



*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 \$8,931.** 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.

**2025 State Arts Agency Arts Education Managers Professional Development Institute 9/16-9/18 Des Moines, Iowa**

Dan Blask, Program Manager for Artists and Youth, has been invited to attend this professional development opportunity held by National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA). Attending will help Dan Blask strengthen Massachusetts' arts education by learning strategies to build career-ready skills, leverage rural community strengths, and access resources that enhance arts education managers' capacity and impact statewide. Dan will receive a \$750 stipend from NASAA and we are seeking approval for **\$756** to cover associated travel costs, including airfare, ground transportation, lodging, 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.