



# AGENDA REPORT

**TO:** Steven Falk  
Interim City Administrator

**FROM:** Sofia Navarro  
Interim Director, Economic  
& Workforce Development  
Department

**SUBJECT:** Informational Report on Oakland  
Cultural Affairs Division's Operations

**DATE:** April 24, 2023

City Administrator Approval

Date:

May 4, 2023

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive An Informational Report From Oakland Cultural Affairs Division On The Status Of Its Operations.**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This informational report represents an update to the Life Enrichment Committee to apprise the Oakland City Council and the public on the operations of the Cultural Affairs Division (CAD) of the Economic & Workforce Development Department (EWDD), including its programs and the activities of the volunteer-based advisory body Cultural Affairs Commission (CAC).

## **BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY**

The Cultural Affairs Division is housed in the City's Economic & Workforce Development Department, whose mission is to increase investment in Oakland in a way that contributes to the growth of the City's economy, fosters fiscal sustainability, expands job opportunities for all Oakland residents, and enhances the City's sense of place and quality of life.

The CAD includes the Cultural Funding Program, which provides approximately \$2 million in grants to support the arts in Oakland; the Public Art Program, which has more than \$1 million in funds currently dedicated for public art installations across Oakland; professional development opportunities for artists and arts organizations: policy research and advocacy; philanthropic partnerships and special events. The CAD forms strategic alliances between business, government agencies, and private philanthropy, that supports programs that advance the civic life of Oakland. The Cultural Affairs Commission and the Public Art Advisory Committee are volunteer advisory bodies, whose members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, who advise the Division on cultural policy matters.

In 2017, the Cultural Affairs Division embarked on the development of ["Belonging in Oakland: A Cultural Development Plan"](#)— the City's first cultural plan adopted by City Council in 30 years. The Plan's introduction describes the process as being a "journey of celebration and reflection

Life Enrichment Committee  
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as we identified our asserts and shortfalls. It has been an undertaking that has both telescopic and microscopic in its process: we hosted community meetings; meet with civic leaders; conducted research into the economic and social impact of the arts; surveyed the public and meet with our grantees. We listened, looked and learned about the many ways Oaklander express themselves.”

The Plan generated the tag ‘Culture is the Frame, Equity is the Driving force and Belonging is the Goal, which operates as a guide to how the Cultural Affairs Division does its work. The Oakland Cultural Plan is a national model that is not caged in a SWOT analysis of *Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats* that reports on how an institution assists its cultural community. Instead, the Oakland Cultural Plan generated the ‘North Star of Belonging’, that speaks to Oakland’s distinctiveness and identity that exists in the nexus of our Civic Body (policy, governance, and the public realm) and Creative Practice (how we imagine our lives together through stories, sound, music, images, and design), as a guide.

The Plan revealed how Oaklanders find deep meaning in being able to live in an equitable society. Living in an ethically just and aesthetically diverse and rich city is the democratic charge we must address. To that end, the Plan’s orientation to equity and culture feeds an action agenda that entails a behavioral shift: one that sees the CAD’s embrace of connectedness and intersectionality as key to realizing belonging. The work of Division is to serve the civic narrative of belonging in all its beauty, temperaments, and complexities.

The CAD leads with the value of “Belonging in Oakland” which informs the work, purpose, and vision of its staff as public servants operating within a public agency.

## **ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

### **Cultural Funding Program Overview**

The Cultural Funding Program (CFP) was established by Oakland City Council in 1985 as the City’s mechanism to support Oakland-based nonprofit arts and cultural organizations through an annual competitive application process. These grants infuse Oakland’s neighborhoods with arts and cultural activities that increase exposure to, understanding of, and respect for diverse cultural heritages, support arts activities that engage the community, and support hands-on arts instruction in Oakland’s public schools. In the past five years, the Cultural Funding Program has awarded an average of \$1.373M to Oakland artists and arts organizations.

For FY 2022-23, CFP awarded two rounds of city funding, providing grants in four categories: Neighborhood Voices for Individual Artists, Neighborhood Voices for Organizations, Organizational Assistance, and Neighborhood Voices for Festivals. In addition to these City funded grant opportunities, CFP also obtained \$500,000 in funds from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). These resources were used to create a new grant opportunity “The Cultural Economies of Belonging: Jobs, Network and Catalysts,” aimed to provide limited resources to re-hire and rebuild jobs for teaching artists.

