



METRO ARTS

NASHVILLE OFFICE OF ARTS + CULTURE

MINUTES

Advocacy Committee

May 18, 2023

11:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

1417 Murfreesboro Pike

Nashville, TN 37218

If you have any questions, please e-mail arts@nashville.gov.

Committee Members: Will Cheek (Chair), Jim Schmidt (Vice-Chair), Marianne Byrd, Diana Perez, Bonnie J. Dow, & Matia Powell (Ex-Officio)

Absent Members: Dexter Brewer

Metro Arts Staff: Daniel Singh, Ian Myers, Jonathan Saad, & Vivian Foxx

METRO ARTS MISSION:

Drive an Equitable and Vibrant Community through the Arts

A. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 AM.

B. Approval of Minutes

No minutes were provided to approve.

C. Action/Discussion Items

A. Overarching theme: A pivotal moment for the Nashville Arts

- a. Daniel discussed the pivotal moment for the arts in Nashville, highlighting the role of Metro Arts in the city; he noted his recommendation to observe how funding is done for the arts in our peer cities as well as in comparison to the top five states with the highest funding like California, New York, DC, and Florida.

- b. Marianne Byrd emphasized the need for the support of artists and organizations in Metro Nashville and their contribution to community building and nurturing services.
- c. Chair Will Cheek recommended a 1-pager that would help encompass all the funding comparison information for an ask to be shared with the Mayor's Office and others to help better stress the need for ongoing support to keep the arts thriving in Nashville, noting that with just \$10 million, we could fully fund grants right now which could equitably be targeted to traditionally disadvantaged neighborhoods.

B. Growing need for Metro Arts funding:

- a. Ian noted a significant increase in applications for operating grants and Thrive proposals in FY24, indicating a growing, urgent need for funding.
- b. Jim Schmidt mentioned that the city receives approximately 5 to 6 million annually from the franchise tax. During a community engagement session, it was discussed that the franchise tax is allocated to different purposes in other cities, presenting an option for consideration. Tennessee's dedicated funding from license plates has helped maintain its budget, preventing significant cuts.
- c. It highlighted the potential talent drain as artists and their families are being displaced from Nashville due to a lack of funding.

C. Metro Arts' role in creating a more equitable Nashville:

- a. Discussed efforts to amplify the work and needs of under-represented artists and organizations.
- b. Described the redesigned grant editing process to support micro and small organizations and provide technical assistance.
- c. Noted the involvement of community input in grant editing, grant review, Thrive review, and public art application processes.
- d. Highlighted the commitment to equity by allocating funds to BIPOC artists and different operating grant categories.
- e. Suggested redirecting the \$2M Capital allocation to Metro Arts to ensure equitable funding.
 - i. Daniel compared the growth of the arts in Nashville to the decreased funding over the past 20 years, highlighting the need for increased investment, and explained that the matrix for funding increases was based on how other states or cities

secured funding, often tied to council districts or gaining broad approval. The proposed plan includes capacity-building grants, arts and entertainment districts, support for schools, and requests for new works and individual artists' funds. Feedback has been received on the plan's budget implications, and Daniel suggested considering taxes on new constructions as a potential funding source.

D. Staff/Commission Report

- A. Daniel Singh mentioned increased offerings to the community, including grant clinics and a comprehensive outreach plan with language translation in FY24. He considered converting empty office spaces into subsidized living spaces for artists through credits to landlords. And drew inspiration from other successful initiatives, such as the approach taken by health agencies that focused on holistic health services rather than just medication and doctors. Additionally, he highlighted Judge Calloway's vision to transform the juvenile services system into a more innovative and community-oriented campus. Daniel proposed exploring the idea of ensuring arts facilities are accessible within a 10-minute radius, akin to the approach taken by parks and libraries.

E. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held during FY24 and is to be announced at a later date.

F. Adjourn Meeting

Chair Will Cheek made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 AM.