



Power of culture

COUNCIL MEETING BOOK

ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FIRST MEETING

OF

MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL

THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2024

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MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2024

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**ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FIRST MEETING
OF MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL**

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2024
10:00 AM-NOON**

BROADCAST MEETING

MEETING WILL BE LIVESTREAMED AT COUNCIL MEETING - YOUTUBE

MEETING MATERIALS WILL BE POSTED ONLINE

UNDER "JANUARY 25, 2024 COUNCIL MEETING"

AGENDA	VOTE
---------------	-------------

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| <p>1. Call to Order- Open Meeting Law Notice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Marc Carroll, Chair</i>➤ <i>David Slatery, Deputy Director (Open Meeting Law Notice)</i> <p>2. Introductions of New and Existing Council Members and Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. <i>Marc Carroll, Chair</i>b. <i>Michael Bobbitt, Executive Director</i>c. <i>All</i> <p>3. Minutes of 160th Council Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Marc Carroll, Chair</i>➤ <i>David Slatery, Deputy Director (reads the roll))</i> <p>4. Chair Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) <i>Calendar of Upcoming meetings</i> | <p>X</p> |
|---|-----------------|

- b) Committee Structure
 - *Marc Carroll, Chair*

5. **Executive Office Report**

- a. Updates
 - *Michael Bobbitt, Executive Director*

6. **Public Affairs Report**

- a) Updates
 - *Bethann Steiner, Senior Director of Public Affairs*

7. **Program Operations Report**

- a) Updates
 - *Jen Lawless, Senior Director of Program Operations*

8. **Mission Moment**-Arts on Prescription Program Presentation

- *Chris Appleton, Art Pharmacy*

9. **Business Operations Report**

- a) Updates
- b) Travel Policy Update **X**
- c) Cultural Equity and Access Report
 - *Catherine Cheng-Anderson, Director of Business Operations and Chief Financial Officer*

10. Adjourn

- *Marc Carroll, Chair*



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MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL

JANUARY 25, 2024

ON-LINE MEETING

RESOLUTIONS

Section 3

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the August 24, 2023 Council Meeting in the form presented.

Section 9 (b)

RESOLVED: to adopt and approve the Council's Revised Out of State Travel Approval Policy as presented.

OPEN MEETING LAW STATEMENT

Please note that this meeting is an open meeting of a public body subject to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. A notice of this meeting together with the agenda was posted on Mass Cultural Council's website 48 or more hours ago (excluding weekends and holidays).

This meeting shall be open and accessible to all members of the public except at such times when this body has voted to go into closed executive session under the Open Meeting Law.

This meeting is a virtual meeting held under the Open Meeting Law as modified under current law to permit online meetings. This meeting is being broadcast to the public on a publicly available YouTube channel as described in the posted meeting notice.

Instructions on how to contact the Council with questions or problems accessing the broadcast are also included in such notice. Only Council members, staff and invited guests will be provided access to the Zoom platform hosting the meeting. As a safety measure, in order to prevent disruption of the meeting or non-public communications among the participants, the Chair, Vice Chair and Executive Committee of Mass Cultural Council has asked staff to implement the following protocols for participants in on-line meetings of Mass Cultural Council or its committees:

- Any "chat" or similar function on the Zoom platform hosting the meeting shall be disabled.
- Other than Council members or participants specifically recognized by the Chair of the meeting, all Zoom platform participants will be muted and have no ability to share media or documents or project or type images or text.
- All participants in the Zoom platform may be required to enter a waiting room and digitally sign-in before being admitted.

- Any attendee in the Zoom platform who nonetheless causes a disruption will be summarily removed from the meeting at the discretion of the Chair.

This meeting is not a public hearing and public testimony will not be taken. Individuals may not address the meeting without permission of the Chair.

Any member of the public may record this meeting provided that they do not interfere with the meeting.

Draft minutes of the open session of this meeting shall be kept and shall be posted on Mass Cultural Council's website no later than 30 days after the meeting provided that such minutes shall not be considered official until they have been approved by this body in open session. Individuals asserting a violation of the Open Meeting Law may file a complaint with this body within 30 days or with the Attorney General's office thereafter.

**TIPS FOR PARTICIPATING IN A VIRTUAL OPEN MEETING USING ZOOM OR OTHER
VIDEOCONFERENCING PLATFORMS WHEN THERE ARE SEVERAL PARTICIPANTS**

(adapted from several sources)

- In order to minimize background noise, please mute microphone when not speaking.
- Please raise hand in order to be recognized by the chair.
- In order for all members to have an opportunity to speak and be heard, please wait to speak until specifically recognized by the chair.
- If there are questions, please direct them to the chair and the chair will then recognize the appropriate person to respond.
- Please limit statements to three minutes.
- The chair will reserve the right to limit discussion in order to allow sufficient time for every member to be heard who wishes to speak.
- Modify Video Settings to “Hide all non-video participants”- this will make it easier to follow who is speaking and participating
- In the event of a service interruption during a Zoom call due to hackers, so-called “zoom bombing” or other technical difficulties, staff will indicate the call is to be terminated. Please exit the call and staff will circulate instructions by email for a new Zoom call to continue the meeting.



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UNOFFICIAL DRAFT SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE COUNCIL AT ITS NEXT MEETING

**MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED-SIXTIETH MEETING
OF
MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL**

THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 2023

ONLINE MEETING

Council Members Present were

Marc Carroll, Acting Chair
Ché Anderson
Barbara Schaffer Bacon
Karen Barry
Kathleen Castro
Jo-Ann Davis
Sherry Dong
Cecil Barron Jensen
Matthew Keator
Barbara Krauthamer
Ann Murphy
Allyce Najimy
Troy Siebels
Mark Snyder

Also Present were Mass Cultural Council Staff Members Michael J. Bobbitt, David Slatery, Catherine Cheng-Anderson, Jen Lawless, Bethann Steiner, Ann Petruccelli Moon, Carmen Plazas, Cheyenne Cohn-Postell, Charles Baldwin, Dan Blask, Erik Holmgren, Sara Glidden, Lillian Lee, Kalyn King, Maggie Holtzberg, Lisa Simmons, and Timothea Pham.

Acting Chair Marc Carroll called the meeting to order at 10:00am and asked Deputy Executive Director David Slatery to read the Open Meeting Law statement:

Please note that this meeting is an open meeting of a public body subject to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. A notice of this meeting together with the agenda was posted on Mass Cultural Council's website 48 or more hours ago (excluding weekends and holidays).

This meeting shall be open and accessible to all members of the public except at such times when this body has voted to go into closed executive session under the Open

Prepared on 10/2/23

Meeting Law.

This meeting is a virtual meeting held under the Open Meeting Law as modified under current law to permit online open meetings. This meeting is being broadcast to the public on a publicly available YouTube or other channel as described in the publicly posted meeting notice. Only Council members, staff and invited participants and guests will be provided access to the Zoom or other videoconferencing platform hosting the meeting. As a safety measure, to prevent disruption of the meeting or non-public communications among the participants, the Chair, Vice Chair and Executive Committee of Mass Cultural Council has asked staff to implement the following protocols for participants in on-line meetings of Mass Cultural Council or its committees:

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This meeting is not a public hearing and public testimony will not be taken. Individuals may not address the meeting without permission of the Chair.

Any member of the public may record this meeting provided they do not interfere with the meeting. The Chair will then inform the members of the meeting that they are being recorded.

Draft minutes of the open session of this meeting shall be kept and shall be posted on Mass Cultural Council's website no later than 30 days after the meeting provided that such minutes shall not be considered official until they have been approved by this body in open session. Individuals asserting a violation of the Open Meeting Law may file a complaint with this body within 30 days or with the Attorney General's office thereafter.

Marc then asked Executive Director Michael Bobbitt to introduce the meeting's Mission Moment, an opportunity taken at the beginning of each Council Meeting to engage with the work of the creative and cultural sector. Today, Michael was pleased to share the Agency's new Strategic Plan launch video with the Council. Michael recruited Massachusetts-based video artist Wesley Verge to create a video that would introduce and publicize the new plan to constituents, partners, and leaders across the state and communicate the vibrancy of the creative and cultural sector. He then showed the video, which is [available on the Agency's YouTube channel](#).

Marc then asked if Council Members had reviewed the minutes from their last meeting held on May 24th, and if so, he would look for a motion to approve the minutes. Mark Snyder moved to approve the minutes and Troy Siebels seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Simone Early was absent, and Ann Murphy was absent but would join the meeting later was unanimously

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the One Hundred Fifty-Ninth Meeting of Mass Cultural Council.

