

Metro Arts Commission Board Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, March 3, 2025

Time: 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Location: Metro Southeast Building,
Green Hills Conference Room,
1417 Murfreesboro Pike, Nashville, TN 37217



Commissioners Present:

Campbell West (Chair), Tré Hardin (Vice Chair), Heather Lefkowitz (Secretary), Evan Brown, Timothy Jester, Jilah Kalil, Shawn Knight, Dawana Wade, Mayra Yu, Ashley Bachelder (Interim Executive Director, ex-officio)

Absent: Janet Kurtz

A. Call to Order, Welcome, and Land Acknowledgement

Chair Campbell West called the meeting to order at 12:05.

B. Public Comment

Vivian Foxx confirmed there were no public comments submitted in-person or online.

C. Approval of Minutes

Approval of the following minutes was **deferred** to the next meeting:

- Full Commission (January 16, 2025)
- Executive Committee (January 15, 2025, and February 11, 2025)

D. Action Items/Discussion

Grants & Funding Committee Report (Moved to Top of Agenda)

Presented by Commissioner Heather Lefkowitz and Interim Executive Director Ashley Bachelder.

Conflict of Interest Overview:

Presented by Tessa Marsh-Ortiz (Metro Legal) to ensure compliance with Metro Code 2.222.020. Commissioners took time to complete written disclosures to indicate conflicts of interest and were instructed to recuse as needed.

FY2025 Funding Allocations – Operating Support Grants

Ashley Bachelder provided an overview of the Operating funding formula and explained that she would present funding recommendations for grants by each size category. Organizations that have a qualifying score of 70 or higher would be taken up as a group vote for approval. Organizations for which any Commissioners have a conflict of interest would be removed from the group vote and voted on individually so that Commissioners can recuse from those specific votes as needed.

Large Organizations

Group Vote for organizations that scored 70 or higher:

A motion was made to approve funding for the following large organizations Cheekwood Estate and Gardens, Nashville Ballet, Nashville Opera, Nashville Symphony Association, National Museum of African American Music by Commissioner Wade and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed.

Individual Votes:

- ***A motion was made to approve Country Music Hall of Fame funding by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Hardin. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict of interest Recusal:** Commissioner Campbell West
- ***A motion was made to approve Frist Art Museum funding by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Wade. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict of interest Recusals:** Commissioners Mayra Yu, Heather Lefkowitz & Evan Brown
- ***A motion was made to approve Tennessee Performing Arts Center (TPAC) funding by Commissioner Jester and by Commissioner West. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict of interest Recusals:** Commissioners Shawn Knight, Dawana Wade

Mid-Size Organizations

Group Vote for organizations that scored 70 or higher:

A motion was made to approve funding for the Mid-size organizations CreatiVets, Humanities Tennessee, Music City Youth in the Arts, Inc., Musicians On Call, Nashville Film Festival, Nashville Jazz Workshops, Operation Song, OZ Arts, Tennessee Association of Craft Artists, Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation, The Forge, Turnip Green Creative Reuse, & W.O. Smith/Nashville Community Music School by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Hardin. Motion passed.

Individual Votes:

- ***A motion was made to approve Belcourt Theatre funding by Commissioner Hardin and seconded by Commissioner Wade. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict Recusal:** Commissioner Heather Lefkowitz
- ***A motion was made to approve Moves and Grooves, Inc. funding by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict Recusal:** Commissioner Dawana Wade
- ***A motion was made to approve Nashville Children's Theatre funding by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Hardin. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict Recusals:** Commissioners Dawana Wade, Shawn Knight
- ***A motion was made to approve Nashville Repertory Theatre funding by Commissioner Wade and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict Recusal:** Commissioner Shawn Knight
- ***A motion was made to approve Nashville Shakespeare Festival funding by Commissioner West and seconded by Commissioner Hardin. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict Recusal:** Commissioner Shawn Knight
- ***A motion was made to approve Southern Word funding by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Knight. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict Recusal:** Commissioner Dawana Wade
- ***A motion was made to approve The Contributor funding by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner West. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict Recusal:** Commissioner Heather Lefkowitz

Commissioner Brown requested a correction to the group vote based on his need to recuse from voting on the Tennessee Association of Craft Artists. A motion was made to amend the initial vote on midsize organizations to remove the Tennessee Association of Craft Artists to revote by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. The motion passed.

