



Power of culture

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
PROGRAMS COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2025
1:00 -2:30 PM
ON-LINE MEETING**

BROADCAST MEETING

**MEETING WILL BE LIVESTREAMED AT
[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/LIVE/ RXKTVYUPCY](https://www.youtube.com/live/RXKTVYUPCY)**

**MEETING MATERIALS WILL BE POSTED ONLINE AT
[HTTPS://MASSCULTURALCOUNCIL.ORG/ABOUT/BOARD/](https://massculturalcouncil.org/about/board/)
UNDER "FEBRUARY 12, 2025 PROGRAMS COMMITTEE MEETING"**

AGENDA VOTE

- 1. Call to Order- Open Meeting Law Notice
- 2. Minutes- October 16, 2024 **X**
- 3. Chairs' Reports
- 4. Programs Report
- 5. Reminder re: Conflict of Interest Notifications
- Additional FY25 Grant and Program Recommendations** **X**
- 6. Gaming Mitigation Grants
- 7. Cultural Investment Portfolio/Operating Grants for Organizations
- 8. Grants for Creative Individuals

9. Adjourn

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
PROGRAMS COMMITTEE**

(IN ADVANCE OF THE 165th MEETING OF MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL ON FEBRUARY 26, 2025)

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2025

RESOLUTIONS

Section 2

RESOLVED: that the Programs Committee approves the minutes of the October 16, 2024 Programs Committee Meeting in the form presented.

Section 6

RESOLVED: To recommend to the full Council approval of the Gaming Mitigation Fund grants as described and presented at the Programs Committee Meeting.

Section 7

RESOLVED: To recommend approval by the full Council the final list of Operating Grants for Organizations as described in the memo provided at the Programs Committee Meeting.

Section 8

RESOLVED: To recommend to the full Council approval of the Grants for Creative Individuals as described and presented at the Programs Committee Meeting.

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

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
PROGRAMS COMMITTEE**

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2024

ONLINE MEETING

Committee Members Present were

Cecil Barron-Jensen, Co-Chair of the Programs Committee
Julie Wake, Co-Chair of the Programs Committee
Marc Carroll, Council Chair
Jo-Ann Davis, Council Vice Chair
Emily Bramhall
Ashley Occhino
Mark Snyder

Staff Members Present were

Michael J. Bobbitt, Executive Director
David Slatery, Deputy Executive Director
Jen Lawless, Senior Director of Program Operations
Catherine Cheng-Anderson, Senior Director of Business Operations and Chief Financial Officer
Bethann Steiner, Senior Director of Public Affairs
Ann Petruccelli Moon, Deputy Chief of Staff
Carmen Plazas, Communications & Community Engagement Manager
Amy Chu, Program Officer
Dan Blask, Program Manager
Erik Holmgren, Program Manager
Kalyn King, Program Officer
Lillian Lee, Program Officer
Sara Glidden, Program Manager
Timothea Pham, Program Officer
Lisa Simmons, Program Manager
Carolyn Cole, Program Officer

Co-Chair Julie Wake called the meeting to order at 1:02pm and asked Deputy Executive Director David Slatery to read the Open Meeting Law statement. David read the Open Meeting Law statement. Julie then asked if Committee Members had reviewed the minutes of their last meeting held on August 8th and called for a motion to

Prepared on 11/18/24

approve them. Emily Bramhall moved to approve the minutes; Mark Snyder seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Simone Early and Donna Haghighat were not present all were in favor, and it was

RESOLVED: that the Programs Committee approves the minutes of the August 8, 2024 Grants Committee Meeting in the form presented at the meeting.

Julie, joined by Co-Chair Cecil Barron Jensen, briefly explained the decision to change the name of the Committee from Grants to Programs. "Programs" more accurately reflects the true work of the Committee at a high level and as it aligns with the Agency's strategic plan, which is focused not only on grantmaking, but also advancing the Agency and the cultural sector. Committee Members indicated their understanding and support for the decision and there were no questions asked. Julie then asked Senior Director of Program Operations Jen Lawless for her report.