Marc then let Council Members know a calendar of upcoming meetings for FY24 could be found on page 23 of their meeting materials. Currently the plan is for the Committees to meet on October 12th. The full Council will meet on November 1st. Marc is rethinking the way Council committees are structured; the Advocacy Committee may be restructured and rethought. He then let the Council know the Executive and Grants Committees met on August 4th to review the proposed FY24 spending plan. Both Committees approved the plans for review and discussion by the full Council today.

Included in the spending plan is a salary adjustment for Michael Bobbitt. Michael was hired in 2021 at a salary approximately \$25K lower than the salary possessed by the previous Executive Director at the conclusion of her 13-year tenure. Michael has requested that his salary be reviewed and adjusted to ensure pay equity. Senior Director of Business Operations & Chief Financial Officer Catherine Cheng-Anderson provided information to the Executive Committee about the salaries of other independent state agency leaders to see how Michael's current and requested salaries aligned. (A link to these materials from the Executive Committee meeting are contained in the meeting materials distributed to the Council members for this Council meeting.) During the August 4th Executive Committee Meeting this request was reviewed and approved (and is part of the Spending Plan that will be voted on later in today's meeting) with a request that Cathy update further salary research; (particularly information about the salary of the MBTA General Manager which the Executive Committee thought may have been listed incorrectly. The General Manager of the MBTA has an annual salary of \$470K; \$200K more than originally listed.) Cathy will be able to answer questions about the research and salary request later in the meeting during the spending plan presentation. Marc then asked Michael for his Executive Director's report.

Michael reminded Council Members of the monthly reports Ann Petruccelli Moon has been preparing and distributing that include past and upcoming engagements of the Executive Office. He thanked Council Members who had recently joined him at events – Matthew Keator, Allyce Najimy, and Cecil Barron Jensen. Since the May Council Meeting, staff has been paying special attention to the Agency's advancement strategy and connecting with leaders within the health, transportation, lodging, economic development, and tourism sectors. The team has also made strides with its Social Prescription program, the Grants team is making important adjustments to the grants management system, and the Fiscal team is working hard to complete grant payments.

Marc then asked Senior Director of Public Affairs Bethann Steiner for her report.

Bethann let Council Members know the FY24 budget process was complete. The Agency's \$25 million request was embraced by the Governor, House, Senate, and Conference Committee. It was a successful and smooth cycle. The final budget is \$25,895,000 - \$25 million which represents an 11% increase to the Agency's line item, plus \$895,000 for 16 funded earmarks. Bethann thanked the Public Affairs team for their work on the Strategic Plan video and let Council Members know there would be two large convenings this fall – one will take place on October 23rd, most likely in the Springfield area and a second convening will be scheduled for November. Final details will be shared with the Council soon. Bethann concluded by introducing Christian Kelly, a newly hired member of the Public Affairs team who will serve as Public Relations & Events Manager.

Marc then asked the staff for their presentation on the proposed FY24 spending plan.

Senior Director of Programs Jen Lawless shared a PowerPoint presentation outlining the plan. [A copy of the presentation is available online.](#) Jen, joined by Michael and Catherine walked Council Members through the Agency's proposed \$44 million spending plan for FY24 noting that – of the \$25 million state appropriation - 80% of the Agency's allocation will go to grants with 20% going to administrative and program costs; meeting and exceeding the requirement that 75% of the allocation go to grants. Once the presentation was complete, Marc thanked the staff for their work creating the plan and asked Council Members for their questions and feedback.

Mark Snyder was happy to see that the Agency will create a Native & Indigenous Equity Plan in FY24 and wondered if there would be any efforts made to help migrants in Massachusetts. Michael let Mark know that part of the Agency's work in FY25 will be to create a plan to support immigration; nothing that the Racial Equity Plan has some overlap with this work already.

Cecil congratulated the staff for their efforts to weave the new Strategic Plan throughout the spending plan then asked about the work to support organizations to reach Net Zero; would this be through financial help, outreach and education, etc.? Jen let Cecil know this will be a very specific workshop and that a similar workshop was offered in FY23. The workshop will be offered virtually and will be recorded. Cecil would like to attend and plans to encourage others to do the same.

Marc noted that some Council Members needed to leave the meeting at 11 am and so if there were not any other questions on the plan, he would entertain a motion to approve it. Dave let Council Members know that the bulk of the presentation by the staff was included in their materials and there has been an opportunity to offer feedback and ask questions; if Council Members would like to take the vote now and have time for follow-up discussion following the vote, they can do so; it is at their discretion.

There were no objections, however Dave paused to review the conflict-of-interest list with Council Members prior to the vote. Council Members were encouraged to review the list which outlines the organizations with which Members have a vested interest to ensure they did not participate in any discussion or votes pertaining to those organizations. There were no additions to the list.

Grants Committee Chair Jo-Ann Davis gave a brief report letting Council Members know the Grants Committee met on August 4th and thoroughly reviewed the recommendations made by the staff contained in section 9b of the meeting materials. The Committee voted to recommend the plan to the full Council. Jo-Ann thanked Jen and the staff for the work they did to build the plan and if Council Members have no questions, Jo-Ann feels a vote can be taken.

The Council had therefore decided to take a consolidated vote to approve the FY24 spending plan and all FY24 grant recommendations. Mark Snyder moved to approve the plan and grant recommendations; Barbara Schaffer Bacon seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Simone Early was absent and

WHEREAS, the General Court of the Massachusetts State Legislature has appropriated, and the Governor has signed into law, a budget of \$25,895,000 to the Mass Cultural Council for FY24; AND

WHEREAS Mass Cultural Council staff has presented a draft FY24 budget and spending plan to the Executive Committee at its meeting on August 4, 2023;

WHEREAS the Executive Committee reviewed said plan and recommended that it be forwarded to the Council for approval;

WHEREAS Council staff presented the Plan to the Mass Cultural Council at its meeting on August 24, 2023.

NOW THEREFORE, it is hereby

RESOLVED: To approve the Plan as recommended by the Council Meeting subject to the further approvals of the individual grant and program recommendations below; and

WHEREAS Council staff presented the FY24 grants recommendations to the Grants Committee at its meeting on August 4, 2023 ("Grants Committee Meeting");

WHEREAS the Grants Committee recommended to the full Council the allocation of the grants presented at the Grants Committee Meeting;

WHEREAS the Grants Committee reviewed procedures of grant allocations and recommended that the Council approve the same;

NOW THEREFORE, it is hereby

RESOLVED: To approve allocations to the Cultural Investment Portfolio and CIP Gateway programs as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting for an aggregate total of \$6,990,300.

RESOLVED: To approve \$100,000 in Media Transition Grants to 5 public media companies, as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve of the fourth cycle of the Gaming Mitigation Program as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve up to \$855,000 in Cultural District grants as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve an allocation to the Local Cultural Councils totaling \$5,500,000 as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting. Arts Education & Youth

RESOLVED: To approve grant allocations to YouthReach program in the amount

of \$1,870,000, as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve allocations of \$1,428,100 to the STARS program, as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve the following grants- \$30,416 to the Youth Arts Impact Network with EdVestors, \$20,000 in support of the NEA-funded Poetry Out Loud program and continued grant funding of the Instrument Library in the amount of \$15,000, all as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve the Projects/Festivals program with a grant allocation of \$1,850,000 as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve \$480,000 in UP Innovation Fund Grants, as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve a grant of \$175,000 to Art Pharmacy for continuation of the CultureRx Social Prescription program as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve Council a \$62,500 grant to Arts Connect International for continuing the Cultural Equity Learning Community (CELC) 2.0 teaching course in FY24, a \$70,000 grant to ArtsBoston acting on behalf of the Network Arts Administrators of Color, a \$5,000 grant to the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs for support of its Truth Commission project and a \$20,000 grant for an organization to be selected to scale up the UP Innovation Learning Network program, all as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve a grant to Mass Humanities totaling \$943,608, a grant to Mass Creative for \$33,000 and a grant to NEFA of \$70,000, all as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve the funding of the Apprentice Grants program in the amount of \$180,000 as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve a grant allocation of \$1,875,000 for up to 375 grants of \$5,000 as part of the new FY24 Individual Creativity Grants Program as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

RESOLVED: To approve continuation of the Cultural Sector Recovery Grants for Individuals program in FY24, using whatever leftover Pandemic Recovery Funds are determined to be available by staff, for further grants under the program, as recommended by the Grants Committee and presented to this meeting.

