

MEETING MINUTES

Metro Arts Commission [Grants & Funding Committee](#)

Monday, August 12, 2024, 12:30-1:30PM

Metro Southeast Facility

[Meeting video](#)

Attendance at Meeting:

Commissioners: Tim Jester (chair), Carol McCoy, Leah Dupree Love

Metro Arts Staff: Interim Director Dr. Paulette Coleman, Sydnie Davis, Chris Afotey, Daryn Jackson, Vivian Foxx

Guests: Tessa Ortiz-Marsh (Metro Legal), Ashley Bachelder (MHRC), Heather Lefkowitz (commissioner)

Not present:

Commissioner Dawana Wade

Action Items

- Sydnie Davis will distribute the proposed grant guidelines to the full commission.
- Tim Jester will present the guidelines during the next commission meeting and gather feedback.
- Emails will be sent to Thrive applicants explaining the next steps.
- A community feedback session will be organized as part of the conciliation process.

Meeting summary

The Metro Arts Commission Grants and Funding Committee met on August 12, 2024, to discuss updates on grant payments, the finalization of the Title VI conciliation agreement, and the timeline for and plans to restructure the Thrive and operating grant processes. The committee discussed a new scoring model for operating grants to ensure equitable distribution. The Thrive grant process will be restructured by a working group, and communications will be sent to applicants explaining the changes. The committee will seek feedback on the new guidelines before presenting them to the full commission and Metro Council.

Agenda and notes

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

- A. Commissioner Tim Jester called the meeting to order at 12:55 PM. Commissioner Jester then read the legal notice regarding the appeals process for Arts Commission decisions, stating that appeals must be filed within 60 days to the Chancery Court of Davidson County.

2. Public Comment

- A. Ashley Bachelder from the Metro Human Relations Commission (MHRC) provided the only public comment. She announced that the conciliation agreement had been finalized on the previous Friday and thanked Dr. Coleman, Commissioner Jester, Commissioner Watts, and others involved in the process. Bachelder emphasized that the agreement was not intended to slow down any processes. She also addressed the topic of disparity studies, referencing memos from Griffin & Strong and MHRC. Bachelder clarified the different approaches to considering racial data without conducting a full disparity study.

3. Approval of Minutes

- A. The committee reviewed the minutes from the May 30, 2024, meeting. Commissioner McCoy moved to approve the minutes, and Commissioner Love seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

4. Updates

- A. **FY24 Payment Update:** Tessa Ortiz-Marsh reported that all but two payments have been made for FY24. She noted that two additional payments were added to the list in process. The committee discussed payments to mural artists and organizations receiving both Thrive and organizational grants. Ortiz-Marsh provided further clarification on payments to micro and small organizations.
- B. **Conciliation Agreement:** Dr. Coleman informed the committee that the conciliation agreement had been finalized and signed by all parties as of last Friday. She stated that it is now a public document available for review.
 - a. Dr. Coleman explained that a working group would be formed to develop a compliant way to fund individual artists. This group will include representatives from legal, Metro finance, MHRC, and the Arts Commission. She clarified that the Thrive grant cycle is not being canceled, but the process is being revised. The committee discussed how to address the 201 current Thrive applications.

- C. **Operating Grants Restructuring:** Sydnie Davis presented a new resource guide for operating grants. She outlined key changes, including a departure from percentage-based allocation to a ranking system, new scoring criteria and categories (first-time applicant, accessibility, art, organization, financial health assessment, community impact, and equity), and a proposed funding model based on the top 60 applicants. Davis used an example based on a \$2.5 million budget to illustrate the new model.
- a. The committee discussed the timeline for approval and implementation. They agreed to share the resource guide with the CARE Committee, commissioners, and make it publicly available. Commissioner Jester said he would discuss it at the full commission meeting on Thursday. The committee aims to make a recommendation to the broader commission at the next meeting.
 - b. The committee clarified that community engagement requirements from the conciliation agreement apply to both Thrive and operating grants. They also discussed the panel selection process and potential involvement of the Care Committee in this process.
- D. **Grant Application Process:** Sydnie Davis explained that current Thrive, and operating grant applications would be voided in the Submittable system due to system limitations, not as a permanent rejection. She outlined plans for developing new applications based on revised criteria. The committee discussed a communication plan, agreeing to send separate emails to Thrive and operating grant applicants before any action in Submittable. They also considered the possibility of issuing a press release or providing a more robust explanation to applicants.
- E. **Metro Code and Grant Approval Process:** Tessa Ortiz-Marsh reviewed Metro code requirements, explaining that grant criteria must be approved by Council via resolution. She clarified that criteria approval is only needed when changes are made. The committee discussed public notice requirements, with Ortiz-Marsh confirming that website posting is sufficient.
- a. Ortiz-Marsh provided clarification on state law (TCA 7-3-314(d)), which preempts the need for individual contract approvals. The committee discussed annual reporting requirements to Council and referenced the budget ordinance (BL2024-373) for Arts Commission authority.
- F. **Tennessee Arts Commission Update:** Dr. Coleman reported that they are working on a progress report due October 1, which will detail the implementation of internal review recommendations. She said she has scheduled a conversation with the Tennessee Arts Commission to discuss this further.
- G. **Next Meeting:** The committee scheduled their next meeting for October 14, 2024, at 12:30 PM at Metro Southeast.

5. Adjournment [Please add details here](#)

Submitted for approval by
Heather Eve Lefkowitz, Secretary