



Power of culture

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

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
GRANTS COMMITTEE**

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2023

ONLINE MEETING

Committee Members Present were

Jo-Ann Davis, Chair of the Grants Committee
Nina Fialkow, Council Chair
Marc Carroll, Vice Council Chair
Barbara Schaffer Bacon
Karen Barry
Cecil Barron Jensen

Staff Members Present were

Michael J. Bobbitt, Executive Director
David Slatery, Deputy Director
Catherine Cheng-Anderson, People & Culture Director
Jen Lawless, Operations Director
Bethann Steiner, Public Affairs Director
Charles Baldwin, Access & Inclusion Program Officer
Dan Blask, Artist Fellowships Program Manager
Carolyn Cole, Cultural Districts and LCCs Program Officer
Sara Glidden, Cultural Investment Portfolio Program Manager
Erik Holmgren, Creative Youth Development Program Manager
Kalyn King, Cultural Investment Portfolio Program Officer
Lillian Lee, Cultural Investment Portfolio Program Officer
Ann Petruccelli Moon, Public Relations & Events Manager
Timothea Pham, Communities Program Officer
Carmen Plazas, Communications & Community Engagement Manager
Lisa Simmons, Communities Program Manager

Prepared on 2/7/23

Chair Jo-Ann Davis called the meeting to order at 1:02pm. She welcomed Committee Members and Agency staff and asked Deputy 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 Meeting Law.

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- Any "chat" or similar function on the Zoom platform hosting the meeting shall be disabled.
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- All participants in the Zoom platform must 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. 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.

Jo-Ann then asked Committee Members to approve the minutes of their last business meeting held on August 5, 2022. Cecil Barron Jensen moved to approve the minutes and Barbara Schaffer Bacon seconded the motion. There were no questions or discussion. By roll call vote with Karen Barry abstaining because she had not attended

the meeting and noting that Karen Hurvitz, Che Anderson, and Kathy Castro were absent, all other Committee Members were in favor, and it was

RESOLVED: that the Grants Committee approves the minutes of the August 5, 2022 Grants Committee Meeting in the form presented to the Grants Committee at its January 11, 2023 Meeting.

Jo-Ann asked David to review the Conflict-of-Interest disclosure list before the Committee was presented with the process and recommendations for the Cultural Sector Recovery Programs.

David reminded Committee members that they typically only review this list at their August Council meeting, but because staff is seeking approval on grant recommendations to more than 5,000 organizations and people, the Committee and the Council will be asked to approve the grants based on what staff *did* to identify the recommended grantees as opposed to having the Committee and Council approve 5200 separate names/entities. In an abundance of caution and strictly not necessary, staff is asking Committee members to review the Conflict-of-Interest list and disclose any additional organizations with which they may have a connection so that it can be noted they did not vote directly on any of the grants that staff determined would go to those organizations.

Jo-Ann further disclosed that she had no involvement on any grants pertaining to Springfield Museums. Cecil Barron Jensen disclosed that she that she had no involvement on any grants pertaining to the Egan Maritime Institute on Nantucket.

Jo-Ann let Committee Members know that staff would now review the Cultural Sector Recovery Grants work they have done. She thanked the team for the breadth and depth of amazing work and the thoughtful process and asked Executive Director Michael Bobbitt and Operations Director Jen Lawless to lead the presentation and discussion.

Michael explained that after a year of advocating, the Agency received an allocation of \$61M in surplus dollars via the Commonwealth's 2021 Covid Response Act (Chapter 102 of the Acts of 2021). Some funds went to cover the operational support of running programs, some went to Mass Humanities; the remaining \$51M went to the creation of two grant programs that staff built based on feedback from the cultural sector – one is general operating support to organizations, the other is for individuals working in the creative field. Staff spend months building the programs through a brilliant all-Agency effort and the programs launched over the summer. Staff then engaged in an intense recruitment and outreach campaign resulting in what the Committee will see today. He then asked Jen to review specifics about the programs and processes.

Jen told the Committee she'd review high-level data, and then they'd hear more about the Organizations program from Program Manager Sara Gidden and the Individuals program from Program Manager Dan Blask. Before she began her presentation Jen took a moment to recognize and celebrate how the entire Agency worked together to make the two grant programs happen. She recognized Sara Gidden, Kalyn King, Lillian Lee, and Greg Torrales for leading the administration of the organization program; Dan Blask, Kelly Bennett, Maggie Holtzberg, and Lani Asuncion for leading the individuals program – both groups were also supported by temporary employees. She thanked the