Jen brought the Committee's attention to the memos included in their materials which provide an update on work being done within and across all program areas. She also provided an update on how the Agency will distribute grants to organizations in FY25. As Mass Cultural Council has continued to pursue its equity and inclusion goals, staff has engaged in outreach efforts and recruited more applicants to apply to its programs – many for the first time. Thanks to advocacy efforts by the Council, staff, and Agency partners and support from the Governor and many members of the state legislature, the Agency has received increases in its allocation in recent years. Still, many applicants are being turned away. Staff did an analysis and realized that 8% of its grantees received 57% of its funding in FY24; much of this was due to organizations who received grants from multiple programs. In FY25 Mass Cultural Council will allow organizations to receive either an organizational support grant (Cultural Investment Portfolio, Operating Grants for Organizations, Creative Projects for Schools, Festivals, or Cultural Districts grant) **OR** a Gaming Mitigation Fund grant. The Cultural Facilities Fund has also shifted from a one-year wait period to a two-year wait period. This will enable grant dollars to go further; 45 additional organizations will receive operating support in FY25 because of this shift. Michael will have direct conversations with the leaders of impacted organizations about the change.

Emily expressed that she is in support of the changes but is curious if the change will have a jarring impact on the affected organizations as she imagines this could be a large deduction. Jen explained that in many cases current grantees have already had to make a choice as a lot of smaller guardrails have been up. This shift will be the largest shift yet, but Gaming Mitigation grants tend to be substantial with the largest grant amounting to \$200,000. Barring any major changes in gambling activity staff anticipates Gaming grants will still be quite large. Jen is hopeful that knowing they can still receive a large Gaming grant and that many additional organizations who would have been turned away will receive funding, will soften the disappointment.

Cecil also expressed support for the change and added that the two-year wait for the Cultural Facilities Fund would probably help smaller organizations have an opportunity to apply and be successful.

Jen added a few additional updates to her report: the Grants for Creative Individuals application is open, there are three new Cultural Districts applying for designation and they will be presented to the Council at its November meeting, staff is working with its

consultant, Civic Moxie, to redesign the Cultural Districts Initiative which is paused and not accepting additional applications at this time, and the first Tribal Cultural Council has launched and will begin taking applications on November 1.

Emily asked if the Grants for Creative Individuals program includes a waiting period like the Cultural Facilities Fund. Program Manager Dan Blask explained that there is a three-year waiting period.

Ashley Occhino asked if Civic Moxie would evaluate current Cultural Districts only or if it was an evaluation of the whole program. Program Officer Carolyn Cole explained that Civic Moxie would evaluate the entirety of the program.

Julie thanked Jen for her robust report and asked Program Manager Sara Glidden to begin her presentation on the Financial Health Analysis Tool. Sara shared a PowerPoint presentation; a copy of the presentation is available upon request.

Julie asked if there was a trend to see who was most in need. Sara said there wasn't any one sector that stood out, perhaps a little bit of a stronger showing from the performing arts. Cecil asked how this information could help inform future grantmaking and program direction. Sara explained that, due to many grantees being new to the Agency, this represents an opportunity for an ongoing conversation to assess needs and determine if support comes from within Mass Cultural Council or from other state agencies and beyond. Staff is currently sharing a monthly list of opportunities for cultural organizations; a lot of these resources include financial health consulting.

Michael added that at their November meeting, the Council would see a presentation on the cultural asset mapping work the Agency engaged in that would illuminate just how large the cultural sector in Massachusetts is. There is a lot more work to be done.

Ashley commented that she would love to see room for organizations with fiscal sponsors as they play a large role in their communities.

There were no further comments or questions for Sara.

Program Manager Erik Holmgren then gave a brief update on Arts Prescriptions and the National Endowment for the Arts' Arts & Health Initiative – the Agency is seeking a grant from the NEA to support and expand its social prescription work. After his report Julie commented that several of her Cape Cod colleagues were well-aware of the arts prescriptions work and were in the process of becoming part of the network. There were no further comments or questions for Erik.

Julie then asked David to review the conflicts-of-interest list and there were no questions or additions, so she moved to the final agenda item: approval of additional grant recommendations for FY25. Jen Lawless explained that the Committee was reviewing recommendations for **Festivals & Projects, Creative Projects for Schools, and Operating Support for Organizations** which includes the Cultural Investment Portfolio and Operating Grants for Organizations for recommendation to the full Council at its November meeting. Full details regarding the grant recommendations were included in the meeting materials. There was no discussion, and no one had questions for Jen. Julie asked for a motion to recommend for approval by the Council the grants within each of the three programs. Mark Snyder moved to approve the recommendations; Emily

Bramhall seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Simone and Donna were absent it was

RESOLVED: To recommend approval by the full Council of \$7,200,000 in unrestricted operating support grants to cultural organizations under the Cultural Investment Portfolio and new Operating Grants for Organizations program as described in the memo provided at the Programs Committee Meeting.

