

Posted on 08/21/26



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Council Meeting Book

One Hundred and Seventieth Meeting of Mass Cultural Council

Thursday, August 27, 2026

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Posted on 08/19/2026

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Agenda

One Hundred Seventieth Meeting of Mass Cultural Council Thursday, August 27, 2026

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Broadcast Meeting

The meeting will be livestreamed on
[Mass Cultural Council's YouTube channel](#)

Meeting materials will be posted online under
[Governing Council Meeting Schedule](#)

"August 27, 2026, Council Meeting"
on Mass Cultural Council's website.

<https://massculturalcouncil.org/about/board/>

Agenda Items

1. Call to Order – Open Meeting Law Notice
2. Guest Speaker: 3rd Eye Youth Empowerment
3. Minutes Vote
 - 3a. Minutes of the 169th Meeting of Mass Cultural Council – May 19, 2026
4. Chair's Report
 - 4a. Update: Executive Director Search
5. Acting Executive Director's Report
 - 5a. Advancement Report
 - 5(a)(i). FY27 Advancement Spending
 - 5b. Equity Progress Report

6. Public Affairs Report

- 6a. Legislative Update
- 6b. Department Updates

7. FY27 Spending Plan Presentation

8. Program Operations Report

- 8a. Department Updates
- 8b. Programs Committee Report

9. Conflict of Interest Notifications

FY27 Grant and Program Recommendations

10. Partnership & Service Grants

- 10a. Mass Humanities
- 10b. New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA)
- 10c. MASSCreative
- 10d. Massachusetts Poet Laureate
- 10e. Legislative Mandates (Appendix A)

11. Organizations

- 11a. Unrestricted Operating Support for Organizations (Appendix B & Appendix C)

12. Communities

- 12a. Cultural District Investment Grants (Appendix D)
- 12b. Local Cultural Councils (Appendix E)
- 12c. Tribal Cultural Councils

13. Arts Education & Youth

- 13a. YouthReach (Appendix F and G)
- 13b. Creative Youth Development and Education Grants

14. Equity and Inclusion

- 14a. Creative Experiences (Appendix H)
- 14b. UP Innovation Fund Grants (Appendix I)
- 14c. Equity, Inclusion, and Access Grants

15. Business Operations Report

- 15a. FY27 Budget Spending Plan Summary
- 15b. Executive Committee Recommendation on Spending Plan
- 15c. Approval of FY27 Spending Plan and Grant Recommendations **Vote**

16. Adjourn



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Open Meeting Law Statement

(Virtual)

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 the Mass Cultural Council's website 48 hours or more 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 have asked staff to implement the following protocols for participants in online 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 on the Zoom platform may be required to enter a waiting room and digitally sign in before being admitted.
- Any attendee on 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; public testimony will not be taken. Individuals may not address the meeting without the 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.



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Resolutions

Mass Cultural Council

Thursday, August 27, 2026

Section 3: Minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the Minutes of the 169th Meeting of Mass Cultural Council dated May 19, 2026, in the form presented.

Section 15(c): FY27 Spending Plan & Grant and Program Recommendations

WHEREAS the General Court of the Massachusetts State Legislature has appropriated, and the Massachusetts State Budget for Fiscal 2027 has been signed into law and contains an appropriation of \$27,348,072 plus \$758,000 in earmarks) for the Mass Cultural Council for FY27 (the "FY27 State Budget"); and

WHEREAS Mass Cultural Council staff has presented a draft FY27 budget and spending plan to the Executive Committee at its meeting on August 13, 2026 (the "Plan");

WHEREAS the Executive Committee reviewed the Plan and recommended that it be forwarded to the Council for approval; and

WHEREAS Council staff presented the Plan to the Mass Cultural Council at its meeting on August 27, 2026 (the "Council Meeting"); and

WHEREAS based on such Plan, staff has recommended grant allocations for Mass Cultural Council programs to the Programs Committee at its meeting on August 13, 2026 ("Programs Committee Meeting"),

WHEREAS based on such Plan, Council staff has recommended FY27 Advancement Spending to the Advancement Committee at its meeting on August 21, 2026 ("Advancement Committee Meeting"),

NOW THEREFORE, it is hereby

RESOLVED: To approve the Plan as recommended by the Executive Committee and presented to the Council Meeting subject to the further approvals of the individual grant and program recommendations below; and

WHEREAS based on such Plan, Council staff has recommended FY27 Advancement Spending to the Advancement Committee at its meeting on August 21, 2026 ("Advancement Committee Meeting"); and

WHEREAS the Advancement Committee reviewed the proposed FY27 Advancement Spending and recommended that it be forwarded to the Council for approval; and

WHEREAS Council staff presented the FY27 grants recommendations to the Programs Committee at its meeting on August 13, 2026 ("Programs Committee Meeting"); and

WHEREAS the Programs Committee recommended to the full Council the allocation of the grants and approval of the programs presented at the Programs Committee Meeting; and

WHEREAS the Programs Committee reviewed procedures of grant allocations and recommended that the Council approve the same;

NOW THEREFORE, it is hereby

Section 5(a)(i) FY27 Advancement Spending

RESOLVED: To approve FY27 Advancement Spending as recommended by the Advancement Committee and presented to the Council Meeting;

Section 10(a) Mass Humanities

RESOLVED: To approve a Mass Cultural Council grant to Mass Humanities totaling \$1,032,234 as recommended by the Programs Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

Section 10(b) New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA)

RESOLVED: To approve a Mass Cultural Council grant to New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) of \$70,000, as recommended by the Programs Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

Section 10(c) MASSCreative

RESOLVED: To approve a Mass Cultural Council grant to MASSCreative for \$30,000 as recommended by the Programs Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

Section 10(d) Massachusetts Poet Laureate

RESOLVED: To approve a Mass Cultural Council grant to Regie Gibson, the Massachusetts Poet Laureate, for \$25,000 as recommended by the Programs Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

Section 10(e) Legislative Mandates

RESOLVED: To approve funding of the \$758,000 of legislative earmarks as recommended by the Programs Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

Section 11(a) Unrestricted Operating Support for Organizations

RESOLVED: To endorse the approach by staff to provide \$7,350,000 in unrestricted operating support grants to cultural organizations under both the Cultural Investment Portfolio program and Operating Grants for Organizations as recommended by the Programs Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

Section 12(a) Cultural District Investment Grants

RESOLVED: To approve up to \$870,000 in Cultural District grants as recommended by the Programs Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

Section 12(b) Local Cultural Councils

RESOLVED: To make allocations to the Local Cultural Councils totaling \$5,850,000 as recommended by the Programs Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

Section 12(c) Tribal Cultural Councils

RESOLVED: To approve up to \$71,200 allocation to Tribal Cultural Councils as recommended by the Programs Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

Section 13(a) YouthReach

RESOLVED: To approve grant allocations to the YouthReach program in the amount of \$1,950,000, as recommended by the Programs Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

Section 13(b) Creative Youth Development and Education Grants

RESOLVED: To approve Creative Youth Development and Education grants in the amount of \$36,000 to the Youth Arts Impact Network with EdVestors and \$25,000 in support of the NEA-funded Poetry Out Loud program, all as recommended by the Programs Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

Section 14(a) Creative Experiences

RESOLVED: To approve the Creative Experiences program grants totaling \$3,442,500 as recommended by the Programs Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

Section 14(b) UP Innovation Fund Grants

RESOLVED: To approve \$465,000 in UP Innovation Fund Grants, as recommended by the Programs Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

Section 14(c) Equity, Inclusion, and Access Grants

RESOLVED: To approve a \$100,000 grant to Open Door Arts for the Arts and Culture Accessibility Resource Hub, as recommended by the Programs Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

General

RESOLVED: To approve the ability of staff to re-allocate unused grant funds for any program to any other FY27 approved grant program (whether approved at this meeting or a future FY27 Council meeting) as recommended by the Programs Committee and presented at the Council Meeting.

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Unofficial Draft Subject to Approval by the Council at its next meeting

Minutes of the 169th Meeting of Mass Cultural Council Tuesday, May 19, 2026

Jackie Liebergott Black Box Theatre, 559 Washington Street, Boston, MA

Council Members Present:

- Ché Anderson, Council Chair
- Jo-Ann W. Davis, Council Vice-Chair
- Tom Bernard
- Vinny deMacedo
- Simone Early
- Joyce Linehan
- Anika Lopes
- Diane Asadorian Masters
- Ellice Patterson
- Julie Wake

Mass Cultural Council Staff Members Present:

- David Slatery, Acting Executive Director
- Jen Lawless, Senior Director of Program Operations
- Bethann Steiner, Senior Director of Public Affairs
- Ann Petruccelli Moon, Acting Chief of Staff
- Erik Holmgren, Manager of Advancement and Strategic Partnerships
- Christian Kelly, Public Relations & Events Manager
- Lindiana Flores, Program Officer
- Lauren Bjella, Program Officer
- Amy Chu, Program Officer
- Käthe Swaback, Program Officer
- Timothea Pham, Program Officer
- Miranda Cook, Program Officer
- Evelyn Nellum, Records Management Officer

Chair Ché Anderson called the meeting to order at 1:10 pm and asked Acting Chief of Staff Ann Petruccelli Moon to read the Open Meeting Law Statement.

The Chair then asked Council Members if they had reviewed the minutes from their last meeting and if they had he would entertain a motion and a second to approve them. Diane Asadorian Masters moved to approve the minutes. Anika Lopes seconded the motion. Noting that Joyce Linehan abstained it was unanimously

RESOLVED: to approve the Minutes of the February 25, 2026 Council Meeting in the form presented.

Ché thanked the Council and staff for their work over the past nine weeks, saying the organization is fortunate to have such an outstanding team. He emphasized the importance of continuing to find ways to responsibly steward resources while building toward the future.

Reflecting on a recent visit to Watertown hosted by State Representative Steve Owens, Ché spoke about both the challenges facing communities and the energy and innovation happening on the ground. He said it was inspiring to see that momentum and viewed it as a strong foundation for what comes next.

He acknowledged that one of the biggest questions ahead is the ongoing Executive Director search process, and said this is also a moment to take a hard look at the organization itself — asking difficult questions, identifying allies, recognizing opportunities for growth, and finding ways to bring skeptics into the conversation.

Ché encouraged the Council to think broadly about the future of the organization and its ecosystem, and to prepare now — both systemically and operationally — for how to accelerate progress as conditions improve. He said he is excited about what lies ahead and hopes Council Members share that optimism.

He then provided an update on the Executive Director search including information about who he sees comprising the search task force and a potential timeline. The Executive Director search for the Mass Cultural Council will be led by a community-centered Search Task Force made up primarily of external agency partners, community stakeholders, and regional leaders, supported by a professional executive search firm. This structure is designed to promote transparency, broaden perspectives, strengthen public trust, and identify candidates with strong collaborative leadership skills across sectors such as education, healthcare, workforce development, arts and culture, government, and philanthropy. The process will unfold over several phases from June through January, beginning with task force formation and search firm selection, followed by stakeholder engagement and leadership profile development in July, active national recruitment and screening from August through October, finalist interviews and Council selection in October and early November, and concluding with announcement and transition planning in December, with the new Executive Director expected to begin or prepare for a January start. He then opened the meeting for questions and discussion.

Diane Asadorian Masters asked how the process would unfold if the Council was interested in having Ché himself as the Agency's next Executive Director.

Ché responded that when he'd agreed to be Chair, his top priority was to help ensure a fair, transparent, and inclusive process. He is still thinking through the details, but at this stage his focus is on building a process that casts a wide net and gives the Council the strongest possible pool of candidates.

Tom Bernard also offered suggestions. First, as the Task Force is assembled, he encouraged a strong emphasis on regional equity and representation, including Council representation, so the group reflects all regions of the Commonwealth. Second, drawing on recent experience with search processes, he offered a note of caution that the Task Force may need to be more actively engaged in the initial vetting stages than is sometimes typical. He also suggested that as the search firm is selected, expectations should be clear and include a defined "job description" for the Task Force that outlines its roles, responsibilities, and level of involvement throughout the process.

Julie emphasized strong support for regional equity in forming the Task Force, while also cautioning against making it too large. She suggested keeping the Task Force at a manageable size but building in additional layers of participation so that more people can still be meaningfully involved. For example, she proposed creating structured opportunities for broader community members to engage with candidates through smaller, focused interactions, rather than expanding the full Task Force. Drawing on experience from prior searches, she noted that very large task forces can sometimes become unwieldy or overly political, and recommended instead designing clear, accessible ways for participation without losing efficiency or focus during the process.

Ché shared that when it was first announced that Michael Bobbitt would be stepping down, he began one-on-one conversations with cultural leaders in Worcester to better understand what they would be looking for in a new Executive Director. He would encourage all Council members to do the same in their own regions—get out into your communities, set up a few conversations with leaders of organizations of different sizes, and meet with artists directly to hear their perspectives.

Tom added that often a search firm will include 15 to 20 stakeholder interviews in their work.

Joyce Linehan shared that she is excited to hear the thinking around sister agencies. There are multiple constituencies to consider, including the Legislature and the Executive Office, as well as peer organizations like MassDevelopment, Massport, and the Mass Convention Center Authority. The cultural sector needs to do a better job of engaging across that broader ecosystem, and she applauds Ché for framing the work in those terms.

That concluded the conversation regarding the Executive Director search process. Ché asked Acting Executive Director David Slatery for his report.

Dave first paused and gave newly appointed Council Member Vinny deMacedo an opportunity to introduce himself to the group as it was his first Council Meeting.

Dave then shared that the Agency continues to move forward at full speed. Even with the departure of the Executive Director, there has been no slowdown in our work, and operations remain strong across the organization.

This quarter we've been especially busy with county-based grant celebrations, attending various community events and Local Cultural Council celebrations, and ongoing grants administration. It is fair to say the Agency is very well respected—and even deeply appreciated—for the work it does.

We also received positive feedback from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). While Dave consistently praises staff, it is especially meaningful to share recognition that came directly from national reviewers. Preliminary information indicates the Agency will receive a similar level of NEA funding as last year—\$1.268 million, a slight decrease of \$50,000 due to the separation of two side programs related to America 250 and health initiatives.

At the Executive Committee, we also discussed the MITx partnership, which reflects significant investment and effort. To date, more than 1,447 students have enrolled, with 13% choosing to pay for the certificate. Approximately 80% of participants report being from the Greater Boston area, and additional reporting is forthcoming.

Finally, advancement and cross-sector partnership work continues to grow. There has been strong expansion in collaborations across economic development, workforce development, housing, and climate sectors, reflecting a broader and more integrated approach to the Agency's mission.

There were no questions for Dave. Ché asked Senior Director of Public Affairs Bethann Steiner for her Public Affairs update.

Bethann Steiner shared a positive update covering the FY27 budget process, bond bill, legislation, and recent events.

She noted that it is her “favorite week of the year,” referring to the Senate budget debate. There were no major amendments, and funding levels remain consistent across the Governor's budget proposal as well as proposals from the House and Senate—reflecting a strong “trifecta” outcome. The budget includes a 5% increase, marking a high-water mark and the highest operating budget to date at \$27.35 million. A small number of amendments were proposed to earmark specific projects, though only a handful of Senators pursued these changes.

Turning to the economic development bond bill, she explained that the Governor files this bill every other year. The current bill was filed in April, and the Agency submitted testimony on April 1, with the bill formally filed 15 days later. Several priorities for the Agency are included in the legislation. These include eligibility changes related to the Cultural Facilities Fund (Section 7 of the bill), as well as new capital spending opportunities relevant to the sector.

