



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
Wednesday, November 20, 2024, 4:00 pm

- 1. Opening of the Meeting**
 - a. Call to order
 - b. Roll call
 - c. **Action:** Motion to approve September 11, 2024 minutes

- 2. Public Comment on Today's Agenda**

- 3. Executive Director's Report**

- 4. Action Items and Reports – Finance and General Business**
 - a. Finance Report
 - b. **Action:** Approval to accept grant from The Cleveland Foundation (The Educational Foundation of America)
 - c. **Action:** Approval of 2025 Board meeting schedule

- 5. Action Items and Reports – Grantmaking**
 - a. 2025 Grantmaking
 - i. **Action:** Approval of 2025 General Operating Support grants
 - ii. **Action:** Approval of 2025 Cultural Heritage grants
 - iii. **Action:** Approval of 2025 Project Support scores and grants

 - b. Grantee Connect Series - Update & Next Steps

- 6. Connect with Culture: Refresh Collective**

- 7. Public Comment on CAC Business**

- 8. Adjourn**

Next Regular Meeting: Wednesday, December 18, 2024 at 3:30 pm



Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees
Wednesday, September 11, 2024

A meeting of the Cuyahoga Arts & Culture (CAC) Board of Trustees was called to order at 4:05 pm at the Cleveland Public Library, Louis Stokes Wing, 2nd Floor Conference Room B, 325 Superior Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

The roll call showed that Trustees DiCosimo, Isenhart, Scott Taylor and Vernaci were present. It was determined that there was a quorum. Trustee Blakemore arrived at 4:09pm.

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

1. OATH OF OFFICE

Gina Vernaci was sworn into office. Trustee Isenhart shared a summary of her biography.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Action: To approve the minutes of the April 17, 2024 Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Motion by – Trustee Vernaci

Second by – Trustee Blakemore

Vote to approve the minutes of the April 17, 2024 Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Ayes: Blakemore, DiCosimo, Isenhart, Scott Taylor, Vernaci.

The motion carried.

Action: To approve the minutes of the April 29, 2024 Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Motion by – Trustee Scott Taylor

Second by – Trustee Blakemore

Vote to approve the minutes of the April 29, 2024 Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Ayes: Blakemore, DiCosimo, Isenhart, Scott Taylor, Vernaci.

The motion carried.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT ON MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

There was no public comment on today's agenda.

4. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Paulsen thanked everyone for joining her and the Board. Ms. Paulsen's remarks can be found [here](#). She also noted that the arts and culture levy that funds CAC will be on the ballot November 5, 2024 as Issue 55. Additional facts on public funding are on [CAC's website](#).

5. FINANCE REPORT

Trustee Blakemore provided an update on the 2023 audit. He noted that CAC received its 17th consecutive clean audit; each year since CAC's inception. CAC received the Auditor of State Award, which is awarded annually to fewer than 10% of public agencies. Thanks to the audit committees and Meg who has overseen all 17 years of the audit.

Ms. Paulsen stated that tax revenue through July was \$5,070,570. This is \$270,503 (5.1%) below budget and \$780,794 (13.3%) below the same period in 2023. She stated interest revenue was \$337,940 and that non-grant expenditures through July were \$582,550. Non-grant expenditures are under budget due to timing of payments. Grantmaking is under budget due to a number of 2024 grants being withdrawn by applicants.

CAC invests its general fund with two different entities – STAR Ohio, which is essentially a high yield money market account managed by the Ohio Treasurer of State and Red Tree Investment Group which is a company that works only with public agencies and diversifies investments for longer term investments.

6. GRANTMAKING ITEMS

Mr. Jake Sinatra, director of grantmaking strategy and communications, provided an update on the [Grantee Connect Series](#), a listening and learning initiative undertaken by CAC to ensure that grant recipients share feedback, connect with one another, and help the agency plan for future grantmaking. The project was initiated in response to Board requests and staff interest in gathering updated data to inform agency work.

- CAC's Grantee Connect Series has three components: 1) anonymous survey of grantees conducted by an independent third-party (75% response rate, reflecting diversity of grantee organizations); 2) Grantee Meet-ups, five gatherings to review survey results and probe further on key findings; and 3) a forthcoming funder scan, which will provide snapshots of other similar arts funding agencies nationwide.
- Headlines from initial work include:
 1. Grant recipients highly value multi-year and flexible funding from CAC.
 2. Grantees are satisfied with communications about the grantmaking process and find CAC staff helpful.
 3. Some grant recipients do not understand how their grants are calculated.

4. There is confusion about CAC’s role in fundraising and/or diversifying revenue for the nonprofit arts sector. CAC must clarify its role as steward of current tax resource vs. entity that “expands the pie,” a role for others.
 5. There is no consensus on how CAC should distribute funds or evolve its grantmaking, despite need for more resources. Nonprofits want what benefits their organization (organization budget, grant program, etc.)
- CAC is already acting on what we learned in the Grantee Connect Series, introducing several technical improvements to our work. The agency launched a new communications toolkit; introduced videos, visual aids, and other tools to make our grantmaking process clearer; and set up ongoing feedback mechanisms (online forms, site visits, and continued grantee meet-ups).

The Board thanked staff for their work and asked to receive updates on the project at future meetings to guide its policy discussions for 2026 and beyond, pending a successful levy.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Jeremy Johnson, president and CEO of Assembly for the Arts, provided an update on the levy campaign, encouraging people to engage directly with Assembly for Action to learn more.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT ON CAC BUSINESS

No public comment.

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 5:06 pm.

Attest:

Leonard DiCosimo, Secretary, Board of Trustees

CAC Executive Director's Report

November 20, 2024

On November 5, Cuyahoga County voters made their voices heard. Issue 55, the tax that supports Cuyahoga Arts & Culture, passed with a resounding **71% YES vote**. This win ensures that CAC will be able to fund arts nonprofits through 2035. This is worth celebrating!

We are thankful to our community for their support, notably Assembly for Action and R Strategy Group, who ran the Issue 55 campaign. Additional appreciation for the early and vocal support from County Executive Ronayne and Council President Jones, along with councilmembers. We thank the arts organizations who reached residents from their stages, in their galleries, and through their member communications. This was a team effort.

See the Staff Report for detail on CAC's education and subsequent "Thank You!" campaign.

The tax goes into effect in February 2025 and CAC will begin receiving increased tax revenue, month by month, starting in March 2025. As previously discussed at Board meetings, it will take time to build back up CAC's general fund; 2026 grantmaking will reflect revenues generated by the new tax. In the meantime, feedback will continue to be integral to our planning. This summer we began a robust grantee feedback process, and since the completion of the third-party survey and nonprofit roundtables, we are doing a peer funder scan. The Board will continue public discussion and decision making to plan for this new levy in 2025.

Today we celebrate our new and returning grant recipients. At this meeting, CAC will approve the majority of its 2025 grantmaking. I thank our applicants and CAC staff for the ten months of work it took to get to today. I appreciate the grantmaking team's focus on customer service and commitment to providing hundreds of supportive technical assistance touch points to applicants.

In preparation for our meeting, please focus your attention on the slate of Board actions, including review and approval of 2025 Project Support, Cultural Heritage, and General Operating Support grants.

As you will read in the memo that follows, we recommend 300 grants totaling \$10,750,847 for our core grant programs. This recommendation is in line with CAC's plan to keep our grantmaking stable from 2024 to 2025.

Respectfully,

Jill Paulsen
Executive Director

Updates from CAC Staff

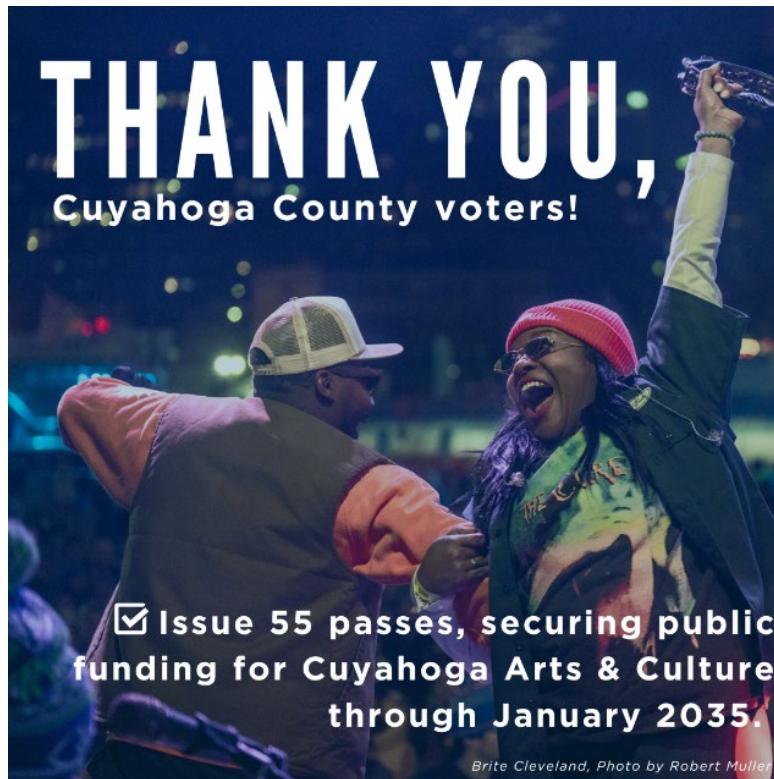
November 20, 2024

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 Board last met in September.

ISSUE 55 PASSES

On November 5, 2024, **Cuyahoga County voters approved Issue 55**, a replacement and expansion of the cigarette tax that funds Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. The tax passed with 71% approval.

The new, increased tax replaces CAC’s sole revenue source, which would have expired in January 2027. The tax will provide additional funds over a 10-year period for CAC to invest in hundreds of local arts and culture nonprofit organizations that provide arts experiences for residents of every zip code in the county.



Graphics featured “thank you” messaging and information about what to expect as CAC begins collecting revenues from the new tax in 2025, reaching over 15,000 people.

Following approval, CAC staff launched a campaign to thank voters and outline next steps, including:

- Media outreach, including news release and interviews (see media placements below);

- Communications with grantees and stakeholders, including “thank you” email to CAC’s 15,000+ email subscribers, and targeted communications to CAC-funded organizations; and
- Social media content and information shared on CAC’s website.

As a reminder, the new tax does not impact the 2025 grant recommendations, as outlined in these materials. The tax goes into effect February 2025, and CAC will begin receiving increased revenues, month-by-month, starting in March 2025.

