

Meeting Minutes

Arts Commission Grants + Funding Committee

February 28, 2025

11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Metro Southeast Building - Green Hills Conference

1417 Murfreesboro Pike

Nashville, TN 37217

Commissioners: Heather Lefkowitz (Chair), Tim Jester, Shawn Knight, Dawana Wade, Jilah Kalil, Ashley Bachelder, Interim Executive Director (ex-officio)

Metro Arts Staff: Vivian Foxx

Metro Legal: Tessa Ortiz-Marsh

Call to Order

- Commissioner Heather Lefkowitz called the meeting to order at 11:10 a.m.
- Vivian Foxx conducted roll call.

Public Comment

- No in-person or emailed public comments were received.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

- A motion to approve the minutes from the February 13, 2025, meeting was made by Commissioner **Jester** and seconded by Commissioner **Knight**.

Staff Report on FY25 Grants

- Ashley Bachelder provided an update on the FY25 grants process:
 - Staff conducted technical reviews of grant applications.

- 18 panelists were involved in the community review process, 17 were able to attend virtual orientation.
- There were two Thrive panels; one reviewed 39 applications and one reviewed 38 applications.
- The Operating panel reviewed 45 applications from organizations requesting new reviews.

- 75 Thrive projects and 94 operating grants are currently recommended for funding.

Discussion on Conflicts of Interest

- Tessa Ortiz-Marsh explained the Metro code on conflicts of interest and the duty of independence for commissioners:
 - Commissioners must disclose any personal connections or financial interests that could influence their votes.
 - Examples of conflicts include:
 - Financial gain or loss (direct or indirect, through family/friends).
 - Close personal relationships with applicants.
 - Board membership with applicant organizations.
 - Recent significant involvement with applicant organizations.
 - Commissioners were advised to err on the side of caution and disclose any potential conflicts.
 - The committee agreed to vote separately on applications where conflicts were identified.
 - Committee members took time to complete their annual conflict of interest form and submit it to Ashley Bachelder.

Approval of Operating Grants

Ashley Bachelder presented recommendations for funding based on size category.

Large Organizations:

The committee approved funding for all qualifying large organizations, with several requiring separate votes due to recusals for conflicts of interest.

A motion was made to approve operating grants for the following large organizations by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Knight. The motion passed.

- Country Music Hall of Fame
- Nashville Ballet
- National Museum of African American Music
- Nashville Symphony Association
- Cheekwood Estate and Gardens
- Nashville Opera

A motion was made to approve funding for Tennessee Performing Arts Center by Commissioner Lefkowitz and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Commissioners Knight and Commissioner Wade recused. The motion passed.

A motion was made to approve funding for Frist Art Museum by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Wade. Commissioners Kalil and Lefkowitz recused. The motion passed.

Mid-size Organizations:

The committee approved funding for all qualifying mid-size organizations, with several requiring separate votes due to recusals for conflicts of interest.

A motion was made to approve operating grants for the following mid-size organizations by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Lefkowitz. The motion passed.

- Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation
- OZ Arts
- Nashville Jazz Workshop
- Humanities Tennessee
- The Forge
- Music City Youth in the Arts Inc.
- Nashville Film Festival
- Tennessee Association of Craft Artists
- Turnip Green Creative Reuse
- CreatiVets
- W.O. Smith Nashville Community Music School
- Musicians on Call

A motion was made to approve funding for Nashville Repertory Theater by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Wade. Commissioner Knight recused. Motion passed.

*A motion was made to approve funding for Moves and Grooves by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Lefkowitz
Commissioner Wade recused. Motion passed.*

*A motion was made to approve funding for The Contributor by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester
Commissioner Lefkowitz recused. Motion passed.*

*A motion was made to approve funding for Southern Word by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Knight.
Commissioner Wade recused. Motion passed.*

*A motion was made to approve funding for Nashville Shakespeare Festival by Commissioner Lefkowitz and seconded by Commissioner Wade.
Commissioner Knight recused. Motion passed.*

*A motion was made to approve funding for Nashville Children's Theater by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Lefkowitz.
Commissioners Knight and Wade recused. Motion passed*

*A motion was made to approve funding for Belcourt Theater by Commissioner Wade and seconded by Commissioner Knight.
Commissioners Khalil and Lefkowitz recused. Motion passed.*

Medium Organizations:

The committee approved funding for all qualifying medium organizations, with several requiring separate votes due to recusals due to conflicts of interest.

