



Washington State Arts Commission

Board Meeting Minutes / Tuesday, April 29 – Wednesday, April 30, 2025 /
Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center, Wenatchee, WA 98801

Commissioners Present

Robin Avni, Second Vice Chair
Mary Big Bull-Lewis
Michael Cade
Jackson Cooper
Lou Oma Durand
Tony Ginn
Ryan Hardesty
Tisa Matheson
Terry Morgan
Noël Moxley
Catherine Nueva España
Charlie Robin, Chair
Star Rush
Krishna Thiagarajan

Commissioners Absent

Claudia Castro Luna
Chonchol Gupta
Jasmine Mahmoud, PhD, First Vice Chair
Bennyroyce Royon
Senator Lisa Wellman
Representative Sharon Wylie

ArtsWA Staff Presenters

Daniya Baisubanova, Wellness, Arts & the Military
Program Specialist and PEAR Team Leader
Angelena Campobasso, Tribal Cultural Affairs Program
Manager
Carina Del Rosario, WAYAL Program Specialist
Miguel Guillén, Grants to Organizations Program
Manager
Karen Hanan, Executive Director
Tamar Krames, Arts in Education Program Manager
Adrienne Kerrigan, Community Relations Program
Coordinator
Alexis Sarah, Early Learning Program Manager
Aaron Semer, Creative Districts Program Manager
Deane Shellman, Deputy Director
Mike Sweney, Art in Public Places Program Manager
Michael Wallenfels, Communications Manager
Cheryl Wilcox, retiring Tribal Cultural Affairs Program
Manager

Guests & Speakers

Ramona Campobasso, constituent
Sydney Frost, 2025 Washington Poetry Out Loud State
Champion, Mt. Spokane High School
Thomas Grant Richardson, WACultures Executive
Director
Courtney Tiffany, Director of Operations, Wenatchee
Valley Museum and Cultural Center
WAYAL PROGRAM YOUTH: Annabelle Betts,
TaeZhanae Hays-Cormier, Olga Loktev, Afra Mizra,
Soleil Olivera-Hernandez, Dhaya Sarathy and Grace
Thykkuttathil

For a full transcript of the meeting, please view the recording at:

[ArtsWA Board Minutes-April 29-2025](#)

[ArtsWA Board Minutes-April 30-2025](#)

April 29, 2025

Call to Order / Land Acknowledgement / Roll Call

Robin, ArtsWA Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:31 p.m. Wilcox, Tribal Cultural Affairs Program Manager, read the land acknowledgement. Roll call was conducted, and a quorum was verified. Public comment rules were shared.

A MOTION to approve the agenda was made by Ginn, seconded by Avni, and passed unanimously.

Courtney Tiffany, Director of Operations, Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center, welcomed the board. Arts and culture are the foundation of a vibrant community. ArtsWA grants have helped to grow programs that support families and children to explore arts and culture through and events.

Board Chair's Report

Robin reviewed his report (packet page 1-2). He reminded the board that we represent our communities and the artistic needs of the state in a bi-partisan manner. We are tasked with moving forward focusing on what can be done to support the arts sector and constituents in a positive way.

Governor Ferguson's Proclamation of May as Arts Education Month was read by Washington Young Arts Leaders (WAYAL) youth with an introduction by Tamar Krames, AIE Program Manager (packet p. 3). This year's proclamation was co-written by the WAYAL cohort.

Executive Director's Report

Hanan reviewed her report (packet pp. 4-8).

Governor Ferguson is reviewing the budget. Hanan previously sent commissioners a breakdown of the impacts to ArtsWA. The CRM is funded enough to get it operating and to maintain it. There is a small general wage increase for state employees and no furloughs. Funding is provided to continue the Billy Frank Jr. statute project. ArtsWA did have to make budget cuts to programs.

ArtsWA receives federal funding from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) through the state partnership grant. The future of the NEA and its ability to provide these grants is currently unknown. Doge came to the NEA last week and continues its review. National Endowment for the Humanities funding was severely cut by Doge, which has impacted several vital programs that ArtsWA partners with Humanities Washington. Hanan is 1st Vice Chair of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) board. NASAA has people in Washington D.C. keeping Hanan and all state arts agencies informed of current federal administration impacts on policies and funding regarding arts, culture and the humanities.