Staff will continue to share updates with grantees, as well as opportunities to connect with CAC as it plans for 2026+ grantmaking.

Issue 55: What’s Next?

When will grants be impacted by the new tax revenue?

			
November 5, 2024	February 2025	March 2025	2026
Cuyahoga County voters passed Issue 55, securing increased public funding for CAC through January 2035.	Increased tax goes into effect.	CAC begins receiving increased tax revenues, month by month.	Grants are awarded annually, bolstered by new revenue.



1. GRANTMAKING

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

2024 General Operating Support, Cultural Heritage and Project Support grants are in progress:

- General Operating Support and Cultural Heritage: CAC staff are finalizing the 2024 Year-End Report and 2025 Goal Setting forms, which become available to General Operating Support and Cultural Heritage grantees in early December and are due January 31, 2025. Grant managers continue regular site visits and technical assistance as we approach the end of the 2024 grant year. The Year-End Report and Goal Setting forms release the final 10% of the 2024 grant and first 50% of the 2025 grant, respectively.
- Project Support: More than 100 Project Support grantees have completed their 2024 projects and completed reporting to date; the remainder are in progress. Grant managers process advance payment requests and reports on a rolling basis throughout the grant cycle. Staff is preparing to host the final virtual report-out meeting on December 17, an alternate reporting opportunity for Project Support grantees with grants of \$5,000 or less.

To deepen relationships and hold more in-person meetings between CAC staff and grantees in 2024, grant managers are conducting regular site visits with their grantees, and the full grantmaking team is holding monthly team visits with a variety of grantees. Thank you to the arts nonprofits who have hosted our team throughout the year; we aim to continue this beneficial way of connecting with grantees into 2025.

2025 Grant Recommendations

In September, CAC held public panel reviews and online written panel reviews, in accordance with the grant guidelines for Project Support. Panel scores have been submitted and recommended grant amounts have been calculated. For 2025, General Operating Support and Cultural Heritage grant recommendations are equivalent to the 2024 grant recommendations, as the second year of a two-year grant commitment. 2025 grantmaking recommendations and the panel process are included in memos in this packet.

At the November meeting, the CAC Board will be asked to approve 300 grants totaling \$10,750,847 for the 2025 grant cycle, distributed across General Operating Support, Project Support, and Cultural Heritage.

Grants to Nonprofits for Artist Support and Resident-Led Arts & Culture Projects

Assembly for the Arts' 2024 Support for Artists grant program is nearing completion, supported by a \$500,000 grant. Assembly's design and management of the program includes a variety of project-based and flexible funding opportunities for artists, including programs by Cleveland Public Theatre, Julia de Burgos Cultural Arts Center, Karamu House, and SPACES, in addition to programs administered by Assembly. In October, Assembly also launched an artist advisory cohort, as part of the grant, to inform their ongoing artist programming. Recipients of 2024 artist funding were announced in September.

ioby's CAC Match Fund leveraged a grant to provide dollar-for-dollar matching for projects that bring arts and culture to Cuyahoga County residents. The Match Fund concluded in July and leveraged \$80,000 in match funds to support residents to raise an additional \$92,449, for a total of \$171,889 directed to 38 local projects. Recently, ioby announced that it was [closing its doors](#). ioby completed all requirements related to their 2024 CAC grant and awarded all CAC Match funds prior to ceasing operations.

Neighborhood Connections is co-funding resident-led arts and culture projects in 2024 with a grant from CAC. The second round of co-funded grants are anticipated to be announced later this month. Neighborhood Connections held its third of four Arts & Culture Network Nights in 2024 on September 25 at Near West Theatre. The final Network Night of 2024 is set for December 4. All are welcome.

2. COMMUNICATIONS

Sharing the Impact of Public Funding

CAC continues to create and promote tools for our grantees to tell the story of how public funding from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture has impacted their organization and community. These include:

- Grantee Communications Toolkit: In August, a new suite of free tools was released to grantees to help them acknowledge CAC funding. Included in this toolkit were several CAC Fact Sheets, all of which are also available on the new [FAQ page](#).
- ClevelandArtsEvents.com: Promotion of the Cleveland Arts Events website, where CAC grantees are required to post their CAC-funded programs and events, is yielding great results. Through August, the site has been visited by more than 80,000 unique users, a 15% increase over 2023. More than 2,400 events have been posted on the site by CAC grantees and other groups in 2024.

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 work:

- [Arts funding continues to decline ahead of proposed Cuyahoga County cigarette tax increase | Ideastream Public Media](#) (September 11, 2024)
- [What is Issue 55, Cuyahoga County’s cigarette tax for the arts? | Ideastream Public Media](#) (October 3, 2024)
- [See the Cuyahoga County tax increases on the November ballot: Election 2024 - cleveland.com](#) (October 7, 2024)
- [Raise cigarette tax for arts? Cuyahoga County’s Issue 55 explained \(signalcleveland.org\)](#) (October 10, 2024)
- [Proposed replacement of excise tax on cigarettes for Cuyahoga County Culture | Election Results | clevelandjewishnews.com](#) (October 14, 2024)
- [Autumn adventures: Cuyahoga Arts & Culture funds programs to color Northeast Ohio’s fall \(freshwatercleveland.com\)](#) (October 17, 2024)
- [New Report Highlights Role of Arts Agencies in Covid Relief Funding | AMERICAN THEATRE](#) (October 24, 2024)
- [Yes on Issue 55, a cigarette tax increase to raise millions for Cuyahoga Arts and Culture: endorsement editorial - cleveland.com](#) (October 25, 2024)
- [ENDORSEMENT: Yes on Issue 55 to Fund Arts & Culture in Cuyahoga County | CoolCleveland](#) (October 29, 2024)
- [Arts and culture funding extended as voters back Issue 55 – Signal Cleveland](#) (November 5, 2024)
- [Cuyahoga County cigarette tax proponents claim victory as strong vote tally continues - cleveland.com](#) (November 5, 2024)
- [County arts levy passes, Cleveland schools issue has strong support | Crain's Cleveland Business](#) (November 5, 2024)
- [Cuyahoga County Passes Issue 55, the Cigarette Tax to Continue Funding the Arts | Cleveland | Cleveland Scene](#) (November 6, 2024)
- [Cuyahoga County Issue 55 passes, increasing the cigarette tax for the arts | Ideastream Public Media](#) (November 6, 2024)

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
- Greater Cleveland Funders Collaborative (GCFC) – Data Equity Working Group, Julia
- Urban Arts Coalition - National Directors, Jill
- Regional “Rustbelt” Communications Peer Group, Jake
- Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities Arts & Culture Collaborative, Julia
- City Club: Harnessing the Power of Film, Theater, and Literature to change the world, Jill, Laura, Dayvon, Maya, Julia
- Building a Bigger We from AFTA, Julia
- Financial Management Essentials Certificate Program, Dayvon Nichols
- Race Forward - The Critical Role of Arts & Culture, Maya, Julia
- FutureLand - Celebrating the Diversity in Tech, Arts, and Culture, Dayvon
- Assembly’s Public Officials Breakfast, Jill, Jake, Julia, Maya, Dayvon
- Arts and Culture Network Nights, Maya, Julia, Laura
- National Endowment for the Arts: Understanding the Value & Impact of Local Arts Agencies, Jill

Core Racial Equity Working 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 has made progress on its 2024 goals, including a recent review of historical location data of CAC-funded arts and cultural programming. Along with this data, CAC staff engaged in a conversation as it relates to the history of redlining in Cleveland. These conversations help our full team to applying different lenses of equity to impact. In this case, we explored historical contexts and access to funding.

Additionally, all staff members are encouraged to explore efforts, new trends, and/or training regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Relevant information is encouraged to be brought back to the full staff for discussions to reflect on operations and to challenge current practices.

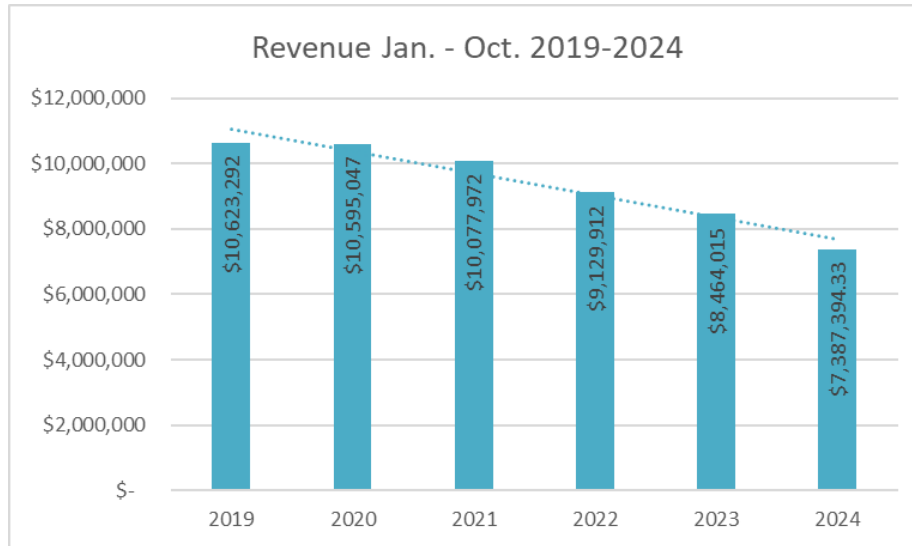
Recent opportunities include:

- The Solution Consulting Co. –Masterclass Beyond Numbers: Measuring DEI Impact, Dayvon
- Facilitating Racial Equity in the Workplace for Managers & Supervisors (5-week training), Dayvon
- Equity in Data Community of Practice, Dayvon
- Application submission to National Leaders of Color Fellowship program, Dayvon
- Equity Centered Data and Practices Workgroup, Julia

FINANCIAL UPDATE

2024 YTD

Revenue. Tax revenue through October 31 was \$7,387,394. This is \$338,482 (4.38%) below forecast and \$1,076,620 (12.7%) less than the same period in 2023. Interest revenue through October was \$398,144 which is \$3,411 above forecast.



Expenditure. The majority of CAC's budget is comprised of 2024 grants which were approved in November and December 2023. These grants are accrued at the beginning of the year and recognized on the balance sheet. Non-grant expenditures through October were \$815,093 and are tracking \$66,113 below budget primarily due to timing of payments.