To ensure transparency and public trust in the distribution of public funds for the arts in Oakland, the program has established policies, review procedures, and a panel system for evaluating applications. Oakland’s CFP is one of the only local grant-making agencies in the State that allows applicants to address the community peer review panel during a three-minute

discussion. The applicant's three-minute address is used to clarify any questions or misinterpretations that the applicant may have heard during the panel discussion. The Funding Advisory Committee (FAC) is a volunteer community group that provides input on matters relating to CFP policies and procedures. The FAC comments on CAD staff's grant allocation recommendations based on community peer reviewed panel ranking, and hears applicant appeals, if any. The seven voting members of the FAC are recruited from the arts community and are elected by current FAC members.

### **FY22-23 Grant Programs**

**Organizational Assistance (Two Year Grant)** Provides general operating support to established, primary arts organizations. To be eligible, an organization must have received CFP funding in two of the past four consecutive funding cycles.

**Neighborhood Voices (VOICES)** A grant program seeking to bring Oaklanders together to create and support a sense of belonging within a community, foster social connections that lift our spirits, feed our community's well-being and offer visions for our collective future. It affirms the voices of Oakland by supporting the expression, recognition and understanding of the array of diverse communities that make Oakland unique, vibrant and resilient.

- **Neighborhood Voices – Individual Artists** Supports project offerings by Oakland-based individual artists that support arts-based civic engagement in communities. Examples include murals, creative placemaking, creative place keeping, and creative place knowing.
- **Neighborhood Voices – Organizations** Supports project offerings by Oakland-based non-profit organizations that support artist-based civic engagement in communities. Examples include arts education workshops, murals, creative placemaking, and arts-based civic engagement projects.
- **Neighborhood Voices – Festivals** Neighborhood Voices (VOICES-FEST) builds belonging within the dynamic neighborhoods of the City of Oakland by supporting culturally-engaging efforts to bring our city's community members together through festival culture. Festivals to be supported may include, but are not limited to: block parties, parades, performances in poetry, dance, music or theater, visual art, and literary presentations, that are rooted in a sense of place.

### **Creative Economies of Belonging – National Endowment for the Arts Sub-Granting Program**

Funds for this grant opportunity are supported by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds awarded to the City of Oakland's Cultural Affairs Division due to its status as a Local Arts Agency and its ability to sub-grant these funds to organizations in Oakland's cultural sector. The \$500,000 in ARPA funds awarded from the NEA to the City through the Cultural Affairs Division were used to create a new grant opportunity "The Cultural Economies of Belonging: Jobs, Network and Catalysts," aimed to provide limited resources to re-hire and rebuild jobs for teaching artists that foster social cohesion and civic belonging.

**Table 1: FY2022-23 Cultural Funding Program Grant Statistics**

<b>FY2022-23 Funding Category</b>	<b>No. of Applications Received</b>	<b>Total Awards</b>	<b>% of Applications Awarded</b>	<b>Average Award Amount</b>	<b>Amount Awarded</b>
Organizational Assistance	31	23	74%	\$32,609.00	\$750,000.00
Individual Artists	44	20	45%	\$10,000.00	\$200,000.00
Festivals	45	26	58%	\$16,744.00	\$435,350.00
Organization Programs	34	20	59%	\$20,000.00	\$400,000.00
<b>CITY-FUNDED TOTALS</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>\$19,838.25</b>	<b>\$1,785,350.00</b>
Creative Economies of Belonging (NEA)	19	17	89%	\$26,500.00	\$450,500.00
<b>GRANTMAKING TOTAL</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>\$21,170.60</b>	<b>\$2,235,850.00</b>

**Public Art Program Overview**

Oakland's Public Art Program provides oversight and guidance on best practices for public art in the City, and commissions original works of art for public spaces throughout Oakland.

Informed by the Oakland Cultural Plan, "Belonging in Oakland," the program enriches the City's visual environment; integrates the creative thinking of artists into our communities, public spaces and new construction projects; provides career opportunities for professional artists and a means for residents and visitors to enjoy and experience the cultural diversity of Oakland. Public Art Program staff in the Cultural Affairs Division, Economic & Workforce Development Department act as Program and Collections managers, facilitators and artist advocates for projects on public property (e.g., City/Caltrans/BART) and Oakland Municipal Code (OMC) mandated Public Art Projects for Private Property, with guidance and support from Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC). Key program oversight responsibilities include:

1. **City Managed CIP Public Art Projects** funded through a 1.5% allocation from all eligible City of Oakland capital improvement projects (CIP), eligible grant revenue as well as private contributions. In 1989, the City of Oakland adopted Ordinance No. 11086 C.M.S. (amended in 2019: [Ordinance No. 13562 C.M.S.](#)) authorizing the allocation of 1.5% of municipal capital improvement project (CIP) costs to commission and acquire public art
2. **Public Art for Private Development Projects** funded through the 2014 OMC adopted requirement for 0.5% of residential or 1% of nonresidential private development costs. In June of 2018, the municipal code was amended to adopt [Chapter 15.78, Public Art Requirements for Private Development](#) (Ordinance No. 13491 C.M.S.)
3. **Civic Art Collection Records and Maintenance** monitoring and assessment of City commissioned permanent artworks, as needed