RESOLVED: To recommend to the full Council approval of up to \$1,500,000 in Creative Projects for Schools grants as presented at the Programs Committee Meeting.

RESOLVED: To recommend to the full Council approval of the Festivals & Projects program with a grant allocation totaling \$1,850,000 as presented at the Programs Committee Meeting.

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

1. Marc Carroll
 - a. Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra
 - b. The Rivers School
2. Jo-Ann Davis
 - a. The Care Center
 - b. Springfield Museums
 - c. MASS Creative
3. Cecil Barron Jensen
 - a. Artists Association of Nantucket
 - b. Egan Maritime Institute
 - c. Nantucket Cultural District
4. Julie Wake
 - a. Arts Foundation of Cape Cod
5. Ashley Occhino
 - a. Fall River Arts and Culture Coalition/One South Coast Chamber Foundation
 - b. Southeastern Massachusetts Visitors Bureau
 - c. SouthCoast Community Foundation
 - d. Society of Arts and Crafts

The end of the meeting agenda had been reached and Julie, as Co-Chair, adjourned the meeting at 2:13pm.

Programs Committee Report

To: Mass Cultural Council Programs Committee
 Fr: Michael Bobbitt, David Slatery, Jen Lawless
 Dt: February 12, 2025
 Re: Program Updates

Program Consolidation Update

To support the simplification of internal administration of programs and improve the constituent experience, since FY21 almost all of our programs have been redesigned and/or consolidated. Our goal was to have fewer programs but to serve as many or more grantees. Additionally, eligibility was broadened so that we could continue to serve our current constituents and reach new constituencies as well. The following shows how the programs have been consolidated from FY21 to FY25:

FY21 (18 Programs)

CIP Portfolio
 CIP Gateway
 CIP Projects
 Festivals
 STARS Residencies
 UP LEAD Professional Development
 Grants
 UP Awards
 UP Innovation Fund
 UP Designation & Innovation and
 Learning Network
 YouthReach
 Cultural Facilities Fund
 Gaming Mitigation Fund
 Local Cultural Council Program
 Cultural District Initiative & Grants
 Card to Culture
 Social Prescription
 Traditional Arts Apprenticeships
 Artist Fellowships

FY26 (11 Programs)

Operating Grants for Organizations
 Creative Experiences
 UP Innovation Fund
 UP Designation & Innovation and
 Learning Network*
 YouthReach
 Cultural Facilities Fund
 Gaming Mitigation Fund
 Tribal & LCC Program
 Cultural District Initiative & Grants*
 Card to Culture
 Grants for Creative Individuals

*The two programs with asterisks are in the process of being redesigned.

Despite these program consolidations we are reaching more organizations and individuals than we did in FY21. The figures below exclude any pandemic related funding:

