

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

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL

GRANTS COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2020

ONLINE MEETING

Committee Members Present were

Victoria Marsh, Chair, Grants Committee
Nina Fialkow, Chair, Mass Cultural Council
Marc Carroll, Vice Chair, Mass Cultural Council
Barbara Schaffer Bacon
Karen Barry
Kathy Castro
Jo-Ann Davis
Sandra Dunn
Karen Hurvitz
Cecil Barron Jensen

Staff Members Present were

David Slatery, Deputy Director
Bethann Steiner, Communications Director
Jen Lawless, Operations Director
Dan Blask
Luis Cotto
Sara Glidden
Erik Holmgren
Maggie Holtzberg
Ann Petruccelli Moon
Carmen Plazas

Chair Victoria Marsh called the meeting to order at 9:30am and welcomed all Committee members and staff. The Open Meeting Law statement was dispensed with since no guests were present. Victoria then asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the two Grants Committee meetings held in June. Karen Barry moved to approve the minutes, and Jo-Ann Davis seconded the motion. Acting Executive Director David Slatery did a roll call and the motion passed unanimously. David noted that all

members of the Grants Committee were present today (noting that Jake Brennan and Lillian Do had been removed from the Committee by the Chair due to nonattendance)

Victoria then stated that the agency had, at this point, secured level funding for FY21 with no earmarks and therefore has a little more money than last fiscal year. Victoria was eager to have David's Acting Executive Director's report and to hear from staff so that the Committee could move towards voting to recommend the proposed spending plan.

David explained that he would take the Committee through a PowerPoint presentation (copies will be made available upon request) on the budget recommendations and that agency staff were present if there were questions. At the end of the presentation, we will ask the Committee for a vote.

David then began his report stating that this has been a year like no other. We have seen a complete disruption of the cultural sector, and we as an agency are in a dramatically different place. Due to delays caused by the pandemic, we are looking ahead at six months to execute a fiscal year spending plan, instead of 12. Anita Walker has retired and we have interim leadership. We have all adapted to working from home, and we are striving to be responsive and offer stability, service, and a trusted partnership to the field. We have adopted a framework to describe the proposed spending plan: *Recover, Rebuild, Renew* as a means of offering high levels of service tailored to their needs, and a true partnership.

We have just over \$24M available: \$18.1M from the state, an increase in NEA funding of \$50K, and Chapter 23K Gaming funds we have already spent/committed in FY21 in the amount of \$3.88M (these funds were approved in the spring, but we weren't able to spend them until July).

David then walked the Committee through the spending plan and showed how it aligned with the agency's strategic plan.

Enriching Communities David mentioned this plan increases funding for Local Cultural Councils, Cultural Districts and maintains a level of funding for Festivals as well as supporting our partner organizations, Mass Humanities and NEFA.

Growing the Economy: David mentioned the Cultural Facilities Fund here, thought the Committee will not vote on those grants today. The Cultural Investment Portfolio would be maintained with an increase for Gateway grants, which are the way into the Portfolio. The Agency would continue to support artists through fellowships and finalist grants and will seek approval to grant the same amount approved for last year (although last year the agency redirected some of those funds in response to the pandemic to the artist relief fund). We hope to make a second round of investment in relief funding for artists in FY21. Media partnership grants will also be maintained. David then referred the Committee to the summary of grants in their meeting materials.

Advancing Inclusion & Equity, in the proposed spending plan the agency would maintain UP initiative grants and grants for the LEAD conference. UP's Innovation

& Learning Network would this year be fully remote. Staff proposes an increase in funding for Projects grants to amplify the reach of grants to organizations that are new to us. Funding for the Network for Arts Administrators of Color would be maintained. An increase in investment in Traditional Arts Apprenticeships is proposed, and the program would transition to a two-year program – \$30K of funding for the apprenticeships comes from the NEA.

Empowering a Creative Generation-the spending plan proposes an increase in investment for YouthReach and SerHacer grantees. The STARS program will adapt to serve schools remotely. Creative Minds Out of School and Poetry Out Loud would continue. META and CYD teaching artist fellowships would pause, along with Big Yellow School Bus and Amplify. Mass History Day would continue.

David referred the Committee to the list of grants in their meeting materials, throughout the presentation. At this point he welcomed general questions, but asked Committee members to hold program-specific questions for the moment. There were no questions.

Victoria asked that before the Committee began its discussion of each grant program, the Conflicts of Interest list be reviewed. David explained that he sent the list around that morning, and has received a few updates. He then explained that the list would be consulted when the Council voted on grants and that it would be reflected in the minutes that Council members did not vote on or participate in any discussion on grants where an identified conflict existed.

