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MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BOOK

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2025

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MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(Please refer to page number at **TOP** of page)

	<u>Page</u>
<u>Agenda and Resolutions</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>2. Minutes – June 25, 2025</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>7. FY26 Budget and Program Allocation Spending Plan</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>8a. Travel Requests</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>9. Agenda for August 19, 2025 Council Meeting</u>	<u>20</u>

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MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2025
10:00-11:30 AM
ON-LINE MEETING

BROADCAST MEETING

MEETING WILL BE LIVESTREAMED AT
<HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/LIVE/MJYOR940B94>

MEETING MATERIALS WILL BE POSTED AT
<HTTPS://MASSCULTURALCOUNCIL.ORG/ABOUT/BOARD/>
UNDER "AUGUST 6, 2025 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING"

AGENDA	VOTE
1. Call to Order & Open Meeting Law	
2. Minutes- June 25, 2025	X
3. Chair Report	
4. Lease Extension Update with DCAMM representative	
5. Executive Director's Report	
6. Legislative Update	
7. Budget and Program Allocation Plan for FY26	X
8. Business Operations Update	
a. Travel Requests	X
9. Draft Agenda August 19, 2025 Council Meeting	X
10. Adjourn	



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MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

AUGUST 6, 2025

ON-LINE MEETING

RESOLUTIONS

Section 2

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approves the minutes of the June 25, 2025 Executive Committee Meeting in the form presented to the Executive Committee.

Section 6a

RESOLVED: that, the Executive Committee recommends that the Council approve for recommendation to the Programs Committee and full Council the FY 26 Budget and Program Allocation Plan presented to the Executive Committee.

Section 6b

RESOLVED: to approve the staff-recommended out-of-state travel requests presented to the August 6, 2025 Meeting.

Section 7

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approve the draft August 19, 2025 Mass Cultural Council Agenda presented to the Executive Committee.



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UNOFFICIAL DRAFT SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE AT ITS NEXT MEETING

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 2025

ONLINE MEETING

Executive Committee Members Present were

Marc Carroll, Chair
Jo-Ann Davis, Vice Chair
Ché Anderson
Cecil Baron Jensen
Simone Early
Iván Espinoza-Madrigal
Julie Wake

Council Members Present were

Donna Haghighat
Anika Lopes
Ashley Occhino

Staff Members Present were

Michael J. Bobbitt, Executive Director
David Slatery, Deputy Executive Director
Catherine Cheng-Anderson, Chief Financial Officer
Jen Lawless, Senior Director of Program Operations
Bethann Steiner, Senior Director of Public Affairs
Christian Kelly, Public Relations & Events Manager
Ann Petruccelli Moon, Deputy Chief of Staff

Chair Marc Carroll called the meeting to order at 10:03am and asked Deputy Executive Director David Slatery to read the Open Meeting Law statement. He then asked if Committee Members had reviewed the minutes of their April 16 meeting and if they had he would entertain a motion and a second to approve them. Julie Wake moved to approve the minutes; Simone Early seconded the motion. By roll call it was unanimously

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the April 16, 2025 Executive Committee Meeting in the form presented.

The Chair briefly reviewed the schedule of upcoming Committee and Council meetings:

- Executive and Programs Committees will meet on August 6
- Advancement Committee will meet on August 11
- The next full Council Meeting is scheduled for August 19

He then moved to the next item for discussion: the Executive Director's Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). The Chair noted that he invited all Council Members to join this meeting specifically to participate in this conversation, as he was aware a few members had questions about the Executive Director's salary. This portion of the meeting is dedicated to addressing any concerns or thoughts on the proposed adjustment. As such, Council Members Anika Lopes, Ashley Occhino, and Donna Haghighat had joined the Executive Committee Meeting. The Chair then shared a written comment from Council Member Ellice Patterson who was unable to attend the meeting:

"I want to be clear that this is not an indicator of performance. My concern is simply a fiduciary concern. As we all discuss the demands outweighing the needs of grant requests in a time where federal cuts will impact us in the coming fiscal years, I am concerned that two raises within a year might not be fiscally appropriate. I voted yes on the raise since it was in regards to the performance Michael was doing. However, I just want us to consider a COLA so soon from that raise might not be the best this fiscal year and can resume in other fiscal years. Even if the COLA is small, that could still be 1 - 2 impactful grants that could go back out to the larger community. I'm open to hearing other viewpoints from the council on the matter. "

The Chair then took a moment to clarify logistics. He asked Chief Financial Officer Catherine Cheng-Anderson to confirm that, if approved, the Executive Director's COLA would take effect with the first full pay period in July. Catherine confirmed this and explained that the increase has been factored into the agency's financial planning. She also noted that while the July increase is included, the previously anticipated January 2026 adjustment remains under review by the Administration. The Chair then opened the meeting for discussion.

During the discussion, Simone Early asked whether not approving the COLA would have a tangible impact on the Agency's grantmaking budget. The Chair invited Catherine Cheng-Anderson to respond. Catherine explained that if the COLA were not implemented, the associated funds—approximately \$4,000—would remain within the agency's general payroll allocation under the operations budget. These funds could then be reallocated later in the fiscal year based on agency needs. She clarified that the amount in question is relatively modest and would simply remain in the payroll line unless repurposed. Simone then inquired whether the COLA had already been incorporated into the budget and, if the Agency had not yet received its final appropriation, how the funds would be returned to the budget.