Number of individuals funded in FY21: 101

Number of individuals funded in FY25: 435

- **330% increase**

Number of organizations funded in FY21: 1,162

Number of organizations funded in FY25 **so far**: 1,824

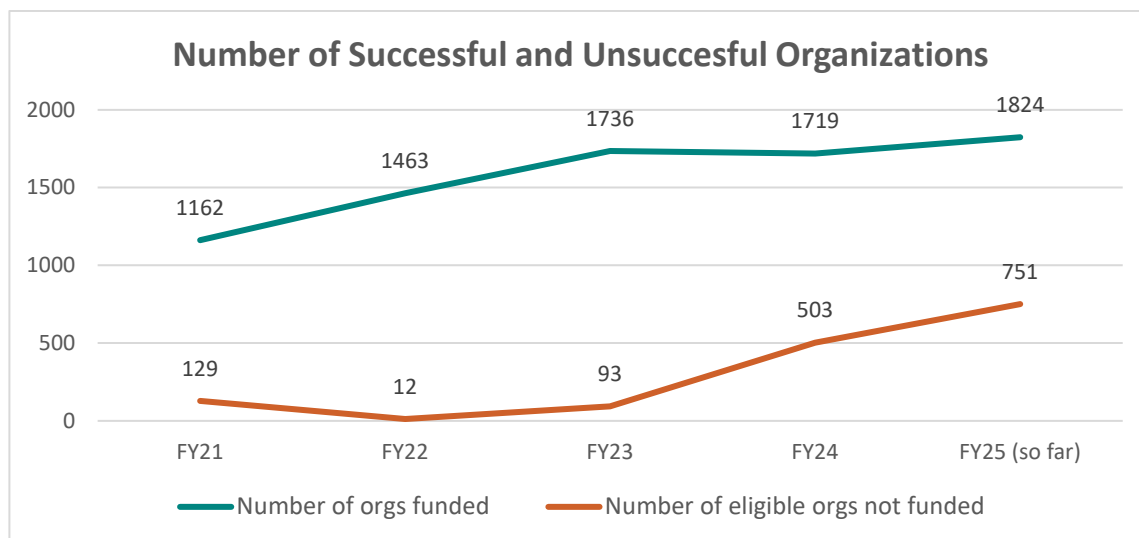
- **57% increase**

For context, during that time our State Appropriation increased from \$18,180,000 in FY21 to \$26,850,000 in FY25, a 48% increase. Also, during that time, we increased the smallest grant organizations received from \$500 in FY21 to \$2,500 in FY25, a 400% increase. However, in order to reach more individuals, the maximum award was decreased from \$15,000 to \$5,000, a 66% decrease.

Advancing Equity and Extending Our Reach. Much of the consolidation work was done to support our equity goals, Mass Cultural Council has expanded the organizations we reach through recruitment and outreach. Because our applications have been simplified and streamlined and eligibility has been expanded over the past 4 years, we have seen a steady increase in applications from organizations in the cultural sector.

In FY25 we received a total of 19,379 applications through our system in FY25 (includes applications to LCCs), a 4% decrease from FY24 (20,226) and a 61% increase compared to FY21 (12,038). Despite the increases to our budget, and an increase in the grantees we are serving, we have had to turn away an increasing number of organizations.

The following chart shows the number of funded organizations and the number of organizations that applied and received no funding per year. It excludes all pandemic related grants so that each year is easier to compare. Additionally, the FY25 award number does not include Gaming, CFF, and some final OGO/Cip awards, as those have not been finalized.



To ensure that we can fund as many organizations as possible, we are working to thoughtfully coordinate and limit our grants. We have been moving in this direction over the past three fiscal years. Looking ahead to FY26, we anticipate:

- Cultural Facilities Fund: 2-year wait period for successful Capital Grant recipients.
- Organizations can only receive one of the following grants:
 - Creative Experiences
 - Cultural Investment Portfolio(CIP)/Operating Grants for Organizations(OGO)
 - Gaming Mitigation
 - Cultural District Investment Grant

And some organizations receiving both YouthReach and operating support will be allowed to receive both for a final year up to a capped amount due to the delay in the reopening of YouthReach. More below.

As we move into FY26 and finalize the design and redesign of our programs we anticipate that ensuring our funds can reach as many organizations as possible will mean further coordination of and communication about our programs so that organizations will be able to determine which program is the best fit for them.

Grant Cycle Realignment

To better manage the significant increase in applications, balance workload, make space for our advancement work we have shifted some of our programs to take in applications every other year, vs every year. To support this shift, we are also moving the OGO awards from 5-year awards to 4-year and YouthReach from 3-year to 4-year as well.

Annual Application Cycles:

- Cultural Facilities Fund
- Tribal and Local Cultural Council Program
- Creative Experiences
- Grants for Creative Individuals

Biannual Application Cycles:

- Operating Grants for Organizations
- Gaming Mitigation Fund
- YouthReach

Program Updates. You will be notified about the following FY26 programs and guidelines as they launch, but we wanted to let you know what is coming down the pipeline:

Operating Grants for Organizations

Opens: February 18, 2025, Deadline: April 17, 2025

Unrestricted general operating grants for Massachusetts-based, nonprofit cultural organizations with year-round operations offering public programming in the arts, humanities, or sciences. Grants start at \$6,000.

Creative Experiences

Opens: March 4, 2025, Deadline: April 30, 2025

NEW: Grants to organizations (including schools) to fund festivals, projects, residencies, and other cultural activities in the arts, humanities, and sciences. This program combines Festivals & Projects and Creative Projects for Schools into one program.