A motion was made to approve funding for the following qualifying medium organizations by Commissioner Lefkowitz and seconded by Commissioner Knight. Motion passed.

- Dancing Through the Curriculum
- DancEast Collective
- Artville
- Native American Indian Association of Tennessee
- New Dialect
- Creative Girls Rock
- Buchanan Arts
- Music for Seniors

- Daybreak Arts
- Art and Soul Nashville Inc.
- Nashville in Harmony
- Youth Empowerment through Arts and Humanities (YEAH!)
- Arts and Business Council of Greater Nashville
- Circle Players Inc.
- The Theater Bug
- Healing Arts Project Inc. (HAPI)
- Rejoice School of Ballet
- Love Learning Music
- Move Inclusive Dance
- Girls Write Nashville
- Global Education Center

*A motion was made to approve funding for The Porch Writers Collective by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Knight.
Commissioner Kalil and Wade recused. Motion passed.*

*A motion was made to approve funding for Actors Bridge Ensemble by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester.
Commissioner Lefkowitz recused. Motion passed.*

Small Organizations:

The committee approved funding for all qualifying small organizations, with several requiring separate votes due to recusals for conflicts of interest.

A motion was made to approve funding for the following qualifying small organizations by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Knight. Motion passed.

- Street Theater Company
- The Arts at Center Street
- Kindling Arts
- Tennessee Youth Symphony
- Nashville Philharmonic Orchestra
- Nashville African American Wind Symphony Inc.
- Helping Music Foundation
- Vox Grata Inc.
- Defy Film Festival Inc.
- Chatterbird

- Portara Ensemble
- Abrasive Media Inc.
- Intersection
- Choral Arts Link Inc.
- Chinese Arts Alliance of Nashville
- Excellence in Motion Inc.
- Make Music Neighbors Inc.
- Kennie Playhouse Theater
- Fashion is for Every Bbdy
- Nashville Pipes and Drums
- Numinous Flux Dance Company

*A motion was made to approve funding for Unscripted by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester.
Commissioner Lefkowitz recused. Motion passed*

*A motion was made to approve funding for Alias Chamber Ensemble by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Wade.
Commissioner Lefkowitz recused. Motion passed.*

Micro Organizations:

The committee approved funding for all qualifying micro-organizations, with several requiring separate votes due to recusals for conflicts of interest.

A motion was made to approve funding for the following qualifying micro-organizations by Commissioner Lefkowitz and seconded by Commissioner Knight. Motion passed.

- COOP
- FALL
- The Quiet Voice
- Verge Theater Company
- Arts Bellevue
- Early Music City
- Number Inc.
- Make Music Nashville
- Little Art House Foundation
- Music City Baroque
- Kurdish Culture and Music Association
- Music City Review

- Vocal Arts Nashville
- Shine Photography
- Satellite Dance Inc.
- Women in Theater Nashville
- Sonus Choir
- Carnegie Writers

A motion was made to approve funding for International Black Film Festival by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Commissioner Wade recused. Motion passed.

A motion was made to approve funding for Friends of the Edmondson Home Site Park and Gardens by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Kalil. Commissioner Wade recused. Motion passed.

Total amount of operating grants approved: \$1,957,920 (60% of the total grant budget).

Approval of Thrive Grants

The committee approved funding for 75 Thrive projects, several of which required separate votes due to conflicts of interest:

- **A motion was made to approve funding for "FROM MALI TO MUSIC CITY"** by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. (Fiscal agent: Arts and Business Administration) - Commissioner Khalil and Wade recused. Motion passed.
- **A motion was made to approve funding for "Keep Heritage Alive, Our Story"** by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Knight.
(Fiscal agent: Belcourt Theater) – Commissioner Khalil and Commissioner Lefkowitz recused. Motion passed.
- **A motion was made to approve funding for "TPS Reading Festival of New Plays."** by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Kalil.
(Fiscal agent: Tennessee Performing Arts Center) – Commissioner Knight and Wade recused. Motion passed.
- **A motion was made to approve funding for "Six Triple Eight" Stage Play Community Outreach -Military, Veterans and Senior Citizens** by Commissioner Kalil and seconded by Commissioner Jester.

