

Minutes

**Metro Arts Commission
Grants & Funding Committee
1417 Murfreesboro Pike
Nashville, TN 37217
Antioch Conference Room
Monday, August 10, 2026
1:00 PM – 3:00 PM**



Commissioners Present: Heather Lefkowitz (Chair), Timothy Jester, Shawn Knight, Ashley Bachelder, Interim Executive Director, (*Ex-Officio*)

Metro Arts Staff: Jackie Hansom, Sydney Ortiz, Vivian Foxx

Metro Legal: Macy Amos, Kelli Woodward

A. Call to Order and Welcome

Chair Lefkowitz called the Metro Arts Commission Grants & Funding Committee meeting to order at 1:00pm and a roll call was conducted to confirm quorum.

B. Public Comment

In-person public comment was offered by:

- Kammy Lunsford spoke about the Tennessee Arts Academy Foundation grant application

C. Approval of Minutes — July 27, 2026

A motion was made to approve July 27, 2026, Grants and Funding Committee meeting minutes by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester.

D. Action & Discussion Items

Staff provided a brief overview of the FY27 grant review process and panel process. The review included 45 community panelists across six Thrive panels and three General Operating panels. Panelist training was held in July, with additional staff support provided through the review period.

a. FY27 Allocation Between General Operating and Thrive Grants — ACTION

Staff recommended an allocation formula of 60% of the FY27 grant budget for General Operating Support Grants and 40% for Thrive Grants. Staff explained that this allocation supports continued growth in the Thrive program while maintaining an operationally manageable number of grantees. The overall grant budget has not increased from the prior year, but the funding model and allocation will result in a slight increase in the number of total grantees compared to the previous cycle.

A motion was made to allocate 60% of the FY27 grant budget to General Operating Support Grants and 40% to Thrive Grants by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Knight. Motion passed.

b. Conflicts of Interest

Director Bachelder reviewed the conflict-of-interest process and reminded Commissioners to disclose actual, potential, or perceived conflicts before discussion or voting. Legal clarified that conflict of interest are generally concern a financial or other interest that is distinguishable from that of the public.

c. FY27 Thrive Grant Recommendations — ACTION

Jackie Hansom reported that 209 Thrive applications were received, of which 20 were denied for eligibility and three were withdrawn, leaving 186 applications reviewed by the panelists. She explained that the funding model provides full funding at the requested amount for recommended Thrive projects, rather than partially funding a larger number of projects, noting that full funding maintains the integrity of the proposed projects, budgets, and timelines. Applicants who were not recommended for funding will receive feedback and information about future opportunities. Staff also emphasized that the number of strong applications exceeded available funding.

For Thrive recommendations, the Committee separately approved funding for applicants that required abstentions as follows:

A motion to approve funding for Allison Jimenez Brazzel, with fiscal sponsor Tennessee Performing Arts Center, for the project titled Songwriting In Community: Stories of Motherhood was made by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Lefkowitz. Commissioner Knight abstained. Motion passed.

A motion to approve funding for Martha Morales Purucker, with fiscal sponsor Actors Bridge Ensemble, for the project titled The Glass Reflections Project was made by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Commissioner Lefkowitz abstained. Motion passed.

A motion to approve funding for Delanyo Mensah, with fiscal sponsor MashUp! Nashville, for the project titled Windows/Mirrors: Black Queer: Becoming Across Nashville and the Diaspora was made by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Commissioner Lefkowitz abstained. Motion passed.

A motion to approve funding for Yamil Jimenez, with fiscal sponsor Tennessee Performing Arts Center for the project titled Country Needs More Conga: Explorations of Latin Rhythms in Music City was made by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Lefkowitz. Commissioner Knight abstained. Motion passed.

A motion to approve funding for the applicants and their fiscal sponsors, where applicable (as shown in the following table) was made by the following by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed.