The bond bill includes two new major initiatives: a \$25 million Creative Economy Grant Program through EOED and a \$25 million Downtown Vitality Grant Program, of which Mass Cultural Council participated in a three-year coalition effort to advance. Cultural Districts are eligible recipients, reinforcing that the sector is recognized as a driver of economic development.

Bethann also extended thanks to Council members who signed a recent thank-you letter, including Ivan, Tom, Jo-Ann, Ashley, Rhonda, Che, Donna, and Ellice; and others still able to sign on through Friday.

Finally, she thanked Council Members for attending recent grant celebrations and noted upcoming events, including two in-person gatherings on June 15 in Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard, and a virtual celebration on June 25 at 11:00 a.m.

There were no questions for Bethann. Ché asked for the Business Operations report.

Dave noted that Senior Director of Business Operations Cathy Cheng-Anderson was currently on vacation and that he would be delivering the report in her stead. Dave first summarized a recent out-of-state travel request approved by Ché. Senior Director of Business Operations Cathy Cheng-Anderson and Program Officer Greg Torrales would attend the Americans for the Arts Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico in early June. The cost is \$2,055. Staff became aware of this conference after the April 14 Executive Committee meeting. Because the travel is scheduled for the week of June 1, there was not an opportunity to bring the request before the Executive Committee in advance. Consistent with the policy, staff sought and received Chair approval and is reporting the travel to the full Council at the meeting.

Dave then summarized proposed changes to the Agency's out-of-state travel policy: at the April 14 Executive Committee meeting, Council members discussed revisions to the Agency's out-of-state travel policy that have been under review since the fall. The proposed policy would establish a Council-approved annual travel budget within the overall spending plan, allow the Executive Director to approve most staff travel within that budget, and require only higher-cost trips above set thresholds to come back to the Executive Committee or Council for approval, with a lower threshold of additional approval for the Executive Director's own travel to avoid self-approval of higher-cost expenses. The Committee supported shifting away from routine review of lower-cost travel while maintaining oversight for higher-cost and Executive

Director-related travel, and staff is now bringing the proposed policy forward to the full Council for consideration and a vote.

Ché expressed his strong support for the revised policy and asked if there were any questions from the Council. There were not, and so he asked for a motion and a second to approve the policy as presented. Tom moved to approve the policy. Julie seconded the motion. All were in favor and it was

RESOLVED: To approve the Agency's updated Out-of-State Travel Policy as presented to the Council at its May 19, 2026 meeting.

Senior Director of Program Operations Jen Lawless then gave a brief Programs report noting that the final round of FY26 grants through the Cultural Facilities Fund have been determined. She also shared that the FY27 cycle is already underway, with Creative Experiences and YouthReach currently in the review process, and recommendations expected in August. Additional program recommendations will be reviewed at the June Programs Committee meeting, where a full overview of grantmaking data will also be provided. There were no questions or comments from the Committee.

Ché, as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 1:49 p.m.

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Acting Executive Director's Report

August 2026

Activities Report

On August 5, Chief of Staff Ann Petruccelli Moon shared the August Executive Department update detailing recent activities. Please look for the next monthly update in early September.

Conferences & Engagements

As noted in the Out-of-State Travel Summary in the Business Operations Report (Item 15 of the materials for today's meeting), Acting Executive Director Dave Slatery was approved to attend the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) gathering in Washington, DC in October. Council Chair Ché Anderson will also attend and will be appointed a member of the NASAA board at the assembly. Several Agency staff will also attend.

Governing Council Committee Updates

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee met on June 17. All Council members were invited to participate in a discussion about the Executive Director search process. The Executive Committee met again on August 13 to review and recommend approval of the FY27 Spending Plan. The Committee also voted to approve the agenda for today's Council Meeting.

Programs Committee

The Programs Committee met on August 13 and voted to recommend the FY27 grant and program recommendations made by staff to the full Council for approval.

Advancement Committee

The Advancement Committee met on June 4 for an update on advancement activities and meets again on August 21, where it is anticipated they will review and recommend the proposed FY27 Advancement Spending to the full Council.

As always, all Committee meeting materials and minutes are posted and available online at [Governing Council – Mass Cultural Council](#).

Acting Executive Director Engagements

Recently Completed Engagements

- Film screening and panel discussion of “Promises of the Revolution” hosted by Mass Humanities at WGBH – July 15
- Treaty of Watertown Dinner hosted by the City of Watertown– July 17
- STEM Advisory Council Meeting – July 21
- STEAM Subcommittee meeting – July 22
- Visit to Arts Connect International's new location in Jamaica Plain (now known as Community Equity Incubator)- July 22
- Reading Moby Dick at Herman Melville’s Arrowhead in Pittsfield – August 1
- Community Opening Event for The Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, MA – August 8
- Science Dinner & Tektrek Showcase at MIT (convening of science, technology, and engineering professionals), Cambridge, MA - August 11

Upcoming Engagements

- Attending Mass Lodging Associations' Annual Outlook- August 20
- Visit to Massachusetts College of Art & Design and Meeting with President Mary Grant – August 24
- Speaking at an Art World class at Boston University- September 9
- Attending the [Latino Equity Fund's](#) annual celebration ¡Pa'lante! at Termeer Square in Cambridge - September 10

- Panelist at Philanthropy MA's event The Creative Economy as Common Ground: Workforce, Equity, and Massachusetts' Competitive Future- September 14
- Tour of the Company Theatre in Norwell with Senator Pat O'Connor- September 21
- Round Table Discussion on Community Engagement with the MFA at the Shah Foundation- September 22
- Attending Designing for Belonging: A Massachusetts Summit on Connection & Community, UMASS Boston- September 25

Conflict of Interest Notifications

A reminder to all Council members to report all potential conflicts of interest and connections with any cultural organizations or potential grantees- see item 9 in the Council Materials. Doing so ensures that the Agency's minutes and records can appropriately reflect that members are recused from any discussion or vote on grants or other Agency arrangements with which a member has a possible conflict. For further information, please contact Dave. A copy of the most recent conflict list is contained in the Council Meeting materials.



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Advancement Report

August 2026

FY26 Advancement and Strategic Partnerships

FY26 was the first full fiscal year of advancement and strategic partnerships work and was defined by a broad approach to building the brand of the Mass Cultural Council as a partner in solving some of the most pressing challenges across the commonwealth, including healthcare, community development and housing, and workforce and economic development. This work was done in partnership with both public and private agencies and, while broad, maintained a focus on supporting individual artists and cultural organizations.

The structure of this work involved engaging with existing program teams to craft specific, measurable goals for the year and work with each team monthly to work toward those goals. In addition, we convened the full program team to share progress across the agency and share information, relationships, and ideas across areas of work and across program teams.

Below is a high-level overview of some of the achievements of the staff of the Mass Cultural Council during FY26.

Arts, Health, and Opioid Relief Funding

The Communities team contacted every municipality that received more than \$75,000 in Opioid Relief Funding to encourage arts-based use of those funds.

- As a result, more than 20 communities are now actively using or are in conversation to utilize the more than \$90 million of funding being allocated to municipalities between now and 2038.
- We also continued to support SocialRx in expanding their work across Massachusetts, including utilizing additional NEA funding to support three

Federally Qualified Health Centers in implementing arts prescriptions. Final reports from those grants indicate significant patient outcomes and anecdotal accounts of the work from both the provider and patient side.

- Our staff joined the [Mental Health Equity Boston Collaborative](#)
- Our staff joined the [National Neuroarts Blueprint Coalition](#), in partnership with the [Berklee College of Music, Music and Health Institute](#)

Individual Artists

- MITx launched with more than 1,430 students in the first year, primarily from New England, but also including participants from 81 other countries.
- The Artist team published 39 [ArtSake](#) posts highlighting cross-sector resources, building a public library of examples connecting the arts to health, housing, and community development.
- Staff worked with EEA to support an artist exhibition and auction at the New England Aquarium.
- Public Affairs and the Artist team collaborated on establishing a partnership with the Mass Lodging Association and Mass Restaurant Association to make connections between local businesses and local artists, facilitated through a new tool created by Public Affairs.

Housing & Community Development Partnerships

- For FY27, we are proposing an investment of \$25,000 to explore the feasibility and growth potential of a Creative Wealth fund in Massachusetts. A creative wealth fund is built on three primary ideas:
- A cross-team group of staff partnered with MassHousing on a statewide convening, hosted by MassHousing, called "Building Community Through Arts & Culture." The conference strengthened ties between the arts and affordable housing sectors across the Commonwealth and included local cultural Councils and vendors.
- Both MassHousing and the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities made Creative Placemaking grants for their financed and operated facilities. MassHousing granted \$150,000, and we are awaiting a final number for EOHLC.
- Staff partnered with MassGIS and MAP to train communities on developing cultural maps to be included in the Commonwealth's GIS data library.
- Staff worked with the [Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations](#) (MACDC) to educate their membership on

how to include arts and cultural districts and organizations in community development projects and programs. We were also invited into their Community Business Network, connected to the State's CDFI Coalition, and partnered on trainings through the Mel King Institute.

- We continued our work with the Downtown Interagency Initiative Partnership, moving forward with support from Undersecretary Patrick Field. The next phase will inform a flagship downtown support program for the state with a coalition of state agencies.

Creative Youth Development

- The Mass Cultural Council continued to contribute to the 3C Data Alliance, a global platform advancing data equity and access in creative youth development. This national initiative has pilot sites in Massachusetts and is supported by the Wallace Foundation and Bloomberg Philanthropies.
- Staff connected with the Global Extended Learning and Youth Development Association, contributing to a creative youth development-themed double issue of Extension magazine.

Workforce Development

- The agency hosted two convenings of the leadership of higher education institutions and programs in the arts focused on curriculum change within institutions and structural change in the sector with the goal of connecting employers to these institutions. In the second convening, we were joined by representatives from the Executive Office of Labor and the Executive Office of Education
- The agency, in partnership with the Executive Office of Education, launched the STEAM Subcommittee of the STEM Advisory Council. The goal of the committee is to explore ways to integrate the arts and creativity into the robust and well-funded STEM ecosystem in the Commonwealth.
- The agency developed a partnership with the Commonwealth Corporation, a quasi-public agency that executes the priorities of the Executive Office of Labor, to present two webinars focused on their available grant funding, which exceeds \$100 million.
- Staff worked with the Tufts Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning program on a spring field project to make a case for, and design, a creative workforce pipeline for the Commonwealth.

Climate & Energy

- The agency partnered with the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs on a webinar focused on engaging the cultural sector in brainstorming and envisioning a climate-resilient Massachusetts in 2050.
- Staff built relationships and contacts amongst public and private sector climate and green energy partners, gathering resources for a future web toolkit.

Pivoting to a Strategic Focus in FY27

The FY27 advancement plan leverages the work that has been done over the last year by program staff, the Advancement Team, Public Affairs and the Executive team to build the infrastructure, partnerships, and systems necessary to dramatically expand the impact of the cultural sector across key areas of the Commonwealth. FY27 represents a year we take what we have built and go on offense to engage a broad group of stakeholders toward strategic change.

Through our advancement efforts, our goals are to:

- Position the arts and culture sector as a visible, recognized resource and an essential partner in problem-solving across the Commonwealth.
- Leverage resources from outside of our sector for the benefit of those within.

The plan for FY27 spans across the entire agency and includes an internal focus on collaboration among Public Affairs, Program Staff, and Senior Leadership. At the center of this plan are two core values:

- **Leveraging Resources:** The agency will continue to work with partners in the public and private sector to expand investment in our field and in our Advancement strategy. This may include the generation of new revenue sources for our field and the potential of leveraging private philanthropic dollars through the agency to support existing programming and strategies.
- **Equity as Strategy:** Equity and inclusion are key values in the mission and vision of the Mass Cultural Council. This plan ensures that the benefits of Advancement and Strategic Partnerships reach all people and communities of the Commonwealth.

FY27 Advancement Plan

The FY27 Advancement plan is organized around three primary areas of work:

- **Narrative Change:** Reframe arts and innovation infrastructure in public discourse, policy, and decision-making.
- **Cross Sector Alignment and Systems Thinking:** Rather than working in individual program teams, which were constructed to run program-specific work, we will be restructuring the way we work with program teams to support staff in thinking across the entire agency and, through this work, across sectors. Building on the relationships and primary areas of investment in the Commonwealth, we will focus our work on three cross-team working groups: Workforce Competitiveness, Health, Community Development and Housing.
- **Creative Wealth Fund:** Our field is undercapitalized to meet its full potential. We are recommending an investment (described elsewhere in this memo) in the feasibility of the creative of a Creative Wealth Fund that compounds and leverages the long-term value of creative infrastructure into a pool of funds that can be utilized to invest in future projects and can allocate a percentage toward the priorities of the Mass Cultural Council.

Narrative Change

In work with the STEAM Subcommittee, MassChallenge, and Industry partners, a common theme has emerged: the narrative of the impact of the arts is not broad enough for our partners across sectors to engage and invest to their full potential. There is an inherent understanding, for example, that the arts are good for your health. The full extent of the clinical impact of the arts on certain conditions like social isolation and loneliness is not understood. Based on peer-reviewed publications utilizing Massachusetts clients, the impact of arts prescriptions is not only effective but cost-effective as compared to medicalized pharmacological treatments.

The same is true in working with the business community. The World Economic Forum identified Creativity as the #1 skill in demand across industries in their 2023 Future of Jobs Report. Yet few employers have built partnerships with higher education and non-college pathways to engage with creatives throughout the commonwealth.

Narrative change is not easy, but **our objective in our narrative change work is to move the Arts and Culture sector from being a recipient of philanthropy to being a partner in solving the challenges facing the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.**

We will work to achieve this through four levels of engagement:

- **Individual Relationships:** At an Executive level, we will be working to normalize communication with the leadership of several agencies. We will also continue to build relationships and cultivate champions in other public and private spaces so that our voice will be in spaces we are not.
- **Committees and Convenings:** In addition to the STEAM subcommittee will be exploring the feasibility of an Executive Order for an Interagency Task Force focused on exploring the integration of the arts across the public sector for FY28. This will be based on an existing Executive Order focused on Early Childhood Education and Care.
- **External Communication:** Working closely with public affairs, we will focus on messaging our impacts, in language that resonates with specific sectors, which may include the Boston Business Journal, Commonwealth Magazine, WBUR, WGBH, The Boston Globe, and other non-arts outlets.
- **Policy:** In addition to policy relevant to our field, we will continue to explore ways of ensuring that the arts are included in economic competitiveness, housing, health, education, and other priority areas.

Cross Sector Alignment and Systems Thinking

We will continue our work with the program team but restructure it to help develop agency and field-wide thinking, in addition to cross-sector thinking, that will help place our work in a broader context of resources. This will include the creation of three working groups, as described above. These groups will be tasked with identifying approximately three concrete objectives for the year, while the Advancement and Executive Team will continue to explore new opportunities across the dynamic landscape of the Commonwealth.

The benefits of working in this way include:

- Flexibility of staffing in each group based on grantmaking workloads
- The development of expertise and sector-wide thinking in specific Strategic Partnership areas
- The sharing of expertise, relationships, and partnerships across agency teams
- The reduction of the current 5 working groups (existing program teams) to three working groups with a more specific focus
- More focus for program staff on specific, concrete areas of work

Creative Wealth Fund

As described in our spending proposal, we will also be exploring the feasibility of creating a Massachusetts Creative Wealth Fund.

