

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

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
GRANTS COMMITTEE**

TUESDAY, MAY 3, 2022

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
Kathleen Castro

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
Dan Blask, Artist Fellowships Program Manager
Sara Glidden, Cultural Investment Portfolio Program Manager
Erik Holmgren, Creative Youth Development Program Manager
Maggie Holtzberg, Folk Arts & Heritage Program Manager
Ann Petruccelli Moon, Public Relations & Events Manager
Carmen Plazas, Communications & Community Engagement Manager

Chair Jo-Ann Davis called the meeting to order at 1:03pm 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).

Prepared on 5/17/22

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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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.

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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 March 15, 2022. Karen Barry moved to approve the minutes and Barbara Schaffer Bacon seconded the motion. There were no questions or discussion. By roll call vote and noting that Che Anderson, Cecil Barron Jensen, and Karen Hurvitz were absent all were in favor, and it was

RESOLVED: that the Grants Committee approves the minutes of the March 15, 2022 Grants Committee Meeting in the form presented to the Grants Committee at its May 3, 2022 Meeting.

Jo-Ann then asked Executive Director Michael Bobbitt for his report.

Michael let Committee Members know the Agency had today announced the recipients of its AAPI grant program and he thanked Program Coordinator Jay Wong for her work administering it. Staff is working on designing two pandemic recovery programs which the Committee will hear more about today. The Committee's feedback on these programs is essential. The Agency is in the planning stages for FY23, and the Committee will hear more about those plans at its June and August meetings. That concluded Michael's update. Jo-Ann asked Program Manager Dan Blask for his report on the on the FY22 Artist Fellowship grant recommendations.

Dan briefly introduced himself and let Committee Members know that today staff is presenting recommendations for FY22 artist fellowships in drawing and printmaking, fiction and creative non-fiction, and painting. Panel meetings were held in late April and Dan is very excited about their recommendations. Staff is eager to announce the fellowships in late May pending Council approval. Dan asked if Committee Members had any questions or feedback.

Jo-Ann remarked that it was wonderful to see so many new applicants. Dan noted that the Agency's Outreach Coordinators had done amazing work recruiting new applicants. He added that at today's meeting Committee Members were only seeing a list of recommended artists as the panel process had just very recently completed last week and, at the full Council Meeting on May 23rd, staff will give a more complete presentation and share work by some of the recommended fellows.

Barbara stated that she was pleased to see more diversity amongst the panelists and Jo-Ann added that she thought the geographic distribution of the recommended fellows was also very good.

Michael stated that he would like to publicly acknowledge and congratulate Dan on his recent promotion to manager of the Artists Team and thank him for acknowledging the hard work done on recruitment. Michael noted that every panel thus far this fiscal year has had equal BIPOC and non-BIPOC representation.

Barbara expressed that she feels the recruitment efforts, the change in panel demographics, and the increase in the fellowship dollar amount all contributed to the success of this grant round.

Maggie Holtzberg then gave a report on the recommended Traditional Arts Apprenticeship selections. The program has recently switched over to a two-year apprenticeship grant and staff has received a good deal of feedback on this change. Maggie explained that the recommendations being presented today are recommendations for awards but as they will be funded with FY23 dollars, there is currently no specific grant amount associated with the award- those dollars will be officially granted as part of the approval of the FY23 spending plan in August. The panel, held in late April, recommended 18 apprenticeship pairs that comprise an incredibly diverse group. Ten individuals are BIPOC and eight are non-BIPOC. On the list Committee members will see apprenticeships in traditional music, crafts, and dance. At the August Council Meeting when the Agency knows its own appropriation and has its National Endowment for the Arts funding, we will be able to specify the recommended

grant amounts.

Jo-Ann asked if the recommended artists and apprentices would be informed of the panel's decisions now or in August. Maggie explained that they would be told now that they had been selected for an apprenticeship (so they can start working together if they wish) with the promise of an actual grant to be determined and approved in FY23 at the August meetings. Maggie added that she'd incorporated Michael's idea to pay apprentices as part of the program.

