



Executive Director's
Report to the
Board of Harbor Commissioners

DATE: DECEMBER 16, 2025

FROM: COMMUNITY RELATIONS

SUBJECT: RESOLUTION NO. _____ - APPROVAL OF AGREEMENTS WITH AVALON ARTS AND CULTURAL ALLIANCE, INTERNATIONAL TRADE EDUCATION PROGRAMS, INC. DBA EXP AND LOS ANGELES MARITIME INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INVESTMENT GRANTS

SUMMARY:

Staff requests approval of three agreements between the City of Los Angeles Harbor Department (Harbor Department) and Avalon Arts and Cultural Alliance (AACA), International Trade Education Programs, Inc. dba EXP (EXP) and Los Angeles Maritime Institute (LAMI) for Community Investment Grants supporting their programs (Agreements).

AACA, EXP (formerly ITEP), and LAMI were selected through the Community Investment Grant Program process. The proposed Agreements are for two years in the following amounts: 1) AACA - \$120,000 each year for a total of \$240,000; 2) EXP - \$355,000 each year for a total of \$710,000; and 3) LAMI - \$300,000 each year for a total of \$600,000. The combined two-year total for the three Agreements is \$1,550,000. The Harbor Department is financially responsible for funding under the proposed sponsorships.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Harbor Commissioners (Board):

1. Find that the Director of Environmental Management has determined that the proposed action is administratively exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Article II Section 2(f) of the Los Angeles City CEQA Guidelines;
2. Find that the proposed Community Investment Grants are consistent with the criteria of the Board-approved Sponsorship/Hosting Policy (March 2010);
3. Approve the proposed Agreement with Avalon Arts and Cultural Alliance for a term of two years and a total not-to-exceed amount of \$240,000;

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4. Approve the proposed Agreement with International Trade Education Programs, dba EXP for a term of two years and a total not-to-exceed amount of \$710,000;
5. Approve the proposed Agreement with Los Angeles Maritime Institute for a term of two years and a total not-to-exceed amount of \$600,000;
6. Authorize the Executive Director to execute and the Board Secretary to attest to the proposed Agreements for and on behalf of the Board; and
7. Adopt Resolution No. _____.

DISCUSSION:

Background/Context – On January 27, 2025, the application for FY 2025/26 Community Investment Grants was made available on the Port of Los Angeles’ (Port) website. The Community Investment Grant Program, which has been in place since FY 2013/14, funds a variety of community programs benefiting both the Harbor Department and Harbor Area. A virtual workshop for those interested in applying was held on February 19, 2025, and grant applications were due on March 24, 2025. The selection committee was composed of six members with familiarity of the Harbor communities. The selection committee consisted of three Harbor Department employees, two community representatives and one Council District 15 representative. Community grant proposals were split into two categories: General - \$99,999 and under; and Large - \$100,000 and over. For the large grants, all six members rated the proposals and discussed appropriate funding level for those programs selected to receive grants – grants could be made up to the requested amount. The AACA, EXP and LAMI applications came in under the “large” category with requests of \$1,160,000 in total yearly funding. The selection committee is recommending funding at \$120,000 per year for AACA (Transmittal 1), \$355,000 per year for EXP (Transmittal 2) and \$300,000 per year for LAMI (Transmittal 3) for a period of two years each.

AACA – Established in 2015 as a nonprofit organization whose motto is “Learn the History, Recognize the Culture, Introduce the Arts, and Embrace the Change”. AACA hosts free community events such as the Wilmington Art Walk, art workshops, music lessons, summer movie nights and more. Their goal is to educate the community of Wilmington about its unique history as well as encourage them to embrace their artistic side in a positive manner. Proudly, they established the Creative Center, located at 616 N. Avalon Blvd. in Wilmington, in 2023, which has allowed them to expand their impact in the community.

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Their mission is to create trusted and emotionally connected community artists and educators of all mediums who are invested in supporting each other's success; to help build an artistic foundation for future generations through art, history and cultural events and workshops; and to promote the economic development of the Harbor Area.

AACA has been a community partner of the Port for many years, helping to promote and draw the public to the LA Waterfront through events like the Wilmington Art Walk, movie nights and other events. They were a key partner in the grand opening festivities of the Wilmington Promenade in February of 2023.

This grant funding will support the various programming events organized by AACA along the LA Waterfront in Wilmington. Events include Maritime-Themed Art & STEAM Workshops, Harbor Storytelling & Cultural Performance Series, and Pop-Up Art Exhibits & Demonstrations which will enhance community access, promote economic development, support educational and environmental awareness.

ITEP/EXP – In 1999, International Trade Education Programs, Inc. (ITEP) was founded as a pilot program called the International Trade Academy on the campus of Banning High School in Wilmington. ITEP has since developed four model academies on that campus: International Trade Academy; Global Safety and Security Academy; Global Environmental Sciences Academy; and Maritime Agriculture, Tourism, Cuisine and Hospitality Academy. Additional academies are running in Barstow, Carson, Gardena, Lawndale, Long Beach, San Pedro, Santa Ana, and Tustin.

