Minutes
Metro Arts Commission
Grants + Funding Committee
December 1, 2025
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Metro Southeast Building, Antioch Conference Room
1417 Murfreesboro Pike, Nashville, TN 37217

Committee Members Present: Heather Lefkowitz (Chair), Shawn Knight, Dawana Wade, Ashley Bachelder, Interim Executive Director *(ex-officio)*

Absent: Tim Jester

Metro Arts Staff Present: Vivian Foxx, Capri Harston

A. Call to Order, Roll Call & Welcome
Chair Heather Lefkowitz called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. and read the standard Metro legal statement regarding appeals. Vivian Foxx conducted roll call and confirmed quorum.

B. Public Comment
There were no public comments.

C. Approval of Minutes: October 20, 2025

A motion was made to approve minutes from October 20, 2025, by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Wade.

D. Discussion Items
Commissioner Lefkowitz reminded the committee that the November grants committee meeting was cancelled due to lack of quorum. That meeting originally had an action item for recommendation of the FY26 Community Arts Leaders of Nashville grantees. Because there was no meeting, that action item was brought straight to the December full Commission meeting and approved. There are no action items for today's meeting. Commissioner Lefkowitz asked Director Bachelder to provide the staff report to begin discussion.

1) FY26 Operating and Thrive Grants – Staff Report
Interim Executive Director Ashley Bachelder presented an update on the FY26 grant progress since the last meeting, including:

- Contract Routing: 159 contracts are fully executed. There are 6 remaining for various reasons which are being worked on.
- Payments: 135 grants have been paid, with the remaining in various stages of payment preparation or processing. All of Metro is transitioning to a new financial system. This is a significant change. Any invoices that are not submitted by December 15 will be pushed into January for payment processing.

- Other updates: Staff are working on plans for grant check-ins and closeout. The new Grants and Strategic Initiatives Manager is expected to be hired and started in January.

2) FY27 Grant Planning – Staff Report and Discussion

Director Bachelder reviewed a tentative timeline for the FY27 grant cycle. The proposed timeline begins with approving panelist guidelines in February 2026 and moves through key milestones through Commission approval in August 2026. Director Bachelder described that each phase builds in more time for each step compared to the last two cycles. She noted a long panelist application period, longer grant application periods, an optional pre-review application deadline, and longer time for the panel review process. The timeline will be brought back to the January committee meeting with any new details and feedback added and incorporated.

The committee reviewed the "Parking Lot" document, which summarized questions, comments, and gaps of information about grant topics gathered over the past year from Commission discussions, community feedback, and staff discussion. Director Bachelder provided an overview, starting with the General Operating grants. Topics within Operating grants included eligibility criteria, budget categories, applications, and rubric. Director Bachelder reviewed specific comments or questions within each area. She described next steps for each one, including researching other agency guidelines to see best practices or examples, as well as specific staff tasks for changes that are already identified and planned. The Thrive discussion included considerations for topics within eligibility criteria, allowable expenses, allowable timeline, application, rubric, and funding formula. Director Bachelder noted that more questions came up in the Thrive application, in part, due to the large volume of Thrive applications with the universal application, which highlighted areas where greater clarity is needed. The Parking Lot for the panel review process included topics within criteria, recruitment, logistics, and the panel process. Additional discussion included underrepresented council districts, considerations for information collected in close-out reporting, and onboarding and priority tasks for the new Grant Manager. The Committee discussed ways to prioritize all the topics.

E. New Business

It was confirmed that Grant Committee meetings will remain on the same schedule in 2026, on the 2^{nd} Monday of the month at 1pm.

F. Adjournment

Commissioners Lefkowitz adjourned the meeting at 2:57 p.m.