

Indiana Arts Commission Quarterly Business Meeting

Friday, July 18, 2025, 11:00 a.m. (ET)

Indiana Government Center South – Conference Room A

302 W Washington St, Indianapolis, IN 46204

Anne Penny Valentine, Chair



There will be a brief break at approximately 12:00 PM. (ET) with an origami demonstration by Commissioner Greg Hull

Members Present: Azizi Arrington-Slocum, Réna Bradley, Chad Bolser, Dave Haist, Greg Hull, Walter Knabe, Daniel Martinez, Laurie Burns McRobbie, Jake Oakman, Anne Penny Valentine, Scott Wylie

Members Present via Zoom: None.

Members Absent: Kelsey Peaper, Renee Thomas

IAC Staff Present: Jordan Adams, Eric Ashby, Connie Brahm, Britt Fechtman, Austin Hendricks, Miah Michaelson, Stephanie Pfendler, Alex Peters, Gwendolyn Pickett, André Zhang Sonera

RAP Partners Present via Zoom: Kayla Myers

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

- a. **Welcome.** Commission Chair Anne Penny Valentine called the meeting to order at 11:07 AM.
- b. **Welcome New Staff.** Ms. Valentine welcomed the new staff, Britt Fechtman (Data and Grant Systems Manager), Alex Peters (Communications' Governor's Summer Intern), and Anne Johansson (Community Services Manager). *At the time of the meeting, Ms. Johansson had not yet joined the staff but was in attendance in the public audience.* Indiana Arts Commission (IAC) Deputy Director André Zhang Sonera presented each of these individuals in turn, and each of them spoke about their backgrounds.
- c. **6th Street Arts Alley in Columbus, IN.** Commissioner Daniel Martinez shared the remodel of the 6th Street Arts Alley in Columbus, IN with the Commission. Mr. Martinez worked directly on this project throughout its development. He shared that he was very proud of the project, turning the former roadway into a pedestrian area downtown. He thanked the Regional Arts Partner, the Columbus Area Arts Council, for their help in the project. Mr. Martinez noted the project had community involvement as members volunteered to help paint the roadway into a large mural. Mr. Martinez expressed his pride in the project and looks forward to seeing where it goes in the future.
- d. **Roll Call.** IAC Administrative Assistant, Austin Hendricks, called the roll. All were present as listed above.

Ms. Valentine thanked everyone for their flexibility as the meeting has changed dates from its original June date.

2. **Review and Approval of Agenda and March 7, 2025, Minutes.** Ms. Valentine called for any additions or changes to the minutes. None were spoken. Ms. Valentine called for a motion to approve the agenda and minutes. Commissioner Jake Oakman motioned, and Commissioner Greg Hull seconded. **By roll call vote, all were in favor, and the motion passed.**

3. Consent Agenda. Ms. Valentine read through the consent agenda verbally, listing all the memos contained within. *You may find the list below in these minutes.* Ms. Valentine called for any items to be moved from the consent agenda to the full meeting. None were spoken. Ms. Valentine called for a motion to approve the consent agenda. Commissioner Scott Wylie moved, and Commissioner Réna Bradley seconded. **By roll call vote, all were in favor, and the motion passed.**

a. Items Submitted for Commission Approval

i. FY26 Contract Authority Delegation

b. Reports for Review:

- i. Arts Trust Report**
- ii. Communications Report**
- iii. Staff Updates and Activity Report**
- iv. Lifelong Arts Report**

v. Accessibility Grant Program Update

vi. Partnerships Report

1. Committee Reports

a. Committee on the Future

- i. FY25 Year-End Budget Statement.** Mr. Zhang Sonera presented this agenda item. He shared that the year-end report looks stable and healthy. He noted the \$200,000 surplus in Point 1 (Personnel) due to staff vacancies. Point 2 (Technology and Communications) and Point 3 (Professional Services) showed a variance with some software licenses that were attributed incorrectly to Point 9 (Shared Departmental Operating Expenses). Point 7 (Grant Contracts) also indicates a variance because those funds were attributed to Point 3, the agency used fiscal sponsors to provide some programmatic assistance. Mr. Zhang Sonera called for questions. None were spoken.