The following Council Members abstained from voting and/or discussing grants pertaining to the organizations listed under their name:

Marc Carroll

- a. Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra
- b. The Rivers School

Jo-Ann Davis

- a. The Care Center
- b. Springfield Museums
- c. MASS Creative

Barbara Schaffer Bacon

- a. Arts Extension Institute

Troy Siebels

- a. Hanover Theater/Worcester Center for the Performing Arts
- b. Worcester Cultural Coalition
- c. Discover Central Massachusetts
- d. Indian Hill Music
- e. MASS Creative

Ann Murphy

- a. MASS Creative

Sherry Dong

- a. The Chinese Historical Society of New England

Kathleen Castro

- a. Little Theater of Fall River
- b. New Bedford Festival Theater
- c. The Fall River Coalition for Arts and Culture

Cecil Barron Jensen

- a. Artists Association of Nantucket
- b. Egan Maritime Institute
- c. Nantucket Cultural District

Che Anderson

- a. Worcester County Mechanics Association (Mechanics Hall)
- b. Worcester Historical Museum
- c. Worcester Art Museum
- d. Institute of Contemporary Art

The vote having passed unanimously, Marc thanked staff and Council Members for their work. Barbara remarked that the Grants Committee spent the full two hours of its meeting thoroughly reviewing the presentation and was impressed with the framing of this year's allocations and how they play into the future of the Agency.

Marc then asked Catherine for her Business Operations report.

Catherine began by reminding the Council that in May of 2023, she transitioned from her post as Director of People and Culture and became the Senior Director of Business Operations and the Agency's Chief Financial Officer.

She was thrilled to introduce a new member of the fiscal operations team. Ashley Freeman is the new Manager of Financial Operations. Ashley brings a decade of state purchasing and finance experience that will be invaluable to the team. Catherine is excited to have her onboard and build capacity on the finance team.

Since Ashley's arrival, the team has deployed a new standardized procurement process across the Agency. This new process aligns with Mass Cultural Council's racial equity goals and supports the Commonwealth's Supplier Diversity initiatives. This substantial change in the way we internal business represents a step forward in ensuring fairness, and administrative efficiency within our purchasing.

Catherine next shared that the Agency's dedicated finance team is at the finish line with pandemic grant payments. Of the 7,000 grant payments about 100 remaining pandemic grant contracts are left to process and pay. This is a significant milestone for Catherine's team and the Agency. The last individuals awaiting grant payments are experiencing the greatest issues with their bank accounts, changing of addresses, the treasury department is intercepting payments from grantees, and other complications. These problems are adding an unexpected layer of complexity to getting the payments out to them. Despite these challenges, the team is working closely with each individual to sort out their issues and ensure that they receive their grant payment.

Catherine then asked Program Officers Cheyenne Cohn-Postell and Charles Baldwin – who are members of Catherine's Business Operations Department – to give their report on Cultural Equity and Access Initiatives.

Cheyenne congratulated her colleagues on reaching shared goals with priority points and exceeding demographic goals. Staff saw a significant increase in the number of applications the Agency received from individuals with disabilities as well as a large increase in the racial and ethnic diversity of its applicant pool. Staff was able to fully engage with new applicants; emails have an open rate of 80%, which is extremely high.

Charles shared his gratitude to the Council for investing in a process that has allowed staff to hear from constituents when developing its new Disability Equity Plan. The two consultants who are reviewing our external and internal practices and programs are discovering ways we can create more opportunities for people in the creative and cultural sector who have disabilities. On September 28th the draft plan will be presented to the full staff.

Marc expressed that, as a marketer himself, he is astonished at the 80% open rate Cheyenne mentioned.

Karen Barry thanked Charles, Cheyenne, and the rest of the staff for their work and asked how much longer the Agency had access to the pandemic relief allocation. Catherine let Karen know FY24 will be the final year; most of the funds have been distributed and the remaining \$1 million will be distributed in FY24 as new grant money.

Karen then asked if any thought had been given to reallocating the money the Agency spends on rent {of its office space} towards grants. Michael stated that there are a few more years on the lease, but staff will begin brainstorming about the Agency's office space very soon. Dave clarified that the lease goes through January 2026; the Agency with assistance from the state through the Department of Capital Asset Maintenance and Management (DCAM) signed a 10-year lease in 2016. Karen has heard success stories from other agencies who have renegotiated leases with DCAM and perhaps a change can be made sooner. Staff will explore this possibility.

Karen then expressed that she is in favor of the work done around pay equity. She is aware that everyone in state government is slated to receive a 4% increase retroactive to July 2023 and another 4% increase in January 2024. Karen is interested in seeing Catherine's pay equity report, particularly the compensation for management levels other than Executive which was discussed earlier in the meeting. Catherine let Karen know that a pay equity assessment for managers was done in FY23, and she will share this document with Karen.

Barbara asked when the Council might hear more about the Agency's cultural asset mapping project. Michael responded that he is in the process of talking with funders around the state to see who might want to join Mass Cultural Council in funding the project. An RFP will be prepared within a few weeks and will be shared with Council Members.

Mark Snyder then expressed his thanks to the legislature for approving the Agency's line item. Bethann added that she wished to thank the Agency's partners at Mass Humanities; MASSCreative; and Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development Co-Chairs Paul Mark and Mindy Domb for their support across both chambers.

There were no further questions or comments and the end of the meeting agenda had been reached. Marc, as Acting Chair, adjourned the meeting at 11:11am.



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UPCOMING FY24 COUNCIL & COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- Executive Committee Meeting – Thursday, March 7, 10am (Zoom)
- Grants Committee Meeting (if needed)– Thursday, March 7, 1pm (Zoom)
- 162nd Meeting of Mass Cultural Council & Council Retreat – Thursday, March 21, 10am (Museum of Science, 1 Science Park, Boston, MA 02114; parking provided)

No further meetings are currently scheduled for the remainder of FY24.

EXPECTED MEETINGS IN FY25

Although not officially scheduled yet, this is a working idea of meetings for the Governing Council and Committees in FY25. Typically, Council Meetings occur on the last Thursday of a month. Executive and Grants Committee meetings, as needed, are scheduled approximately two weeks prior to Council meetings. Other Committees will be scheduled as needed.

AUGUST 2024 (SPENDING PLAN REVIEW AND APPROVAL- THE "BIG" MEETINGS)

Executive Committee Meeting
Grants Committee Meeting
Council Meeting

NOVEMBER 2024

Executive Committee Meeting
Grants Committee Meeting
Council Meeting

JANUARY 2025

Executive Committee Meeting
Council Meeting

MARCH 2025

Executive Committee Meeting
Grants Committee Meeting
Council Meeting and Retreat



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EXECUTIVE OFFICE UPDATE

JANUARY 2024

Activities report. On Thursday, January 4, Ann Petruccelli Moon forwarded the monthly Executive Department Update detailing activities during the previous month. Please look for the next monthly update in early February. Ann circulates this update at or near the beginning of each month.

Welcome New Members. A number of new Council members have been appointed by Governor Healey since our last meeting in August. In January, we held orientations for 7 of the new members. A listing of the current Mass Cultural Council members, along with their bios can be found on our Council page at [Governing Council – Mass Cultural Council](#).

Executive Committee. The Executive Committee met on January 11 to recommend for approval by the full Council the updated Out of State Travel Policy contained in Section 9(b) of the meeting materials for today's meeting and also approved out of state travel for staff for the Executive Director for his participation later in a Washington D.C. convening hosted by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the White House Domestic Policy Council entitled [Healing, Bridging, Thriving: A Summit on Arts and Culture in our Communities](#) and approved the agenda for today's Council meeting. Members are reminded that all Committee meeting materials (as well as all Council Meeting materials) are posted and available for review at our website's Council page at [Governing Council – Mass Cultural Council](#).



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PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE

JANUARY 2024

Budget/Legislative/Advocacy Report

- The Legislature convened the second year of the 2023-2024 legislative session on January 3. Under the Joint Rules the House and Senate have until midnight on July 31, 2024 to complete all formal business which requires a roll call vote. Also, this month, the Governor is expected to make her State of the Commonwealth address on Jan. 17, and her FY25 Budget Recommendation, H. 2, is due to be filed by January 24.
- Mass Cultural Council submitted [testimony to the Governor](#) last month requesting a \$28 million budget appropriation in FY25. This would be a \$3M increase to the current operating budget. This letter has been shared with the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development chairs, as well as with our fiscal analysts in House and Senate Ways & Means, and our advocacy partners at MASSCreative and Mass Humanities. The Agency will begin its budget advocacy campaign and meetings as soon as H. 2 is released.
- The Agency is partnering with MASSCreative to support a Creative Sector Advocacy Week scheduled Jan. 22-26. The main event is an advocacy day at the State House, featuring a speaking program and a day of arts and cultural presentations and performances in the Great Hall and the Grand Staircase on Jan. 24. We will share the agenda when it is finalized. Throughout the week MASSCreative member organizations will host regional conversations and forums with their elected leaders to discuss the importance of the creative and cultural sector in their communities and in the Commonwealth.

