



CIVIC ARTS COMMISSION Policy Subcommittee MEETING AGENDA

**Wednesday, August 5, 2026
3:00 PM**

Subcommittee Members:

Commissioner Bullwinkel (Chair), Commissioner Blecher, Commissioner Woo,
Commissioner Kramer

This meeting will be conducted virtually Attend this meeting remotely using **Zoom**
<https://cityofberkeley-info.zoomgov.com/j/1656414367>. To request to speak, use the “raise hand”
function in Zoom. To join by phone: Dial **1-669-254-5252 or 1-833-568-8864 (Toll Free)** and enter
Meeting ID: 165 641 4367. To provide public comment, Press *9 and wait to be recognized by the
Chair. To submit a written communication for the public record, email civicarts@berkeleyca.gov.

This meeting will be conducted in accordance with the Brown Act, Government Code Section 54953.
Any member of the public may attend this meeting.

Roll Call

Land Acknowledgement

The City of Berkeley recognizes that the community we live in was built on the territory of Huchiun (Hooch-yoon), the ancestral and unceded land of the Chochenyo (Cho-chen-yo) speaking Ohlone (Oh-low-nee) people, the ancestors and descendants of the sovereign Verona (Vuh-roh-nuh) Band of Alameda County. This land was and continues to be of great importance to all of the Ohlone Tribes and descendants of the Verona Band. We acknowledge and honor the original inhabitants of Berkeley, the documented 5,000-year history of a vibrant community at the West Berkeley Shellmound, and the Ohlone people who continue to reside in the East Bay. We recognize that Berkeley residents have and continue to benefit from the use and occupation of this uncended stolen land since the City of Berkeley's incorporation in 1878. As stewards of the laws regulating the City of Berkeley, it is not only vital that we recognize the history of this land, but also recognize that the Ohlone people are present members of Berkeley and other East Bay communities today. The City of Berkeley will continue to build relationships with the Lisjan (Lih-Shawn) Tribe and create meaningful actions that uphold the intention of this Land Acknowledgement.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Matters

Chairperson's Report

Presentation, Discussion, and Action Items

- 1. Discussion: Policy Related to Grants Program**
From: Lisa Bullwinkel, Policy Subcommittee Chair
- 2. Discussion: Youth Art Awards Proposal**
From: Cari Arredondo, Assistant to the City Manager

Adjournment

Notices

Notice of Public Record

Communications to Berkeley boards, commissions or committees are public record and will become part of the City's electronic records, which are accessible through the City's website. Please note: E-mail addresses, names, addresses, and other contact information are not required but, if included in any communication to a City board, commission, or committee, will become part of the public record. If you do not want your e-mail address or any other contact information to be made public, you may deliver communications via U.S. Postal Service or in person to the secretary of the relevant board, commission, or committee. If you do not want your contact information included in the public record, please do not include that information in your communication. Please contact the secretary to the relevant board, commission, or committee for further information.

Staff Contact:

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RECOMMENDATION:

To allocate general funds into the Art Commission Grant Program that are now being distributed randomly by council to arts non-profits and festivals. The Art Commission would create a large festival grant category which would see to it that the funds are distributed transparently and equitably. Festivals now receiving funding by request to the council would have instead to apply for the grant. The Commission realizes that Council Members like to support constituents and therefore, we are not advocating the cessation of small amounts of discretionary funding from individual council members when requested.

HISTORY

Eight years ago, funding for festivals was distributed from the general fund when requested by individual Council Members. Not only was this an inequitable and non-transparent system, it required recipients to have a personal relationship with their council member who would submit the budget request. Seeking to remedy this inequity, a Festival Grant Program was established by the Art Commission in 2019. The annual funding, to this day, is the annual total that had been doled out prior to the beginning of the grant program, **\$158,317**. This funded 17 festivals. Over 55 are now being funded from the same amount.