Ms. Valentine called for a motion to approve the statement. Mr. Hull motioned, and Commissioner Azizi Arrington-Slocum seconded. **By roll call vote, all were in favor, and the motion passed.**

- ii. FY26 Arts Trust Draw Request.** Mr. Zhang Sonera shared that the agency is requesting a draw from the trust of \$240,000.

Ms. Valentine thanked the commissioners and staff for having the agency's license plates on their cars to help keep the trust up.

Mr. Zhang Sonera shared that this draw request is to cover the two rounds of Arts Project Support. He then called for questions. None were spoken.

Ms. Valentine called for a motion to approve the request. Ms. Bradley motioned, and Commissioner Chad Bolser second. **By roll call vote, all were in favor, and the motion passed.**

IAC Executive Director, Miah Michaelson, highlighted the work of Mr. Peters on his promotion of the arts trust.

At this point, Commissioner Laurie Burns McRobbie joined the meeting in-person.

- iii. FY26 Budget Presentation.** Mr. Zhang Sonera continued his portion of the meeting by presenting the Commission with the FY26 Budget. Mr. Zhang Sonera shared a short

review of how the state budget is approved. He then shared the nine main accounting points of the State's budget and listed their name and purposes point by point, including those the IAC does not use. *Please see the attached memo for additional information about how the IAC's budget is structured.* He also noted that the agency receives funding from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and generally, that funding award is sent out in April. This year it was received in June. He also noted that the IAC works with the State Budget Agency to make sure its budget is in compliance with state policies. Mr. Zhang Sonera then noted the changes to the IAC's budget from the state and the NEA. There is a 33% reduction from the State Appropriation, which returns the agency to FY17 funding levels. He noted that there is an additional 5% management holdback for every state agency. He also shared that the NEA award amount is \$102.4k (a 9.42% increase), mainly due to the two new one-time components: Arts and Health and America250. Mr. Zhang Sonera called for questions.

Ms. Michaelsen shared that the proposed budget for the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for Humanities (NEH) for Federal Fiscal Year 2026 reflects a 35% reduction in the NEA/NEH funds. She shared that the IAC is monitoring this situation closely and that the IAC will communicate with grantees with awards that include federal funds.

Commissioner Laurie Burns McRobbie asked about what the Arts and Health funding is specifically for. Ms. Michaelsen responded that IAC Director of Programs, Eric Ashby, will share that later in the meeting.

Mr. Zhang Sonera then shared a summary of the numbers for the IAC's revenue. *Please see the attached memo for additional information.* He noted that there will be a reduction in Point 1 (Personnel), because a position is currently vacant and temporarily frozen. He then went through point by point of the budget with notable highlights in Point 7 (Grants Contracts). That Point will see reductions such as in Arts Organization Support (AOS) and Arts Project Support (APS), and in other grants programs such as Work in Progress, Creative Leap, Creative Convergence, and Every County Funded. He then showed each budget point and their FY26 budget compared to FY25. Point 7 sees the biggest reduction in its budget of all the points. *Please see the attached memo for additional information about each of the changes in the budget.* Mr. Zhang Sonera noted that the next steps include the IAC waiting for the official NEA award letter, which will come in late July. He shared that the projects that do not have federal funding will begin soon, but those that include federal funds will take longer before award notifications are sent. Mr. Zhang Sonera called for questions. None were spoken.

Ms. Valentine complimented the staff on their ability to navigate the uncertainty and being able to provide solutions rather than just sharing the negatives of the situation. She noted that these choices were tough and outside of the agency's control.

Ms. Valentine called for a motion to approve the budget. Mr. Haist motioned, and Ms. McRobbie seconded. **By roll call vote, all were in favor and the motion passed.**

Ms. Valentine shared that this reduction in budget impacts how the agency can grant, but wanted to highlight that the agency still exists and can still provide grant opportunities throughout the state.

b. Programs, Grants, and Services

- i. **FY26/27 Arts Organization Support (AOS).** IAC Director of Programs, Eric Ashby, presented this agenda item. Mr. Ashby shared a review of what Arts Organization Support (AOS) is, and that it is a grant that provides general support for arts organizations throughout the state. He then noted the changes to the program this cycle, notably:

- **The criteria language changed**
- **The scoring became a scale of 1-4**
- **Applicants were not required to provide year-round programming**
- **There were no recorded panels**

He shared that there were 273 applicants in this cycle, 31 are new, and 50 applicants are rural. 56 of the 92 Indiana counties had representation in the applicant pool. He noted that this program is growing year over year.

