

Posted online 2/4/26



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**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2026  
10:00 – 11:30 AM**

**BROADCAST MEETING**

MEETING WILL BE LIVESTREAMED AT  
<https://www.youtube.com/live/ff6HfdXQllk>

MEETING MATERIALS WILL BE POSTED ONLINE AT  
[HTTPS://MASSCULTURALCOUNCIL.ORG/ABOUT/BOARD/](https://massculturalcouncil.org/about/board/)  
Under "February 11, 2026 Executive Committee Meeting"

**AGENDA**

**VOTE**

**1. Call to Order – Open Meeting Law Notice**

**2. Minutes**

2a. October 22, 2025

**X**

2b. December 3, 2025

**X**

**3. Chair Report**

**4. Acting Executive Director Report**

**5. Public Affairs Update**

5a. Legislative Update

- 5b. Upcoming Events
- 6. Extension of Current Strategic Plan** **X**
- 7. Travel**
  - 7a. Notification of Staff Out-of-State Travel Approved by the Chair
  - 7b. Out-of-State Travel Policy
- 8. Draft Agenda February 25, 2026 Mass Cultural Council Meeting** **X**
- 9. Adjourn**



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**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

(IN ADVANCE OF THE 167TH MEETING OF MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL ON FEBRUARY 25, 2026)

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2026**

**RESOLUTIONS**

**Section 2 (a) & (b)**

RESOLVED: the Executive Committee approves the minutes of the October 22, 2025 and December 3, 2025 Executive Committee Meeting in the form presented.

**Section 6**

RESOLVED: To recommend to Mass Cultural Council a 2-year extension of the Council's FY24-26 Strategic Plan.

**Section 8**

RESOLVED: To approve the draft agenda for the 168<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Mass Cultural Meeting on October 29, as presented.

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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2025**

**ONLINE MEETING**

**Executive Committee Members Present** were

Marc Carroll, Chair  
Jo-Ann Davis, Vice Chair  
Ché Anderson  
Cecil Barron Jensen  
Simone Early  
Julie Wake

**Staff Members Present** were

Michael J. Bobbitt, Executive Director  
David Slatery, Deputy Executive Director  
Catherine Cheng-Anderson, Chief Financial Officer  
Jen Lawless, Senior Director of Program Operations  
Bethann Steiner, Senior Director of Public Affairs  
Carolyn Cole, Special Projects Manager for Advancement  
Ann Petruccelli Moon, Deputy Chief of Staff  
Carmen Plazas, Communications & Community Engagement Manager

Chair Marc Carroll called the meeting to order at 10:03am and asked Deputy Executive Director David Slatery to read the Open Meeting Law statement. He then asked if Committee Members had reviewed the three sets of minutes included in their meeting materials and if they had he would entertain a motion and a second to approve them. Julie Wake moved to approve the minutes; Ché Anderson seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Iván Espinoza-Madrigal was absent it was unanimously

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee affirms its prior approval of the executive session minutes of the February 25, 2025 Executive Committee (previously approved in executive session on April 16, 2025) Meeting in the form

presented.

RESOLVED: the Executive Committee approves the executive session minutes of the April 16, 2025 Executive Committee Meeting in the form presented.

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approves the minutes of the August 6, 2025 Executive Committee Meeting in the form presented.

The Chair then shared that he had nothing pressing to report, though he expressed his excitement to see everyone next week at the Council Meeting at the Agency offices on October 29. He then turned the meeting over to Michael Bobbitt for the Executive Director's report.

Michael reflected on the past two months, noting that September and October had flown by and that it had been one of the busiest and most productive periods since he joined. He highlighted the opening of numerous grant opportunities and various convenings. Michael reminded Council members to review the monthly report prepared by Deputy Chief of Staff Ann Petruccelli Moon and encouraged them to reach out with questions or to join upcoming events, expressing appreciation for their participation. Among the highlights, he mentioned his keynote address at the OneCape Summit in Harwich, joining Julie Wake for a panel, and Dave's attendance at several events, including the STEM Week Kickoff and the Mass Humanities Board Meeting.

Michael joined by staff visited the Berkshire Museum at Senator Paul Mark's invitation, met with MassDOT Secretary Monical Tibbits-Nutt and MOTT Executive Director Kate Fox, and reached out to newly appointed Secretary of Economic Development Eric Paley to explore collaboration opportunities. In the last ten days, Michael had three speaking engagements in three different cities, including at the American Society of Landscape Architects Conference in New Orleans, the Creating Healthy Communities Annual Conference at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark, and at Yale University's Cultural Innovation Lab.

