



GRANTS

METRO ARTS / NASHVILLE

Minutes

Metro Arts Grants + Funding

Committee Meeting

Date: June 16, 2025

Time: 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

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

Committee Members Present:

Heather Lefkowitz (Chair), Tim Jester, Jilah Kalil, & Ashley Bachelder (Interim Executive Director, ex-officio)

Absent Commissioners: Shawn Knight & Dawana Wade

Metro Arts Staff Present:

Vivian Foxx, Capri Harston

Metro Legal:

Macy Amos

A. Call to Order, Roll Call & Welcome

Chair Heather Lefkowitz called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.

B. Public Comment

There were no public comments submitted online or provided in person.

C. Approval of Minutes – May 19, 2025

A motion was made to approve May 19, 2025 meeting minutes by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Kalil.

D. Discussion and Action Items

1) FY25 Updates

Ashley Bachelder gave a brief status update on FY25 grants, including payment disbursements and closeout report deadlines. No questions were raised by the committee.

2) FY26 Updates

The action items for the meeting are to review and make recommendations for the Operating and Thrive guidelines. After the committee makes recommendations, they will go to full Commission for approval.

a) Operating Guidelines Review and Recommendations – ACTION

Ashley led the committee through a detailed review of the FY26 Operating Guidelines, highlighting key points. Ashley made edits throughout the guidelines was mainly for clarity and ordering of information. Areas for change or discussion included:

- Date of the start of the contract and grant spending period
 - The contract will begin when it is fully signed by all parties, meaning the start date will vary by grantee. The alternative option is to set a hard deadline by which the contract must be signed, but Ashley explained that this may unintentionally disqualify some grantees from receiving their grant if they miss the deadline.
- Introduced midpoint award scaling for organizations just above budget thresholds to ease funding transitions.
- Added a 3-day correction period for applicants to fix minor errors after technical review.
- Updated scoring rubric: all micro, small, and medium organizations answer questions 1-5 uniformly; mid-size and large answer 1-7; added question 8 for first-time or new applicants to provide additional context.
- Changed language of “midpoint check-in” to “grant check-in” to better reflect flexible timing and purpose. Staff will develop a process for this.

A motion was made to recommend the FY26 Operating Support and Grant Criteria Guidelines to the full Commission, incorporating clarified contract effective dates and the name change of the midpoint check-in, by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Kalil.

b) Thrive Guidelines Review and Recommendations – ACTION

Ashley reviewed the FY26 Thrive Guidelines, which she made edits for clarity in language and overall organization and structure. She noted the several areas of change or discussion, including:

- Grant request set at \$15,000.
- Removal of public art projects due to past challenges with unclear evaluation criteria or requirements.
- Suggested removal of the prohibition preventing CARE and PAC community members from applying for Thrive grants, allowing their participation provided they do not serve on grant review panels to avoid conflicts.
- Applicants may submit only one Thrive grant per cycle; if multiple, they will choose one rather than be disqualified
- Two policy options were discussed regarding the eligibility of micro and small organizations applying for both Thrive and Operating grants – allowing micro and small organizations to apply for both or requiring them to only apply for one grant per cycle.

Members voiced differing opinions but leaned toward Option 1 for clarity and operational ease, and allowing greater allocations to micro-organizations within operating grants.

- Different options for fiscal sponsor fees were discussed, including no change, a standardized flat \$750 fee paid to fiscal sponsors on top of the approved project budget, or a 5% percentage fee paid to fiscal sponsors on top of the project budget. The committee favored the flat \$750 fee.
- Inclusion of a new application question about the role of community involvement and decision making in the project.

The projected timeline for both Thrive and Operating is as follows:

- Applications open July 16, 2025.
- Grant panelist recruitment July 28 – August 13, with notifications by August 22.
- Grant panel reviews September 2–12.
- Funding approval by commission in September.
- Grant monitoring January – March 2026.
- Final spending deadline June 30, 2026, and closeout July 15, 2026.

A motion to recommend all Thrive project grant guideline with all recommendations changes including that organizations cannot receive both Operating and Thrive awards, that Arts will provide a fiscal sponsor a flat \$750 admin cost in addition to the grant amount, that grant mid-point will be changed to grant check in, that we will remove the prohibition of PAC and CARE members, that more clarity is added about the start date, and remove the requirement of a score of 70 or higher in the funding formula by Commissioner Jester and Khalil.

3) FY26 Timeline Review

The committee reviewed the full FY26 grant cycle timeline.

E. New Business

No new business was introduced.

F. Adjournment

Chair Heather Lefkowitz adjourned the meeting at approximately 3:00 PM.