adjourn**

Next Meeting: Annual Meeting - Wednesday, April 16, 2025 at 4 p.m.
Cleveland Public Library - Martin Luther King Branch, Tech Room
10601 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44106



Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees
Wednesday, December 18, 2024

A regular meeting of the Cuyahoga Arts & Culture (CAC) Board of Trustees was called to order at 3:42 p.m. at Cleveland Public Library, Main Branch, Louis Stokes Wing, 2nd Floor.

The roll call showed that Trustees Isenhart, Scott Taylor, and Vernaci were present. It was determined that there was a quorum. Trustee DiCosimo arrived at 3:55 p.m.

Also in attendance were Executive Director Jill Paulsen and CAC staff.

Trustee Isenhart welcomed guests to the last CAC Board meeting of the year. She noted that 2024 was an exciting year, including the passage of levy that ensures CAC can make grants to nonprofits through 2035. Trustee Isenhart reminded the Board that CAC made grants to organizations for 2025 at its November 2024 meeting and indicated that this December meeting would continue CAC's planning for next year.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Action: To approve the minutes of the November 20, 2024 Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Motion by – Trustee Scott Taylor

Seconded by – Trustee Vernaci

Vote to approve the minutes from the November 20, 2024 meeting.

Ayes: all ayes

The motion carried.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Action: At 3:46 p.m., to adjourn to executive session to consider the compensation and performance of public employees.

Motion by – Trustee Vernaci

Seconded by – Trustee Scott Taylor

Roll Call Vote: Isenhart, aye; Scott Taylor, aye; Vernaci, aye.

The motion carried.

At 4:40 p.m. executive session adjourned, and the Board resumed the public meeting.

(Trustee DiCosimo arrived at 3:55 p.m. and joined executive session.)

Approval of Personnel Report

Action: To approve the Personnel Report dated December 18, 2024.

Motion by – Trustee Scott Taylor

Seconded by – Trustee Vernaci

Vote to approve the Personnel Report dated December 18, 2024.

Ayes: all ayes

The motion carried.

3. CONNECT WTH CULTURE

Sarah Sisser, executive director of Creative Ohio, provided an overview of the mission of Creative Ohio and an update on their statewide arts advocacy work in 2024.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT ON MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

No public comment.

5. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Ms. Paulsen thanked everyone for joining her and the Board. Ms. Paulsen’s remarks can be found in the meeting materials.

6. GRANTMAKING

Resident-Led Grant to Neighborhood Connections

Action: To approve a grant to Neighborhood Connections to provide responsive, resident-led grantmaking and to hold Arts & Culture Network Nights in 2025 in the amount to of \$60,500.

Motion by – Trustee Scott Taylor

Seconded by – Trustee DiCosimo

Vote: To approve a grant to Neighborhood Connections to provide responsive, resident-led grantmaking and to hold Arts & Culture Network Nights in 2025 in the amount of \$60,500.

Ayes: all ayes

The motion carried.

Support for Artists Grant

Action: To approve a one-year grant in the amount of \$500,000 to Assembly for the Arts to design and manage a program that provides support for Cuyahoga County artists throughout 2025.

Motion by – Trustee Scott Taylor

Seconded by – Trustee Vernaci

Vote to approve a one-year grant in the amount of \$500,000 to Assembly for the Arts to design and manage a program that provides support for Cuyahoga County artists throughout 2025.

Discussion: It was confirmed that Assembly relayed to CAC that it has informed all current program nonprofit partners that they will no longer receive funds for this work from Assembly in 2025. Mr. Sinatra, CAC's director of grantmaking strategy and communications, stated that Assembly designed its 2025 program to manage all of artist support program activities, thereby reducing overhead expenses and ensuring that more money will be dedicated to the Assembly's artist programming.

Ayes: all ayes

The motion carried.

Update – Grantee Connect Series + 2026 Planning.

Ms. Paulsen and Mr. Sinatra provided an update on planning as well as plans for Q1 and Q2 of 2025.