ArtsWA continues to manage and oversee the Billy Frank Jr. project working with the Governor-appointed committee. All required federal approvals for the statue have been received. Focus is now on requests for bids on fabrication and also on transportation of the statue to Washington D.C.

The "Own Your Own Art" program development is moving forward without legislative approval. Once established, the program can be used for the purchase of existing artwork or the

commissioning of a work by a Washington State artist procured through a participating arts business that has been certified by ArtsWA. The program will allow people to apply for an interest-free loan.

Hanan continues to work on the Social Prescribing / Art Pharmacy project. A promising partnership between ArtsWA, Art Pharmacy, Path with Art, the Department of Health and a potential funder is evolving. This would be a state-wide program supported by the insurance networks that would transform health care in Washington. ArtsWA's role is to bring together all the partners, find initial funding, and then let it evolve after it is established. In Europe and the UK, this program has been operating for many years. Massachusetts is a model for this program, and Connecticut is progressing.

ArtsWA is working with several partners to help communities throughout Washington commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Independence through the America 250 initiative. This is a focus of the current administration, so there may be funding from the federal administration. At the least, ArtsWA will spread the word about this anniversary and whatever communities are planning throughout the state.

Debrief of key bills

Wallenfels reviewed the 2025 Legislative session (packet p. 9) and review some of the notable bills. The Heritage Caucus meets at 7 am on Wednesdays throughout the session. This is an active and supportive group. Commissioners are encouraged to attend virtually. ArtsWA presents at least once during session. Heritage Caucus is built on a bipartisan structure with Representative Tharinger and Senator Warnick are the current co-chairs. ArtsWA provides weekly bills reports as prepared by Michael. He tracks bills that have impact on arts, heritage and culture. He reviewed some of the bill highlights.

Biennium 7th Quarter Report

Hanan and Shellman, Deputy Director, reviewed the 2024-25 Biennium 7th Quarter Report (packet pp. 10-21). The budget is on track to be spent by the end of the fiscal year including artwork acquisition billing for expenditures. Remaining Billy Frank Jr. project funding will be reappropriated to the FY 2026 biennium to cover future stages of this program. Bidding for fabrication of the two statutes will be open soon. Spending all budget funds is very important to our agency. All funds not spent by the end of the fiscal year are reclaimed by the state. Private and federal funds can be carried over from one fiscal year to another, but state general operating funds cannot be rolled over into a future fiscal year.

CRM Dashboard preview

Wallenfels, Communications Manager, provided an overview of the upcoming Customer Relations Management (CRM) database and the reports it will generate. Kerrigan, Community Relations Program Coordinator, explained the CRM is a staff facing tool that can support commissioner advocacy efforts. Commissioners will be able to make requests to staff for reports on activities within their districts prior to meetings with legislators.

Approve Consent Agenda

A MOTION to accept the consent agenda of minutes for the April 29-30, 2025 Board Meeting (handout) was made by Cade and seconded by Hardesty. There were no changes. The motion passed unanimously.

Creative Districts

Semer, Creative Districts Program Manager, and Kerrigan reviewed the list of Creative Districts to be recertified (packet pp. 22). Part of recertification includes an examination of lessons learned and their five-year future work plans. He provided a brief overview for each district.

A MOTION to approve recertification for Issaquah, Langley Creates, Port Townsend, Tenino, and Twisp and operating funds grants of \$7,500 for each was made by Ginnn, seconded by Moxley. Conflicts of interest: The motion was approved with two recusals due to conflict of interest Cade (Tenino), Nueva España (Port Townsend).

Grants to Organizations

Miguel Guillén, GTO Program Manager, reviewed General Operating Support for Emerging and Small Organizations – Fiscal Year 2026 and 2027 (packet pp. 23-30).

This program offers General Operating Support grants to Emerging and Small Organizations. Groups can apply for Fiscal Sponsorship with our partner Shunpike through this application. Applicants can request up to \$6,000 split across two years (\$3,000 x 2) for general operating expenses. Grant amounts may vary depending on available funds.