IAC Data and Grant Systems Manager, Britt Fechtman, then presented this portion of the presentation. She highlighted that the budget threshold for applicants is \$20,000, and in FY23 it had been higher. She noted that the new applicants for FY26-27 are slightly less than FY24-25, and that may be because new applicants may have applied when the budget threshold was lowered. She then shared a map of the density of the counties represented in the applications in FY26-27. Ms. Fechtman then shared the types of organizations that applied, as self-reported. Arts Service Organization is the largest group of applicants, followed by Performing Group, Performance Facilities, and Youth Performing groups. Ms. Fechtman called for questions. None were spoken. She then shared the applicants' self-reported discipline types using the NEA's categories. The top types were music and theatre applicants, followed by multidisciplinary and visual arts.

Mr. Hull asked if the NEA defines poetry as part of literature.

Mr. Ashby shared that poetry is categorized as part of literature by the NEA, but that the NEA also has discretionary funds specifically for poetry. Mr. Ashby continued: some of the NEA funds the IAC was awarded this year were for Poetry and the Poetry Out Loud program. Ms. Fechtman then shared that the primary applicants for AOS are within budget ranges of \$20k-\$689,976, which are Tiers A, B, and C. *The IAC breaks the AOS down into budget tiers A-E. Please see the attached memo for more information.* She then shared that in those smaller organizations; there are very few if any full-time staff. Mr. Ashby thanked Ms. Fechtman and her work jumping into this program.

Mr. Ashby then presented the funding recommendations for the AOS program. In the memo, he highlighted that the color coding is incorrect, but the labeling in the chart headers is correct. He encouraged the commissioners to disregard the color coding. *The memo attached is the wrong version; please disregard the color coding.* Mr. Ashby shared that this year \$2,000,000 will be allocated to this program. He noted that the funding source is from the NEA, State Match dollars (money matched by the agency reserved from the state appropriation) and State appropriated funds. Mr. Ashby stated that this program is funded by budget tiers. He also reminded the Commissioners of the five budget tiers that applicants are broken into: A through E; Tier A ranges from budget sizes \$20k to \$86,882, and Tier E includes budgets \$1.59 million or more. Tiers B, C, and D range between those two extremes. *Please see the attached memo for additional*

information. He then presented how the agency funded this program in FY24-25. He noted that as the organizations got larger, the grant got more competitive. In FY24-25, 207 of the 251 applicants were funded (82%). He noted that in the FY24-25 cycle, the program prioritized more meaningful awards and created more parity between the budget tiers compared to previous years.

He then shared that there were several scenarios presented to the Programs, Grants, and Services Committee and the Executive Committee on how to fund this program given the budget constraints while meeting the core goal of this program. He shared that the agency wrestled with the following question: Do they fund more organizations with less money or fewer organizations with more money? The result was a balancing act: keeping the funded organizations about the same compared to previous years but not reducing awards by more than 30% to match the agency's reduction from the state. He shared that 231 of the 273 applicants (84%) will be funded, 43 of those 231 will be rural grantees, 52 counties will be funded, and 27 new applicants will be funded. He then shared the percent applications funded based on tier. *Please see the attached memo for additional information.* The largest reduction is 31.77% in Tier C. Mr. Ashby called for questions. None were spoken. He continued by noting that the average award compared to previous years has been reduced due to the decision to fund more organizations. He then shared some key impacts:

- **4 additional counties are funded in this model that were not funded in the previous year**
- **24 more applicants were funded this year than the previous year**

He noted that this funding recommendation is to help maintain stability in the field. Mr. Ashby also noted that this funding recommendation balances demand for Arts Project Support (APS), and that organizations that are not in AOS can apply for APS in the second cycle so as not to overstrain either program, considering the reduced funding.

He then shared the AOS grantee approval tier by tier. *Please see the attached memo for the breakdown of funded organizations by tiers.*

Ms. Valentine shared that commissioners should be looking at this program holistically and not weighing the merits of funding certain organizations.