- ***A motion was made to approve Tennessee Association of Craft Artists funding by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict Recusal:** Commissioner Evan Brown

Medium Organizations

Individual Votes were taken first:

- ***A motion was made to approve Actors Bridge Ensemble funding by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict Recusal:** Commissioner Lefkowitz

- ***A motion was made to approve Arts and Business Council of Greater Nashville funding by Commissioner West and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict Recusals:** Commissioners Dawana Wade, Tré Hardin, Evan Brown
- ***A motion was made to approve Global Education Center funding by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Hardin. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict Recusal:** Commissioner Mayra Yu
- ***A motion was made to approve Creative Girls Rock funding by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict Recusals:** Commissioners Evan Brown, Tré Hardin

Group Vote for organizations that scored 70 or higher:

A motion was made to approve funding for the Medium size organizations Art & Soul Nashville, Inc., Artville, Buchanan Arts, Circle Players, Inc., DancEast Collective, Dancing Through the Curriculum, Daybreak Arts, Girls Write Nashville, Healing Arts Project Inc. "HAPI", Love Learning Music, MOVE Inclusive Dance, Music for Seniors, Nashville in Harmony, New American Indian Association of Tennessee, New Dialect, Rejoice School of Ballet, The Porch Writers' Collective, The Theatre Bug, & Youth Empowerment through Arts and Humanities (YEAH!) by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Wade.

Small Organizations

Individual Votes were taken up first:

- ***A motion was made to approve Alias Chamber Ensemble funding by Commissioner Hardin and seconded by Commissioner Knight. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict Recusal:** Commissioner Heather Lefkowitz
- ***A motion was made to approve Unscripted funding by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Yu. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict Recusal:** Commissioner Heather Lefkowitz
- ***A motion was made to approve Chinese Arts Alliance of Nashville funding by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict Recusal:** Commissioner Mayra Yu

Group Vote for organizations that scored 70 or higher:

A motion was made to approve funding for the Small size organizations abrasiveMedia Inc., chatterbird, Choral Arts Link, Inc., Defy Film Festival, Inc., Excellence in Motion Inc., Fashion is for Every Body, Helping Music Foundation, Intersection, Kennie Playhouse Theatre, Kindling Arts, Make Music Neighbors, Inc., Nashville African American Wind Symphony, Inc., Nashville Philharmonic Orchestra, Numinous Flux Dance Company, Portara Ensemble, Street Theatre Company, Tennessee Youth

Symphony, The Arts at Center Street, The Nashville Pipes and Drums, & Vox Grata, Inc.
by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed.

Micro Organizations

Individual Votes were taken up first:

- ***A motion was made to approve International Black Film Festival funding by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Brown. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict Recusal:** Commissioner Dawana Wade
- ***A motion was made to approve Number: Inc funding by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict Recusal:** Commissioner Evan Brown
- ***A motion was made to approve Music City Review funding by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed.***
 - **Conflict Recusal:** Commissioner Mayra Yu

Group Vote – No Conflicts

*A motion was made to approve funding for the Mirco sized organizations **FALL, The Quiet Voice, Verge Theater Company, Arts Bellevue, Early Music City, Make Music Nashville, Little Art House Foundation, Music City Baroque, Kurdish Culture and Music Association, Vocal Arts Nashville, Shine Photography, Satellite Dance, Inc., Women in Theatre Nashville, Sonus Choir, & Carnegie Writers** by Commissioner Hardin and seconded by Commissioner Yu. Motion passed.*

Summary:

- 92 Operating Support Grants were awarded totaling **\$1,957,920**, representing 60% of the FY2025 grant budget.