What the Fund does for the Commonwealth

The Massachusetts Creative Wealth Fund is a proposed public-private investment vehicle designed to strengthen the Commonwealth's creative economy by capturing and reinvesting a share of the long-term value that Massachusetts' cultural sector creates. Today, the Commonwealth supports culture through grants and public investment, but there is no mechanism to recycle and expand the economic growth those creative works generate. The Fund is designed to complement and maximize the existing grant program, never to replace it, creating a permanent source of capital that attracts private investment and supports Massachusetts' home-grown creators and their enterprises.

What the feasibility year involves

FY27 is a feasibility and design year that will determine how the Fund can be responsibly established within the Commonwealth. Working together, the Mass Cultural Council, our fund infrastructure partner [PNAQL](#), legal counsel, academic partners, and industry experts will settle the Fund's governance, legal structure, investment framework, policy recommendations, and initial investment pipeline. The objective is to produce a fully designed and legally validated model, supported by independent research and market engagement, to launch an initial fund for deployment in FY28 and enable deeper investment in Massachusetts' creative economy.



Power of culture

FY27 Advancement Spending

August 2026

To: Mass Cultural Council
 From: David Slatery, Erik Holmgren, Carolyn Cole
 Date: August 27, 2026
 Re: **Proposed FY27 Advancement Spending**

Advancing the Cultural Sector in Massachusetts

Advancement work is focused on building a statewide ecosystem of partners in the public and private sector that work hand in hand with Mass Cultural Council grants to maximize the resources and visibility of the Commonwealth's internationally recognized Cultural Sector.

Complementing our advocacy work, the Advancement and Strategic Partnerships team works across the rest of the agency to leverage our expertise, relationships, and connections to expand the narrative and impact of our work. The Cultural Sector is an economic force and is also part of the solution to spiraling health care costs and the behavioral health workforce. It is an economic force and creates community, which aids in addressing social isolation, housing stability, and climate resiliency. It is an economic force focused on developing the #1 skill employers across industries demand: creativity. The efforts of the Advancement and Strategic Partnerships team are focused on leveraging that work to tap into existing resources in other economic sectors and to elevate our sector and the Commonwealth.

While the Advancement and Strategic Partnerships team endeavors to be a net revenue generator for the Agency, we are recommending three

investments to support the growth of our work across Massachusetts, elevating our sector and the Commonwealth together.

Measuring the Creativity Economy

\$10,000 to define, measure, and integrate the creative economy into the existing decision-making data sets across sectors.

- In 2025, the Cultural Policy Development Advisory Council released a set of recommendations to grow the Creative Economy. The top recommendation was to measure and define the Creative Economy (or the “Cultural Sector” or “Creative Sector”- we have used the terms interchangeably throughout this memo). Since that time, no direct action on this recommendation or the other recommendations in the report has been taken outside Mass Cultural Council, but we have and will continue to drive these recommendations forward.
- “Measuring the Creative Economy” is more than a question of creating a definition and survey. This effort would be different than our Cultural Asset Inventory, which gave us a sense of the size and scope of the organizations and the workforce. Instead, it is specifically designed to help develop partnerships within state government, primarily with the economic development agencies and the Department of Economic Research, particularly to measure the Creative Economy in a way that is consistent with the methods used to measure and define other economic sectors and put the cultural sector on an equivalent footing in terms of research and identity. The outcome of this investment is that the size, scope, and impact of our sector would be defined and then utilized by the Mass Cultural Council and other decision-making entities across state government when developing policy.

Cross-Sector Statewide Convening

\$10,000 to support a convening of cross-sector partners celebrating the contributions our sector makes to a stronger Commonwealth.

- The purpose of this funding is to bring together the partners, collaborators, and champions we have developed across the public and private sector into one space to celebrate and deepen the groundbreaking impacts that the arts and culture sector are having in other areas such as healthcare, community development and housing, and economic competitiveness.
- Rather than being an insular, solely arts-focused convening where people within the cultural sector present to each other about

challenges, this convening is intended to be a solutions-oriented event led by public and private leaders in many different sectors.

- The convening will act as a bridge and catalyst between sectors and will work to expand our impact. We are tentatively planning this convening for Advocacy Week in March, which will also give our new Executive Director the opportunity to deepen connections with colleagues in the public and private sectors.

The Massachusetts Creative Wealth Fund

\$25,000 to explore the feasibility of a Massachusetts Creative Wealth Fund

- For FY27, we are proposing an investment of \$25,000 to explore the feasibility and growth potential of a Creative Wealth Fund in Massachusetts. A creative wealth fund is built on three primary ideas:
 - The value of the Creative Sector builds over time, and we have an opportunity to capture that long-term value, let it compound, and create more resources for our field in ways that other industries already do.
 - There are more investors in the world than philanthropists, and the Creative Economy is an unrealized investment opportunity for those who choose to participate.
 - It is unlikely that this fund would be operated long-term by the Mass Cultural Council. Rather, we would act as a catalyst for its development and potentially have a role in governance over the long term to ensure that the deployment of any of the value created aligns with our funding priorities.
- The Massachusetts Creative Wealth Fund is a proposed public-private investment vehicle designed to strengthen the Commonwealth's Creative Economy by capturing and reinvesting a share of the long-term value that the Massachusetts Cultural Sector creates. Today, the Commonwealth supports culture through grants and public investment, but there is no mechanism to reinvest and expand the economic growth that creative work generates. The Fund would be designed to complement and maximize the existing grant programs, and create a growing, permanent source of capital to attract private investment and support Massachusetts' creators and their enterprises.
- FY27 is a feasibility and design year that will determine how the Fund can be responsibly established within the Commonwealth. Working together, the Mass Cultural Council, our fund infrastructure partner [PNAQL](#), legal counsel, academic players, and industry experts will

design the Fund's governance, legal structure, investment framework, and policy recommendations while also exploring initial investment pipelines. The objective is to produce a fully designed model that supports launching an initial fund for deployment in FY28, enabling deeper investment into the Massachusetts Economy.

- If feasibility is determined and the fund is deployed, it would be a vehicle to fund new artistic and cultural ventures, provide seed funding for new projects, and potentially play several other roles in bolstering the work and lives of individual artists and organizations across the Commonwealth.



Power of culture

Equity Progress Report

August 2026

Equity Plan Implementation

Disability Advisory Committee

We held the final [Disability Advisory Committee](#) meeting on May 28. At the meeting, the committee reviewed and discussed:

- Recap of prior meetings and recommendations.
- Draft approach to access rubric for feedback.
- Draft approach to UP Designation for feedback.

A copy of the presentation can be provided upon request. We thank our committee members for their two years of service and all their thoughtful guidance and insight.

Native American and Indigenous People's Advisory Committee

We held a meeting of the [Native American and Indigenous People's Advisory Committee](#) on May 22. The committee is one year into the planned 2-year duration. The meeting provided an opportunity for conversation about the Agency's programs and identification processes as they relate to Native and Indigenous individuals and communities, as well as a review of progress on the equity plan to date.

Sector Education, Services & Achievement

Access Office Hours: peer learning session providing organizational counsel, effective practice, and shared resources for grantees and applicants:

- Mar 24: [Small Shops](#)

- Apr 28: [Large Institutions](#)
- May 13: [Access Plan Q&A with Open Door Arts](#)
- May 19: [Budgets & Funding](#)
- June 10: [Access Plan Q&A with Open Door Arts](#)

Programs

This year, the Tribal Cultural Council (TCC) Program had four TCCs accepting applications:

- [Aquinnah Wampanoag Cultural Council](#)
- [Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe Cultural Council \(HPWTCC\)](#)
- [Mâseepee Cultural Council](#)
- [Nipmuc/k Cultural Council](#)

The TCCs completed their cycles, investing \$39,158 in 30 projects and programs in their communities. All four TCCs are planning on doing Council Programs as well, meaning that an additional \$27,719 will benefit their communities.

Internal

- Mass Cultural Council is partnering with Open Door Arts on the [Arts & Culture Accessibility Hub](#) to strengthen accessibility across the sector. As part of this work and to meet expectations of the National Endowment for the Arts and the d/Deaf and Disability and Deaf Equity Plan, we have formed an internal working group to complete the agency's Arts and Culture Self-Assessment Survey. The 300+ question assessment reviews our approach, spaces, technology, communications, and programs, and then produces scored reports highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. The assessment has been completed, and staff are working together to review the report to identify key themes and recommendations regarding our internal and external accessibility priorities.
- Public Affairs is working with our web developer to finalize updates to www.massculturalcouncil.org to meet WCAG 2.1 AA compliance. After that, we'll pivot to making our [ArtSake blog](#) compliant. We also had a digital audit done to guide us in improving our social media and email accessibility. Those recommendations will be incorporated in the coming months.
- Public Affairs is also working with photography partners to document events and activities hosted by Tribal Cultural Councils, ensuring a wide

range of creative expression from our diverse communities is equitably represented across our materials and digital spaces.

- Following a series of in-person grant celebration events located throughout the state, we held a final virtual grant celebration event at the recommendation of the [Disability Advisory Committee](#). This event featured American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation and Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) captioning. We had 91 people attend this event, and the [recording](#) is available to watch on our YouTube channel.



Power of culture

Public Affairs Report

August 2026

Budget/Legislative/Advocacy Update

Formal legislative sessions concluded on July 31; however, as in past years, the Legislature will continue to meet twice a week through January 5, 2027, to consider non-controversial and local matters. Further, due to new Rules governing the House and Senate operations this session, matters that were sent to conference by July 31 can be brought to the full Chambers for approval for the remainder of this session. There are currently 12 conference committees working to finalize proposals on several different topics.

Mass Cultural Council secured several policy and budget priorities for the cultural sector throughout the 2025-2026 legislative session:

- The FY27 state budget contains the largest appropriation for arts and culture in the Agency's history - \$28.1M!
- The FY27 capital spending plan provides \$10M for this year's Cultural Facilities Fund grant cycle.
- An amended version of S. 2169, our Cultural Facilities Fund (CFF) eligibility expansion legislation, is pending before the MA Wins Act economic development bond bill conference committee. This policy change, if retained and signed into law by the Governor, will ensure all primarily cultural municipally owned facilities are eligible to apply to the CFF for assistance, regardless of the building's age or size.
- The Mass Wins Economic Development bond bill, currently in conference, contains several new capital spending authorizations that benefit the sector:

- **0640-03096 of the Senate bill:** a new \$1 million micro grant program, to be administered by Mass Cultural Council, to boost entertainment and nightlife. The grant would support individuals, businesses, and organizations involved in public art, performance, and cultural and community programming that stimulates downtown areas, commercial areas, cultural districts, gathering places, and nightlife destinations and contributes to the cultural and economic vitality of cities and towns. This new authorization was proposed as a part of the Senate's "Fun Agenda," and the Agency welcomes the chance to partner with and help make these investments to boost local economies, as envisioned by the sponsors.
 - **7002-8085 of the House and Senate bills:** a new downtown vitality capital grant program, to be administered by the Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED), to cities, towns, regional organizations whose membership is exclusively composed of municipal governments, municipal redevelopment authorities or agencies or quasi-governmental agencies to support economic development in the Commonwealth including, but not limited to, support for the vitality, activation, improvement and competitiveness of downtowns, main streets, business districts, town centers, commercial corridors, cultural districts and other walkable mixed-use areas. As a longtime partner in the Downtown Vitality Advocacy Coalition and the state agency charged with administering the Massachusetts [Cultural District Initiative](#), Mass Cultural Council supports this authorization, which will benefit our vibrant network of state-designated cultural districts.
 - **7002-8086 of the House and Senate bills:** a new capital grant program, to be administered by EOED, in partnership with MassDevelopment, Mass Cultural Council, and other unnamed state agencies, to enhance the arts, culture and the creative economy in the Commonwealth including, but not limited to, grants to cities and towns for public realm and streetscape improvements that enhance downtown vibrancy, rehabilitation of historic districts, wayfinding and signage to support cultural institutions, improvements to public gathering and performance spaces and permanent public art installations. Mass Cultural Council's statutory role and deep relationships across the cultural sector will help ensure the program is implemented effectively and reaches the communities and organizations it is intended to serve; we look forward to this future partnership.
- Our proposal to rebrand [STEM to STEAM](#) in the Massachusetts General Laws, H. 561, received a favorable report from the Joint Committee on

Education and continues to be under review by the House Committee on Ways & Means.

Events/Communications/Digital Communications Update

Events

Following the May Council Meeting, we continued to hold events to celebrate our FY26 investments:

- On **June 15**, we were at Nantucket Dreamland and Martha's Vineyard Playhouse at the invitation of Cecil Barron Jensen and Emily Bramhall to celebrate our investments made into Nantucket and Dukes Counties. Thank you also to Julie Wake for joining us for a day of celebrations on the Islands. We were so thankful to have Senator Julian Cyr and Rep. Tom Moakley with us for the day as well.
- On **June 25**, we held one final virtual fiscal year-end celebration, recognizing all that we accomplished together during the last fiscal year. We appreciate all Council Members who attended – Vinny, Diane, Donna, Tom, Simone, Allyce, Ashley, and Ellice. And we are especially grateful to our Chair and Vice-Chair for providing remarks; they were joined by Tourism, Arts & Cultural Development Chairs Sen. Paul Mark and Rep. Sean Garballey and the Official Poet Laureate of the Commonwealth, Regie Gibson. If you missed the celebration but would still like to watch, the recording is available on the Agency's [website](#).

As we move into FY27, we are hard at work with a robust schedule of events planned for the fall:

- On **September 24**, from 1pm to 3pm in State House Room 428, Mass Cultural Council will host a briefing for Legislators and State House staff on the grant programs the Agency will offer in FY27. Our new Programs At-a-Glance booklet, as well as FY26 Grant Reports and other Agency resources, will be distributed to all 200 legislative offices on this day. The briefing will be hosted by Tourism, Arts & Cultural Development Committee Chairs Senator Paul Mark and Rep. Sean Garballey. Council Members and staff are welcome to attend.
- In FY27, Public Affairs is partnering with Mass Humanities to organize and host the [2026 Mass Storytellers of the Year Event](#). This celebration will be held on the evening of **October 15** in Holyoke. Council Members are encouraged to attend; however, tickets must be purchased in advance. Please contact Bethann for more information if you'd like to attend.

- We are working with the Communities team to organize a convening for Local Cultural Council members and Cultural District representatives from the Cape and Islands on **October 21** at 10am at the 204 Cultural Arts Municipal Building in Harwich. The event will include discussions on regional tourism promotion, grant opportunities, public art, and municipal partnerships.
- Later this fall, we look forward to hosting two regional grant celebration events, likely one in western Mass and one in the metro Boston area, highlighting the investments that you will review at the August Council Meeting. Stay tuned for more information about these events!

As always, Council Members are encouraged to attend any events in your area, as your schedule permits. Please be in touch with Bethann for more details about any of our upcoming events and to let us know if you plan to attend.

Media/Community Relations

Mass Cultural Council in the news:

Mass Cultural Council

- [Mass. Cultural Council invests \\$3 million into Berkshire County cultural sector](#) (Berkshire Edge, May 19, 2026)

Advancement

- ['You need the arts when it's a cloudy day': Why BU is doubling down on art now](#) (Boston Globe, July 28, 2026)

Card to Culture

- [Card To Culture Offers Affordability to the Arts To EBT, WIC & ConnectorCare Cardholders](#) (Falmouth Enterprise, June 22, 2026)

Cultural Facilities Fund

- [Haverhill Library, Museum of Printing to Share in State Cultural Grants](#) (WHAU, May 21, 2026)
- [Taunton museum lands grant for new parking and garden](#) (Taunton Gazette, May 28, 2026)

As a reminder, we regularly issue press releases and media advisories to outlets statewide throughout the year to announce grant decisions, new programming, and other notable items. While we generally make a point to share these with Council Members when they're released, they remain available to re-read in the [Press Room](#) at any time.