He also acknowledged advancement staff Erik Holmgren and Carolyn Cole for their work stewarding new partnerships with MassChallenge, MassHealth, the Executive Office of Economic Development, and other initiatives, noting that these efforts have already leveraged approximately \$2 million going to the cultural sector through funding and services. Michael also highlighted potential new partners, including municipal health plans, DCAMM, MassHire, and Commonwealth Corporation, emphasizing how these partnerships position Massachusetts as a national leader in creativity-led problem solving. Michael noted the October 31st "Degrees of Change" convening co-hosted with BU as the first in a two-part series designed to enhance public and private sector leadership, improve graduate outcomes, and strengthen business and political acumen among arts graduates. He also noted that later today the Programs Committee will receive an overview of the revisions the Agency is making to the Cultural Districts Initiative. Michael concluded by thanking the Council for their support and expressing excitement to see them in person next week.

Marc thanked Michael and asked whether it would be possible to attend portions of the Higher Education Summit without committing to the entire day. Michael confirmed that would be fine and explained that the summit would begin with a welcome and an overview of the data asset inventory and information about graduates with arts

degrees, followed by testimony from those who have incorporated business acumen into their curricula, and then a session on political engagement.

Marc then turned the meeting over to Senior Director of Public Affairs Bethann Steiner for her Public Affairs update. Bethann reported a busy period with legislative activity, including public hearings on topics of concern to the Council. She noted that this week is Massachusetts STEM Week and highlighted the Agency's advocacy efforts to rebrand STEM to STEAM. She described her attendance at the public hearing for the Cultural Facilities Fund (CFF) technical correction bill and expressed optimism that the initiatives would move forward with committee recommendations. Bethann also highlighted Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development Committee hearings and submissions on the MassCreative Creative Space and Place Acts, the LCC proposal allowing small-town LCC members to serve three consecutive terms, and a new campaign Mass Cultural Council has launched to celebrate new grantees. She mentioned the Governor's new Competitiveness Council as an opportunity to advocate for creative sector representation and noted ongoing regional grant celebrations, with additional events planned for fall and spring.

Julie asked for clarification on the CFF technical correction. Bethann explained that it pertains to ensuring equitable eligibility for cultural facilities, including tribal, cultural, and municipal organizations, by striking outdated language. Dave added context that the size and age limits were originally intended to fit some very specific projects but over time we have realized it makes sense to include all municipal cultural facilities as well as tribal government cultural facilities. Bethann further clarified that the policy change was prompted by an example of a small town in Western Massachusetts whose project had previously been deemed ineligible. Marc thanked Bethann for the clarification.

He then asked Michael and Dave to provide an update on the Strategic Plan extension. Michael explained that staff is recommending extending the current plan through 2028 to operationalize ongoing work. Dave added that the last three pages of the plan included in the Committee's meeting materials highlighted achievements under the existing strategic plan over the past 2.5 years. Marc confirmed that the areas marked in red were suggested updates. Michael explained that part of the extension includes implementing the current plan by creating a "Creative Massachusetts 2035 plan", which is a forward-looking approach to long-term economic impact, government interventions, and sector development. The Council discussed the importance of scenario planning, considering future interventions, and incorporating private sector partnerships. Julie and Jo-Ann emphasized the need for flexibility given rapid changes, including potential impacts from AI, and suggested incorporating metrics and benchmarks for monitoring progress. The group agreed to dedicate significant discussion time at the next Council Meeting and vote on the extension at a future after that discussion, allowing full Council input and feedback. Dave noted that an extension of the status quo with minor tweaks would still allow the Council to engage in deeper conversation. Marc re-confirmed that the discussion would be prioritized at the Council Meeting and that we would put off a vote on the plan today.

Marc then turned to Chief Financial Officer Cathy Cheng-Anderson for a Business Operations update. Cathy reported that the Agency originally planned to allocate \$55,000 each in National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) federal funds to the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), and the Sterling & Francine Clark Art Institute however each organization notified us about concerns about accepting

federal funding from the current administration. Cathy clarified that this approach of administratively assigning larger federal awards to organizations capable of meeting compliance requirements aligns with the Agency's historical practice. She added that the majority of organizations receiving federal funding are already under contract and that only the three she mentioned raised concerns about compliance. Jo-Ann confirmed her understanding of the situation, and the Committee discussed alternative options for reallocating funds if necessary, noting that any unaccepted funds could be reassigned to other eligible organizations or replaced with state funding. The total reallocation discussed was \$165,000.

The Committee then reviewed a \$325 travel request for Michael Bobbitt to attend and moderate a panel at the Capacity Interactive Boot Camp conference in New York City in November. The majority of his costs are covered by Capacity Interactive, the \$325 is to cover remaining costs such as transportation to and from Amtrak stations and meals. Michael explained that the convening would include finance experts from government, the for-profit sector, and social impact organizations to discuss strategic investment in arts organizations. The motion to approve the travel request was made by Ché, seconded by Cecil. By roll call vote and noting that Iván Espinoza-Madriral was absent it was unanimously

RESOLVED: To approve \$325 to cover Michael Bobbitt's expenses pertaining to his participation in the Capacity Interactive Bootcamp conference.