FY2025 Funding Allocations – Thrive Grants

Ashley Bachelder provided an overview of the Thrive funding formula and stated that 75 projects are recommended for funding. 11 projects are recommended for funding at their original ask amount, and 64 projects are recommended for funding at 94% or higher of the requested amount.

Motions to Approve Funding for Applicants with Fiscal Agents

- (1) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Kamilah Sanders** with fiscal agent **The Forge** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Brown** recused. The motion passed.

- (3) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **LeAndra Crystal** with fiscal agent **North Nashville Arts Coalition** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Hardin**. Commissioner **Brown** recused. The motion passed.
- (4) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **WINDSHIP BOYD** with fiscal agent **Arts and Business Administration** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioners **Wade**, Commissioner **Hardin**, and Commissioner **Brown** recused. The motion passed.
- (5) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Keith Benion** with fiscal agent **Belcourt Theatre** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Lefkowitz** recused. The motion passed.
- (6) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Mark Schlicher** with fiscal agent **Friends of the Edmondson Homesite Park & Gardens** by Commissioner **Tre Hardin** and seconded by Commissioner **Yu**. Commissioner **Wade** recused. The motion passed.
- (8) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Tennessee Art League** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Brown** recused. The motion passed.
- (9) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **COOP** by Commissioner **Jester** and seconded by Commissioner **Wade**. Commissioner **Brown** recused. The motion passed.
- (10) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Molly Breen** with fiscal agent **TPAC** by Commissioner **Jester** and seconded by Commissioner **West**. Commissioners **Wade** and Commissioner **Knight** recused. The motion passed.
- (13) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Daniel Arite** with fiscal agent **Global Education Center** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Brown**. Commissioner **Yu** recused. The motion passed.
- (14) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Mary McCallum** with fiscal agent **Tennessee Performing Arts Center** by Commissioner **Jester** and seconded by Commissioner **Brown**. Commissioners **Wade** and **Knight** recused. The motion passed.
- (15) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Yamil Jimenez** with fiscal agent **Tennessee Performing Arts Center** by Commissioner **Jester** and seconded by Commissioner **Brown**. Commissioners **Wade** and **Knight** recused. The motion passed.
- (16) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Nashville Public Radio** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Lefkowitz** recused. The motion passed.
- (18) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Ruben Torres-Rodriguez** with fiscal agent **The Forge Nashville** by Commissioner **Jester** and seconded by Commissioner **Knight**. Commissioner **Brown** and Commissioner **Yu** recused. The motion passed.

- (20) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Nichole Robinson** with fiscal agent **Global Education Center** by Commissioner **Hardin** and seconded by Commissioner **Knight**. Commissioner **Yu** recused. The motion passed.
- (22) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Marie Campbell** with fiscal agent **Street Theatre Company** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Lefkowitz** recused. The motion passed.
- (25) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **North Nashville Arts Coalition** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Hardin**. Commissioner **Brown** recused. The motion passed.
- (26) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Stephen Joel Watts** with fiscal agent **Black Mental Health Village** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioners **Brown**, Commissioner **Wade**, and Commissioner **Hardin** recused. The motion passed.
- (28) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Danielle Myers** with fiscal agent **North Nashville Arts Coalition** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Brown** recused. The motion passed.
- (29) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Tracy Beard** with fiscal agent **North Nashville Arts Coalition (NNAC)** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Brown** recused. The motion passed.
- (32) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Cynthia Harris** with fiscal agent **Actors Bridge Ensemble Theater of Nashville, Inc.** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Lefkowitz** recused. The motion passed.
- (33) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Marlos E'van** with fiscal agent **Nashville Bel Canto** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Brown** recused. The motion passed.
- (34) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Martha Morales Purucker** with fiscal agent **Actors Bridge Ensemble** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Lefkowitz** recused. The motion passed.
- (36) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Joe Nolan** with fiscal agent **The Contributor** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioners **Lefkowitz** and **Brown** recused. The motion passed.
- (39) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Erihii Nyamor** with fiscal agent **North Nashville Arts Coalition** by Commissioner **Jester** and seconded by Commissioner **Knight**. Commissioner **Brown** recused. The motion passed.
- (44) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Mary Aliza Presto** with fiscal agent **API Middle Tennessee** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Wade** recused. The motion passed.
- (45) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Joseph Clemons** with fiscal agent **The Forge** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Brown** recused. The motion passed.