- Grantee Meetups to share progress on CAC research and planning in January
- Series of listening sessions for grant recipients to share feedback on grant programs in February
- Public feedback period on guidelines in March

The Board asked if CAC plans to seek feedback from the broader community to hear from people who are not affiliated with organizations but attendees of arts and cultural programs. Ms. Paulsen said that in the past CAC has done that from time to time, but that CAC works directly with nonprofits and currently has a lesser capacity to engage residents directly.

7. FINANCE REPORT

Ms. Harris provided a financial update through November 2024, included in the meeting materials.

Revenue. Tax revenue through November 30 was \$8,047,150. This is \$319,777 (3.8%) below budget year-to-date and \$1,119,163 (12.2%) below revenue for the same period in 2023. Interest revenue through November was \$427,839 which is \$5,339 (1.2%) above forecast.

Expenditure. Non-grant expenditures through November were \$888,882 and are tracking under budget by \$73,854 due to timing of payments.

2024 Year End Outlook

Revenue is expected to be approximately \$350,000 lower than forecast at year end, pending tax receipts for December. Expenses for 2024 will be approximately \$350,000 below budget primarily due to reductions/cancelled grant payments and modest lower-than-budgeted expenses. In addition to monthly tax and interest revenue, CAC has used \$2.8 million from its general fund to issue grant payments and for operational expenditures which is in alignment with the budget.

2025 Budget

Action: To approve Cuyahoga Arts & Culture's 2025 budget in the amount of \$12,417,684.

Motion by – Trustee DiCosimo
Seconded by – Trustee Scott Taylor

Discussion: The Board posed several questions regarding changes in budget year-over-year and how invested funds are managed. Staff responded to the questions.

Vote to approve Cuyahoga Arts & Culture’s 2025 budget in the amount of \$12,417,684.

Ayes: all ayes

The motion carried.

8. APPROVAL OF CONTRACTS

FIT Technologies

Action: To approve a one-year contract with FIT Technologies for IT support for \$21,120.

Motion by – Trustee Scott Taylor
Seconded by – Trustee Vernaci

Discussion: None

Vote: To approve a contract with FIT Technologies for IT support for \$21,120.

Ayes: all ayes

The motion carried.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT ON CAC BUSINESS

No public comment.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Trustee Scott Taylor, seconded by Trustee DiCosimo, to adjourn the meeting.

Vote: all ayes

The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:43 p.m.

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 25, 2025.

Attest: _____
Leonard DiCosimo
Secretary, Board of Trustees

Executive Director's Report

February 25, 2025

Welcome to our first Board meeting of 2025.

The focus of today's meeting is a work session where the Board will review CAC's revenue history and discuss how the agency will forecast revenue over the next ten years, the duration of our third levy (through 2035). We are at the moment where CAC can establish a ten-year vision, one that prioritizes providing consistent and flexible support to arts and culture nonprofits, something that more than ever is vital for the sector. This planning starts with the Board anticipating available revenue. This discussion builds off the consistent financial reports this Board has received at each of its past meetings. I look forward to the Board's thoughtful discussion.

Also at this meeting, the grants team will provide an update on its Grantee Connect Series, including themes gathered from January and February listening sessions. This work, alongside the Grantee Connect survey and a peer funder scan, are informing our 2026+ planning. We seek the Board's approval of proposed objectives for our 2026+ grantmaking. See the memo in this packet for further detail.

Finally, we welcome Hermione Malone, the executive director at the Cleveland International Film Festival as our Connect with Culture presenter. Ms. Malone joined CIFF last year and is leading this long-time CAC general operating support grant recipient into a new era. These presentations at our Board meetings are an opportunity for CAC to remember why we exist and to learn firsthand how arts and culture nonprofits are navigating complexities and uncertainty to serve residents across our community.

I appreciate your attention to matters before the Board today.

Respectfully,

Jill Paulsen
Executive Director

Updates from CAC Staff

February 25, 2025

CAC's work is rooted in our [10-year community planning process](#) that identifies the two constituents that we must serve as: 1) nonprofit arts organizations; and 2) the residents of Cuyahoga County. Every year, staff creates a [work plan](#) that is grounded in this framework and CAC's [Mission, Vision & Values](#).

What follows is a brief update on the progress made since the last Board meeting in December.

