

SOUTH CAROLINA ARTS COMMISSION
Board of Commissioners Meeting
June 26, 2025

Note: The time, date, location, and agenda for this meeting were publicized as required by South Carolina laws covering meetings of public bodies.

Members Present

Flavia Harton, Heidi Carey, David Hodges, Barbara Nwokike, Rip Parks, Jessica Rourke, Linda Stern, Danielle Thompson

Staff Present

David Platts, Nick Boismenu, Angela Brewbaker, Tanisha Brown, Daisha Calhoun, McKenzie Drake, Maria Earl, Jonathan Eason, Krista Grendze, Milly Hough, Trinity Howell, Wendy Jackson, Victoria McCurry, Amanda McSwine, Mikayla Moore, Kimberly Washburn Motte, Amanda Noyes, Laurel Posey, Johnathan Rabon, Abby Rawl, Ce Scott-Fitts, Chris Scudder, Harvee White, Hailey Yasinski

Call to Order

Chair Flavia Harton called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

Introduction of New Members

Executive Director David Platts recognized new commissioners David Hodges, Jessica Rourke, and Danielle Thompson, who were appointed by Gov. McMaster and confirmed by the Senate May 8.

- David Hodges, a native of Columbia, has been in the life insurance industry for 48 years with the MassMutual Life Insurance Company.
- Jessica Rourke of Columbia has worked as a wedding planner for 20 years.
- Danielle Thompson of Sumter is the founder of Quixote Hospitality and has been involved in the development of downtown Sumter. She and her husband founded a charter school in Sumter.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Harton called for a motion to approve minutes from meetings held April 17, 2025, and April 25, 2025. Ms. Carey made a motion; Ms. Stern seconded. The minutes were approved.

FY2026 Budget

Finance Director Angela Brewbaker presented the FY26 operating budget, which includes a comparison of income between FY25 and FY26. **State Income** includes the FY26 state base appropriation of \$500,000 in recurring funds and \$1 million in nonrecurring funds, and state carry forward includes nonrecurring state funds from previous years. The agency has the authority to carry forward up to 10% of state base appropriations into the next year. **Federal Income** includes the recently announced National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) partnership grant award of \$1,196,438, plus NEA extended funds for FY23 and FY24. The amounts for state carry forward and NEA extended will change after final closeout of FY25. Ms. Brewbaker will bring a revised budget to the board at the Aug. 14 meeting. The Other funding source currently includes Education Improvement Act (EIA) funds. Additional Other funds will be added later in the year.

Expenditures are divided into two sections. Administration includes operating expenses such as contractual maintenance, information technology, and purchasing/property. Statewide Arts Services reflects programmatic expenses, including grant awards.

Responding to a question from Mr. Parks, Ms. Brewbaker clarified that the increase in salaries and fringes in the Administration section resulted from moving some salaries and fringe to the Administration section from the Statewide Arts Services section. The shift better aligns with how the agency operates. That move also resulted in a reduction of salaries/fringe in the Statewide Arts Services section.

Ms. Harton called for a motion to approve the FY26 operating budget as presented. Ms. Carey made a motion; Ms. Stern seconded. The motion passed.

Grants Request

Recusals

Commissioners were recused from voting on these categories:

- General Operating Support – Heidi Carey and Barbara Nwokike
- Festivals Grant and America 250 – David Hodges
- Partnerships and Special Projects – David Hodges and Barbara Nwokike

Arts Industry

Mr. Platts introduced the FY26 grants request by reviewing how the Arts Industry area of focus accomplishes the strategic plan outcomes:

- Provides a robust grant portfolio for arts organizations and providers.
- Supports collaborations between arts providers and local, statewide, and national funders to maximize impact of public funds.
- Develops diverse cross-sector relationships that engage arts and culture providers to address local issues in matters that may include economic, community or workforce development, healthcare, education, public safety, housing or capital.

Deputy Director Ce Scott-Fitts reviewed the requested amounts for five Arts Industry grant categories. Due to recusals, each category was voted on separately. The following grant amounts were approved:

Grant Category	Amount	Motion/Second
Operating Support for Small Organizations	\$254,000	Ms. Carey/Ms. Stern
General Operating Support	\$3,700,000	Mr. Parks/Ms. Stern
Arts Project Support - Organizations	\$60,000	Ms. Nwokike/Ms. Carey
Festivals Programs	\$163,000	Ms. Stern/Mr. Parks
America 250	\$25,000	Ms. Carey/Ms. Stern

Artist Development

Mr. Platts outlined how the agency’s Artist Development area of focus helps accomplish strategic plan outcomes:

- Provides a robust grant portfolio for individual artists.

- Cultivates partnerships and peer networks that create professional opportunities and make more efficient use of resources for artists.
- Supports and promotes the essential role artists as citizens serve in their communities.
- Provides opportunities for artists to participate in a learning continuum ranging from pre-professional to advanced career training.

Ms. Scott-Fitts reviewed the requested amounts for four Artist Development grant categories. No recusals were necessary, so the categories were voted on as a group. The following grant amounts were approved:

Grant Category	Amount	Motion/Second
Arts Project Support - Artists	\$120,000	Ms. Nwokike/Ms. Carey
Emerging Artists (2 cohorts)	\$25,000	
Artists' Business Initiative	\$13,500	
Fellowships	\$40,000	

Arts Learning

Mr. Platts shared how the Arts Learning area of focus helps accomplish strategic plan outcomes:

- Provides a robust Arts in Education grant portfolio.
- Works in partnership with public and private entities to advance arts in education.
- Works with organizations, decision-makers, and advocates to affect local, state and national policies that ensure quality arts in education experiences for all students.
- Provides opportunities for teaching artists, educators, and arts organizations to participate in a learning continuum ranging from pre-professional to advanced career training.