- (50) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Reza Filsoofi** with fiscal agent **Global Education Center** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Yu** recused. The motion passed.
- (51) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Elisheba Mrozik** with fiscal agent **North Nashville Arts Coalition** by Commissioner **Jester** and seconded by Commissioner **Knight**. Commissioners **Brown** and **Wade** recused. The motion passed.
- (52) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Cameron Mitchell** with fiscal agent **Free Fyre** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Brown** recused. The motion passed.
- (53) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Tony Williams** with fiscal agent **The Forge Nashville** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Brown** recused. The motion passed.
- (54) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **API Middle Tennessee** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Wade** recused. The motion passed.
- (57) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Clay Steakley** with fiscal agent **DancEast** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Lefkowitz** recused. The motion passed.
- (61) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Christina Barclay** with fiscal agent **International Black Film Festival** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Wade** recused. The motion passed.
- (64) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Sean Smith** with fiscal agent **SouthernWord** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Wade** recused. The motion passed.
- (68) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Jaimie Flores** with fiscal agent **The Belcourt Theatre** by Commissioner **Jester** and seconded by Commissioner **Hardin**. Commissioner **Lefkowitz** recused. The motion passed.
- (72) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Emma Supica** with fiscal agent **Unscripted** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Lefkowitz** recused. The motion passed.
- (74) A motion was made to approve funding for applicant **Shakira Arikah Nash Baly** with fiscal agent **The International Black Film Festival** by Commissioner **Knight** and seconded by Commissioner **Jester**. Commissioner **Wade** recused. The motion passed.

Group Approval Thrive Applicants

A Motion was made to approve funding for the following applicants, along with their respective Fiscal Agents or Applicant organization name, as listed below, by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. The motion passed.