(Fiscal agent: Tennessee Performing Arts Center) – Commissioner Knight and Wade recused. Motion passed

- **A motion was made to approve funding for "Community Latin Music Pop Ups."** by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Kalil.
(Fiscal agent: Tennessee Performing Arts Center) – Commissioner Knight and Wade recused. Motion passed.
- **A motion was made to approve funding for "Music Citizens by WNXP."** by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Kalil.
(Applicant: National Public Radio) – Commissioner Lefkowitz recused. Motion passed.
- **A motion was made to approve funding for "Nashville Resistance Revival Chorus."** by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester
(Fiscal agent: Street Theater Company) – Commissioner Lefkowitz recused. Motion passed.
- **A motion was made to approve funding for "Black Mythology Project."** by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed.
(Fiscal agent: Black Mental Health Village) – Commissioner Wade recused.
- **A motion was made to approve funding for "Documentary Screening Series and Community Conversations."** by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed.
(Applicant: Mark Schleicher, Fiscal agent: Edmondson Home Site Park and Gardens) – Commissioner Wade recused. Motion passed.
- **A motion was made to approve funding for "Choreopoems on Health and Justice."** by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Kalil.
(Fiscal agent: Actors Bridge Ensemble) – Commissioner Lefkowitz recused. Motion passed.
- **A motion was made to approve funding for "Our Place Nashville Partners with Glassville Tennessee."** by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Wade. *(Fiscal agent: Actors Bridge Ensemble) – Commissioner Lefkowitz recused. Motion passed.*
- **A motion was made to approve funding for "Nashville Street Poetry Project."** by Commissioner Wade and seconded by Commissioner Knight.
(Fiscal agent: The Contributor) – Commissioner Lefkowitz recused. Motion passed.
- **A motion was made to approve funding for "The Honey Dip Music City Inspirations."** by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester.

(Fiscal agent: North Nashville Arts Coalition) – Commissioner Wade recused.

Motion passed.

- **A motion was made to approve funding for "Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month."** by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester.

(Applicant: API Middle Tennessee) – Commissioner Wade recused. Motion passed.

- **A motion was made to approve funding for "The Fire Cycle."** by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Wade.

(Fiscal agent: DancEast) – Commissioner Lefkowitz recused. Motion passed.

- **A motion was made to approve funding for "How Do We Heal?"** by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester.

(Fiscal agent: International Black Film Festival) – Commissioner Wade recused.

Motion passed.

- **A motion was made to approve funding for "The Free Lunch Program."** by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester.

(Fiscal agent: Southern Word) – Commissioner Wade recused. Motion passed.

- **A motion was made to approve funding for "Dance Film."** by Commissioner Wade and seconded by Commissioner Jester.

(Fiscal agent: Belcourt Theater) – Commissioner Lefkowitz and Commissioner Khalil recused. Motion passed.

- **A motion was made to approve funding for "FMK."** by Commissioner Wade and seconded by Commissioner Knight.

(Fiscal agent: Unscripted) – Commissioner Lefkowitz recused. Motion passed.

- **A motion was made to approve funding for "Veni Vidi Vici App Celebration Project."** by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester.

(Fiscal agent: International Black Film Festival) – Commissioner Wade recused.

Motion passed.

A motion was made to approve funding for the THRIVE grants, as listed below, by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed unanimously.