Mr. Ashby noted that this is a two-year program, so this approval is only good for this year, and the recommendations may change in year two and will be reapproved at next summer (2026) Quarterly Business Meeting (QBM). Mr. Ashby reminded the commission that the color-coded highlights within the presentation did not translate correctly into the memo packets presented to the commission and *in this archival copy.*

Ms. Valentine called for a motion. Mr. Wylie motioned, and Mr. Oakman seconded. **By roll call vote, all were in favor and the motion passed.**

At this point, the meeting took a break at 11:50AM for twenty minutes. During the break, Mr. Hull led the meeting in a short origami activity. The meeting was reconvened at 12:10PM.

After returning from the break, Mr. Ashby noted that in AOS, funding notifications will go out September 1, 2025, which is much later than normal due to the delayed notification from the NEA.

ii. **FY26 Arts Project Support (APS) - Spring Cycle.** Mr. Ashby continued to present with the Arts Project Support (APS) funding recommendations. He began by reminding the commission that there are two cycles of this program this year. He then reminded everyone that the program is for granting up to \$4,000 for an arts experience in the state. Mr. Ashby then shared some notable changes to the program:

- **Scoring was simplified to match AOS (1-4),**
- **Application questions were revised to be aligned with the criteria,**
- **Colleges and universities must have their project for Pre-K through 12 or take place in a high-priority geographic service county,**
- **501(c)(6) tourism entities and chambers of commerce are eligible,**
- **Panel review meetings have been eliminated, and**
- **The program now has a Fall and Spring Cycle.**

He then shared some of the statistics for this program: 265 received applications, 53 new applicants, 70 counties represented, 85 applicants were rural (32% of applicant pool), and only eight colleges and universities applied (a 65% decline from FY25). The average project budget was \$19,000.

Ms. Fechtman shared some of the same data visually. *Please see the attached memo for additional information.* She noted that between AOS and APS combined, eight of the 15 Every County Funded target counties applied, and 81 of the 92 Indiana counties are applied between the two programs. She noted that since this program is only in its spring cycle, and more applicants are expected to apply in the Fall. Ms. Fechtman noted there is a large budget range in the applicant pool, ranging from \$0 to more than \$3,000,000. Ms. Fechtman noted that if not awarded in the spring cycle, applicants can apply in Fall.

Mr. Wylie asked if the reason such high-budget organizations applied for APS is because they were not funded in AOS.

Mr. Ashby responded that there will likely be some data for that in the APS Fall cycle, noting that in prior years, that has been a lagging indicator.

Ms. Fechtman added that some of those larger organizations may not be arts-focused organizations and are not available to apply to AOS. Ms. Fechtman noted the types of organizations that applied were primarily nonprofits (>80%), and the types of institutions were primarily performing groups, museums, and fairs or festivals.

Mr. Ashby then shared the funding recommendations for the whole program. He shared that the funding formula in FY25 for this program was that the top three applicants in each county were funded, and the fourth round was competitive based on scores. He shared that 70% of the applications were funded last year, with 68 counties reached. *Please see the attached memo for additional information.* He noted that the percentage of applicants recommended for funding has gone down because the program continues to become more popular, meaning applicants will be denied funding. Mr. Ashby shared that in this cycle the formula for funding was funding the top 2 scoring eligible applicants in each county that applied, and the agency eliminated the scoring threshold. He then shared that this program is funded by state appropriation and the Arts Trust. Following this, Mr. Ashby presented statistics about who will be funded this cycle. 116 of 265 applications (44%) will be funded, noting that this is significantly lower, citing the

two cycles and the reduced budget. Seventy counties will be funded, and 35 grantees are first-time APS grantees, 16 of which are new IAC applicants. 58 applications are from rural grantees. This cycle of the program's total funding is \$437,916.

Ms. Valentine noted she appreciated that the funding recommendations are in line with the results planned for this program, and that is a result of the careful planning of the agency and the commission.