Cultural Equity & Access team – Cathy Cheng-Anderson, Cheyenne Cohn-Postell, and Charles Baldwin. Cheyenne oversaw the review of all BIPOC-centered organizations and Cheyenne and Charles worked hard on outreach efforts. She thanked Bethann Steiner, Dawn Heinen, Carmen Plazas, and Ann Petruccelli Moon for their help promoting and publicizing the opportunity and talking with legislators about it. Jay Paget and Miranda Cook of the Cultural Facilities Fund (CFF) sent hundreds of emails to new applicants – all while amid the CFF grant cycle. Lisa Simmons, Carolyn Cole, Guelmi Espinal, Hanako Brais, Jay Wong, Ricky Guillaume, and Timothea Pham of the Communities team sent thousands of emails to new individual applicants. The Creative Youth Development & Education staff, Erik Holmgren, Diane Daily, Kätthe Swaback, and Amy Chu, found new leads – people and organizations – to introduce to the Agency and helped with the individuals program review. Kate McDougall, Cyndy Gaviglio, Tom Luongo, Carina Ruiz-Esparza, and Marc Sulmonte of the Fiscal team are about to ramp up so that thousands of grantees can be paid, this is an enormous undertaking and a challenging process. The Grants team – Deborah Kenyon, Evelyn Nellum, and Scott Hufford made this entire process work so that people could apply for funding. Finally, the Agency's team of BIPOC Outreach Coordinators – Erin Genia, Ana Masacote, Erika Slocumb, and Tran Vu whose guidance and counsel greatly impacted the success of both grant programs. The entire staff team has had a positive attitude about the work and has consistently asked what can be done to help.

Jen then shared her screen and presented Committee Members with background information on the Cultural Sector Recovery Program for Organizations. A copy of the presentation is available upon request. Once Jen completed her presentation, she asked Sara Glidden to provide further background.

Sara shared that the program received 1,359 applications. Staff reviewed the applications to identify those applicants who met eligibility requirements: organizations who present public programming, are fully cultural, and were established by a certain date – they presented programming prior to June 30, 2022. Staff also reviewed the legal status of each applicant organization. There were 112 organizations who did not meet eligibility requirements. Those 112 organizations were reviewed a second time and it was determined they would not go forward. Staff also noted that 29 applicant organizations had received named grants (earmarks) from the Covid response Act (effectively grants already made under this program). Those organizations were deemed eligible, but their named grants were considered and compared to the maximum grant amount in the Agency's program - \$75K. Any organization that had a named grant over \$75K, did not receive an additional grant under this program. Any organization that had a named grant under \$75K was further reviewed and staff calculated what their grant would be in the Agency's program, if that grant was more than their named grant, they received a grant under our program equal to the difference. There were two organizations for whom this was the case. Temporary staff also reviewed tax returns and internal financials to make sure numbers were accurate – this ensured grant amount calculations were accurate. Once staff had a complete list of eligible applicants, prioritization points from the application guidelines were applied. Those prioritization points were given to – BIPOC-centered organizations, organizations in priority communities, organizations who hadn't received funding from the Agency previously, tourism impact, job creation, access to pandemic relief funds received previously, and negative financial impact of the pandemic. Sara noted that jobs, tourism, and negative impact from the pandemic is included in the legislation for the allocation.

Staff worked with a consultant, Sandi McKinley, who helped determine what questions should be asked in the application and to create the calculations that would feed into the numerical score that would reflect the negative impact of the pandemic. Some organizations showed growth during the pandemic. Sara noted that staff looked at revenue, expenses, cash-on-hand at the end of each fiscal year, the short-term and immediate impact of the pandemic and what organizations were looking like one year later. The applicants were then put into five budget categories because the impact of the pandemic looked different for organizations of different sizes – it wasn't okay to compare a \$100,000 organization with a \$10 million organization; staff wanted to make sure the process did not disproportionately favor larger or smaller organizations. Once the prioritization points, data, budget size was determined the grant calculation process looked similar to how Portfolio grants are calculated. Small organizations were treated as if their budget was \$50,000, even if it was less; large organizations were treated as if their budget was \$10 million, even if it was more. The process made sure the Agency funded all applicants who were eligible, but increased grant amounts based on prioritization points. Smaller organizations will receive grants that are a larger percentage of their organization's budget – approximately 37% of their expenses. Larger organizations will receive grants that are approximately 1.3% of their expenses. To simplify, this means the larger grants we are recommending are a smaller piece of the recipient's pie, the smaller grants are a larger piece of the recipient's pie. Overall, this process went very well, and staff is happy with the resulting list of recommendations.

Jo-Ann thanked Michael, Jen, and Sara and asked the Committee for their feedback and questions.

Karen Barry echoed Jo-Ann and thanked the team for their presentation and for creating such a thoughtful process.

Barbara Schaffer Bacon stated that she was amazed at how staff brought objectivity to the process. To have a basis that looks fair, that looks like it took the prioritization and made it real; Barbara is struck by the number of organizations who are receiving money for the first time. This is the opportunity she didn't see coming and she thinks it's fabulous.