David Slatery added context that the Agency doesn't typically receive the final state budget until July, so at this point in the year the team is always working in anticipation of

it. The Council still votes to approve the annual spending plan, which includes payroll projections. He explained that Catherine prepares a detailed spending plan each year, which include a set-aside for staff compensation including COLA for all employees, the Executive Director, and any projected hires. He reiterated that the amounts being discussed for the Executive Director's COLA if not used, it would simply be reabsorbed into general operations.

Simone asked David to confirm that the Agency receives the funds regardless of whether the Executive Director receives a COLA; David confirmed that this was correct.

Donna Haghighat commented in support of Michael's leadership of the agency. Anika Lopes expressed her appreciation for the thoughtful comments made today and voiced her strong support for Michael Bobbitt's leadership. She understands the need for fiscal prudence, especially given budget pressures, but supporting Michael at this moment feels critically important; recognizing and supporting leadership, even in small ways like a COLA, sends a powerful message.

Iván Espinoza-Madrigal expressed that he fully understands and respects the fiscal concerns raised. The current environment is challenging, and we're navigating serious funding pressures. That said, Iván believes it's essential to recognize the leadership that's guiding us through these times. A COLA reflects our values—it's not just about compensation; it's about investing in the people who carry the weight of the work. Iván strongly supports the COLA for Michael and urges other Council members to do the same. We can—and should—make grants, but we also need to ensure our internal capacity remains strong.

Julie Wake expressed her appreciation for what her fellow Council Members stated; she also deeply appreciates Michael's leadership during this difficult period. She asked for clarification about the process; why the discussion is taking place today, what were the concerns that brought this back to the Committee, and could those challenges be framed and clearly outline the positives and negatives of moving forward with the COLA.

The Chair explained that today's discussion stems from the previous Council vote regarding Michael's salary. The Council has the authority to approve or deny any change to the Executive Director's compensation. In the last meeting, the vote allowed for the COLA to proceed *unless* the Council determined there was a reason to withhold it. A few members reached out to the Chair after the vote, suggesting that now might not be the right time for a COLA—so the Chair determined that this meeting would be the right forum to revisit the issue and hear from Council Members.

He explained if enough members felt strongly, the Council could hold another vote. But from what has been shared thus far in the discussion, that doesn't seem necessary. Vice Chair, Jo-Ann Davis and all Committee Members agreed, and it was determined that the July COLA for the Executive Director will go into effect in July as planned. The Chair also noted that the Council still reserves the right to revisit any future salary adjustments. David added one further clarification—the statute specifically states that the Executive Director's compensation is subject to Council approval. So, while the July COLA can be implemented, when the Council votes on the FY26 spending plan in August, the final payroll number will include this adjustment.

The Chair then asked Michael for his Executive Director's report.

Michael thanked the Committee Members for their support. He and the staff have been working hard to close out the fiscal year, engage in budget advocacy, share the results of the Cultural Asset Inventory, begin to build plans for FY26 grant programs, make operational improvements, and to continue the strong Agency-wide focus on advancement work. At the core of all this is Mass Cultural Council's commitment to putting money and jobs into the cultural sector. One exciting success: our arts prescription program continues to gain traction. The Agency recently engaged with the Town of Franklin, which approved the use of opioid settlement funds to support the program. The Agency also held a well-received webinar with the Mass. Municipal Association and are now in active conversations with several other municipalities.

Tomorrow, Mass Cultural Council will be part of a press announcement with MassPort to launch Live Music at Logan—a new program to bring local performers to the airport. We're hopeful this will serve as a model to inspire similar busking initiatives across the state. We're also in talks with MassDevelopment, the Massachusetts Restaurant Association, and the Mass. Lodging Association to potentially expand this model to include visual artists as well.

We're also finalizing fundraising for an exciting partnership with MITx and the Sloan School of Management on an arts entrepreneurship course. Michael has seen the presentation deck, and it's impressive. We have a bit more money to raise, but we're close to the finish line.

Last month, the Governor announced the appointment of Regie Gibson as Massachusetts' first-ever Poet Laureate.

Our work on the Cultural Asset Inventory continues. We've been sharing early findings with stakeholders; a briefing is planned for Secretary Lauren Jones and her team at the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. We're exploring ways the data can inform workforce programs, including partnerships with MassHire.

We've also begun our work with the Disability Advisory Council and the Native American and Indigenous People's Advisory Committee.

Senior Director of Public Affairs Bethann Steiner will update you shortly on the FY26 budget process. Senior staff is currently reviewing the fine details of our draft FY26 spending plan, and we'll present the final version at the August Council Meeting.

Meanwhile, we continue to monitor potential federal cuts to the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, and Institute for Museum and Library Services. Mass Cultural Council received news of a \$1.31M grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). While this is welcome support, we are concerned accepting the funds and the required certifications may conflict with the agency's diversity, equity and inclusion goals, and we're carefully reviewing our options. The response deadline for accepting the offer is July 11. There is a state legislative oversight hearing on the topic of federal funds on July 15, which will be an opportunity to share updates and inform lawmakers' decisions. Michael asked David and Catherine to share more about the NEA funding.