Investments. As of October 31, CAC's general fund is invested as follows:

- STAR Ohio: \$967,712 (yield 5.01%)
- RedTree Investment Group: \$8,721,587 (yield 4.33%)

Budget Projections at Year End

It is projected that CAC will end 2024 with tax receipts of approximately \$8.9 million, which is \$1.2mil. less than 2023, and approximately \$300,000 below the 2024 forecast budget of \$9.2 million.

Total expenditures are close to budget for most major categories with the exception of grantmaking. In 2024 there were several organizations that ceased operations and others that could not complete their 2024 projects. As planned, CAC will use an estimated \$2.9 million from the general fund to balance the budget. It is estimated that the general fund balance will be \$10.2 mil. at the end of year, these funds will be fully encumbered by the grant commitments for 2025.

2025 Budget Preview

At the November 20 meeting the Board will be asked to approve the majority of grants for 2025. These approvals provide the foundation for CAC's 2025 budget, with grants comprising more than 91% of the budget. Revenue for 2025 is estimated to be \$18.6mil. (\$18mil. excise tax, \$600k interest) but factors such as continued decreases in demand for cigarettes coupled with impacts of the price increase associated with passage of Issue 55 may mean tax receipts will be lower. For the purposes of this forecast, a 9% decrease in tax revenue was used, determined by a three-year, year-over-year average of the decrease in tax receipts from 2021-2024.

In December, staff will finalize team objectives for 2025. This work will help us build the remainder of the 2025 budget, which will be presented to the Board for approval on December 18.

Cuyahoga Arts & Culture				
Through 10/31/2024				
	Actual YTD	Budget YTD	\$ Over/Under Budget	% of Budget
Ordinary Revenue/Expenditures				
Revenue				
Excise Tax	\$ 7,387,394	\$ 7,725,876	\$ (338,482)	95.62%
Interest	\$ 398,144	\$ 395,000	\$ 3,144	100.80%
Other revenue	\$ 41,940	\$ 41,000	\$ 940	102.3%
Total Revenue	\$ 7,827,478	\$ 8,161,876	\$ (334,398)	95.90%
Expenditures				
Salaries, Wages and Benefits	\$ 613,743	\$ 633,528	\$ (19,784)	96.9%
Grantmaking Expenses	\$ 45,962	\$ 65,346	\$ (19,384)	70.3%
Grants**	\$ 11,160,683	\$ 11,425,487	\$ (264,804)	97.7%
Facilities, Supplies, Equipment	\$ 42,938	\$ 56,190	\$ (13,252)	76.4%
Professional Fees	\$ 112,449	\$ 126,143	\$ (13,694)	89.1%
Depreciation	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Total Expenditures	\$ 11,975,777	\$ 12,306,693	\$ (330,917)	97.3%
Net Ordinary Revenue	\$ (4,148,299)	\$ (4,144,817)	\$ (3,481)	

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

Non-grant cash disbursements YTD	\$ 815,093	\$ 881,206	\$ (66,113)
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Cuyahoga Arts and Culture
Balance Sheet
As of October 31, 2024

	Total
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
KeyBank	93,751
RedTree (U.S.Bank)	8,721,587
Star Ohio	967,712
Total Bank Accounts	9,783,050
Accounts Receivable	
11000 Accounts Receivable	755,751
Total Accounts Receivable	755,751
Other Current Assets	
12100 Prepaid Expenses	10,548
Total Other Current Assets	10,548
Total Current Assets	10,549,348
Fixed Assets	
15000 Furniture and Equipment	6,915
Total Fixed Assets	6,915
TOTAL ASSETS	10,556,263
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
24000 Payroll Liabilities	721
24200 GOS Grants	915,966
24300 PS and CH Grants	590,737
24450 2024 SFA & ComBased Grants	56,500
Total Other Current Liabilities	1,563,924
Total Current Liabilities	1,563,924
Total Liabilities	1,563,924
Equity	
32000 General Fund	13,140,637
Net Income	-4,148,299
Total Equity	8,992,339
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	10,556,263

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			
DECEMBER	\$ 916,773.68			
TOTALS	\$ 10,083,086.28	\$ 7,387,394.33	\$ (1,076,620.26)	-12.7%



MEMORANDUM

Date: November 20, 2024
To: CAC Board of Trustees
From: CAC Grantmaking Team
Re: 2025 Grants: approval of panel scores and grant amounts

SUMMARY

This year, CAC accepted applications to the 2025 Project Support (PS) grant program and facilitated the application and panel review processes as outlined in the Board-approved guidelines. 2024-25 General Operating Support (GOS) and 2024-25 Cultural Heritage (CH) grant recipients in good standing are automatically recommended for a 2025 grant, the second year of a two-year grant cycle.

For 2025, CAC recommends **300 grants totaling \$10,750,847, including:**

- 70 General Operating Support grants totaling \$8,983,725
- 217 Project Support grants totaling \$1,546,680
- 13 Cultural Heritage grants totaling \$220,442

BOARD ACTION

Approve grant panel scores and 2025 grant amounts.

I. BACKGROUND

At its September 2023 meeting, the Board approved a grantmaking approach for 2024 and 2025 that:

- Continues a commitment to consistent, multi-year funding, using the general fund to allow for larger grants. General Operating Support and Cultural Heritage grant amounts will be the same for 2024 and 2025.
- Is consistent with ongoing community feedback to decrease funding slowly over time, as CAC's revenue declines.
- Enables CAC to earn additional investment income which can be used in 2025 to put the most money into the community over a two-year period.

At its April 2024 meeting, the Board approved grantmaking guidelines for 2025 Project Support. CAC launched the 2025 PS application and panel processes in May 2024, and administered the 2024-25 General Operating Support and 2024-25 Cultural Heritage grants as outlined in those documents and described below.

- **2024-25 General Operating Support** grants strengthen the community by deepening its access to arts and culture through meaningful, multi-year core support grants to arts and cultural organizations based in and serving Cuyahoga County.
- **2025 Project Support** grants promote public access and encourage the breadth of arts and cultural programming in our community by supporting Cuyahoga County-based projects.
- **2024-25 Cultural Heritage** grants support and strengthen the community by providing flexible support to organizations that are representative of a culturally specific population.

On November 5, 2024, Issue 55 was approved by Cuyahoga County voters, The new, increased tax replaces CAC’s sole revenue source, which would have expired in January 2027. The tax does not go into effect until February 2025, and CAC will begin receiving increased revenues, month-by-month, starting in March 2025. **Recommended 2025 grant amounts are not impacted by the new tax**; we anticipate new funding to impact grantmaking starting in 2026.

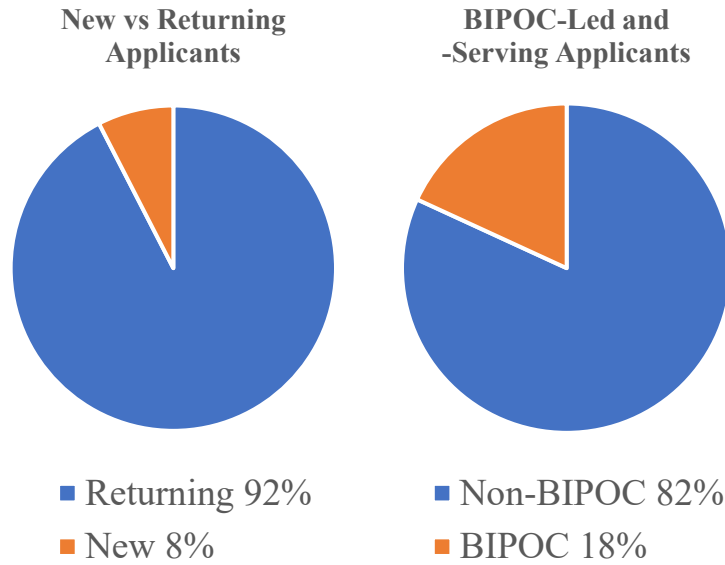
II. APPLICANT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

CAC provides a variety of technical assistance opportunities to ensure applicants have the tools and information to be successful throughout CAC’s grant process. To ensure every applicant gets the help they need, the team recorded all online workshops, which can be found on [CAC’s YouTube channel](#). CAC staff provided technical assistance one-on-one via phone and email. This year, those offerings included:

- Hundreds of one-on-one calls and emails with current and future grantees
- Grant opportunities workshop (108 participants)
- Application workshop for the 2025 Project Support program (32 participants)
- Workshop with Plante Moran on 990 and 990EZ (22 participants)
- SMU | DataArts Cultural Data Profile workshop (26 participants)
- Two rounds of virtual office hours where applicants meet with staff to address specific questions. (37 participants)
- Regular emails and personal phone calls regarding technical assistance and reminders fielded by the entire CAC team.

III. APPLICANT POOL OVERVIEW

CAC welcomes new and return applicants every year through the annual Project Support grant program. This year, 225 Cuyahoga County-based nonprofits applied for PS funding. These include:



2025 Grant Applicant Breakdown – Project Support	
Total Applicants	225
<i>Returning Applicants</i>	208 (92%)
<i>New Applicants</i>	17 (8%)
<i>Non-BIPOC-Led and -Serving</i>	184 (82%)
<i>BIPOC-Led and -Serving</i>	41 (18%)

Of the 225 total applicants, **175 organizations submitted applications deemed eligible to be reviewed by panelists. 46 current Project Support grantees were exempt from the full application and panel process**, as outlined in the 2025 PS guidelines – all are conducting the same project for a second year and met all eligibility requirements. First-time CAC applicants must participate in the Project Support grant program before being considered eligible to apply for another grant program.

41 applicants self-identified as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color)-led and -serving organizations. This is the sixth time that CAC has asked applicants to self-identify, to track alignment to CAC’s organizational values. There are 12 BIPOC-led and serving organizations in Cultural Heritage steady cohort and 3 BIPOC-led and serving organizations in General Operating Support cohort.

70 current General Operating Support grantees and 13 current Cultural Heritage grantees did not apply this year as they are entering the second year of a two-year grant cycle. These organizations are repeating their 2024 project in 2025 and confirmed their eligibility via the Eligibility Check.

IV. PANEL REVIEW PROCESSES

As detailed in the guidelines, a panel of experts reviewed the applications based on CAC’s funding criteria. **Thirty-nine (39) qualified arts and cultural professionals served as panelists for the 2025 Project Support grant panel process.** See the Panelist Memo in this packet for details.