Marc then opened discussion on the Agency's travel policy. Ché noted that while the sector is facing complex challenges, reviewing small travel expenditures of a few hundred dollars at each meeting might be inefficient. Julie agreed that discussion of minor travel amounts was unnecessary. The Committee discussed options for setting an annual or per-trip threshold, reviewing past best practices, and implementing accountability measures without micromanaging operational details. Michael noted that staff already track travel and spending. Simone emphasized that internal financial review processes provide sufficient oversight. The Committee agreed to present the issue to full Council as an open discussion at their meeting on October 29<sup>th</sup>. Cathy noted that under the current policy, any overage within a budget line exceeding ten percent must be reported to the Chair and approved by the Council. Simone questioned whether, then, the travel policy was still necessary. Marc suggested reviewing the threshold and parameters with full Council. The Committee discussed updating the policy with a placeholder for the threshold. It was agreed to leave the existing policy as-is for discussion at the Council Meeting on October 29<sup>th</sup>.

Dave asked the Committee where the item should appear on the upcoming Council Meeting agenda, and it was decided that travel policy would remain as item 7B, just before the break, with the only change being the addition of a broadly framed discussion item titled "Travel Policy Discussion." The Strategic Plan item would remain on the agenda without an anticipated vote. Marc asked for a motion to approve the draft agenda as amended. Cecil moved, Julie seconded, and by roll call noting that Iván Espinoza-Madriral was absent it was unanimously

RESOLVED: To approve the draft agenda for the 167<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Mass Cultural Meeting on October 29, as amended.

Marc adjourned the meeting at 11:54 a.m.



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

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2025**

**ONLINE MEETING**

**Committee Members Present** were

Marc Carroll, Chair  
Jo-Ann Davis, Vice Chair  
Ché Anderson  
Cecil Barron Jensen  
Simone Early  
Julie Wake

**Council Members Present** were

Rhonda Anderson  
Diane Asadorian Masters  
Tom Bernard  
Emily Bramhall  
Donna Haghighat  
Ashley Occhino  
Ellice Patterson

**Staff Members Present** were

Michael J. Bobbitt, Executive Director  
David Slatery, Deputy Executive Director  
Cathy Cheng-Anderson, Chief Fiscal Officer  
Jen Lawless, Senior Director of Programs  
Ann Petruccelli Moon, Deputy Chief of Staff  
Carmen Plazas, Communications & Community Engagement Manager  
Bethann Steiner, Senior Director of Public Affairs

Chair Marc Carroll called the meeting to order at 11:03am and asked Deputy Chief of Staff Ann Petruccelli Moon to read the Open Meeting Law statement. He then gave his Chair's report. A farewell celebration for Executive Director Michael Bobbitt is scheduled

**Prepared on 12/5/25**

for Tuesday, December 16<sup>th</sup> from 10am to noon at the Museum of African American History in Beacon Hill. He encouraged Committee Members to register and join the celebration and shared that the Agency learned late last week that Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll will attend. Earlier this week the Chair attended Metrowest Grant Celebration at the Hopkinton Center for the Arts. It was the final celebration of the fall tour. He noted his gratitude that Senate President Karen Spilka was able to join the event along with Representatives Arena-DeRosa and Tarsky; he also thanked Council Member Ellice Patterson for attending and commended the Public Affairs team for their hard work planning the event. He noted that this was Michael's final grant celebration event as Executive Director of Mass Cultural Council; a bittersweet moment comprised of a mix of sadness at Michael's upcoming departure, and happiness for all he has done for the cultural sector.

The Chair then let the Committee know about a recent out-of-state travel request he'd approved. Any staff travel outside Massachusetts must receive prior approval from the Executive Committee. If meeting timing makes that impossible, the request may be approved by the Chair and subsequently reported to the Executive Committee and full Council. Because the requested travel was scheduled for December 2, the Chair pre-approved it; he noted he will also share this with the full Council on December 10. The request was outlined in the Committee's meeting materials. Program Officer Käthe Swaback, was invited to participate in the Grantmakers for Thriving Youth convening in Baltimore. This is a national gathering of funders, researchers, community leaders, and youth organizers whose work centers on youth development, arts learning, equity, and community well-being. Participation in this convening will greatly strengthen and inform Käthe's work across YouthReach, Creative Experiences, the 3C Data Alliance, the YAIN network, and the Artists and Youth advancement portfolio. The Chair reported that the cost of the travel was \$400 and covered flight and lodging. There were no questions from the Committee.

He then shared that today the Committee would take a vote on his recommendation to the full Council that Deputy Executive Director Dave Slatery be appointed Acting Executive Director when Michael departs at the end of the year. He noted that the grant celebration he mentioned previously offered a great opportunity for him as Chair to speak with grantees, partners, members of the sector, and Senate President Spilka. He was pleased to report that the Senate President expressed strong confidence in the work Mass Cultural Council is doing and in the overall strength of the Agency. Even though the Council will soon begin an Executive Director search, she made it clear that she is confident in the Agency's leadership and direction. The Chair noted that some grantees were understandably sad about the transition, but everyone he spoke with echoed the Senate President's sentiments: the Agency is in a solid place. They consistently praised the Agency's staff—their direct contacts at the Agency—and remarked on how much they enjoy working with Mass Cultural Council. The Chair thanked the staff for everything they do every day; noting that none of this work is possible without their dedication to the sector.

