

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2026**

MINUTE ORDER NO. 20

SUBJECT: LAUNCHING THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY FILM INITIATIVE TO DRIVE REGIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH AND JOB CREATION (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

Film and media production represent a powerful economic engine capable of generating immediate local spending and long-term workforce opportunity for San Diego County residents. Productions inject revenue directly into hotels, restaurants, construction trades, transportation services, small businesses, and technical professions, while supporting high-quality careers in skilled trades, creative industries, and emerging digital media fields. As competition for production activity intensifies and state-level incentives expand, jurisdictions with coordinated infrastructure, streamlined operations, and performance-based local incentives are best positioned to capture sustained economic benefits.

San Diego County possesses the natural assets, experienced workforce, and diverse locations necessary to compete as a premier production destination. In recent years, the Office of Economic Development and Government Affairs (EDGA) has advanced film-related coordination efforts, supported permitting across County departments, facilitated production inquiries, and strengthened relationships with industry partners. These efforts have demonstrated both the demand for filming in the region and the measurable economic impact that production activity can generate when properly supported. Notably, EDGA's coordination helped facilitate the production of *One Battle After Another*, which filmed extensively across San Diego County and injected nearly \$6.8 million in direct spending into the local economy, supporting local workers, vendors, and hospitality businesses. The foundational work completed by EDGA has positioned the County to take a more comprehensive and strategic next step.

This Board item represents the first step toward launching the San Diego County Film Initiative. Today's action directs the design and development of a centralized Film Office within EDGA to deliver dedicated operational support, a Film Commission within EDGA to serve as an advisory body advancing regional vision and strategy, and a performance-based Rebate Program designed to attract and retain production activity. Together, these components build upon existing coordination efforts and establish a structured, coordinated framework for long-term economic growth and job creation.

The San Diego County Film Initiative will revitalize San Diego's position as a competitive production destination and translate that competitiveness into measurable job creation and economic growth. Film production is a high-multiplier industry capable of generating millions of dollars in local spending within weeks while supporting union and non-union labor, local vendors, hospitality providers, transportation services, and regional workforce pipelines. By linking incentives to verified local expenditures, local hiring, and measurable return on investment, the County ensures that public action is directly tied to job growth and economic benefit for San Diego residents. This item revitalizes and strengthens the County's film strategy, elevating prior efforts into a comprehensive, accountable, and competitive framework designed to deliver sustained economic impact.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHAIR PRO TEM PALOMA AGUIRRE

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to develop a comprehensive San Diego County Film Initiative centered on the proposed creation of a San Diego County Film Office (Film Office), San Diego County Film Commission (Film Commission), and San Diego County Film and Media Production Rebate Program (Rebate Program), and to return to the Board of Supervisors (Board) on September 15, 2026, with a detailed San Diego County Film Initiative Implementation Plan for Economic Growth and Job Creation (Implementation Plan) establishing a coordinated operational framework necessary to develop and align these components.
 - a. The Implementation Plan shall include:
 - i. An organizational and staffing framework, including Film Commission formation, bylaws, staffing structure within EDGA, and interdepartmental coordination mechanisms;
 - ii. A fiscal framework detailing start-up and ongoing operational costs, proposed funding sources, recommended Rebate Program caps, and required future appropriations and revenue;
 - iii. An implementation timeline identifying key milestones, including the development and adoption of a countywide film ordinance to establish the regulatory and programmatic framework, followed by the launch of the Film Office to administer permitting, coordination, and program functions, and the subsequent convening of the Film Commission in an advisory capacity, as well as the phased rollout of the Rebate Program; and
 - iv. Performance measurement benchmarks and evaluation intervals to assess economic impact, job creation, and program effectiveness.
 - b. The development of the Implementation Plan shall include stakeholder engagement conducted prior to submission to the Board, including the creation of an advisory work group established by the Implementation Plan consultant in collaboration with EDGA. This work group will be composed of representatives from local jurisdictions, industry stakeholders, labor partners, educational institutions, workforce entities, arts and cultural organizations, and community groups, and will provide input and technical guidance to the CAO during the design and development of the Implementation Plan, ensuring it reflects regional needs, workforce capacity, and industry best practices.
2. As part of the Implementation Plan described in Recommendation 1, the CAO shall include the development of a San Diego County Film Office (Film Office) housed within EDGA, including a formal reporting structure to ensure transparency, accountability, and alignment with Board priorities.
 - a. The purpose of the Film Office shall be to serve as the centralized operational entity responsible for supporting film production, media initiatives, and coordinated industry growth within San Diego County.
 - b. The Film Office shall:
 - i. Establish long-term industry development priorities;
 - ii. Align film-related initiatives with County economic development objectives;
 - iii. Manage countywide permitting for productions in unincorporated areas and coordinate with participating jurisdictions;
 - iv. Administer programs that support film and media productions, including the Rebate Program;