CURRENT SITUATION

The council has repeatedly budgeted large amounts for several festivals and arts organizations, circumventing the Art Commission's grant programs. (See attached spreadsheet of funding distributions.) This process is neither equitable nor transparent and the recipients have received the funding without oversight or follow up reporting. If these funds were appropriated directly into Civic Arts Grants Programs, the requests would be reviewed by a panel of experts, distributed equitably, and have oversight and follow-up requirements.

FY26	
Organization/Event	Allocation
Bay Area Book Festival	\$50,000
Berkeley Art Center	\$86,652
Berkeley Film Foundation	\$25,000
Berkeley Juneteenth Celebration	\$5,000
Elmwood Music Festival	\$7,000
Holocaust Remembrance Day	\$7,000
Solano Stroll	\$10,000
UC Theater Concert Career Pathways Program	\$50,000

\$240,652

FY25	
Organization/Event	Allocation
Aurora Theatre	\$150,000
Bay Area Book Festival	\$50,000
Berkeley Art Center	\$186,652
Berkeley Film Foundation	\$25,000
Berkeley Juneteenth Celebration	\$5,000
Cesar Chavez Dolores Huerta Tribute Site	\$10,000
Holocaust Remembrance Day	\$7,000
La Pena	\$150,000
Solano Stroll	\$10,000
UC Theater Concert Career Pathways Program	\$50,000

\$643,652

FY24	
Organization/Event	Allocation
Bay Area Book Festival	\$50,000
Berkeley Art Center	\$86,652
Berkeley Film Foundation	\$25,000
Berkeley Juneteenth Celebration	\$5,000
Holocaust Remembrance Day	\$6,000
Solano Stroll	\$20,000
UC Theater Concert Career Pathways Program	\$50,000

\$242,652

Internal

FY23	
Organization/Event	Allocation
Bay Area Book Festival	\$50,000
Berkeley Art Center Contract	\$86,652
Berkeley Film Foundation	\$25,000
Holocaust Remembrance Day	\$6,000
La Pena Cultural Center	\$150,000
Luna Dance	\$150,000
Solano Stroll	\$20,000
UC Theater Concert Career Pathways Program	\$50,000
Youth Spirit Artworks	\$78,000

\$615,652

Internal

FY22	
Organization/Event	Allocation
Bay Area Book Festival	\$50,000
Berkeley Art Center Contract	\$86,652
Berkeley Film Foundation	\$25,000
Solano Stroll	\$20,000
UC Theater Concert Career Pathways Program	\$50,000
Youth Spirit Artworks	\$78,000

\$309,652

Internal

FY21	
Organization/Event	Allocation
Bay Area Book Festival	\$50,000
Berkeley Art Center Contract	\$73,654
Berkeley Film Foundation	\$25,000
UC Theater Concert Career Pathways Program	\$50,000
Youth Spirit Artworks	\$117,000

FY20
Organization/Event
Bay Area Book Festival
Berkeley Art Center Contract
Berkeley Film Foundation
Holocaust Remembrance Day
Youth Spirit Artworks

\$315,654

Internal

Allocation
\$50,000
\$86,652
\$25,000
\$2,000
\$83,777

\$247,429

FY19	
Organization/Event	Allocation
Berkeley Art Center Contract	\$86,652
Berkeley Arts Festival	\$10,000
Berkeley Bay Area Book Festival	\$50,000
Black History Month	\$4,250
Cesar Chavez Commemoration	\$4,500
Cinco de Mayo	\$4,000
Earth Day	\$4,050
Elmwood Festival	\$2,700
Indigenous Peoples' Day	\$4,050
Juneteenth	\$4,050
Poetry Festival	\$3,240
SF Mime Troupe	\$1,450
Solano Stroll	\$5,000
Stonewall Festival	\$5,000
Sunday Streets	\$30,000
Sundays on Telegraph	\$15,000
TAA World Music Festival	\$9,000
Telegraph Avenue Holiday Fair	\$2,027