A MOTION that the board ratify the decision of the Executive Director to approve the panel's recommendation for first-year grants for FY 2026 General Operating Support for Emerging/Small Organization grants totaling \$110,350 as provided in the packet was made by Thiagarajan, seconded by Cade, with one conflict of interest: Big Bull-Lewis (Dangerous Women). The motion passed with one recusal due to conflict of interest.

Note: exact grant amounts might be adjusted when the final FY 2026 budget is determined.

Arts in Education

Krames and Sarah reviewed two grants for approval.

Creative Start Project Grant

The Creative Start Project Grant (packet pp. 31-35) funds projects that integrate the arts to support learning for preschool to 3rd grade students. This one-year grant focuses on helping students grow creatively, academically, and emotionally, with a strong emphasis on equitable access to arts education. It encourages partnerships between educators, schools, families, teaching artists, and organizations to create inclusive and culturally relevant arts experiences for students.

A MOTION for the Board to approve the panel recommendation for FY26 Creative Start Project grants totaling \$200,000 as provided in the packet was made by Hardesty, seconded by Cade, with no conflicts of interest. The motion passed unanimously.

Sustaining Project Grant

The Arts in Education (AIE) Sustaining Project Grant (packet pp. 36-45) is a two-year grant that supports a variety of arts learning projects in Washington's schools, nonprofits, Tribal communities, and other community settings. This grant funds efforts to sustain, deepen, and grow arts learning opportunities for PreK-12 students.

A MOTION for the Board to approve panel recommendation for FY26-27 Sustaining Project Grants totaling \$994,376.35 as provided in the packet was made by Big Bull-Lewis and seconded by Cade, with no conflicts of interest. The motion passed unanimously.

Note: exact grant amounts might be adjusted when the final FY 2026 budget is determined.

Tribal Cultural Affairs

Wilcox, TCA Program Manager, reviewed the Tribal Cultural Grants (packet pp. 46-50). This non-competitive grant offers funding for Washington State Federally recognized Tribes to support Tribal communities as they expand, enhance, or create space for art and culture that is respectful and responsive to each community's needs. These are non-competitive grants. Two tribes that have treaty rights but are not based in Washington have asked to be included in future grants: Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Nez Perce Tribe. TCA is working with the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs and the Attorney General's Office for a formal decision, which would affect next year's granting.

A MOTION that the Board approve the recommendation for the FY26 Tribal Cultural Grant totaling \$493,000 as provided in the packet was made by Nueva España, seconded by Moxley, and passed unanimously with no conflicts of interest.

Board Development and Nominating Committee

Avni and Nueva España, co-chairs, outlined this process, which is designed to collect feedback on how the Board is accomplishing its mission, collect suggestions for future endeavors, and determine candidates for next year's board officers. They asked commissioners to provide suggestions for questions to ask the Board in the survey as soon as possible, as it will be distributed in the near future.

Poetry Out Loud (POL)

Sarah, Arts in Education Project Manager, oversees the Poetry Out Loud program with Judy Cullen, AIE Specialist (packet p. 51). POL is a core requirement of the state partnership grant with the NEA. All fifty states and six territories run POL programs simultaneously. It is a program that engages high school students in recitation of poetry. Students gain self-confidence and connect deeply with classic and contemporary poetry. Students advance from their classroom competitions, their schools, districts, then state-wide. All state finalists go to Washington D.C. for competition to determine a national champion.

This year's **POL State Champion**, Sydney Frost of Mt. Spokane High School (Mead, WA), recited *The Siren Song* by Margaret Atwood for the board.

Poetry Forward is open to all school champions and virtual POL participants to submit their original poems. This year's first place winner is competitions Sidra Marshall of Anacortes High School (Anacortes, WA).

Public Comment

Ramona Campobasso praised the efforts of ArtsWA to support tribal arts and culture.

Adjourn

Robin adjourned the meeting at 3:30 p.m. for the day.

April 30, 2026

Call to Order / Roll Call

Robin, ArtsWA Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Krames and del Rosario introduced the WAYAL program youth observing the board meeting.