Project Title	Applicant Name	Organization (if applicant)	Fiscal Sponsor
Kwanzaa Nashville's Umoja (Unity) Night	Maria Hall		The Village Cultural Arts Center

Land, Lineage, and Liberation: Re-Membering Northview Through Art, Story, and Creative Placemaking	Joseph Bazelais		LG Foundation
MARIPOSAS	Andrés Bustamante		Aventura Community School
Lost in Translation	Sai Clayton		COOP Gallery
Keep Heritage Alive: New Voices of Jefferson Street – Community Story Activation Project	Keith Benion		Mentor to Motivate
A Moment to Breathe: Art, Wellness & Community Healing	LeAndra Richardson		North Nashville Arts Coalition
Rooted & Remembered: A Community Arts Journey into Birth, Body, and Black Maternal Healing	Tanzye Hill		The Forge Nashville
Roots & Belonging: An Intergenerational Diaspora Arts Experience	Rudrapriya Shanker		Healing in the Margins
IndigeNash, Indigenous Arts Festival	Trenton Wheeler		The Forge Nashville
Voices of Resilience		Urban Green Lab	
MashUp Weekend 2027: The Age of Metamorphosis		MashUp! Nashville	
Masc Manifesto	Beasley Turner		Kindling Arts
The 37208 Fund ART ZONE	Shawna Clay		Corner to Corner
Creation Myths: Queer Southern Stories of Belonging and Becoming	Lane Scott Jones		The Porch
I Can Draw, You Can Draw Too	Erihii Nyamor		North Nashville Arts Coalition
Cloth That Remembers- A Community Batik and Mudcloth Workshop Series	Elisheba Mrozik		North Nashville Arts Coalition
Nashville ABCs: A Community Phonics & Early Literacy Initiative		Learning A TO Z Club	A to Z Learning Limited
Nashville Music Boost: Nashville Producer Accelerator	Jarrel Pierson		Helping Music Foundation
Creating Connection: A collaborative expressive arts experience for individuals and families impacted by cancer		Gilda's Club Middle Tennessee	
Nashville Women in Jazz, Beyond the Bandstand	Alayna Anderson		North Nashville Arts Coalition
Stitched Stories: The Cloth of Jefferson Street	Sandra Chandler		The Forge Nashville

Expressions of Belonging: An Inclusive Sculpture Initiative		Progress Inc.	
The SpinLab Pro Track	Aimée Watson		Helping Music Foundation
Leveraging Thrive: Germantown's 2027 Spring Block Party		Historic Germantown Neighborhood Association	
R.E.A.C.H. Through Beats	Ricardo Johnson		Free Fyre
Silver Sparkles Queer Joy Project	Steven Houtschilt		Global Education Center
Birth and Bloom-Blending floral art design with group pregnancy education	Rolanda Lister	Building Life Opportunities and Options for Mothers	
Creative Youth Society: Engaging Visual Storytelling + Print Media		Bhegani Education	
Material & Immaterial	John Holmes		Buchanan Arts
Arte para todos: Participatory community-based workshops exploring traditional art forms		Workers' Dignity Project	
Last Rite	Eve Petty		Kindling Arts
Stories for Health Equity		Black Mental Health Village	
Color the Future: Community Creative Wellness Program	Janai Pledger		The Forge Nashville
KOA - World of Butterflies	MIKE QUIÑONES GONZALEZ		LA MISIÓN CONARTE
The Power Mag	Mariah Phillips		Mosaic Changemakers
Legacy Makers: Artists, Community, and Value	Haniyfa Muhammad Branka		COOP Gallery
Shop Talk: The People's Playlist	Terri Davis		North Nashville Arts Coalition
ERA (Expression through Recreation and Arts)		Rocklife Youth	
La La Librarian- Get Ready to Rock! Get Ready to Read!	Jada Cato		Excellence In Motion
The Children's Book Project	Brandon Van Leer		Creative Girls Rock
A.D.O.T. Art Department of Transportation	Adam Nicholson		Transit Now Nashville
JOCK NIGHT: Queer Masculinity in the Digital Age	Daniel Jones		Kindling Arts