1. GRANTMAKING: Connecting with and serving nonprofit organizations

Core Grants: General Operating Support, Cultural Heritage, Project Support

2024 General Operating Support, Cultural Heritage, and Project Support grant recipients closed out their grants with a Year-End/Final Reporting deadline on January 31, 2025. All 2025 grantees entered into grant agreements and General Operating Support and Cultural Heritage grantees submitted their 2025 Goals. Staff are working to review materials, provide feedback, and issue payments accordingly.

Planning for 2026 General Operating Support and Project Support

Looking ahead, CAC is planning for its 2026 core grant programs – informed by the recently completed *National Scan of State & Local Arts Funders*, led by CAC staff. Our planning is also informed by ongoing listening and learning with our grantees, including a summary of findings from our *Grantee Connect Series*. Summaries of both processes, and their findings, have been provided to the Board to guide discussion.

As outlined in a memo in these materials, planning for 2026 centers on the following objectives:

- 1) Prioritize consistent and reliable operating support funding for Cuyahoga County arts and culture nonprofits.
- 2) Build efficient and effective grantmaking practices to the benefit of grant applicants and current grant recipients.
- 3) Increase awareness and transparency around CAC's purpose, authority, and decision-making processes.
- 4) Continue CAC's emphasis on public benefit by funding nonprofits and programs that connect all Cuyahoga County residents with arts and cultural experiences.
- 5) Deepen connection and trust with our grant recipients through ongoing listening, conversations, and feedback and evaluation processes.

Informed by today's discussion and continued public feedback, we anticipate bringing forth guidelines for 2026 programs for review and approval at the next regular Board meeting.

Resident-Led Grants & Support for Artists

Neighborhood Connections has signed its 2025 grant agreement. For the 12th year, CAC is co-funding resident-led arts and cultural projects, and funding quarterly Arts & Culture Network Nights in Cleveland and East Cleveland through a grant to Neighborhood Connections. The first application cycle for Action Grants closed on Monday, February 10, and there are plans for a second round in the fall. The first of four Arts & Culture Network Nights in 2025 is scheduled for Thursday, February 27 at 6pm at the new Midtown Collaboration Center.

Assembly for the Arts has received its 2025 Support for Artists grant agreement and is working with CAC to establish key benchmarks and deliverables for the grant, as well as ensure compliance with state and federal law. Their Boost Fund will begin accepting applicants in March, and the Creative Impact Fund will launch later this year. An artist advisory committee has resumed meeting to inform Assembly's work.

2. COMMUNICATIONS: Connecting with residents

Media Partnerships Highlight Stories of CAC Grant Recipients. In 2025, CAC will continue to promote the unique or lesser-known stories of our grant recipients. Stories will highlight grantees and direct viewers to the ClevelandArtsEvents.com website. Media partnership with Fresh Water Cleveland will help CAC continue to reach thousands of residents and visitors and to connect them to the CAC-funded activities taking place across Cuyahoga County.

Media Placements. In addition to consistent crediting for Cuyahoga Arts & Culture in the media by our partners, below is a sampling of recent media clips focused on CAC's grantmaking:

- [Civic education, spelling bee among projects awarded Neighborhood Connections grants | Ideastream Public Media](#) – December 18, 2024
- [New lottery system will award more artists funding in Cuyahoga County | Ideastream Public Media](#) – December 18, 2024
- [2025 CAC grants for new projects bring 'something for everyone' | FreshWater Cleveland](#) – January 9, 2025

3. EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK AND OPERATIONS

Connecting with Community and Building Our Capacity

CAC staff presented at or participated in the following workshops, peer groups, and trainings:

- Creative Ohio Regional Directors, Jill Paulsen
- Greater Cleveland Interfaith Alliance: Funding Opportunities for Faith-Based and Community-Based Organizations, Maya Curtis
- Philanthropy Ohio: The State of Race-Based Philanthropy, CAC grantmaking team
- Public Records Training, Meg Harris