Web

Updated the web site in support of FY26 activities, including Cultural District guidelines, Cultural Facilities Fund project list, and funding reports by County and Legislative Districts. Working on preparing the site for the FY27 cycle, which includes updating all program guidelines and updating the Programs At-a-Glance section.

Blog

Published 23 blog posts since the May Council update - in partnership with Program and Advancement staff - to amplify and document the Agency's work.

Of note:

- [How'd Arts & Culture Fare on Beacon Hill this Session?](#) A reflection on how the Agency's budget and policy agenda was addressed in the State House now that formal legislative sessions have recessed.
- [Listening Beyond Grantmaking](#) - a lovely shout-out to the work of LCCs.
- Continued making the case for arts/cultural participation as a benefit to public health:
 - [Peer-Reviewed Study Finds Arts Prescriptions Improve Mental Well-Being](#)
- Continued our series on Creative Entrepreneurship:
 - [Arts & Business Insights: Cambridge Common Restaurant](#)
 - [Arts & Business Insights: Julia Emiliani](#)

E-Newsletters

Spent some time this summer cleaning out our email lists in MailChimp. This exercise in archiving inactive subscribers brought down our monthly cost without impacting our open and click rates!

Currently, of the Agency's three e-newsletters:

- **Power of Culture** has **38,106 subscribers** and an average of **61% open rate** and 3.4% click rate this quarter.
- **Community Initiative** has **15,057 subscribers** and an average **64% open rate** and 4.5% click rate.

- **Artist News** has **15,269 subscribers** and an average **60% open rate** and 5.9% click rate this quarter.

Campaigns & Social Media

In the last year, we saw significant increases in our engagement on all our social media channels:

- 17.4K Facebook followers (1.3K / 18% up)
- 23.3K Instagram followers (7.7K / 7.8% up)
- 9,015 LinkedIn followers (1,951 new followers / 17.8% up)
- 2.11K YouTube subscribers (16% up)

Photography of the Cultural Sector: Worked closely with two photography partners to document #PowerOfCulture events and activities organized by our grantees and partners around the state. Please visit our social media channels to see the vibrancy of our sector.

Media Partnerships

- **El Planeta Media** - our FY26 media partnership promoting our grant opportunities and events with [El Planeta Media](#) has reached an audience of 165,524 Spanish-speaking individuals, with a total of 433,251 impressions. This partnership has included social media graphics and videos on El Planeta's social media channels, including [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), and [newsletter mentions](#).
- **Somos Berkshires** - our first-ever media partnership with [Somos Berkshires](#) promoted our grant opportunities, events, and initiatives to a social media community of 3,338, generating 124,910 views. Significantly, 73.1% of views came from non-followers, highlighting the campaign's success in reaching Spanish-language audiences.

Of note:

- As a result of the bilingual [“Can I? ¡Yo puedo!” video campaign](#) encouraging Latino representation in LCCs, two members of Pittsfield's [Latino community joined](#) the Pittsfield Cultural Council for FY27.
- The post of [Mass Cultural Council's Creative Individual Grantee Noel Staples dancing video](#) got 10.4k views just on Facebook.
- **Rádio Insuperável** – our first-ever media partnership with Rádio Insuperável promoting Mass Cultural Council grant opportunities and

events with Rádio Insuperável included 86 radio spots, along with Portuguese-language live reads and editorial coverage. During the partnership period, Rádio Insuperável reached a cumulative streaming audience of 101,440 listeners and generated 566K+ session starts. A couple of examples include promotion of our [Creative Experiences program](#) and coverage of the Agency's [Card to Culture celebration](#).



Power of culture

Program Operations Report

August 2026

Access & Inclusion

Charles Baldwin

Advancement: Cross-Sector Partnerships

- MassHousing, Housing Stability Conference: Building Community Through Arts and Culture. Tuesday June 16

Service to the Sector

- NASAA Steering Committee- SAA/RAO ADA/504 Coordinators peer sessions
- Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability (LEAD®) Conference Aug 10-15, Philadelphia
 - While in attendance at this year's conference, we are proud to share that Charles G. Baldwin also received a John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability (LEAD®) Award. As a recipient of this year's LEAD Award for Excellence in Accessibility Leadership, Charles is recognized for a lifetime of achievement in arts and accessibility.

Open Door Arts Partnership

Meeting monthly on the development of the learning modules and certification process in the Arts Access Hub, launching August 2026.

UP Initiative

Recipients of the 2026 UP Innovation Fund will be required to submit an Access/Transition Plan with their Annual Report. Planning and preparing for launch of updated program.

Cross Program Support

Responding to applicants for Creative Experience grants, providing individual and organizational counsel, and attending Mass Cultural Council grant celebrations.

Artists & Youth

Dan Blask, Kortney Adams, Kelly Bennett, Amy Chu, Summer Confuorto, Käthe Swaback

Staffing

Artists & Youth team member Amy Chu will depart the Agency at the end of August. Since she joined us in 2021, Amy has been an integral contributor in supporting our Creative Youth Development and arts education work, including leadership of young alumni of Creative Youth Development programs through the BIPOC Youth Alumni Council. Later, she administered hundreds of grants through the STARS Residencies/Creative Projects for Schools. More recently, she has served as an advocate for schools and arts education programs in co-administering the Creative Experiences program. We will miss Amy's thoughtful commitment to young people's creativity and her deeply intelligent service to the field, and we wish her continued success in future creative and professional ventures. The team will work with Senior Staff over the coming months to discuss future staffing to support arts education initiatives.

Creative Experiences

The FY27 [Creative Experiences](#) program accepted applications from March 3, 2026, with a deadline of April 30, 2026, 11:59pm (ET). The program, in its current incarnation, debuted in March 2025, and this will mark its second year. It combines the prior Festivals & Projects and Creative Projects for Schools/STARS programs. Applications were open to all types of organizations that create, present, and/or offer experiences incorporating the arts, humanities, and sciences for people in Massachusetts. Grant recommendations (in the amounts of \$2,500 and \$5,000) will go to the August Programs Committee and Council Meetings for approval.

YouthReach

Elsewhere in these materials, you will find a full report on the FY27 grant recommendations for the YouthReach program, which supports innovative,

ongoing Creative Youth Development programs. For more than thirty years, YouthReach has nurtured the creativity and potential of young people through grants to programs that center youth leadership, racial equity, and social change. These recommendations reflect the first new application process for the program following the redesign and streamlining of the application process in accordance with Mass Cultural Council's ongoing values of equity and inclusion. We are excited to work with the grantees and celebrate these awards in the weeks ahead.

Grants for Creative Individuals

In September, the team plans to begin accepting applications for the fourth year of the Grants for Creative Individuals, our Agency's accessible program to support artists, culture bearers, and creative practitioners across all disciplines. While no major changes are anticipated, staff is currently reviewing FY26 data to finalize any potential adjustments to the FY27 guidelines and application process.

Advancement

The following represents the Artist & Youth team's ongoing work to advance the creative and cultural sector. Partnerships include:

- Meetings with MassHealth, Mass League of Community Health Centers, and others to discuss how to help our sector and mitigate the impact of medical insurance, SNAP, and other changes in H.R.1 (aka "The One Big Beautiful Bill").
- Governor's Office to exhibit MA artists in the Governor's reception at the State House, including Pride Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, and Massachusetts250.
- Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities to support their Creative Placemaking Award, capital grants to create art installations and more at 5 to 8 Local Housing Authorities. We offered feedback on the guidelines and presented two webinars to the Local Housing Authorities on working with artists on public projects.
- Massachusetts Restaurant Association and Massachusetts Lodging Association to increase opportunities for local artists, including an online toolbox for connecting the hospitality industry and artists/arts orgs.

Supporting Native American and Indigenous Communities

Summer Confuorto from the Artists & Youth team supports the [Native American & Indigenous People's Advisory Committee](#) in their work guiding the implementation of the [Agency's Native American and Indigenous People's equity plan](#), helping to create and evaluate systems and services, assessing

programs, and establishing meaningful annual benchmarks that advance our equity goals.

- This year's work has included an in-person convening at the Herring Pond Wampanoag Meeting House in November, followed by virtual meetings in January, March, and May. We will continue to work with the Advisory Committee and deepen this work in FY27.
- In addition, Summer continues her outreach and relationship-building efforts within Native communities. She's attended events such as the Mashpee Wampanoag Powwow, the Native Artisan Market & Festival in Aquinnah, and the North American Indian Center of Boston (NAICOB) Annual Arts and Crafts Fair to connect with Native artists, share information about Agency programs, and encourage participation.
- She's also engaged in learning opportunities, including the Harvard University Native American Program symposium and the Massachusetts Tribal Health Summit, to better understand best practices for building respectful, reciprocal partnerships between Native communities and non-Native institutions.

Communities

Lisa Simmons, Lauren Bjella, Cheyenne Cohn-Postell, Timothea Pham, Sommers Smith, Greg Torrales, Jay Wong

The Communities Initiative Program of the Mass Cultural Council consists of the Local Cultural Council Program, the Cultural District Initiative, the BIPOC-Centered Organization Self-Identification process, and the Creative Experiences grant program, which we share with two other programs.

The LCC grant program and the CDI Grant Program will launch in fall 2026, with Creative Experiences launching in spring 2027. The Creative Experiences grant program shares management and staffing among three program teams: Organizations, Communities, and Artists & Youth. The Creative Experiences team has completed the FY27 grant cycle and is finalizing grants for approved grantees.

Regional Assignments & Staffing

The Community Initiative program staff work regionally to more fully represent and support all Cultural Partners in the communities we serve. In FY27, program staff will continue to work closely with their LCCs and municipalities to support LCCs in being connectors and convenors between the cultural community and the municipality. We have had success introducing municipalities to their LCCs through the Mass Municipal Association trade show, which we attend each January, as well as webinars we have hosted in the past.

In FY25, we lost one member of our team, who is now working on the Advancement Team here at Mass Cultural Council. In the spring of FY26, we welcomed Lauren Bjella, who now handles the Cape Cod and South Central regions, as well as parts of North Central Massachusetts. The team is now fully staffed at 6 Program Officers and one Program Manager. In addition to supporting LCCs, one of the 6 program officers is designated to support the Creative Experiences, another to support the Cultural District Initiative, and one to support the BIPOC Organization Self-Identification Process.

Local Cultural Council (LCC) and Tribal Cultural Council (TCC) Programs

The LCC program successfully completed the FY26 grant cycle. Due to outreach from both the Councils and the Mass Cultural Council, the LCC program received a record number of applications: **13,078 LCC applications** this year.

- Of those applications, the LCCs/TCCs approved 7,618 grants totaling \$7,564,766. These grants support community-based projects in the arts, humanities, and sciences with a combination of Mass Cultural Council funds and locally raised funds.
- In FY27, we will be conducting a series of webinars and workshops as the LCC grant cycle gets underway. Please see the full grant memo for the recommended allocations for both the Local Cultural Council and Tribal Cultural Council Programs in FY27.

For FY27, the online application system will open on September 1st. The Local Cultural Council members continue to have the opportunity to review applications in real time, which helps facilitate their voting process and enables them to hold voting meetings earlier in the grant cycle, if they wish. We are now going into year 10 of the online application, and it has been highly successful for councils, applicants, and the Mass Cultural Council. The grants management system allows us to gather data on applicants, including project budgets and who is and is not selected for funding. The grant application deadline for FY27 will be October 15, 2026.

Cultural Districts Initiative

- **Cultural District Investment Grants:** See the memo later in the materials for more information.
- **Cultural District Designation:** The [Cultural District Designation guidelines](#) are online. [Current districts](#) have until March of 2028 to recertify based on the updated guidelines. The application is open for [prospective new districts](#). New districts need to submit their application by February 8, 2027.

Creative Experiences

- Please see the memo later in the materials for more information.

Events/Outreach/Advancement

The team continues to visit their communities and participate in LCC meetings, LCC grant receptions, festivals, and other programming where our LCCs and Cultural Districts are involved. Fall will be busy supporting our LCCs as they manage the grant cycle, as well as assisting applicants with their applications. In addition, Cultural Districts will be applying for grants for their districts mid-fall. In addition, the Communities Team has been busy connecting and working with other state agencies, foundations, and municipal entities to further the work of arts and culture in communities. We will continue to work on connecting with others who are providing support for the cultural sector and assess partnerships and collaborations as we move forward with our work. A deeper part of our advancement work had us working with municipalities and LCCs around opioid mitigation funding, supporting partnerships between LCCs and local and statewide cross-sector partners, and specifically the Mass Office of Housing and Livable Communities.

Cultural Facilities Fund (CFF)

Jay Paget, Miranda Cook

CFF Grants

In May, MassDevelopment voted to finalize this year's grant recommendations.

The grant recommendations for this round include Capital Grants; Feasibility and Technical Assistance Grants; and Systems Replacement Plan Grants. The recommendations in these categories are as follows:

CFF Grant Name	Number of Recommended Applicants	Amount
Capital Grants	75	\$8,165,000
Feasibility and Technical Assistance Grants	16	\$463,600
Systems Replacement Plan Grants	6	\$48,000
Total	97	\$8,676,600

The Fund received 223 eligible applications by the December 11, 2025, deadline. The requests were as follows:

- Capital Grant requests: 186
- Feasibility and Technical Assistance Grant requests: 31
- Systems Replacement Plan Grant requests: 6

The total capital grant dollar request to the Fund was \$24.8M, and the combined estimated total development costs of all projects was \$313M.

In July, the Healy Administration authorized \$10M for CFF in the FY27 capital spending plan. Staff is working with our partners at MassDevelopment to craft the guidelines and application for the next round of funding.

Creative Space Development Network Accelerator

Mass Cultural Council is partnering with the [ArtStaysHere Coalition](#) on a development network accelerator to help those preserving, developing, and advocating for a healthier creative space ecosystem across Massachusetts.

Creative Space DNA holds monthly Zoom sessions bringing together artists, musicians, cultural organizations, funders, developers, and anyone advocating for creative space in their community.

Each session highlights the work of experienced professionals as well as the lived experience of practitioners.

March - July Sessions:

- [Creative Zoning & Municipal Tools – Arts Overlay Districts](#)
- [Working with Architects](#)
- [Adaptive Reuse of Municipal Buildings](#)
- [Organizing & Advocacy](#)

Grant System Management

Colin Baylor, Allie Rosenthal

The Grant Systems Team of Mass Cultural Council supports the agency's grantmaking via technical expertise of our grants management system (GMS). We are responsible for database management, reporting, technical grant application support, and providing customer service/training both internally and externally. We also contribute to policy, program design, and implementation of grant programs. This team consists of two Grants Management System Officers who work with the Senior Director of Program Operations.

- In collaboration with Public Affairs, we generated and published FY26 Legislative Funding Lists for our website and to share out.
- We continue to review the system for enhancement opportunities to make the user experience better and to pull data more intuitively.

- We are working closely with the fiscal team and all the programs to set up and prepare for the FY27 grant cycles.

Organizations

Sara Glidden, Lindiana Flores, Kalyn King, Lillian Lee

The Operating Grants for Organizations program runs every other year, in the odd-numbered fiscal years. There was no application for Operating Grants in FY26. The Organizations team supported the YouthReach application process, which happens in alternating years.

