

Minutes

Arts Commission Grants + Funding Committee

January 12, 2026

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Metro Southeast Building, Conference Room A

1417 Murfreesboro Pike, Nashville, TN 37217



Committee Members Present: Heather Lefkowitz (Chair), Tim Jester, Shawn Knight, Dawana Wade & Ashley Bachelder (ex-officio)

Metro Arts Staff: Vivian Foxx, Josiah Golson, Chuck Beard, Darius Barati

Metro Legal: Macy Amos, Kelli Woodward

A. Call to Order, Roll Call & Welcome

Chair Lefkowitz called the meeting to order at 1:00pm. Roll call was conducted and a quorum was confirmed.

B. Public Comment

Vivian Foxx reported that there were no public comments.

C. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve December 1, 2025, meeting minutes by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Wade.

D. Discussion Items

1. Staff Reports

a. FY26 Community Arts Leaders of Nashville

Josiah Golson provided an update on the FY26 Community Arts Leaders of Nashville program. Orientations for eight participating host organizations and eight undergraduate student interns will take place this week. Internships will begin in February 2026 and run through the second week of May 2026. Mentor matches are being finalized. Mentors are local artists and/or arts administrators who support students independently of host organizations.

b. FY26 General Operating and Thrive Grants

Director Bachelder reported on the status of FY26 Operating and Thrive grants. All contracts have been fully executed and processed. 158 of 165 grantees were paid prior to the December holidays. The remaining payments are due to vendor setup issues related to Metro's new financial system migration. Staff are working with affected grantees to resolve issues as quickly as possible. Additional staff priorities in January and into February include finalizing closeout reports and the framework for grant check-ins. Director Bachelder shared that the new Strategic Grants and Initiatives Manager has been hired and will begin work later in the week.

2. Planning and Discussion

a. FY26 Grant Check-ins and Closeout

Director Bachelder presented draft proposals for FY26 grant check-ins and close-out reports. In order to manage the large volume of grantees and the required check-ins, staff will implement group check-ins in addition to individual ones. Group check-ins may be organized by organization size or project type, discipline, geographic, or other affinity groups. Grantees will self-select what check-in they want to participate in, with virtual and in-person options. Individual check-ins will also be available. The check-in structure and agenda will be a one-hour session, facilitated by staff to focus on information between grantees including discussion of current work, challenges or barriers, identification of resources or other needed supports, and feedback on the Metro Arts grant process. Grantees will be provided details in advance and will have opportunities to share tangible examples of their work.

Director Bachelder also provided an overview and walkthrough of the proposed FY26 close out reports. Closeout reports include an expenditure report and budget narrative, quantitative data on job creation and volunteer engagement, project location and engagement reach, community partners, success stories, challenges, and organization/project impact. Grantees are also requested to share photos and provide optional feedback about the grant process. Closeout reports are due July 15, 2026. Additionally, a small number of randomly selected audits will be performed, as required by Metro.

b. FY27 Timeline

Director Bachelder presented an updated timeline with FY26 and FY27 grant cycle activities. FY26 activities include dates for check-ins, closeout, and audits. The FY27 timeline is tentative and for internal planning purposes, including dates for committee review of materials, commission approvals, and projected dates for application periods, review processes, and ultimate grant approvals. In this tentative timeline, FY27 Operating and Thrive grants will open in May and final approvals will be in August. Discussion in the next committee meeting will focus on review and feedback on grant review panelist guidelines and application.

E. New Business

The next Grants & Funding Committee meeting is scheduled for February 9, 2026, at the same time and location.

F. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:12pm.