



# METRO ARTS

NASHVILLE OFFICE OF ARTS + CULTURE

## **Metro Arts Commission**

Minutes of the Committee for Anti-Racism and Equity

January 30, 2021

This meeting took place via teleconference.

You can find a recording of the meeting here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftUOOPMdJ50>

\*\*\*It is recommended to view this recording for the full context of the meeting\*\*\*

Attending Committee Members: Sarah Bounce, Will Cheek (Co-chair, Commissioner), Aaron Doenges, Megan Kelley, Ellen Gilbert, Jonathan Marx, Teree McCormick, Paula Roberts (Co-chair, Commissioner), Jon Royal, Jim Schmidt

Absent Committee Members: Alandis Brassel

Staff: Janine Christiano, Tré Hardin, Grace Wright, Caroline Vincent

Guests: Dontrai Buchanan (Metro ITS)

### **METRO ARTS MISSION:**

**Drive an Equitable and Vibrant Community through the Arts**

A. Administrative – Facilitator: Paula Roberts

a. Call to Order & Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 9:07 a.m.

b. Roll Call and Group Norms

Co-Chair Roberts did a roll call and recognized the CARE group norms.

c. Vote on Governor’s Executive Order No. 71

***A motion that the meeting agenda constitutes essential business of this body and meeting electronically is necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of Tennesseans considering the COVID-19 outbreak and is permitted under the Governor's Executive Order number 71 was offered by Megan Kelley, Sarah Bounce seconded.***

Roll call vote was taken, all members present voted, and all votes were affirmative

B. Retreat & Agenda Overview – Teree McCormick & Paula Roberts

Teree McCormick and Commissioner Roberts reviewed the agenda for the day.

C. Team Building Training – Sarah Bounce & Jon Royal

Jon Royal and Sarah Bounce led a discussion around Amanda Gorman’s poem “The Hill We Climb.” They also gave an overview of the continuum of multicultural organizational development in relation to the work of CARE and the Arts Commission.

For more details of the discussion, please listen to the recording of the meeting.

D. Equity Lens Questions Review – All

Teree gave an overview of the Maryland Association of Boards of Education “Looking Through the Equity Lens,” which includes the following questions:

1. Who are the under-represented groups affected by this policy, program, practice, decision, or action? What are the potential impacts on these groups?
2. Does this policy, program, practice, decision, or action worsen existing disparities or produce other unintended consequences?
3. How have you intentionally involved stakeholders who are also members of the communities affected by this policy, program, practice, decision, or action? Can you validate your assessments in #1 and #2, having considered this stakeholder reaction?
4. What are the barriers to more equitable outcomes (e.g. mandated, political, emotional, financial, programmatic, or managerial)
5. How will you (a) mitigate the negative impacts and (b) address the barriers identified above?

It was proposed that this document be used as a baseline to develop a tool for Metro Arts to use as a tool for evaluating and approaching discussions and programs.

The Committee discussed the implications of using the term “underrepresented” and what might better describe the relationship or situation. It was also suggested that the description should include a reference to the past and include the term “historically.” Additionally, the point was made to identify both groups included and excluded.

In further discussion, the Committee recognized the following considerations for building an equity lens in terms of the Nashville/Davidson County community:

- Identifying equitable relationships beyond just the binary of white-black but also in terms of the multitude of vibrant communities as well as the variety of genres that communities use in their practice.
- Acknowledging history of harm associated with well-intentioned but potentially uninformed assistance that damaged a community's arts practice. And, additionally, paying attention to not defining how aid is given but learning what would be right for a particular culture.
- Recognizing that we are talking about equity there are distinct ethnic or cultural backgrounds, refugee status, abilities (cultural, physical, intellectual), education, skin color, and cultural striations that need to be taken into account.
- Consider whether or not new policies are excluding different cultural groups because they may not identify in terms of the categories that Metro Arts uses or have the same needs within an overarching cultural, racial, or ethnic designation.

The Committee also suggested that due to these multiple aspects, relationships should be made with communities before making offers of help and/or enacting programs and should include being mindful of bringing in a wide range of representation from stakeholders and on CARE.

The Committee further discussed the following topics and considerations in terms of the use and goals of the Equity Lens:

- How to build trust with communities
- How to intentionally involve stakeholders through the entire process of projects and programs including planning, decision making, and execution
- How Metro Arts can enact programs like Learning Lab and other community engagement
- How to build authentic agency for stakeholders in the process and what tools could be used to weigh and track this
- Additionally, how can the strategic planning consultants help in this, perhaps by encouraging honesty by being outsiders
- How grantees can show that they are authentically involving members of the community involved
  - Janine mentioned the introduction of a Cultural Equity scoring criteria in the Metro Arts review process
- How to use the Equity Lens as a tool that can be used for internal relationships as well as external
- Additionally, as a tool for looking into the context of CARE and bringing people into CARE for representation and long-term sustainability

The conversation was drawn to a close with the idea that this lens represents a continuous conversation, and that the final question of how to mitigate harm will be developed as the other elements of the lens are discussed.