Jo-Ann asked Maggie if staff ever tracks over time what happens with the apprentices and what they end up doing after their apprenticeships end. Maggie responded that staff could explore more ways of keeping track of apprentices but in the short term is working to produce three short films about three of this past cycle's apprentices. What comes through the films is that many of these art forms are not taught in colleges or universities, artists must find an individual who wants to pass on an artform and carry a tradition forward.

Barbara expressed that she sees this as a jobs program on one level and that she wants to say that if there were a way to think about resources and fund all applicants, she would be in favor of that.

Jo-Ann thanked Dan and Maggie for their hard work and asked for a motion to approve the recommendations for both Artist Fellowships in drawing and printmaking, fiction and creative non-fiction, and painting as well as the recommendations for Traditional Arts Apprenticeships. Karen Barry moved to approve the recommendations; Kathleen Castro seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Che Anderson, Karen Hurvitz, and Cecil Barron-Jensen were absent it was

RESOLVED: To recommend to Mass Cultural Council the FY22 Artist Fellowship grant awards in the disciplines of Drawing & Printmaking, Fiction/Creative Nonfiction and Painting as reviewed by the Grants Committee at its May 3, 2022 meeting, and to recommend to Mass Cultural Council the selection of the participants in the FY23 Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program as described in the memorandum presented to them at this meeting.

Jo-Ann moved to the next item on the agenda: a discussion of the Agency's Pandemic Recovery Programs (*funded from the Agency's \$60 million appropriated under the Commonwealth's Immediate Covid Recovery Act, Line item 1599-2043 of Chapter 102 of 2021*) which led by Michael and Jen Lawless.

Jen noted that there are two programs being designed and proposed and while Committee Members will hear about each one of them separately during the presentation, she'd like to begin by offering some more general context. In January and February 2021, staff conducted a public input period to learn what the cultural sector most needed in terms of pandemic recovery. Time and time again staff heard that unrestricted support would be most useful. Responses to the Agency's recent (sixth) Covid impact survey reinforced this – organizations are still seeing very low earned revenue, for example and therefore the proposed programs will be incorporating that notion.

Jen explained that design of the programs was truly a cross-Agency effort. A 10-person working group has been established and includes representatives from nearly every Agency team. Jen noted that this process is not entirely new for the staff, and this is not the first time the Agency has tackled Covid recovery needs. Staff is building on what they learned in administering the \$10 million Cultural Organization Economic Recovery grant program (COERG) in December 2020 (from an allocation by Governor Baker of federal CARES act funds) and what staff learned through development and implementation of the more recent AAPI recovery grant program. The Agency's ongoing racial equity work is also informing program design.

Jen noted that as with all programs there are several terms and definitions, and staff wants to be as clear as possible as they move forward in drafting guidelines and FAQs and many of these are summarized in the meeting materials. Staff does have experience in defining terms like "fully cultural" (which is used in the organization-centered program) among others and in design, we had the goal of always being more inclusive as opposed to using terms and definitions to be exclusive. Jen noted that these programs will be based on eligibility and priorities and neither program will rely on an independent panel. Applications will be staff reviewed for eligibility and priorities and operationally the customer-focused work on the programs will also be done by staff. On that note, Jen added that the Agency will need to add temporary staff to manage the two programs and administering what is anticipated to be several thousand grants and will include support for the fiscal team. Having provided context on the process, Jen asked Dan Blask to speak about the proposed Pandemic Recovery Program for Individuals.

