

CITY OF OAKLAND

AGENDA REPORT


TO: Jestin D. Johnson
City Administrator

FROM: Ashleigh Kanat
Director, Economic and
Workforce Development
Department

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 2024-25 Cultural Funding
Grants

DATE: March 5, 2025

City Administrator Approval


Jestin Johnson (Mar 24, 2025 21:41 PDT)

Date: **Mar 24, 2025**

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Awarding Grants To Twenty-Five (25) Oakland-based Nonprofit Organizations Providing Arts And Cultural Services In Oakland Through December 31, 2025, In A Total Amount Not To Exceed One Hundred Sixty-Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$162,500)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides background on the grant funding allocated in the amended Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-25 Budget. City Council approval of this resolution will award the grants and allow the City Administrator to enter into grant agreements with twenty-five nonprofit organizations. Each organization will receive \$6,500, resulting in a total allocation of \$162,500 as described in **Attachment A**.

Funding for the grant agreements has been established by the amended FY 2024-2025 Budget by Resolution [90585 C.M.S.](#) This is the second year of a two-year General Operating Grant commitment, funded by Measure C: Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) Surcharge Fund (2419).

Specifically, the adoption of the proposed resolution will authorize the City Administrator to enter into twenty-five (25) cultural services grant agreements with nonprofit organizations to provide cultural services that reach all seven of the City of Oakland (City) Council Districts. These organizations support free and low-cost access to culturally diverse artistic programming, including dance, music, theater, media, digital, visual, literary, and community-focused arts, while leveraging state, federal, and philanthropic investments in arts and culture for Oaklanders and attracting visitors to Oakland. The grant funds will support organizations in producing and presenting over 10,000 arts events and activities and will engage nearly 400,000 participants (80 percent Oakland-based). This attendance figure includes active and ambient participants, at indoor, outdoor and virtual locations. Program activity locations are included in **Attachment B**.

Life Enrichment Committee
April 8, 2025

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

The FY 2023-25 Adopted Policy Budget (Budget), with subsequent amendments, includes allocations for grant agreements between the City and various organizations and nonprofits that provide services, programs, and resources to Oakland residents. The City Council routinely funds these grant agreements as part of the budget to enable these nonprofits to continue to operate programs and serve the community without interruption.

Program Overview

The Cultural Affairs Division was seeded in 1980 with the formation of an Oakland Arts Council to seek support from public and private sources and to advise on the allocation of funds. These city grants connect civic workers with champions of Oakland's vibrancy, infuse neighborhoods with arts and cultural activities, deepen understanding of and respect for diverse cultural heritages, support arts activities that engage the community, and enable hands-on art instruction in Oakland's public schools. Grant programs vary in intent and impact, the Cultural Organization Assistance (General Operating Support) category provides vital working capital grants to organizations that earn and raise project support from other sources and places them within a network that receives weekly resource and event updates from Cultural Affairs staff.

The program is managed by the Cultural Affairs staff within the Economic & Workforce Development Department (EWDD) and is central to EWDD's key goals of attracting, retaining, and growing key economic sectors, and also amplifying Oakland's social and cultural activities.

Cultural Affairs staff enlist a diverse team of community members to review grant proposals, reflecting ages, backgrounds, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and professions. Following a thorough review of the written applications and discussion, proposal reviewers hear directly from applicants for three minutes. Oakland is one of the only local grant-making agencies in the State that allows applicants to address the community peer reviewed panel. Each applicant's three-minute address is used to clarify any questions or misinterpretations that the applicant may have heard during the panel discussion.

With City Council support, cultural grants have historically been funded from both the General Purpose Fund and the [Transient Occupancy Tax \(TOT\) surcharge](#) that voters approved to supplement general fund investments in arts and culture. This year, the City Council voted to eliminate the General Purpose Fund allocation for cultural grants to help address the Fiscal Year 24/25 deficit.

On February 10, 2025, the Cultural Affairs Commission advised EWDD staff on the distribution of approximately \$188,000, the remaining Transient Occupancy Tax funds available for grants this fiscal year. This conversation resulted in the decision to provide \$6,500 in grants to 25 arts and cultural organizations through the Cultural Organization Assistance grant program. Remaining available Transient Occupancy Tax funds will subsidize permits required for festivals in Oakland for organizations that do not receive other subsidy and were recommended for Neighborhood Voices for Festivals grants this fiscal year.

ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES

The Budget includes appropriation of Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenue to be allocated through grants. Following a competitive and open review process, including a diverse panel of professional and peer review, the Cultural Affairs Staff recommended awards totaling \$835,500. In consideration of the reduction of General Fund appropriation in the amended Midcycle Budget, staff presented reduced funding scenarios to the Cultural Affairs Commission for discussion on February 10, 2025, and is now recommending grant agreements of \$6,500 to 25 nonprofits based on available funds.

