

MEETING MINUTES

Metro Nashville Arts Commission Grants + Funding Committee

Date: April 24, 2025

Time: 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Location: Green Hills Conference Room, Metro Southeast
Building

1417 Murfreesboro Pike, Nashville, TN 37217



Committee Members Present: Heather Lefkowitz, Chair, Tim Jester, Shawn Knight, Dawana Wade, Ashley Bachelder, Interim Executive Director (Ex-Officio)

Absent: Jilah Kalil

Metro Arts Staff Present: Sydnie Davis and Vivian Foxx

Metro Legal: Tessa Marsh-Ortiz

A. Call to Order, Roll Call & Welcome

Chair Lefkowitz called the meeting to order at 11:02 AM. Roll call confirmed a quorum with Commissioners Jester, Knight, Wade, Interim Executive Director Bachelder, and Chair Lefkowitz in attendance.

B. Public Comment

No public comments were submitted by the stated deadline or in person.

C. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve February 28th minutes by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Knight. Motion approved.

A motion was made to approve March 27th minutes by Commissioner Wade and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion approved.

D. Discussion Items

1) FY25 Updates

a) Staff Report – Contracts & Payments

- Of 165 total grant contracts, 160 have been executed and signed by all parties.
- Two contracts remain unsigned by the grantee; 2 are waiting on Metro signatures; and 1 is not being processed due to an appeal.
- Invoices undergo multi-layered approvals involving multiple departments, which accounts for the time it takes to process. 146 payments have been approved.

b) Denial Overview

- 148 Thrive denials were issued for reasons including ineligibility, missing forms, and misaligned project timelines.
- 28 Operating denials were issued, with reasons including duplicate applications or general eligibility.

2) FY26 Updates

a) Community Engagement

An overview of community input sessions and outreach:

- **Online Survey:** available at bit.ly/MetroArtsFY26. The survey will be promoted through the email listserv with an end date the following week.
- **In-Person Sessions:** Metro Arts is hosting a number of engagement sessions, four of five have been completed:
 - **April 10 at Studio 615:** 13 attendees
 - **April 15 at Trinity Community Commons:** 9 attendees
 - **April 16 at Centennial Arts Center:** 15 attendees
 - **April 21 at 100 Taylor Events:** 15 attendees
 - **April 24 at 5pm on Webex:** request the link by email
- **Weekly Director Drop-In Sessions:**
Hosted by Interim Director Bachelder to answer questions and provide updates.
- **Community Feedback Themes:**
 - Confusion over whether to apply for **Thrive** or **Operating** grants.
 - Awareness that Thrive grants may be more beneficial to small organizations.
 - Frustration with perceived inequities in Operating funding formulas for large orgs.

b) FY25-26 Presentation

Interim Director Ashley Bachelder presented the PowerPoint that is used at community engagement sessions. It included an overview of operating grant structure and distribution of awards, Thrive distribution of awards and summary information about fiscal sponsors, and an overview of the tentative timeline for FY26. She expressed that the majority of attendees

expressed favoring minor policy revisions over major structural shifts, in order to ensure timely disbursement in this next year and a more predictable grant cycle. Staff aims to present grant guidelines in May to finalize the FY26 criteria.

E. New Business

- Tentative Commission Meeting: **Thursday, May 22, 2025**
- Proposed Grants + Funding Committee Meeting: **Monday, May 19, 2025, from 1:00 – 3:00 PM**
 - Staff will distribute materials by **May 15** to allow adequate review time.
 - Chair Lefkowitz noted that some committee members will be contacted to confirm availability before finalizing this date.

F. Adjournment

*A motion was made by Commissioner Jester for adjournment at **12:56 PM**.*