Dan shared that the headline for this program is that while the last two relief individual programs looked at loss and focused on relief, this new program would look towards recovery and the future and setting a path for growth for individuals within the cultural sector. We are anticipating offering much larger grants than previously of up to \$5000. Staff is has developed and refined broad eligibility requirements to be inclusive of individual artists, teaching artists, and those who are sometimes called teaching scientists and teaching humanists. Along with this, staff is also proposing to fund cultural workers within the cultural sector meaning those whose work is directly involved in the arts and culture but that is not art-making –theater electricians and museum curators, for example. Proposed funding priorities include first-time applicants, applicants who have yet to be directly funded by Mass Cultural Council, applicants who have been historically underfunded (BIPOC, applicants who identify as Deaf, applicants who identify as having a disability), and applicants who reside in Gateway Cities or historically under-resourced communities. These are broad funding priorities. The key for implementing the program will be determining eligibility and priorities and making sure there is fair geographical distribution of grants.

Barbara asked for further clarity around the term "cultural worker" and named an individual who is a lighting designer and a theater director and another who is an arts consultant as examples of individuals who may or may not be eligible for funding. Dan responded that based upon the intent of the program, both most likely would be eligible and added further context of producers, curators, and editors as all being eligible given that their work ties directly to the cultural sector even though it is not specifically artmaking.

Jo-Ann asked how funding these workers would advance them to the next step in their

careers and what staff believes they will do with the funds. Dan explained that the grants are unrestricted, but the guidelines will contain descriptive language about the ways in which individuals could think about the growth of their careers – such as they could use the funds for professional development, travel, equipment upgrades; not specifying that they are required to do these things, simply suggesting ways to use the funds to ignite career growth.

Michael added that there is priority given to gig workers – someone might be working full-time for a cultural organization but gigging as a lighting designer. Dan agreed and noted that so many people working in the cultural sector wear multiple hats. If someone is working full-time for a cultural organization, that by itself will not make them eligible for this program if they have independent work.

Barbara commented that the Agency needs to carefully define the term *cultural worker*. Someone may work full-time for a museum, but their gig work as a lighting designer is the job that is keeping them afloat; we don't know the major source of income. Jen responded that because the Agency is not focusing on financial loss or employment status, the application will not ask applicants about their salary or how much they've lost. The focus is putting the definition out there and leaving it to applicants to explain how it applies to them. Barbara explained that she is very in favor of funding that looks to the future and is unrestricted, but she is still trying to understand how the Agency will know what it is supporting and where those narratives will come from.

Dan explained that staff has gone back and forth during discussions about whether to ask applicants how they will use the funding to grow their careers or benefit their recovery. We will have a final report which may look like a survey which will provide information on how grantees used the funding in their grant and how it aided their recovery. Michael added that \$5000 is probably not going to advance careers all that much. Artists just need money and whether it's used for food or rent or artmaking, the program would have achieved its goal.

Kathleen Castro asked what the total grant amount would be and if all artists are operating as not for profits. Jen responded that the grant amount contemplated at up to \$15 Million (up to 3000 grants of up to \$5000 but those amounts will not be determined until the August meeting to approve the FY23 Spending Plan) and as artists are individuals, there is no legal classification of either for-profit or non-profit- that classification will be part of the program for organizations.

Jo-Ann asked staff to please give their presentation on the pandemic relief program being designed for organizations. Jen asked Sara Glidden, Program Manager of the Cultural Investment Portfolio (CIP) to summarize the proposed program

Sara explained that, as Jen stated, staff learned a great deal when they administered the COERG program in 2020 and from the AAPI relief program this year. In response to questions about definitions from Council members, Sara explained that this program would be looking at cultural organizations who are "fully cultural" meaning their primary purpose is the arts, humanities, or interpretive sciences (this term is currently used in the CIP program); "fiscally sponsored organizations" meaning those organizations without a 501c3 or without financial infrastructure but working with another nonprofit who acts as its fiscal sponsor and holds and manages the grant funds; municipal arts programs;