The presentation of this report supports the Citywide Priority of housing, economic and cultural security, as well as the allowable TOT activities. TOT resources are to fund cultural arts programs and festivals in Oakland, to draw Oakland residents and visitors to venues citywide, adding vibrancy, fueling revitalization and creating jobs. The Cultural Affairs Division surveys grant recipients to assess their contribution to the creative economy through visitor and resident attraction, jobs created and maintained, and the number of accessible activities offered. It's anticipated that these grants will contribute to the employment of over 600 Oakland-based artists and engage nearly 400,000 participants, generating direct and indirect revenue to the organizations, local businesses and the City.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funding for these agreements is included in the adopted, amended Midcycle Budget, with \$162,500 coming from the Measure C: Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) Surcharge Fund (2419), Cultural Arts & Marketing Org (85511), Third Party Grant Contracts Earned Account (54912), TOT Surcharge: Cultural Grants Project (1000458), Cultural Funding Program (CE02).

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the project cost summary, and the appropriated project funding sources are included in **Table 2**.

Table 1: Project Cost Summary

Cost Category	Description	Number	Per Grant Amount	Total Amount
Grant Disbursements	FY2024-25 Cultural Funding Grant Disbursements	25	\$6,500	\$162,500
Total Project				\$162,500

Table 2: Project Funding Sources

Funding Source	Organization	Account	Project	Program	Amount
Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) Surcharge Fund 2419	85511	54912	1000458	CE02	\$162,500
Total Project					\$162,500

PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST

This item was agendaized for discussion in a meeting of the Cultural Affairs Commission on February 10, 2025. Members of the public who attended described how the unforeseen budget reduction, following the initial award recommendations and Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget approval, has impacted Oakland-based cultural organizations and workers.

The availability and open application period for the FY23-25 Cultural Organization Assistance grants were announced on July 10, 2023, via a press release, social media, and posted on the City's website. Application guidelines and grant category descriptions were widely publicized for seven weeks. Outreach for this grant opportunity included posting on the City's website and social media sites, including the [Cultural Affairs Division Facebook Page](#). Email notices were sent to interested groups, including City Councilmembers and staff, past grantees, grant applicants, and all parties that contacted staff for arts funding opportunities. In total, staff estimates that it was able to outreach to over 500 organizations and community groups. CFP staff conducted public workshops and one-on-one technical assistance meetings for prospective applicants; a total of 40 people attended the public workshops via Zoom, and 10 prospective applicants received one-on-one technical assistance from CFP staff.

Throughout the year, an Open Call for qualifications is posted on the [City's website](#), inviting community members to serve on peer review panels. Grant review panels convened to discuss and evaluate applications in open meetings, where applicants had the opportunity to attend and address the panel with a three-minute statement. Grant review panels were open to the public and accessible through a public Zoom link.

COORDINATION

The City Attorney's Office and the Budget Bureau have been consulted in the preparation of this report and resolution.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: Community-oriented arts activities bolster the cultural arts identity of Oakland, fortifying the City as a destination, bolstering the creative economy, and creating positive publicity resulting in economic benefits. In FY 2024-25, recipients of Cultural Affairs Division financial assistance will employ over 600 Oakland-based artists. Their activities generate local sales taxes and revenues for the City and local businesses. Many Oakland grantee organizations have received international recognition and draw large crowds for their performances or artwork.

Environmental: There are no environmental opportunities or benefits resulting from any action outlined in this report.

Race & Equity: The Cultural Affairs Division offers an open, competitive process for applicants, resulting in awards to artists and arts organizations that represent all seven City Council Districts. American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation is available for deaf and hard of hearing applicants, language translation services are provided through the City's Equal Access Program, and staff performs outreach in communities with significant Asian American, Pacific

Islander, Black, Latinx, and immigrant populations. Racial equity goals are advanced through outreach activities that include How-to-Apply Workshops, one-on-one technical assistance that targets under-represented communities, and the recruitment of grant review panelists that represent Oakland's diverse community. The Division provides support to artists and organizations that serve low-income, culturally-specific, Lesbian/ Gay/ Bisexual/ Transgender/ Queer (LGBTQ), youth, disabled, and senior communities. Furthermore, Cultural Organization Assistance grantees have over 2,600 arts and culture activities that benefit zip codes 94601, 94603, 94605, 94606, and 94621, which rank high in Oakland's community stressors index.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Awarding Grants To Twenty Five (25) Oakland-based Nonprofit Organizations Providing Arts And Cultural Services In Oakland Through December 31, 2025, In A Total Amount Not To Exceed One Hundred Sixty Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$162,500)

For questions regarding this report, please contact Raquel Iglesias, Cultural Funding Coordinator, at riglesias@oaklandca.gov.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments (3):

- A: FY 2024-25 Grant Award Recommendations and Project Descriptions
- B: FY 2024-25 Cultural Organization Assistance Grant Activity Locations