- v. Facilitate connections between productions and local workforce pipelines, including apprenticeship programs, labor organizations, veterans programs, and small businesses; and
 - vi. Provide location promotion and coordinated marketing and branding initiatives, including the development and promotion of a countywide “Filmed in San Diego” identity to highlight qualifying productions, enhance regional visibility, and support industry attraction.
- c. The Film Office shall provide updates to the Film Commission and the Board on program performance, including:
- i. Production activity and permitting volume;
 - ii. Incentive awards and program utilization;
 - iii. Job creation and workforce participation metrics; and
 - iv. Program expenditures and projected economic return.
3. As part of the Implementation Plan described in Recommendation 1, the CAO shall include the development of a San Diego County Film Commission (Film Commission) housed within EDGA.
- a. The Film Commission shall serve as the County’s advisory body for setting regional vision, standards, and strategic direction for film, television, commercial, and digital media production within San Diego County. The Film Commission shall:
 - i. Advise on long-term industry development priorities;
 - ii. Advise on aligning film-related initiatives with County economic development objectives;
 - iii. Advise on program standards and performance goals;
 - iv. Strengthen the County’s creative economy and regional competitiveness;
 - v. Promote economic growth, job creation, and workforce development; and
 - vi. Advise on expanding opportunities for local business participation in film and media production.
 - b. The Film Commission shall also support the Film Office’s regional coordination by engaging local jurisdictions, industry stakeholders, labor partners, educational institutions, workforce entities, and community groups to promote alignment and collaboration.
 - c. The Film Commission shall advise on ways to advance the cultural and artistic significance of filmmaking within San Diego County, including to:
 - i. Explore and promote long-term goals for filmmaking as a major emphasis of the region’s economic and cultural base;
 - ii. Support collaboration with regional arts and cultural organizations, film festivals, community groups, and educational institutions to strengthen the County’s creative identity; and
 - iii. Promote cross-border artistic and cultural collaboration within the broader San Diego-Baja California region, recognizing the transnational creative economy as a unique asset.
 - d. In its role as an advisory body to the Board, the Film Commission shall:
 - i. Advise on the Film Office’s annual written report to the Board including but not limited to local film and media production activity, incentive utilization, economic impact, and workforce participation; and
 - ii. Identify policy or fiscal matters for potential future Board consideration.

- e. In its role as an advisory body to the Film Office, the Film Commission shall:
 - i. Provide input on program design and implementation to support alignment with County economic development objectives and industry best practices; and
 - ii. Identify programmatic considerations to support effective administration and continuous improvement of film-related initiatives.
4. As part of the Implementation Plan described in Recommendation 1, the CAO shall include the development of a Film and Media Production Rebate Program (Rebate Program), administered by the Film Office, and shall include a proposed ordinance, administrative framework, and fiscal analysis.
- a. The proposed Rebate Program shall incentivize qualified productions that generate measurable economic benefit within San Diego County and shall include:
 - i. Clear definitions of qualified productions and qualified production costs;
 - ii. Minimum local expenditure and principal photography requirements;
 - iii. Eligibility and ineligibility criteria; and
 - iv. Timeframes for project certification and commencement of principal photography.
 - b. The Rebate Program shall include fiscal and structural safeguards, including:
 - i. Percentage-based reimbursement of verified local qualified expenditures;
 - ii. Tiered rebate levels based on budget size, local hire utilization, and duration of production;
 - iii. Per-project caps and annual aggregate program limits;
 - iv. Proof-of-funding and expenditure verification requirements; and
 - v. Audit, compliance, and clawback provisions.
 - c. The Rebate Program shall incorporate workforce and equity considerations, including:
 - i. Local hiring commitments or good-faith hiring efforts;
 - ii. Reporting on wages, residency, and workforce participation; and
 - iii. Incentive enhancements for expenditures benefiting local small businesses, veteran-owned, women-owned, and BIPOC-owned businesses.
 - d. The Rebate Program shall include annual reporting and a recommended sunset or evaluation provision for Board consideration.
5. Transfer \$100,000 from the Community Enhancement Grant budget (Org 12900), Other Charges, to the Chief Administrative Office, Office of Economic Development and Government Affairs (Org 11810), Services and Supplies, for a consultant contract to complete the work outlined in Recommendations 1-4 above, including assembling a work group comprised of regional representatives, conducting stakeholder engagement, and preparing an Implementation Plan for the Board's consideration, which would include a Film Office, Film Commission, and Rebate Program.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Data on workforce participation and small business access within the film and media industry demonstrate that entry into production-related careers and contracting opportunities has not been evenly distributed across communities. Barriers to industry access, including limited professional networks, capital requirements, and uneven access to training pipelines, have historically limited participation for underrepresented workers and locally owned small businesses. Without intentional design, public incentive programs may inadvertently reinforce these disparities by disproportionately benefiting established production entities and vendors.