Jo-Ann agreed with Barbara. She is impressed at the rigor of the process and the outreach. She is thrilled that 42% of the recommended grantees are receiving a Mass Cultural Council grant for the first time.

Barbara noted a for-profit gallery in Northampton on the list of recommended grantees to receive the maximum grant amount of \$75K. She noticed that they are a first-time grantee who would not have been eligible previously. She asked for a bit more information on the recommendation and to hear how staff will prepare to talk about grants such as this one.

Sara explained that for scoring purposes in this part of the application, first-time applicants received prioritization points of 0, 5, or 15. They received 15 if they would have been eligible in the past but were not funded. They received 5 points if they were eligible for the first time. Sara further explained that the program was promoted extensively and if organizations who were eligible chose not to apply, staff feels a strong enough effort was made to encourage them to. Staff received applications from a fair number of for-profit organizations, but fewer than they know exist. The gallery in Northampton was eligible and applied; Sara noted that in the program name the team

used Cultural Sector and not *Non-profit* Cultural Sector.

Michael added that for-profits were included in the legislative intent, and that staff heard from its team of BIPOC Outreach Coordinators that a lot of BIPOC organizations find it tedious to become non-profits and opt to become for-profits. Allowing for-profits to apply and receive funding will keep these organizations engaged.

Karen asked if we are looking at a program that funded for-profits because it's written in the legislation or are we looking at future funding? Are we looking backwards or forwards?

Sara explained that the staff decided early in this process that decisions in this program would not be precedent setting for other grant programs, but the information that has been gathered provides a perspective the Agency did not previously have. Jen added that this year the Agency did allow for-profit organizations to apply for Festivals & Projects grants of \$2500, so between new data from that program and the Recovery program, the team will have new data that can inform a discussion about what to do moving forward. Michael let Committee Members know this was something being discussed during strategic planning conversations.

Barbara stated that the General Society of Mayflower Descendants stood out to her as she was reviewing the list of recommended grantees and would like to know more about them. Sara explained that they provide educational programming around colonial history in Massachusetts and that those programs must be available to the public.

Cecil asked what the follow up would be after organizations learned they were receiving a grant. Sara explained that successful applicants would receive an email congratulating them and letting them know they'd receive another email in February once their contract was available. They will be required to complete a final report in mid-July and staff will continue to follow-up with them in the coming months.

Jo-Ann asked how much time would pass between the approval of the grants and the time when the organizations would receive their funds. Jen explained that there are several steps. Each grantee must send a contract back – some do this quickly; some take a bit longer. Then, the Fiscal team enters each contract into the state payment system. From there the Comptroller's office handles the payments. The Agency is hiring temporary staff to help with these efforts. The team tries to move quickly but will tell grantees the process could take between four and eight weeks. Dave added that legally the Agency has these funds available through this and next fiscal year to complete this process, so four to eight weeks is not of concern; this is a groundbreaking number of grants for us and the Comptroller. Michael added that the new Grants Management System will allow the Agency to accept digital signatures in the future, this will help on the efficiency front.

There were no further questions or comments from the Committee. Jo-Ann asked David to read the vote. Once he had done so, Jo-Ann asked for a motion. Karen Barry moved to approve the recommended grants; Cecil seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Kathy Castro, Che Anderson, and Karen Hurvitz were absent, it was

RESOLVED: To recommend to Mass Cultural Council the award of grants under the Cultural Sector Recovery Grants program for Organizations as described in the memo presented to Grants Committee on January 11, 2023.

Jen then shared her screen and delivered a presentation on Cultural Sector Recovery Grants for Individuals. A copy of the presentation available upon request. At the conclusion of her presentation, Jen let Committee Members know that more final materials for the January 26th Council Meeting would be sent to them by the end of the day on January 20th. She noted that ideally materials would be sent earlier, but staff is working as efficiently as they can with this large number of recommendations.

Program Manager Dan Blask then provided further detail on the program and process. He began by expressing his gratitude to the entire Agency who worked hard to design and promote the program, looking in new corners and far reaches of the cultural sector to recruit new applicants. This resulted in almost 7,600 applications. Staff originally planned to award 3,000 grants of \$5K. The organizations team graciously committed an additional \$5 million to the individuals program so that 4,000 grants could be awarded. To select those grantees, staff will distribute grants geographically to six regions based on the number of applicants from each region. Once those geographic distributions were determined, staff applied funding prioritization points very similar to those utilized by the organizations program. Where there were "ties" for those final slots, the team used a randomized lottery process to determine the grantees. Given that this process existed, the role of the staff was to check potential grantees for eligibility. In order to be eligible, applicants needed to be Massachusetts residents, they could not be full-time students, and their materials were checked to verify that they worked in the arts, humanities, and/or interpretive sciences. Staff encountered some challenges: websites that did not work, Instagram accounts that were set to private, artist legal names that would not appear on websites – if an artist was using a stage name or if they shared a YouTube video that did not include their name. The team undertook a good deal of research to verify in other ways and when they were unable to, they reached out to applicants directly so they could revise their applications. Finally, the team checked a number of applications to determine if their work fits into what the Agency considers the cultural sector. That process is still underway and that is why the team does not have a final list of recommended grantees today; they anticipate this will be done soon. Once the grants are approved and awarded, the Agency will ask for final reports from grantees in June. Dan is excited to see how the funds impact the sector. He feels gratitude to the Council and the Grants Committee for their support of the staff. He then asked if Committee Members had questions or feedback.