YouthReach

While we had hoped to reopen YouthReach for FY26 funding, due to program changes, realignment of grant cycles, and staff changes, we will have decided to delay the reopening for one year.

We hope to announce an FY27 round of funding with updated guidelines in early 2026. In the meantime, we will encourage interested organizations to apply for Operating Grants for Organizations or Creative Experiences.

Most FY25 YouthReach grantees are eligible for a one-year extension of their current funding.

Gaming Mitigation Fund

(Agenda Item #6)

To: Mass Cultural Council Program Committee

From: Michael Bobbitt, David Slatery, Lillian Lee, Sara Glidden, Jen Lawless

Date: February 12, 2025

Re: FY25 Gaming Mitigation Program

Background:

The Gaming Mitigation Fund provides grants to Massachusetts nonprofit and municipal performing arts centers to spend on touring shows or touring artist fees. Established by the Legislature, this grant program aims to target funding to those most directly impacted by the operation of resort-style casinos. Funding decisions are determined by a formula based on the percentage of performances that include an eligible touring entity, and the amount of fees paid to those eligible entities.

FY25 Program Summary:

The FY25 cycle of the Gaming Mitigation program closed on January 9, 2025. There were 61 total applications for the FY25 cycle. The updates made to the program and outreach efforts did result in a significant number of new applicants to the program:

- 34% (21) were new to the Gaming Mitigation Fund (12 as a result of direct outreach to organizations who did not receive Operating Grants for Organizations)
- 8% (5) identified as BIPOC-Centered Organizations
- 13% (8) are UP-Designated Organizations

There was an intentional lower rate of retention this year compared to previous years given the change to the guidelines that prohibit organizations from receiving both Operating Support funding and Gaming Mitigation Funding. There was a retention rate of 69%, with 40 out of 58 organizations reapplying for the FY25 cycle. Of the 31% (18) organizations that did not reapply, 78% (14) chose to accept Operating Support Funds instead and were therefore no longer eligible for the program.

Reflections on Changes to FY25 Program:

For the FY25 Gaming Mitigation Fund, we updated the program to better align with the agency's equity goals and to better serve performing arts centers across the Commonwealth who present touring shows and artists.

The changes made to the application did move us toward those goals. We were able to capture a broader range of touring entities. This allowed organizations with less traditional presenting models to more effectively apply for the program. The changes also led to fewer revisions needed by applicants,

with a 29% decrease in applications needing revisions, which led to a faster and more efficient review process for staff.

For this cycle, we have changed the program from a 1-year to a 2-year grant cycle, which means that all FY25 grantees will also receive a grant in FY26 and the next open application for this program will be for FY27 funding. With an additional year before the next application cycle, we hope to continue to measure the impact of the changes made and develop an outreach plan that focuses on reaching new organizations.

A number of organizations requested to defer their decision about which grant was a better fit for them until they could compare the award amounts between the programs. Those organizations have been notified, and they must notify the agency before February 12. Once they select between operating support and Gaming Mitigation, we will be able to finalize grant amounts (with the introduction of Equity Impact Points for formula calculations this year).

A recommended funding list will be provided to the Programs Committee on February 12 in Appendix A. We are requesting that the Programs Committee recommend approval of the grants to be listed on Appendix A in accordance with this memo to the full Council.

Unrestricted Operating Support for Organizations

(Agenda Item #7)

To: Mass Cultural Council Grants Committee
 Fr: Michael Bobbitt, David Slatery, Jen Lawless, Sara Glidden, Lindiana Flores, Kalyn King, Lillian Lee
 Dt: February 12, 2025
 Re: Organizations grants: Operating Grants for Organizations and Cultural Investment Portfolio

Updated Funding Recommendations

The Organizations team presented funding recommendations at the November meeting of the Programs Committee. The list included a waitlist of organizations that were next in line to be funded, pending the outcome of applications to the Gaming Mitigation grant program.

Organizations that applied to the Gaming Mitigation and were also awarded a grant from the Portfolio or Operating Grants for Organizations program are only allowed to receive one of the grants, and are required to choose which grant they prefer to accept. The outcome of these decisions will impact the amount of funding available to allocate to any additional Operating Grants for Organizations recipients.