David shared that the Agency has received preliminary approval for a \$1.31M grant from the NEA. However, accepting the funds would require Mass Cultural Council to certify that it does not operate any programs that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in ways that could be interpreted as violating federal anti-discrimination laws—per the terms of a recent executive order issued under the Trump administration. This language is not in alignment with our Agency's values, and we are currently reviewing the implications. Senior staff is still discussing this. It's important to note that the NEA accounts for only about 4-5% of the Agency's total funding, unlike many other arts agencies in other states, where it can range from 20% to 40% or more. Our concern is that accepting this relatively small amount of funding, which we would also need to match with our own dollars, could subject us, and any Massachusetts cultural organizations who are sub-grantees of such, to increased risk of federal audit and oversight under a potentially hostile regulatory framework. If we were to decline the funds, we estimate the impact on our grantees would be in the range of a 3-4% reduction, which we would need to plan for in our allocations. This issue raises significant legal questions, particularly concerning whether accepting the funds would expose both the Agency and our grantees to additional scrutiny or liability under this federal directive.

The Vice Chair asked if the NEA funds pertain to FY25 and they do not; all FY25 funds from the NEA have been received at this time.

The Chair asked if there might be political repercussions if the Agency does not accept the funds. Dave stated that, depending on how much publicity the Agency received, it could potentially make Mass Cultural Council a target. Michael added that we fear that accepting the funds could potentially undo all the work the Agency has done pertaining to equity over the past four years.

Iván stated that the issue of complying with federal executive orders and priorities is being widely discussed among grant recipients. He has heard strong advice to have legal counsel review contracts to ensure compliance doesn't require compromising core programs or values. He is glad to see this level of thoughtfulness—especially in today's climate, where strategy and caution are more important than ever. The state may also have its own review process, so he appreciates the due diligence being done before accepting these funds.

Dave shared that as the agency's counsel, he has reviewed the matter, though he hasn't seen the final documents. The NEA requires recordkeeping and assurance of compliance, with the risk of having funds reclaimed if those terms are found not to have been met. The Agency's position is that its past and current practices comply with federal civil rights laws—even if the current executive order suggests a different viewpoint. Jen added that it's not just about Mass Cultural Council, the requirements would apply to every constituent who was a subrecipient. Anyone who receives these funds would need to make the same attestations. Michael added that our diversity, equity and inclusion work isn't just part of the Agency's grantmaking—it's embedded in everything the Agency does. Accepting this funding under these terms could compromise years of progress.

The Chair and several Committee Members agreed. Cecil Barron Jensen asked if as part of advancement efforts, the Agency has identified foundations that could help offset the potential funding loss. Michael has within his personal network, there are possibilities,

though the Agency hasn't formally approached them yet. If Mass Cultural Council decides to decline the NEA grant, it would be a defining moment that could be used to galvanize support. Cecil shared that major foundations might be looking for opportunities to fill funding gaps. Iván has heard that Fidelity Investments and others may be considering stepping in; Julie added that Community Foundations might also be able to help. Simone suggested that perhaps some of the larger organizations receiving funding might be able to sacrifice funding to help some of the smaller groups.

The Chair asked Senior Director of Public Affairs Bethann Steiner for her advocacy update.

Bethann shared that the FY26 state budget is currently in Conference Committee. The House and Senate each passed their versions in April and May. The good news for Mass Cultural Council is that our base appropriation—\$26 million and change—was identical in the Governor's, House, and Senate budgets. That means it is not subject to conference negotiations, so we're anticipating that amount for FY26 and using it as our internal planning figure. What is in conference are the earmarks, which differ between the House and Senate. We'll be watching to see which ones are retained and funded, as well as resolving reporting requirements, where the deadlines differ. Those are the two areas the conference committee will settle. The Agency has submitted testimony and received encouraging feedback—there's support and enthusiasm for our work. We're confident we'll see the \$26 million appropriated. It's a small increase over level funding, but in this fiscal environment, that's significant.

Separately, for the first time since 2019, the House and Senate agreed on a House Rules package, which changes how they operate—including new deadlines and procedures. The aim is to improve efficiency, accessibility, and transparency. We're staying in close contact with the Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development Chairs and staff, whose public hearings will begin this summer, likely on Tuesdays. We'll provide oral or written testimony as needed. Also, there's an oversight hearing on July 15 at the State House, focused on the impact of federal funding cuts to the cultural sector. Mass Cultural Council has been asked to testify—this is a great opportunity for the sector to share its story.

In other updates:

- Dawn Heinen and Lisa Simmons are leading a digital campaign for the 45th anniversary of the Local Cultural Council (LCC) program, which will roll out over the next year.
- Public Affairs has published FY25 investment reports on our website and are working on FY26 promotional materials, which will go live after the next Council meeting.
- There is a Cultural Facilities Fund (CFF) event at Zumix this Friday at 10:30 AM. Chari Marc Carroll and Iván Espinoza-Madrigal plan to attend.

There were no questions for Bethann. The Chair asked Catherine to give the Business Operations update.

Catherine provided an update on the agency's office lease, explaining that while there are no new developments to report at this time, the lease renewal is progressing through the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM). She noted that DCAMM is reviewing the lease terms and expects to draft a formal agreement later this year.

David Slatery added that the lease has reached the Commissioner's desk at DCAMM and clarified that the leasing process is controlled entirely by DCAMM and the agency's landlord. DCAMM welcomes and is informed by Mass Cultural Council's input, but the final decisions rest with them. Dave also mentioned that a member of the DCAMM staff was slated to attend today's meeting, but a conflict arose. The key message they wanted to convey is that while the proposed lease includes an increase for a five-year extension, the deal we secured ten years ago was exceptionally favorable for the agency, and the market has since shifted significantly since- even with the effects of Covid on the market. We've worked collaboratively with DCAMM, and they have approved the terms. We're now looking forward to finalizing the extension before the current lease expires in January.