4. **Temporary/Permanent City-Funded Artist and Community Initiated Projects** commissioned as funding becomes available; facilitated in collaboration with other departments and reviewed for completeness and feasibility with City requirements.
5. **Artists' Professional Development and Workshops** provided by City staff to local artists for new CIP opportunities, and through partnerships with local organizational stakeholders and regional trainings with public art programs in nearby cities

### **Special Programs Overview**

The following special programs of the Cultural Affairs Division were designed to support Oakland's individual artists and arts organizations, who are desperate for resources that will allow them to continue operating in Oakland and contribute to Oakland's captivating vibrancy. Most of the funds needed to support these programs are the result of the Cultural Affairs Division Manager's fundraising efforts and professional relationships.

### **Just City Cultural Fund**

*Belonging in Oakland: A Just City Cultural Fund (JCCF)* is a public-private funding collaborative of CAD, the East Bay Community Foundation, and the Akonadi Foundation focused on supporting deeply-rooted Oakland BIPOC artists and cultural practitioners to imagine with their communities an Oakland where everyone belongs. The brainchild of CAD's manager, the JCCF was made possible with an initial \$1.2M, three-year investment from the Surdna Foundation's national initiative, [Radical Imagination for Racial Justice](#), and additional funding from the East Bay Community and Akonadi foundations.

Launched at the beginning of the COVID lockdown and administered as the racial reckoning unfolded, the JCCF made 12 grants of \$25,000 to artists and arts organizations to "reflect & reimagine" what a just Oakland could look like. The CAD served as an advisor to the JCCF, therefore grants did not have to be approved by Oakland City Council. In 2021, [eight two-year grants](#) totaling nearly \$800,000 were awarded to projects that: shift narratives about Black fathers; restore Indigenous visions of the land; elevate Black joy and Black genius; reimagine public spaces for under-served communities; envision Oakland as a hub for radical reparations; reclaim knowledge and healing traditions of Two Spirit people; activate the creativity and agency of unhoused Oaklanders; and lift courageous conversations of Black women and other marginalized voices. At the end of last year, the JCCF was awarded \$2.8M from Surdna for an additional six years of programming.

### **Cultural Strategists-in-Government Program**

In accordance with the City of Oakland's Cultural Development Plan (see p. 92 of the plan), the CAD created and implemented the pilot program, *Cultural Strategists-in-Government (CSIG)*, in [FY 2018-19/FY 2019-20](#) with City funding. The CSIG Program seeks to co-create new ways of fulfilling equity aspirations by having City workers collaborate with cultural strategists from communities most impacted by inequities and who can bring a new lens to the work of building a fair and just city for all Oaklanders. In its pilot iteration, the CSIG Program embedded six CSIGs into five City entities—i.e., Dept. of Race & Equity, Dept. of Transportation, Human Services Dept., Office of the Mayor (Housing Security), and the Planning & Building Dept. After addressing rapid relief efforts for the cultural sector in response to the pandemic, the CAD Manager was able to partner with The Oakland Fund for Public Innovation to secure a \$900,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to expand the program to place CSIGs in 11 different City entities with a more robust CSIG fee structure (4x that of the pilot program). The City entities collaborating with CSIGs are:

- African American Museum and Library at Oakland & Celia C. Peters to create media innovations for library exhibitions
- Dept. of Race and Equity & Candice Wicks-Davis to animate the data of the Racial Equity Report
- Dept. of Transportation & Walter Wallace to promote transparency and engagement in civic life
- Dept. of Violence Prevention & Umi Vaughan to create cultural activities as a protective factor against violence
- Economic and Workforce Development Dept. (Public Art) & Sorell Raino-Tsui to bring more equity and diverse voices into public art
- Human Services Dept. (Head Start) & Sabereh Kashi to promote healing for unhoused families
- Office of the City Administrator (Communications) & Kev Choice to ground the meaning of the City's motto, *Love Life*, across Oakland
- Oakland Public Works (Environmental Services Div.) & Maddy Clifford to promote understanding of the importance of zero waste and electrification (ESD also found Pacita Rudder through the CSIG application process and contracted her independently to support the program.)
- Office of the City Council President & Tanisha Cannon to build more equitable activation of outdoor spaces
- Office of the Mayor (AssistHub) & Jamica El to remove stigmas and barriers related to public assistance (AssistHub also found Cheo Tyehimba Taylor through the CSIG application process and contracted him independently to support the program.)
- Planning & Building Department & David Peters to deepen understanding of assets and needs in under-resourced neighborhoods during the General Plan Update

A program aim is to demonstrate the value of embedding cultural strategists in government to advance the City's equity agenda. The program has been attracting attention from other municipalities and runs through fall 2023.