Center for Washington Cultural Traditions Update

Thomas Grant Richardson, Director, said the Center is now known as WACultures, which is a partnership between Humanities Washington (HumWA), ArtsWA, and the National Endowment for the Arts folk arts program.

Richardson explained that on April 2, DOGE cancelled all National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grants. The oral history project is shut down. The folk arts archiving project cannot proceed, but past accomplishments leave it in good shape for the moment. Humanities WA is taking legislative, legal and philanthropic actions to continue its work. All HumWA staff are furloughed one day per week. The Mellon Foundation provided a one-time lump sum donation that will help programming continue for six months.

HumWA and ArtsWA have agreed to ensure the Heritage Arts Apprenticeship Program (HAAP) continues through this year. This program helps master artists and tradition bearers foster a new generation of artisans by supporting training on a traditional trade, craft, or skill.

Richardson previewed the new WACultures website which features photographs of existing artists in Washington state.

Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) Team Quarterly Meeting Recap

Baisubanova, PEAR Team Leader and Hanan provided an overview of recent work (packet pp. 52-62). In 2022, Governor Inslee signed an executive order establishing PEAR. ArtsWA has been focused on this work for the last two to three years. The PEAR team includes state constituents, ArtsWA staff, and commissioners. ArtsWA reports to the Office of Equity on accomplished work.

Current state of equity work is more challenging with the current federal environment. The Governor has outlined guidance for Washington state to navigate this environment (packet p. 61). As an organization, we tune in and adopt the changes from state and federal level guidelines. Equity work is an ongoing process. Hanan explained that state focused work, not subject to federal government guidelines, will continue to focus on equity. Work supported by federal funds will be required to follow federal guidelines.

Public Artist Roster Update

Sweney, Art in Public Places (AIPP) Program Manager, reviewed the roster process (packet p. 63). The roster is a pre-qualified list of U.S. and B.C. based artists. This list is used by local art selection committees to select the artist for their public art project. Local decisions are key to design in acquisition. The selected artist is educated on the art site and the local culture and history.

The 2025-2029 roster call has specific criteria such as a unique vision or perspective, skill in technique, and the ability to engage with a site/community. Improvements were made to the process to ensure this opportunity is more accessible to a vast array of artists including underrepresented communities such as rural, central and eastern Washington, and artists of color.

The roster application opens this week. AIPP staff will conduct online webinars and several public outreach events to reach as many artists from various regions throughout the state as possible. Sweney asked commissioners to spread the word to their constituents.

Recognition of Outgoing Board Members

Chair Robin and Hanan recognized the contributions of outgoing commissioners Dr. Kelvin Frank, Ryan Hardesty, and Senator Matt Boehnke.

Retiring staff member, Cheryl Wilcox, ArtsWA's first Tribal Cultural Affairs Program Manager was also recognized. She successfully launched this new program and has achieved 100% participation by tribes in the granting program.

Strategic Plan

Hanan and Wallenfels reviewed information gathered from listening sessions that will inform FY 2026 program goals. Later this year, ArtsWA will begin the planning process for its future strategic plan.

Advocacy

Thiagarajan, Advocacy Chair, explained the role of commissioners is to help communicate ArtsWA's resources to their local wide constituency of elected officials, foundations, corporations, venture capital funders, and legislators, and other possible partners. After these meetings it is important to funnel back the information and insight gained from these connections.

According to the data, Washington State pays more to the federal government than it receives back. It is a "net giving" state rather than a "net receiving" state. Today we learned some of the devastating impacts of the dismantling of NEH funding. Currently, we do not know how the NEA will be impacted. It is important to understanding and maintain state-wide funding for the arts. Thiagarajan reminded

commissioners that ArtsWA is a bi-partisan entity. It is more important than ever to educate both sides of the isle about the value of the arts. Commissioners are asked to meet with their legislators and other elected officials during this interim period before the next legislative session begins.

Public Comment

Ramona Campobasso thanked the board and staff for the work they do to support arts and culture in Washington State.

Adjourn

Robin adjourned the meeting at 2:05 p.m.