Grantees were also curious about who the Council might hire next. They expressed confidence in Dave stepping in as Acting Executive Director; and Dave closed out Monday's celebration by reassuring attendees of the Agency's continued commitment to equity and inclusion, to the policies that have strengthened and amplified the cultural sector, and to the stability of the Agency during this transition. The Chair stated that Dave has helped build deep trust across the sector and made sure people know

there will be no sweeping changes as Michael departs. Dave has been with the Agency for 13 years, has served as Acting Executive Director before, and knows this work well. Everyone the Chair has spoken with felt comfortable with Dave moving into the role.

He noted that the cultural sector represents more than 130,000 jobs and generates nearly \$30 billion in economic activity, or 4% of the Commonwealth's GDP. It is essential that the Agency continues along this path. The Chair has great confidence in the senior leadership team—many of whom have been through a previous Executive Director search—as have several members of this Council. During the last search in 2020, Marc was Vice Chair and served on the search task force along with current Vice Chair Jo-Ann Davis and Council Members Cecil Barron Jensen and Allyce Najimy. Between staff and Council experience, the Committee can feel confident that the team will do their due diligence to find the next Executive Director. With that context, the Chair wholeheartedly recommended appointing Dave as Acting Executive Director. He then opened the meeting for questions and discussion by the Committee and Council Members who were invited to join as guests

Cecil expressed full agreement regarding Dave and the staff. Julie shared that although all are sad to see Michael go, he has set the Agency up for success with a strong vision, and she fully supports Dave. Diane, who is from New York City originally, asked Michael whether he had found an apartment in New York yet; he replied that his husband is handling the search and noted that the OPERA America building will undergo renovations this summer which shifts the timing of his move.

That concluded the discussion and the Chair asked for a motion to approve his recommendation to the Council that Dave be appointed Acting Executive Director upon Michael's departure. Julie moved to approve the recommendation, Ché seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Committee Member Iván Espinoza-Madrigal was absent the motion passed unanimously:

WHEREAS, Michael J. Bobbitt, current Executive Director of Mass Cultural Council is resigning as of December 31, 2025;

WHEREAS, the FULL Council at its next meeting will begin undertaking discussions about the process by which a new Executive Director will be selected and hired;

WHEREAS, the search process will take several months and therefore the Council will need interim leadership during the period prior to the time a new Executive Director is hired and begins working;

WHEREAS, the Executive Committee has confidence in David Slatery, the current Deputy Executive Director, and existing leadership team of the Council for this period,

NOW THEREFORE, IT IS RESOLVED THAT, that the Executive Committee recommend to the Council that, pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 10, Section 52, the Council designate, with the concurrence of the Chair, that the current Deputy Executive Director of the Council, David Slatery, in addition to his current duties, be appointed as acting Executive Director, assisted by the existing senior leadership team and with no additional

compensation, during the period between when Michael leaves on December 31 and the date a new Executive Director is hired and begins working.

The Chair then outlined next steps. He explained that under Mass Cultural Council's Enabling Act, it is the responsibility of the Chair and the Council to select the Executive Director. That statutory language is quoted in the resolutions included in the Committee's meeting materials. As the Council begins the process of selecting a new permanent Executive Director, the Chair would like to gather input from the Committee and the full Council. During the most recent search in 2020, the Council followed the same thoughtful, deliberate, and stakeholder-inclusive process established in the prior Executive Director search in 2006. During that process the Chair established a search task force comprised of the Executive Committee along with additional Council members. The Chair mentioned that Vice Chair Jo-Ann Davis's strong background in administration and human resources was invaluable to the search task force last time. The Chair asked Council Members interested in serving on the task force to please let him know of their interest after the meeting. Given the complexity of running an Executive Director search—and the need to appropriately manage external interest in the role—we have engaged an executive search firm for the past two searches. The firm (during the last search it was Arts Consulting Group) was selected through a public RFP process and was responsible for guiding and managing the full search and selection effort. The Chair will ask staff to begin preliminary research and prepare a draft RFP for an executive search firm. Once the search task force is formed, it can review and refine that draft, and the final RFP can be issued after discussion with the full Council. The Chair's goal today is to hear members' perspectives on the process and confirm whether there is agreement to follow past precedent. The Chair shared that the feedback he and the Vice Chair have received from staff reinforces that this must be a thoughtful and deliberate process. The decision we make will shape the Agency's direction for years to come, and there is no need to rush it. The Agency will remain in strong hands with existing staff, who are deeply engaged in implementing the current Strategic Plan developed under Michael's leadership. The Chair concluded by stating that he believes it is important to have a collective discussion regarding the overall search methodology as a full Council before taking additional steps.

