



Tier I + Zoological Advisory Board

All-Day Review

September 25, 2025 | 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Mid-Valley Performing Arts Center, Conference Room

FINAL MEETING MINUTES

Attendees

Board Members: Chair Johann Jacobs, Vice Chair Peter Klinge, Amanda Mulia, Lynette Wendel, Andrea Hansen, Heidi Prokop, Noemi Hernandez-Balcazar.

Staff and Guests: Samantha Thermos Program Director, Kelsey Ellis Impact Manager, Cody Goetz Grants & Communications Coordinator, and Dustyn Burt Program Assistant, Tori Potestio, CPA, Sorenson, Vance & Co.

Agenda

- I. Welcome – Johann Jacobs, Chair
 - Welcome, Call to Order and Member Activity started at 9:09AM.
- II. Public Comment Period – Chair Jacobs
 - Chair Jacobs asked for public comments. No members of the public were present.
- III. Agenda & Review Process Overview – Samantha Thermos, Program Director
 - Ms. Thermos welcomed everyone and brought attention to the agenda.
 - ZAP new logo design was recognized.
 - Ms. Thermos continued with housekeeping items, the meeting's run of show, Conflicts of Interest (COI) management, Board packet materials, available parking lot for questions and staff support present.
 - Focus should be on applicants, not the number of applicant to be approved at this time. Time is on the agenda for that toward the end of deliberations.
 - If we have the Board come back, we will set up another meeting where we invite applicants to present for ~20-minutes.
 - Ms. Thermos reminded the group that they can update their scores in ZoomGrants throughout the meeting.
 - Ms. Thermos displayed a PowerPoint slide about Tier I + Zoological eligibility and criteria.
 - Ms. Prokop's question: Did the new entrant applicants also apply for Tier II funding

- Ms. Thermos provided context that ZAP encourages new entrant applicants to Tier I to also apply for Tier II funding to avoid a gap year.
 - Gina Bachauer did apply for Tier II funding this year as well; This Is The Place did not apply for Tier II funding this year.

IV. ACTION ITEM: Approval of June 10, 2025, Meeting Minutes – Chair Jacobs

- **Chair Jacobs asked for a motion. Ms. Wendel made a motion to approve the meeting minutes; it was seconded by Vice Chair. Chair Jacobs asked if anyone opposed; no one opposed, the motion passed unanimously.**

V. ACTION ITEM: Election of 2026 Advisory Board Leadership – Chair Jacobs

Nominees: Peter Klinge, Chair | Lynette Wendel, Vice Chair

- Chair Jacobs read the nominees' names and asked if there were any other nominees. Ms. Thermos let the board know they can nominate themselves or each other and/or have a discussion.
 - **Chair Mr. Jacobs asked for a motion. Ms. Prokop made a motion to approve the two nominees; it was seconded by Ms. Hansen. No one opposed, the motion passed unanimously.**

VI. CPA Review Overview – Tori Potestio, CPA, Sorenson Vance & Company, PC

- Financial Health Tests (FHT) Overview, Results, and Observation Comments
 - FHT Failures – Financial Health Improvement Plan – Ms. Thermos
 - Ms. Thermos introduced and provided the context about what ZAP's CPA will be going over about the Financial Health Test (FHT) and which organization's passed and failed the FHT and why.
 - Ms. Thermos continued with the process an organization follow when it fails the FHT.
 - Chair Jacobs reminded the Board that FHT failure does not mean an applicant organization cannot receive funding.
 - Ms. Potestio discussed the 5 FHTs: CPA process calculations that reflect the scores of these tests and which tests and how many tests equal a failure of an organization.

Gina Bachauer International Piano Foundation – New Entrant Applicant | Failed Financial Health Test (FHT)

Strengths:

- Internationally respected organization that enhances Utah's cultural prestige.
- Offers meaningful educational outreach and community access.
- Maintains high artistic integrity and reach.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board observed limited: year-round public visibility between major competitions and brand recognition.