Nina congratulated Dan and thanked him and the staff for their hard work.

Barbara asked if any of the concerns raised in the Agency's recent audit that looked at a previous pandemic relief program were addressed in this program. Dan explained that one of the corrections was the use of PO Boxes in addresses, so a street address was required on this grant application. Staff followed up with anyone who listed a PO Box and asked for their street address. Further, with the past two Covid relief grant programs, the auditor stated that the Agency did not verify loss with tax materials. Staff did not ask for tax information with this program either because the program was about the path forward as opposed to loss. This was both a philosophical decision and a decision made considering the audit. Dave added that in its six-month review with the

auditor the Agency stated that this program was set up so that there weren't facts included in the application that the staff would need to go back and verify. The program assumed that if you are an artist/cultural worker and lived in Massachusetts during the pandemic, you were impacted and you were not required to document your losses. Jen added that in the contracting and payment process there is another check to verify information. Grantees will have to provide a W-9 and a street address and at that point the Fiscal team could catch someone living outside of Massachusetts. A triple check!

Karen Barry stated that she is excited to see the level of outreach that was done to promote the program and recruit new applicants and that she appreciates Jen's extra work to include the report outlining grantees by county. Karen believes this will help inform future outreach efforts and she appreciates it. She is over the moon with the work the team has done. She then asked if staff included the blind community in its outreach as she noticed the Deaf community was specifically mentioned.

Dan explained that frequently the Deaf community does not see itself as part of the disabled community and so they were listed separately based on this and to encourage them to apply. Jen added that staff will work with Program Officer Charles Baldwin to expand this work and that a full access plan is forthcoming that will specifically outline the Agency's work with the Deaf and disabled communities. The language is ever-evolving.

Karen thanked the team for explaining noting that Charles is amazing, and the Agency is lucky to have him; she also mentioned that Commissioner David D'Arcangelo at the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind is another great resource.

Jo-Ann asked Michael how the Agency would keep the other 3500 applicants who will not receive grants engaged. Michael noted that the number of people the Agency would not be able to fund is quite sad but can be used in its advocacy efforts. The need is great and it's something authorizers pay attention to. One of the new processes the Agency is implementing is that before a new grant launches, the team managing the grant program will present an outreach plan targeting new applicants. The Agency will have data informing which communities have received less funding and developing a stewardship plan – if people don't get grants, what other ways can they be engaged. We will hopefully turn the sadness into a future positive.

Jo-Ann thanked Dan and his team for their work. She asked David if she'd heard correctly that we do not yet have a final list of recommended grantees. David confirmed that is correct and that a final list of grantees will be available at the January 26th Council Meeting. Today staff is seeking the Committee's approval on the process by which staff reaches its list of 4,000 grantees so that the Committee will not need to review a list of 4,000 names. The vote is on the process and not on the individual grantees.

Jo-Ann asked David to read the vote and when he was finished, she asked for a motion to approve the recommendations. Karen moved to approve the recommendations; Cecil seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Che Anderson, Kathy Castro, and Karen Hurvitz were absent all were in favor, and it was

RESOLVED: To recommend to Mass Cultural Council the award of grants under the Cultural Sector Recovery Grants program for Individuals as described in the memo presented to Grants Committee on January 11, 2023.

Cecil stated that she is floored by this effort by the Agency and so proud to be a part of it; she thinks that even if an artist does not receive a grant that the opportunity to apply could raise their confidence to apply in the future. Michael reiterated that a conversation amongst the Strategic Planning Task Force right now is what the Agency can do for those who aren't currently receiving money from Mass Cultural Council.

Jo-Ann moved to the final item on the agenda. Within their materials Committee Members received memos updating them on the status of grants they'd approved at their August meeting: Gaming Mitigation Program, STARS, UP, Cultural Districts, and Festivals & Projects. She asked if Committee members had any questions on those very thoughtful materials and there were no questions.

Jo-Ann asked if there were any further comments or questions from Committee members or staff. David mentioned that the March, May, and June meetings of the Committee would need to be rescheduled and that Ann would be in touch to begin that process.

There was no further business. Jo-Ann thanked Committee Members and staff and, as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 2:18pm.