Using panel as an educational tool

Panelists deliberated and scored each application in accordance with the funding criteria in the 2025 grant guidelines. The panel review meetings were recorded for the public record and will be accessible via [CAC’s YouTube page](#). All Project Support applicants for \$5,000 or less will receive their scores and written comments from panelists, which are also public. The recorded panel video and written feedback ensure a transparent and consistent review process and serve as educational tools for current and future applicants.

Seeking feedback

CAC invited feedback from panelists via a panelist public comment period at the end of each review meeting, and through a panelist survey at the end of the process. For applicants, CAC invited comment via an online public comment form and will send a post-panel survey at the end of the process as well. This panel is the fourth chance in the application cycle for applicants to provide feedback, which will inform the grant year, as well as the next application cycle.

V. CALCULATING GRANT AMOUNTS

CAC’s Funding Criteria

The funding criteria for CAC grants are **Public Benefit**; **Artistic & Cultural Vibrancy**; and **Organizational Capacity**. To reflect CAC’s role as a public funder – committed to using public dollars to benefit the public – CAC weighs Public Benefit more heavily than the other two funding criteria. Applicants are educated on the criteria through the grant guidelines and technical assistance, and panelists are trained to review applications using the criteria.

Calculating Grant Amounts

For 2025 Project Support grants, panelists reviewed each application against the funding criteria and provided a score using the scoring framework, as outlined in the guidelines. Applicants needed an average score of at least 75 (or a majority of “Yes” or “Somewhat” scores for Project Support grants of \$5,000 or less) to be recommended for funding.

- **General Operating Support** grant amounts from 2024 will be carried over to 2025, for the 2nd year of a two-year commitment. Grants were originally calculated for 2024 using CAC’s [funding formula](#) (the same formula used since CAC’s inception, adopted from the Ohio Arts Council). The formula is based on the three-year average of an organization’s revenue. **In total, 70 organizations are recommended to receive grant amounts totaling \$8,983,725 in 2025.**
- **Project Support** grant amounts were calculated using an organization’s requested grant amount multiplied by their panel score as a percentage, then further adjusted by funds available for this program. **In total, 217 total projects have been recommended for funding with grant amounts totaling \$1,546,680 for 2025.** Of those 217 projects, 171 were applications that went to panel and received sufficient scores to receive funding. 46 selected the bypass option and are approved to conduct the same project that they were granted for in 2024. Four (4) applicants did not receive a score high enough to be recommended for funding.

- **Cultural Heritage** grant amounts from 2024 will be carried over to 2025, for the 2nd year of a two-year commitment. Grant amounts were originally calculated as a percentage of an applicant's revenue, per the guidelines. **In total, 13 organizations are recommended for 2025 grants totaling \$220,442.**

NEXT STEPS: November 20 Board Meeting

At the November 20 meeting, CAC's Board will vote on 2025 grant amounts and panel scores.

Combined, this slate is 300 grants totaling \$10,750,847 for the 2025 grant cycle.

See Appendix 1 for a list of all applicants' scores and recommended grant amounts. See Appendix 2 for a list of the organizations that will not be recommended for funding.

APPENDIX 1: Applicants Recommended for Funding (Scores and Grant Amounts)

† Indicates that the nonprofit self-identifies as a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color)-led and serving organization

* Indicates a first-time Project Support grant recipient

General Operating Support

Note: For 2025, General Operating Support recommended grant amounts are equivalent to 2024 grant amounts; the second year of a two-year grant cycle. Eligibility for all organizations is verified annually.

Organization	Grant Amount
Apollo's Fire Baroque Orchestra	\$ 102,914
Art House	\$ 25,225
Art Therapy Studio	\$ 44,753
Artists Archives of the Western Reserve	\$ 23,028
Arts Impact	\$ 42,668
Assembly for the Arts†	\$ 42,649
BA Yarts	\$ 42,579
Beck Center for the Arts	\$ 115,525
Broadway School of Music and the Arts	\$ 24,967
Center for Arts-Inspired Learning	\$ 83,621
Chagrin Documentary Film Festival	\$ 31,383
Chagrin Valley Little Theater	\$ 25,182
Children's Museum of Cleveland	\$ 91,210
Cleveland Botanical Garden	\$ 149,843
Cleveland Classical Guitar Society	\$ 32,816
Cleveland Institute of Art	\$ 486,867
Cleveland Institute of Music	\$ 472,791
Cleveland International Film Festival	\$ 106,206
Cleveland Jazz Orchestra	\$ 17,263
Cleveland Museum of Natural History	\$ 437,584
Cleveland Play House	\$ 264,669
Cleveland Pops Orchestra	\$ 51,196
Cleveland Print Room	\$ 36,742
Cleveland Public Theatre†	\$ 86,632
Cleveland Restoration Society	\$ 75,733
Collective Arts Network	\$ 23,551
Contemporary Youth Orchestra	\$ 23,704
DANCECleveland	\$ 38,611
Dancing Wheels	\$ 39,212
Doan Brook Watershed Partnership	\$ 33,053

Dobama Theatre	\$ 39,797
Dunham Tavern Museum & Gardens	\$ 15,670
Ensemble Theatre	\$ 15,226
Great Lakes Science Center	\$ 216,921
Great Lakes Theater	\$ 139,572
Heights Arts	\$ 23,572
ICA - Art Conservation	\$ 63,512
Ideastream Public Media	\$ 537,116
Ingenuity	\$ 34,724
Inlet Dance Theatre	\$ 26,025
Karamu House†	\$ 113,918
Lake Erie Ink	\$ 26,583
Lake Erie Nature & Science Center	\$ 63,683
LAND studio	\$ 152,738
Literary Cleveland	\$ 23,208
Maltz Museum	\$ 109,938
Morgan Conservatory	\$ 30,665
Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland	\$ 104,387
Musical Theater Project	\$ 34,744
Nature Center at Shaker Lakes	\$ 73,516
Near West Theatre	\$ 47,702
North Coast Men's Chorus	\$ 19,884
Ohio Contemporary Ballet	\$ 35,516
Piano Cleveland	\$ 58,031
Playhouse Square	\$ 872,438
Rainey Institute	\$ 70,645
Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum	\$ 670,975
Roots of American Music	\$ 21,447
Sculpture Center	\$ 15,384
Shaker Historical Society	\$ 13,381
Singing Angels	\$ 16,505
SPACES	\$ 34,003
The Cleveland Museum of Art	\$ 869,265
The Cleveland Opera	\$ 11,760
The Cleveland Orchestra	\$ 863,659
The Music Settlement	\$ 177,229
Ukrainian Museum Archives	\$ 16,047
Valley Art Center	\$ 28,499
Western Reserve Historical Society	\$ 202,424
Zygot Press	\$ 21,239

Cultural Heritage

Note: For 2025, Cultural Heritage recommended grant amounts are equivalent to 2024 grant amounts; the second year of a two-year grant cycle. Eligibility for all organizations is verified annually.

Organization	Grant Amount
AfricaHouse International†	\$ 19,780
Buck Out Foundation†	\$ 15,075
Cleveland Association of Black Storytellers†	\$ 5,000
CollectivExpress†	\$ 8,542
Djapo Cultural Arts Institute†	\$ 19,389
DuffyLit†	\$ 15,711
Foluke Cultural Arts†	\$ 30,000
Greater Cleveland Urban Film Festival†	\$ 30,000
Julia De Burgos Cultural Arts Center†	\$ 30,000
LatinUs Theater Company†	\$ 23,828
Mojuba! Dance Collective†	\$ 8,820
Sankofa†	\$ 7,714
Slovenian Museum and Archives	\$ 6,583

Project Support

Note: Scores are numerical for grants of more than \$5,000 (on a 0-100 scale). Scores are “Yes” or “No” for grants of \$5,000 or less. A score of 75 or above, or “Yes” is required to be eligible for funding. Organizations without a score in the “Score” column were eligible to bypass the panel this year. Eligibility for all organizations is verified annually.

Organization	Score	Grant Amount
Abrepaso Flamenco†		\$ 4,700
Achievement Centers for Children		\$ 4,700
America Asian Pacific Islander Organization†	Yes	\$ 4,700
America SCORES Cleveland	94	\$ 17,660
American Hungarian Friends of Scouting	80.8	\$ 13,315
American Slovenian Polka Foundation	Yes	\$ 3,760
Aradhana Committee†		\$ 17,400
Art of Me Productions†		\$ 4,700
Arts in Strongsville		\$ 3,760
Arts Without Borders†	Yes	\$ 3,760
Association of African American Cultural Garden†	Yes	\$ 3,570
Association of Asian Indian Women In Ohio*†	Yes	\$ 1,505
Baldwin Wallace University	85.2	\$ 16,010
Baseball Heritage Museum	Yes	\$ 4,700

Bay Village Community Band		\$ 3,005
Beachwood Arts Council		\$ 4,700
Bedford Historical Society		\$ 2,705
Bellaire Puritas Development Corporation	Yes	\$ 4,700
Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging	Yes	\$ 4,700
Berea Arts Fest	88	\$ 13,710
BigHearted Blooms	Yes	\$ 4,700
Blazing River Arts Group INC	Yes	\$ 4,700
BlueWater Chamber Orchestra	91.25	\$ 17,145
Bodwin Theatre Company	Yes	\$ 3,760
BorderLight	85.4	\$ 16,045
Brecksville Theatre	89.5	\$ 16,815
Brite Cleveland	86.2	\$ 16,195
Brooklyn Heights Service Clubs	Yes	\$ 3,760
Canalway Partners	Yes	\$ 4,700
Carolyn L. Farrell Foundation	85.2	\$ 16,010
Case Western Reserve University	Yes	\$ 4,700
Cassidy Theatre		\$ 15,860
Catholic Charities Diocese of Cleveland	Yes	\$ 3,760
Cedar Fairmount Special Improvement District	Yes	\$ 3,760
Center for Employment Opportunities [†]		\$ 4,700
Cesear's Forum	Yes	\$ 3,760
Chagrin Arts		\$ 16,910
ChamberFest Cleveland		\$ 15,895
Choral Arts Cleveland		\$ 3,760
City Ballet of Cleveland		\$ 10,990
City Club of Cleveland	95.75	\$ 17,990
CityMusic Cleveland	84.8	\$ 15,935
Cleveland Arts Education Consortium*	Yes	\$ 4,700
Cleveland Arts Prize	89.5	\$ 9,670
Cleveland Ballet	82.5	\$ 15,500
Cleveland Chamber Choir	93.25	\$ 10,600
Cleveland Chamber Collective	Yes	\$ 3,760
Cleveland Chamber Music Society	91.25	\$ 17,145
Cleveland Chamber Symphony		\$ 6,485
Cleveland Composers Guild	Yes	\$ 4,700
Cleveland Contemporary Chinese Culture Association [†]		\$ 10,340
Cleveland Cultural Gardens	96	\$ 18,040
Cleveland Dance Project Company	Yes	\$ 4,700
Cleveland Inner City Ballet [†]	Yes	\$ 3,760
Cleveland Leadership Center	Yes	\$ 4,700
Cleveland Philharmonic Orchestra	Yes	\$ 3,760
Cleveland Photographic Workshop		\$ 4,700