Events/Communications/Digital Communications Report

- This fall, Mass Cultural Council held a number of events across the Commonwealth to advance the sector and celebrate grant award decisions including: *Health & Wellness through Creativity* at the Community Music School of Springfield (Oct. 23), *Cultural Facilities Fund Grant Award Celebration* at the Colonial Theatre in Pittsfield (Oct. 30), *The Creative Gig Economy – Panel Discussion* at the Pao Arts Center in Boston's Chinatown Neighborhood (Nov. 6), and *Cultural District Investment Grant Celebration* at Gloucester Stage in Gloucester (Nov. 30). Next, we're looking forward to hosting events celebrating recipients of our Gaming Mitigation Fund, STARS, and Grants for Creative Individuals awards along with two additional sector-wide convenings. Details will be shared as they are confirmed.
- The FY24 media partnership promoting our grant opportunities with El Planeta Media has reached an audience of 590,516 Spanish-speaking individuals, with a total of 836,830 impressions. This partnership has included [social media graphics](#) and [videos](#) on Facebook and Instagram, and [newsletter mentions](#).
- In calendar year 2023 we saw strong growth in our e-newsletter subscribers, as well as consistently above average open rates and click throughs:
 - Power of Culture subscribers increased 29% (from 21,810 to 28,085), open rates averaged 51.9% and click throughs averaged 7%.
 - Community Initiative subscribers increased 17% (from 11,775 to 13,749), open rates averaged 48.6% and click throughs averaged 5.4%.
 - Artist News subscribers increased 19% (from 13,174 to 15,637), open rates averaged 51.5% and click throughs averaged 7.5%.

The Agency's website, MassCulturalCouncil.org, saw a slight uptick in traffic throughout calendar year 2023 (1.13M views, 300K users) over calendar year 2022 (1M pageviews).



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PROGRAM OPERATIONS UPDATE

JANUARY 2024

Program Team Overview

The program team has been hard at work in FY24 in support of the strategic plan to:

- Build and support programmatic practices that advance equity, diversity, and inclusion through our services to the sector, and
- Advance the creative and cultural sector through building partnerships, identifying recommendations, and storytelling, both inside and outside of the sector.

You will find more details about specific ways the program team is doing this later in this memo. But first a snapshot of the grant making and the feedback from constituents and an update on the Cultural Asset Inventory project.

Grantmaking Activity

In FY24 to date, across all programs:

- **19,600 applications have been submitted**
 - 7,230 applications to our direct grant programs
 - 12,370 applications to Local Cultural Councils
- **11,921 applications have been reviewed**
 - 2,385 applications by our staff
 - 9,086 applications by Local Cultural Councils
- **6,886 grants have been awarded**
 - 1,791 grants to our direct grant programs
 - 5,095 grants awarded by Local Cultural Councils

The following programs still need to complete their FY24 cycles so these numbers will change:

- Local Cultural Council Program
- Cultural Facilities Fund
- Gaming Mitigation Fund
- Grants to Creative Individuals

Applicant Feedback Survey. In FY24 we added a 4-question survey to our grants management system that popped up after applicants submitted their application. Here is a summary of the responses so far. There is still one program open, so these are not the final numbers, but they represent the majority of the responses for the fiscal year.**

Total Responses so far: 7,123

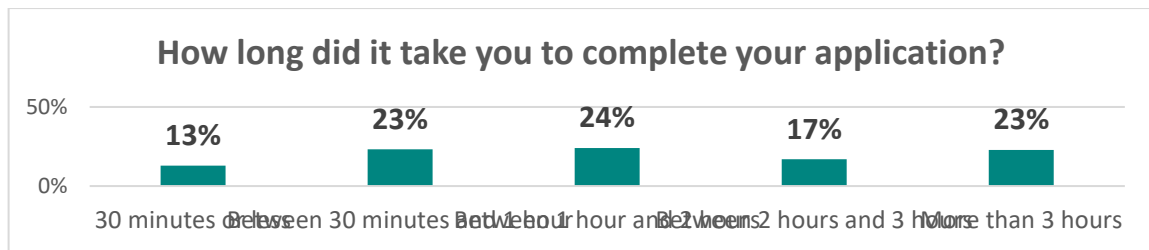
Programs included:

Application Type	Number
Grants for Creative Individuals	3,140
BIPOC Centered Organization Self-Identification	54
Card to Culture	28
Cultural Facilities Fund	185
Cultural District Initiative	36
Gaming Mitigation Fund	5
Local Cultural Council Program	3,500
STARS Residencies	175

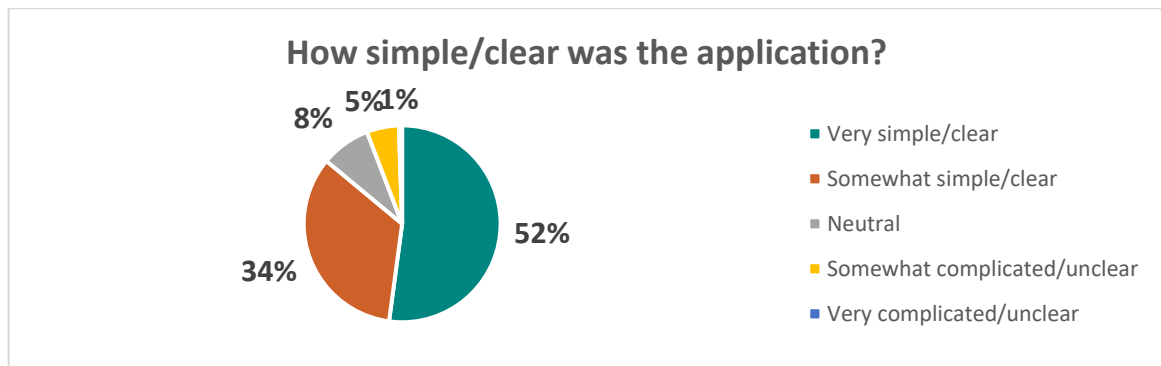
7,123

** : Festivals & Projects, which had roughly 1,200 applicants is not included in this data because the program ran before the survey launched

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

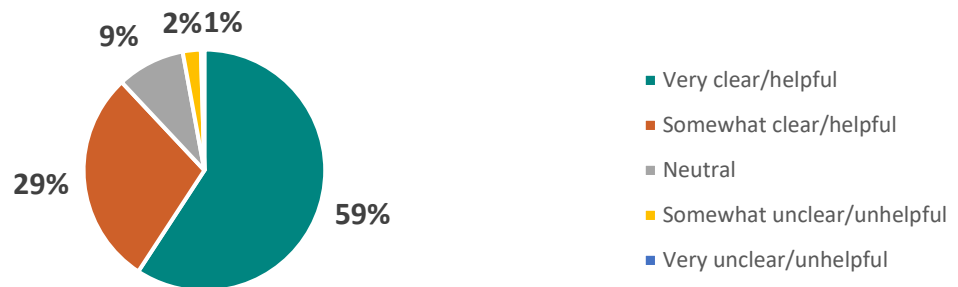


60% of applicants complete their application in 2 hours or less.



Only 6% of the respondents found the application they completed Somewhat or Very Complicated/Unclear.

How clear/helpful were the materials on our website?



96% of the respondents made use of the website to apply.

Only 3% of people who made use of the website to apply found it somewhat or very unclear/unhelpful.

How helpful were Mass Cultural Council staff?



47% of respondents reported that they contacted staff for help while working on their application (3,050 people).

Only 2% of the people who received help from staff found that support somewhat or very unhelpful.

Averaging the three areas the survey focused on (application, website, and staff support) would give us an **overall customer service satisfaction (CSAT) rating of 86**.

What is a good CSAT rating? 86 puts us ahead of most industry averages and in the excellent/highly satisfied range for organizations using a 5-point scale according to this source: <https://www.retently.com/blog/customer-satisfaction-score-csat/>

Companies preferring the popular 1-5 CSAT rating may find this approach to CSAT score meaning more accurate, setting the 65 to 80 range as a good one:

- 0-35 very bad/highly unsatisfied
- 35-50 poor/unsatisfied
- 50-65 average/quite satisfied
- 65-80 good/satisfied
- 80-100 excellent/highly satisfied

Even when the vast majority of applicants find the application simple and the website useful, there is still a huge amount of customer support that goes into supporting applicants through applications. Almost half of the applicants that completed the survey sought out staff for help with their application.

We have survey responses for about 36% of the total applications that came in. If we extrapolate the rate of personalized support (phone, email, office hours, meetings, etc.) from the surveys (47%) to all applications, that means **program staff provided personalized support for 8,000 to 9,000 applications**.

