



# GRANTS

METRO ARTS / NASHVILLE

## MINUTES

### Grants and Funding Committee

Monday, May 8, 2023

12:30PM - 1:30PM

Metro Southeast

1417 Murfreesboro Pike,

Nashville, TN 37217

*Bordeaux Room*

**If you have any questions, please e-mail [arts@nashville.gov](mailto:arts@nashville.gov)**

**Commissioners Present:** Sheri Nichols Bucy (Chair), Carol McCoy, Matia Powell (Ex-Officio), Clarence Edwards

**Commissioners Absent:** Marianne Byrd (Vice Chair)

**Metro Arts Staff Present:** Jonathan Saad, Ian Meyers, Chuck Beard, Jesse Ross, Dana Parsons (Consultant), Vivian Foxx

### METRO ARTS MISSION:

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

**A. Call to Order**

Chair Nichols Bucy called the meeting to order at 12:43 PM.

**B. Approval of Minutes: April 10, 2023**

*A motion was made to approve the April 10, 2023, minutes by Commissioner Chair Nichols Bucy and seconded by Commissioner Edwards. The motion passed.*

**C. Action/Discussion Items**

1. FY24 Program Updates (Jonathan Saad)

A. Operating Support proposed allocations

B. 92 Submissions, 88 qualified for review for Operating Grants

C. There will be a focus on supporting micro, small, and medium-sized businesses since the funding remains the same as last year unless there is additional funding approved by the council.

D. Daniel expressed disappointment regarding the mayor's decision not to provide more funding, despite their efforts to present a comparison study and provide data to support their case. They adjusted the grant cycles to

present concrete data, but it did not result in increased funding. Daniel acknowledges that there are further steps to be taken and emphasizes the need for a comprehensive discussion on the matter.

- E. There are five funding categories based on the operational budgets of arts organizations:
    - A. Large: Arts organizations with budgets exceeding \$3,000,000.
    - B. Midsize: Arts organizations with budgets ranging from \$500,000 to \$3,000,000.
    - C. Medium: Arts organizations with budgets ranging from \$100,000 to \$500,000.
    - D. Small: Arts organizations with budgets ranging from \$25,000 to \$100,000.
    - E. Micro: Arts organizations with budgets below \$25,000.
2. Thrive Call for Artist Services proposed allocations (Dana Parsons)
- A. Out of 155 submissions, 31 of them scored above 75% (the 31 are public art projects, primarily murals). The speaker highlights the positive aspect of the applications aligning with the criteria's rubric and demonstrating impactful community work. There is also geographical diversity, with projects serving 32 out of 35 districts, and collaborative community engagement. The panel meetings were celebrated for their commitment to serving Davidson County. However, funding all the requested projects would require 1.8 million dollars, which is currently unavailable. Partially funding the projects at a lower percentage would compromise their integrity. Despite the financial challenge, the community's evident need and impactful work drive the need to explore funding options moving forward.
  - B. Daniel discusses various options for securing funding. The first option involves requesting the Public Arts Committee to allocate funds from their budget. The second option is to advocate strongly to the council, highlighting the importance of funding 135 projects, including 32 projects that benefit specific districts. There is a budget presentation on the 23rd, where public comments can be made to voice concerns. Following that, the Council will have two votes on June 6th, and it is crucial to contact them via email to request last-minute budget adjustments. Short-term advocacy actions include attending the mayoral forum to hold the arts community accountable and reminding them of their commitments. While the staff cannot directly lobby, community organizations and council members can. Although there was no increase in the allocated budget, efforts are being made to advocate for modifications by reallocating funds within the existing budget. The council has a history of making improvements of up to \$20 million by adjusting priorities and granting specific funds.
  - C. Dana acknowledges that staff cannot directly advocate but suggests assisting in the planning of an advocacy plan. They highlight the power of the stories within the applications and the importance of artists speaking

directly about the impact of their projects. Dana expresses willingness to help make connections with commissioners and ensure staff involvement in planning the advocacy efforts to maximize their impact on the designated day.

- D. The commissioners express their willingness to assist in the planning process. They appreciate Dana's involvement and suggest finding a way to collaborate within the bounds of the metro code. They propose assigning a couple of commissioners to gather talking points or seek guidance from staff. The commissioners emphasize their readiness to support and facilitate the new advocacy form, providing the necessary information to make requests effectively. They highlight the importance of offering solutions rather than simply complaining about the need for funding. They view changing the council ordinance as a positive approach to addressing the issue.
- E. Commissioner Clarence Edwards raises a point regarding the applicants underfunding themselves and expressing the need for more money to complete their projects. Edwards suggests including this as a talking point, emphasizing that historically the arts have been underfunded. They view the current situation as an opportunity to address the underinvestment in arts and ensure that artists' services are not undervalued.
- F. Chuck Beard emphasizes the importance of presenting data related to the Thrive program's impact. By providing concrete evidence, it becomes clear that the program serves as a positive outlet rather than causing additional trauma. Sharing this data holds individuals accountable for their decisions and actions, and if they refuse to support the program, they may face consequences during elections.
- G. Commissioner Carol McCoy raises concerns about finding the necessary funding for Metro Arts. Daniel suggests proposing a one-time waiver of the Surplus rules, which dictate that surplus funds must be used for debt payment or one-time capital costs. Daniel intends to ask the commissioners to recommend the waiver so that the surplus funds can be allocated to artist capital. He argues that artist capital is as important as building capital and highlights Nashville's strong credit rating and the significance of artists for tourism and the city's identity. With a surplus of \$126 million, Daniel suggests tapping into some of those funds.
- H. Commissioner Carol McCoy suggests modifying the funding request to 6 million as a more compelling negotiating point. She believes that requesting half of the originally requested amount may result in a higher chance of approval. McCoy also recommends involving multiple individuals in the request process, not just Sharon and Nancy. She emphasizes the importance of making a strong argument for why a one-time waiver should be granted.
- I. Clarence Edwards requests a flyer that includes information on the funding percentages, the current available amount, and the remaining funding needed. The purpose is to distribute the flyer to galleries, allowing

them to assess how they can utilize their resources and contribute.  
Clarence offers to provide the necessary information for creating the flyer.

**D. Staff Report**

Daniel announces that the Advocacy Meeting will take place on May 18, 2023, at 11am and invites the entire Grant committee to attend.

**E. Old/New Business**

A. Digital Communication Frustrations

A. The conversation, between Daniel Singh, Commissioner Edwards & Commissioner McCoy revolved around frustrations regarding communication, too many emails and the availability of a database containing contact information for all the galleries in town. The discussion touched on the importance of galleries being able to effectively communicate with the artists they represent. Chuck Beard mentioned that galleries must sign up due to anti-spam rules, and sending emails to non-subscribers can result in being blacklisted. The limitations on forcefully emailing groups without consent are acknowledged. The conversation also highlighted the need for community engagement through events and face-to-face interactions with galleries and organizations. There is a mention of a past directory project that did not meet expectations.

**F. Adjourn Meeting**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:34 pm by Chair Sheri Nichols Bucy.