\$244,969

FY18	
Organization/Event	Allocation
Bay Area Book Festival	\$50,000
Berkeley Art Center Contract	\$86,652
Berkeley Arts Festival	\$10,000
Berkeley Film Foundation	\$25,000
Black History Month	\$4,250
Cesar Chavez Commemoration	\$4,500
Cinco de Mayo	\$4,000
Earth Day	\$4,050
Elmwood Festival	\$2,700
Indigenous Peoples' Day	\$4,050
Juneteenth	\$4,050
Kala Contract	\$18,000
Poetry Festival	\$3,240
SF Mime Troupe	\$1,450
Solano Stroll	\$5,000
Stonewall Festival	\$5,000
Sunday Streets	\$30,000
Sundays on Telegraph	\$15,000
TAA World Music Festival	\$9,000
Telegraph Avenue Holiday Fair	\$2,026
Youth Spirit Artworks	\$93,777

\$381,745

FY17	
Organization/Event	Allocation
Bay Area Book Festival	\$50,000
Berkeley Art Center Contract	\$97,652
Berkeley Arts Festival	\$10,000
Black History Month	\$4,250
Cesar Chavez Commemoration	\$4,500
Cinco de Mayo	\$4,000
Earth Day	\$4,050
Elmwood Festival	\$2,700
Indigenous Peoples' Day	\$4,050
Juneteenth	\$4,050
Poetry Festival	\$3,240
SF Mime Troupe	\$1,450
Solano Stroll	\$5,000
Stonewall Festival	\$5,000
Sunday Streets	\$30,000
Sundays on Telegraph	\$15,000
TAA World Music Festival	\$9,000
Telegraph Avenue Holiday Fair	\$2,025

\$255,967

FY16	
Organization/Event	Allocation
Berkeley Art Center Contract	\$86,652
Berkeley Arts Festival	\$10,000
Black History Month	\$4,250
Cesar Chavez Commemoration	\$4,500
Cinco de Mayo	\$4,000
Earth Day	\$4,050
Elmwood Festival	\$2,700
Indigenous Peoples' Day	\$4,050
Juneteenth	\$4,050
Poetry Festival	\$3,240
SF Mime Troupe	\$1,450
Solano Stroll	\$5,000
Stonewall Festival	\$5,000
Sunday Streets	\$30,000
Sundays on Telegraph	\$5,000
TAA World Music Festival	\$9,000
Telegraph Avenue Holiday Fair	\$2,025

\$184,967

PROPOSAL

City of Berkeley Youth Arts Awards Program

A Citywide Recognition Program for Young Artists in Grades 6 through 12

Peter Montgomery, Chair, Civic Arts Commission

Executive Summary

This proposal recommends that the City of Berkeley establish an annual Youth Arts Awards Program to recognize outstanding artistic achievement among the city's young people. Each year, the program would present a Gold, Silver, and Bronze award in each of three artistic groupings, two-dimensional fine arts, three-dimensional fine arts, and performance, within each of two age divisions, for a total of eighteen awards annually. The program would serve youth ages roughly 11 through 18. Unlike school-based arts recognitions, it would be open to all Berkeley youth in the eligible age range, regardless of where or whether they attend school. Middle and high school students enrolled in the Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD), independent and parochial schools, homeschool programs, and youth who are unenrolled or between school placements would all be eligible to enter on equal footing.

The program is designed to be low-cost, high-visibility, and easy to administer within existing city and community infrastructure, while sending a clear civic message: that Berkeley values the creative contributions of all its young residents, not only those enrolled in a particular school system.

Program Rationale

Municipal youth recognition programs are frequently tied to a single school district, which inadvertently excludes a meaningful share of the city's youth population, including students at private and parochial schools, homeschooled students, students in independent study or online programs, and youth who are temporarily unenrolled. Berkeley is home to a diverse mix of educational settings outside BUSD, and a citywide award program is one of the few civic mechanisms that can reach all of these young people equally.

An arts-focused award also fills a recognition gap: academic and athletic achievement are frequently celebrated through school-based honors, but creative and artistic achievement often receives comparatively little civic recognition, particularly for students outside the traditional school system. A city-sponsored award signals that the City itself, not just a school, sees and values this work.