Cultural Asset Inventory. We conducted a search for a vendor capable of completing three main components of work: Data Collection, Data Organization and Analysis, and a Final Report. We would like to obtain an

accounting and analysis of cultural organizations and individuals operating within the state of Massachusetts, encompassing all the diverse discipline categories. We would like a better understanding of:

- the legal and commercial structure of cultural organizations to provide us insights into the operational dynamics of the cultural landscape.
- the breadth of the sectors, outside of the of, or adjacent to the established disciplines/sub-disciplines within the [national standard for arts information exchange](#)
- the demographic profile of artists and cultural workers in Massachusetts. Their age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, geographical location, years in the industry and any other pertinent information. This will provide insights into the diversity and inclusivity of the sector and highlight any underserved or underrepresented groups.
- the employment status and income levels of independent artists and cultural workers. Are they full-time or part-time artists? Do they have other employment outside of their artistic work? How stable is their income, and what is the range of income levels within the sector?
- Financial health/stability of independent artists and cultural workers have savings, retirement funds, health insurance, etc.

We received nine proposals in response to the RFP and after several rounds of review and interviews selected [Diversity North Group](#). Diversity North is a Massachusetts based, “women, Afro-Latina, and LGBTQ-owned consulting firm that works to live its values for diversity and inclusion every day.” The team held a first meeting in mid-January, and we will provide regular updates as the project progresses.

Here follows more information from each of the smaller teams that make up the Program Team with information about what they are working on.

Artists Team

Grants for Creative Individuals: In October '23, after an extensive redesign process, Mass Cultural Council launched a new program to support artists, culture bearers, and creative practitioners called the [Grants for Creative Individuals](#). By the program's December 11 deadline, we had **received over 4,450 applications** from individuals in all creative disciplines and categories.

Program staff is currently evaluating applications for eligibility and funding priorities. We are also gathering a pool of grant reviewers from the Massachusetts creative and cultural sector. The goal is to conclude the review process and award 375 grants of \$5,000 by early April 2024.

ArtSake and Artist News: Along with grants, the Artist Team provides an online artists' resource called ArtSake that shares career- and skills-building content. In calendar year 2023, **ArtSake received 158,000 pageviews from 48,548 visitors**. The most frequently visited pages were our [weekly Artist Opportunities posts](#), the [Creative Space Classifieds](#) with listings of available studio and live/work spaces, and an article sharing non-Mass Cultural Council [funding for Massachusetts artists](#).

We also support the sector with a monthly e-newsletter called Artist News. Artist News shares all Mass Cultural Council dates, deadlines, and news for creative individuals. In calendar year 2023, the "open rate" for Artist News was just over 50%, and **sign-ups increased from 13,174 at the outset to 15,637** by the [December '23 newsletter](#).

FY24 Partnerships with:

- Assets for Artists, a program of MASS MoCA that offers career-building workshops for artists, including [several funded by Mass Cultural Council](#).
- Work Without Limits, a program of UMass Chan Medical School, to support grant recipients who receive [public benefits](#).

- The [Special Commission on the Official Seal and Motto of the Commonwealth](#), to which Kelly Bennett from the Artist Team was the Agency's representative.

Personnel: For nearly 25 years, Mass Cultural Council was honored to have **Maggie Holtzberg**, a nationally recognized public folklorist, managing our Folk Arts and Heritage Program. She retired from state service at the end of December. Read Maggie's observations on her years of service on [the Agency's Power of Culture blog](#).

On January 16 the team welcomed **Summer Confuorto**. Summer joins the Agency as Program Officer, Traditional Arts, to support traditional, immigrant, and indigenous artists and culture bearers and to help administer the Grants for Creative Individuals. Summer's most recent experience in the arts was with New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA), where she worked on the Creative City, Public Art, and Native Arts programs.

CIP Team

Cultural Investment Portfolio: FY24 will be the final year of our partnership with SMU | DataArts, which has provided the financial platform that the Portfolio grantees have used for their annual reporting requirements since the beginning of the Portfolio grant program in 2010. We are developing plans for the new simplified year end reporting requirements for FY24 Portfolio grantees. We are in the final steps of identifying a financial consultant to work with us to develop the year-end report structure, including a methodology for categorizing applicants and grantees by financial health indicators.

We are finalizing the plans for the revisions to the Portfolio grant program, which will be re-launched in March as Operating Grants for Organizations (OGO).

Activities: Although the CIP team has not been conducting site visits, we continue to provide consultations with CIP organizations and potential applicants through online platforms. The CIP team has been active in

providing constituent support and supporting the Fiscal team as we have implemented new requirements for contracts.

Card to Culture: CIP Program Officer Greg Torrales has developed new program guidelines, which launched in fall 2023, with an increased focus on equitable practices. He has been working with organizations to help them align with the improved guidelines and has created supplement guides to support organizations by discipline practice (performing arts, museums, historical societies, etc.). He has been working with the partner agencies to promote the organizations participating in the Card to Culture program, and he has created a promotional toolkit to help organizations that work closely with low-income populations to promote the program benefits to their constituency.

There are now 404 organizations participating in the Card to Culture program, up from 288 at this time last year.

Festivals & Projects: CIP Program Officer Kalyn King worked with Communities Program Officer Timothea Pham to provide support to 740 organizations that received a Festivals & Projects grant – many of them are first time grantees who required a high level of support. More information is available in the separate memo about the program.

Gaming Mitigation: The FY24 Gaming Mitigation program launched in December 2023, and CIP Program Officer Lillian Lee has supported the process with webinars, office hours, and one-on-one consulting sessions with applicants. The application deadline is February 1, 2024. This program supports performing arts centers across the Commonwealth with grants to help with the costs associated with hosting touring artists and shows.

Communities team. The Communities Initiative Program of the Mass Cultural Council consists of the Local Cultural Council Program, The Cultural District Initiative and the Festivals and Projects grant program. There are currently seven team members working in the Communities Initiative.

Since the beginning of the FY24 fiscal year, the Communities Team has successfully completed the LCC grant cycle (September 1-October 17, 2023), the Cultural Districts Grant Program, and the Festivals and Projects grant cycle.

The Communities Initiative team is made up of seven members, one manager and six program officers who are responsible for providing support, advice, and training to the 329 cultural councils in the Commonwealth. This year we will be bringing on 2 new members as 2 of the team members will be leaving in January 2024. Each team member (except for the Program Manager) works with between 55-58 LCCs, as well as with the Cultural Districts that are located within their cities or towns. The team also helps to support the Festival and Projects Grant program.

Local Cultural Council (LCC) Program. The LCC program successfully completed the FY24 grant cycle on October 17th, 2023. Due to outreach from both the Councils and the Mass Cultural Council, the LCC program received **12,379 applications!** That is about 800 more than last year, another record year. Currently the LCCs are reviewing grants and working toward completing their Annual Reports and approving applicants for their individual cities and towns. The Communities team is working with LCCs to complete the reports and keep them on track to grant out their funds for FY24. The allocation for the LCCs FY24 is \$5,500,000 but with additional funds from municipalities and fundraising efforts, that amount will grow to about \$8,000,000 to support arts and culture programming.

In addition, we will be preparing a survey to send to LCC members regarding this past year's grant cycle. Once the LCC grant cycle is completed for all 329 Cultural Councils, we will be able to tabulate the exact amount of grants that were awarded from the program. We anticipate this to take place by March 15, 2023.

Expansion of LCC Program to Tribal Cultural Councils. Mass Cultural Council's Executive Director, leadership team, and Communities staff met with members of the Tribal Task Force over two days in January to learn how to better align

Mass Cultural Council's programming to the needs of Native American tribes and Indigenous people in the Commonwealth.

The primary focus of the convenings were to obtain feedback and recommendations from key leaders in Native American and Indigenous communities for the proposed Tribal Cultural Council program, which will be modeled after the existing Local Cultural Council program. Through this program, Native American tribes will be able to receive and distribute funding to their communities as they see fit. The convening will also be an opportunity for participants to learn about Mass Cultural Council's impact on Native American and Indigenous artists, culture bearers and organizations, and for Mass Cultural Council's director, leadership team and staff to learn about the unique arts and cultural needs of tribal communities.

Once both meetings have been held and we have time to process and evaluate all the information, we will be able to provide an update on the plan for the expansion of the LCC Program to include Tribal Cultural Councils.

Cultural Districts. 54 districts successfully applied for this year's round of CDI grants of \$15,000, totaling \$810,000. These grants are supporting our sectoral leaders, their partners, communities, and constituents, through the implementation of equitable initiatives in areas pivotal to their sustainability and accessibility such as community-informed strategic and cultural planning and development, diversified marketing and engagement, regional and collaborative programming, and equity and access initiatives, among others. With the support of last year's CDI grant funds, districts reported a cumulative 1,300% increase in visitation, over 200 new businesses open within their boundaries, over 1.3 million attendees to district programs and events, and over \$600,000 paid directly to artists.