1. **Jarrel Pierson** – *Helping Music Foundation* (#2)
2. **Dana Jo Cooley** – *The Forge* (#7)
3. **Stefano Baldasseroni** – *Nashville Bel Canto Foundation* (#11)
4. **Karimah Taylor** – *Black Girl Lessons Inc* (#12)
5. **Lydia Yousief** – *Elmahaba Center* (#17)
6. **Horacio Guendulain** – *The Forge Nashville* (#19)
7. **Delaine Dobbs** – *DancEast* (#21)
8. **Timbre Cierpke** – *Chatterbird* (#23)
9. **Rebecca Hoback** – *DancEast Collective* (#24)
10. **Alayna Anderson** – *Street Theatre Company* (#27)
11. **Lydia Lynn** – *Samaritan Recovery Community* (#30)
12. **Fathiyah Suso** – *World AfriCultural Community Project* (#31)
13. **Caymen Brown** – *The Forge Nashville* (#35)
14. **Jason Garriott** – *Music Neighbors Inc.* (#37)
15. **Brad Henderson** – *Old School Farm Poetry* (#38)
16. **Ashley Mintz** – *Nashville Bel Canto Foundation* (#40)
17. **Richard Ripani** – *Nashville Youth Jazz Ensemble* (#41)
18. **Kemi Elufiede** – *Carnegie Writers* (#42)
19. **Hayden Hubner** – *New Dialect* (#43)
20. **Leslie Townsend** – *The Forge Nashville* (#46)
21. **Wil Merrell** – *Street Theatre Company* (#47)
22. **Kenieha Boren** – *Free Fyre* (#48)
23. **Nivedhan Singh** – *The Quiet Voice* (#49)
24. **Cameron Mitchell** – *Free Fyre* (#52)
25. **Antoine Weir** – *The Forge* (#55)
26. **Sharon Kay** – *WFSK Radio Fisk University* (#56)
27. **Thalia (Muziqueen) Ewing** – *Excellence In Motion* (#58)
28. **Nabou Ramu** – *Buchanan Arts* (#59)
29. **Alexander Williams** – *Women of Color Collaborative* (#60)
30. **Shayla Holt** – *Creative Artist of Tennessee* (#62)
31. **Mel'Keta Andrews-Levitt** – *Mentor to Motivate (MTM)* (#63)
32. **Dr. Ramona Whitworth** – *Excellence In Motion* (#65)
33. **Sarah Cahill** – *Acme Radio Company* (#66)
34. **JayVe Montgomery** – *Chatterbird* (#67)
35. **Candace Fleming** – *Curry Music Foundation* (#69)
36. **Justin Harvey** – *Abrasive Media, Inc.* (#70)
37. **Joshua Lewis** – *Sickle Cell Foundation of Tennessee* (#71)
38. **Sarah Arace** – *Little Art House Foundation* (#73)
39. **Fredrick Weathersby** – *Curry Music Foundation* (#75)

Grants Next steps- Director Bachelder:

- Contracting phase for awarded grants will begin soon, with estimated processing time of 4–6 weeks.

- All applicants will be notified via email, regardless of outcome.
- Grants Committee will meet later in the month to discuss FY26 planning.
- Appreciation extended to the Grants Committee and staff for their work.

Committee for Anti-Racism and Equity (CARE) Update – Commissioner Tre Hardin

- No substantial updates currently.
- Commissioner Hardin anticipates having more to report at the next meeting.

Community Engagement Update – Chuck Beard

- Two Coffee Talk events are scheduled:
 - **March 19** at The Liqui Studio Gallery, featuring artist Amber Lelli.
 - **March 26**, Forging Ahead next recording, featuring former Chair Commissioner Ellen Angelico and Josiah Golson. Upcoming episodes will be available on NECAT.
- Harper Bisango, AmeriCorps member, introduced to the Commission.

Interim Executive Director's Report (Ashley Bachelder)

Budget Update:

- Department budget modification submitted, requesting:
 - Modest increase in grants budget.
 - Restoration of targeted savings.
 - Funding for court-involved youth program.
 - Additional support for communications and community engagement.
- Department budget hearing scheduled for the following morning.
- Metro Council budget hearings to begin after May 1.

Staffing and Hiring:

- Open positions: Finance Manager, Public Information Manager, Public Art Manager.
- Written interviews under review for Finance Manager; PI Manager interviews to follow.
- No update yet on the search for a permanent Executive Director.

Commissioner Changes:

- Commissioners Watts, Love, and Nicholas-Phillips have concluded their service.
- New commissioner, Brittany Cole, pending final Metro Council vote.

Metro Working Group Update:

- Metro-wide recommendation to standardize board sizes to 7–11 members.
- Arts Commission currently has 15 members.
- Recommendation is to reduce to 11 over time, not through immediate removal.

- Timeline for implementation unclear; clarification requested by several commissioners.
- Concerns raised about quorum difficulties during transition.

New Budget & Audit Committee:

- Established by Chair West.
- To be chaired by Commissioner Jester.
- Focus on continuing work related to audit findings and financial oversight.

New/Old Business

- Clarification provided on this agenda section's intent: to propose items for future agendas, not for immediate discussion.
- Staff will resend updated committee assignments and survey commissioners for availability to plan meetings for the remainder of the year.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 2:00 by Commissioner Knight.