Program Structure

Award Groupings, Tiers, and Age Divisions

Within each of the two age divisions, awards would be organized into three primary artistic groupings, each carrying its own Gold, Silver, and Bronze recipient:

- Two-Dimensional Fine Arts: Painting, drawing, photography, printmaking, and related flat-format work
- Three-Dimensional Fine Arts: Sculpture, ceramics, and other dimensional or object-based work
- Traditional Cultural Arts: Indigenous and culturally specific practices, folk arts, craft traditions, social-practice art, community-based work, and other forms grounded in cultural knowledge or collective participation.

This yields nine awards per age division (three groupings × three tiers) and eighteen awards program-wide each year, as shown below:

Middle School Division (Grades 6–8)	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Two-Dimensional Fine Arts	1 award	1 award	1 award
Three-Dimensional Fine Arts	1 award	1 award	1 award
Traditional Cultural Arts	1 award	1 award	1 award

High School Division (Grades 9–12)	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Two-Dimensional Fine Arts	1 award	1 award	1 award
Three-Dimensional Fine Arts	1 award	1 award	1 award
Traditional Cultural Arts	1 award	1 award	1 award

Organizing awards around these three groupings, rather than a single undifferentiated “arts” category, ensures that a young sculptor is not competing directly against a young painter or a young dancer, whose work cannot be fairly judged by a common yardstick. It also gives the program a natural structure for recruiting jurors with matching expertise, discussed below.

The Middle School Division would encompass ages roughly corresponding to sixth through eighth grade, and the High School Division would encompass ages roughly corresponding to ninth through twelfth grade. Because eligibility is age-based rather than grade-based, the program can accommodate homeschooled entrants and others whose grade level may not map neatly onto a conventional school calendar; a simple age cutoff (for example, based on age as of a fixed date each program year) is recommended as the operative standard, with grade level offered only as a descriptive reference point.

To be clear, the High School Division extends through twelfth grade. Graduating seniors are eligible to enter and compete for the Gold, Silver, and Bronze awards in their division on the same terms as ninth, tenth, and eleventh graders.

Eligibility

To fulfill the program's civic purpose of reaching all Berkeley youth, eligibility would extend to any young person within the applicable age range who:

- Resides within the City of Berkeley, or
- Is enrolled at a school (public, private, parochial, or charter) located within the City of Berkeley,
- regardless of school district enrollment, including students in BUSD, independent and parochial schools, homeschool or independent study programs, and youth who are currently unenrolled.

A residency-or-enrollment standard (rather than a BUSD-enrollment standard) ensures that a Berkeley resident attending school in another city, and a non-resident student attending a Berkeley private school, are both eligible, closing the two gaps a single-criterion rule would otherwise leave open. The City may choose to tighten or loosen this definition, but some form of dual residency-or-enrollment standard is recommended so that no meaningful group of Berkeley youth is inadvertently excluded.

Submission Format by Grouping

Submission mechanics would necessarily differ by grouping. Two- and three-dimensional fine arts entries would be submitted as physical work (or high-resolution photographs of physical work, where transport is impractical) for in-person or photographic review. Performance entries would be submitted as recorded video, given the impracticality of live adjudication for a citywide open-entry program; the City may wish to consider a live component (such as a finalists' showcase) in later program years once submission volume is established.

Creative writing and digital/film media are not treated as standalone groupings in this proposal, since the three groupings above were specified as the program's primary structure. The City may consider adding additional groupings in future years, following the same Gold/Silver/Bronze, two-division pattern, once the program is established and administrative capacity allows.

Program Administration

Jury Structure

Each of the two age divisions (Middle School and High School) would be served by its own dedicated panel of jurors, rather than a single jury covering both. This allows jurors to calibrate their expectations to the developmental stage of the entrants they are reviewing, and avoids the fairness problems that arise when a fourteen-year-old's work is judged against a seventeen-year-old's by the same undifferentiated standard.