Prospective Cultural Districts. Informal visits to potential new districts have occurred in Watertown, Holyoke, Westfield and Belchertown. The former three of which are currently on track to be presented for approval in FY25. Formal site visits will take place in the spring for those fully developed applicants most ready to proceed with designation.

Additional municipalities who have started the application process include Attleboro and Hopkinton, and staff continues to field inquiries from, and/or has met with stakeholders in the prospective communities of, Stoneham, Needham, Groton, Adams, Roslindale, Mattapan, Acton, Melrose, Norwood, Needham, and Andover, in addition to Framingham and New Bedford who are exploring a second potential designation.

Designation Renewals. In line with new procedural protocol for districts working through their fifth year of designation, Program Officers continue to meet, virtually and in-person, with district leaders and partners to assess their successes, challenges and needs to ensure they are being properly supported as they progress to their ten-year milestone.

District Offerings & Updates. The Cultural Districts Initiative program received a 2023 New England Urbanism Award from the Congress for the New Urbanism. The program was also a key feature of the inaugural Cultural Tourism Conference in Fall River. Staff continues to provide ongoing opportunities for Cultural District teams to connect and collaborate, share resources, information, and best practices, and to learn from subject matter experts on topics they've identified as their primary areas of focus.

Advancement. Lastly, and in line with the agency's new Strategic Plan, we have engaged in partnerships and planning with other state and regional entities including, but not limited to, the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities' Mass Downtown Initiative, Mass Development's TDI and Creative Cities programs, MASSCreative, NEFA's Creative Economy Network, Regional Planning Agencies and Tourism Councils, Transportation Agencies, and Mass Office of Travel & Tourism, among others.

Creative Youth Development (CYD) and Education

STARS Residencies. We received 421 STARS applications (of which 25 were withdrawn and 6 were ineligible). A total of 390 went forward for review, requesting a total of \$1,954,800. This is the largest number of applications the program has ever received; 17% more than FY23 STARS. **We recommended a**

list of 299 applications be funded for a total of \$1,502,450, which will place teaching artists, scientists, and humanists, into schools, bringing cultural enrichment to more than 32,000 Massachusetts students. List attached in the Appendices.

Funded residencies range in discipline, grade level, regional location, and school districts, including but not limited to residencies about Fashion Design, Latin American music and dance, poetry, art therapy and mechanical science! A few descriptions of funded residencies can be found in our recently published [blog post](#).

Following positive feedback about the application information sessions, in Mid-January, we will host an information session with the fiscal team, detailing the new contract and payment process for our diverse STARS grantees, which include schools, cultural organizations, and individuals.

Arts on Prescription Update. Following program, On Oct. 23, over 100 people convened in Springfield for the “Health & Wellness through Creativity” summit to further discuss arts on prescription (and learnings from the [CultureRx: Social Prescription Pilot](#) and [Arts on Prescription: A Field Guide for US Communities](#)). This convening featured a keynote panel discussion with leaders closely involved in this work. Moderated by Erik Holmgren, speakers included Vanessa Ford, Associate Director, Community Music School of Springfield, Cristina Huebner Torres, Chief Executive Vice President, Caring Health Center, Maria Silvia, Chief Operating Officer, Latino Counseling Center, Adrienne Hundley, Art Pharmacy, and Käthe Swaback, CultureRx Program Officer, Mass Cultural Council. After [the speaking program](#), breakouts were well-attended, especially for all those who were interested in learning more about our partnership with [Art Pharmacy](#) and their model of care that bridges the arts, healthcare, and public health sectors. Over these past three months, Art Pharmacy has been working to build powerful, cost-saving collaborations in Massachusetts that will help to create healthier and more equitable communities.

- Currently over 250 arts and cultural organizations have joined the network for arts on prescription of Art Pharmacy

- Art Pharmacy's goal is to announce payer partnerships and be able to begin providing healthcare grade social prescribing in our state by March, 2024.

YouthReach and the Youth Arts Impact Network (YAIN). In October, YAIN offered an "In-Person Creative Youth Development and Arts Education Convening" at the ICA Seaport Studio with the goal of bringing the YouthReach, CYD, and Arts Ed. sector together for an opportunity to connect and do artmaking in person for the new school year (see the [slide deck](#) that provides an overview and celebrates the content/artwork centered in the role of CYD organizations in mental health and belonging.

In December, we published [Create, Connect, Catalyze: YouthReach in FY23](#). This report details the challenges and successes of 85 Creative Youth Development programs in FY25. In particular, the report highlighted the depth and breadth of the mental health challenge currently facing youth and the structural changes that organizations are making to address some of these challenges for youth and staff.

YAIN has worked over the years with advisors in the nation to develop a database and indicators project for Creative Youth Development. In December, this project, "The 3C (Create, Collaborate, and Catalyze) Data Alliance" was awarded a \$250,000 seed grant from the Wallace Foundation (with [DreamYard](#) as the lead partner). Currently, at least one YouthReach organization will be directly involved in this project to develop the prototype and pilot the 3C Data Alliance Database. These funds will allow the Alliance to work with [North Peak](#) to build the prototype, pilot, test, and then revise this innovative equity and youth-centered CYD collaborative database for organizations.

Advancement. Over the past three months we have been engaged in conversations with several of our public sector partners in education. We have set up quarterly meetings with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and have been in conversations with Secretary Tutwiler and his team at the Executive Office of Education around converting a STEM committee to a STEAM committee. In addition, we continue to advocate for

the role of the creative sector in the public health, workforce development, and lessening the crisis of mental health with partners in each of those sectors. Attending conferences and cross-sector convenings has been crucial to the acknowledgement that arts and culture can be essential partner in solving these larger systemic issues. Convenings have included:

- Sept.: EQTY 2023 - A Summit for Health Justice and the Health Equity for All Symposium, Prospera Institute
- Oct.: Massachusetts Association of Mental Health 2023 Friend and Leader Award Dinner, and Accelerate the Future Research Awards for Innovation in Behavioral Health Workforce Development.
- Dec.: The Massachusetts School-Based Behavioral Health Summit

We have met with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, the National Organization for Arts in Health, Health Equity Compact, Strategic Initiatives & Partnerships in the Office of Human Services, Center for Behavioral Health and Wellness, the Boston Community Health Collaborative, and the Public Health Museum in Tewksbury.

Cultural Facilities Fund. In September, twenty-eight grants totaling \$3,139,000 were recommended to the CFF Advisory Committee. The recommendations were approved by both the Advisory Committee and the MassDevelopment Board who voted in October.

The grant awards were as follows:

- 27 Capital Grants: \$3,104,000
- 1 Feasibility and Technical Assistance Grant: \$35,000
- 28 Grants Total: \$3,139,000

Staff worked with a number of applicants who were not successful last round to update their applications and provide additional information that was previously unclear or missing from their previous application.

The process largely revolved around the applicant providing updated information such as estimates or bids for the work, resumes or qualifications for who is doing the work, updates on fundraising progress, operating plans for new ventures, timelines, and project budgets.

In September the Advisory Committee also approved the new guidelines for the FY24 round. The application was released October 12. Staff held office hours twice a week and provided on call assistance to applicants.

The application deadline was December 14 and 263 organizations submitted applications. This number of applications submitted was more than any previous CFF round. In addition, 88 of the 263 applicants (33%) are first time applicants to the program. Staff will work with our colleagues at MassDevelopment and reviewers to assess applications over the next few months.

Grant Systems Team. The Grants Systems Team supports the agency's grantmaking via technical expertise of our grants management system (GMS). We are responsible for database management, reporting, technical grant application support, and providing customer service/training both internally and externally. We also contribute to policy, program design, and implementation of grant programs. We are currently a team of three full-time staff; one manager and two officers.

From August through December, we **opened eight FY24 programs** to accept applications in GMS:

- LCC, Cultural Districts, UP Innovation Fund, STARS Residency, Grants for Creative Individuals, Card to Culture, Cultural Facilities Fund, and Gaming Mitigation

We also supported renewal setups for some programs:

- CIP, Traditional Arts Apprenticeships, and YouthReach.

We provided technical assistance to applicants, grantees, LCC volunteers, and staff while supporting “higher than ever” volume deadlines for those programs in GMS. To demonstrate system usage in GMS this past fall, we can share that 24,500 applications were *at minimum* started in the above programs. (By comparison, FY23 had 30K for the entire year but also included Pandemic Recovery and Festivals and Projects.)

In collaboration with the fiscal team, we transitioned to sending **electronic signature contracts** to grantees via GMS.

We continue to also **provide high-level reporting** on our grantees and programs for audiences like public affairs, NEA, and cross-agency portfolio analyses.

