

Minutes

Arts Commission Grants + Funding Committee

July 14, 2025

1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Metro Southeast Building

Green Hills Conference Room

1417 Murfreesboro Pike

Nashville, TN 37217



Committee Members: Heather Lefkowitz, Jilah Kalil, Shawn Knight

Absent: Tim Jester, Dawana Wade

Arts Staff Present: Ashley Bachelder, Capri Harston, Vivian Foxx, & Darius Barati

Metro Legal: Tessa Ortiz-Marsh

A. Call to Order, Roll Call & Welcome

Chair Lefkowitz called the meeting to order and welcome all attendees. Roll was taken, confirming a quorum.

B. Public Comment

No public comments were received in advance, and no members of the public were present to speak.

C. Approval of Minutes – June 16, 2025

A motion to approve June 16, 2025, meeting minutes was made by Commissioner Kalil and seconded by Commissioner Knight. Motion carried unanimously.

D. Discussion Items

1) FY25 Updates – Staff Report

Director Bachelder reported that all 165 grant contracts were executed and paid before the close of the fiscal year. Closeout reports were due July 15 at midnight. As of the current time:

- Operating Grants: 41 of 90 submitted
- Thrive Grants: 35 of 75 submitted

Conciliation Grant closeouts were also underway, covering 23 murals and 13 micro/small organizations. Staff have been holding virtual help sessions and providing one-on-one support to assist grantees with both closeout processes. Staff actions regarding closeout includes verifying the completeness of submissions and expenditures, notifying grantees their closeout is approved or if changes are needed, organizing and archiving the data for future reference, and gathering feedback submitted on the closeout survey.

Feedback Highlights (Preliminary)

Director Bachelder provided an overview of grantee feedback and recommendations as submitted by those who had completed the closeout forms or survey so far. Some preliminary themes from included:

- Questions about tax implications and requests for related education/workshops
- Grantees had overall positive relationships with fiscal sponsors and noted examples of valued support, but expressed questions about why it is necessary
- Desire for more consistent Metro Arts check-ins
- Way to better align between application and reporting processes
- Interest in tracking volunteer contributions and having more information about what information is most important to Metro Arts

Director Bachelder stated that she will bring a full report to the next meeting, categorizing feedback into actionable items such that have quick fixes, ways to operationalize feedback, and what are bigger picture, values-driven considerations.

2) FY26 Updates – Staff Report

Director Bachelder stated the FY26 grant application period is set to open pending Council approval on July 15. Application support events are planned at various community locations, including public libraries and the Farmers Market. Microsoft Bookings will be used to schedule virtual one-on-one support sessions.

Updates to the Submittable platform will include clearer instructions, branching logic, required fields, and improved file upload capabilities to improve the grantee experience.

Key dates for major next steps in the FY26 cycle include:

- Aug 18 – Next Committee Meeting (closeout report + application update)
- Sept 11–12 – Panel review days
- Sept 22 – Committee meeting to recommend allocations
- Sept 25 – Full Commission votes on allocations

3) Upcoming Legislation to Approve Grant Criteria

Director Bachelder reminded committee members that the opening of the FY26 application cycle is contingent on Council approval of the grant criteria. Committee meetings are scheduled for the same evening and the following day. Commissioners can contact Councilmembers to request their support.

E. New Business

Director Bachelder shared that the audit implementation work is in progress, with SOPs for the grant cycle being formalized. She also asked the committee to suggest future topics for committee meetings. Committee members shared ideas including more storytelling to share grantee work, strategic grantmaking discussions, advocacy for increased funding, and artist professional development.

F. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous motion.