It was noted that all the votes recommending the FY21 grant recommendations will note the various possible conflicts and abstentions of the Committee Members in attendance at this meeting.

Nina Fialkow disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to **Boston Ballet and Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum**.

Marc Carroll disclosed that he would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to **Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra or The Rivers School**.

Victoria Marsh disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to **Company One** or **WGBH**

Sandy Dunn disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to the **Discover Central Massachusetts**

Barbara Schaffer Bacon disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to the **Arts Extension Service**.

Jo-Ann Davis disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to the **The Care Center**

Kathleen Castro disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to the **Little Theater of Fall River or the New Bedford Festival Theater and the Fall River Coalition for Arts & Culture**.

Cecil Barron Jensen disclosed that she would abstain from any discussion or vote regarding the provision of a grant or other assistance to the **Artists Association of Nantucket, The Nantucket Historical Association, or Nantucket Cultural District.**

Victoria then asked David to explain how the next portion of the meeting would be managed. David explained that the Committee would walk through the spending plan program by program and that staff was present to answer any questions the Committee might have. David referred the Committee to the Grants memos included in their materials. The spending plan memo was presented to the Executive Committee last week. What the Grants Committee is considering and voting on today are grants being made out of the agency's state appropriation and its NEA funds.

The presentation began with the newly proposed COVID-19 relief fund for individual practitioners. \$650K is proposed to make 430 grants of \$1500. Jen Lawless explained that thousands of artists were surveyed so that the agency could gain a better understanding of the financial loss, unemployment, and under-employment they were facing. The average loss of income for artists is \$8K, but went as high as \$1M, this increase in funding is an acknowledgement of that plus the fact that federal unemployment expires in December.

Barbara Schaffer Bacon expressed that she was happy to see this proposal, happy to see the addition of these 430 grants, but wondered if artists would be included in any service offerings. Jen clarified that this was just the grant spending. That there were plenty of services the agency planned to offer that would be available to artists, along with \$10K for professional development. Barbara asked if artists would be encouraged to work as part of any events being offered within communities. Jen explained that this was given some consideration – what do artists have the capacity to do right now, but it was decided that they are gravely struggling financially, unable to pay rent, may lose their studios, so the financial investment will remain focused on relief as there is no employment in sight. Dan Blask from the Artists department affirmed what Jen said, and told Committee members that he and his colleagues have heard that artists are still very much in the recovery stage.

Karen Barry expressed that she felt this funding was an important action and only wished more could be done. She referred to the Committee's conversation in April regarding geographic distribution of artist grants. Jen explained that this particular relief program would be open to applicants longer than its previous iteration, and David added that marketing of the program could be increased statewide.

Next the Committee looked at funding for the Traditional Arts Apprenticeship program which proposed an increase to \$100K and would change from a one-year program to a two-year program. Maggie Holtzberg was available for questions, and there were none.

The FY21 Artist Fellowship budget is \$652,500 for six different disciplines; the agency would award 40 fellowships, and 35 finalist grants.

Karen Barry stated that she wished the agency could do more here, as well, that she is aware that the need and demand for these grants is great. David clarified that artist

grants are focused on excellence as opposed to need and only 3 or 4% of applicants receive a grant. Need is addressed by the relief program.

The Cultural Investment Portfolio (CIP) is proposing funding of \$5M including the addition of 12 Gateway organizations who have graduated to the Portfolio. Karen Barry asked if this represented a kickoff to a new two-year cycle. Sara Glidden responded that this is the kickoff of a two-year cycle for Gateway, but the Portfolio is an annual program. Jo-Ann Davis asked to be reminded what the agency defines operating support as. David explained that operating support refers to unrestricted funds; the organizations can spend the funds on anything. When the program was redesigned several years ago, we learned that our organizations were looking for basic grant dollars that they could rely on each year.

Karen Barry mentioned that several CIP organizations have also received Cultural Facilities Fund grants and wonders if it is only once organizations join the Portfolio that they have access to agency services. Jen clarified that services are not just for Portfolio grantees. Karen asked if the agency could consider pausing CIP funding for the year given that some organizations have had access to PPP funds and might have large endowments and give those funds to individuals.

Sara Glidden explained that guidelines had already been published in addition to the fact that staff had spoken with 306 organizations, all of whom experienced devastating loss as a result of the pandemic; in fact, some smaller organizations were better equipped to weather the storm. Jen Lawless added that surveys of the field indicated losses of \$500M. points out that will surveying, \$500M in losses has been reported. Sara then mentioned that there will be an increase in Gateway and Projects to increase the agency's reach to people who are not currently funded, and David added that the impetus of the program is that it is a steady and regular source of funding. This is not extra money; this is funding that organizations build into their budgets and that to pull it away would be a hard sell.