This month, we begin planning the application setups for **Operating Grants for Organizations** and **Festivals and Projects**. We will also provide reporting and effort to the **Cultural Asset Inventory** project with Diversity North Group. Lastly, we are working with colleagues across programs to evaluate similarities in the grantmaking process as we have early discussions about FY26 programs and applications.

Universal Participation Innovation Fund. In 2024 the UP Innovation Fund remains a distinct equitable approach to grant application and distribution, available to all organizations with UP Designation. The status of Designation being vetted, the Innovation Fund application includes simple affirmations on spending criteria. The 2024- spending plan included \$480,000 to provide 96 \$5,000 Innovation Fund grants.

Attached in the Appendices are the 94 organizations approved for the Innovation Fund. While originally budgeted for 96, 1 organization (Arts Are Essential) has closed and 1 organization (Voices Rising) has indicated they do not have the human nor financial capacity to accept the grant this fiscal year. Please note, while New Repertory Theater announced its closure in October 2024, they were still producing July 1 - September 30, 2024 and they have been informed on being awarded the grant.

Of the 94 UP Designated organizations, there is a vast range in size, discipline, region, and financial capacity. The Annual Reports from FY23 note the ease of the application, the deep need for institutional investment in Access, and the steps taken for developing sustainable accessible systems. Monthly office hours will continue to support recipients of the Innovation Fund. These office hours are also open to any cultural worker wanting to participate in Access as a Community of Practice.



Power of culture

BUSINESS OPERATIONS UPDATE

JANUARY 2024

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER UPDATE

- The funding for the Mass Cultural Council is not impacted by the Administration's recent announcement of \$375 million in budget cuts, which included a 50% decrease in local earmarks and major reductions across various state programs.
- The new electronic contracting process has accelerated grant payments. As of December 31, 2023, comparing FY23 to FY24 payments to date, we've issued 518 more payments than in FY23 as of mid-year.
- We will be updating Mass Cultural Council's Financial Policies and Procedures that was last updated on August 27, 2019. This policy document outlines our new travel guidelines (recommended by The Executive Committee to be approved by the Council today) and policies related to credit card use, purchasing goods and services and internal controls and fraud prevention. The goal of the document update is to provide increased clarity of our fiscal processes, uphold the existing policy framework, and improve the overall readability of the document.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

- We are about halfway through the fiscal year, and our spending is on target or slightly below in most spending areas. Typically, spending lags in the first half of the year.
- Gaming Revenue – Casino tax revenue realized as of December 31, 2023, is consistent with anticipated revenue. The Mass Cultural Council is on track to disburse \$3,737,400 in Gaming Mitigation Grants, \$1,200,000 in Organizational Support Grants and \$359,385 in administrative expenses.
- Due to a combination of savings and grant cancelations, we were able to provide \$74,350 in 10 additional STARS grants than we previously anticipated within the PP spending category.
- Approximately 94% of the funds allocated for the FY24 Cultural Sector Recovery Grant have been distributed as of December 31, 2023. Over the next few months, we will conduct reviews of individual grant applicants to ensure the remaining funding is utilized in FY25.

- Mass Cultural Council has contracted with Diversity North Group LLC to inventory and analyze Massachusetts cultural organizations and individuals. The amount of \$50,000 was budgeted for this contract. The contractual budget exceeds the amount budgeted by \$42,100. The agency has received donations and pledges from cultural partners to subsidize the difference in cost.

CORE APPROPRIATION

EXPENSES	COUNCIL APPROVED CORE APPROPRIATION	EXPENSES AS OF 12/31/23	% OF BUDGET EXPENDED	SPENDING PROJECTIONS 12/31/23
AA: SALARY	3,713,870	1,843,717	50%	3,713,870
BB: EMPLOYEE REIMBURSEMENT	44,685	21,716	49%	44,685
CC: CONTRACT STAFF	19,835	17,556	89%	19,835
DD: PAYROLL TAX AND FRINGE	91,476	31,454	34%	91,476
EE: ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES	185,896	35,776	19%	185,896
GG: RENT AND ELECTRICITY	300,675	172,148	57%	300,675
HH: CONSULTING SERVICES	232,425	71,887	31%	232,425
JJ: PROGRAMMATIC SERVICES	139,495	10,776	8%	139,495
KK: PROGRAMMATIC EQUIPMENT	3,200	1,982	62%	3,200
LL: PROGRAMMATIC LEASES	7,580	2,051	27%	7,580
PP: GRANTS	19,928,555	5,532,340	28%	19,928,555
PP: EARMARKS	895,000	250,000	28%	895,000
UU: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	332,308	91,282	27%	332,308
TOTAL EXPENSES	25,895,000	8,082,685		25,895,000

TOTAL SPENDPLAN (CORE APPROPRIATION AND ALL FUNDING SOURCES)

EXPENSES	COUNCIL APPROVED SPEND PLAN	EXPENSES AS OF 12/31/23	% OF BUDGET EXPENDED	SPENDING PROJECTIONS 12/31/23
AA: SALARY	4,167,787	1,843,717	44%	4,167,787
BB: EMPLOYEE REIMBURSEMENT	50,752	21,716	43%	50,752
CC: CONTRACT STAFF	47,600	51,560	108%	91,279
DD: PAYROLL TAX AND FRINGE	300,096	32,090	11%	300,529
EE: ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES	228,518	35,776	16%	228,518
GG: RENT AND ELECTRICITY	356,010	172,148	48%	356,010
HH: CONSULTING SERVICES	238,425	71,887	30%	238,425
JJ: PROGRAMMATIC SERVICES	184,495	10,776	6%	184,495
KK: PROGRAMMATIC EQUIPMENT	3,200	1,982	62%	3,200
LL: PROGRAMMATIC LEASES	7,580	2,051	27%	7,580

PP: GRANTS	37,262,349	17,650,691	47%	37,222,236
PP: EARMARKS	895,000	250,000	28%	895,000
UU: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	332,308	91,282	27%	332,308
TOTAL EXPENSES	44,074,119	20,235,676		44,078,118*

*The \$4K delta represents Cultural Sector funding received from ANF that was not included in the July revenue projection. The revenue estimate has been adjusted as part of the midyear reconciliation.

FY24 Approved Spending Plan Documents:

[Spending Plan PowerPoint](#)

[Budget and Program Allocation Spending Plan for FY24](#)

PEOPLE OPERATIONS HIGHLIGHTS

- Please join us in welcoming Summer Confuorto our Program Officer, Traditional Arts, to support traditional, immigrant, and indigenous artists and culture bearers and to help administer the Grants for Creative Individuals. Summer's most recent work experience was with NEFA, where she worked on the Creative City, Public Art, and Native Arts programs.
- We closed out the 2023 payroll year by performing internal audits and reconciliations to ensure the accuracy of payroll data and compliance with tax laws and ensured all payroll runs are complete and accurate for 2023 W-2 distribution later this month.
- To ensure our employees understand the risks associated with potential fraud related to grantmaking and financial management, all employees are undergoing an online classroom Fraud Mitigation and Awareness training provided by the Office of the Comptroller. The training educates staff on various fraud types and equips them with detection techniques and prevention strategies. Additionally, the training highlights important statewide hotlines for reporting fraud, waste, abuse, or illegal activities.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND OFFICE OPERATIONS HIGHLIGHTS

- To ensure our employees have the knowledge to safeguard our digital assets and information systems we developed a comprehensive Cyber Security Mitigation and Training Program comprised of the following components for staff.
 - *Annual Cybersecurity training:* The training sessions reinforce the critical role of cybersecurity in all our operations.
 - *Monthly Cybersecurity Learning Campaign:* A curated newsletter that covers topics such as data protection, secure communication practices, and current cyber threats, fostering ongoing awareness and vigilance.
 - *Monthly Modern Workplace Technology Series:* Training demonstrations on range of applications, platforms, methodologies, and skillsets, keeping staff up-to-date and proficient in technology.

- The lease for the Mass Cultural Council's current space is scheduled to expire on January 14, 2026. In anticipation of this date, the senior staff plan to hold a series of meetings with staff to explore and discuss potential alterations or improvements to our workspace environment. Following these discussions, we will initiate the procurement process directed by the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM). This process will involve assessing our space requirements, exploring new locations, and ensuring that all decisions are cost effective and are in alignment with the Administration.



Power of culture

To: Mass Cultural Council
Fr: Michael Bobbitt, David Slatery and Cathy Cheng-Anderson
Dt: January 25, 2024
Re: Revised Out of State Travel Policy

Under Mass Cultural Council's Financial Policies, the Executive Committee reviews, considers and consents to out of state travel by Mass Cultural Council staff. Mass Cultural Council's line item in the FY20 Massachusetts State Budget (Chapter 41 of 2019) required the Council adopt a policy requiring pre-approval of out-of-state travel by council staff. The Council adopted and implemented such new policies at its August 27, 2019 meeting and delegated, per the Council's enabling act, approval responsibilities to the Executive Committee.