Caroline gave the Committee an overview of the [2015 Metro Arts Strategic Plan: Crafting a Creative City](#), and the proposed 2021 strategic planning process including finding a strategic planning team that has experience in working with local arts agencies and equity planning. The consultant team would be evaluating all programs, departmental capacity, cross sector partners & opportunities, engage community feedback, analyzing community art sector needs, how to sustain goals with the current resources, and formalizing equity goals. Major questions to answer would be solidifying vision, identity, and the value of arts and culture in Nashville and what programs and projects that Metro Arts is leading, partnering, or seeding within the community.

In terms of soliciting consultants for the strategic planning process, Metro Arts expects that:

- The solicitation for a consultant team will go out new few weeks.
- The expectation is that a consultant team will be decided on by the summer.
- The first step of the strategic planning process with the consultant team will be seeking stakeholder input into the process.

Caroline further clarified that the design of this process evolves with the work and consultant/stakeholder input, and that CARE could be an integral part of that process. It was also pointed out that while it is important to have a long-term plan, given the quickly evolving landscape, it is also important to be flexible with short-medium-long term goals. With this in mind, the strategic planning process would entail looking for guiding principles on how Metro Arts can focus on projects that the department is uniquely situated to do and can do with the current staff and capacity.

The Committee asked for further clarification on given the previous strategic plan, what would success look like for this strategic plan.

It was clarified that success would entail a simplified version of Metro Arts' goals – a north star. The strategic plan would be a guide that staff, Commissioners, and Committees could access for mutual understanding and working towards the same goals. Additionally, equity would be further codified beyond Metro Arts' cultural equity statement and the CARE guidelines. The strategic planning process should include a deep focus on stakeholder engagement to understand what the community needs. The planning process should involve the goals of this Committee to help frame the plan.

The Committee further clarified that the strategic plan should not only north star as an acknowledgement that there are several paths forward to achieving one goal. It could be an opportunity to devise more clearly the what are the pathways to the north star. Staff agreed that a successful strategic plan would include tactics to help achieve goals.

It was also discussed how community stakeholders would be brought into the planning of the plan and how Metro Arts and CARE could demonstrate to stakeholders their value in terms of plans on their behalf, ongoing relationships, compensation for their time, support them relationally and in other ways as we are planning for the planning process.

Staff confirmed that this will be part of the planning process with the consultant and CARE and were certainly on board with the idea of compensation – both financially and in other ways whatever that might be.

Committee further acknowledged that showing up for a community and acting as a bridge is creative labor.

The Committee asked for clarification about the consultant procurement process and prioritizing equity goals.

Caroline clarified that that equity had been included in several points on the scope of services including the ability to engage multiple communities of different abilities and languages. Additionally, Metro procurement has their own internal equity review.

The conversation was wrapped up, but it was further clarified that the Equity lens would be pivotal to the work of strategic planning.

#### F. 360° Organizational Review – All

The Committee decided by consensus to move discussion of this agenda item to the regularly schedule CARE meeting on February 3, 2021. At that meeting the equity lens would be finalized along with further review of the strategic plan.

Staff gave an abbreviated review of the topic including suggesting keeping elements of the 360 review process but also focusing more on organizational assessment and using [a framework from the Georgia Council for the Arts](#) as a base template.

The Committee suggested that the framework focused heavily on workflow and efficiency and that for the work of this Committee there should be a focus on internal and relationship development as well. This would help make sure that the work of CARE continued working beyond white supremacist norms.

It was also discussed that the principles of the 360 review format could be useful in taking an honest look at where the agency is and allow for the ability of individual accounts and perspectives to be authentically recognized in moving for structural change.

The discussion was wrapped up, and the Committee was asked to consider how to enact this process and to reach the outcome/implementation phase.

#### G. Break & Working Group Breakout Rooms

The Committee recessed for a short break and discussion in working groups.