Starting in FY25, we introduced the Financial Health Analysis process, which used data from the publicly available non-profit tax forms to assess financial health indicators for the Operating Grants for Organizations grantee organizations. For FY26, we expanded this work to include the second cycle of Operating Grants and the continuing Portfolio grantees. Grant amounts are increased for organizations determined to be experiencing financial stress. Approximately 85% of the grantees are included in the review, omitting the programs that are Cultural Affiliates – programs of larger, not eligible organizations. The data indicates that an increasing percentage of organizations were facing financial challenges through FY25 (the most recent 990s that we have to review). We now have three years of data, and a report based on a more in-depth analysis is planned for late 2026.

Program Manager Sara Glidden and Program Officer Lindiana Flores attended the [national conference of Grantmakers for Effective Organizations \(GEO\)](#) held in Boston in June. GEO is a community of funders committed to transforming philanthropic culture and practice, with racial equity as a core commitment.

Gaming Mitigation Fund

Over the past few months, Program Manager Lillian Lee has been working to close out the FY26 Gaming Mitigation Fund cycle to prepare for the next application cycle. The Final Reports for the program were due in June, and all organizations submitted by the deadline. The FY27 cycle will open for applications in the fall.

Card to Culture

Lindiana Flores continues to support applicants interested in joining Card to Culture, which now includes more than 600 active participating organizations and continues to grow. In response to this growth, Lindiana is developing and co-creating with a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) expert a virtual learning webinar to help create a more welcoming and accessible experience for EBT, WIC, and ConnectorCare card holders utilizing the program. This webinar is anticipated to be offered this fall.

Advancement

The Organizations team curates a list of opportunities and resources for organizations, which are shared through monthly postings on the agency website. Program Officer Lillian Lee leads this monthly project, with input from the full team.

The Organizations team will continue to support the Agency's Advancement goals. Lindiana has begun participation in both the Arts and Health and Community Development working groups, identifying opportunities for Cards to Culture to support the working groups' priorities while furthering Cards to Culture's mission and impact.



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Conflict of Interest Notifications

Mass Cultural Council Members

Updated August 20, 2026

1) Ché Anderson

- a. City of Worcester
- b. College of the Holy Cross
- c. EcoTarium
- d. Institute of Contemporary Art
- e. Museum of Worcester
- f. New Balance / New Balance Foundation
- g. New Commonwealth Fund
- h. Rose Kennedy Greenway
- i. The Hanover Theatre
- j. The Quin House
- k. UMass Chan Medical School
- l. Worcester Art Museum
- m. Worcester County Mechanics Association (Mechanics Hall)
- n. Worcester Historical Museum
- o. Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce

2) Rhonda Anderson

- a. Mass Humanities
- b. New England Foundation for the Arts
- c. Ohketeau Cultural Center

3) Emily Bramhall**4) Thomas Bernard**

- a. Northern Berkshire Community Coalition

5) Jo-Ann Davis

- a. MASSCreative
- b. Springfield Museums
- c. The Care Center

6) Vinny deMacedo

- a. Bridgewater State University
- b. The Mayflower District, Scouting USA
- c. Plymouth Area Chamber of Commerce
- d. South Shore Chamber of Commerce
- e. Old Colony YMCA
- f. Pilgrim Hall

7) Simone Early**8) Iván Espinoza-Madrigal**

- a. Institute of Contemporary Art
- b. New England Foundation for the Arts

9) Donna Haghighat

- a. WAM Theater

10) Cecil Barron Jensen

- a. Artists Association of Nantucket
- b. Egan Maritime Institute
- c. Nantucket Cultural District

11) David Kong**12) Joyce Linehan**

- a. Culture Saves
- b. Friends of Cedar Grove Cemetery
- c. Fuller Craft Museum
- d. Massachusetts College of Art & Design
- e. Shout Syndicate
- f. Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts

13) Anika Lopes

- a. Ancestral Bridges Foundation

14) Petrina Martin**15) Diane Asadorian Masters****16) Allyce J. Najimy****17) Ashley Occhino**

- a. Fall River Arts and Culture Coalition/One South Coast Chamber Foundation
- b. SouthCoast Community Foundation
- c. Southeastern Massachusetts Visitors Bureau
- d. Textile Society of America

18) Ellice Patterson

- a. Abilities Dance

19) Julie Wake

- a. Arts Foundation of Cape Cod
- b. Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute



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Conflict of Interest Procedures - Mass Cultural Council

Grant Votes

Prior to any Council or Programs Committee meeting, staff will compile a list of conflicts of interest by identifying any potential recipient of Mass Cultural Council funds to be voted on at that meeting to which any Council member has an identified connection. Unless a Council member indicates otherwise, it is assumed that the Council member will abstain from all discussion and any vote regarding such grantee.

A document listing these possible conflicts of interest (the "conflicts list") will be distributed to the board at the beginning of the meeting.

Before a motion for a vote, the Chair should refer to the list and 1) ask the members present if the conflicts list is accurate and if the members identified will abstain from votes and discussion for the relevant organizations as identified on the conflicts list and 2) ask if any other conflicts exist which should be added to the conflicts list.

After addressing any necessary corrections or additions, the Chair will then ask for a motion approving the grant/allocation recommendations, noting that the Council members noted on the conflict list will abstain from discussion and votes for certain organizations in accordance with the conflicts list. It will not be necessary for any member with a conflict to leave the room as long as such member does not participate in any decision regarding the affected organization, and it is specifically noted in the minutes that such member abstained from all discussion and votes regarding the specified organization.

Sample script for a meeting vote:

CHAIR: We will now consider votes approving the FY27 grant recommendations. Please note the conflicts list that has been distributed. Staff members have compiled these lists to identify members who have a real or potential conflict of interest in connection with this

vote. Please indicate 1) if there are any inaccuracies on the list or 2) if any additional conflicts need to be disclosed.

[If any corrections or additions are noted by board members, the conflicts list will be amended at this time]

Noting the abstentions disclosed on the [corrected] conflicts list, the Chair now calls for a motion to approve the grant recommendations for this program.

Then, upon motion duly made and seconded, with the abstentions noted above, it was

VOTED: ...]"

In the minutes recording this vote, the following will be included:

[Council Member X] disclosed that they would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to {list affiliated organizations}

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FY27 Grant and Program Recommendations

August 2026

To: Mass Cultural Council
From: David Slatery, Jen Lawless, Colin Baylor, Allie Rosenthal
Date: August 27, 2026
Re: FY27 Grant and Program Recommendations

Overview

In FY27, Mass Cultural Council is poised to make an estimated 2,600 grants through its programs totaling approximately \$27.77 million.

In FY26, across all direct programs and including the Local Cultural Council Program, we had over **19,000 applications** come in through our grants management system. We presented an analysis of our FY26 grant making to the Programs Committee in June. The presentation is available upon request.

The Program teams, including the Grants Management System team, put in an immense amount of work and time supporting applicants, potential applicants, and grantees. We expect a similar volume in FY27. The following memos describe proposed FY27 grantmaking in more detail. All grant allocation amounts are contingent upon the Council's approval of the FY27 Spending Plan.

**** Please note:** There are two programs - **Grants for Creative Individuals** and the **Gaming Mitigation Program** – that are not included in this memo. Both programs will be brought to the February meetings of the Programs Committee and Council.

FY27 Partnership & Service Grants

To: Mass Cultural Council
 From: David Slatery, Jen Lawless, Bethann Steiner
 Date: August 27, 2026
 Re: FY27 Partnership & Service Grants

Summary

In this section, you will find proposed information on our partnership and service grants. Legislative earmarks have also been included for your reference; however, these payments are directed by the legislature, and our role is simply to pay the funds as a passthrough entity.

Recommendations

Table 1: Partnership and Service Grants

Recipient	Initiative	Grant
Mass Humanities	Partnership Grant	\$1,032,234
New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA)	New England State Touring (NEST)/Annual Grant	\$70,000
MASSCreative	Passthrough - Artist Stipends at State House Event(s)	\$30,000
Regie Gibson	Massachusetts Poet Laureate	\$25,000
Total		\$1,157,234

Mass Humanities: In the FY27 budget we are recommending \$1,032,234 for our annual partnership grant with the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities (Mass Humanities). The proposed partnership award for FY27 is approximately 5% (\$49,178) greater than the amount awarded in FY26. The percentage increase is the same as the percentage increase in Mass Cultural Council's FY27 state appropriation from the amount received for FY26 (in both cases, after earmarks). We have an agreement with Mass Humanities that this grant will increase or decrease at the same percentage rate as our state appropriation from one year to the next which is documented in a signed Memorandum of Agreement.

This partnership goes back more than twenty years. The partnership is renewed each year through a vote of the Council.

New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA): In providing an annual grant to NEFA, Mass Cultural Council considers annual funding requests from NEFA for projects and activities that specifically benefit the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In addition, Mass Cultural Council requires an annual accounting of NEFA's expenditure of any Mass Cultural Council funding showing the benefits to Massachusetts. We work closely with and collaborate with NEFA throughout the year as an important regional and local arts organization representing the region on issues of mutual interest.

Staff proposes FY27 funding of **\$70,000** to NEFA in accordance with the support structure from the states which NEFA has proposed. In FY26, Massachusetts provided \$70,000 to NEFA.

We will have available upon request from members a report from NEFA detailing the use of our FY26 award of \$70,000, which was used to support its New England States Touring (NEST) Program for the benefit of Massachusetts artists and venues.

MassCreative: For the fourth year in a row, Mass Cultural Council will join the coalition co-hosting Creative Sector Day at the State House - a day on Beacon Hill to celebrate and amplify the contributions of artists, creatives, cultural nonprofits, and creative businesses in Massachusetts with our elected leaders. This day-long event will feature performances and displays by artists across the Commonwealth, presentations by cultural organizations, and storytelling by creative businesses. This is NOT a lobby day, but a visibility and celebration day that will acknowledge the economic impacts and contributions of the creative sector and help build public support for artists, creatives, and cultural organizations. As co-host, we propose awarding **\$30,000** to compensate performing artists and cultural organizations at the event. As a matter of administrative simplicity, Mass Cultural Council will award the funds to MassCreative, which will pay the individual artists and organizations directly.

Massachusetts Poet Laureate: In February 2025, Governor Maura T. Healey announced Executive Order no. 640, establishing the position of Poet Laureate in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The order specified that Mass Cultural Council administers the position's application process. We propose that our Agency provide a grant in the amount of **\$25,000** to the selected poet for the second year of their appointment, to acknowledge the unique significance of the Poet Laureate position. Poet Laureate Duties:

- Encouraging poetry appreciation and creative expression
- Public events, readings, creating occasion-specific poems, and
- Advising the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) on poetry in schools

In FY26, the stipend was paid to the Poet Laureate through a funded legislative earmark. In FY27, while there is an earmark, it is not funded. Therefore, we propose funding the stipend from our general appropriation.

Legislative Mandates

Earmarks: The budget included 19 earmarks totaling **\$783,000** in our budget line item. Eighteen were funded. The \$25,000 Poet Laureate stipend will be funded from our appropriation as described above. A list of the 18 funded earmarks can be found in **Appendix A**.

FY27 Unrestricted Operating Support for Organizations

To: Mass Cultural Council
 From: David Slatery, Jen Lawless, Sara Glidden, Lindiana Flores, Kalyn King, Lillian Lee, Colin Baylor
 Date: August 27, 2026
 Re: FY27 Unrestricted Operating Support for Organizations

Summary

In this section, you will find proposed information on the operating support grant programs for nonprofit cultural organizations and Cultural Affiliates (programs with a parent organization) in Mass Cultural Council's programs: **Operating Support for Organizations (OGO)** and the **Cultural Investment Portfolio (CIP or "Portfolio")**.

A total of **\$7,350,000** has been allocated towards these grant programs to support 404 organizations. This amount is an increase of \$150,000 over the allocation for organization support programs for FY26 and includes the amount allocated to the Portfolio and the Operating Grants for Organizations.

Background

In 2021, the CIP team was directed to conduct a review of the existing Cultural Investment Portfolio program with the goals of maintaining the values that are important to grantees – the availability of unrestricted operating support that is reliable and predictable – while also centering equity in our evaluation and program revisions. We made our first announcement about changes coming to the Portfolio program in April 2022. The changes fell into two categories: the sunseting of the existing Portfolio grant program, and the launch of the new Operating Grants for Organizations program.

Sunsetting the Portfolio: The existing Portfolio program will be phased out through FY29. For purposes of transitioning into the new program, current Portfolio grantees were randomly assigned to a final year of support from the Portfolio grant program. After the final year of support, an organization must successfully apply to the new Operating Grants for Organizations program for continued operating support going forward. Organizations were sorted by budget size, and then randomly assigned to a fiscal year for Portfolio grant expiration, with some adjustments to address geographical distribution. The final year for Portfolio support is aligned with the application cycles of the Operating Grants for Organizations, so that former Portfolio recipients may apply to the Operating Grants for Organizations.

Operating Grants for Organizations: The first application cycle of the Operating Grants for Organizations was launched in March 2024 and offered a five-year funding commitment starting in FY25. In October 2025, 160 organizations were recommended for grants from this program.

The second round of Operating Grants for Organizations opened in February 2025 for funding that would begin in FY26. There were two significant changes to the program. 1) the commitment for this program is 4 grant years, reduced from five, and 2) the program will be open for applications every other year, alternating with the YouthReach program applications.

This means that successful applicants received a grant for FY26 – FY29, and that the next application for this program will be in the spring of 2027, for grants from FY28 – 31, subject to the legislative appropriations and the spending plans approved by the Council.

Organizations moving from Operating Support to YouthReach: Fifty-five grantees from Operating Grants or Portfolio applied to YouthReach in spring of 2026. Twenty-eight of these organizations were successful in their application and chose to accept the YouthReach grant and forfeit the Operating Grant or Portfolio grant. For these organizations, the YouthReach grant was more advantageous, either because the grant was for a larger amount, or the funding commitment was for a longer time.

Since twenty-eight organizations will move from OGO/CIP to YouthReach, we recommend that the twenty-eight organizations that applied to OGO for FY26 should be offered one-year contracts from the Operating Grants for Organizations program. This will provide support for additional organizations and will minimize the impact to grant calculations in the formula-based programs. The organizations that were selected were the next highest scoring applicants in each budget group/review panel, proportional to the organizations that moved to YouthReach. These organizations will be eligible to apply for multi-year support in the next application cycle for Operating Grants in 2027.

Addition of One-year grantees supported by increase in program allocation: The proposed FY27 Spending Plan includes an increase of \$150,000 to the allocation for the formula-based programs. We recommend that this allocation be used to add ten additional one-year grantees to the formula-based grants. The organizations that were selected were the next highest scoring applicants, following the organizations that are proposed for replacing the grantees that moved to YouthReach.

Grant Awards

The awards for the Operating Grants for Organizations are calculated with the remaining Portfolio organizations in one funding formula.

Grant awards are based on a formula that takes into account a three-year average of an organization's cash expenses (Formula Expenses). Awards are recalculated annually, and vary based on the resources allocated to the Organizations grants by the Council, as well as whether an organization's Formula Expenses increase or decrease.

We will continue to implement Equity Impact Points (described in previous Council write-ups) as part of the funding formula calculation, which will increase grant

amounts for organizations that meet certain criteria. This includes twenty-two organizations that are identified as financially stressed based on the Financial Health analysis protocol that we have developed, and we also support **BIPOC-Centered** organizations (this is a self-identification for organizations that are BIPOC led and/or run, and whose primary mission, programming and/or practices explicitly and specifically reflect and serve one or more communities that self-identify as BIPOC).

Recommendations

Additional information about the process can be found in **Appendix B**.

The list of 404 recommended FY27 grantees is provided in **Appendix C**.