Studio to Hire: A Nashville Artist Career Launch Program	Dhara Patel		The Aloe Family
The Black Girl Times Community Art Project: Rest, Joy, and Resilience	Britney Drake		Soul'd Creative Collective
The Focus Project: Youth Storytelling Council	Sean Smith		Southern Word
"The End of the Tour"- Workshop Production	Mary McCallum		Verge Theater Company
Arts'N Antioch Creative Community Arts Series	Jasmine Parkerson		The Forge
Made Here: A Producer-in-Residence Project and Community Showcase Series	TRAVIS LOPES		God's Hope for Uganda Families Inc.
One More Day	Greta McClain	Silent No Longer Tennessee	
Stories That Move Us: A Generations in Motion Senior Day Art Parade		Senior On The Move	
Alternative Currents: 2026–2027 Exhibition Series at Neue Welt	Mauro Barreto		Tri-Star Arts
Connecting Through Rhythm and Breath	Liz Johnson		The Forge
Divine Intervention Zines	Rhu Blue		Global Education Center
Sanctuary Songs: Live From the Neighborhood	Christa Wells		Healing in the Margins
Young Men of Distinction: Designed for the Future	Brittany Paschall	Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc. (Nashville Capitol City Chapter)	
The Rest is Commentary	Alex Shor		Franklin Light Opera
Nashville Resonance: Harmonizing Country-Latin Legacies on a Mobile Narrative	Jeremias Garcia		La Misión ConArte
One rhythm many voices	Nesrin Simsek		Kurdish Culture and Music Association
La Cara Productions Bilingual Music Industry Mixers - English/Spanish	Rick Rodriguez		Music Neighbors
Mapping Home: A Community Cartography Project	Jennifer Carland		Nashville Civic Design Center
Seated Dance Class	Lyle Oberman		DancEast Collective
TAL Arts Education & Artist Advancement Initiative		The Tennessee Art League Inc.	

The Art of Belonging: Creating Calm, Connection, and Community Through Sensory Arts	Rainbow Mosho		Healing Arts Project, Inc. (HAPI)
Woven Theatre Company 10th Anniversary Season	William Odum		Arts and Business Council of Greater Nashville
Common Threads: Sharing Histories Through Song	Kyshona Armstrong		Unmanageable
EXPAT	Arash Shoushtari		Kindling Arts
Reverb: A Nashville Black Music Archive	Brian Garrett		Excellence In Motion
The Black Opry Hall of Fame	Holly G		Unmanageable
Arts and Community for the Unhoused		Room In The Inn	
Bashville Stampede	Quincy Ellison		DancEast Collective
Esencial	Stephany Medina		Unmanageable
Visual Voices: Youth-Led Photography & Storytelling Project	Laurence Andrews		DYMON in the Rough (Dynamic Young Minorities of Nashville)
Nashville Artist Digital Opportunity (NADO): Online Digital Business Hub for Emerging Artists	KEVPOP (Kev Page)		The Forge Nashville
Social Fix Sing-Along Series	Jeremy Cox		Kindling Arts
Felt, Experienced, and Connected	andee rudloff		The Forge
The Expressive Body	Emma Morrison		DancEast Collective
This Isn't Music — The Quartet Premiere	Violetta Zironi		Blueprint Ensemble
Nashville Intercollegiate All-Stars Jazz Ensemble	Marc Widenhofer		Nashville Jazz Workshop
BACKSTAGE Presents: A Year of Artistic Inquiry	Phylicia Roybal		DancEast Collective
Germantown Stories: Art, Place, and Community	Valeria Eadler		Historic Germantown Neighborhood Association
Petraglitch: An archive of Indigenous World Building	Joe Clemons		The Forge
The Banjo Knows the Way: A Journey Through Craft, Sound, and Cultural Reclamation	Amanda N. Ewing		Friends of the William Edmondson Homesite Park & Gardens

d. FY27 General Operating Grant Recommendations — ACTION

Staff explained the funding model for General Operating Grants. Organizations that receive a panel score of 70% or higher qualify for funding, with award amounts determined through the established funding formula and organizational budget-size categories. Of the 102 applications received, six were denied during technical review, two were withdrawn, and 94 were received by the panel. 90 organizations are

recommended for funding. Staff described the methodology to determine grant amounts, based on an approach that sought maintain relatively consistent award amounts for smaller organizations, whereas all organizations in the large category see a reduction compared to the previous cycle.

For Operating recommendations, the Committee separately approved funding for applicants that required abstentions as follows:

A motion to approve funding for Belcourt Theater was made by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Commissioner Lefkowitz abstained. Motion passed.

A motion to approve funding for Frist Art Museum was made by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Commissioner Lefkowitz abstained. Motion passed.

A motion to approve funding for Tennessee Performing Arts Center was made by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Lefkowitz. Commissioner Knight abstained. Motion passed.