- United State Urban Arts Federation National Directors, Jill Paulsen
- Creative West - National Leaders of Color Fellowship Program, Dayvon Nichols
- Greater Cleveland Funders Collaborative (GCFC) – Data Equity Working Group, Julia Carey
- First Year Cleveland Engaging Funders: Demystifying Philanthropy Forum, Julia Carey
- Candid Cleveland Funders Meet and Greet, Julia Carey
- Spotting Financial Risks in Nonprofits: A Guide to Red Flags and Best Practices - Nonprofit Quarterly, Maya Curtis
- Accelerate: Citizens Make Change 2025 – Cleveland Leadership Center, Arts & Culture judge, Jill Paulsen
- Grants Team site visits to Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Ingenuity Cleveland, and the Cleveland Museum of Art

Effective Teamwork and Operations

Core Racial Equity Group (CREW) Updates

CREW is an internal advisory body to CAC for equity initiatives that lead to a more racially equitable workplace. You can find additional information in our [CREW Description](#). CREW is finalizing 2025 goals that build on work completed in 2024. The goals are designed to move CAC along the Continuum on Becoming a Multicultural Organization, a framework we have been using since 2020.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

2024 Unaudited Financials

Revenue. Final, unaudited tax revenue for 2024 was \$8,889,512. Tax revenue for the year was \$314,328 (3.41%) below forecast and \$1,193,574 (11.8%) lower than 2023 tax receipts. Interest revenue was \$449,955.

Expenditure. Final, unaudited expenditures for FY2024 were \$12,136,632 ending the year \$353,368 under budget. To balance the budget, \$2,755,225 was used from the general fund, as planned.

Annual Audit. The Local Government Services division of the Ohio Auditor of State began work on CAC's GAAP conversion for 2024 in early January and should finish the conversion in March.

2025 Financials YTD

Revenue. Tax revenue through January was \$779,8500. This is \$78,499 (11.2%) above budget and 59,170 (8.2%) above revenue for the same period in 2024. Interest revenue through January was \$67,537.

Expenditure. The majority of CAC's budget is comprised of grants which were approved by the Board in 2024. These grants are accrued at the beginning of the year and recognized on the balance sheet. Non-grant expenditures through January were \$101,692.

Note: Due to lack of funds on deposit, CAC has delayed entering into a handful of grant agreements until the funds are on deposit to secure the contracts. All agreements will be issued by the end of February.

Investments. As of January 31, CAC funds were invested as follows:

STAR Ohio: \$2,513,1785 (yield 4.53%)

RedTree Investment Group: \$8,818,336 (target yield 4.22%)

CAC Tax Receipt History 2007 – 2024

As we enter the new ten-year levy with an increase in the excise tax, which will bring in additional revenues, it is helpful to recap tax receipts since inception to provide a reference for anticipating future tax receipts.

CAC’s revenue history, along with the percentage decrease year-over-year.

Calendar year	Tax Received	Annual Change in Tax %
2007*	\$ 18,815,996	
2008	\$ 19,540,480	-3.79%
2009	\$ 18,222,183	-6.75%
2010	\$ 17,456,610	-4.20%
2011	\$ 17,241,240	-1.23%
2012	\$ 16,791,300	-2.61%
2013	\$ 16,719,606	-0.43%
2014	\$ 15,984,716	-4.40%
2015	\$ 15,986,647	0.01%
2016	\$ 14,767,137	-7.63%
2017	\$ 14,533,031	-1.59%
2018	\$ 13,799,929	-5.04%
2019	\$ 12,552,790	-9.04%
2020	\$ 12,732,464	1.43%
2021	\$ 12,009,236	-5.68%
2022	\$ 10,931,382	-8.98%
2023	\$ 10,083,086	-7.76%
2024	\$ 8,889,512	-11.84%