To the extent not all such \$7,350,000 set aside can be used in FY27, staff requests the ability to re-allocate any such unused funds to other grant programs.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact:

- Sara Glidden, Program Manager, Organizations (617) 858-2710
- Kalyn King, Program Officer, Creative Experiences and Organizations (617) 858-2718
- Lillian Lee, Program Officer, Organizations and Gaming Mitigation (617) 858-2737
- Lindiana Flores, Program Officer, Organizations, and Card to Culture program 617-858-2826

Cultural District Investment Grants

To: Mass Cultural Council
 From: David Slatery, Jen Lawless, Lisa Simmons, Timothea Pham, Allie Rosenthal
 Date: August 27, 2026
 Re: Cultural District Investment Grants

Summary

For FY27, we are recommending an \$870,000 allocation to the Cultural Districts Initiative to support placemaking and placekeeping efforts in prospective districts. This represents level funding from FY26. Staff is recommending a \$15,000 grant per district, consistent with what was approved in FY26. There are currently fifty (58) districts designated.

Background

To receive funds, a municipality must apply through a streamlined acceptance form agreeing to allocate the funds in support of Cultural District activities and goals. Unless otherwise directed, the funds will go to the municipality to disburse. Applications are reviewed internally by staff. The grant must be spent in FY27, and an Annual Report is due in July 2027.

The Cultural District Designation program relaunched in FY27 [with new guidelines](#). Applications for new designations opened July 7, 2026, following an information session for prospective districts. The full application deadline is February 8, 2027.

Recertification for existing Cultural Districts began in March 2026 and continues on a separate track, with a deadline to recertify of March 2028, giving existing districts ample time to meet updated requirements. Full program guidelines and the FY27 timeline are available on the [MCC website](#).

Recommendations

The FY27 grants to the current Cultural Council Districts can be found in **Appendix D**. Thank you for your ongoing support of the Cultural Districts Initiative program.

To the extent that not all of the \$870,000 set aside for districts can be used in FY27, staff requests the ability to re-allocate any such unused funds to other grant programs.

Local Cultural Council Program

To: Mass Cultural Council
 From: David Slatery, Jen Lawless, Lisa Simmons, Lauren Bjella, Cheyenne Cohn-Postell, Sommers Smith, Greg Torrales, Jay Wong, Allie Rosenthal
 Date: August 27, 2026
 Re: FY27 Local Cultural Council Allocations

Summary

This memo presents recommended allocations for each of Mass Cultural Council's 329 Local Cultural Councils (LCCs) in FY27. Mass Cultural Council's spending plan calls for an allocation of **\$5,850,000** to the Local Cultural Council Program. This figure represents an increase of \$150,000 (2.6%) from FY26. For reference, this chart summarizes the last 26 years of LCC Program allocations.

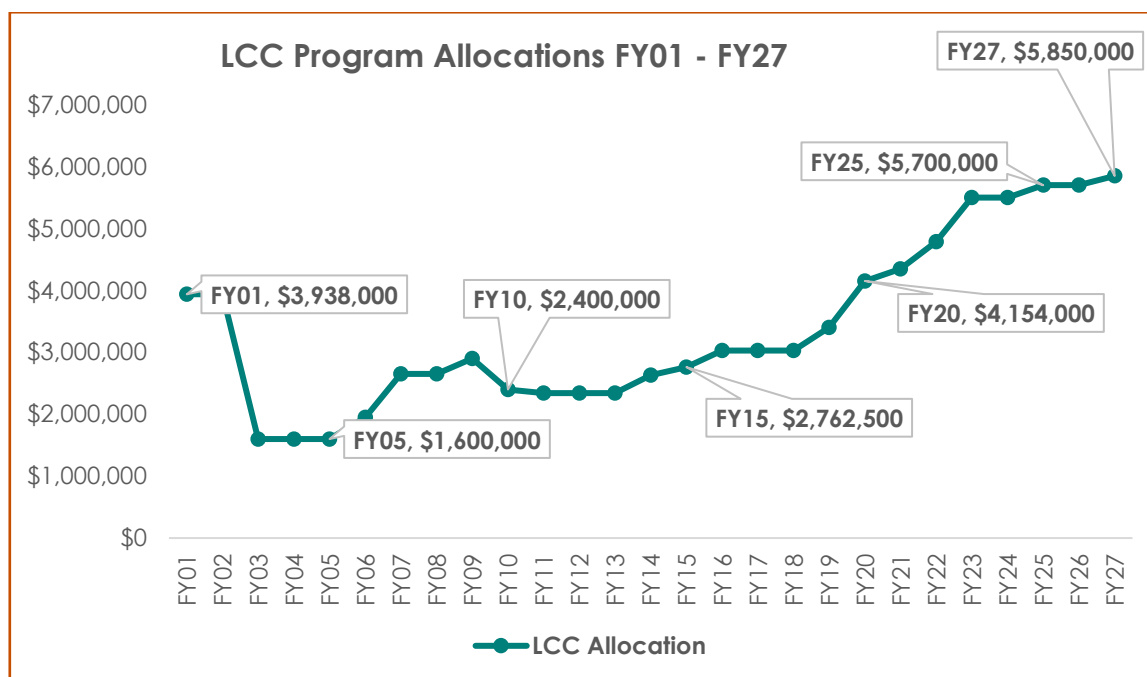


Figure 1 Local Cultural Council Allocations FY01- FY27

LCC Allocations

Consistent with Mass Cultural Council's enabling act, each council's individual allocation is determined by following the Department of Revenue's formula for distribution of lottery funds to each city and town, which is done using a state local aid formula, based on population and property values. It is weighted towards communities with lower property values and/or larger populations.

Due to the increase in the program allocation, 80% of LCCs will see modest increases of between 1% and 4% based on the formula. Increases range from \$100

to \$8,000 - the median increase is \$300. There are 66 LCCs whose allocation will not change from FY26. The minimum allocation a council will receive is \$5,700.

The recommended allocations for all 329 Local Cultural Councils are detailed in **Appendix E**.

Tribal Cultural Council Program

To: Mass Cultural Council
 From: David Slatery, Jen Lawless, Lisa Simmons, Allie Rosenthal
 Date: August 27, 2026
 Re: FY27 Tribal Cultural Council Program

Summary

The FY27 Spending Plan allocates **\$71,200** for the Tribal Cultural Council Program for 4 Tribal Cultural Councils (TCCs). The recommended allocation per council is \$17,800, which is the average Local Cultural Council allocation. This represents an increase of \$475 per TCC.

Background

Mass Cultural Council recently completed a [Native American and Indigenous People's Equity Plan](#). While working on the plan, we also worked with a task force comprised of Native American and Indigenous people and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Commission on Indian Affairs (MCIA) to create an equivalent regranteeing program to our [Local Cultural Council Program](#) for Tribal Governments in recognition of their inherent tribal sovereignty and right to self-determination. The Tribal Cultural Council Program provides funding that Tribal Cultural Councils can regrant to benefit their communities and use to support their own projects and initiatives and is driven by local autonomy. TCCs can tailor the program to their unique goals, define what community benefit means to them, and set local priorities.

The current Tribal Cultural Councils are:

- [Aquinnah Wampanoag Cultural Council](#)
- [Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe Cultural Council \(HPWTCC\)](#)
- [Mâseepee Cultural Council](#)
- [Nipmuc/k Cultural Council](#)

The Task Force recommended establishing two additional TCCs, one for the Stockbridge-Munsee Community, and an Intertribal Cultural Council that would serve Native American and Indigenous communities with ties to Massachusetts that are not Federally, or state-recognized, and/or Native American and Indigenous people who currently reside in Massachusetts whose native lands or territories are outside Massachusetts. We are still actively in conversation about these, but we do not anticipate they would be ready to participate in FY27.

To the extent not all 4 TCCs spend their allocations during FY27, staff requests the ability to re-allocate any unused funds to other grant programs.

YouthReach

To: Mass Cultural Council
 From: David Slatery, Jen Lawless, Dan Blask, Kortney Adams, Käthe Swaback, Colin Baylor
 Date: August 27, 2026
 Re: FY27 YouthReach Grants

Summary

The Artists & Youth Team is pleased to submit for approval our Agency's recommendations for 84 awards in the FY27 YouthReach program, totaling \$1,950,000. This represents an increase of \$80,000 from the FY26 approved amounts with an increase of 10 organizations. These grants support innovative Creative Youth Development programs in the arts, humanities, and sciences.

Background

For 33 years, YouthReach has nurtured the creativity and potential of young people through grants to programs that center youth voice, racial equity, and collective action. As part of Mass Cultural Council's ongoing work to build more accessible and equitable programs, the YouthReach application was streamlined this cycle to include:

- Broadened eligibility for schools to apply in any discipline
- A simplified application process removing the logic model and evaluative site visit requirements.
- Establishment of two award ranges:
 - A \$20,000 minimum award
 - A \$26,000 award to acknowledge higher costs for organizations committed to addressing additional needs of young people by providing mental health and/or workforce development resources
- An end to the "YouthReach Partners" distinction, with all former grant recipients required to apply to be eligible for FY27 funding.
- A transition to 4-year funding cycles, with half of this cycle's grants awarded for 2 years and half for 4 years; staggered expirations will allow us to award 4-year grants every 2 years going forward.

Program Overview

The full [YouthReach Program Guidelines](#) are online, and a high-level summary follows:

Eligibility

- Applications were open to Massachusetts non-profit organizations; unincorporated organizations with a fiscal agent; pre-K-12 Schools; and federally recognized tribal, state, or municipal entities.
- Organizations must have operated a Creative Youth Development program for a minimum of 6 months between 2024 and 2026.
- Programs must be primarily arts, humanities, or interpretive sciences; provide a specific group of young people hands-on cumulative learning through creation; be designed so that participants have the option of multi-year participation; work with Massachusetts youth ages 4-24; and have a minimum budget of \$20,000 in cash expenses.
- Organizations needed to attest that their programs meet this definition: Creative Youth Development (CYD) is a commitment to supporting young people's stories, ideas, and dreams through creative expression and honoring their lived experiences. To create environments that promote Creative Youth Development, these three concepts must be present: Racial Equity and Social Justice, Youth Voice, and Collective Action.

Review Process

- Funding Priorities – modest rating advantage
 1. Applicants that are BIPOC Centered Organizations or BIPOC majority schools.
 2. Applicants that did not receive funding in the last three fiscal years, or that were applying for the first time.
 3. Applicants that completed the [Arts & Culture Accessibility Self-Assessment](#) prior to applying.
- Scored by reviewers from the Massachusetts creative/cultural sector based on how the applicants demonstrate strength in the following criteria:
 1. Program Design and Fiscal Management
 2. Community Engagement
 3. Equitable Practices
 4. CREATE: Youth Voice
 5. CONNECT: Relationships
 6. CATALYZE: Youth Leadership
 7. Outcomes
 8. **Optional** Mental Health/Workforce Development only impacted award amount
- Funding length determination: Highest rated applications recommended for 4-year grants, with subsequent applications recommended for 2-year grants

- Funding amount determination: Reviewer scores for the optional mental health/workforce development questions, with the highest scoring applications receiving the higher grant award.

Timeline

- Application opened February 5, 2026
- Application closed April 2, 2026
- Panelist Review process spanned the time between April 30 - June 5, 2026
- Recommended grant awards to Programs Committee, August 13, 2026
- Full Council vote at Council Meeting, August 27, 2026
- Grants announced by September 2026
- Grant celebrations throughout the Commonwealth in FY27, Council Members encouraged to attend, details to come.

Applications

- 210 total applications
- 166 eligible applications
- 84 recommended grants (approx. 51% of eligible applications)

Recommendations

In keeping with the Agency's Racial Equity Plan and D/deaf and Disability Equity Plan, we present relevant data points in reaching equity goals:

Table 2 Funding Priority Totals/Percentages for All Eligible Applications (166)

No recent grant	BIPOC	Accessibility Self-Assessment	Mental Health Workforce Development
35	60	119	97
21.1%	36.1%	71.7%	58.4%

Table 3. Funding Priority Totals/Percentages for Recommended Grantees (84)

No recent grant	BIPOC	Accessibility Self-Assessment	Mental Health Workforce Development
14	45	60	45
16.7%	53.6%	71.4%	53.6%

The list of YouthReach reviewers is provided in **Appendix F**. The recommended grantees are included in **Appendix G**.

Creative Youth Development and Education Grants

To: Mass Cultural Council
 From: David Slatery, Jen Lawless, Dan Blask, Kortney Adams, Amy Chu, Käthe Swaback
 Date: August 27, 2026
 Re: Creative Youth Development and Education Grants

Summary

We are pleased to present, for your review, funding recommendations for the Youth Arts Impact Network and Poetry Out Loud.

FY27 Recommendations

Table 4. Creative Youth Development and Education Grants

Organization	Initiative	Grant
Edvestors	Youth Arts Impact Network (YAIN)	\$36,000
Huntington Theatre Company	Poetry Out Loud (POL)	\$25,000
Total		\$61,000

Youth Arts Impact Network (YAIN): Mass Cultural Council formalized our partnership with EdVestors in FY21 to support funding for the Youth Arts Impact Network. Since then, we have fostered our partnership with EdVestors to bring these services to potential and existing Creative Youth Development organizations and school-based partnership organizations outside of Boston.

YAIN is [responsive to the field](#), by helping organizations elevate their practices and track their ability to foster trust, cultivate relationships, and strengthen social connections. One major benefit of YAIN has been that organizations throughout the state can now participate in quarterly networking opportunities and share monthly resources. Organizations can also access the services of consultant Julia Gittleman, PhD, for planning, evaluation, and program development support. In FY26, 26 organizations across the Commonwealth completed more than 100 pro bono technical support sessions over the course of the year. These organizations represented considerable geographic diversity and were of varying sizes and maturity. These sessions included survey design, logic model design, data analysis, and reporting.

In FY27, building on the [success of YAIN](#) over the past six years, we would like to continue offering resources and access to best practices and innovations equitably across Massachusetts. We request to maintain our investment of \$36,000 to support the Youth Arts Impact Network in FY27 so that we may continue to strengthen our partnership with EdVestors, the 500+ community of Creative Youth Development practitioners, funders, and alumni who are part of the network.

This network is important given the current federal administration's policies and executive orders that are creating heightened pressures and uncertainties on nonprofits, especially those in the arts and culture sector.

Youth Arts Impact Network priority areas will continue to be the following:

1. Strengthen relationships and connections among organizations across the Commonwealth.
2. Provide resources through a comprehensive website and pro bono office hours. The [YAIN website](#) enables youth arts and CYD organizations to gain immediate access to relevant and timely [resources](#), [frameworks](#), [reports](#), and [current opportunities](#), including community networking events.
3. Improve practices. Continue to support improved data gathering systems and resources for Creative Youth Development (CYD) organizations. In FY27, we will continue to work alongside YAIN and the [3C Data Alliance](#) to help CYD organizations and young people access and utilize their own data for storytelling, advocacy, employment, and enhanced leadership opportunities, as well as adding to the overall advancement of arts and culture in our state. The collaborative structure is organized by a Steering Committee, a National Advisory Council, and DreamYard, a Bronx-based CYD organization acting as the lead partner for the project.

Poetry Out Loud (POL): Again, this year, we will be contracting with the Huntington Theatre Company to implement the national Poetry Out Loud program on behalf of Mass Cultural Council here in Massachusetts.