In 2018, ITEP rebranded to EXP. With the tagline “The opportunity engine,” the EXP brand builds on all ITEP has done, captures the organization’s entrepreneurial drive, honors its enduring legacy in the Port, and remains true to its core goal: to help young people gain experience, unlock doors and build the confidence they need to succeed in school, career and life.

In addition to classroom and campus-based activities, EXP and its maritime industry sponsors provide valuable, future-focused learning experiences for each academy group.

During the summer of 2025, 154 students entering their senior year participated in the EXP Internship Program, in which the Harbor Department participates along with 55 other corporate and community organizations in Los Angeles and Orange Counties, as well as the City of Barstow. The students receive a practical introduction to careers in maritime commerce, environmental firms and security sectors. The creation of a strong, stable work environment greatly benefits the

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Harbor Department, and the maritime industry exposure offered by the EXP program helps generate awareness, interest and preparation among the next generation of maritime industry professionals.

This grant funding will enable EXP to provide outreach, workshops and career education to students providing opportunities to learn about maritime history, navigation, commerce and safety.

LAMI – TopSail is a program of the Los Angeles Maritime Institute, a non-profit, public benefit corporation which operates in conjunction with the Los Angeles Maritime Museum. TopSail is an experiential education program for underserved youth which has been in operation since 1992. The program consists of three to five one-day sails in and around San Pedro Bay with the option of a multi-day voyage, usually to Catalina Island. TopSail's programs use the twin brigantines, the *Exy Johnson* and the *Irving Johnson*, the Official Tall ships of the City of Los Angeles.

TopSail is known as a highly successful program which promotes teamwork, teaches responsibility and encourages leadership and self-esteem by providing character-building opportunities. At the same time, the youths receive educational information regarding the Port and the maritime industry. For some of the participants, the TopSail voyages represent their first awareness of the Port and its operations. Testimonials from educators, participants and others indicate that the TopSail experience has served to encourage many of the students to stay in school and lead more productive lives. More than 100,000 students have been served over the past decade alone.

This grant funding for LAMI's TopSail Youth Program will enable the organization to provide upper elementary, middle and high school students and educators from Title I schools and community groups, sails aboard one of the tall ships, exposing them to STEM concepts, navigation, examining marine life, and testing water quality.

Agreement Requirements – All Harbor Department Community Investment Grants must be for programs/projects/events that are Tidelands Trust compliant. They must show a nexus to these requirements and it must be clearly explained in the application. This is not only a factor for the committee in the selection process but is also reviewed by the City Attorney's Office before final selection is confirmed. Those without a Tidelands Trust nexus cannot be supported with Harbor Department funds. The three large grant awardees in this case, have shown a Tidelands Trust nexus and have been reviewed by the City Attorney's Office.

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Each grant Agreement states what is expected from the Grantee with respect to their program/project/event and what the Harbor Department shall get in return for the investment. This primarily is recognition of the Port's investment in outreach materials and avenues such as the organization's website, eblasts, flyers, etc. Additionally, where appropriate, Harbor Department participation is required – such as providing a table for Harbor Department employees, commissioners and guests at a dinner or other important event.

The Community Investment Grant oversight does not end at the writing of the check – Community Relations staff monitor our grantee programs/projects/events throughout the year, and a wrap-up report is required from each grant recipient by the close of the fiscal year (FY) in which they received their grant. Failure to provide a wrap-up report or follow-through on Harbor Department recognition as detailed in their Agreement will detrimentally affect future year's grant opportunities should these requirements not be met.

Past Agreements –

AACA – This is the first time AACA is receiving a large grant, however, the organization has been a recipient of prior Community Investment Grants. These grants include \$25,000 in FY 2017/18; \$13,000 in FY 2018/19; \$10,000 in FY 2019/20; \$15,000 in FY 2020/21 (Agreement E7105); \$25,000 in FY 2022/23 (Agreement E7180); \$35,000 in FY 2023/24 (Agreement E7234); and \$45,000 in FY 2024/25 (Agreement 136). Since the implementation of the Community Investment Grant Program, AACA has been awarded \$168,000 in grant funding.

ITEP/EXP – In FY 2006/07, the Board approved Agreement E2490, a one-year grant of \$440,000 to specifically assist ITEP with the expansion of its maritime education programs, start-up costs for establishing ITEP as an independent, non-profit corporation, and for development of marketing materials to solicit corporate sponsorships. In a letter dated December 14, 2005, the State Tidelands Commission approved utilization of Port revenue for this program and provided recommendations on future funding. The State Tidelands Commission stated that compliance with the recommendations were within the Port's discretion but not mandated by the Commissions' granting statute or existing public trust doctrine. In all subsequent actions, the Board has exercised its authority to determine the level of funding and how those funds should be used.

The Board subsequently approved Agreement E2646, providing funding of \$400,000 each year for FY 2007/08 and FY 2008/09 to assist with development of a model academy for potential implementation on a regional or state-wide basis. ITEP met or exceeded all requirements of Agreement E2646, including the establishment of academies at San Pedro High School, Barstow High School in

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the Inland Empire, Excel High School in Oakland and at high schools in Gardena and Carson.

