

# Community Education Commission (Updated 6/5/2020)

## Follow Up responses from Council Budget Work Session 6/4/2020

1. Can you clarify the difference between the Community Education Commission and the Adult Literacy Council as it relates to language and literacy programming?

**Department Response:** We are not affiliated with the NALC nor do we offer any of the same programming. The Community Education Commission does not offer literacy or ESL classes (or private tutoring) due mostly to the fact that NALC (which is housed in the same building) and other programs offer these options and we strive to provide unique programming such as non-English languages, wellness, arts, small business assistance, technology and more. We do collaborate with these types of agencies, but it is to fill in the gaps their programming cannot cover rather than compete or be redundant.

There is history between us though: NALC and the Community Education Commission used to be associated under MNPS as the Community Education Alliance (along with other organizations) but in 2009 the school board voted to eliminate that department under MNPS. It's my understanding that Metro Government had been subsidizing the CEA with about \$350,000 in funding and decided to save the program with that funding creating our current department. NALC and other organizations were not covered under that funding and formed independent 501c3s.

2. If funding was restored, does the Commission have plans to add more locations?

**Department Response:** We have been on the path of adding more locations for the past 5 years. We currently hold classes in the Cohn School (West Nashville), Inglewood Elementary (East Nashville), Wright Middle School (Southeast Nashville) and Antioch Middle (Southeast Nashville) as well as with a few other partners throughout the city. We were hoping to add Madison, Donelson and potentially something in North Nashville in the near future based on public requests.

The largest deterrent to doing so has been funding. We currently partner with MNPS to offer classes in their spaces in the evening, but MNPS requires that we have a staff member (who is not an instructor) be in the buildings during class. We have been hiring contract (not Metro) part-time coordinators to do this as full-time staff is at capacity with hours. There are also only 4 FTEs, which limits the amount of locations we could have even if we were covering these locations (which we did often).

Without receiving our full funding we could not afford a contracted site coordinator so public office hours will have to change and/or we would need to connect with different partners who would allow instructors to open and close the spaces OR have their own staff there. FiftyForward, Make Nashville, and the Nashville Farmers' Market have shown interest in doing so, but will require some type of fee (likely a small percentage of class fees). If our FTEs are greatly reduced, we would not be able to cover more than one or two locations.

We have tried partnering with NPL and Parks in the past, but these partnerships have their own set of challenges including not having enough space to hold enough classes for a location to make sense, prioritizing their own programming, and libraries not hosting classes that require a fee.

Additionally, adding locations means adding more classes which brings in more revenue, but means we pay more instructors. Having a greatly decreased budget will put a strain on how many classes we can offer and still be able to provide instructors with a fair stipend. To be clear, the stipend is very small and occasionally not accepted by volunteers, but key to attracting and keeping quality instructors. I do have plans to rework how our fees and stipends work so that they are easier to budget for and can allow us to generate more revenue, but they will still be a significant portion of our expenses.

We have been, and will continue to increase our online offerings which does help solve some of the issues of limited locations, but equitable access to unique and affordable enrichment will be an issue without full funding of the department.

### 3. Administration response regarding CEC:

This was of course a difficult decision; but the reduction of discretionary spending as reflected by the elimination of the Community Education Commission (CEC) is the most fiscally responsible decision under current financial constraints. Multiple factors drive this decision, from financial concerns to the ability of the CEC to reach its target audience. As Metro experiences historic financial challenges, optimizing spending and focusing limited resources toward vulnerable groups is paramount.

The CEC was originally housed under Metro Nashville Public Schools, but was eliminated under then-director Pedro Garcia -- only to be restored as a separate commission by the Metro Council. Its format and curriculum was originally designed in the pre-internet era.

Unfortunately, since FY2017, the CEC has seen a consistent pattern of operating losses, averaging over -\$321,000 in annual losses (with an average operating margin of -68.18%). Unfortunately, no indication of significant improvement for EOFY20 has been identified.

	FY2017	FY2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
	Actuals	Actuals	Actuals	Budget
Revenue	\$ 118,544	\$ 142,718	\$ 171,369	\$ 158,000
Total Expenditures	\$ 407,090	\$ 467,908	\$ 478,319	\$ 521,600
Operating Earnings (Losses)	\$ (288,546)	\$ (325,190)	\$ (306,950)	\$ (363,600)

The CEC provides highly subsidized, non-essential services to a segment of Nashville residents. Those served are primarily white, college-educated, older adults. While commendable efforts have been made to reach a broader constituency, currently approximately one quarter (¼) of class attendees are minorities.

The CEC has offered approximately 200 low-cost classes. Today, CEC classes have moved online and projections indicate this will continue into the months ahead to accommodate social distancing requirements. Fortunately, viable alternatives to online education exist at no cost or low cost for Nashville residents, including programming through YouTube and lynda.com. The CEC's current financial state simply does not allow it to remain competitive in a crowded market, likely widening their financial gap in the coming fiscal year.

Various Metro agencies, including Metro Public Libraries and Farmers Market, have already expressed interest in absorbing at least some classes offered by CEC. The Mayor's Office will request an emphasis on classes that can further equity opportunities.