Deputy Director Kimberly Washburn Motte reviewed the amounts requested for the four Arts Learning categories. No recusals were necessary, so the categories were voted on as a group. The following grant amounts were approved:

Grant Category	Amount	Motion/Second
School Arts Support	\$150,000	Ms. Carey/Ms. Stern
ABC Schools Advancement	\$805,000	
District Arts Support	\$225,000	
Term Arts Education Projects	\$165,998	

Multiple Areas of Focus/Other

The final grants request section included several categories not confined to one area of focus, but that contribute to strategic plan outcomes in a variety of ways:

- Consistently award grants and provide services that impact all 46 counties.

- Cultivate direct programs and partnerships that create professional opportunities for artists statewide and within Arts Hub Regions.
- Conduct or commission research and evaluation that documents the value of the arts and arts education.

Ms. Motte reviewed the amounts requested for the four categories in the Multiple Areas of Focus/Other section. Due to recusals, each category was voted on separately. The following grant amounts were approved:

Grant Category	Amount	Motion/Second
Art of Community: Rural SC	\$80,000	Ms. Carey/Ms. Rourke
Accessibility	\$20,000	Mr. Parks/Ms. Carey
Horizon Opportunity	\$20,000	Ms. Stern/Ms. Rourke
Partnerships and Special Projects	\$4,044,000	Mr. Parks/Ms. Carey

Governor’s Awards for the Arts

Senior Deputy Director Milly Hough introduced two recommended category changes for the Governor’s Awards for the Arts. These changes would take effect when nominations open September 2. She reminded commissioners that there are currently six categories: Arts Education, Organization, Government, Business/Foundation, Individual, and Individual Artist.

The first category change is to divide the Arts Education category into one category for individuals and one category for institutions. The current category with individuals and institutions in the same nominee pool makes the panel’s job more difficult because they are comparing apples to oranges. Feedback from nominators over the years supports this change.

The revised categories:

- ARTS IN EDUCATION – INDIVIDUAL - open to S.C. individuals and/or institutions whose primary function is arts education. May include arts educators - teachers, consultants, principals, or administrators. schools, school districts, college/university arts departments, etc.
- ARTS IN EDUCATION – INSTITUTIONS - open to SC individuals and/or institutions whose primary function is arts education. May include arts educators (teachers, consultants, principals, administrators), schools, school districts, college/university arts departments, etc.

The second recommendation is to add an Accessibility category to honor organizations’ accomplishments in making the arts more accessible for those with disabilities.

The category:

- ACCESSIBILITY – open to S.C. organizations that receive S.C. Arts Commission operating support funding and that have demonstrated a commitment to improving or providing access to the arts for individuals with disabilities in South Carolina.

Amanda Noyes, Arts Learning & Accessibility Director, shared a brief overview of the agency’s work in this area to provide context around the category addition.

In a response to a question from Ms. Thompson, Ms. Hough clarified that organizations would be the only recipients for the new Accessibility category; staff will evaluate the category after one year and recommend any needed updates.

Ms. Harton called for a motion to approve category updates to the Governor's Awards for the Arts policy as recommended by staff. Ms. Stern made a motion; Ms. Nwokike seconded. The motion passed.

Agency Updates

Mr. Platts shared several updates:

- After a two-month delay, the National Endowment for the Arts issued preliminary offer letters June 18 for the next round of State Partnership Agreements. These funds will be drawn from FY25 federal funds to support FY26 state activities. After states submit additional information, the NEA will issue official award letters. Awards will include the standard funding components for SCAC's strategic plan, underserved communities, arts education, folk and traditional arts. and Poetry Out Loud, plus one-time funds for America 250 and an arts and health pilot project.
- Mr. Platts added that while the agency is deeply grateful that NEA funds have been awarded, staff members continue to be respectful of the many S.C. grantees who were notified that their NEA grants were being terminated. Therefore, the agency will not make any special announcements or invite media coverage of the award notification. The NEA Partnership Agreement will ultimately be a matter of public record, but staff intends to be thoughtful about how the information is positioned in public.
- Mr. Platts advised commissioners that they may be asked why state arts agencies received NEA grants while other organizations lost their awards. The response is that the NEA is following a congressional directive to allocate 40% of its grant funds to states and regions. The federal-state partnership also leverages state dollars and ultimately supports more than 30,000 grants nationwide. Sustaining the partnership is a positive step that can help to stabilize the arts field at a time of uncertainty.
- The final version of the FY26 state budget bill has been adopted, with SCAC receiving an additional \$500,000 in recurring funds and an additional \$1 million in one-time nonrecurring funds. The nonrecurring funds will not be released until February 20, a delay designed to ensure the state's economy is still strong and can support the funds being disbursed to agencies.
- In early June, South Arts held its board meeting in Greenville. This was the last meeting for retiring President and CEO Susie Surkamer, who previously served as executive director for the Arts Commission. South Arts board members heard presentations from Artisphere and the Greenville City Poet Laureate, Glenis Redmond, and toured the S.C. Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities. They also viewed the Southern Prize exhibition presented by South Arts at Wofford College. Greenville-area commissioners Flavia Harton and Rip Parks joined the group for the tour.
- All Governor's Arts Awards presentations have taken place in recipient communities in Columbia, Sumter, Rock Hill, and Charleston. Mr. Platts reminded commissioners that the awards presentation film can be watched on the Arts Commission's YouTube channel.
- Mr. Platts thanked staff for their hard work during one of the busiest times of the year. Year-end includes a flurry of final grant reports and payments, plus closing out finances while preparing to begin another year.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:35 a.m.