Cleveland Rape Crisis Center	Yes	\$ 4,700
Cleveland Repertory Orchestra	Yes	\$ 4,700
Cleveland Rocks: Past Present and Future	93.75	\$ 17,615
Cleveland School of the Arts Board of Trustees	84	\$ 15,785
Cleveland Seed Bank	Yes	\$ 4,700
Cleveland Shakespeare Festival	Yes	\$ 3,760
Cleveland Silent Film Festival and Colloquium	Yes	\$ 4,230
Cleveland TOPS Swingband	Yes	\$ 3,760
Cleveland Treatment Center†	Yes	\$ 4,700
Cleveland Uncommon Sound Project	Yes	\$ 4,700
Cleveland Winds	Yes	\$ 3,760
Cleveland Women's Orchestra	Yes	\$ 3,760
Colors+ Youth Center	Yes	\$ 3,760
Comité Mexicano†	Yes	\$ 3,760
Community Cup Classic Foundation	Yes	\$ 3,760
Community Life Collaborative*	Yes	\$ 4,700
Connecting for Kids	Yes	\$ 4,700
convergence-continuum	86.4	\$ 16,235
Coventry PEACE Campus	Yes	\$ 3,760
Coventry Village Special Improvement District	Yes	\$ 4,700
Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad	Yes	\$ 3,760
Dance Evert	Yes	\$ 3,760
Dancing Classrooms Northeast Ohio		\$ 3,235
Darl Center for the Arts*	Yes	\$ 3,760
Deutscher Musik Verein	Yes	\$ 2,255
Diversity Center of Northeast Ohio	Yes	\$ 3,760
East Cleveland Farmers' Market Preservation Society	Yes	\$ 1,880
Edward E. Parker Museum of Art†	Yes	\$ 3,005
Empowering Epilepsy	Yes	\$ 4,700
Euclid Symphony Orchestra*	Yes	\$ 4,700
Far West Center	Yes	\$ 4,700
Fashion Talks Foundation*†	Yes	\$ 3,760
Folknet		\$ 3,760
Food Strong	Yes	\$ 4,700
Fostering Hope	Yes	\$ 4,700
Friends of the East Cleveland Public Library†	Yes	\$ 3,005
Friends of the McGaffin Carillon	85.75	\$ 8,760
From Me 2 U, Inc†	Yes	\$ 4,700
Front Steps Housing and Services	Yes	\$ 4,700
FrontLine Service	Yes	\$ 4,700
FutureHeights	Yes	\$ 4,700
Gardening in the District†	Yes	\$ 3,760
German Central	Yes	\$ 3,760

Golden Ciphers Youth Development & Cultural Arts Center [†]	Yes	\$ 3,760
Good Company: A Vocal Ensemble		\$ 4,700
Graffiti HeArt Corporation		\$ 3,760
Greater Cleveland Film Commission		\$ 4,700
Greater Cleveland Neighborhood Centers Association	82.2	\$ 15,445
Harvard Community Services Center [†]	Yes	\$ 4,700
Haus of Transcendent* [†]	Yes	\$ 4,700
Heights Youth Theatre	81.6	\$ 15,330
Henry Johnson Center [†]	Yes	\$ 3,760
Hispanic Police Officers Association [†]	Yes	\$ 4,700
Historic Gateway Neighborhood Corporation	75.2	\$ 10,455
Hospice of the Western Reserve	92.4	\$ 15,915
In Harmony Therapeutic Services	84	\$ 15,785
India Fest USA [†]	Yes	\$ 3,760
InMotion	Yes	\$ 3,935
International Community Council-Worldwide Intercultural Network (ICC-WIN)	Yes	\$ 3,760
International Women's Air & Space Museum	Yes	\$ 3,005
Italian Cultural Garden	Yes	\$ 3,760
Jennings Center for Older Adults	82	\$ 15,405
Jewish Family Service Association of Cleveland Ohio	Yes	\$ 4,700
Jewish Federation of Cleveland	90.2	\$ 16,950
Jones Road Family Development Corporation [†]	88.5	\$ 16,630
Kings & Queens of Art [†]		\$ 3,760
Lakewood Young Filmmakers Academy	93.5	\$ 17,570
LakewoodAlive	Yes	\$ 4,700
Larchmere PorchFest	Yes	\$ 3,760
Les Délices	85.4	\$ 16,045
LGBT Community Center Greater Cleveland [†]	Yes	\$ 4,700
Little Italy Redevelopment Corporation	Yes	\$ 3,760
Little Lumpy's Center for Educational Initiatives [†]	85.8	\$ 16,120
Local 4 Music Fund	95.2	\$ 17,885
M.U.S.i.C.		\$ 11,760
Maelstrom Collaborative Arts	88.75	\$ 15,010
Malachi Center	Yes	\$ 4,700
Mandel Jewish Community Center of Cleveland	78.8	\$ 14,805
May Dugan Center	Yes	\$ 3,760
Midnight Art Club*	Yes	\$ 3,760
MidTown Cleveland		\$ 4,700
Museum of Creative Human Art [†]	Yes	\$ 3,760
Music and Art at Trinity Cathedral	75.6	\$ 9,290
Naach Di Cleveland [†]		\$ 3,760
NAMI Greater Cleveland		\$ 4,700

Negative Space Gallery	Yes	\$ 4,700
New Avenues to Independence	Yes	\$ 3,190
No Exit	Yes	\$ 3,760
North Pointe Ballet		\$ 4,700
North Union Farmers Market	Yes	\$ 3,760
Northeast Ohio Hispanic Center for Economic Development [†]	80.8	\$ 6,790
Northeast Ohio Marathi Mandal* [†]	Yes	\$ 3,760
Northeast Ohio Musical Heritage Association	Yes	\$ 4,700
OCA Cleveland [†]	Yes	\$ 4,700
Oh Sew Powerful [†]	83.8	\$ 10,395
Ohio City Inc		\$ 4,700
Ohio Selfie World Foundation* [†]	Yes	\$ 3,760
Old Brooklyn Community Development Corporation		\$ 4,700
One South Euclid		\$ 4,700
Open Doors Academy	93.4	\$ 17,550
Open Tone Music [†]	88.6	\$ 16,645
Pakistani Cultural Garden [†]	Yes	\$ 3,760
PALS for Healing	85.75	\$ 16,110
Parma Area Fine Arts Council		\$ 3,760
Parma Symphony Orchestra*	Yes	\$ 3,760
Polish Village Parma		\$ 3,760
Praxis Fiber Workshop		\$ 16,835
Radio on the Lake Theatre		\$ 3,760
Re: Source Cleveland		\$ 15,555
Reaching Heights	Yes	\$ 3,760
Refresh Collective	88.6	\$ 16,645
Renovare Music	97.75	\$ 13,800
Restore Cleveland Hope Inc.	Yes	\$ 3,760
RhythmiCLE Sound Tap Company*	Yes	\$ 3,760
Ridna Shkola Cleveland		\$ 4,700
Roberto Ocasio Foundation	Yes	\$ 4,700
Rollin' BuckeyeZ [†]	Yes	\$ 4,700
Seat of the Pants*	Yes	\$ 4,700
Shaker Arts Council		\$ 3,760
Shore Cultural Centre		\$ 3,760
Slavic Village Development	Yes	\$ 4,700
SOS: Strengthening Our Students [†]	Yes	\$ 3,760
Spread the Love Foundation* [†]	Yes	\$ 4,700
Stellar Acrobatic Dance Academy [†]	Yes	\$ 4,700
Studio Institute	Yes	\$ 4,700
STV Bavaria		\$ 4,700
Suburban Symphony Orchestra	Yes	\$ 4,700
Talespinner Children's Theatre	93.2	\$ 17,510

Tender Hearts Crusades†	Yes	\$ 4,700
The Foundry		\$ 4,700
The Gathering Place	Yes	\$ 3,760
The Harvard Square Center†	Yes	\$ 3,760
The Land†	83.8	\$ 15,745
The Meeting Place Learning Center*	Yes	\$ 3,760
The Movement Project	86	\$ 16,160
Thea Bowman Center†	Yes	\$ 4,700
Tremont West Development Corporation	86.4	\$ 8,525
Trobár Medieval	Yes	\$ 4,700
Ukrainian Cultural Arts Association of Greater Cleveland	Yes	\$ 4,700
Union Miles Development Corporation†	Yes	\$ 3,005
University Circle Inc.	91.2	\$ 17,135
Upcycle Parts Shop		\$ 4,700
UpStage Players	Yes	\$ 4,700
Ursuline College		\$ 4,700
VIVA Bavaria	Yes	\$ 4,700
Waterloo Arts		\$ 17,210
West Park Kamm's Neighborhood Development	Yes	\$ 4,230
West Shore Chorale	81.4	\$ 8,655
West Side Catholic Center	Yes	\$ 4,700
West Side Community House†		\$ 16,960
Western Reserve Chorale	Yes	\$ 4,700
Western Reserve Fire Museum & Education Center	Yes	\$ 4,700
Western Reserve Land Conservancy	Yes	\$ 3,760
Westlake Chinese School†		\$ 3,760
Westown Community Development Corporation	Yes	\$ 3,760
Windsong, Cleveland's Feminist Chorus	Yes	\$ 4,700
Woodland Cemetery Foundation of Cleveland	Yes	\$ 3,760
Writers in Residence	93.2	\$ 8,755
YMCA of Greater Cleveland	Yes	\$ 4,700
Youth Challenge	Yes	\$ 4,700

† Indicates that the nonprofit self-identifies as a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) -led and serving organization

* Indicates a first-time grant recipient

APPENDIX 2: Applicants Not Recommended for Funding

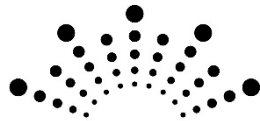
Note: Scores are numerical for grants of more than \$5,000 (on a 0-100 scale). Scores are “Yes” or “No” for grants of \$5,000 or less. A score of 75 or above, or “Yes” is required to be eligible for funding.