#### H. Working Groups Report Out

##### a. Internal Analysis & Development (Restorative Practices)

Tré Hardin presented on behalf of the working group. The group discussed the following:

- Relationship and team building within Metro Arts staff
  - Building understanding of each other to promote trust and a sense of safety and deal restoratively with any conflict that arises
- How to deal with internal conflict when it does arise
  - Exploring conflict resolution techniques
  - Exploring how an artist mediator could be integrated into the process similarly to the way Metro Arts works with an artist to build relationships in the community
  - Example of improv as a conflict resolution tool
- The role of Metro Human Resources and internal processes
  - Define HR's purpose to the department and explore alternative methods for conflict resolution
  - Designing a process or flow for engaging with conflict and conflict resolution of which HR might only be one part
  - Acknowledgement that sometimes external resolutions can lead to feelings of separation or discouragement.
- Codifying an informal process for conflict resolution that relies on strong internal relationships and a strong team foundation

The Committee decided to discuss the report out of each working group as they presented.

It was asked if the working group had discussed any tangible ideas for building internal conflict resolution policies. Members of the group responded that their discussions centered on storytelling as a form of conflict resolution. It was also offered that programs like Metro Arts' Learning Lab sought to teach artists how to use creative practice for relationship/community building and conflict resolution. This could be helpful for Metro Arts and also employee local artists. The Center for Performance and Civic Practice might be a useful example.

It was asked if the concept of repair and restorative practice was a part of the discussion. Members of the group responded that it was not but recognized the real need. part of the work. This would potentially be a useful part of the Equity Lens discussion. It would be useful to seek out a model.

It was further discussed that measurement and evaluation of this kind of work is inherently difficult but that perhaps evaluation tools could also be integrated into the Equity Lens discussion. It was suggested that a system could be developed that could be applied agency wide for evaluation.

b. External Analysis & Development (Metro Arts Funding, Programs & Initiatives)

Megan Kelley presented on behalf of the working group. They also acknowledged that the External Analysis & Develop group and the Communications/Equity Programs and Projects Policy ended up working in tandem and exploring that interdependence.

The group discussed the following:

- The growth of the arts ecosystem and the resource challenges and how improvement might need more time to develop
- Quantitative data gathering is going well but qualitative, cultural research could be a point for more work
- The unfilled community engagement position at Metro Arts
- Metro Arts' relationship with communities in terms of authentically serving and striving for transformative as opposed to transactional relationships
- Identifying how CARE can work with Metro Arts to provide input and feedback as well as Metro Arts self-identifying points of work
- Identifying how current projects are interconnected and how those connections can be used to strengthen and support the programs
- Creating a wish list of big ideas but then working backways to build an implementation strategy particularly in terms of pivoting existing programs and relationships that could be utilized
- Building a resources list of partners and spaces to map the state of those relationships and explore where Metro Arts is not connecting.
- Creating a cultural map of the Nashville/Davison County arts ecosystem to see who serves and is connected to various cultural groups
- Exploring cultural work residencies from a wide range of genres as a way of engaging external partners
- How Metro Arts can work with cultural community workers to build authentic relationships with communities given the diversity and complexity
- Fostering a community calendar to support the wide range of cultural offerings and to build relationships that are not transactional

- How Metro Arts and CARE can create an imaginative space for all communities

The Committee asked for further clarification on the currently vacant community engagement role. The person should have experience with intercultural nuance and be able to build relationships with cultures that they are unfamiliar with.

The Committee also discuss how CARE could be further integrated into the work of Metro Arts.

The Committee decided that given the resonance between the External Analysis & Development and Communications working groups that the two should be combined with the option to divide as needed. However, it was recognized that each group should draft intentions to make sure that they combined group stays on target for both. Additionally, it was acknowledged that a communication element should be built into the Internal Analysis & Development working group.

c. Communications/Equity Programs and Projects Policy

This working group was combined with the External Analysis & Development working group discussion – see above.

d. Training – Jon & Sarah

Sarah and Jon presented on behalf of the working group. They updated the Committee on the following:

- The group and staff are in the process of exploring the use of Crossroads material to create an onboarding module for new Arts Commissioners.
- If not possible, who should develop training materials, which would involve significantly more labor and investment, and how would they be compensated. If this included Jon and Sarah would this be a conflict of interest?
- Codifying that this onboarding module would be a permanent part of onboarding all new board members
  - It was further suggested that a Board member should be a part of this process

Staff gave an update on the Crossroads materials discussion. Using the materials is not part of current contact but Metro Arts has solicited pricing for using it if it is possible. It was also emphasized that deep work should be compensated but that a structure would need to be discussed as Metro Arts does not currently have a framework for that.

I. Retreat Wrap up & Next Steps – Teree McCormick & Paula Roberts



It was discussed that the Committee could attend cultural events as part of team building and community relationship building.

The next meeting was confirmed for February 3, 2020 from 5:00-6:30pm

J. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 12:36 p.m.