### **Oakland Poet Laureate Program**

In 2021 the City of Oakland's Cultural Affairs Commission supported the research, development, and launch of the first Oakland Poet Laureate Program for Oakland residents ages 18+. Twenty-five applications were submitted but ultimately Ayodele Nzinga was selected to serve in this two-year role. The Program was created through in-kind donations and City-funding.

The Commission's action is in response to a long-held community desire for a program to celebrate the beauty, diversity, resilience, and brilliance of Oakland and its residents. Cities and counties throughout the Bay Area, such as San Francisco, Santa Clara County, El Cerrito, and Richmond have a Poet Laureate program, served as models for this new program. A panel of five members of Oakland's literary community using the following criteria to rate and rank applications:

- Understanding of the multiplicity of the aesthetic speeches of the city and consideration of the ways literature, heritage practices, film, arts practices, etc. illuminate how Oaklanders express their poetic souls.
- Command of poetry as a craft.



- Affirmation of a poetic voice that expresses Oakland’s diversity, beauty, and distinctions.
- Community engagement experience and ability to communicate well across a diverse range of communities.
- Understanding of civic narratives around equity, culture, and belonging.

### Cultural Affairs Commission

The Cultural Affairs Commission was established by [Ordinance No. 9969 C.M.S.](#) in 1990 and was re-established by [Ordinance 13561 C.M.S.](#) in 2019, with new members appointed by City Council in February 2020.

The CAC members are the eyes and ears for the City— elevating the opportunities and surfacing the needs and barriers for the many voices who represent the diversity of the residents of Oakland that are heard through cultural institutions and the work of artists/performers, etc. They do this work as members of the community by supporting and publicizing the work of the CAD to the community and the needs of the CAD to the Mayor, City Administrator and Councilmembers. We advocate for the allocation of the needed funding and resources for the CAD to work effectively and reach the goals of the Cultural Plan and serve the residents of Oakland. Commissioners, like other public servants in Oakland are required to complete a Form 700, comply with the City’s ethics policies, and take an oath of office.

Oakland's approved cultural plan [Belonging in Oakland](#) sets the framework and goals for the CAC’s work. This document emphasizes cultural spaces, neighborhood places, and the civic cultural commons. In order to fulfill the vision of the Cultural Plan it is necessary to work across government and collaboratively with City colleagues to promote culture equity. The CAC tries to build working relations with other commissions and City departments whose work overlaps engages the cultural sector. The CAC offers advice, holds up best practices in the field, and partners with others to develop policy, build cultural infrastructure and opportunities that enhance the feeling of belonging in our city. A list of the CAC’s activities and accomplishments from 2020 to present can be found in **Attachment A**.

### Update on Staffing

The following is a summary of the status of all the CAD positions, with the CAD currently experiencing a 38.5% vacancy rate.

**Table 2: Cultural Affairs Division Staffing**

Position	Budgeted	Filled	Vacant
Manager	1	1	0
Program Analyst III (Public Art)	1	1	0
Program Analyst III (Cultural Funding Program)	1	1	0
Program Analyst II (Admin/Cultural Affairs Commission)	1	1	0
Program Analyst II (Public Art)	1	0	1
Program Analyst II (Cultural Funding Program)	1	0	1
Program Analyst II PPT (Admin)	0.5	0	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2.5</b>

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

This item is for informational purposes only and does not have a direct fiscal impact or cost.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST**

This item is for informational purposes only and did not require public outreach.

### **COORDINATION**

This report has been reviewed by the Office of the City Attorney and the Budget Bureau.

### **SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES**

***Economic:*** This item is for informational purposes only and has no economic impact.

***Environmental:*** This item is for informational purposes only and has no environmental impact.

***Race & Equity:*** In 2015, the City of Oakland adopted a bold Ordinance No. 13319 C.M.S. that states explicitly the government's will to integrate "the principle of 'fair and just' in all the City does in order to achieve equitable opportunities for all people and communities" on a Citywide basis. The goals of this ordinance form the foundation of Oakland's Cultural Plan *Belonging in Oakland* with the tagline "Equity is the Driving Force. Culture is the Frame. Belonging is the Goal."



**ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive An Informational Report From Oakland Cultural Affairs Division On The Status Of Its Operations.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Roberto Bedoya, Cultural Affairs Manager at (510) 238-2136.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachments (1):

A: Cultural Affairs Commission Activities and Accomplishments (2020 - present)