2025 Project Support

Organization	Score
Downtown Cleveland, Inc.	69.2
Euclid Beach Park Now	No
Kaboom Collective	72.2
LYLESART †	No

† *Indicates that the nonprofit self-identifies as a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color)-led and serving organization*

* *Indicates a first-time grant recipient*



cuyahoga
arts & culture
 strengthening community

MEMORANDUM

Date: November 20, 2024
 To: CAC Board of Trustees
 From: CAC Staff
 Re: 2025 Panelist Recruitment and Roster

SUMMARY

Below is an overview of the 39 panelists who reviewed and scored applications for CAC’s 2025 Project Support (PS) panels, which took place in September 2024. No action is required.

Background

Panelists play a pivotal role in CAC’s grantmaking process, serving as the independent group of outside experts that review and evaluate applications. Staff works year-round to recruit and train a diverse and reputable roster of panelists from across the nation. Their biographies are on the following pages.

Panelist Selection

Staff identified, recruited, and vetted candidates through personalized emails, references, and interviews to ensure alignment with CAC’s funding criteria and process. CAC also accepts panelist nominations through open call on our website. This process resulted in a slate of respected regional and national leaders thoughtfully selected and qualified to evaluate grant applications, including a mix of returning (20) and new (19) panelists. The group is diverse in artistic/management expertise, race/ethnicity, gender, and age:

Panelist Race	
Asian or Asian American	8%
Black or African American	23%
Hispanic or Latino/a/x	8%
Multiracial	5%
Persian	2%
White or European American	49%
Did not disclose	5%

Panelist Age	
25-30	10%
31-40	36%
41-50	32%
51-60	10%
61-70	10%
70 and over	2%

Panelist Gender	
Female-identifying	74%
Male-identifying	24%
Other-identifying	2%

Panelist Disability Status	
Living with a disability	11%
Not living with a disability	84%
Prefer not to answer	5%

Panel Review Process

Panelists received all application materials and access to our online system in August. Every panelist participated in training webinars and was provided with handbooks to ensure all were prepared to serve. Panelists deliberated and scored each application in accordance with the funding criteria in the 2025 grant guidelines. The live panel review meetings for Project Support applications requesting more than \$5,000 were held on September 16-18, 2024, as public live Zoom meetings. The panels were recorded and will be made accessible via [CAC's YouTube page](#). Project Support applications for up to \$5,000 were reviewed with written scores and comments, and which will be posted on CAC's website.

Panelist rosters were made available to the public on the first day of each public panel meeting in audience guides which are linked below.

- [Project Support Live](#)
- [Project Support Written](#)

Panelist Feedback

At the end of each public panel review meeting, panelists are given a chance to provide general feedback, which is publicly available via the YouTube recordings. All panelists are also asked to complete a survey following the close of panel. Below is some of the feedback offered about CAC's process that we will use to inform and improve our process.

100% of panelists felt that CAC set clear expectations about their role and responsibilities as panelists, and that CAC was clear in explaining and defining the Funding Criteria.

"The thoughtful way CAC approaches public benefit always makes me assess the work I am doing in my home community, ensuring I am honoring power-sharing and inclusion."

"I have learned a great deal from CAC's grantmaking practices. It has definitely informed our own practices and panel process."

"I think that CAC makes it very clear to applicants about how to write a successful application. It's clear that it reflects the philosophy of being inclined to fund these projects - rather than to find fault."

Cuyahoga Arts & Culture 2025 Panelist Biographies

**denotes previous service as a Cuyahoga Arts & Culture panelist*



**Jordan Adams, she/her
Indianapolis, IN**

Jordan Adams brings nearly 15 years of experience with non-profit, public and human services, marketing and communications, and startup entities. Studying organizational leadership and supervision, as well as communications, at Purdue University equipped Jordan with the capacity to look at an organization at both macro and micro levels. Jordan joined the Indiana Arts Commission as the Artist Services Program Manager where she inherited the premiere program for Indiana's individual artists, On-Ramp: Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator. Jordan has served on United Way of Central Indiana's Youth as Resources executive board, Project WILL, Inc.'s executive board, and is a former Americorps VISTA. Jordan loves learning about the art of placemaking and keeping through psychological lens of people, place and business.



**Roshi Ahmadian, she/her
Chicago, IL**

Roshi Ahmadian derives her sense of purpose from her value of impact and has centered her career on this value. Roshi holds an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, an MA in art history and museum studies from Case Western Reserve University, and is a Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society graduate with BA degrees in art history and pre-architecture from the same university. Roshi is a fluent Persian speaker, has working knowledge of Italian and Arabic, and is learning Japanese. In her free time, Roshi enjoys photography, graphic design, painting, and traveling, and has visited over a dozen countries to date. Roshi lives in Chicago with her husband and daughter.



***Melissa Astin, she/her
Chattanooga, TN**

Melissa Astin joined ArtsBuild in April 2022. She has resided in Chattanooga for ten years. Previously, she was the Director of Community Outreach & Engagement at Crabtree Farms. Prior to her time at Crabtree, she worked for the City of Chattanooga-Public Art, initially as an intern and then as a contractor. The Manager of Grants and Community Engagement oversees ArtsBuild's grantmaking programs and supports our local arts communities with a focus on collaborative work, needs-based initiatives, and equitable arts programming in underserved areas.



**Heather Beffa, she/her
Centennial, CO**

Heather joined CERF+ as the Readiness and Relief Coordinator in 2021, facilitating applications, review, and determinations. Prior to joining our staff, Heather served as the Grants Program Manager at ArtsKC in Kansas City, Missouri where she oversaw competitive and needs-based funding for artists and arts organizations. She is dedicated to transparency, ethics, and demonstrating the positive effects of funding. Art is the center of Heather's personal and professional life. Heather has a Master's degree in Art History from University of Missouri-Kansas City and a BFA from Kansas City Art Institute in Printmaking. Outside of work, Heather enjoys skiing, reading, and drawing.



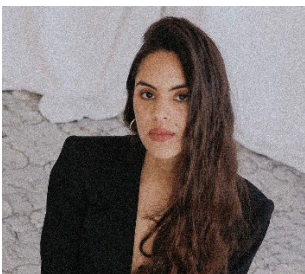
**Rem Cabrera, he/him
Kalamazoo, MI**

Rem Cabrera is the Grants & Inclusion Manager at The Gilmore in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He was a grants officer for 17 years with the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, one of the 5 top largest agencies in the U.S. He has served on panels for the National Endowment for the Arts multiple times, as well as state panels for Florida and Illinois, and has been involved in the arts his entire professional life.



***Brad Carlin, he/him
Beaverton, OR**

Brad Carlin is a Senior Consultant for TRG Arts and works with organizations of all sizes and disciplines in the US, Canada, and the UK. Prior to joining TRG, Brad was the Managing Director of Fusebox Festival in Austin, TX and has 15 years of experience in general management and fundraising for arts organizations. He received a Master's Degree in Arts Management from Carnegie Mellon University and a B.A. in Theatre from St. Edward's University.



***Karla Centeno, she/her
San Diego, CA**

Throughout her career, Karla has sought experiences that allow people to see the world as it is while imagining what it could be. She has had the privilege of working in arts at all levels as a museum educator, writer, curator, director of education, and grantmaker. She also co-founded allofus, an artist-run collective and online gallery. She is currently the Director of Education for Working Assumptions



***Lisa Chang, she/her
Madison, AL**

Lisa Chang, MSW, Deputy Director of United Women of Color, has spent over 20 years working in development, community engagement, and management for advocacy, arts, and faith-based nonprofits. With a unique background in social work and engineering, Lisa brings expert relationship management and a data-driven approach that is rooted in anti-racism and anti-oppression. Lisa has worked for a variety of arts, faith-based, and advocacy organizations such as Pulitzer Arts Foundation, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, and the Bloomberg School of Public Health. She has also served on numerous nonprofit boards, including Prison Performing Arts, Encore Stage and Studio, and the Huntsville Bail Fund.



***Keya Crenshaw, she/her
Reynoldsburg, OH**

Founder of Black Chick Media, LLC, Keya acts as a Film Festival Consultant, Digital Media Maven, and Writer. As a creative entrepreneur and stage and voice actor, Keya is and has been, a member of numerous organizations including the League of Professional Theatre Women based in New York City, the So and So Arts Club based in London, England, The League of Professional Theatre Women, and Past Productions Columbus. Keya has previously held positions at The Ohio State University, The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, WOSU Public Media, the Brooklyn Arts Council, Americans for the Arts, and the Columbus Post Newspaper. Her most recent book chapter, *Unbought & Unbossed: Black Womanist Resistance and the Power of Holding Space*, was published in 2022 by The University of Arizona Press as a part of the anthology, *A Love Letter to This Bridge Called My Back*.



***LaShawnda Crowe Storm,
she/her
Indianapolis, IN**

LaShawnda Crowe Storm is an artist, activist, community builder and occasionally an urban farmer. Whether she is making artwork or sowing seeds, Crowe Storm uses her creative power as a vehicle for dialogue, social change and community healing. Crowe Storm has an M.F.A. from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a B.A. in mass communications and English Literature from the University of Michigan. She has received numerous awards for art and community activism including but not limited to a MdW Fellowship (2023), Power Plant Award (Big Car with the Andy Warhol Foundation), Artist of Distinction Award (Indianapolis Art Council). Crowe Storm is the creator and project manager of *Powerful Conversations on Race*, a monthly community dialogue series exploring race in America as the Community Engagement Director for *Spirit & Place*. *Spirit & Place* uses the arts, humanities and religion as a vehicle to create space for critical community dialogue.



**Noah Dixon, he/him
Columbus, OH**

Noah Dixon is an award-winning screenwriter, director and editor based in Columbus, OH. Recognized for his “assured debut” by The New York Times, Noah’s first feature film, POSER, premiered at the 2021 Tribeca Film Festival and found theatrical distribution through Oscilloscope Laboratories. His work has screened at numerous festivals in the U.S. and abroad including Filmfest Hamburg, American Film Festival, Cleveland International Film Festival, Thessaloniki International Film Festival, Nashville Film Festival and the Jecheon International Music and Film Festival. In 2023, Noah was sponsored by the Greater Columbus Arts Council and the Cultural Foundation of the Free State of Saxony for an artist residency in Dresden, Germany. Noah is the co-owner and creative director of the production company, Loose Films which has had films featured at Sundance Film Festival, Big Sky Film Festival, and distributed via Showtime, The New Yorker and Vimeo Staff Picks.