This item advances equity by embedding workforce participation, local hiring considerations, and small business engagement into the design of the County’s film initiatives. By requiring structured reporting on job creation, local workforce utilization, and economic impact through the Film Office, and by establishing advisory guidance and strategic input from the Film Commission alongside Board reporting requirements, the County strengthens its ability to monitor outcomes and identify where gaps in access may persist.

Importantly, this item establishes the conditions necessary for equitable economic development by ensuring that public investments in the film and media sector are accompanied by transparency, accountability, and measurable performance standards. In doing so, the County reinforces its commitment to inclusive economic opportunity, fair access to high-quality careers, and regionally distributed economic benefit.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

This item supports long-term economic, environmental, social, and governance sustainability by developing a coordinated framework for film and media production within San Diego County. The development of a Film Commission, Film Office, and performance-based Rebate Program aligns with the County of San Diego Sustainability Goals to engage the community, provide just and equitable access to opportunity, transition toward a resilient and inclusive economy, and reduce pollution and resource consumption.

By embedding structured oversight, fiscal safeguards, and performance standards, the County strengthens its ability to promote industry growth in a manner that advances economic vitality while supporting responsible environmental stewardship. Absent coordinated policy, production activity may occur without consistent workforce engagement, environmental standards, or long-term planning; this action addresses those gaps through formal governance, measurable reporting, and incentives that encourage sustainable production practices and compliance with local environmental regulations.

Importantly, this item advances the conditions necessary for durable and inclusive economic development by aligning industry expansion with workforce pipelines, local business participation, and measurable return on investment, while encouraging environmentally responsible production operations. Through structured implementation planning and ongoing evaluation, the County positions itself to support sustained job creation, economic diversification, reduced resource strain, and long-term regional resilience, reinforcing its broader commitment to sustainable, community-centered growth across San Diego County.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are not included in the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Operational Plan in the Office of Economic Development and Government Affairs. If approved, this request will result in estimated one-time costs and revenues of approximately \$100,000 funded through a Community Enhancement Grant based on existing General Purpose Revenue, for a consultant contract to assemble the work group comprised of regional representatives, conduct stakeholder engagement, and develop an Implementation Plan, which includes a Film Office, Film Commission, and Rebate Program. There is no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years. There will be fiscal impacts associated with future related recommendations that will be outlined in an Implementation Plan, which staff would return to the Board for consideration and approval.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

The development and eventually implementation of the San Diego County Film Initiative is expected to generate positive business impacts by increasing production-related spending across hospitality, construction, transportation, catering, equipment rental, and other local service sectors. A performance-based Rebate Program tied to verified local expenditures will incentivize productions to hire locally and contract with San Diego County businesses, expanding economic opportunity for both small and established enterprises. By strengthening one-stop-shop permitting coordination and industry support, this initiative positions the region to attract sustained production activity that supports job growth and long-term business development.

ACTION:

ON MOTION of Supervisor Aguirre, seconded by Supervisor Anderson, the Board of Supervisors took action as recommended.

AYES: Aguirre, Anderson, Lawson-Remer, Montgomery Steppe, Desmond

State of California)
County of San Diego) §

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



Signed
by Andrew Potter