

METRO NARTS COMMISSION
Grants + Funding Committee
Meeting Minutes

Date: May 19, 2025

Time: 1:00 PM – 3:00 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, Jilah Kalil, & Ashley Bachelder, Interim Executive Director (Ex-Officio)

Metro Arts Staff: Sydnie Davis, Vivian Foxx, & Capri Harston

A. Call to Order, Roll Call & Welcome

Chair Lefkowitz called the meeting to order at 1:08 p.m. Roll call was taken, and we had a quorum. She welcomed everyone and thanked them for being present.

B. Public Comment

T No public comments were submitted online prior to the deadline.

In-person Public Comment:

1. *Celina M. Smith-Wilson*

C. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve meeting minutes for April 24, 2025, by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Wade.

D. Discussion Items

1. FY25 Grant Updates

Staff reported that 159 out of 165 grantees have been paid. The remaining six are pending due to processing delays, contract issues, or payment information problems.

2. FY26 Planning – Summary of Proposed Grant Guideline Changes

Staff presented an overview of potential guideline changes for FY26 grant guidelines. No decisions were made, but an overview of proposal included:

- **Underrepresented council district:** No proposed policy this year. More data and proposal rationale are needed.
- **Background Checks:** Change the current requirement from 2-years to 5-years for when background checks need to be completed.
- **Application Corrections:** A suggested 3-day window post-review would allow applicants to fix correctable issues.
- **Support for First-Time Applicants:** Potential measures include tagging applicants in the system, allowing optional video submissions, and providing priority office hours.
- **Appeals Process:** A proposed shift to remove internal appeals process.
- **Thrive Grant Changes:**
 - Proposed funding maximum request amount of \$15,000
 - FY26 pause on murals/public art eligibility due to limited capacity and project requirements.
 - Change to fiscal sponsorship fee structure to provide a uniform administrative support fee to all fiscal sponsors.
- **Operating Support Adjustments:**
 - Add clarifying language to the definition of “arts organization.”
 - Adjust the funding formula to provide a specific allocation of overall operating dollars to each grant category based on budget sizes.
 - Add a transition period for organizations that are just over the funding threshold for changes in budget categories.
- **Dual eligibility:** A decision needs to be made as to whether micro and small organizations are eligible to apply for both Thrive and Operating grants.

Next Steps & Key Dates:

Staff provided an updated timeline, including the following key dates:

- Guideline vote: June 16 Grants & Funding Committee meeting
 - Review of final proposals: Planned for the same session.
- June 26 – Final approval by the full Commission

The goal is to distribute funding to grantees by the end of the year. If the schedule stays on time, then applications will open on or after July 16, and will be open for approximately 4 weeks.

E. New Business

There was no new business brought forward.

F. Adjournment

The meeting wrapped up at around 3:09 p.m.