***Sheryl Doades, she/her
Ellettsville, IN**

Sheryl recently earned her master’s degree in arts administration from the O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University Bloomington. She holds a B.A. and B.F.A. in theatre arts and has performed in, directed, and taught theatre and musical theatre across the U.S., Canada, and overseas. Sheryl currently works full-time as a writer/editor at IU Bloomington and part-time as a teaching artist, director, and performer in South Central Indiana.



**Lenore Eggleston-Herbst,
she/her
Wilton, CT**

With more than thirty years of experience managing non-for-profit organizations, Lenore is dedicated to utilizing Woodcock Nature Center’s incredible team to connect the community more deeply to nature. Lenore’s previous leadership experience includes twelve years as director of marketing and development for the Westchester Philharmonic. She has also worked in fundraising and marketing for The Ballet Tech Foundation (New York City’s only tuition-free public school for dance) and the Kaufman Center, also in New York City which operates a community arts school, a K-12 public school for gifted music students, and the renowned Merkin Concert Hall. Lenore holds a B.A. in Dance and Psychology from Connecticut College and an M.A. in Performing Arts Administration from NYU. .



**Claudia Gage, she/her
Bloomington, IN**

Claudia is a recent graduate of the MAAA-MPA program at the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. She currently works in Student Leadership for her alma mater, coordinating work-study programs, seminar series, workshops, and volunteer opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students. Claudia's background is in the performing arts. Her early career as an arts educator led to a broader interest in nonprofit leadership and program management.



***Jeff Garrett, he/him
Davison, MI**

Jeff Garrett is a grant Program Manager and Accessibility Coordinator for the State of Michigan Arts and Culture Council. Previously, Jeff served as the Director of the Art School at the Flint Institute of Arts. He has teaching experience in Michigan Public Schools K-12, has been adjunct faculty at Vincennes University, Saginaw Valley State University, Mott Community College, and was Head of the Art & Design Department at Crowder College. He received a Master of Fine Arts degree in Ceramics with Distinction from Indiana State University.



***Michael Greer, he/him
Bainbridge, WA**

As a relationship builder, thought leader, and strategic planner, Michael Romy Greer is dedicated to supporting the mission of ArtsFund to support the arts through leadership, advocacy, and grantmaking in order to build a healthy, equitable, and creative Washington. With degrees in economics, education, and business, Michael brings a diverse skill set to the role and a unique perspective on the challenges and opportunities of the sector. In addition, he is a dedicated community partner, serving on several boards, including the Downtown Seattle Association and Puget Sound Regional Council's Economic Development District.



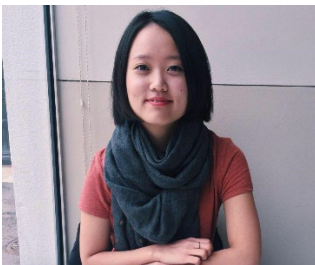
***Deonté Griffin-Quick,
he/him
Avenel, NJ**

Deonté is a nationally recognized, award-winning actor, arts administrator and consultant with a proven track record of envisioning and implementing change at the local and regional level. Currently, Deonté serves as the Managing Director of External Affairs for Artist Communities Alliance (ACA). Before joining ACA, Deonté served as Director of Programs and Services at New Jersey Theatre Alliance where he built lasting partnerships, led statewide initiatives, and oversaw programming to support the cultivation of 42 professional theatre companies. In an effort to connect, empower, and cultivate other arts and cultural leaders of color, in 2019 Deonté developed and spearheaded the New Jersey Arts and Culture Administrators of Color Network.



***Maria Iafelice, she/her
Findlay, OH**

Maria Iafelice is an arts leader and museum professional dedicated to making art accessible and building capacity with mission-driven organizations. Iafelice has held positions at the Akron Art Museum, Center for Arts-Inspired Learning, Cleveland Museum of Art, and most recently at the Toledo Museum of Art, where she launched the award-winning Teen Leaders program, co-authored the museum's inaugural Belonging Plan, and was recognized as the 2019 Emerging Professional of the Year by the Ohio Museums Association. Iafelice is the Visual Arts Chair for the Black Swamp Arts Festival, serves as the Board President for Public Works Collaborative, Board Treasurer of the Collingwood Arts Center, and sits on the Artist Services Committee at The Arts Commission of Greater Toledo. She earned a M.A. and B.A. in Art Education from Kent State University and was part of the 2018 NextGen Museum Leadership class at Getty Leadership Institute.



***June Kim, she/her
New York, NY**

June Kim currently serves as Senior Manager, Grants and Development Communications at The Juilliard School. Previously, she served in the development offices at the Santa Fe Opera and IU Jacobs School of Music. She is a graduate of St. Olaf College and Indiana University, where she studied flute performance and arts administration. In her daily work, she is guided by the core principle of eliminating barriers to arts education, exploration, and access.



**Sara Little, she/her
Erie, PA**

Sara's journey in dance began nearly 40 years ago right here in Erie at Little Dance Studio. There, she immersed herself in various dance styles, from tap and jazz to ballet, lyrical, modern, hip hop, contemporary, Irish step, and swing. As a dedicated member of Jazz Kids Dance Company, Sara showcased her talents at prestigious venues, including Times Square's Project Dance in NYC. During high school, she graced the stage in musicals with the Footlights Theatre Program under the direction of David W. Mitchell. Later, she transitioned to the Footlights staff, where she choreographed "Annie" and "Bye Bye Birdie!" For over 28 years, Sara has nurtured dancers of all ages and skill levels, from beginners to aspiring professionals, at various studios in Erie.



**Jo-ann Lawrence, she/her
Stone Mountain, GA**

Jo-ann Lawrence is a non-profit professional with experience in the theatre, ballet, and museums as well as healthcare, child-welfare, early education, and disability services. Her expertise lies in operating non-profits. Specifically, program creation/management, strategic planning, board management, grant writing, grants training, grant making, and annual funds. A few examples of Jo-ann's past hands on work are managing two historic theatres, running a city-wide arts education program in Chicago, managing a health system grant making program and creating programming for youth in foster care. Lawrence graduated from Butler University with a B.S. in Arts Administration and Columbia College Chicago with a M.A. in Performing Arts Management. While Jo-ann has been working independently for many years, she recently formed Ascension Nonprofit Development Strategies, LLC to bring all of her interests and efforts under one umbrella.



***Dana Manyothane, she/her
Denver, CO**

A Native of Denver, Colorado, Dana was the executive director of The Colorado Black Arts Festival before joining the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District team as a program officer in 2017. Dana is a passionate advocate for visual and performing arts and racial equity initiatives. She has served on the board or in board advisory positions in several non-profits in the Denver Metro area, including African Leadership Organization and FreshLo, and is the current chair of the Colorado Business Committee for the Arts's Equity, Inclusivity, Diversity, and Accessibility committee. She is a graduate of the University of Colorado-Boulder, married, the proud mother of four college-aged children, and an avid consumer of cultural events. Dana's hobbies include terra cotta pot painting, reading, and roller skating.



**Ellen Milligan, she/her
Seattle, WA**

Ellen Milligan (she/her) is Vice President of Grantmaking at ArtsFund in Seattle, Washington. She has been a member of the ArtsFund team since 2016, and before that, worked for performing arts organizations on the West Coast and in the Midwest. She earned her B.A. from Ohio State University. She has served as a member of the Seattle Cultural Accessibility Consortium Steering Committee since 2021.



***Lisa Much, she/they
Columbus, OH**

Lisa Much is currently a nonprofit events, fundraising, and operations consultant. Her background is predominantly in community development, having worked for Ohio CDC Association for nine years, and theatrical stage management. She has a BA in Sustainable Theater Management from Green Mountain College and recently completed her Masters in Public Policy & Management from the John Glenn College at The Ohio State University.



**Yuki Numata Resnick,
she/her
Buffalo, NY**

Yuki Numata Resnick is a violinist, nonprofit leader, and educator. Originally from Vancouver, BC, she is passionate about her adopted home in Buffalo, NY, and ensuring that all youth in Buffalo have equitable access to music education. Yuki holds violin performance degrees from the Eastman School of Music and the University of Michigan. She also holds a Certificate in Nonprofit Management from Duke University. As a violinist, Yuki has performed on stages from the Sydney Opera House to Carnegie Hall and is a passionate advocate for new music. In 2016, she released *For Ko*, her debut solo record featuring brand new works by living composers. A versatile musician, Yuki has also played with and recorded for artists such as The National, Beirut, King Princess, Lisa Hannigan, Arcade Fire, and Taylor Swift. She is also a featured musician on Ed Sheeran's 2023 record, *(Subtract)*. Yuki co-founded Buffalo String Works, a music program focused on leadership development and social change. She is currently the Director of Arts and Culture at the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. Her role interacts closely with the Raph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation's \$100M commitment to transform the long-term viability of Western NY's arts and culture community through the establishment of an endowment that will support the sector now and forever.



**Alicia Olivo, they/them
Pasadena, TX**

Alicia Margarita Olivo is a Houston-based Mexican American writer, director, arts manager, and weather enjoyer. They are currently the Manager of Membership Programming for Benvenuti Arts and a Community Storyteller with Houston BANF. Alicia was the Texas Representative in the 2022-2023 National Leaders of Color Fellow cohort. As a playwright, Alicia's works have been developed and/or received readings with Rec Room Arts, Stages, Company One Theater, The Workshop Theater, Teatro Chelsea, Telatúlso, AlterTheater, and The Inkwell Theater. They've directed or assistant directed for TEATRXX, Rec Room Arts, Stages, and Wellesley Repertory Theater. Selected recognitions include being Finalist for AlterTheater and La Lengua Teatro's Historias de Descolonización Commission, Finalist for Texas State University's Black and Latino Playwrights Celebration New Play Development Workshops, plus more.