Donna asked whether, if Council Members are aware of search firms that may be interested, we should send their names to anyone in particular. Marc explained that once the RFP is created, it will be sent to individual firms when referrals exist, but it will also be publicly posted so that anyone may apply.

Ché asked whether we had thought about a general timeline for releasing the RFP, convening the search task force, and whether any pre-work with cultural leaders had been considered to gather ideas for the process. The Chair explained that he and the Vice Chair will be scheduling meetings with the senior team to determine the timeline. Regarding sector input, he noted that last time the Agency's search firm helped to conduct a sector-wide survey, spoke with Agency staff, and interviewed all Council Members. There will again be many opportunities for input as the Council determines the qualities needed in the next leader.

Jo-Ann and Cecil both spoke about the previous search process, calling it thoughtful and deliberate and involving all stakeholders. Cecil added that it was a great learning experience about both the sector and the organization and that although she is not

happy Michael is leaving, she is looking forward to participating again.

Marc noted that the 2020 process took time to find the right candidate in Michael, and that while circumstances are different now, including new challenges at the federal level, the goal remains to identify the leader best able to guide the Agency forward. He emphasized the need for support and wisdom from all Council Members, staff, and the sector. Multiple discussions will take place as the process unfolds, and Marc encouraged anyone who knows potential candidates to contact him.

Tom Bernard thanked Marc and the Executive Committee for opening this meeting to all members of the Council and for the transparency ahead of next week's discussion at the Special Council Meeting.

Diane asked whether the search task force will be limited to Council members; Marc confirmed that it will, with the Executive Committee with other Council members invited.

Ellice Patterson asked whether there are specific dates Council Members should keep in mind for supporting the RFP process. Marc said that exact dates are still to be determined. Dave reminded the group that we will have a full Council meeting next week, offering another opportunity to share updates.

The Chair then moved to the final item for discussion: the agenda for the December 10 Special Council Meeting. He walked through the agenda, noting the formal vote on Dave's appointment as Acting Executive Director. There were no questions and the Chair asked for a motion and a second to approve the agenda. Ché moved to approve the agenda, and Julie seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Committee Member Iván Espinoza-Madriral was absent it was unanimously

RESOLVED: that the Executive Committee approve the draft December 10, 2025 Mass Cultural Council Special Meeting Agenda presented to the Executive Committee.

With no further business, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:40am.

## STRATEGIC PLAN EXTENSION

To: Mass Cultural Council Executive Committee  
Fr: David Slatery, Jen Lawless, Bethann Steiner, Catherine Cheng-Anderson  
Dt: February 25, 2026  
Re: Strategic Plan Extension

### BACKGROUND

Mass Cultural Council adopted its current Strategic Plan in March 2023 to cover the three fiscal years from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2026 (FY24-26). The Agency has experienced and learned a great deal through the implementation of the current plan. While much has been accomplished, there is still much to do. Given that Michael Bobbitt resigned as Executive Director at the end of 2025 and the Council is about to undergo a search process for a permanent Executive Director, staff recommends that the Plan and that it be extended through FY28.

The current Mass Cultural Council FY24-26 Strategic Plan can be found [on our website](#) and is set forth below.

While at the October 2025 meeting, staff had suggested modest revisions to the extended Plan, given the current circumstances, we now feel it is more appropriate just to extend the existing Plan as is. For informational purposes, attached on **Exhibit A**, please find a summary of our progress on the Plan goals through last October.

We anticipate that with the extended Plan, the Agency would next go through a comprehensive strategic planning process starting sometime in the latter half of 2027.

### CURRENT PLAN

#### **Values**

*The statement of what is most important to us; our non-negotiables*

**Creativity.** Mass Cultural Council believes that creativity is the key to solving many of society's concerns and advancing this asset helps to

make the Commonwealth a preeminent place in the nation for it to thrive.

**Public Service.** Mass Cultural Council serves the Commonwealth and all who live, work, visit, and play here by amplifying creativity, providing resources, expanding relationships, and championing transformational changes that maintain and grow a thriving creative and cultural ecosystem.

**Inclusion.** Mass Cultural Council works to build a diverse and equitable creative and cultural sector in the Commonwealth, ensuring that all who practice and participate in creative and cultural expression see themselves in it.

### **Vision**

*The better world we are working towards*

Mass Cultural Council envisions a diverse creative and cultural sector that is valued as essential in the Commonwealth.

### **Mission**

*Our role in creating that world*

Mass Cultural Council advances the Commonwealth's creative and cultural sector by celebrating traditions and talents, championing its collective needs, and equitably investing public resources.

### **Strategy**

Mass Cultural Council's strategy is to analyze its investments (of money, time, resources, etc.) to ensure that its work and any new opportunities advance equity in the sector. Mass Cultural Council prioritizes opportunities that both advance equity and a) support transformational change via advocacy/education, and/or b) elevate, nurture, or celebrate the sector.

### **Goals**

#### **Our Impact**

Build and support programmatic practices that advance equity, diversity, and inclusion through our services to the sector.