Project Title	Organization name (if applicable)	Applicant Name	Fiscal Agent Information (if applicable)
Project Awake		Justin Harvey	Abrasive Media, Inc.
Our Place Nashville Partners with GlassvilleTN (formerly Nashville Glassworks).		Martha Morales Purucker	actors bridge ensemble
Choreopoems on Health and Justice		Cynthia Harris	Actors Bridge Ensemble Theater of Nashville, Inc.
Creative Artists Club and Coffee Project		Mary Aliza Presto	API Middle Tennessee
FROM MALI TO MUSIC CITY		WINDSHIPBOY D	Arts and Business Administration
Keep Heritage Alive Our Story		Keith Benion	Belcourt Theatre
Spoken Graffiti		Karimah Taylor	Black Girl Lessons INC
Black Mythology Project		Stephen Joel Watts	Black Mental Health Village
A River in the Basin		Nabou Ramu	Buchanan Arts
Silver Songs		Timbre Cierpke	chatterbird
Lake Black Town		Jay Ve Montgomery	chatterbird
Telling Our Stories		Candace Fleming	Curry Music Foundation
Nashville Monday Night Jazz		Fredrick Weathersby	Curry Music Foundation
Dream Machine		Delaine Dobbs	DancEast
The Fire Cycle		Clay Steakley	DancEast
Moving Through Purity Culture with “Sacral”		Rebecca (Becca) Hoback	DancEast Collective

Urban Writers Rounds		Thalia (Muziqueen) Ewing	Excellence In Motion
Shared Experiences: A Community Visual Photo Story		Dr. Ramona Whitworth	Excellence in Motion
Title: 0063		Kenieha Boren	Free Fyre
Savoir-Faire: Collision of Jazz & Poetry		Cameron Mitchell	Free Fyre
Documentary Screening Series and Community Conversations		Mark Schlicher	Friends of the Edmondson Homesite Park & Gardens
A Fabric of Sound II		Daniel Arite	Global Education Center
The Story Heart Project		Nichole Robinson	Global Education Center
Rug & Roll		Reza Filsoofi	Global Education Center
Nashville Music Boost		Jarrel Pierson	Helping Music Foundation
How Do We Heal ?		Christina Barclay	International Black Film Festival
Continuing my HER journey with strangers		Sarah Arace	Little Art House Foundation
The Art of Raqs Sharqi Workshop and Showcase		Mel'Keta Andrews-Levitt	Mentor to Motivate (MTM)
Playing Field		Marlos E'van	Nashville Bel Canto Foundation
Black Arts Movements: Recreating Art from the Past		Ashley Mintz	Nashville Bel Canto Foundation
"Tell me how to hold you the best" Workshop and Performance		Hayden Hubner	New Dialect
Graphic Arts Workshop		Erihii Nyamor	North Nashville Arts Coalition
The HoneyDip: Music City Ink-spirations		Elisheba Mrozik	North Nashville Arts Coalition

Vibe & Release		LeAndra Crystal	North Nashville Arts Coalition
For Us, By Us, Near Us, To Liberate Us: Theater for Housing Justice		Tracy Beard	North Nashville Arts Coalition (NNAC)
Recipes From A Stranger		Danielle Myers	North Nashville Arts Coalition
"Lost and Found" Mix Media Collage/Assemblage		Joshua Lewis	Sickle Cell Foundation of Tennessee
The Free Lunch Program		Sean Smith	Southern Word
Nashville Resistance Revival Chorus		Marie Campbell	Street Theatre Company
Nashville Women In Jazz records album!		Alayna Anderson	Street Theatre Company
ERA recording and Harlem Nights Nashville		Wil Merrell	Street Theatre Company
"Six Triple Eight" Stage Play Community Outreach -Military, Veterans and Senior Citizens		Mary McCallum	Tennessee Performing Arts Center
Community Latin Music Pop-Ups		Yamil Jimenez	Tennessee Performing Arts Center
Dance Film		Jaimie Flores	The Belcourt Theatre
Nashville Street Poetry Project		Joe Nolan	The Contributor
Antioch Art Party		Antoine Weir	The Forge
The Pulse of Progress Walking Immersive Art Experience		Kamilah Sanders	The Forge
New Athenian Publishing X Indie Publications Pro Bono Program		Joseph Clemons	The Forge