The Chair asked for further clarification on timing. David shared that it is unclear exactly when the lease will be final, but it will be before the current lease expires in January. Assuming it moves forward it will be part of the FY26 Spending Plan which will be voted on at the August Council Meeting.

The Chair invited Catherine to present the final agenda item: a request for out-of-state travel approval. Catherine shared a proposal on behalf of Program Officer Charles Baldwin, who has been invited to participate in the 2025 LEAD Conference in Cleveland, Ohio. She noted that this annual national convening—centered on arts accessibility and aligns closely with the agency's strategic plan and equity priorities. Charles has played a key role in developing the conference agenda and will lead several professional training sessions. Catherine estimated the total cost of travel, including hotel, airfare, and related expenses, at \$1,639. She confirmed that the request had been reviewed and approved in accordance with the agency's standard internal travel authorization procedures. She also noted that for the past four years, the Council has consistently supported staff participation in this event.

The Chair agreed that Charles' attendance at LEAD is an asset to the Agency and asked for a motion and a second to approve the request. Simone moved to approve the request; Jo-Ann seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Iván was no longer present it was unanimously

RESOLVED: to approve the staff-recommended out-of-state travel request as presented to the Committee.

The end of the agenda had been reached and there was no further discussion. The Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:05am.



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To: Mass Cultural Council
 From: Michael Bobbitt, Executive Director
 David Slatery, Deputy Executive Director
 Cathy Cheng-Anderson, Chief Financial Officer
 Date: August 6, 2025
 Re: **FY26 BUDGET AND PROGRAM ALLOCATION SPENDING PLAN**

This memorandum presents the proposed FY26 Budget and Program Allocation Spending Plan for Mass Cultural Council. It outlines anticipated revenue sources, key investment areas, and grantmaking priorities. After the Executive Committee meeting, the FY26 grant recommendations for most Mass Cultural Council grant programs based on this plan will be presented to the Programs Committee. When approved, the plan and the recommendations will be voted on by the full Council on August 19, 2025.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENT AND COMPLIANCE

The agency's legislative mandate requires that at least 75% of the Line Item 0640-0300 appropriation (\$26,975,152) be allocated to grantmaking. For FY26, this establishes a minimum grantmaking threshold of \$20,231,364. Mass Cultural Council's FY26 Budget and Program Allocation Spending Plan exceeds this requirement, dedicating \$27,095,983 to grantmaking, representing 134% of the statutory minimum.

REVENUE SUMMARY

Mass Cultural Council's total projected revenue for FY26 is \$33.8 million, sourced from the following:

- State Appropriations and Earmarks – \$27.0M
- Chapter 23K Gaming Funds (Estimated) – \$5.1M
- MassDevelopment for Cultural Facilities Fund – \$354K
- National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) – \$1.3M total, including Basic State Plan, Education, Underserved Communities, Folk Arts, Poetry Out Loud, Art & Health, and America250
- Harry Rice Trust (Estimated) – \$64K

The FY26 state appropriation allocates \$26,975,152 to support Mass Cultural Council operations, representing near-level funding compared to the prior fiscal year. For context this includes:

- \$26,045,152 for core operations
- \$930,000 for 19 legislative earmarks that fund specific arts and cultural projects across the Commonwealth. The budget includes a funded earmark sponsored by Senator Paul Mark, Chair of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural

Development, which provides a \$25,000 honorarium to support the Commonwealth's first-ever Poet Laureate.

We extend our appreciation to Governor Healey, the Legislature, and key committee chairs for their continued support of the cultural sector and investment in the arts across the Commonwealth.

GRANT PROGRAM ALLOCATIONS

The FY26 Budget and Program Allocation Spending Plan dedicates \$26.2 million to Mass Cultural Council grant programs. This list is not inclusive of \$930k earmarks:

- Organizations – \$7.2M (28%)
- Artists & Youth – \$4.2M (16%)
- Communities – \$6.57M (25%)
- Equity and Inclusion – \$4.04M (15%)
- Advancement – \$687K (3%)
- Other Grants (Gaming and Trust) – \$3.46M (13%)

MASSACHUSETTS GAMING FUND (CHAPTER 23K)

As in prior years, and in accordance with M.G.L Chapter 23K, 2% of the Commonwealth's share of gross gaming tax revenues is allocated to the Massachusetts Cultural and Performing Arts Mitigation Trust Fund, which is administered by Mass Cultural Council. This program is intended to mitigate the impact of casino gambling on nonprofit performing arts organizations by helping offset the competitive challenges they face in booking touring artists and performers due to the presence of nearby gaming establishments. Accordingly, the FY26 Budget and Program Allocation Spending Plan includes \$5.1 million for the Gaming Mitigation Grant Program.

Of the total \$5.1 million:

- \$4.6 million will be awarded as grants to eligible nonprofit performing arts centers
- \$356k will support administrative and outreach activities

The funding draws from a combination of existing and projected revenues from the Commonwealth's share of casino tax revenue. Mass Cultural Council seeks approval to utilize:

- \$2,580,414 in available funds as of June 30, 2025
- \$2,545,166* in anticipated new revenue by December 31, 2025

*Please note the \$2,545,166 allocation is a conservative estimate based on year-to-date gaming tax receipts and current revenue trends, and while contingent on actual collections through the first half of FY26, any surplus revenues will be carried forward.

