GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW GUIDE

ABOUT METRO ARTS

METRO ARTS, Nashville's Office of Arts + Culture, is a department of Metro Government of Nashville-Davidson County and was created by Metro Charter in 1978. Metro Arts serves as the designated driver and facilitator of programs, policies and practices that support our arts and cultural vibrancy.

The work of Metro Arts is anchored in the idea that arts and culture are created and consumed in a dynamic ecosystem within the community. Nashville's creative ecosystem is substantially more robust than comparable cities, with a large number of nonprofit cultural organizations, small and large arts-related businesses, music and publishing corporations, schools and universities, and individual artists and creative workers of all types. Supporting all of these formal and structured creative entities are the thousands of Nashvillians who attend and support arts activities throughout the city.

Metro Arts believes that ALL Nashvillians should be able to participate in a creative life. In order to facilitate an equitable community through the arts, we must first have a common belief system. Metro Arts believes that 1) the ability to express and celebrate cultural traditions is vital to a democratic society; 2) artists and cultural creators have a unique role in re-imagining a more equitable reality; and 3) the future of the arts and culture ecosystem is dependent on the inclusion of those who have historically been underrepresented.

Mission + Vision | to drive an EQUITABLE and VIBRANT community through the arts

Metro Arts Scoring Process

Review panels play an important role in Metro Arts' grant-making process by providing breadth in experiences and diversity of perspectives. Panelists must live or work in Davidson County, disclose any real or potential conflicts of interest, and uphold the values articulated in the Metro Arts Cultural Equity Statement. We aim to recruit panel

members who truly care about the arts and reflect our community through diversity in age, race/cultural identity, neighborhoods, physical abilities, professional expertise and personal interest.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Review grant guidelines and scoring criteria.
2. Review all grant application materials, including narratives, proposed budget, support materials, and GivingMatters.com profile data.
3. Provide a score and accompanying comments for each section of the application using the scoring criteria and rubrics below. Applicants will have access to their score sheets after awards have been announced. Many applicants use this feedback to strengthen future applications.
4. Preliminary scores and comments must be completed prior to the panel review day.
5. On the panel review day, you will discuss and provide final scores for applications with the other assigned panelists in a public meeting format. You will be able to ask clarifying questions of the applicants in this meeting and update your initial scores if necessary. All questions must be related to the project proposal being reviewed.
6. After all applications have been reviewed, each application will be assigned an average score. The panel will review these scores and vote to approve them before the panel meeting is adjourned.

APPLICATION SECTIONS

GivingMatters.com Profile Data: Maintaining a profile on this site is a requirement of all Metro Arts applicants. The profile provides a substantial overview of the nonprofit that includes its mission, background, recent accomplishments, program descriptions, governance, senior leadership, and financial history. Profiles provide reviewers with a snapshot of the history and current operations of the organization applying for funding. GivingMatters.com profiles are included as attachments to the application.

The Art: All answers in this section address artistic and cultural merit. Components discussed here will include the type of artistic genres that will be used in programming, qualifications of the lead artist(s), how standards will be defined, and what artistic goals/outcomes the program or organization will produce.

The Community: Answers provided in this section describe the organization's ability to engage the community effectively. Answers should include evidence that the organization understands the community it is trying to serve, evidence that the program offerings are something that fills an artistic/cultural need, and that the program has been developed with a focus on arts access.

The Organization: This section of the application addresses the organization's overall health as a nonprofit organization. Much of the information used to score this section is found in the GivingMatters.com profile. Areas that influence the overall health of a nonprofit are the size and make-up of the governing board of directors, qualifications and abilities of staff, leadership demographics in relation to the population being served, regular organizational assessment, and short and long-term goal setting.

Equity: This section of the application addresses the organization's commitment to racial and cultural equity in its programs, organizational policies and practices, planning, and implementation.

Financial Health Assessment: This section of the application will be adjudicated by a qualified accountant or other financial professional. Their scores will be based on a review of the organization's financial reports from the most recently completed fiscal years and the responses provided in the financial health assessment questions. **Grant panelists do not review this section.**

You will assign a numeric score to each section of the application: The Art, The Community, The Organization, and Equity. The numeric ranges shown here correlate with the scoring descriptions described below.

Inadequate	Fair	Good	Strong	Exceptional
0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-23

Exceptional: The applicant *comprehensively* addresses an identifiable artistic/cultural need in the community. The applicant has provided *overwhelming* evidence throughout the application that demonstrates that all the funding criteria are met. The plans are clear, well-articulated, and appropriate. The budget is realistic, comprehensive, and carefully aligned with the narrative.

Strong: The applicant *strongly* addresses an identifiable artistic/cultural need in the community. The applicant has provided *clear* evidence throughout the application that demonstrates that all the funding criteria are met. The plans are clear, well-articulated, and appropriate. The budget is realistic, comprehensive, and carefully aligned with the narrative.

Good: The applicant *partially* addresses an identifiable artistic/cultural need in the community. The applicant has provided *adequate* evidence throughout the application that demonstrates that all the funding criteria are met. The plans are clear and appropriate, but are not well-expressed. The budget is realistic and reasonably aligned with the narrative.

Fair: The applicant *narrowly* addresses an identifiable artistic/cultural need in the community. The applicant has provided *insufficient* evidence throughout the application that demonstrates that all the funding criteria are met. The plans are appropriate, but with limited detail. The budget is incomplete or is not well aligned with the narrative.