POL is a program of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Poetry Foundation. The NEA fully funds this program with a specific dedicated grant of \$25,000, the same as FY26. The Huntington Theatre Company raises more than \$50,000 in additional funds to carry out the program, which has been one of the five largest programs in the country for the last twelve years and the largest in New England as well. We are proud to partner with the Huntington Theatre on this successful project.

Creative Experiences

To: Mass Cultural Council
 From: David Slatery, Jen Lawless, Dan Blask, Sara Glidden, Lisa Simmons, Cheyenne Cohn-Postell, Amy Chu, Kalyn King, Allie Rosenthal
 Date: August 27, 2026
 Re: FY27 Creative Experiences

Summary

This memo presents the funding scenario for the FY27 cycle of Mass Cultural Council's Creative Experiences program. The FY27 Spending Plan calls for an allocation of \$3,442,500 to support organizations, schools, and creative businesses to fund festivals, projects, residencies, and other cultural activities in the arts, humanities, and sciences. These grants are meant to expand access to a wide range of cultural experiences for the Massachusetts public. This year, the Creative Experiences program will grant \$2,500 or \$5,000 to recommended grantees. After receiving a total of 1,730 grant applications, the program will seek to fund 738 grants.

Program Overview

The full [Creative Experiences Program Guidelines](#) are online, and a high-level summary follows:

Applicant Eligibility

Eligibility is intentionally broad and includes nonprofits, for-profits, schools, municipal entities, as well as unincorporated organizations and creative businesses applying with fiscal agents. Eligible fiscal agents, foreign LLCs and corporations must be registered to do business in Massachusetts. Ineligible entities include FY26 Operating Grants for Organizations, Cultural Investment Portfolio, Cultural District Investment, and Gaming Mitigation Fund grant recipients and FY27 Operating Grants for Organizations and Youthreach applicants that are approved and choose to accept the award.

Program Eligibility

Eligible programs include experiences that incorporate the arts, humanities, or sciences and contribute to the cultural vitality of Massachusetts by being publicly available or intentionally serving a segment of the general public, rather than benefiting a private individual or group. "Publicly available" means open to the general public through paid or free admission, while serving a portion of the public may include specific geographic communities, schools, cultural or tribal groups, or populations requiring accommodations such as K-12 students, seniors, incarcerated individuals, or people with disabilities.

The programmatic activity must occur at least 50% between July 1, 2026, and June 30, 2027, with a project budget of cash expenses equal to or exceeding the requested grant amount of either \$2,500 or \$5,000. All experiences must be accessible to people with disabilities, and take place in Massachusetts, or if virtual, the event must be primarily marketed to a Massachusetts-based audience. Activities cannot include inherently religious practices such as worship, instruction, or proselytization, nor can they support events for political candidates. Finally, the project must not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, disability, age, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Funding Priorities

Grants of \$2,500 or \$5,000 will be awarded based on the number of eligible applicants, equitable distribution and the prioritization categories listed below.

- **Experiences/Activities** where the primary purpose is producing, presenting or facilitating an experience in the arts, humanities, or sciences.
- **Experiences/Activities** that hire and compensate Massachusetts artists, humanists and/or scientists.
- **Applicants** that have not received funding from Mass Cultural Council directly in the last three fiscal years, or that are applying to the Mass Cultural Council for the first time.
- **Applicants** that have received a cumulative total of \$5,000 or less in grant funding from Mass Cultural Council directly in the last three fiscal years.
- **Applicants/Experiences** providing access for low-income individuals and families.
- **Applicants** that are [BIPOC Centered Organizations](#) or BIPOC majority schools.
- **Experiences/Activities** in cities and towns that are below the state's median household income and below statewide educational attainment. This includes but is not limited to places designated as Gateway Cities. [A full list of these under-resourced communities is available.](#)

These funding priorities are intended to support the agency's advancement goals by centering the arts, humanities, and sciences, emphasizing the fair compensation of cultural workers, and applying a more nuanced equity and inclusion lens to applicants' past funding histories.

Equitable Distribution: Each county is awarded grants based on their proportion of applicants. Ties for the final awards within a county were broken by considering distribution based on the applicant's Official City.

FY27 Program

The FY27 grant cycle of the Creative Experiences program opened on March 3, 2026, with an application deadline of April 30, 2026. We received 1,730 applications for this cycle, an increase of almost 12% over last year.

Eligible applicants: Of the 1,581 eligible applications received:

- 730 (46%) of the organizations have not received funding from us in the last three years, including previously unsuccessful applicants and new applicants.
- An additional 614 (39%) of the organizations have only received a total of \$5,000 in grant funding in the last three fiscal years (FY26, FY25, FY24).
- 448 (28%) are from BIPOC-Centered organizations/BIPOC majority schools.
- 576 (36%) would fund programs taking place in a priority community.
- 1,346 (85%) applicants are participating in the Card to Culture program or providing activities/experiences that are free.

Of the 738 organizations recommended for funding:

- 494 (67%) of the organizations have not received funding from us in the last three years, including previously unsuccessful applicants and new applicants.
- An additional 146 (20%) of the organizations have only received a total of \$5,000 in grant funding in the last three fiscal years (FY26, FY25, FY24).
- 359 (49%) are from BIPOC-Centered organizations/BIPOC majority schools.
- 290 (39%) would fund programs taking place in a priority community.
- 684 (93%) applicants are participating in the Card to Culture program or providing activities/experiences that are free.
- 734 (99%) applicants have the primary purpose of creating, presenting, or providing services in the arts, humanities, or sciences.
- 715 (97%) applicants are hiring and compensating Massachusetts artists, humanists and/or scientists.

80% of eligible applications from BIPOC-Centered organizations or BIPOC-majority K-12 schools are recommended for funding.

68% of eligible applications from organizations that haven't received funding from us in the last three years are recommended for funding.

Recommended Grants

Of 1,730 applications, 149 are determined to be ineligible for funding. Of 738 applications recommended for funding, we recommend that 16 receive Holds. Organizations that do not resolve the reason for their hold by late Fall will have their grant reverted.

A list of the 738 proposed grantees is included in **Appendix H**.

To the extent that not all the \$3,442,500 set aside can be used in FY27, staff requests the ability to re-allocate any such unused funds to other grant programs.

The program is jointly managed by Cheyenne Cohn-Postell from the Communities team, Kalyn King from the Organizations team, and Amy Chu, from the Artists & Youth team. Application reviewers included Jenifer Lawless, Sara Glidden, Lisa Simmons, Dan Blask, Amy Chu, Cheyenne Cohn-Postell, Timothea Pham, Kalyn King, Kelly Bennett, Summer Conforto, Greg Torrales, Jay Wong, Sommers Smith, Lauren Bjella, Lillian Lee, and Jay Paget.

UP Innovation Fund

To: Mass Cultural Council
 From: David Slatery, Jen Lawless, Charles Baldwin, Colin Baylor
 Date: August 27, 2026
 Re: FY27 UP Innovation Fund

Summary

The UP Innovation Fund is a financial award for the 93 organizations that obtained the status of UP Designation while applications for the UP Initiative were active, 2015-2022. The UP Innovation Fund enables these organizations to identify and enact "Access" that is foundational, sustainable, and aspirational. When applications for the UP Initiative were paused in 2023, there was a recalibration of the UP Innovation Fund as a 5-year grant access grant. For FY27, the 5th and final year of the original proposal, I am requesting an allocation of \$465,000 to provide the 93 UP Designated organizations with \$5,000 awards.

Background

Between 2015 and 2022, organizations applied annually to join a community of inclusive design practice, the UP Initiative (UP for Universal Participation). A badge of UP Designation could be earned by participating in peer learning cohorts, the Innovation Learning Network (ILN), or by providing evidence of inclusive, accessible practices. The UP Designation status entitled them to apply for the UP Award (\$10k unrestricted grant for achieving Accessibility excellence, determined by peers and panelists), the Innovation Fund (\$3k grant for accessible product/practice development), and the LEAD stipend (\$1k professional development grant for staff to attend the LEAD Conference). Funding was competitive and not all UP Organizations were able to receive funding through these opportunities.

In 2023, the Agency developed a comprehensive Disability Equity Plan that seeks to enhance the growth of organizational learning, advance relationships with Deaf and/or Disabled artists, and address the Agency's internal policies and practices. Also, the UP grant programs were merged into a single Innovation Fund, a grant that was proposed to be available to all UP Designated Organizations each year for the duration of their designation, a 5-year period. To determine the efficacy of this multi-year fund, recipients of the UP Innovation Fund were expected to meet distinct criteria, including the submission of a Self-Assessment in 2025 and an Access Plan in 2026.

Of the 96 original UP Designated organizations, due to closures and/or internal capacities, 93 organizations remain eligible for the Innovation Fund grant. The Agency has allowed all UP Organizations to maintain their original UP Designated status during this innovative funding period and has been collecting the cohort's access data to determine effective practices and accountability measures. Along

with recommendations from the Disability Advisory Committee, this data has contributed to the redesign of the steps toward “UP Designation”.

In FY27, the Arts Access Hub Access Certification courses will be made available to staff from UP Designated organizations. Monthly UP office hours will continue to provide education and support on legal obligations, technical assistance, and access plan implementation. UP Designated Organizations will be expected to reapply for the status following the new guidelines. Data from Innovation Fund grantee Annual Reports will be one strategy towards finalizing the new UP Designation rubric and measuring the impact of the Agency's 5-year investment. In FY28, applications for UP Designation will open for Mass Cultural Council grantees and applicants.

Recommendations

The FY27 UP Innovation Fund grants to the current UP Designated Organizations can be found in **Appendix I**.

To the extent that not all of the \$465,000 set aside for UP Organizations can be used in FY27, staff requests the ability to re-allocate any such unused funds to other grant programs.

Equity, Inclusion, and Access Grants

To: Mass Cultural Council
 From: David Slatery, Jen Lawless, Bethann Steiner, Charles Baldwin
 Date: August 27, 2026
 Re: Arts & Culture Accessibility Hub

Overview

Mass Cultural Council is proud to have partnered with Open Door Arts in the development of research, resources, training, and tools that have established a strong, data-informed, and disability-centered foundation for advancing accessibility across the Massachusetts arts and culture sector.

A partnership investment of **\$100,000** in FY27 would support the continued growth and expansion of our work, enabling Open Door Arts to provide coordinated support across the Hub, self-assessment, staff training, and sector-wide learning initiatives.

This partnership supports:

- alignment with community-informed research and established tools
- consistent and clear understanding and implementation of accessibility efforts across organizations
- efficient use of resources without duplicating efforts
- measurable progress toward accessibility excellence

Background

The Innovation and Learning Network (ILN) was a series of professional development workshops on Universal Design and accessibility practices run directly by Mass Cultural Council staff, collaborative partner organizations, and hired consultants. The ILN facilitated the development of a Community of Practice; examining and activating physical, digital, educational, and social systems. Originally, the learning cohort consisted of 5 to 6 in-person day-long sessions but became an online class during the pandemic. In FY21 and FY22, the ILN consisted of a series of webinars, meetings, evaluations, and website audits to steward the implementation of access plans for cultural organizations. Program activities were designed and delivered in partnership with the National Center for Accessible Media, the Institute for Human Centered Design, Partners for Youth with Disabilities, and Open Door Arts.

This learning opportunity was offered to 10 to 13 organizations a year, but the goal was to make this opportunity available more broadly to as many organizations as possible. In FY23, applications for the UP Initiative were paused, the UP Innovation Fund was redesigned, and the Agency developed the [d/Deaf & Disability Equity Plan \(FY25-28\)](#).

In FY25, Mass Cultural Council's [d/Deaf & Disability Equity Plan \(FY25-28\)](#) called for the agency to collaborate with a specialized vendor, other agencies and service orgs, on the deployment, revision, scaling and launch of the Mass Cultural Council's Universal/Inclusive Design learning program, called the [Innovation and Learning Network \(ILN\)](#), in order to reach hundreds of organizations and individuals in the creative sector using a universal design for learning framework and a dynamic mix of online delivery and small group/peer group discussion opportunities. An investment from the Mass Cultural Council [helps launch](#) the **Arts & Culture Accessibility Hub**.

- Website containing comprehensive centralized information, resources, rosters and training related to accessibility for arts and culture organizations
- Informational content, introductory videos, resources
- Rosters of disabled artists, user/experts, access consultants, and service providers

In FY26, the [Arts & Culture Accessibility Hub](#) served as a centralized, publicly accessible, free resource designed to support organizations in understanding and implementing accessibility across all areas of practice. [The Arts & Culture Accessibility Self-Assessment](#) provided more than 450 Massachusetts organizations with a structured, accessible way to evaluate their current practices, identify gaps, and prioritize next steps.

- The Arts and Culture Legal Responsibilities Identification Tool
- The Arts and Culture Glossary
- The Arts and Culture Accessibility Self-Assessment
- Content and structure are aligned with the Self-Assessment

Partnership

Arts & Culture Accessibility Hub: The Arts & Culture Accessibility Hub serves as a centralized, publicly accessible resource designed to support organizations in understanding and implementing accessibility across all areas of practice. It reflects extensive research, expert input, and lived experience, and provides practical, actionable guidance for organizations at all stages of their accessibility journey. Mass Cultural Council's FY25 investment helped launch this resource.

FY27 Partnership Components:

- Continued free access for all
- Continued recognition of MCC as an active founding partner across all materials
- Up to two annual "From Intention to Action" training sessions open to all grantees

Self-Assessment and Accessibility Planning: [The Arts & Culture Accessibility Self-Assessment](#) provides organizations with a structured, accessible way to evaluate their current practices, identify gaps, and prioritize next steps. Since launch, more than 450 Massachusetts organizations have completed the assessment, contributing to a growing body of data and demonstrating strong sector-wide interest in advancing accessibility. Mass Cultural Council's FY25 investment helped launch this resource.

FY27 Partnership Components:

- Continued free access to the self-assessment tool for all
- Continued integration of self-assessment as a core requirement for UP Designation
- Continued recognition of MCC as a founding partner
- Ongoing technical assistance and support provided by Open Door Arts
- Continued equity points for completion of the self-assessment
- Continued data collection from Massachusetts-based organizations and compilation of aggregate self-assessment data, including a high-level summary of statewide findings.
- Exploration of additional equity points/funding priorities for grantees.

Foundations of Cultural Access Training: The Foundations of Access online training provides a comprehensive introduction to accessibility in arts and culture organizations through two 90-minute asynchronous sessions. Designed for staff across roles and departments, the training explores disability history, culture, and justice, along with the policies, practices, and procedures that support meaningful access. Participants learn about physical spaces, access services, accessible communications, and program design, while gaining a deeper understanding of how these elements work together to create inclusive experiences. Mass Cultural Council's FY26 investment helped launch this resource.

FY27 Partnership Components:

- Foundations of Cultural Access training available to all MCC grantee organizations for the first 12 months after they are made available.

Cultural Access Practitioner Certification Course: The Cultural Access Practitioner Certification program is the first of its kind, designed to build a national workforce of trained professionals equipped to lead accessibility efforts within arts and culture organizations. In addition to strengthening individual knowledge, capacity, and expertise, the program establishes a shared foundation of training across participants. This consistency ensures that individuals across organizations are working from a common understanding of accessibility principles and practices. In turn, this leads to more consistent and reliable access experiences for people with disabilities across organizations and the sector.

By investing in training and certification, the Agency has the opportunity to lead nationally in developing a network of practitioners who can drive change across the sector. This approach increases access to high-quality, disability-centered learning, reduces redundancy in training efforts, and strengthens the overall standard of practice. Mass Cultural Council's FY26 investment helped launch this resource.