Within each divisional jury, membership would be drawn to provide expertise spanning both fine arts practice and education, specifically:

- Practicing artists or arts professionals with direct experience in one or more of the three groupings (two-dimensional fine arts, three-dimensional fine arts, and performance), to evaluate technical and creative merit.
- Arts educators or youth education professionals, to ensure entries are evaluated with an appropriate understanding of age-appropriate skill development, rather than solely against adult professional standards.

A recommended starting point is a jury of four to six members per division, composed so that each of the three groupings has at least one juror with directly relevant expertise available to weigh in, supplemented by one or two members with a general arts-education background who can weigh in across all three groupings. The same juror may serve on both divisional juries if their expertise and availability allow, though the City may prefer to rotate membership to broaden community involvement over time.

To preserve fairness and public confidence, jurors should: review entries anonymized by number rather than name where practicable; disclose and recuse themselves from any entry involving a personal or professional connection to the entrant; and score against a written rubric established before the submission window opens, rather than through open-ended discussion alone. Jury service is proposed as an unpaid, volunteer civic role (consistent with keeping the program's budget minimal) with jurors recommended for appointment through the Civic Arts Commission, and confirmed by whatever body the City deems appropriate (Commission vote, Council liaison sign-off, or similar).

Role of the Berkeley Civic Arts Commission

This proposal recommends that the Berkeley Civic Arts Commission serve as the program's primary administrative and civic home, with responsibility for three core functions:

Parenthetical comments: The Civic Arts Commission is an advisory public body, not an independently staffed nonprofit or operating department. Commissioners can recommend policy, provide subject-matter expertise, participate in defined selection processes, and support outreach, but the full Commission can't necessarily manage it all because of the brown act :(

A majority of commissioners could not informally plan or administer the program outside properly noticed meetings, and any standing subcommittee may have its own public-meeting obligations.

The Commission: advises on program design, recommends jurors or panelists, participates in evaluation, and reviews annual outcomes.

Civic Arts staff: administer City-approved processes within available staffing and budget. (Not sure about this. Do not want to burden an already potentially overworked staff)

- Organizing the jury: Recruiting, vetting, and convening the Middle School and High School juries described above, and maintaining the judging rubric from year to year.
- Organizing submissions: Managing the open call for entries, eligibility verification, intake logistics for physical and recorded work, and outreach to schools and community organizations to ensure broad awareness across BUSD, private and parochial schools, homeschool associations, and unaffiliated youth.
- Organizing the awards event: Planning and hosting the annual gala or awards presentation at which the eighteen winners are publicly recognized, alongside any accompanying exhibition of finalist work.

Housing these three functions within the Commission gives the program a natural, ongoing civic sponsor with existing ties to Berkeley's arts community, rather than requiring the City to build new administrative infrastructure from scratch. City staff support would still be useful for logistics such as venue booking, insurance, and promotional coordination, but the Commission would hold overall programmatic ownership and continuity from year to year.

Recognition and Ceremony

Winners would be honored at a public awards gala organized by the Civic Arts Commission. Two venue directions are worth exploring in particular:

- A vacant or underused retail space in downtown Berkeley, temporarily activated for the event. This has the added benefit of bringing visible civic life and foot traffic to the city center, and may be available through a short-term community-use or pop-up arrangement.
- The Berkeley Art Center in North Berkeley, an established arts venue already aligned with the program's mission, which could offer a more turnkey venue solution with existing gallery infrastructure suited to displaying finalist work.

Whichever venue is chosen, the gala should be planned as a genuine public event: one that press outlets can cover, and that parents, mentors, teachers, and civic leaders are invited to attend alongside the young award recipients. Bringing these groups together in one room, honorees, families, members of the arts community, and city officials, is itself part of the program's value: it is a bonding experience for the youth being honored and for the broader community of people invested in their development, and it gives the City a visible, positive, low-cost civic moment each year.

A companion exhibition displaying finalist and winning work: Physical for the two- and three-dimensional groupings, and a recorded or live showcase for performance, would extend the program's visibility and give all entrants, not only winners, a form of public recognition.

