



**METRO ARTS  
GRANTS + FUNDING COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES**

**Date:** March 27, 2025

**Time:** 11:00 PM – 1:00 PM

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

**Committee Members' Present:** Heather Lefkowitz (Chair), Tim Jester, Shawn Knight, & Dawana Wade

**Committee Members Absent:** Jilah Kalil

**Metro Arts Staff Present:** Ashley Bachelder, Interim Executive Director (ex-officio), Sydnie Davis, & Vivian Foxx

**Metro Legal:** Tessa Marsh- Ortiz

**A. Call to Order, Roll Call & Welcome**

Chair Lefkowitz called the meeting to order after the roll call was completed with one member absent.

**B. Public Comment**

Vivian Foxx confirmed there were no public comments submitted via the online form or in person.

**C. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

Although the approval of minutes was scheduled, the agenda item was inadvertently omitted from the printed agenda. The committee deferred formal approval of the minutes until the next meeting. Commissioners were encouraged to review the minutes in the meantime.

## **D. Discussion Items**

### **1) FY25 Grants Update**

**Presented by: Ashley Bachelder and Sydnie Davis**

#### **i) Timeline Review and Status Update**

- On March 3, 2025, the full Commission approved the Thrive and Operating award authorizations.
- Award notifications were sent out March 6–7 via Submittable. Grantees were asked to formally accept the grant and submit an updated grant spending plan and contact info.
- Deadline for responses: March 20, 2025.
  - Thrive: 100% (75 of 75) accepted
  - Operating: 89 of 90 accepted; 1 organization declined and is appealing
- Contracts:
  - Information needed to generate Operating and Thrive contracts was finalized and sent to Metro Legal on March 21. Metro Legal will generate contracts and send to grantees and Metro officials for signatures
  - As of the meeting date, ~50 of 164 contracts had been signed
  - Once fully signed, Metro Arts staff will issue invoices
  - Payments are subject to Metro's 30-day payment policy after invoice date

#### **ii) Descriptive Profiles of FY25 Applicants**

Sydnie Davis presented data on fiscal agents supporting Thrive grantees:

- Most fiscal agents charged either no fee or a small flat/percentage-based admin fee
- The largest number of grantees supported by one fiscal agent was nine
- Of 31 agents, 13 charged 0% fees
- All fees complied with the 10% maximum policy
- Staff are analyzing the data for future policy refinements

### **2) FY26 Grants Update**

#### **I) Timeline + Community Engagement Planning**

Ashley Bachelder presented a proposed timeline and engagement strategy, and provided this handout:

[https://www.metroartsnashville.gov/\\_files/ugd/cc4e3f\\_97cfb7d52ee949df8d996f4b1eaffc31.pdf](https://www.metroartsnashville.gov/_files/ugd/cc4e3f_97cfb7d52ee949df8d996f4b1eaffc31.pdf)

- Five-in-person and one virtual listening sessions planned for April
- Community survey open April 6–25
- Session topics will include Thrive, Operating, fiscal sponsorship, reporting, and policy adjustments
- Sessions to be held across diverse times and locations for accessibility
- Staff will publicize events with clear framing to prepare participants

- Commissioners are encouraged to attend sessions as listeners, not participants (to avoid Open Meetings issues)

## **II) Policy and Approval Timeline**

Ashley Bachelder reviewed a possible tentative timeline for FY26 grant cycle, available here:

[https://www.metroartsnashville.gov/\\_files/ugd/cc4e3f\\_13d935653364426e93a8dd17436cc53b.pdf](https://www.metroartsnashville.gov/_files/ugd/cc4e3f_13d935653364426e93a8dd17436cc53b.pdf). Details include the following. All proposed dates and timelines are subject to change:

- April 30: Full Commission meeting
- May 22 (tentative): Full Commission approval of FY26 guidelines
- June 3: Target date for Metro Council approval
- June: Open FY26 applications for four weeks
- July 5–28: Internal reviews, community panel reviews, and prep
- August 28: Target Commission meeting for FY26 award approvals
- Contracts issued in September; payments disbursed Nov–Dec
- Ashley emphasized this is a “tight but achievable” timeline, critical for avoiding future delays
- Commissioners raised the importance of preparing for FY27 planning concurrently, possibly via a multi-year visual timeline
- Commissioner Wade suggested a working group or retreat focused on deeper funding strategy and institutional memory

### **iii) Updates to Policy Discussions**

Ashley shared a summary of recent one-on-one stakeholder interviews, and provided this handout:

[https://www.metroartsnashville.gov/\\_files/ugd/cc4e3f\\_ba81e8247994446f9531ac965d669efc.pdf](https://www.metroartsnashville.gov/_files/ugd/cc4e3f_ba81e8247994446f9531ac965d669efc.pdf)

- The notes provided are summaries from one-on-one conversations and are not endorsed as specific recommendations or to be representative of specific groups, but are feedback and ideas that have been provided to Ashley Bachelder. Some of those details include the following:
- Suggestions included more clarity and consistency for fiscal sponsorship processes
- Desire for more direct contact or community-based reporting methods
- Commissioners and staff need better understanding of arts organizations’ planning processes
- Interest in inviting external experts (e.g., private foundations) to share equity-based grantmaking strategies
- Commissioners expressed interest in onboarding, orientation, and ongoing education to better support decisions

## **E. New/Old Business**

**Minutes Review:** Commissioners should review and hold onto draft minutes for discussion at the next meeting

**Next Meeting Date:** Tentatively scheduled for Thursday April 24, 2025, at 11:00 am. Staff will confirm availability.

**F. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn made and seconded at 1:09 pm.