Mr. Ashby continued by noting that if every project that applied was funded, the program's budget would be \$1.02 million. He also shared that applicants are not required to seek other funding for their projects, but do, and that the total additional funding leveraged was over \$5.07 million. In funded applicants \$2.07 million of additional funding is leveraged by applicants. Mr. Ashby noted that the funding approach reflects the following key considerations:

- **Prioritizing access to arts experience across the state,**
- **Reaching counties that are high priority counties for IAC communities programming, and**
- **Keeping \$200,000 in reserve for the second cycle of APS**

He added that understanding the demand is hard to predict, as the agency has never done APS in two cycles. Mr. Ashby then shared the types of activities presented by those who are recommended for funding. Arts instruction was the top demographic, followed by concerts/performance/reading, then fairs and festivals.

Ms. Michaelsen added that currently, there are a number of school corporations applying for APS funds for arts education activities in their schools. She noted that there has always been a gray area between what should be in the school curriculum versus what is arts access. She added that this may be a change that is made in the coming years, and the agency will be in conversation with the Indiana Department of Education to clear up any ambiguity.

Mr. Ashby then shared the applicants recommended for funding, sorted in alphabetical order. *Please see the attached memo for the list of applicants recommended for funding.* He then called for questions.

Ms. Arrington-Slocum asked about how denied applicants (both first-time and prior recipients) would be communicated with.

Mr. Ashby shared that when the denied notification goes out, the agency can encourage them to apply for the second cycle. He also shared that first-time applicants are eligible for a draft review by their Regional Arts Partner and that some rural counties may qualify for a community program. He also stated that it's unfortunate not to fund previously funded applicants, but that due to the quality of applications, some may have just scored better by the review panelists. Non-funded applicants who have previously been funded are encouraged to apply in the second cycle.

IAC Marketing and Communications Director, Connie Brahm, shared that all contact information for previous applicants is saved, and the IAC can direct them to other internal and external grant opportunities. Mr. Ashby also noted that in both AOS and

APS applicants will get their comments from the reviews, regardless of whether they were funded or not.

Mr. Martinez highlighted that the APS program has around \$600,000 this year, compared to around \$800,000 last year. Mr. Martinez continued by asking if the current cycle of APS has around \$400,000 allocated to it, if the Fall cycle has less money.

Mr. Ashby responded that yes, it will.

Ms. McRobbie asked how many of these changes in budget have been forecasted to the communities that applied.

Mr. Ashby shared that the decline notification will include language about the IAC's reduced budget, and that this project is more competitive than in previous years as a result.

Mr. Ashby called for more questions. None were spoken.

Ms. Valentine called for a motion to approve the funding recommendations. Ms. McRobbie motioned, Mr. Bolser seconded. **By roll call vote, all were in favor and the motion passed.**

Mr. Ashby then shared a macro look at both programs at this time. The demand for both is increasing steadily; there were 531 applications between both programs, with another cycle of APS to go later this year. He predicted that by December, it could be the case that applications are up 20% from the previous year. He noted that more updates will come later in this fiscal year. He also noted that the programs continue to have an increased reach throughout the state, which he believes is a testament to the staff connecting with the state.

Mr. Ashby then shared what will come next for the programs team. There will be an analysis of the grantee pool, a discussion of the program changes to AOS and APS, and an application evaluation process presented at the September QBM. America250 is waiting on the NEA for guidelines. Mr. Ashby noted that the NEA's Arts and Health dollars were competitive and not given to every state. This funding will be reinvested in the creative aging programs the agency offers, with updates coming at the remaining two QBMs this year. Finally, he noted that the Creative Convergence framework will be presented at the next QBM, and this program will be offered twice. He thanked the commissioners for their participation in the funding process for AOS and APS.

- iii. **Traditional Arts Indiana (TAI) Update.** Mr. Ashby then gave a verbal presentation about Traditional Arts Indiana (TAI). He shared a reminder of what TAI was, highlighting that it is a partnership between the IAC and Indiana University. He noted that some of the NEA award is earmarked for folk life programming. He noted that TAI will not show up in funding recommendations with AOS and APS, as this program is a professional services contract rather than a grant. He shared that Dr. Jon Kay will come with some more updates later this calendar year.

Mr. Ashby then presented about Poetry Out Loud. This program is managed by Indiana Humanities, similarly to TAI, and invites Indiana youth to participate in poetry presentations.

Ms. McRobbie asked about the poet laureate program and if there are any expected changes in the current State laureate.

Mr. Ashby shared that Curtis Crisler has been offered renewal in that position. Mr. Zhang Sonera corrected that Mr. Crisler accepted a second term, and that a renewal contract will be issued in the fall.