- Encouraged broadening participation among underrepresented and local audiences.
- Suggested stronger: communication of long-term impact and leadership legacy secession and workforce planning.

Utah Arts Alliance – Failed Financial Health Test (FHT)

Strengths:

- Grassroots model successfully empowers local artists and creative entrepreneurs.
- Strong community partnerships and adaptive use of space.
- Demonstrates inclusivity and responsiveness to emerging creative needs.
- Organization's board is diverse with representation from our broader community.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board questioned long-term sustainability given program scope and resources.
- Suggested greater focus on defining and evaluating impact metrics.
- Encouraged continued governance and strategic development for growth stability.
- Board expressed concern regarding executive director's loan(s) to keep organization afloat.
- Difficult to understand what public awareness is for their organization with different websites, brands and art forms.

Pioneer Theatre Company – Failed Financial Health Test (FHT) 2025, 2026

Strengths:

- Produces professional-caliber theatre that enhances the state's artistic profile.
- Demonstrates strong institutional management and loyal audiences.
- Actively supports new play development and educational partnerships.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board noted a need for clearer articulation of community impact beyond ticket sales.
- Encouraged expanding outreach to more diverse audiences particularly including more K-12 schools.
- Suggested increased visibility of equity, diversity, and inclusion-initiatives that include our broader community.
- Board shared concerns related to the financial stability of organization post-COVID.

VII. Related Party Transactions: Qualified/Unqualified Expenditures

- **ACTION ITEM: Related Party Costs Expenditures In/Exclusion Vote**

- Repeat Transactions
 - Tanner Dance – videography
 - Utah Film Center – rent
 - Utah Symphony | Utah Opera – advertising
- **Ms. Wendel motioned to approve the repeat Related Party Transactions as stated in the CPA/staff report; it was seconded by Vice Chair Klinge seconded. No one opposed, the motion passed unanimously.**
 - Mr. Jacobs asked if the board could vote not to give this approval every year.

- Ms. Thermos provided context about how it needs to be placed ahead of time as an action item.
- Ms. Wendelle asked to put this in the parking lot
- **ACTION ITEM: Determine Treatment of Lease Reporting**
 - ZAP's CPA and Ms. Thermos provided context and reminders of the Treatment of Lease Reporting in the FHT reviews in previous years. Primarily this lease rule may impact grantee FHT results if it is included (operating leases over 12 months) so it has been excluded in recent past years.
 - The point of making it an action item this year is so the Board can make a final determination on the record to continue to exclude the rule (of grantee leases over 12 months) in ZAP grants FHT reviews to hold harmless grantees for having leases over 12 months.
 - The Board asked questions and discussed with ZAP's CPA which FHTs (and how) it may impact if not excluded from the FHTs.
 - **Ms. Prokop motioned for approval as stated in the CPA/staff report and action item; Vice Chair Klinge seconded the motion. No one opposed, the motion passed unanimously.**
- Ms. Thermos called for a 10-minute break. Recording paused 10:25AM; meeting and recording resumed at 10:36AM.

VIII. Applications Reviews – Advisory Board

Ballet West

Strengths:

- Demonstrates exceptional artistic quality and leadership, serving as a statewide cultural anchor.
- Expands access through touring, education, and outreach.
- Strong audience loyalty and institutional stability.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board expressed concern over the sustainability of ambitious touring plans relative to expenses. Reminder that ZAP funding is for activities within Salt Lake County.
- Suggested greater clarity around strategies for diversifying audiences and participants, particularly, Ggreater outreach to smaller cities/communities.
- Recommend continued work to strengthen organizational adaptability to economic shifts.

Utah Humanities Council

Strengths:

- Deep statewide impact through literacy, storytelling, and civic dialogue.
- Strong partnerships and community presence across rural and urban areas.
- Effective alignment with ZAP's mission of cultural enrichment.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board suggested improving visibility and communication of outcomes.
- Encouraged broader representation and inclusion within programming.
- Noted a need for updated digital engagement strategies.

