

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS

September 30, 2025

Embedding a Creative Strategist in the Office of Immigrant Affairs

In June 2017, the Los Angeles County (County) Board of Supervisors (Board) approved a motion by Supervisor Hilda L. Solis and former Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas to fund a key recommendation from the County’s Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative (CEII): to embed artists, arts administrators, and other creative professionals within County departments as Creative Strategists. Supervisor Solis championed CEII to ensure that equity, cultural inclusion, and community voice are built into the structure and values of County government.

The Creative Strategist-Artist in Residence (Creative Strategist) program places artists in County departments to work alongside staff, community partners, and residents. These residencies support departments in using the creative process to develop, communicate, and implement more inclusive and community-informed public policies and services. The program is one of the foundational strategies of CEII and continues to serve as a key implementation tool for the Countywide Cultural Policy, which was also led by Supervisor Solis. That policy recognizes arts and culture as essential to achieving just human-centered governance.

Throughout history, the United States has turned to artists during times of

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Solis	_____
Mitchell	_____
Horvath	_____
Hahn	_____
Barger	_____

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national crisis. During the Great Depression, New Deal programs provided employment for artists who created works that reflected the struggles and hopes of everyday people. In the Cold War era, the government invested in cultural diplomacy to shape public perception. In the 1970s, during another economic downturn, artists were supported through federal job programs that recognized the social value of cultural labor.

Today, local governments across the country are embedding artists in civic agencies to address challenges in housing, public health, justice, education, and immigration. These residencies vary in structure, but all aim to integrate artistic thinking into the design and delivery of public services. They demonstrate that artists can serve as trusted collaborators, creative problem solvers, and community connectors.

Los Angeles County's Creative Strategist program has already shown this potential in practice. During the 2021 to 2022 residency of artist Phung Huynh with the Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA) in the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA), she applied her own lived-experience as a refugee and her artistic focus on Southeast Asian representation to develop arts-based strategies aimed at building trust between County agencies and immigrant communities. Huynh created interactive art activities for outreach events, designed visual materials featuring OIA staff to foster recognition and approachability, taught the OIA team how to apply the arts lens to community outreach and engagement, and mentored team members to sustain arts-based engagement beyond her residency. Her work strengthened OIA's efforts to increase community participation in County services and helped integrate creative

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practices into OIA's ongoing work.

The need for another Creative Strategist within OIA is urgent. Immigrant communities in the County are living with greater risks and fear under the Trump administration. Families are experiencing more frequent and aggressive immigration enforcement, including ICE systematically detaining them without judicial warrants just because of the color of their skin, the language they speak, and the kind of work they do. This is tearing families apart, as detention and deportation leave children, loved ones, and communities behind to struggle with the emotional and financial consequences. These tactics have sown fear and uncertainty, causing many to avoid critical services out of fear of detention or deportation. The recent Supreme Court decision upholding roving patrols further heightens these risks, making it more important than ever to protect and inform residents. In this challenging environment, government agencies must do more than provide services. They must lead with empathy and courage to rebuild public trust, strengthen community resilience, and ensure programs are accessible and responsive to all Angelenos.

Embedding a Creative Strategist in OIA at this critical time is an important step in responding to the ongoing crisis immigrants and their families are facing. A Creative Strategist can help OIA and the County look at the challenges in new ways and imagine fresh solutions. They can help reimagine how the County connects with immigrant communities and communicates programs that reflect the lived experiences of those most affected. Now more than ever, it is vital Angelenos see themselves in the

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government and services they are meant to access. They can support efforts to share vital Know Your Rights information with every Angeleno, acknowledging that racial profiling impacts not only immigrants but also U.S. citizens. Artists can create space for grief and resilience, document and elevate community voices, and help transform systems from within.

This proposal builds on a proven model, visionary leadership, and a countywide commitment to cultural equity. Embedding a Creative Strategist in OIA is not symbolic, but a necessary step toward ensuring that our policies and institutions are as inclusive and imaginative as the people they are meant to serve.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture to collaborate with OIA in DCBA to embed a Creative Strategist in OIA for Fiscal Year 2025-2026.

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