#### **Our Ecosystem**

Advance the creative and cultural sector through building partnerships, identifying recommendations, and storytelling, both inside and outside of the sector

#### **Our Culture**

Ensure that our internal systems, structures, and ways of working reflect our values and advance the sector's needs.

### **Objectives**

***Our Impact: Our most powerful tools for delivering on our mission.***

### **Goal 1: Build and support programmatic practices that advance equity, diversity, and inclusion through our services to the sector**

#### *Objectives*

1. Consolidate programs and services to provide a) clear and simple pathways for grantees and b) increased capacity of the agency to achieve strategic goals.
2. Increase use of data and research to strengthen programming and services.
3. Ensure accessibility, inclusivity, and equity in our grant making.

***Our Ecosystem: We are both for and of the creative and cultural sector.***

### **Goal 2: Advance the creative and cultural sector through building partnerships, identifying recommendations, and storytelling, both inside and outside of the sector**

#### *Objectives*

1. Increase use of data and research to strengthen programming and services by telling the sectors' stories to decision makers and community leaders which advance awareness and integration in the Commonwealth and support for the sector
2. Build sector policy and advocacy priorities and efforts with our partners, beyond funding, to advance the sector, address the sector needs, and integrate, deepen, and expand creativity and culture everywhere in the Commonwealth

3. Identify areas of strategic alignment and build relationships with other state agencies, networks, sectors, and organizations which can support and advance the creative and cultural sector
4. Build immersive, intensive, and interactive education opportunities for government and civic leaders to change minds and hearts and deepen knowledge and awareness of the vast benefits of the sector beyond economic impact.
5. Enhance or update our brand to more clearly define and communicate agency identity in service to increasing our visibility and reach.
6. Use intentional storytelling, sector-wide convenings, and stewardship to galvanize, celebrate, and support the sector

***Our Culture and Infrastructure: Our staff and council are a critical resource for the sector.***

**Goal 3: Ensure that our internal systems, structures, and ways of working reflect our values and advance the sector's needs.**

#### Objectives

1. Identify agencies high level competencies, structure, and culture needed for implementation and alignment with strategic goals
2. Foster a culture of continuous improvement by a) using and b) periodically reevaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of our practices, policies, tools, and systems
3. Leverage tools and technology to streamline our work.
4. Operationalize a practice of communication and cross agency collaboration among staff and between departments as it relates to strategic goals.
5. Build a culture and internal supports which prioritize and promote staff relationship building with and outreach to all constituents (sector, partners, government and civic leaders).
6. Develop clear roles and responsibilities for governing council members that align with strategic goals.

**Exhibit A**  
**Summary of Progress Toward Strategic Objectives under Mass Cultural Council's FY24-26 Strategic Plan**

Outlined below are the goals of the current Strategic Plan. Under each goal, is a list of achievements to date towards that goal.

**Goal 1: Build and support programmatic practices that advance equity, diversity, and inclusion through our services to the sector.** Please see below for a summary list of specific advances made toward this goal.

1. Consolidate programs and services to provide a) clear and simple pathways for grantees and b) increased capacity of the Agency to achieve strategic goals
  - Went from 18 grant programs to 9.
  - Simplified/shortened applications.
  - Moved some programmatic work to other partners better suited to do the work (i.e. Open Door Arts, Arts Pharmacy, etc.)
  - Reviewed/redesigned all the programs, we are finalizing the last three now.
  
2. Increase use of data and research to strengthen programming and services
  - Conducted and shared Cultural Asset Inventory. Using data to expand our reach and make the case for investment into the field from other sectors.
  - Used data to analyze grant overlap so we could adjust our policies and reach more grantees.
  - Collect and use data to track progress on our equity goals (i.e. new grantees, geographic diversity, and demographic diversity).
  
3. Ensure accessibility, inclusivity, and equity in our grant making
  - Developed and implemented outreach and recruitment plans to increase diversity of our applicants and grantees.
  - Introduced priority points to target historically underfunded individuals and organizations.
  - Developed and implemented BIPOC-Centered Organization Self-Identification process.
  - Working with advisory committees to identify additional areas of work to improve programs.

**Goal 2: Advance the creative and cultural sector through building partnerships, identifying recommendations, and storytelling, both inside and outside of the sector.**

1. Increase use of data and research to strengthen programming and services by telling the sectors' stories to decision makers and community leaders which advance awareness and integration in the Commonwealth and support for the sector.

Mass Cultural Council released the 2024 Cultural Asset Inventory and used this new data which quantifies the size, scope, economic impact and needs of the cultural sector to convene several in person and remote briefings with policymakers, advocacy partners, philanthropic leaders, cross sector partners and arts and culture stakeholders. By sharing this new data – in writing, in briefings, and with colorful one-pagers of key datapoints broken down by state and counties – Mass Cultural Council continues to develop a narrative of the economic power, as well as the need for new and ongoing public support – for those who work in the cultural sector.