CULTURAL FACILITIES FUND

The Commonwealth's FY26 Capital Plan includes \$10M for the Cultural Facilities Fund grant program, which is administered in partnership with MassDevelopment. Mass Cultural Council receives an annual allocation of \$350,000 to support program administration. The FY26 Budget and Program Allocation Spending Plan reflects a total of \$354k in available administrative funds, which includes a \$4k carryforward of unspent funds from prior years.

ADVANCEMENT INVESTMENTS

As part of its broader advancement strategy, Mass Cultural Council is committed to strengthening the cultural sector through innovative partnerships, cross-sector initiatives, and investments that extend the reach and relevance of arts and culture statewide. The FY26 Budget and Program Allocation Spending Plan includes the following priorities:

- **Catalyzing Investment to open Arts Benefit Market** – funding to connect Massachusetts employees with arts and cultural benefits that enhance well-being, creativity, and workplace engagement.
- **NEA Art & Health Project** – a federally funded initiative from the National Endowment for the Arts focused on the intersection of arts and public health. This grant supports nonprofit organizations, and state entities in promoting and advancing the ArtPharmacy program. Additional details will be shared at the October Council meeting.
- **MassChallenge and Higher Education** – details will be shared at the October Council meeting. Set aside funding to support two initiatives: one to elevate creativity as a vital component of the innovation economy, and another to advance a collective agenda for integrating business and civic leadership training into post-secondary arts degree programs.
- **Cultural Policy Development Advisory Council (CPDAC)** – Funding to support CPDAC's work, including research and stakeholder convenings that inform future cultural policy.
- **STEAM Advisory Subcommittee** – Funding to support the agency's advisory subcommittee tasked with integrating arts into STEM education and workforce development strategies.
- **MassPort Artist Program** – A partnership with the Massachusetts Port Authority to create public art opportunities for Massachusetts artists in transportation hubs such as Logan Airport and regional seaports.
- **MITx Grant Initiative** – To strengthen the business acumen of the creative sector, continued funding will support the launch of a training program covering key topics such as finance, legal issues, marketing, branding, pricing, business models, negotiation, and civic engagement. The initiative also includes curriculum design and resource development to further support the creative sector.

EQUITY INVESTMENTS

Mass Cultural Council is committed to advancing equity, access, and inclusion across all areas of its work. In FY26, we are investing in targeted initiatives that deepen support for historically marginalized communities and further integrate equity into our grantmaking, operations, and advancement work. The FY26 Budget and Program Allocation Spending Plan includes the following priorities:

- **Access and Disability Learning Hub** – Continued funding to support our partnership with [Open Door Arts](#) to launch a central resource for cultural organizations to build capacity in accessibility and disability inclusion. The Hub supports learning, technical assistance, and implementation strategies that help organizations better

serve individuals with disabilities. This initiative is aligned with the agency's ongoing implementation of the multi-year [d/Deaf & Disability Equity Plan](#).

- **Tribal Cultural Council Grant Program** – FY26 marks the second year of this grant program, which provides targeted support to Native American and Indigenous artists, cultural practitioners, and community-led initiatives. This grantmaking effort is part of a broader commitment to implementing the [Native American & Indigenous Peoples Equity Plan](#), which was developed with Indigenous stakeholders to promote culturally responsive funding, visibility, and inclusion.
- **Work Without Limits and Individual Artist Support** – Dedicated funding to provide enhanced technical assistance, navigation services, and accommodations for individual applicants—particularly those with disabilities and/or limited income. In partnership with [Work Without Limits](#) and through internal efforts, the agency aims to ensure equitable access to its grant programs for all eligible individuals.
- **Equity Advisory Taskforces – Funding to support the Native American & Indigenous Peoples Advisory Taskforce and the Disability Advisory Committee**, which provide community-informed guidance to advance the agency's equity, access, and inclusion strategies. Comprised of leaders and stakeholders from across the Commonwealth, these taskforces help identify barriers, improve program accessibility, and ensure that agency policies and investments reflect the needs of historically marginalized communities. In FY26, both committees will play a central role in guiding the agency in implementing the [Native American & Indigenous Peoples Equity Plan](#) and the [d/Deaf & Disability Equity Plan](#) by: (1) advising on grantmaking strategies and guidelines. (2) Identifying opportunities for expanded engagement with artists, cultural workers, and organizations. (3) Provide recommendations on staff training, and capacity-building efforts.



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REVENUE	STATE FUNDING	GAMING*	CULTURAL FACILITIES FUND	NEA FEDERAL	MCC TRUST	TOTAL
FY26	26,975,152	2,545,166	350,000	1,310,938		31,181,256
FY25 CARRY OVER / TRANSFER IN	-	2,580,414	3,961		64,472	2,648,847
TOTAL REVENUE	26,975,152	5,125,580	353,961	1,310,938	64,472	33,830,103