IIII (The Downtown Revival Series)		Dana Jo Cooley	The Forge
Deciduous Sounds		Tony Williams	The FORGE NASHVILLE
Harvest Hands Community Murals		Ruben Torres-Rodriguez	The Forge Nashville
Rescue Rhythms: The Sound of Transformation		Horacio Guendulain	The Forge Nashville
Art Heals Nashville		Caymen Brown	The Forge Nashville
"It Ain't Over"		Leslie Townsend	The Forge Nashville
Veni, Vidi, Vici App Seablabration Project		Shakira Arikah Nash Baly	The International Black Film Festival
Sleep Away Camp		Nivedhan Singh	The Quiet Voice
TPS Reading Festival of New Plays		Molly Breen	TPAC
FMK		Emma Supica	Unscripted
LJA: A Broken 5th Wall		Alexander Williams	Women of Color Collaborative
Record Store Day	Acme Radio Company	Sarah Cahill	
Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month	API Middle Tennessee	Joseph Gutierrez	
Creative Journeys - Nurturing Young Authors and Readers	Carnegie Writers	Kemi Elufiede	
Microcinema	COOP	Beth Reitmeyer	
Creatives Connect	Creative Artist Of Tennessee	Shayla Holt	
Arab American Heritage Month	Elmahaba Center	Lydia Yousief	
Play It Forward Recording Sessions and Mix It UP Artist	Music Neighbors Inc.	Jason Garriott	

Showcase Concert Series			
Nashville Bel Canto Opera Scenes Intensive	Nashville Bel Canto Foundation	Stefano Baldasseroni	
Music Citizens by WNXF	Nashville Public Radio	Jesse Strauss	
NYJE Community Concert Series	Nashville Youth Jazz Ensemble	Richard Ripani	
The Mobile Ink Link - Community Creation Hub	North Nashville Arts Coalition	Drew Lamb	
Old School Farm Pottery Expansion of Services	Old School Farm Pottery	Brad Henderson	
Bridging Hope: The Samaritan Courtyard Mural Project 2025	Samaritan Recovery Community	Lydia Lynn	
TAL Arts Workshops & Education	The Tennessee Art League INC	Stephanie Helmey	
WFSK Presents: The Fisk Food & Jazz Music Festival	WFSK Radio Fisk University	Sharon Kay	
Ubuntu -- Community, Connections & Celebration	World AfriCultural Community Project	Fathiyah Suso	

FY26 Grants

Ashley Bachelder provided updates on what to expect in the coming weeks and considerations and planning for FY26. Updates included:

- **Contracting Process for FY25:** A paralegal will assist with preparing the contracts and routing them for signatures, to add capacity for the workload. The contracting process typically takes 4-6 weeks.

- **FY25 Application Feedback:** Staff plans to gather data regarding the applicants who did not update their applications for the FY25 cycle. Potential reasons likely include issues with fiscal sponsorships, changes in work scope, or lack of necessary information. These factors will be explored to identify potential improvements.
- **Fiscal Sponsorship Framework and Alternatives.** Bachelder provided a brief context about how the Thrive Working Group came to its recommendation for fiscal agents, and other things that were considered during those discussions. One option considered was using a single fiscal sponsor to standardize the process for applicants. This option was debated, and some concerns were raised about the potential loss of decision-making authority by the Commission. Another option discussed was procuring a vendor through a solicitation process to manage fiscal sponsorships, though the timeline for this approach was deemed too long for the current cycle. This option remains open for future discussions.
- **FY26 Planning and Grantee Outreach.** Ashley Bachelder stated that she has one-on-one meetings scheduled with approximately 10 grantee organizations next week to discuss the changes to funding formulas and the reasons behind these adjustments. These discussions aim to clarify how funding amounts were determined and address concerns about changes. She emphasized the importance of engaging with grantees to ensure they understand the rationale behind the changes and to gather feedback for future cycles. Continued outreach to grantees and more public engagement events will be scheduled in the coming weeks. Specific dates and schedules will be shared once finalized.

Next Meeting

- The next Grants Committee meeting is scheduled for March 27, 2025, from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM.

Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.