This Is The Place Foundation – New Entrant Applicant

Strengths:

- Offers valuable historical interpretation and family-oriented education.
- Successfully connects heritage with hands-on experiences.
- Significant attendance and community presence.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board questioned whether narratives fully reflect Utah's the diverse city of Utah's history.
- Suggested modernization of interpretation and storytelling methods.
- Encouraged greater accessibility and broader community collaboration.

UtahPresents

Strengths:

- Provides diverse, high-quality performing arts experiences.
- Builds meaningful connections between campus and community.
- Demonstrates solid curation and production capacity.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board noted a need for clearer articulation of long-term strategic direction.
- Suggested stronger emphasis on local artist integration.
- Encouraged defining success metrics for impact and engagement.

Friends of Tracy Aviary – Zoological

Strengths:

- Excels in conservation education and community programming.
- Demonstrates strong environmental leadership and partnerships.
- Facilities are well-maintained and inviting to families.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board questioned clarity of alignment between new capital projects and mission outcomes.
- Suggested tracking accessibility improvements for underserved audiences.
- Encouraged continuous evolution of interpretive storytelling.
- Consider succession planning for leadership.

Salt Lake Acting Company

Strengths:

- Continues to champion new work and contemporary issues with courage.
- Maintains strong artistic identity and loyal following.
- Plays an essential role in supporting local playwrights and artists.

- Works hard to fundraise, partner, and cross-promote themselves and peer organizations.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board discussed concerns over financial vulnerability tied to smaller venue size.
- Encouraged audience diversification and outreach expansion, particularly K-12 schools.
- Suggested increased communication of how productions drive community dialogue.
- Board has several open vacancies at once.

IX. Working Lunch

- Recording paused at 12:05PM, resumed at 12:30PM.

X. Applications Reviews Con't – Advisory Board

Salt Lake Film Society

Strengths:

- Vital institution preserving independent film culture.
- Offers strong education programs and media literacy efforts.
- Adapted effectively to pandemic-era technology and access shifts.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board expressed concern about aging audience demographics.
- Encouraged more robust outreach to younger and more diverse communities.
- Suggested continued focus on long-term operational stability.

Utah Museum of Contemporary Art

Strengths:

- Consistently produces thought-provoking, risk-taking exhibitions.
- Record of supporting Utah-based artists.
- Operates with curatorial excellence and innovation.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board noted uneven visitor engagement levels across exhibitions.
- Encouraged refining audience development and evaluation tools.
- Suggested continued investment in education and public access.
- Board noted ongoing challenges with audience attendance and downtown accessibility, particularly parking. Explore cross-promotion partnerships for increased attendance at venue.

Discovery Gateway Children's Museum

Strengths:

- Provides impactful STEAM-focused learning for children and families.
- Maintains strong accessibility and inclusivity efforts.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board questioned whether mission alignment is consistently clear across all programming.
- Encouraged developing stronger methods to measure and communicate impact outcomes.
- Suggested improving long-term sustainability planning and funding diversification.
- Programs should be hands-on, engaging, and responsive to community needs.

Red Butte Garden & Arboretum

Strengths:

- Serves as both a premier botanical resource and a cultural destination.
- Offers robust environmental education and community programming and outreach.
- Successfully integrates science, nature, and the arts.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board observed challenges balancing entertainment events with conservation goals.
- Encouraged developing clearer sustainability and accessibility metrics.
- Suggested strengthening partnerships that reinforce educational mission.

Repertory Dance Theatre

Strengths:

- Preserves and advances modern dance heritage with artistic rigor.
- Provides meaningful education and community programs.
- Operates with discipline and has invested in the development of a multi-year plan.
- Innovation such as with tiered ticket pricing, pay-as-you-go program.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board expressed concern about aging repertory and long-term audience renewal.
- Suggested strengthening marketing and outreach strategies including clear artistic identity.
- Encouraged clarifying succession and leadership transition planning.