*Estimated FY26 revenue

EXPENSES	STATE FUNDING	% TOTAL STATE FUNDING	GAMING	CULTURAL FACILITIES FUND	NEA FEDERAL	MCC TRUST	TOTAL	% TOTAL FUNDING ALL CATEGORIES
AA: SALARY	4,323,243	16%	213,907	167,822	23,679		4,728,651	14.0%
BB: EMPLOYEE REIMBURSEMENT	96,739	0.4%		4,603			101,342	0.3%
CC: CONTRACT STAFF		0%					0	0.0%
DD: PAYROLL TAX AND FRINGE	95,544	0.4%	80,878	63,453	8,953		248,828	0.7%
EE: ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES	153,382	0.6%	21,645	22,583	2,368		199,977	0.6%
GG: RENT AND ELECTRICITY	333,565	1.2%	37,500	37,500			408,565	1.2%
HH: CONSULTING SERVICES	251,750	0.9%		10,000			261,750	0.8%
JJ: PROGRAMMATIC SERVICES	197,096	0.7%		48,000			245,096	0.7%
KK: NON-IT EQUIPMENT	5,000	0.02%					5,000	0.0%
LL: LEASES	13,299	0.05%					13,299	0.0%
PP: GRANTS PROGRAMS (DETAILS BELOW)	20,225,573	75%	4,600,000		1,275,938	64,472	26,165,983	77.7%
PP: LEGISLATIVE EARMARKS	930,000	3%					930,000	2.8%
UU: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	349,961	1%	2,539				352,500	1.0%
TOTAL EXPENSES	26,975,152	100%	4,956,469	353,961	1,310,938	64,472	33,660,992	100.0%

PP: GRANTS PROGRAMS (DETAILS)	STATE FUNDING		GAMING	CULTURAL FACILITIES FUND	NEA FEDERAL	MCC TRUST	TOTAL	% TOTAL GRANT FUNDING
ORGANIZATIONS							7,200,000	28%
Operating Grants (OGO & CIP) (23.25% revenue)	5,190,762		1,200,000		809,238		7,200,000	
ARTISTS & YOUTH							4,201,000	16%
Grants for Creative Individuals	2,270,000						2,270,000	
YouthReach	1,528,300				341,700		1,870,000	
National Endowment of the Arts: Poetry Outloud Huntington Theatre					25,000		25,000	
YAIN (Edvestors)	36,000						36,000	
COMMUNITIES							6,570,000	25%
Local Cultural Councils	5,700,000						5,700,000	
Cultural District Grants	870,000						870,000	
EQUITY AND INCLUSION							4,043,950	15%
Creative Experiences (F&P and Schools)	3,350,000						3,350,000	
National Endowment of the Art: America250 (creative experiences)					25,000		25,000	
Tribal Cultural Councils	103,950						103,950	
UP Innovation Fund	465,000						465,000	
Open Door Arts	100,000						100,000	
ADVANCEMENT							686,561	3%
New England Foundation for the Arts, Inc.	70,000						70,000	
Massachusetts Foundation for Humanities and Public Policy, Inc.	983,056						983,056	
NET CREDIT AND CARRY FORWARD	-756,947						-756,947	
	260,452						260,452	
MITx	10,000						10,000	
Massport Artist Program	5,000						5,000	
Catalyzing Grant to open Arts Benefit Market	10,000						10,000	
National Endowment of the Arts: Art & Health Project					75,000		75,000	
Mass Creative	30,000						30,000	
OTHER GRANTS							3,464,472	13.24%
Mass Cultural Council Trust (Grant Reserve/Uncommitted)						64,472	64,472	
Chapter 23k Funded Grants Gaming Mitigation Program			3,400,000				3,400,000	
TOTAL GRANTS	20,225,573		4,600,000	0	1,275,938	64,472	26,165,983	100%

AA: SALARY	We currently have 39 full-time employees and expect to fill 3 backfill vacancies in FY26. Payroll projections include a 2% cost of living increase on July 13, 2025, and another 2% cost of living increase on January 11, 2026, for unionized employees per their collective bargaining agreement. Managers received the July 13, 2025 2% cost of living increase; however, under current executive branch guidance, they are not scheduled to receive the January 11, 2026 cost of living increase this fiscal year.
BB: EMPLOYEE REIMBURSEMENT	This line item covers reimbursements for work-related employee expenses, including in-state travel for meetings, conferences, professional licensing, and similar activities. Out-of-state travel expenses are also included but require Council preapproval.
CC: CONTRACT STAFF	
DD: PAYROLL TAX AND FRINGE	This line covers payroll tax for staff salaries. It also includes fringe and indirect charges related to federal or state trust-funded salaries or contracts. Several salaries are paid from a trust account for the Cultural Facilities Fund and a casino tax revenue trust for employees managing the Gaming Mitigation Program or "organizational support" from Gaming Revenues under the Gaming Law.
EE: ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES	This line covers administrative costs, including Commonwealth chargebacks for accounting and payroll systems/services, office supplies, utilities, printing, postage, membership fees, subscriptions, event-related expenses, staff training, credit card purchases, and costs related to grant program panels.
GG: RENT AND ELECTRICITY	This line reflects our annual office lease (\$387K) and utility expenses. We are paying the current rental rate for the first six months of the fiscal year, and the increased rate for the second six months of the year.
HH: CONSULTING SERVICES	This line includes expenditures related to outside attorneys, mission moments, event speakers, program consultants, advisors, and stipends for taskforce participation.
JJ: PROGRAMMATIC SERVICES	This line covers costs for photographers, auxiliary services, staff trainers, videographers, audio-visual providers, language or ASL interpreters/accommodations, grant reviewers, and program panelists/readers.
KK: NON- IT EQUIPMENT	This line covers purchases of non-IT equipment, such as office furniture and equipment, as well as ADA accommodation needs.
LL: LEASES	This line covers all non-IT equipment lease agreements, including copier and postage meter leases, as well as rental car expenses for staff travel.
PP: GRANTS PROGRAMS & EARMARKS	A detailed grant allocation list is included in this packet.
UU: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	This line includes costs for information technology needs such as the grants management system, ISP Service Retrofit, technology service providers, phone services/charges, laptop lease, web development, and Commonwealth chargebacks for IT services. Specific to FY26 included are planned upgrades to the agency's network infrastructure.