**2007 reflects 11 months of revenue in CAC’s first year of tax levy collections.*

Cuyahoga Arts & Culture				
Through 12/31/2024				
	Actual YTD	Budget YTD	\$ Over/Under Budget	% of Budget
Ordinary Revenue/Expenditures				
Revenue				
Excise Tax	\$ 8,889,512	\$ 9,203,750	\$ (314,238)	96.59%
Interest	\$ 449,955	\$ 450,000	\$ (45)	99.99%
Other revenue	\$ 41,940	\$ 41,000	\$ 940	102.3%
Total Revenue	\$ 9,381,407	\$ 9,694,750	\$ (313,343)	96.77%
Expenditures				
Salaries, Wages and Benefits	\$ 774,301	\$ 783,363	\$ (9,062)	98.8%
Grantmaking Expenses	\$ 49,036	\$ 71,450	\$ (22,414)	68.6%
Grants**	\$ 11,136,262	\$ 11,425,487	\$ (289,225)	97.5%
Facilities, Supplies, Equipment	\$ 50,098	\$ 64,427	\$ (14,329)	77.8%
Professional Fees	\$ 125,161	\$ 145,273	\$ (20,112)	86.2%
Depreciation	\$ 1,773	\$ -	\$ 1,773	
Total Expenditures	\$ 12,136,632	\$ 12,490,000	\$ (353,368)	97.2%
Net Ordinary Revenue	\$ (2,755,225)	\$ (2,795,250)	\$ 40,025	

** Outstanding 2024 grant obligations are on the balance sheet.

Non-grant cash disbursements YTD	\$ 1,000,369	\$ 1,064,513	\$ (64,144)
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**Cuyahoga Arts and Culture
Balance Sheet
As of December 31, 2024**

	Total
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
KeyBank	73,447
RedTree (U.S.Bank)	8,760,071
Star Ohio	1,996,544
Total Bank Accounts	10,830,063
Accounts Receivable	
11000 Accounts Receivable	842,362
Total Accounts Receivable	842,362
Other Current Assets	
12100 Prepaid Expenses	11,311
Total Other Current Assets	11,311
Total Current Assets	11,683,736
Fixed Assets	
15000 Furniture and Equipment	6,915
17000 Accumulated Depreciation	-1,773
Total Fixed Assets	5,142
TOTAL ASSETS	11,688,877
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
20000 Accounts Payable	3,516
Total Accounts Payable	3,516
Other Current Liabilities	
21000 Unearned Revenue	26,000
24000 Payroll Liabilities	14,642
24200 GOS Grants	908,555
24300 PS and CH Grants	323,252
24450 2024 SFA & ComBased Grants	27,500
Total Other Current Liabilities	1,299,949
Total Current Liabilities	1,303,465
Total Liabilities	1,303,465
Equity	
32000 General Fund	13,140,637
Net Income	-2,755,225
Total Equity	10,385,412
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	11,688,877

CIGARETTE TAX RECEIPTS FY 23 VS FY 24 YTD				
Month	2023	2024	2024	
			\$VAR	23/24 % VAR
JANUARY	\$ 902,452.46	\$ 720,680.19	\$ (181,772.27)	-20.1%
FEBRUARY	\$ 661,798.93	\$ 585,197.39	\$ (76,601.54)	-11.6%
MARCH	\$ 935,437.39	\$ 601,562.02	\$ (333,875.37)	-35.7%
APRIL	\$ 758,029.32	\$ 762,671.33	\$ 4,642.01	0.6%
MAY	\$ 816,989.21	\$ 823,925.67	\$ 6,936.46	0.8%
JUNE	\$ 1,656,081.30	\$ 1,302,380.22	\$ (353,701.08)	-21.4%
JULY	\$ 120,575.75	\$ 274,153.68	\$ 153,577.93	127%
AUGUST	\$ 884,886.34	\$ 798,356.75	\$ (86,529.59)	-10%
SEPTEMBER	\$ 912,041.36	\$ 762,716.32	\$ (149,325.04)	-16%
OCTOBER	\$ 815,722.53	\$ 755,750.76	\$ (59,971.77)	-7%
NOVEMBER	\$ 702,298.01	\$ 659,755.39	\$ (42,542.62)	-6%
DECEMBER	\$ 916,773.68	\$ 842,362.25	\$ (74,411.43)	-8%
TOTALS	\$ 10,083,086.28	\$ 8,889,511.97	\$ (1,193,574.31)	-11.8%