Sandra Dunn stated that she is in support of keeping the CIP program the way it is. Barbara Shaffer Bacon agreed that excellent work had been done, but that she is sure with a new executive director we may rethink how CIP is structured down the road.

Sara Glidden then informed the Committee on funding for the Gateway program. Gateway is a two-year program and FY21 is the first year of the two-year cycle. As was previously mentioned, eight organizations have graduated from Gateway into the Portfolio. This year Gateway received 41 applications from first time applicants and 23 of those were funded. Sara then spoke about the agency's Projects grants: new this year is that organizations can apply for a \$1K or a \$2500 grant. They can fund up to half the cost of a project, this allows very small organizations to apply; we might also see organizations that would typically do larger projects, do smaller projects with a smaller financial footprint. This program looks at traditional public programming and also internal capacity development with an eye towards how that can allow an organization to provide public value. Preference points will be given to establish geographic diversity and support organizations that focus on traditions of BIPOC and other underrepresented groups.

Karen Barry asked when the grant process will open. Sara responded that staff hopes to launch as quickly as possible after the New Year, possibly the third week of January with a March 2nd deadline.

The Committee then moved on to review proposed funding for Media Partnerships. Karen Barry stated that she understood staff was proposing \$130K to promote a message for the sector, she hoped there would be a DEI component to the message. Bethann Steiner responded that last year's messages were focused on CultureRx organizations and that the wording was crafted by staff in collaboration with Vice Chair Marc Carroll and members of the Advocacy Committee. Carmen Plazas explained that there would be three different types of PSAs as part of the program: 10, 20, and 30-second spots, used in different ways to support a given message and call-to-action. Victoria added that staff would continue to work with the Advocacy Committee to craft the message, Marc Carroll commented that last year's campaign seemed like a lifetime ago! Carmen then shared a brief story of an event she attended at Arts Emerson. At the event she was introduced to a student and mentioned Mass Cultural Council. The student knew of the agency as a result of the media partnership grant to Emerson's radio station.

The Committee moved onto funding for Cultural Districts and the Communities initiative which proposed a general increase to Local Cultural Council funding, an increase of 50% for grants to Cultural Districts, as well as funding for Festivals. Sandra Dunn was curious why the agency no longer requires match money on Cultural Districts. Luis Cotto explained that the policy was taken away in 2017 because previous Program Manager Meri Jenkins found that there were smaller districts who had problems with municipalities making that match. Sandra asked that it be put on the docket for the new executive director to look into adding this back to the list of requirements.

Next, Creative Youth Development proposed an increased grant from \$19K to \$20K on for their YouthReach and SerHacer grantees. Barbara Schaffer Bacon asked for clarification around the paused META program funded by the Klarman Family Foundation, noting that those remaining monies did appear on the grants list in the Grants Allocation Plan memo. David noted that this was an inadvertent error and would be corrected.

Karen Barry recalled during the Committee's June meetings that this was an area that was identified as one where Committee members would like to see an increase in geographical reach. Jen Lawless explained that this is a multiyear grant and no new applications had yet been sought given that fact. The CYD team has an agenda to get organizations prepared for the new, upcoming grant cycle. Erik Holmgren added that the program has grown, but does still have gaps and that staff will keep working to expand the program's reach.

The agency's Education programs proposed \$1.15M for STARS residencies. Given the odd nature of this school year staff is unsure how many residencies will be pursued, and any money not spoken for after the application period will be transferred to the individual artist relief fund which includes teaching artists. Creative Minds Out of School will receive a smaller \$10,000 allocation and Mass History Day, and NEA funding for Poetry Out Loud remain unchanged. There were no questions from the Committee.

Next, \$80K was proposed for the UP initiative for FY21. Jen Lawless explained that UP offers the Innovation & Learning Network (ILN) and UP Awards in alternating years. This upcoming year is an ILN year. Essentially the agency will fund the ILN, innovation grants, and LEAD conference grants. All ILN offerings will be tweaked to represent the current COVID environment.

Cecil Barron Jensen offered her congratulations as she feels the UP initiative is so important especially given the pandemic. She is pleased the ILN will take place this year.

Finally, it was noted that partnership grants to MassHumanities, the New England Foundation for the Arts, the Network for Arts Administrators of Color, and SMU Data Arts would remain the same as they were in the previous fiscal year.

