

Cultural Arts Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Commissioners Laura Ward, Jon Dohlin and Scott Miller

Staff: Dr. Lilia Gonzalez Chavez of the Fresno Arts Council

09-16-2025

Meeting 3:30 pm - 5:15 pm

Meeting Agenda– review appeals submitted for proposed EAAC grant awards, discuss community feedback provided at September 15, 2025, commission meeting, and continued collaborative approach to solicit and incorporate changes to improve the EEAC review process.

A. FAC Staff Updates

1. FAC Staff reported 11 appeals were received related to the proposed EEAC grant awards, from the following applicants: (1) Central Valley Youth Drum Corps, (2) Hib Hib/Arsonists, (3) Big Fresno Fair, (4) Paper Crane, (5) Philip Lorenz Keyboard Concerts, (6) Root Hackerspace, (7) South Tower Community Land Trust, (8) Deep Roots/Christina Olague, (9) Photo Lock, (10) OPA!, and (11) Good Dirt Coalition.

B. Discussion Items

The Subcommittee discussed the following topics:

1. Appeals must be reviewed within the narrow appeal criteria added to the EEAC grant guidelines and adopted by the Fresno City Council in Resolution 2025-19 on January 30, 2025, as follows: “Any applicant not recommended to receive an award may submit a written appeal to the arts council staff no later than 5:00 p.m. by the 10th business day following the release of this notification. Appeals must be based on the following criteria: clerical error and/or incorrect processing required application materials negatively influencing the panel's assessment of the applicants request for funding.”
2. Eleven appeals received were closely reviewed, discussed, and considered; determination reached for each appeal that narrow appeal criteria were not met.
3. Discussed that appeals received highlighted policy considerations related to enhancing grant writing resources available to EEAC grant applicants, additional panelist training, and process improvements which may address review consistency.
4. Discussed and confirmed that subcommittee is operating within parameters established by Resolution 2024-4 adopted by PRAC on October 20, 2024, and fulfilling limited role outlined by Administrative Service Agreement adopted August 10, 2023, between City of Fresno and Fresno Arts Council at Exhibit A, Deliverables 5 and 6, as adopted by the City Council as Resolution 2023-244 on August 10, 2023.
5. Reviewed the PRAC discussion between commissioners and City staff of considerations raised related to the subcommittee parameters on October 14, 2024, at commission meeting, including unfunded financial burdens associated with conversion to standing committee, and inquiries at that time from the subcommittee

to the City Attorney regarding ability to invite and encourage public participation at meetings of ad hoc subcommittee.

6. Discussed follow-up email sent to City Attorney on September 16, 2025, by subcommittee member to continue exploring parameters to incorporate public engagement with subcommittee, consistent with continued public interest as expressed at PRAC meeting on September 15, 2025.
7. Discussed misrepresentation by a community member during public comment periods of written communication related to subcommittee efforts to incorporate more public participation in subcommittee activities, while advocating for increased transparency. Discussed that in furtherance of transparency request, accurate segment of email quoted in part during public comment periods reads as follows, in summary of October 14, 2024 PRAC meeting discussion regarding subcommittee: “The Cultural Arts Subcommittee meeting minutes are provided in the PRAC meeting materials - you may recall that last year we sought to make these open meetings that are subject to the Brown Act, but that raised a lot of additional concerns about city staff costs/etc. and that was too burdensome, so the City Attorney recommended the subcommittee remain ad hoc, with the commission receiving minutes from those meetings (which then are publicly available).”
8. Discussed initial recommendation of implicit bias training for staff and panelists in EEAC grant review process as first recommendation of more robust set of policy and process updates to be developed by the commission with community feedback, which need to be supported by PRAC budget recommendations to fund those activities. Continue to solicit feedback from applicants, panelists, and community members regarding process concerns.
9. Discussed that process concerns raised include neutrality of facilitator, single organization having a financial interest in more than 25% of scored applications, enhancing panelist conflicts of interest screening process to identify pre-existing applicant relationships beyond true legal conflicts, engaging more panelists with arts and culture grant review experience, enhancing panelist culture grant review training, incorporating geographically diverse panelists with art and culture grant review experience, scoring rubric modifications and/or revising application questions to better solicit applicant responses for both art and culture projects, expanding publicly-available grant writing resources to support applicants, increasing public engagement with subcommittee activities, considering methods to anonymize identity of applicant in review process, considering future award allocations at different percentages for emerging applicants than established applicants due to overall size of budget requests, and separating/staggering timing on grant application periods for different types of grant awards.
10. Timelines discussed: (1) recommendation of grant award allocations for funding; (2) separation of policy updates and continued public engagement in process improvements from award recommendation; and (3) timing to recommend budget allocations to fund the 2027 community engagement process related to 2028 Cultural Arts Plan update (2023 Cultural Arts Plan adopted by City Council on August 10, 2023, in Resolution 2023-244, with five year update cycle), and fund additional

EEAC grant process support costs as identified by community-informed process improvements and in the Cultural Arts Plan at Recommendations 1.1 and 1.2.

C. Subcommittee Recommendations

1. Commissioners support the proposed EEAC grant funding allocations without adjustment for appeals due to appeal criteria not met.
2. Commissioners recommend specific actions: (1) continuing collaborative approach to solicit community feedback on additional process improvements to assist PRAC with developing community-informed comprehensive EEAC program process improvements, with associated PRAC budget recommendations to fund those recommended activities; (2) continuing to engage with City Attorney to explore public participation with subcommittee activities; and (3) recommend FAC staff work with CMAC to post the videos of both 2024 and 2025 grant writing workshops held for EEAC grant applicants, so that these recorded sessions are available publicly online to enhance the grant-writing resources available to applicants.
3. Commissioners support timeline: (1) EEAC Grant Award funding recommendations brought to PRAC as an action item at the 9/29/25 commission meeting; (2) separate out EEAC program policy revisions, as they require additional time for development and recommended by PRAC and are future-looking revisions; (3) revisions to EEAC Grant Guidelines cannot go to City Council before 12-month period from prior adoption in Resolution 2025-19 on January 30, 2025, but can be developed before that date; (4) budget recommendations for FY 2027 budget for Cultural Arts Plan update and to fund EEAC grant process improvements activities can be made by PRAC in October 2025 and June 2026.