Power of culture

To: Mass Cultural Council
From: Michael Bobbitt, Executive Director
David Slatery, Deputy Executive Director
Cathy Cheng-Anderson, Chief Financial Officer
Date: August 6, 2025
Re: Out-of-State Travel

Under the Mass Cultural Council's Out-of-State Travel Policy, any staff travel outside Massachusetts must receive prior approval from the Executive Committee. Travel within New England—Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, and Connecticut—is not considered out-of-state unless it involves airfare, overnight lodging, or registration fees over \$800.

The travel requests outlined below total \$8,175. Each request provides a clear public benefit, supports the employees' core job duties, aligns with the Council's mission, Strategic Plan, and Equity Plan, and represents a cost-effective use of resources. All required Travel Authorization Forms, Procurement Request Forms, and State Ethics disclosures are on file.

[Robert J. Thompson Eastern Leadership Academy](#) 8/24 - 8/28, Philadelphia, PA
Executive Director Michael Bobbitt has been accepted as a Fellow in the Robert J. Thompson Eastern Leadership Academy. The Academy annually convenes 30 officials from the 18 member jurisdictions of the Council of State Governments' Eastern Region, representing all three branches of state and provincial government. Participants engage in an intensive four-day program to strengthen leadership and communication skills through interactive training with experts in media, education, and government. Michael's application was supported by a letter of recommendation from Massachusetts State Representative Mindy Domb.

Participation in this program will enhance Michael's leadership toolkit and expand his network within state government—resources that will support the agency's advancement priorities. Program tuition, lodging, and some meals are provided by the Council of State Governments. We are seeking approval of \$600 to cover remaining travel-related costs, including airfare, ground transportation, and meals.

[American Society of Landscape Architects \(ASLA\) Annual Conference](#), 10/10-10/12, New Orleans, LA

Executive Director Michael Bobbitt has been invited to present at the 2025 ASLA Annual Conference. He will join Kara Elliott-Ortega of the Kresge Foundation (formerly Chief of Arts & Culture for the City of Boston) and Anna Crawse of Sasaki in a session titled Making Space for Culture: Strategies for Supporting Cultural Programming in Public Landscapes. This session will explore how government and private foundations can advance cultural programming in public spaces through effective policy and collaboration.

Michael will highlight Mass Cultural Council's work as case studies, sharing insights into the challenges and opportunities facing the cultural sector in shared public environments. This major national event attracts over 6,000 professionals, including landscape architects, urban and environmental planners, engineers, developers, sustainability experts, and government officials. As a featured presenter, Michael's conference registration fee has been waived. We are seeking approval of \$1,400 to cover associated travel costs, including airfare, ground transportation, lodging, and meals.

[Creating Healthy Communities Convening](#), October 14-16, Newark, NJ

Executive Director Michael Bobbitt and Program Officer Kathe Swaback have been invited to attend the 2025 Creating Healthy Communities Convening, hosted by the University of Florida Center for Arts in Medicine in partnership with the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC). This national gathering brings together more than 500 professionals working at the intersection of arts, public health, and community development to explore cross-sector strategies that promote equity and community well-being.

Participation will allow Mass Cultural Council to engage with national leaders and peer institutions in shaping policy, practice, and investment strategies for arts and health initiatives. Michael has been invited to speak at the convening, while Kathe will participate in learning sessions and site visits with NJPAC's ArtsRx partner organizations, which showcase advanced arts-on-prescription models. Michael's travel is fully subsidized by NJPAC. We are seeking approval of \$1,075 to cover Kathe Swaback's registration and travel expenses, including airfare, ground transportation, lodging, and meals.

[National Assembly of State Arts Agencies \(NASAA\) Executive Forum](#), November 11/11–11/13, Omaha, NE

Executive Director Michael Bobbitt and Deputy Executive Director David Slatery have been invited to participate in the 2025 NASAA Executive Forum. This biennial gathering is designed for executive and deputy directors of state arts agencies and provides a confidential setting for peer learning, collaborative problem-solving, and leadership development.

Michael and David last attended in 2023. This year's forum will provide continued opportunities to engage with colleagues from across the country and

address pressing challenges in the state arts sector. We are seeking approval of \$3,600 (\$1,800 per attendee) to cover registration, airfare, ground transportation, lodging, and meals

[Strategic HR Conference](#), 10/26-10/28 located in Bretton Woods, NH
Cathy Cheng-Anderson, Chief Financial Officer and Chief Human Resources Officer, will attend a conference focused on workplace diversity, compliance, technology, employee engagement, and employee relations. Cathy was previously approved to attend in 2022, 2023, and 2024, and her participation has yielded tangible improvements to the agency's HR practices and strategy. We are seeking approval for \$1,500, covering registration and mileage.

Fully Subsidized Out of State Travel

Consistent with Council policy, any fully subsidized travel has been disclosed in accordance with the State Ethics law and will be reported in the Executive Director's updates, rather than submitted for pre-approval.