Cuyahoga Arts & Culture				
Through 1/31/2025				
	Actual YTD	Budget YTD	\$ Over/Under Budget	% of Budget
Ordinary Revenue/Expenditures				
Revenue				
Excise Tax	\$ 779,850	\$ 701,351	\$ 78,499	111.19%
Interest	\$ 67,537	\$ 60,000	\$ 7,537	112.56%
Other revenue	\$ 26,000	\$ 26,000	\$ -	100.0%
Total Revenue	\$ 873,387	\$ 787,351	\$ 86,036	110.93%
Expenditures				
Salaries, Wages and Benefits	\$ 56,586	\$ 69,534	\$ (12,948)	81.4%
Grantmaking Expenses	\$ 29,049	\$ 22,795	\$ 6,254	127.4%
Grants**	\$ 11,272,644	\$ 11,325,847	\$ (53,203)	99.5%
Facilities, Supplies, Equipment	\$ 11,216	\$ 7,972	\$ 3,244	140.7%
Professional Fees	\$ 4,841	\$ 11,599	\$ (6,759)	41.7%
Depreciation	\$ -	\$ 108	\$ (108)	
Total Expenditures	\$ 11,374,336	\$ 11,437,856	\$ (63,519)	99.4%
Net Ordinary Revenue	\$ (10,500,950)	\$ (10,650,505)	\$ 149,555	

** Outstanding 2025 grant obligations are on the balance sheet.

Non-grant cash disbursements YTD	\$ 101,692	\$ 112,009	\$ (10,316)
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Cuyahoga Arts and Culture
Balance Sheet
As of January 31, 2025

	Total
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
KeyBank	\$ 25,229
RedTree (U.S.Bank)	\$ 8,818,336
Star Ohio	\$ 2,513,178
Total Bank Accounts	\$ 11,356,744
Accounts Receivable	
11000 Accounts Receivable	\$ 779,850
Total Accounts Receivable	\$ 779,850
Total Current Assets	\$ 12,136,594
Fixed Assets	
15000 Furniture and Equipment	\$ 6,915
17000 Accumulated Depreciation	\$ (1,773)
Total Fixed Assets	\$ 5,142
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 12,141,735
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
24000 Payroll Liabilities	\$ 1,961
24200 GOS Grants	\$ 9,828,373
24300 PS and CH Grants	\$ 1,841,439
24400 SFA and Other (CC) Grants	\$ 560,500
24450 2024 SFA & ComBased Grants	\$ 25,000
Total Other Current Liabilities	\$ 12,257,273
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 12,257,273
Total Liabilities	\$ 12,257,273
Equity	
32000 General Fund	\$ 10,385,412
Net Income	\$ (10,500,950)
Total Equity	\$ (115,538)
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$ 12,141,735

CAC has delayed entering into several 2025 grant agreements in order to ensure funds are on deposit or in the process of collection. All agreements will be finalized in February.

CIGARETTE TAX RECEIPTS FY 24 VS FY 25 YTD				
Month	2024	2025		
		2025	\$VAR	24/25 % VAR
JANUARY	\$ 720,680.19	\$ 779,850.00	\$ 59,169.81	8.2%
FEBRUARY	\$ 585,197.39			
MARCH	\$ 601,562.02			
APRIL	\$ 762,671.33			
MAY	\$ 823,925.67			
JUNE	\$ 1,302,380.22			
JULY	\$ 274,153.68			
AUGUST	\$ 798,356.75			
SEPTEMBER	\$ 762,716.32			
OCTOBER	\$ 755,750.76			
NOVEMBER	\$ 659,755.39			
DECEMBER	\$ 842,362.25			
TOTALS	\$ 8,889,511.97	\$ 779,850.00	\$ 59,169.81	8.2%



MEMORANDUM

Date: February 25, 2025
To: CAC Board of Trustees
From: CAC Grantmaking Team
Re: 2026 Grantmaking Objectives

SUMMARY

In preparation for the forthcoming 2026 grant cycle, CAC has set the following objectives to guide our work. These objectives are rooted in robust grant recipient feedback, a national funder scan research project, and strategic alignment with plans for CAC's third levy cycle.

BOARD ACTION

We seek the Board's discussion and approval of these objectives as we develop grant guidelines and policies for public feedback and the Board's approval this spring.

Background

Over the last year, CAC held its **Grantee Connect Series**, a listening and learning project with our grant recipients. The series focused on grantee engagement with an emphasis on short-term improvements to our grantmaking practices and gathering feedback to inform long-range planning. A process summary outlines key learnings from our anonymous grantee survey and ongoing nonprofit roundtables, as well as details on methodology, links to the survey instrument, and results.