FY27 Partnership Components:

- Access for all current UP-designated organizations:
- One seat per UP organization in the Cultural Access Practitioner Certification program
- Co-facilitated cohort model for certification program UP participants, including six facilitated peer-learning sessions that support reflection, discussion, and a structured timeline for certification completion.

Thought Partnership & Collaboration: The continued partnership between Open Door Arts and Mass Cultural Council creates opportunities to align efforts, share expertise, and strengthen accessibility initiatives across the cultural sector. As UP Designation, accessibility planning, and professional development opportunities continue to evolve, regular collaboration will help ensure these efforts remain practical, impactful, and responsive to the needs of Massachusetts organizations. This partnership also creates opportunities for mutual learning, drawing on each organization's experience working directly with arts and cultural organizations to advance accessibility.

FY27 Partnership Components:

- ODA will provide feedback and consultation on the development of the accessibility rubric, UP designation criteria, implementation timeline, and related learning opportunities associated with UP Designation.
- Mass Cultural Council will provide feedback on trainings, practitioner certification, and other accessibility capacity-building initiatives.



Power of culture

Business Operations Report

August 2026

Fiscal

As fiscal year 2027 begins, most of our attention focuses on developing the FY27 Spending Plan, fiscal year opening activities, and any remaining FY26 close-out activities.

New Staff

We are pleased to welcome a new Fiscal Contracts Officer to Mass Cultural Council. Anitha Kanthaiah previously worked with us as a contract employee to help process Pandemic Recovery Grants. We are excited to have Anitha on board and look forward to the experience and perspective she will bring to this work.

Office Operations

As previously reported, Mass Cultural Council's office lease was extended for another 5 years last January. As part of the new lease and the landlord improvement allowance, we are undergoing some office improvements. The space is currently being repainted, and the office will be closed to staff until early September. We have also installed card readers for our front door and new temperature sensors. Also, lighting in the general office area is now dimmable thanks to funding from the [Reasonable Accommodation Capital Reserve Account \(RACRA\)](#), a capital allocation established within the Executive Office for Administration and Finance (A&F). RACRA funds are distributed through a collaboration between A&F and the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD). When everything is completed and cleaned up, we invite Council Members to visit the office.

Out-of-State Travel

Under Mass Cultural Council's newly revised Out-of-State Travel Policy, on August 13, the Executive Committee approved a travel request for the Acting Executive Director to attend [NASAA Assembly 2026, Washington, DC, October 7 – 9, 2026](#) (although the estimated cost has increased by another night as Dave has been invited to join the “New Executive Directors Roundtable” the day before the full conference begins in order to provide a unique “perspective on transition dynamics, advocacy and operations”).

Additionally, this quarter, the Acting Executive Director approved travel for several additional staff members to also attend NASAA Assembly 2026 (three of whom have received travel stipends and fee waivers), such amounts being within the out-of-state travel budget for FY27 Spending Plan (which has been submitted for Council approval at today’s meeting).

- NASAA's Assembly 2026 is a dynamic, in-person gathering that brings together arts and cultural leaders from across the country who will engage in two days of shared learning, peer exchange, and conversation about the future of public support for the arts. This conference is both a celebration of the work happening across the field and an opportunity to connect, learn, and collaborate. Participants engage in sessions exploring timely trends, challenges, and opportunities shaping the arts sector; peer gatherings for executive leaders, commissioners/council members, and job-alike groups; and unifying plenary sessions featuring national perspectives and inspiring voices. A [full agenda](#) is available online.

Each trip has been determined to provide a clear public benefit, advance the Council’s Strategic and Equity Plans, and represent a cost-effective use of resources. All required Travel Authorization Forms, Procurement Request Forms, and State Ethics disclosures will be on file prior to the travel dates. A quarterly report on out-of-state travel will be provided at the Council’s fall meeting.



Power of culture

FY27 Budget and Program Allocation Spending Plan

August 2026

To: Mass Cultural Council
 From: David Slatery, Acting Executive Director
 Date: August 27, 2026
 Re: **FY27 Budget and Program Allocation Spending Plan**

This memorandum presents the proposed FY27 Budget and Program Allocation Spending Plan for Mass Cultural Council. It outlines anticipated revenue sources, key investment areas, and grantmaking priorities. At its August 13 meeting, the Executive Committee recommended that the full Council approve this Plan. Also on August 13, the Programs Committee endorsed the staff's FY27 grant recommendations, based on this plan, for approval by the full Council. The Advancement Committee will meet on August 21 to review proposed advancement spending and will make recommendations to the full Council at the 170th Council meeting on August 27.

Legislative Requirement and Compliance

The Agency's legislative mandate requires that an amount equal to at least 75% of the [Line Item 0640-0300](#) appropriation (\$28,106,072) be allocated to grantmaking. For FY27, this establishes a minimum grantmaking threshold of \$21,079,554. Mass Cultural Council's FY27 Budget and Program Allocation Spending Plan exceeds this requirement, dedicating \$27,822,525 to grantmaking, representing 132% of the statutory minimum.

Revenue Summary

We are deeply thankful to the Commonwealth, MassDevelopment, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and our other funding partners for

their continued investment in the arts, culture, creative sector, and Mass Cultural Council.

The FY27 state appropriation allocates \$28,106,072 to support Mass Cultural Council operations, representing a 4.2% increase compared to the prior fiscal year. For context, this includes:

- \$27,348,072 for core operations
- \$758,000 for 19 legislative earmarks that fund specific arts and cultural projects across the Commonwealth. The core operations budget includes one unfunded earmark, which provides a \$25,000 honorarium to support the Commonwealth's Poet Laureate.

Mass Cultural Council's total projected revenue for FY27 is \$34.9 million, sourced from the following:

Funding Source	Amount
State: Basic Appropriation (0640-0300) less Earmarks	\$27,348,072
State: Earmarked Pass-Through Funds	\$758,000
State: Chapter 23K Funds (Gaming Mitigation estimated)	\$5,094,902
MassDevelopment: For Mass Cultural Council expenses associated with Cultural Facilities Fund	\$358,705
*National Endowment for the Arts: Basic State Plan	\$809,238
*National Endowment for the Arts: Arts in Education	\$62,900
*National Endowment for the Arts: Arts in Underserved Communities	\$278,800
*National Endowment for the Arts: Folk Arts Infrastructure Grant	\$35,000
*National Endowment for the Arts: "Poetry Out Loud"	\$25,000
*National Endowment for the Arts: Art and Health	\$50,000
Harry Rice Trust Account (Estimated)	\$64,726
Total	\$34,885,343

*Federal funding from the National Endowment for the Arts is approximately \$1.26 million

Massachusetts Gaming Fund (Chapter 23K)

As in prior years, and in accordance with M.G.L Chapter 23K, 2% of the Commonwealth's gross gaming tax revenues is allocated to the Massachusetts Cultural and Performing Arts Mitigation Trust Fund and ultimately made available to Mass Cultural Council. This program is intended to both 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 and to support cultural organizations generally. Accordingly, the FY27 Budget and Program Allocation Spending Plan estimates \$5.1 million from gaming revenues.

Of the total \$5.1 million:

- \$4.7 million will be awarded as grants to eligible nonprofit performing arts centers and to support organizations.
- \$357k will support administrative expenses.

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:

- \$2,138,193 in available funds as of May 30, 2026
- \$2,956,709* in anticipated new revenue from June 1, 2026, to December 31, 2026

*Please note the \$2,956,709 anticipated revenue allocation is a conservative estimate based on year-to-date gaming tax receipts and current revenue trends.

Cultural Facilities Fund

The Commonwealth's FY27 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 to support program expenses. The FY27 Budget and Program Allocation Spending Plan reflects a total of \$359k in available administrative funds.

Advancement Investments

Mass Cultural Council is committed to strengthening the cultural sector through innovative partnerships, strategic investments, and cross-sector initiatives that expand the reach, relevance, and long-term sustainability of arts and culture across the Commonwealth. The FY27 Budget and Program Allocation Spending Plan includes funding for projects to support sector-wide learning, policy development, and future investment strategies. These items were presented for specific recommendations to the Advancement Committee on August 21.

- **Creative Wealth Fund Feasibility** – \$25k in funding to evaluate the feasibility of establishing a Creative Wealth Fund designed to build long-term value from cultural infrastructure investments and reinvest returns into nonprofit cultural organizations.
- **Cultural Policy Development Advisory Council (CPDAC)** – \$10k in funding to establish a creative economy definition and economic measurement of the Cultural/Creative Sector in coordination with other state government data gathering efforts.

- **Cross Sector Partnership Convening** – \$10k in funding to support a cross-sector convening to bring together partners from economic development, community development, health, workforce, and related fields to examine how the cultural sector contributes to broader public priorities. The convening would also help identify opportunities for partnership, investment, and policy alignment across sectors.

Equity Investments

Mass Cultural Council is committed to advancing equity, access, and inclusion across all areas of its work. In FY27, we are investing in targeted initiatives that deepen support for historically marginalized communities and further integrate equity into our grantmaking, operations, and advancement priorities. The FY27 Budget and Program Allocation Spending Plan includes the following equity priorities:

- **Arts & Culture Accessibility 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** – FY27 marks the third 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.
- **Native American & Indigenous Peoples Advisory Committee** – Funding to continue support for the Native American & Indigenous Peoples Advisory Taskforce, which is comprised of leaders and stakeholders from across the Commonwealth. The taskforce helps identify barriers, improve program accessibility, and ensure that agency policies, programs, and investments reflect the needs of historically marginalized communities.

FY27 Mass Cultural Council Budget

Table 1 Mass Cultural Council FY27 Revenue by Funding Source

Revenue	State Funding	Gaming*	Cultural Facilities Fund	NEA Federal	MCC Trust	Total
FY27	28,106,072	2,956,709	350,000	1,260,938	-	32,673,719
FY26 Carry Over / Transfer In		2,138,193	8,705	-	64,726	2,211,624
Total Revenue	28,106,072	5,094,902	358,705	1,260,938	64,726	34,885,343

*Estimated FY27 Revenue

Table 2 FY27 Budget and Allocation Plan by Expense Category and Funding Source

Expense Category	Percent of Total State Funding	State Funding	Gaming	Cultural Facilities Fund	NEA Federal	MCC Trust	Total	Percent Total Funding All Categories
AA: Salary	16.3%	4,567,450	189,697	149,467	21,724	-	4,928,338	14.1%
BB: Employee Reimbursement	0.4%	112,501	-	4,499	-	-	117,000	0.3%
CC: Contract Staff	0.0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.0%
DD: Payroll Tax and Fringe	0.3%	96,830	87,469	68,919	10,017	-	263,235	0.8%
EE: Administrative Expenses	0.7%	197,489	28,454	32,320	3,259	-	261,522	0.7%
GG: Rent And Electricity	1.4%	397,000	37,500	37,500	-	-	472,000	1.4%
HH: Consulting Services	1.1%	319,300	-	12,000	-	-	331,300	0.9%
JJ: Programmatic Services	0.8%	224,183	-	54,000	-	-	278,183	0.8%
KK: Non-IT Equipment	0.02%	7,000	-	-	-	-	7,000	0.02%
LL: Leases	0.04%	12,000	-	-	-	-	12,000	0.03%
*PP: Grants Programs (including Poet Laureate)	75%	21,035,602	4,738,259	-	1,225,938	64,726	27,064,525	77.6%
PP: Legislative Earmarks	3%	758,000	-	-	-	-	758,000	2.2%
UU: Information Technology	1.3%	378,717	13,522.97	-	-	-	392,240	1.1%
Total Expenses	100%	28,106,072	5,094,902	358,705	1,260,938	64,726	34,885,343	100%

*See Table 3 for FY27 Grants Program (PP) Details

Table 3 FY27 Grant Programs (PP) by Funding Source – Details \$27,064,525 (77.6% of Agency Budget)

Grants Programs	State Funding	Gaming	Cultural Facilities Fund	NEA Federal	MCC Trust	Total	Percent of Total Grant Funding
Organizations	-	-	-	-	-	7,350,000	27%
Operating Grants (OGO & CIP)	5,356,197	1,184,565	-	809,238	-	7,350,000	-
Artists & Youth	-	-	-	-	-	4,486,000	17%
Grants for Creative Individuals	2,450,000	-	-	-	-	2,450,000	-
YouthReach	1,608,300	-	-	341,700	-	1,950,000	-
NEA: Poetry Out Loud Huntington Theatre	-	-	-	25,000	-	25,000	-
Poet Laureate (Unfunded Earmark)	25,000	-	-	-	-	25,000	-
YAIN (Edvestors)	36,000	-	-	-	-	36,000	-
Communities	-	-	-	-	-	6,720,000	25%
Local Cultural Councils	5,850,000	-	-	-	-	5,850,000	-
Cultural District Grants	870,000	-	-	-	-	870,000	-
Equity and Inclusion	-	-	-	-	-	4,078,700	15%
Creative Experiences (F&P and Schools)	3,442,500	-	-	-	-	3,442,500	-
Tribal Cultural Councils	71,200	-	-	-	-	71,200	-
UP Innovation Fund	465,000	-	-	-	-	465,000	-
Open Door Arts	100,000	-	-	-	-	100,000	-
Advancement	-	-	-	-	-	811,405	3%
New England Foundation for the Arts, Inc.	70,000	-	-	-	-	70,000	-
Massachusetts Foundation for Humanities and Public Policy, Inc.	1,032,234	-	-	-	-	1,032,234	-
<i>FY26 Mass Humanities Carry Over</i>	<i>-559,241</i>	-	-	-	-	<i>-559,241</i>	-
<i>1% Mass Foundation for Humanities Reserve</i>	<i>188,412</i>	-	-	-	-	<i>188,412</i>	-
MITx	-	-	-	-	-	0	-
Massport Artist Program	-	-	-	-	-	0	-
Catalyzing Grant to open Arts Benefit Market	-	-	-	-	-	0	-
NEA: Art & Health Project	-	-	-	50,000	-	50,000	-
Mass Creative	30,000	-	-	-	-	30,000	-
Other Grants	-	-	-	-	-	3,618,420	13%
MCC Trust (Grant Reserve/Uncommitted)	-	-	-	-	64,726	64,726	-
Chapter 23K Funded Grants Gaming Mitigation Program	-	3,553,694	-	-	-	3,553,694	-
Total Grants	21,035,602	4,738,259	-	1,225,938	64,726	27,064,525	100%

Budget Line Item Descriptions

AA: Salary:

- We currently have 41 full-time employees and 1 part-time employee. In FY27, we expect to backfill one vacancy.
- Payroll projections include a 2% cost-of-living increase effective July 12, 2026, and an additional 2% cost-of-living increase effective January 10, 2027, for unionized employees, consistent with their collective bargaining agreements.
- For non-union staff, payroll projections include a 2% cost-of-living increase for senior staff and a 4% cost-of-living increase for managers effective July 12, 2026. A reserve has also been included for a 2% cost-of-living increase for non-union staff effective January 10, 2027.
- The Acting Executive Director has excluded himself from these increases; therefore, no separate vote is required.

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.
- It also includes an annual budget of \$22,000 for direct out-of-state travel expenses (net of conference registration fees).

CC: Contracted Staff: Not applicable.

DD: Payroll Tax and Fringe: This line covers payroll tax for staff salaries. It also includes fringe 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 (\$450K) and utility expenses.

HH: Consulting Services: This line includes expenditures related to outside attorneys, 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, artists who perform at Agency public events, 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 as well as car rental expenses for staff travel.

PP: Grant Programs and Legislative Earmarks: A detailed grant allocation list is included in these materials.

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 leases, web development, and Commonwealth chargebacks for IT services.