Power of culture

APPROVAL DRAFT FOR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SIXTH MEETING
OF MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL

TUESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2024
9:00-11:00 AM

BROADCAST MEETING

MEETING WILL BE LIVESTREAMED AT

MEETING MATERIALS WILL BE POSTED ONLINE AT

[HTTPS://MASSCULTURALCOUNCIL.ORG/ABOUT/BOARD/](https://massculturalcouncil.org/about/board/)

UNDER "AUGUST 19, 2025 COUNCIL MEETING"

<u>AGENDA</u>	<u>VOTE</u>
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- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Call to Order- Open Meeting Law Notice | |
| 2. Guest Speakers – Ben Shields, Senior Lecturer, MIT Sloan School of Management & Jenny Larios Berlin, Lecturer, MIT Sloan School of Management & Entrepreneur-in-Residence, Trust Center for MIT Entrepreneurship. | |
| 3. Minutes of 165 th Council Meeting & Special April 22, 2025 Meeting | X |
| 4. <i>Chair Report</i>
a) Welcome new Council Member
b) Calendar of Upcoming meetings
c) Committees | |

5. *Executive Office Report*

- a) Executive Director report
- b) Advancement Update

6. *Public Affairs Report*

- a) Legislative Update
- b) Department Updates

7. *FY 26 Spending Plan General Presentation*

- a) PowerPoint Presentation on FY26 Spending Plan

8. *FY26 Conflict of Interest Notifications*

9. *Program Operations Report*

- a) Department Updates
- b) FY 26 Grant Recommendations

c) PROGRAMS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS ON GRANT PROPOSALS

d) Advancement

- i. Mass Humanities
- ii. New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA)
- iii. MASSCreative
- iv. MassPort Artist Program
- v. National Endowment for the Arts-Arts & Health
- vi. MIT Sloan School of Management

e) Organizations

- i. Unrestricted Operating Support for Organizations (Appendix A & Appendix B)

f) Communities

- i. Cultural District Investment Grants (Appendix C)
- ii. Local Cultural Councils (Appendix D)
- iii. Tribal Cultural Councils

g) Arts Education & Youth

- i. YouthReach (Appendix E)
- ii. Creative Youth Development and Education Grants

- h) Equity and Inclusion
 - i. Creative Experiences (Appendix F)
 - ii. UP Innovation Fund Grants (Appendix G)
 - iii. Equity, Inclusion, and Access Grants

10. FY 26 Spending Plan Approval

- a) EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION ON SPENDING PLAN
- b) Approval of FY26 Budget and Spending Plan and Grant Recommendations

X

11. *Business Operations Report*

12. Adjourn

OPEN MEETING LAW STATEMENT

Please note that this meeting is an open meeting of a public body subject to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. A notice of this meeting together with the agenda was posted on Mass Cultural Council's website 48 or more hours ago (excluding weekends and holidays).

This meeting shall be open and accessible to all members of the public except at such times when this body has voted to go into closed executive session under the Open Meeting Law.

This meeting is a virtual meeting held under the Open Meeting Law as modified under current law to permit online meetings. This meeting is being broadcast to the public on a publicly available YouTube channel as described in the posted meeting notice.

Instructions on how to contact the Council with questions or problems accessing the broadcast are also included in such notice. Only Council members, staff and invited guests will be provided access to the Zoom platform hosting the meeting. As a safety measure, in order to prevent disruption of the meeting or non-public communications among the participants, the Chair, Vice Chair and Executive Committee of Mass Cultural Council has asked staff to implement the following protocols for participants in on-line meetings of Mass Cultural Council or its committees:

- Any "chat" or similar function on the Zoom platform hosting the meeting shall be disabled.
- Other than Council members or participants specifically recognized by the Chair of the meeting, all Zoom platform participants will be muted and have no ability to share media or documents or project or type images or text.
- All participants in the Zoom platform may be required to enter a waiting room and digitally sign-in before being admitted.

- Any attendee in the Zoom platform who nonetheless causes a disruption will be summarily removed from the meeting at the discretion of the Chair.

This meeting is not a public hearing and public testimony will not be taken. Individuals may not address the meeting without permission of the Chair.

Any member of the public may record this meeting provided that they do not interfere with the meeting.

Draft minutes of the open session of this meeting shall be kept and shall be posted on Mass Cultural Council's website no later than 30 days after the meeting provided that such minutes shall not be considered official until they have been approved by this body in open session. Individuals asserting a violation of the Open Meeting Law may file a complaint with this body within 30 days or with the Attorney General's office thereafter.

**TIPS FOR PARTICIPATING IN A VIRTUAL OPEN MEETING USING ZOOM OR OTHER
VIDEOCONFERENCING PLATFORMS WHEN THERE ARE SEVERAL PARTICIPANTS**

(adapted from several sources)

- In order to minimize background noise, please mute microphone when not speaking.
- Please raise hand in order to be recognized by the chair.
- In order for all members to have an opportunity to speak and be heard, please wait to speak until specifically recognized by the chair.
- If there are questions, please direct them to the chair and the chair will then recognize the appropriate person to respond.
- Please limit statements to three minutes.
- The chair will reserve the right to limit discussion in order to allow sufficient time for every member to be heard who wishes to speak.
- Modify Video Settings to “Hide all non-video participants”- this will make it easier to follow who is speaking and participating
- In the event of a service interruption during a Zoom call due to hackers, so-called “zoom bombing” or other technical difficulties, staff will indicate the call is to be terminated. Please exit the call and staff will circulate instructions by email for a new Zoom call to continue the meeting.