February 11 is the deadline for organizations to make their decision, and a **final list of any additional grant recommendations will be presented at the February 12 meeting of the Programs Committee**. That list will include two organizations that were inadvertently omitted from the November recommendations, and any additional recommendations.

The two organizations that were omitted are:

Organization/Grant Program/Grant amount

American Repertory Theater, Cambridge MA	Portfolio	\$55,000
Special Needs Arts Program (SNAP), Lexington MA	Portfolio	\$6,000

The FY25 final grantee list will be available in **Appendix B**. We are requesting that the Programs Committee recommend approval of the grants listed on Appendix B in accordance with this memo to the full Council.

Grants for Creative Individuals

(Agenda Item #8)

To: Mass Cultural Council Programs Committee

Fr: Michael Bobbitt, David Slatery, Jenifer Lawless, Dan Blask, Kelly Bennett, Summer Confuorto

Dt: February 12, 2025

Re: FY25 Grants for Creative Individuals

Summary. The Artist Team is pleased to submit for approval our Agency's recommendations for the FY25 Grants for Creative Individuals. The grants are unrestricted awards of \$5,000 to applicants who demonstrate achievement of creative expression and commitment to their artistic/cultural practice.

The program launched in FY24 after a redesign as part of the Agency's Racial Equity Plan.

Pending approval by the full council we will hold a grant celebration at the Great Hall in the Massachusetts State House on Monday, May 19, 2025. Council Members encouraged to attend, details to come

Eligibility

- Applications were open to Massachusetts artists/culture bearers/creative practitioners in ALL artistic/creative disciplines
- Ineligible:
 - Undergrad students or grad students in the arts
 - Recent (past three years) recipients of direct Mass Cultural Council grants
 - Non-MA residents

FY25 Stats

- 3,084 eligible applications
- 435 recommended grants (14% of applications, an increase of approximately 5% from FY24)
- Please note: if unspent funds from other programs become available between now and the February 26 Council meeting, staff will recommend additional grants following the review process as laid out below. Those awards would be included in the grantee list to be approved at the meeting.

Funding Priorities

- Funding Priority (modest ratings advantage) for "Underfunded" applicants, including those who identify as:
 - BIPOC
 - Having a Disability
 - Recipients of anti-poverty benefits

- Veterans of the United States Armed Forces
- Recipients with no direct grant past 6 yrs
- Traditional/Folk Artists/Culture Bearers

Review Process

- Geographic Distribution (same % of grants as % applications in each County, see "Grants by County" chart below)
- Funding Priorities (as listed above)
- Scores by reviewers from Massachusetts creative/cultural sector based on how the applicants demonstrate **achievement of creative expression** and **commitment to their artistic/cultural practice**

Grant Statistics. In keeping with the Agency's Racial Equity Plan and D/deaf and Disability Equity Plan, we present relevant data points in reaching equity goals:

Grants By County

County	# of Apps	%	# Grants
Barnstable	99	3%	14
Berkshire	113	4%	16
Bristol	153	5%	22
Dukes	26	1%	4
Essex	256	8%	36
Franklin	131	4%	17
Hampden	169	5%	23
Hampshire	250	8%	36
Middlesex	730	24%	103
Nantucket	2	0%	0
Norfolk	208	7%	30
Plymouth	95	3%	13
Suffolk	642	21%	91
Worcester	210	7%	30
	3084	100%	435

New Applicants/New Grantees

- 1,741 applicants (56%) applied to the agency for the first time
- 426 grantees (98%) are getting their first Mass Cultural Council grant

Funding Priority Totals/Percentages for All Eligible Applications (3084)

No recent grant	BIPOC	Disability	Veteran	Poverty	Traditional
2906	1160	590	60	598	82
94.23%	37.61%	19.13%	1.95%	19.39%	2.66%

Funding Priority Totals/Percentages for Recommended Grantees (435)

No recent grant	BIPOC	Disability	Veteran	Poverty	Traditional
433	278	148	6	185	66
99.54%	63.91%	34.02%	1.38%	42.53%	15.17%

In **Appendix C** you will find a current list of Recommended FY25 Grants for Creative Individuals recipients.

In **Appendix D** you will find a list of FY25 Reviewers for the Grants for Creative Individuals program.

We are requesting that the Programs Committee recommend approval of the grants listed on Appendix C in accordance with this memo to the full Council.