Funding was not provided to ITEP in FY 2009/10 because they were able to operate with funds received from the Port at the end of FY 2008/09.

The Board approved Agreement 10-2897 in 2010, a three-year agreement which continued to provide ITEP with \$400,000 per year for its programs.

The Board approved Agreement 13-3154 on August 12, 2013, in the amount of \$400,000 for the academic year ending June 30, 2014, and in 2014, a one-year agreement in the amount of \$330,000 was approved.

Under the Community Investment Grant Program, the following grants have been made: \$680,000 for FY 2015/16 and FY 2016/17 (Agreement 15-3350); \$700,000 for FY 2019/20 and FY 2020/21 (Agreement 19-3672); \$670,000 for FY 2021/22 and FY 2022/23 (Agreement 21-9909); and \$692,300 for FY 2023/24 and FY 2024/25 (Agreement 23-9997). Since the implementation of the Community Investment Grant Program, ITEP/EXP has been awarded \$3,472,000 in grant funding.

LAMI – The Board initially approved a two-year agreement with LAMI for TopSail in March 1997 for FYs 1997/98 and 1998/99, for a total of \$200,000 per year. At the conclusion of the second year, the success of the program was re-evaluated prior to eventual sponsorship of a third and fourth year at the same level.

Agreement No. 2177 was approved in March 2002 for annual sponsorship of \$300,000 for an additional three-year period. Subsequently, the Board approved the first Amendment to Agreement No. 2177 which increased the annual sponsorship by \$467,000 to assist with capital repayment costs for the completion of twin brigantines commissioned on April 27, 2002. Both actions were also approved by the City Council. Agreement No. 2177 covered FYs 2001/02 through 2003/04.

Agreement No. 2330 was approved in July 2004 for annual sponsorship of \$450,000 for an additional three-year period. This action was approved by the City Council in September 2004. Agreement 2330 covered FYs 2004/05 through 2006/07.

Agreement No. 2581 was approved on February 27, 2007. This agreement was for three years with a sliding financial package starting at \$525,000 and increasing three percent each year for a final year compensation of \$556,972.

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Agreement No. 10-2890 was approved on October 13, 2010. This agreement was for three years with a financial package of \$350,000 a year for a total amount of \$1,050,000. An amendment to this Agreement in the amount of \$175,000 continued funding of the LAMI program through the end of calendar year 2013.

Agreement 13-3213 was approved on December 12, 2013, for \$175,000 bringing total funding in FY 2013/14 to \$350,000 and in 2014, a one-year agreement for \$225,000 was approved.

Under the Community Investment Grant Program, the following grants have been made: \$510,000 for FY 2015/16 and FY 2016/17 (Agreement 15-3351); \$550,000 for FY 2017/18 and FY 2018/19 (Agreement 17-3520); \$550,000 for FY 2019/20 and FY 2020/21 (Agreement 19-3673); \$520,000 for FY 2021/22 and FY 2022/23 (Agreement 21-9837); and \$580,000 for FY 2023/24 and FY 2024/25 (Agreement 23-9998). Since the implementation of the Community Investment Grant Program, LAMI has been awarded \$3,285,000 in grant funding.

Since the implementation of the Community Investment Grant Program, \$14,313,515 has been awarded to qualified non-profit entities.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

The proposed action is the approval of three Agreements with AACA, EXP, and LAMI for Community Investment Grants supporting their programs. This action is limited to the administrative approval for the distribution of funds. Individual programs or projects implemented with the use of funding will be subject to separate environmental review by the lead agency with jurisdiction over the project, as necessary. Therefore, the Director of Environmental Management has determined that the proposed action is administratively exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in accordance with Article II Section 2(f) of the Los Angeles City CEQA Guidelines.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Approval of the proposed two-year Agreements will commit \$240,000 to AACA, \$710,000 to EXP, and \$600,000 to LAMI to support community programs for a total aggregate amount of \$1,550,000. Funding under the proposed Agreements is anticipated to occur as follows:

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FISCAL YEAR	AMOUNT
2025/26	\$775,000
2026/27	\$775,000
TOTAL	\$1,550,000

FY 2025/26 funding in the amount of \$775,000 is available within Account 521015 (Organization & Event Sponsorship Expense), Division 20200 (Community Relations), Project 60000003 (Community Sponsorship Program). The Harbor Department's financial commitments for the proposed Agreements beyond the current fiscal year are contingent upon approval of funds by the Board as part of the annual budget adoption process. If future fiscal year funds are not appropriated by the Board for the work in any subsequent fiscal year as required by the Agreements, the Agreements shall be terminated. However, such termination shall not relieve the parties of liability for any obligation previously incurred.

CITY ATTORNEY:

The Office of the City Attorney has reviewed and approved the proposed Agreements as to form and legality.

TRANSMITTALS:

1. Agreement with Avalon Arts and Cultural Alliance
2. Agreement with International Trade Education Programs, Inc. dba EXP
3. Agreement with Los Angeles Maritime Institute

FIS Approval: JS

CA Approval: SO



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