Inadequate: The applicant *does not* address an identifiable artistic/cultural need in the community. The applicant has *not* provided any evidence in the application that demonstrates that the funding criteria are met. The plans are not appropriate and/or are lacking details. The budget is incomplete and/or does not align with the narrative.

THE ART
Scoring Criteria

Artistic + Cultural Merit	Artistic Vision	Creative Workforce
• Describes the unique artistic components, genres, and/or creative elements of the project • Lead artists demonstrate mastery of skills and deep understanding of the genre and cultural standards of the specific art form and associated culture supported by history of practice and/or relationship to the specific arts community • Expands the artistic and cultural knowledge of artistic leaders and participants • Innovatively addresses an artistic/cultural need	• Develops creative and relevant artistic and cultural programs that are aligned with the organization's mission, vision, and goals. • Articulates specific artistic goals/outcomes • Utilizes an approach/process that details the creative content of the project	• Shows evidence of employing qualified artists and program leaders • Engages supporting artists and program leaders who have applicable experience and cultural knowledge • Includes a wide range of artists, creators, and project staff from a variety of backgrounds

THE ORGANIZATION *Criteria*			
Planning	**Leadership**	**Governance**	**Assessment**
• Project/programs align with organization's overall mission • Financial plan is appropriate for the size and scope of project or programs • Staffing plans are realistic and sustainable • Is financially stable and has a plan for avoiding operating deficits	• Executive director and senior program officers have applicable experience, expertise, and are reflective of the community it serves as stated in its mission or other strategic documents. • Recruits, evaluates, and retains a wide range of administrative and program staff that are reflective of the community it serves as stated in its mission or other strategic documents.	• Cultivates a board of directors that is reflective of the community it serves as stated in its mission or other strategic documents. • Board of directors provides sound leadership and substantial financial support	• Utilizes a board-approved strategic plan that regularly evaluates programs and processes for efficiency, professionalism, quality, and effectiveness • Creates and implements policies and procedures that increases equity and sustainability within the organization

THE COMMUNITY *Scoring Criteria*		
Accessible to the Community	**Understands the Community**	**Benefits the Community**
• Project times, locations, facilities and technology are accessible to the public • Considers affordability in program development and/or offers free admission, scholarships, or sliding scale options • Engages participants through a variety of means	• Understands the community it serves (geographical, cultural, economic, racial, educational relevance, etc.) • Utilizes partnerships to effectively serve specific communities • Collects participant feedback and uses the results to improve community-focused programming	• Demonstrates social, educational, cultural and/or economic relevance for the community • Fosters deeper participation in arts and culture activities • Contributes to vibrant, creative neighborhoods • Engages a strong base of community volunteers to help the organization achieve its mission

EQUITY *Scoring Criteria*		
Underrepresented People	**Practice and Policy**	**Planning and Implementation**
• Organization's program(s) exhibits commitment to people who have been historically underrepresented in mainstream arts funding, discourse, leadership and resource allocation; including, but not limited to,	• Organization demonstrates commitment to equity through trainings, discussions, or other opportunities • Organization has policies, practices, or strategic documents in place that	• Program(s) design and components move past simple representation and addresses the unequal nature of voice, resource allocation and visibility that exist in the arts and cultural ecosystem

people of color, seniors (age 65+), differently abled people, LGBTQ people, women, and the socio-economically disadvantaged.	address diversity, equity, and inclusion	demonstrated by involvement in planning, performance, and/or facilitation

FINANCIAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Forms 990, Audited Financial Statements, and narrative answers from the Financial Health section of each application are reviewed by a qualified financial professional or team of financial professionals. Community Grant Panelists do not review this section.

Inadequate	Fair	Good	Strong	Exceptional
0	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8

FINANCIAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT	
Scoring Criteria	
Basic Operating Support	**Core Operating Support**
• **Revenue Dynamics**: Does the organization have diverse revenue streams? Are these revenue streams reliable? (2) points) • **Expense Dynamics**: Are expenses right-sized with the size and scope of the organization? Do changes in expenses match with changes in revenue? (2 points) • **Balance Sheet Composition**: Does this organization have positive net assets? Are the net assets mostly unrestricted? If there is debt, is debt COVID related? Is there a realistic repayment plan in place? (2 points) • **Sustainability**: If funded, will org be able to operate for at least 6 months? Has organization demonstrated ability to maintain programs in previous year and through next year? (2 points)	• **Revenue and Expenses:** Has the organization had positive net assets in the last 2 fiscal years? If not, was pandemic related and addressed in the financial narrative? (2 points) • **Sustainability:** Has the organization shown sustainability over time? Are they in a place to continue offering programs for the next fiscal year? (4) • **Financial Practices:** Is the board regularly apprised of budget to actuals? Does the organization use an accounting system to manage money? Does the organization have a plan for handling cash flow issues?(2 points)

RANKING AND ALLOCATIONS

After the panel review meeting, Metro Arts staff will combine all of the panelists' scores from the public meeting, add the Financial Health score to that number, and assign a total score to each application. Applications are listed in order from highest to lowest to determine each application's *ranking*. Metro Arts staff and Commissioners will use these rankings to determine award allocations. Those with a higher ranking will receive a higher percentage of the amount they requested. Rarely do organizations receive the full request amount. The Grants Committee reviews the allocations and then sends those on to the full Commission for approval. Awards are announced immediately following Commission approval.