The pandemic started roughly six months after adoption of this policy and travel has been restricted over the past 3 years, meaning that, until this past year, these provisions were not employed that often. However, as society continues to emerge from the pandemic, there has been more need for travel, and we anticipate there will be more (especially short trips within the region). Several of the travel requests to the Executive Committee in 2023 were relatively routine, involving relatively small costs and mileage reimbursement (i.e. no airfare) and have often come up on short notice. While the Committee members have always helpfully and promptly assembled when asked to review these items, we began to realize that frequent meetings for routine requests were not the most efficient use of members' time and not in keeping with the original intention of the travel preapproval policies. Although not a huge burden for staff and Committee members, there are difficulties involved in organizing, holding and obtaining a quorum for Executive Committee meetings- especially on short notice. Therefore, staff has recommended updates to the policy to remove more routine requests from the policy while retaining the policy's intention of ensuring Council members' review of out of state travel involving significant costs, airfare or lodging.

Staff brought these concerns and recommendations for a modified policy to the Executive Committee last October. After discussion at its October 12, 2023 and again at its January 11, 2024 meetings, the Committee agreed to certain modifications to the policy summarized below.

The updated Out of State Travel Policy is attached. While the policy has been restated in a standalone document (the prior policy was contained in a larger set of "Financial Policies" which are currently being updated), the changes to the prior policy are summarized follows:

- Under the policy, "Out of State Travel" will not include expenses related to travel from Massachusetts to the other New England states (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Connecticut) as long as such expenses do not include any airfare, overnight lodging or registration fees in excess of \$800.
- Travel which is fully subsidized by another party (and has been disclosed and approved in accordance with the ethics law) and does not require expenditure of agency funds will not require pre-approval of the Executive Committee or Council but will be reported to the Executive Committee at the next occurring meeting.
- If, after attempts to convene a meeting, the Chair determines it is not possible to assemble a quorum of the Executive Committee to consider a time-sensitive out of state travel request prior to the date of travel, the Chair may review and decide upon the approval of such request individually provided that the Council and Committee is informed at the next occurring meeting.

Staff will of course continue to abide by all of the other provisions of the existing travel policy, ensuring that any request for out of state travel submitted for approval, has been internally approved and including a finding that such travel has a clear public benefit for the Mass Cultural Council and has a direct benefit to the requesting employee's essential job functions.

Staff hereby requests the Council adopt the recommendation of the Executive Committee and approve the attached updated Out of State Travel Policy

The Out Of State Travel Policy has been put forward as a standalone document as the Council's Financial Policies exist in a number of different documents, some of which are out of date and Cathy Cheng-Anderson is reviewing them all and will bring them forward at an upcoming meeting.

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OUT OF STATE TRAVEL POLICY (REV. JANUARY 2024)

Per Section 2, Line Item 0640-0300 of Chapter 41 of the Massachusetts Acts of 2019 (Massachusetts FY20 state budget), Massachusetts Cultural Council was required to establish a policy for pre-approving all out of state staff travel including any associated travel budgets. The Council adopted such a policy in January and under Section 54 of the Council's enabling act (M.G.L. Chapter 10 Sections 52-58A), the Council delegated the authority to pre-approve any such out-of-state travel to the Executive Committee.

This document represents a restatement and update of the out of state travel policy and sets forth guidelines for out of state business travel and establishes criteria for the reimbursement of travel expenses. In compliance with the standards prescribed by the State Comptroller's Office, Operational Supplier Diversity Office, and Executive Office for Administration and Finance, this policy mandates the maintenance of economic efficiency and cost-effectiveness in its application.

1. All travel must have a clear public benefit for the Mass Cultural Council and have a direct benefit to an employee's essential job functions.
2. Out-of-state travel requests will be sent to the Executive Committee before its scheduled meetings. The Executive Committee will consider and decide upon such requests and then inform the Council of any approvals in the subsequent Council meeting.
3. The agency is responsible for maintaining documents including the Travel Authorization Form, any required State Ethics disclosure forms, and Procurement Request Form. No expenses or reimbursements detailed in this form shall be approved unless they are consistent with applicable provisions of this policy. While these forms are primarily for internal record-keeping, they may be provided to the Executive Committee and Council as needed but will not be routinely submitted for review.

4. For this policy "Out of State Travel" excludes travel within New England (Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Connecticut), unless it involves airfare, overnight accommodations, or registration fees over \$800. In exceptional cases where a quorum of the Executive Committee cannot be assembled for travel approval within a reasonable period of time, the Chair of the Council can grant approval. This decision must be reported at the next Council and Committee meetings.
5. Mass Cultural Council employees receiving travel subsidies from external entities are required to comply with state ethics regulations as well as this policy. This requires the employee directly consult with the State Ethics Commission and may require the submission of any required disclosure and determination forms as stipulated in Commission regulations such as 930 CMR 5.08(2)(d)1. Any forms which are required to be disclosed to the employee's "appointing authority" must be submitted to the Deputy Executive Director and the Senior Director of Business Operations/Chief Financial Officer both for record-keeping and to ensure adherence to state conflict of interest laws. Furthermore, travel fully subsidized by an external entity, which has been appropriately disclosed and approved under ethics law and does not involve the use of agency funds, is exempt from the Council/Executive Committee's pre-approval process. However, such travel must be reported at the subsequent meetings of the Executive Committee and Council.
6. Except for mileage reimbursement for private vehicles, employees are expected to submit corresponding itemized receipt/s showing the vendor's name, description of purchase/s and date for all purchase/s they seek reimbursement/s for. Eligible reimbursements include:
 - Economy/coach airfare and ground transportation (train, bus, taxi, ridesharing services) including reasonable tips not more than 20% of the fare.
 - Economical hotel and lodging considering proximity to the business destination and personal safety.
 - Conference fees
 - Private auto-mileage: \$0.625 /mile.
 - Parking and tolls
 - Car rental arrangements
 - Purchase of gas for car rental
 - Meal reimbursement following federal guidelines set-forth by the [General Services Administration \(GSA\)](#):

BREAKFAST:	\$13.00
LUNCH:	\$15.00

DINNER: \$26.00

7. Parking tickets, fines, valet service, personal expenses, alcohol related expenses, entertainment, newspapers, magazines, laundry services, travel accident insurance, change fees for non-emergency personal reasons, pre-check fees, and any related expenses are the responsibility of the employee and will not be reimbursed.



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CULTURAL EQUITY & ACCESS PROGRESS REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2023 – JANUARY 2024

- D/Deaf & Disability Equity Plan:** Mass Cultural Council staff worked with Open Door Arts and Art-Reach to develop a [series of recommendations](#) contributing to a Disability Equity Plan. Following an in-depth analysis of the action steps derived from the guidance of our disability consultants, the senior leadership team is now focusing on creating a feasible schedule for putting the d/Deaf & Disability Equity Plan into action, with a planned launch in March 2024.
- Native and Indigenous Taskforce and Equity Plan:** Mass Cultural Council, since 2021, is aligning its programming with the Racial Equity Plan to better serve BIPOC artists, focusing particularly on Native American and Indigenous communities. We are developing a Native American and Indigenous Peoples' Equity plan to address the specific needs of Native people. A key initiative is the establishment of the Tribal Cultural Council (TCC) program, modeled after the Local Cultural Council program, to distribute funds for arts and culture. This involved creating a Native taskforce to guide the TCC's formation and ensure it meets the needs of Native American and Indigenous tribes.
- The Panelist Handbook has been revised and renamed as the **Reviewer Handbook**, reflecting our commitment to equity. This update includes anti-bias training for reviewers, making it a more thorough resource that corresponds with our continuous efforts in learning and development around equity.
- We have conducted **ADA 101 workshops** for the Festivals and Projects, Communities, and Local Cultural Councils programs. These workshops are designed to educate participants about the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) requirements and explain how these requirements impact effect their projects and initiatives.
- Consultations have been provided to various organizations on how to develop a system that proactively considers and supports individuals with disabilities. The organizations we've worked with include Adams Theater, Fine Arts Work Center, Museum of Russian Icons, and Malden Public Access TV.
- The CEA team collaborated with the artists and events teams to host the Creative Individuals Info Session with both ASL and Spanish Interpretation. The session was attended by over 300 participants, with over 200 questions answered.

- The Cultural Equity Learning Community (CELC) is registering for its summer 2024 cohort. Mass Cultural Council will be providing up to 250 state cultural workers with full scholarships.