- a. Artist Services Presentation.** IAC Artist Services Program Manager, Jordan Adams, presented this agenda item. She shared that the Artist Needs Assessment was completed in 2023-2024. The programs that came out of those sessions were Work In Progress Exchange Labs (WIP). *Please see the attached memo for additional background on WIP.* Ms. Adams noted the program is in Phase Two of its three phases. *Please see the attached memo for information about the phases.* She then shared a bit about the Curriculum and Discussion guide, which includes guidelines for both artists and facilitators in the program. Ms. Adams noted that some of this program's discussion structures came from the book *Creative Back* by Rick Rubin. Ms. Adams then shared the 12 grantees funded in this Spring Cycle—primarily in the “west” and “south” WIP regions. She noted that there have been 12 grantees selected for this spring cycle. *Please see the attached memo for additional information about the Work in Progress Exchange Labs.*

Ms. Adams then shared about The Creative Leap, a program intended to be launch point after the On-Ramp program. This program's applications were open from May-June 2025, *Please see the attached memo for additional information about The Creative Leap.* Today, July 18, 2025, was the deadline for grantees to accept the invitation to participate. Ms. Adams called for questions about the two programs. None were spoken.

Ms. Adams concluded by stating that the On-Ramp evaluation update is in the data collection phase and is being managed by Measurement Resources. She noted that there are a few surveys that the agency sends to the On-Ramp participants during the program and after the completion of the program that Measurement Resources has access to as part of the evaluation. Ms. Adams called for questions for her entire presentation.

Ms. Bradley asked Ms. Adams to discuss the affirming step in the five-step process in the Work in Progress Exchange Labs program.

Ms. Adams noted many artists, when finished with a work, hit a “the work is done, so now what” phase of an artistic project. She concluded, noting that this program (WIP) is meant to create solid work rather than focusing on just getting to the end goal of presenting something.

- 2. Regional Arts Partnership Update.** IAC Regional Arts Partner, Kayla Myers, gave this presentation. She shared that the partners are in the process of reviewing the FY24-25 AOS Final Grant Reports and that she was very thankful for the IAC staff sharing the transparency about the delays in funding and funding notifications for the core programs. She shared that despite some shakeups in the traditional funding cycle; the cohort is excited to get the funding notifications out soon.

3. Consent Agenda Items Moved to Full Agenda. Ms. Valentine skipped this agenda item as no items were moved.

4. Old Business and New Business. Ms. Valentine called for any old or new business to be shared at this time.

Ms. Michaelsen shared that two commissioners are now term-limited and will serve until they are replaced: Ms. Valentine and Ms. McRobbie. Ms. Michaelsen thanked both Commissioners for their service at this meeting and during their tenure. Both were presented with tokens of appreciation. She reminded them that they serve until they are replaced and may still attend the September QBM. Ms. Michaelsen then shared some specific moments of these Commissioners' leadership as both the Chair for Ms. Valentine and Chair of the Programs, Grants, and Services Committee for Ms. McRobbie.

Mr. Zhang Sonera then presented IAC Financial Operations Manager, Stephane Pfendler, with a recognition for her ten years of service at the Indiana Arts Commission. Ms. McRobbie shared that she was very grateful for Ms. Pfendler's time and for working with her over the years here at the commission.

Ms. Valentine thanked Ms. McRobbie for her time on the commission as well. No other business was shared.

5. FY26 Officer Election and Approval. Ms. Valentine asked Mr. Hendricks to verbally call the slate of nominated Commissioners. The list is as follows: the role of Chair, Commissioner Dave Haist of Wabash, Ind.; the role of Vice-Chair, Commissioner Réna Bradley of Fort Wayne, Ind.; and for the role of Secretary, Commissioner Scott Wylie of Evansville, Ind.

Ms. Valentine then called for a motion. Mr. Oakman motioned, and Ms. Arrington-Slocum seconded. **By roll call vote, all were in favor and the motion passed.**

6. Adjournment of Quarterly Meeting. Newly elected Commission Chair, Dave Haist, thanked Ms. Valentine for her time and leadership as Chair. Mr. Haist adjourned the meeting at 1:04 PM.