Utah Museum of Fine Arts

Strengths:

- Balances major traveling exhibitions with local and regional relevance.
- Partnerships with diverse revenue sources, schools and community organizations.
- Demonstrates curatorial excellence and operational stability.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board encouraged deepening diversity and inclusion in exhibitions [and staffing](#).
- Suggested strengthening public understanding of the museum's strategic vision.
- Recommend ongoing innovation in digital engagement.
- Board noted ongoing challenges with audience attendance and University accessibility, particularly parking.

Natural History Museum of Utah

Strengths:

- Recognized nationally for excellence in science communication and design.
- Demonstrates robust educational reach and research integration.
- Maintains strong attendance and public trust.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board encouraged increased access for underserved communities.
- Suggested continued development of partnerships outside academia.
- Recommend ongoing leadership in sustainability practices.
- Robust volunteer program may need succession plan in future.

Spy Hop Productions

Strengths:

- Model program for creative youth development with measurable impact.
- Demonstrates inclusivity, skill-building, and mentorship excellence.
- Maintains strong financial, organizational, and strategic management.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board encouraged planning for growth while maintaining program quality.
- Suggested more longitudinal tracking of participant outcomes.
- Recommend exploring greater regional and national visibility.

Tanner Dance

Strengths:

- Longstanding legacy in arts education and movement-based learning.
- Inclusive, multi-generational programming.
- Strong alignment with ZAP goals and community wellness.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board noted need for clearer documentation of impact and reach.
- Suggested broadening partnerships to attract new demographics that serve the whole community.
- Encouraged continued evolution of artistic curriculum and accessibility.

Wasatch Community Gardens

Strengths:

- Highly effective in combining community education, environment, and food access.
- Demonstrates mission clarity, program consistency, and board engagement.
- Builds community cohesion and learning through hands-on experiences.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board questioned whether the arts and cultural dimension is fully defined.
- Encouraged clearer articulation of creative and cultural outcomes.
- Suggested exploring partnerships with arts and cultural organizations.
- Explore easier ways for community members to donate including non-digital means.

XI. Afternoon Break

- Recording paused at 1:59PM, resumed at 2:15PM.

- Before continuing advisory board reviews Ms. Thermos asked that since Mr. Castillo is onsite for questions for a short time today, this is the time to ask those questions and discussions.
 - Ms. Wendel started the conversation regarding how some organizations demonstrate more effort than others (serving the community). "How should we navigate this issue?"
 - Mr. Castillo: it is up to the board to make those identifications and not every year do we have this issue where there are more applicants than the available Tier I positions. Mr. Castillo said that all recommendations should match what the scores are and if they do not match, there needs to be some sort of rationale from the policy guiding documents of ZAP.
 - The other piece to add that makes this a bit more challenging. A core principle of ZAP's Tier I funding category is the consistency of steady funding. We give a slight preference to maintain existing organizations (grantees) and given what their concerns and considerations are, need to be taken into account before a change of funding.
 - Giving those organizations that had funding in the past to understand what the concerns are, and improvements needed before adjusting the funding. It is important to consider what has been communicated in the past to grantees and what the response from those grantees has been.

Hale Centre Theatre

Strengths:

- Consistently delivers high-quality productions with exceptional technical execution.
- Maintains strong financial management and audience demand.
- Represents a significant economic and cultural driver in the region.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board noted limited experimentation in repertoire and risk-taking.
- Encouraged more inclusive representation on and off stage for serving our broader community.
- Suggested continued balancing of commercial success with broader artistic contribution.

Vice Chair Klinge had a question regarding the Funding Recommendations Council approval process and the upcoming ZAP process improvement groups.

- Ms. Thermos provided context and policy. There will be process improvement working groups for both TII and TI+Z grant processes that will need their requested changes to Council (if needed) to Council by February before applications open. And Chair Jacobs stated that there will not be policy changes today.

Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company

Strengths:

- Innovative programming and strong educational reach across Utah.
- Demonstrates excellence in choreography and touring.
- Well-established community partnerships and adaptability.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board questioned the clarity of measurable outcomes tied to outreach programs.
- Suggested enhancing audience development and data tracking.
- Encouraged deeper connection between artistic uniqueness and innovation and community engagement.