2. Build sector policy and advocacy priorities and efforts with our partners, beyond funding, to advance the sector, address the sector needs and integrate, deepen, and expand creativity and culture everywhere in the Commonwealth.

In the 2025-2026 legislative session Mass Cultural Council developed two new bills which are pending before the Legislature. One focuses on our goal to rebrand STEM to STEAM – embracing arts and creativity as a core educational subject and valued skill, just like science, technology, engineering, and math. The second attempts to clarify the Cultural Facilities Fund statute to ensure all municipal and tribally owned cultural facilities are eligible, regardless of size or age. Additionally, the Agency continues to monitor and advocate for bills under review by the Legislature of interest to the sector and continues to be a thought partner with other state agencies on various policy and programmatic initiatives. With the conclusion of the Cultural Policy Development Advisory Council and the filing of said recommendations with the Governor in April 2025, Mass Cultural Council stands ready to help the Administration implement the recommendations.

3. Identify areas of strategic alignment and build relationships with other state agencies, networks, sectors, and organizations which can support and advance the creative and cultural sector. Mass Cultural Council built strong ties with:

- **State Agencies:** Executive Offices of Labor, Housing, Public Health, and Education and well as MassPort, MassDOT and MassHousing—advancing arts in workforce, housing, and health.
- **Education & Workforce:** DESE, Executives across higher education, Boston University summit on arts education curricula, Tufts Field Projects proposing to work on 'Workforce Development for the Creative Economy: Building a Creative Workforce Pipeline for MA', STEM to STEAM advocacy at the Commonwealth's STEM Council.
- **Health Sector:** Focus on arts prescriptions with clinics and insurers. National Endowment for the Arts "Arts & Health" grants, City of Franklin, the City of Brockton, in conversation with more than a dozen other municipalities on Opioid Funds.
- **Business & Innovation:** MassChallenge's Creative Advantage program, Main Street America, and business resource development, Associated Industries of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Restaurant and Lodging Association.

4. Build immersive, intensive, and interactive education opportunities for government and civic leaders to change minds and hearts and deepen knowledge and

awareness of the vast benefits of the sector beyond economic impact. The Council is educating civic leaders through:

- **Degrees of Change Summit:** A hands-on event with Boston University to boost business and advocacy skills.
- **Policy Engagement:** STEM to STEAM testimony and Percent for Art agency outreach.
- **Creative Platforms:** Events like the Envisioning Access Golf Tournament to reach new audiences.
- **Narrative Shift:** Focusing on research and data drive outcomes to promote the arts as essential to health, housing, and innovation—not just economic impact.

5. Enhance or update our brand to more clearly define and communicate agency identity in service to increasing our visibility and reach.

Mass Cultural Council's teal and orange logo and tag line "Power Of Culture" is widely recognized by public sector and cultural sector partners and stakeholders. Continued focus on building new relationships and strategic partnerships outside of the cultural sector increases the visibility and reach of our messaging and initiatives.

6. Use intentional storytelling, sector-wide convenings, and stewardship to galvanize, celebrate, and support the sector.

Mass Cultural Council has a robust library of digital tools, including a dynamic website, two blogs, three monthly e-newsletters, and daily engaging content on social media which is paired with colorful and informational print materials used to celebrate and support the cultural sector. Additionally, the Agency convenes several celebrations each fiscal year – in FY26 the model is changing to large regional celebrations instead of program-by-program celebrations – and maintains media relations to foster external attention to our efforts.

**Goal 3: Ensure that our internal systems, structures, and ways of working reflect our values and advance the sector's needs.**

1. Identify agencies high level competencies, structure, and culture needed for implementation and alignment with strategic goals.

The Council has undertaken a comprehensive review of internal competencies and organizational structure to ensure alignment with strategic priorities. Agency culture has been reinforced through ongoing DEIA initiatives, staff engagement practices, and professional development. These efforts help ensure that the agency's day-to-day operations reflect its values and that staff are empowered to contribute fully to the implementation of strategic goals.

2. Foster a culture of continuous improvement by a) using and b) periodically reevaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of our practices, policies, tools, and systems.

Policies, procedures, and systems are regularly evaluated for efficiency and effectiveness. Over the past two years, staff have piloted new workflows, incorporated audit recommendations and operational best practices, and updated procurement, travel, and HR processes. Feedback loops through staff memos, and

surveys, have been institutionalized, ensuring continuous refinement of tools and practices.

3. Leverage tools and technology to streamline work. Mass Cultural Council has made significant technology investments to modernize operations. These include expanding use of SmartSimple for grants management, implementing MMARS and CIW enhancements to strengthen fiscal reporting, and upgrading cybersecurity system and training to ensure compliance. Staff have also transitioned to upgraded laptops, cloud-based collaboration platforms, and virtual meeting tools, improving both workflow efficiency and accessibility across teams. In addition, staff participate in monthly technology training designed to build skills and maximize the effective use of targeted tools.

4. Operationalize a practice of communication and cross agency collaboration among staff and between departments as it relates to strategic goals.