Annual Program Timeline

Period	Activity
Late Summer	Program announcement, promotional outreach to BUSD, private and parochial schools, homeschool associations, and youth-serving community organizations.
Fall	An open submission window. Entrants register and submit work along with a signed eligibility and consent form.
Early Winter	Submissions close. Panel review and judging take place.
Winter	Winners notified privately, followed by a public awards ceremony and exhibition of finalist work.

Following Year	Cycle repeats; program evaluation and adjustments incorporated for the next cohort.
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Budget Considerations

Because juries are proposed as unpaid volunteer positions, the largest discretionary line items are the gala itself and program materials. Core costs to anticipate include: promotional outreach materials, awards or certificates for eighteen annual winners, venue costs for a public gala (which may be reduced or waived if a downtown retail space is secured through a short-term community-use arrangement, or if the Berkeley Art Center offers in-kind or reduced-rate use), light refreshments, and any exhibition or printing costs associated with displaying finalist work across all three groupings. Because the program does not require new facilities, ongoing staff, or paid jurors, it is well suited to a modest annual line-item budget or a City arts grant administered through the Civic Arts Commission, and could also attract sponsorship from local businesses or a Friends-of-the-Library-style nonprofit partner interested in youth arts.

Reasons for the Program

At its core, this program is motivated by a desire to put the City's civic weight behind its youth, particularly in the arts, an area where Berkeley's young people are rarely recognized by name at the municipal level. Berkeley already has a strong civic identity as a city that values arts and culture; extending that identity explicitly to its youngest residents, in a way that reaches beyond any single school system, reinforces that every young person in the city, however and wherever they are educated, is seen as part of Berkeley's creative community and part of the broader civic life of the city and society around them.

As a reference, the Berkeley arts and culture plan echo and reinforce these motivations (see page 47): <https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2019-09-17%20WS%20Item%2001%20City%20of%20Berkeley%20Arts.pdf>

The reward this program offers is deliberately non-monetary. What it offers instead is recognition: recognition among a young person's peer group, recognition within the arts community, and recognition from the City itself. For a young person, being publicly named as a Gold, Silver, or Bronze recipient by their own city carries a form of validation that a cash prize does not. It tells them that their work, and their effort, was seen and valued by the place they live.

A specific and practical benefit of this recognition is the award as document of achievement. A civic arts award of this kind gives Berkeley's high schoolers something distinctive and credible to point to, in a landscape where many other extracurricular honors are less clearly defined or less independently verified.

Administrative Philosophy

This proposal is deliberately structured to minimize the ongoing staff-hour burden on the City. The program is designed so that its three recurring functions, organizing the jury, organizing submissions, and organizing the awards event, can be carried out largely by the Civic Arts Commission and volunteer community members, with City staff involvement limited to light coordination (venue logistics, insurance, and promotional support) rather than day-to-day program management. Juries are proposed as unpaid, volunteer positions, drawing on community members' existing goodwill toward youth and the arts, which both keeps the program's budget minimal and reinforces its character as a genuine civic, rather than purely administrative, undertaking.

Anticipated Civic Benefits

- Extends municipal recognition to youth outside the BUSD system, reinforcing the City's commitment to all its young residents.
- Strengthens the visibility of the arts as a valued civic priority alongside academics and athletics.

- Gives high school entrants a credible, well-documented civic honor to include in future endeavors, a concrete and highly sought-after form of value for students and families.
- Creates a low-cost, high-visibility annual civic tradition that can grow over time, achievable with minimal City staff time given its volunteer jury structure and Commission-led administration.
- Builds a public record of youth artistic talent that can be referenced by families, schools, and local media.

Recommendation

The City Council is encouraged to approve the establishment of a Youth Arts Awards Program along the lines described above, direct staff to identify an appropriate administrative home and modest first-year budget, and authorize outreach to BUSD, private and parochial schools, and homeschool associations to ensure the broadest possible awareness of the program among eligible youth ahead of its first submission cycle.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Montgomery

Chair, Berkeley Civic Arts Commission