Sandra Dunn noted that three years ago the agency had prioritized technology and data and proposed working to improve all internal systems. She asked if that work had been completed noting that the software and technology budget is lower in the proposed spending plan. Jen explained that the number is lower because the agency prepaid for its grants management system, but that the conversion had proven to be challenging and was taking more time than originally anticipated. The conversion should be completed by April.

Barbara Schaffer Bacon asked if it might be possible to find more funding for the Network for Arts Administrators of Color. David responded that at this point the agency is proposing level funding for NAAC, but is awaiting a request from NAAC and will bring it to the Committee for approval if it is higher. We have signaled to them that we have \$25K set aside but that we can increase it if needed.

Karen Barry asked if Gaming mitigation funding lists could appear on the same web page as all the other program funding lists. Bethann Steiner noted her request and said she would have Dawn Heinen work on it.

David stated that when the Committee wished to vote, all resolutions were written out at length on page 3 of their materials. Victoria suggested and it was agreed upon that the Committee would vote on all resolutions at once, she then called for a vote on the FY21 grant allocation spending plan and all FY21 grant recommendations. Jo-Ann moved to approve the spending plan and grant recommendations, and Karen Barry seconded the motion. David read the motion and did a roll call. Unanimously the Committee voted

WHEREAS, the General Court of the Massachusetts State Legislature has appropriated a budget of \$18,180,000 to the Mass Cultural Council for FY21; and

WHEREAS, Mass Cultural Council staff has presented a recommended FY21 grants budget to the Grants Committee at its meeting on December 17, 2020 ("Grants Committee Meeting"), including recommended grant allocations for a variety of Mass Cultural Council programs;

NOW THEREFORE, it is hereby

- RESOLVED:** that the Grants Committee further recommends that the Council approve the allocation of grants and processes and procedures presented at the Grants Committee Meeting.
- RESOLVED:** To recommend to Mass Cultural Council the funding of a Relief Fund for individual artists and other cultural practitioners in the amount of \$651,000 plus any contributions from any other source plus unexpended amounts from the STARS program and other approved grant programs; the funding of the Apprentice Grants program in the amount of \$100,000 and Artist Fellowship program allocations totaling \$652,500, all as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting.
- RESOLVED:** To recommend allocations to the Cultural Investment Portfolio, CIP Gateway and CIP Projects (collectively, the "CIP Programs") as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting in for an aggregate total of \$6,203,000.
- RESOLVED:** To recommend allocations to the Media Partnerships program of \$130,000 as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting.
- RESOLVED:** To recommend an allocation to the Local Cultural Councils totaling \$4,350,000, up to \$397,500,000 in Cultural District grants, and \$50,000 to the Festivals Program all as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting.
- RESOLVED:** To recommend grant allocations to YouthReach and SerHacer programs, continued funding of the Instrument Library in the combined amount of \$1,490,000 plus expenditure of any remaining CARES Act funds all as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting.
- RESOLVED:** To recommend to Mass Cultural Council the following Arts Education grant allocations, \$1,150,000 to the STARS program (provided that any unused amounts be repurposed to the Relief Fund for individual artists and other cultural practitioners described elsewhere), \$10,000 to the Creative Minds Out of School program, \$20,000 in support of Massachusetts History Day, \$20,000 in support of the NEA-funded Poetry Out Loud program, all as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting.
- RESOLVED:** To recommend to Mass Cultural Council the continuation of the UP Program with grants in the amount of \$80,000 as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting.
- RESOLVED:** To recommend to Mass Cultural Council a grant to Mass Humanities totaling \$686,191 as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting.

- RESOLVED:** To recommend to Mass Cultural Council a grant to NEFA up to \$60,000 provided that Mass Cultural Council does not provide more than \$55,000 if the other New England states do not provide to NEFA as much as Mass Cultural Council provides as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting.
- RESOLVED:** To recommend to Mass Cultural Council an allocation of \$25,000 to ArtsBoston acting on behalf of the Network Arts Administrators of Color as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting.
- RESOLVED:** to recommend to contract with SMU Data Arts to provide the Cultural Data Profile tool as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting.

Kathy Castro congratulated and thanked agency staff for their hard work calling it a triumph in Covid times. She recalled over the summer the Committee had preliminary meetings around the budget wherein each program area made a presentation to the Committee. Victoria acknowledged this and stated that those meetings were held in anticipation of a normal budget year. Kathy stated that she found the meetings helpful and would like to see them again in the coming year. David said that with new leadership coming in he imagined there would be much discussion around meetings such as these, but that he would note Kathy's request.

Victoria thanked the staff for their hard work and expressed her appreciation for their efforts. David thanked Committee members for their time, feedback, and thoughtful questions.

Victoria as Chair moved to adjourn the meeting.