Agency-wide practices, such as daily memos, monthly all-staff meetings, and cross-departmental working groups, have strengthened internal communication and collaboration. Strategic goals are consistently connected to staff-level work, ensuring alignment. This connection is reinforced through updated job descriptions, regular planning cycles, project updates, and individual goal setting, which help staff see how their responsibilities contribute to the larger mission.

5. Build a culture and internal supports which prioritize and promote staff relationship building with and outreach to all constituents (sector, partners, government and civic leaders).

Staff are encouraged and supported to build relationships with grantees, partners, and civic leaders. Initiatives like equity planning efforts, and outreach have deepened community engagement. The launch of the Tribal Cultural Council program and the Access & Disability Learning Hub demonstrate commitment to expanding and sustaining sector-wide relationships.

6. Develop clear roles and responsibilities for governing council members that align with strategic goals.

Council member expectations have been articulated through strategic engagement in key initiatives. Council input is actively integrated into budgetary, policy, and programmatic decisions, ensuring governance supports the strategic plan.

## **SUMMARY OF OUT OF STATE TRAVEL REQUEST APPROVED BY CHAIR**

Under the current Out-of-State Travel Policy, any staff travel outside Massachusetts must receive prior approval from the Executive Committee. If meeting timing makes that impracticable, the request may be approved by the Chair and subsequently reported to the Executive Committee and full Council. Because Erik Holmgren's out of state travel is scheduled for February 11, 2026, and the Executive Committee meeting is also on February 11, this request requires Chair pre-approval and will be formally reported at the February 11 Executive Committee meeting.

The out of state travel request outlined below totals \$110 for meals. NASAA is reimbursing Erik for the remaining travel costs transportation/flight and hotel. The appropriate Massachusetts State Ethics form has been reviewed and filed for this arrangement. Erik's request provides clear public benefit, directly supports his core job duties, aligns with the Council's mission, Strategic Plan, and Equity Plan, and represents a cost-effective use of resources. Additionally, all required Travel Authorization Forms and Procurement Request Forms are on file.

### **Hearts of Practice: Promoting Statewide Strategies in the Arts and Health**

#### **February 12 – 13, 2026**

Erik Holmgren, Manager of Advancement and Strategic Partnerships has been asked to serve as a panelist on February 12, 2026, presenting on the role of Opioid Relief Funds in advancing Arts Prescriptions in Massachusetts. This engagement will showcase Massachusetts' leadership in this emerging practice and create an opportunity to connect with peer agencies implementing Arts Prescriptions through a range of models.

Approved by Chair Marc Carroll February 3, 2026

**DRAFT**

**ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-EIGHTH MEETING**

**OF MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL**

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2026**

**12:00 – 3:00 PM**

MEETING WILL BE LIVESTREAMED AT

[https://www.youtube.com/live/1\\_Ut14eVxN0](https://www.youtube.com/live/1_Ut14eVxN0)

MEETING MATERIALS WILL BE POSTED ONLINE AT

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

Under "FEBRUARY 25, 2026 Council Meeting"

<b>AGENDA</b>	<b>VOTE</b>
<b>1. Call to Order – Open Meeting Law Notice</b>	
<b>2. Minutes</b>	<b>X</b>
2a. Minutes of the October 29, 2025 Meeting	
2b. Minutes of December 10, 2025 Special Meeting	
<b>3. Chair Report</b>	
<b>4. Executive Office Report</b>	
4a. Acting Executive Director Report	
4b. Advancement Report	
4c. Equity progress report	
<b>5. Public Affairs Report</b>	

5a. Legislative Update

5b. Upcoming Events

**6. Business Operations Report**

6a. Notification of Staff Out-of-State Travel Approved by the Chair

6b. Out-of-State Travel Policy

**[Break]**

**7. Extension of Strategic Plan** **X**

**8. Programs Report**

**9. Conflicts of Interest**

**10. Additional FY26 Grant Recommendations** **X**

10a. **Gaming Mitigation Program**

10b. **Grants for Creative Individuals**

**11. Adjourn**

MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

PRIVATE CALL-IN INSTRUCTIONS FOR MEMBERS AND PARTICIPANTS  
FEBRUARY 11, 2026 10:00 A.M.

IF MEETING IS INTERRUPTED FOR ANY REASON AND TERMINATED ABRUPTLY, PLEASE CONTACT  
[DAVID.T.SLATERY@MASS.GOV](mailto:DAVID.T.SLATERY@MASS.GOV) FOR NEW CALL-IN INSTRUCTIONS

Topic: Executive Committee Meeting

Time: Feb 11, 2026 10:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86944649158?pwd=PZaMvwllEa9oj0YQL3At9JCbsy3Ceb.1>

Meeting ID: 869 4464 9158

Passcode: 458391

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Dial by your location

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- +1 646 931 3860 US
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- +1 305 224 1968 US
- +1 669 444 9171 US
- +1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)
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Meeting ID: 869 4464 9158

Passcode: 458391

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/koleBvPvh>