Utah Film Center

Strengths:

- Well-equipped facility with ADA accommodations and flexible multi-use spaces.
- Operates as a true community hub, offering free programming and shared resources.
- Supports local filmmakers with match funding and space for screenings; actively collaborates with other ZAP grantees.
- Has recent local recognition and plans for public art (mural) that can increase visibility.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board noted limited public awareness despite strong programming; suggested a focused outreach/marketing effort.
- Encouraged clearer revenue diversification strategies for long-term stability while maintaining free-access mission.
- Suggested tracking RSVP/attendance data more systematically to demonstrate community impact and inform programming decisions.

Utah Symphony | Utah Opera

Strengths:

- Longstanding cultural pillar of Utah's arts community with strong youth education and professional artist programs.
- Maintains artistic excellence and deep passion across leadership and staff.
- Significant contributor to professional development for teachers and to Utah's cultural identity; among ZAP's founding organizations.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board noted ongoing challenges with audience attendance and downtown accessibility, particularly parking.

- Suggested continued innovation in audience engagement and partnerships to attract broader demographics.
- Encouraged evaluative new strategies to strengthen community connections.

Salt Lake Arts Council Foundation

Strengths:

- Offers diverse, inclusive programming that engages range of ages, geographies, and cultural communities.
- Demonstrates strategic financial management; strong fundraising results (30% of revenue) and impressive volunteer growth (up 130%).
- Leadership and board engagement are strong, intentional, and mission-driven; consistent staff and board training reinforce organizational excellence.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board noted room to strengthen marketing to expand reach.
- Improve neighborhood-level engagement to grow audience.
- Suggested clearer communication strategies with community and elected officials about public art investments and decision-making processes.

Utah Arts Festival Foundation

Strengths:

- The festival remains a major statewide cultural event with broad public impact and support.
- Leadership and board show strong commitment to improving organizational logistics and sustainability.
- Significant volunteer base and dedication to supporting artists.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board cited logistical challenges and communication gaps that affected public experience and operations (e.g., wayfinding, volunteer management and training, beverage policies).
- Encouraged renewed focus on foundational management practices (back to basics) to match the right-size scale of the event.
- Suggested increasing year-round presence and community visibility beyond the festival weekend.

Utah Zoological Society – Zoological

Strengths:

- Accredited, respected institution with strong conservation leadership.
- Engages broad audiences in environmental education.
- Demonstrates consistent operational and animal care excellence.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board noted opportunities to expand accessibility and inclusion beyond the stroller population.
- Suggested enhancing communication of conservation impact to local audiences.

- Encouraged continued focus on sustainability and innovation.
- Increase board opportunities for larger and more diverse backgrounds on [the board](#).

Loveland Living Planet Aquarium – Zoological

Strengths:

- Major regional destination with impressive visitor growth.
- Provides strong STEM-focused education and exhibits.
- Expands public understanding of environmental conservation.

Areas for Continued Attention:

- Board questioned how rapid growth aligns with long-term mission focus.
- Encouraged clearer evaluation of educational outcomes.
- Suggested strengthening local partnerships and community engagement narratives.

XII. Applications Reviews Completed – Advisory Board

- Board chair asked Ms. Thermos to go over the lowest-scoring applicants.
 - Discovery Gateway, Gina Bachuer, Pioneer Theatre and This is the Place.

XIII. **ACTION ITEM: Vote to Approve Funding Recommendations** – Chair Jacobs

- Chair Jacobs stated if the Board is comfortable with the Zoological funding category, then it can move on to the Tier I unanswered questions.
 - **Vice Chair Klinge called for a motion to approve Zoological funding category; Ms. Wendel seconded the motion. No one opposed, the motion passed unanimously.**
- Discussion on which organizations the Board would like to invite back for a future meeting.
 - Discovery Gateway
 - This is the Place
 - Pioneer
 - Gina Bachauer

XIV. Adjourn – Chair Jacobs

- Ms. Wendel motioned to adjourn at 4:03PM. Chair Jacobs called the meeting adjourned at 4:04PM.