A motion to approve funding for Nashville Shakespeare Festival was made by Commissioner Lefkowitz and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Commissioner Knight abstained. Motion passed.

A motion to approve funding for The Contributor, Inc. was made by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Knight. Commissioner Lefkowitz abstained. Motion passed.

A motion to approve funding for Actors Bridge Ensemble by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Commissioner Lefkowitz abstained. Motion passed.

A motion to approve funding for Unscripted was made by Commissioner Jester and seconded by Commissioner Knight. Commissioner Lefkowitz abstained. Motion passed.

A motion to approve funding for the following organizations (listed below) was made by Commissioner Knight and seconded by Commissioner Jester. Motion passed.

- ***Cheekwood Botanical Garden and Museum of Art***
- ***Country Music Foundation, Inc.***
- ***CreatiVets***
- ***Nashville Ballet***
- ***Nashville Opera Association***
- ***Nashville Symphony Association***
- ***National Museum of African American Music***
- ***Arts & Business Council of Greater Nashville***
- ***Humanities Tennessee***
- ***Moves and Grooves, Inc.***
- ***Music for Seniors***
- ***Nashville Children's Theatre***
- ***Nashville Film Festival***
- ***Nashville Jazz Workshop***
- ***Nashville Repertory Theatre***

- *Native American Indian Association of Tennessee*
- *OZ Arts, Inc.*
- *Southern Word*
- *Tennessee Association of Craft Artists (d/b/a Tennessee Craft)*
- *The Forge Nashville*
- *The Porch Writers' Collective*
- *The Theater Bug*
- *Turnip Green Creative Reuse*
- *Unmanageable*
- *W.O. Smith/Nashville Community Music School*
- *Arcade Arts Nashville*
- *Art & Soul Nashville, Inc.*
- *Artville Artist Fund*
- *Buchanan Arts Center*
- *Carnegie Writers*
- *Chamber Music City*
- *chatterbird*
- *Creative Girls Rock*
- *DancEast Collective*
- *Dancing Through the Curriculum*
- *Daybreak Arts*
- *EXCELLENCE IN MOTION INC.*
- *Girls Write Nashville*
- *Global Education Center*
- *Healing Arts Project, Inc. (HAPI)*
- *Kennie Playhouse Theatre*
- *Kindling Arts*
- *MOVE Inclusive Dance*
- *Nashville Bel Canto Foundation*
- *Nashville in Harmony*
- *Nashville Philharmonic Orchestra*
- *New Dialect*
- *North Nashville Arts Coalition*
- *Old School Farm Pottery*
- *Rejoice School of Ballet*
- *Street Theatre Company*
- *The Arts at Center Street*
- *Youth Empowerment through Arts and Humanities (YEAH!)*
- *April Gloaming Publishing*
- *Chinese Arts Alliance of Nashville*
- *Circle Players, Inc.*
- *COOP Gallery*
- *Enlightenment Film Academy*
- *Friends of the Edmondson Homesite Park & Gardens*
- *Helping Music Foundation*
- *INTERNATIONAL BLACK FILM FESTIVAL*

- *Intersection*
- *La Misión ConArte*
- *MADE Foundation*
- *Music Neighbors Inc.*
- *Nashville Chamber Music Society*
- *Nashville Design Week*
- *Nashville Filmmakers Guild*
- *Numinous Flux Dance Company*
- *Portara Ensemble*
- *SONUS Choir*
- *The L.O.V.E. Academy*
- *The Nashville School of Traditional Country Music*
- *Vox Grata Women's Choir*
- *Community Arts Collective*
- *Drkmttr Community Fund*
- *EARLY MUSIC CITY*
- *Harmonize Artists Foundation Limited*
- *Music City Baroque*
- *Music City Review*
- *Nashville Dance Collective*
- *Nashville Story Garden*
- *Verge Theater Company*

Director Bachelder commented on the now committee-recommended FY27 funding package. The total allocation is \$3,263,200, unchanged from the previous year. The approved package includes 90 General Operating grantees and 86 Thrive grantees, compared with 79 General Operating grantees and 86 Thrive grantees in the previous year. Individual award notifications will not be issued until final Commission approval. She recognized work from staff members and extensive support that was provided to applicants.

E. New Business

The Committee discussed rescheduling its September to Tuesday, September 15 at 1pm due to the holiday.

F. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:27 p.m.