In 2024, CAC also conducted **broad research on nine arts and culture funders** across the United States that make grants using public funds. This included a robust website analysis, interviews with key staff members at each organization, and the development of summary profiles and learnings to inform our work.

Together, these projects **increased grantee engagement and feedback**, building on CAC's ongoing practices and relationship with the nonprofits we fund. As we look to the next grant cycle (2026), we have developed a set of objectives to guide CAC's planning, rooted in the findings of this work and our continued commitment to evaluate and align our core grant programs to CAC's purpose.

2026 Grantmaking Snapshot

Grant Period:	January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026
Core programs:	2026-27 General Operating Support, 2026 Project Support
Anticipated applicants:	Approximately 300 Cuyahoga County-based nonprofits
Key dates:	<p>Spring 2025: Board approves policies within 2026 grant guidelines.</p> <p>Summer 2025: Applications due, CAC staff reviews applicant eligibility, utilizing peer panel of outside experts to assess some applications.</p> <p>Fall 2025: Board sets grantmaking allocation, by program.</p> <p>Winter 2025: Board reviews and approves grants at a public Board meeting</p>
Grantmaking budget:	To be determined – based on future tax revenue collections and Board allocations (Q3 + Q4 2025)

2026 Grantmaking Objectives

The following objectives will guide the development of 2026 grantmaking guidelines/policies for Board of Trustees review, discussion and approval.

- 1) **Prioritize consistent and reliable operating support funding** for Cuyahoga County arts and culture nonprofits.

This may include:

- Prioritizing operating support for eligible Cuyahoga County nonprofits **with a primary mission of arts and culture**.
- Continuing **multi-year commitments for operating support grant recipients** (same grant amount for two years, e.g. 2026 and 2027).
- Utilizing more **predictable funding categories**, based on budget size, across programs.
- Continuing or implementing **appropriate caps and floors** across programs, to ensure equitable distribution of grant funds.
- Folding eligible **Cultural Heritage** grantees into operating support grants.
- Continuing to fund nonprofits **without a primary mission of arts and culture**, but with a reduced maximum grant amount.

- 2) Build **efficient and effective grantmaking practices** to the benefit of grant applicants and current grantees.

This may include:

- Further **streamlining and simplifying grant applications and reporting**, with a focus on trust-based philanthropy and right-sized expectations for applicants and grantees.

- Combining CAC’s two-step **eligibility check and application** processes into one cohesive process.
- Providing grant team members more efficient structures to prioritize **relationship-building** and focus on CAC’s **core mission** – funding arts and cultural nonprofits.

3) **Increase awareness and transparency** around CAC’s purpose, authority, and decision-making processes.

This may include:

- Continuing **communications efforts** to underscore CAC’s role/impact in the funding/arts community, authority, and purpose.
- Reviewing and **sharing** around CAC’s process of determining an organization’s eligibility for CAC funding and specific grant programs, including how CAC determines an organization’s primary mission and definitions of arts and culture as outlined in Ohio Revised Code.
- Refining **tools to explain grant calculations**.

4) **Continue CAC’s emphasis on public benefit** by funding nonprofits and programs that connect all Cuyahoga County residents with arts and cultural experiences.

This may include:

- Maintaining CAC’s **three core funding priorities**: public benefit, artistic and cultural vibrancy, and organizational capacity.
- Using CAC’s transparent application and further simplified **panel review process** for Project Support.
- **Setting goals** and using other grantmaking processes, with a focus on public benefit, to assess grantees and share their impact with the public.
- Investing appropriately to ensure that the **public is aware of CAC-funded programs** and events.

5) **Deepen connection and trust with our grant recipients** through ongoing listening, conversations, and feedback and evaluation processes.

This may include:

- Continuing CAC’s **grantee connect meetups**, and other listening opportunities.
- Focusing on **co-creation and responsive technical** assistance throughout the grant cycle/process.
- Leveraging **data and reporting responses** to provide deeper insights to its grantmaking and the challenges/opportunities facing CAC grantees.

Contractor	Amount	Purpose	Term	Requires Board Approval
Freshwater	\$9,000	Article Features	1/1/2025 - 12/31/2025	N