**Alexandra Opsahl,
she/her
Altadena, CA**

Originally from Norway, Alexandra Opsahl studied cornetto and recorder at the Royal Academy of Music in London, graduating with 1st Class Honors in 2004. She continued her studies of historic brass at the Schola Cantorum in Basel, Switzerland. Her performances include collaborations with renowned ensembles such as the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Philharmonia Baroque, Boston Early Music Festival, I Fagiolini, Capella Barocca di Mexico, Carmel Bach Festival, Apollo's Fire (Cleveland Baroque Orchestra), and Portland Baroque Orchestra. In 2007, Alexandra relocated to Los Angeles, where she founded Tesseræ Baroque, a non-profit arts organization dedicated to performing music from the Renaissance and Baroque periods. She also served as executive director for Musica Angelica Baroque Orchestra. Now, as the Member Engagement and Development Manager for ACSO, Alex brings her collaborative spirit and passion for the arts to a role focused on supporting and championing the classical music community as a whole.



**Beth Prevor, she/her
New York, NY**

Beth Prevor is a co-founder and Executive Director of Hands On, an arts service organization that advocates for access to the cultural arts for the Deaf community and audiences with disabilities. As Executive Director, Beth works with arts organizations to ensure inclusion for all by providing marketing, community engagement and audience development strategies. As a disabled advocate, Beth is active as an advisory member to groups including, Shubert Accessibility Committee, New Jersey Theatre Alliance, and the Museum, Arts & Culture Access Consortium (MAC). She has led workshops on accessibility and the arts around the country including the Kennedy Center's LEAD (Leadership Exchange in Arts & Disability) Conference, Americans for the Arts, National Arts Marketing Project, Theater Communications Group (TCG) and Alliance of Resident Theaters/New York (ART/NY) where she is their Disability Consultant. She is the 2015 recipient of the John F. Kennedy Center's Excellence in Accessibility Leadership Lifetime Achievement award.



***Susan Roll, she/her
Escanaba, MI**

Sue is an engineer by education, a life coach by training, a costumer by avocation, a manager by choice, a planner by necessity, an arts administrator by vocation, and an out-going optimist. She has lived and worked overseas for many years of her career which has included 19 years with Intel Corporation, creating a successful coaching and consulting practice in the rural community, and, over the last 10 years, has been involved in her community arts and culture world including the position of an executive director of a community arts center. She helped establish the Upper Peninsula Arts and Culture Alliance, a non-profit that generates connections and community prosperity across the Upper Peninsula of Michigan through arts and culture. She is passionate about people and their connections with and through arts and culture.



***Ami Scherson, she/her
Elmhurst, NY**

Ami (ah-mee) Scherson is a Queens, NY based arts administrator, musician, and facilitator. She is currently the Membership & Individual Giving Manager at National Sawdust. Prior to joining the organization, she worked at Americans for the Arts and Arts Business Collaborative to develop and implement programs that support and elevate the voices of BIPOC arts leaders. As the manager for national programs such as the Diversity in Arts Leadership (DIAL) Internship Program and Arts and Culture Leaders of Color, she curated educational programming for emerging and mid-career leaders, developed partnerships with New York City and national arts organizations, and guided the pivot to virtual programming during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Christopher Schram is the Director of Development for the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He has served as Executive Director/Artistic Director and/or Director of Advancement/Development at a number of institutions in Michigan, Illinois, and Florida including art museums, theaters, and multi-disciplinary organizations, such as the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts (Kalamazoo, MI), Victory Gardens Theater and Court Theater (both in Chicago, IL), and the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts/youngARTS (Miami, FL). He has served on grant review panels throughout the nation. He is also a producer, director, choreographer, actor, dancer, singer, classical pianist, and composer/lyricist. A cum laude graduate of Washington & Lee University, Mr. Schram holds a BS in Business Administration and a BA in French.

***Christopher Schram,
he/him
Kalamazoo, MI**



Michael A. Smith is the Assistant Director of The Fine Foundation, a funder of Arts & Culture and Jewish Life in the greater Pittsburgh region. Before working as a grantmaker, he established a reputation for enabling bold arts-based economic development projects through a career in institutional development, most recently at the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust. Michael earned a Ph.D. in English from Duquesne University, where he researched placemaking, geocriticism, and the American railroad. He is published in MDPI's Humanities journal and the St. John's Humanities Review. Michael serves on the board of PA Humanities and on the Northland Public Library board. He also serves on the advisory committee of the International Poetry Forum, the Franciscan Volunteer Ministry's finance committee, and on the Committee on Honors and Awards for the MLA. In addition to serving as a panelist for Cuyahoga Arts & Culture, he has reviewed grants for The Whiting Foundation.

***Michael Smith,
he/him
Wexford, PA**



**Emily Sollenberger,
she/her
Baltimore, MD**

Emily is the Program Director, Arts Services at the Maryland State Arts Council, where she works with a team who encourages and invests in the advancement of the arts for all Marylanders. She is the staff expert in the visual, media, multidisciplinary, folk/traditional arts, and service disciplines - and supports the artists and arts organizations within these discipline categories with access to grant opportunities, professional development, and strategic initiatives to better serve their own communities. She was also selected for the very first cohort of its kind in the country, one of twelve arts administrators across the county, in the Crisis Analysis & Mitigation Coach Training for Arts Responders, supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Coalition of Arts Preparedness & Emergency Response (NCAPER).



**Anna Tragesser, she/her
Indianapolis, IN**

Anna Tragesser is the Program Manager at Indy Arts Council. As a lifelong Hoosier, she's inspired by the tension and beauty of today's Midwestern cultural expression. Her career is to make work and life easier for artists. In a previous role at the Indiana Arts Commission, Anna managed hundreds of artist and nonprofit grantees, supported creative community development with municipal governments, and launched an award-winning artist entrepreneurship accelerator. She's also been on the other side of the table as a freelance grant writer and community arts organizer. Anna is committed to a journey of understanding racial equity and its applications in philanthropy and the arts and culture sector.



***Elena Velasco, she/ella
Alexandria, VA**

Elena Velasco (she/ella) is a Helen Hayes nominated theatre artist serving DC and Greater Boston. A commissioned playwright and researcher, she has written for Routledge, Intellect Books, and several TYA musicals, and served on panels for Boston Conservatory, George Mason University, and Theatre Washington. Her yogic training and DEI experience informs her culturally responsive processes, practices she has shared as a consultant for organizations such as American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE), Southeastern Theatre Conference, Women's Theatre Festival, and TheatreWashington. Her professional and academic theatre work garnered the 2024 University Systems of Maryland Board of Regents Excellence in Creativity Award, and she was named the 2023 recipient of SDCF's Barbara Whitman Award. She is an associate theater professor at Bowie State University and serves on the advisory council for DC Theatre Arts, Carpe Diem Arts and is the Professional Theatre Network chair for AATE.



**Laura Weiss, she/her
Baltimore, MD**

Laura Weiss joined the staff of the Maryland State Arts Council in 2019. Previous to MSAC, Laura has 13 years of non-profit arts management experience as a long-time staff member at Everyman Theatre in Baltimore. During her tenure at Everyman, she served in multiple roles including Associate Director of Marketing and Media Relations, Special Assistant to the Artistic and Managing Directors, and Development Operations Manager. Laura holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Musical Theatre from The Catholic University of America. She is a Baltimore area native, having grown up in Towson and attending Carver Center for Arts and Technology for high school. The arts have always played an important role in Laura's life, and she is proud to support individual artists and arts organizations across the State in her role as Program Director for Arts Services at the Maryland State Arts Council.



***Tom Werder, he/him
Denville, NJ**

With Morris Arts since 2012, Werder serves as chief operating executive officer. In New Jersey, Werder previously served as the Managing Director of Two River Theater Company in Red Bank; the Executive Director of Carolyn Dorfman Dance, based in Union; and the Managing Director of George Street Playhouse in New Brunswick. Before that, he was the Managing Director of Portland Stage Company in Portland, Maine where he was also a member of the Executive Committee for the Portland Arts and Cultural Alliance, an organization charged with the creation of a Downtown Arts District and credited with the revitalization of the city's downtown area. On a national level, he was twice an Executive Committee member of the League of Resident Theaters (LORT) and a member of numerous collective bargaining committees. He has served on the board and executive committees of Dance/USA and Dance New Jersey, as treasurer of the Morris County Tourism Bureau and chair of The Bridge to Recovery in Bowling Green, KY. Tom received his MFA in Theatre Management from the Yale School of Drama and his BFA from Purchase College (SUNY) where he was lighting designer and stage manager.



**Tamara Williamson,
she/her
Memphis, TN**

Tamara has a B.A. and an M.A. in English from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and has been a grant writer for 8 years, at the Children's Museum of Memphis and previously at Shelby Residential and Vocational Services, a nonprofit that supports people with disabilities.



**Courtney Young, she/her
Lafayette, LA**

CC Young is a writer (of fiction, screenplays, popular culture criticism & creative nonfiction) and a creative entrepreneur. She is the recipient of writing residencies from Willapa Bay Air, Vermont Studio Center (VSC), Faber, Hambidge, Hedgebrook, The Studios of Key West, the Key West Literary Seminar, Bainbridge & Chateau D'Orquevaux. She is the founder of Quitman Studios, an entertainment studio designed to curate exceptional storytelling experiences across space, technology & medium. She is completing her first narrative feature entitled *This Savage Life Makes Us Hard to Kill* & her first collection of short stories entitled *Scar Tissue of the Extraordinary*. A graduate of Spelman College & New York University, she received her B.A. in English and her M.A. from the Gallatin School of Individualized Study, completing an interdisciplinary program combining Entertainment Business, Performance, & Africana studies. She was born and raised in Southwest Louisiana.



Board of Trustees: 2025 Meeting Schedule

All regular meetings will start at 4:00pm unless otherwise noted.

Date	Location
Wednesday, February 12	TBD
Wednesday, April 16 <i>Annual Meeting</i>	TBD
Wednesday, September 10	TBD
Wednesday, November 12 <i>Approval of 2026 grants</i>	TBD
Wednesday, December 17* <i>Approval of 2026 budget</i> <i>*meeting starts at 3:30pm to include an executive session</i>	TBD

Contractor	Amount	Purpose	Term	Requires Board Approval
DataArts	\$14,500	Tool to track program participation and financial measures and support advocacy coalition efforts.	1/1/2025 - 12/31/2025	N
The Cleveland Foundation	\$26,000	Accept a \$26k operating support grant provided to CAC, via The Cleveland Foundation, by the Education Foundation of America (EFA).	1/1/2025 - 12/31/2025	Y
Ohio Auditor of State	\$6,000	For year end conversion of financials for FY24	1/1/2025 - 12/31/2025	N