Cultural Districts; Local Cultural Councils who offer cultural programming; and Massachusetts owned and operated for profit cultural organizations. Similar to the program for individuals, the program for organizations will prioritize applications from historically underfunded applicants such as BIPOC organizations, organizations in Gateway Cities and historically under resourced communities (communities which meet certain income measures), first-time applicants, applicants who haven't received funding from Mass Cultural Council recently, and organizations who have not received other federal or state relief dollars along with three prioritizations that are included in the statute: organizations that demonstrate need as a result of the pandemic, impact on job creation, and impact on tourism in Massachusetts. These grants will be unrestricted funding for organizations who will be able to use the funds for direct financial support, staffing, program expenses, operational needs, even capital needs including work they've had to do in response to the pandemic. Staff is developing a scoring process and notes that, unlike the program for individuals, the grant amounts will not be the same for all applicants. There will be a range of grant amounts determined by the number of applications the Agency receives. Staff is working with a consultant to determine how to measure the impact of the pandemic (one of the criteria noted in the statute). An application draft is in the works and as much as possible staff hopes to create one where an applicant can check off boxes indicating what applies to them and pull information from existing documentation such as tax returns. Staff is hoping to create a minimal burden for the applicants.

Karen Barry asked for clarification around the inclusion of for-profit organizations. Michael responded that this is part of the legislation. *(Michael later clarified that the language in the legislation is broad enough to include for-profit organizations and that funding for profits was always mentioned as part of the legislative intent behind pandemic relief bills for arts and culture and a key part of the advocacy message)*

Barbara asked why, if the Agency wasn't required to distribute the funds for several years, grantees will be required to submit a final report by July of the same year in which they receive the funds. Sara explained that the final report is still being developed at this point. It may contain an acknowledgement that the funds have been used and an opportunity to ask questions that could inform future relief needs and advocacy efforts for a report on how the funds had been used within the fiscal year so as to be able to plan for the following year. Barbara asked if recipients will be required to spend the money in six months or less. Jen explained that the statute allows the spending to happen over several fiscal years, but we will clarify the length of time the grantee has to use them. David is looking into this a bit more, but the Agency is required to abide by the comptroller's expectations. David further clarified that even though these funds came from an Act to mainly distribute federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars, the Agency's money for these programs is comprised of state surplus funds.

Barbara asked if staff could talk about organizations who haven't received federal or state aid through other programs and if there might be a lot of organizations who will be ineligible due to this. Sara explained that it will not make them ineligible, it will just deprioritize them. Some organizations haven't received any pandemic relief funds at all, and staff wants to move them to the front of the line. It will be made clear to applicants that having received federal or state relief dollars previously will not render an applicant ineligible.

Karen asked how the Agency tracks an applicant's former funding and Sara explained that applicants will be asked to disclose this information. Jo-Ann asked if there are any entities who haven't received any funding and Sara responded that when the Agency administered the COERG program there were approximately 100 organizations who were first-time applicants for funding of the sort. Michael added that the Agency received a report from SMU DataArts indicating that there are 1,500 cultural organizations in Massachusetts; the current Portfolio only includes around 300. It will help to make for-profits and fiscally sponsored organizations eligible for this funding. David later in meeting added with respect to this topic that in the line item providing the Agency with Pandemic Recovery Funds, the total allocation was \$134M, of which approximately \$60M of which went to the Agency with the remainder being distributed via earmarks. Any organization who received one of those earmarks will be deprioritized under the program. Additionally, the Council voted in March to give \$5.6M of its Pandemic Recovery Funds to the Cultural Facilities Fund and any organization who accepted those funds from CFF will likewise be deprioritized under the proposed programs.

Karen Barry asked if there would be priority given to non-profit organizations and Sara responded that there would not be a priority just for being a nonprofit as opposed to a for-profit. Jen added that eligibility for for-profit organizations is limited to fully cultural for-profits based in Massachusetts. Sara provided a comparison: North Shore Music Theater is privately owned and located in Massachusetts – they are eligible; the Boston Opera House is owned by California-based Live Nation – they are not eligible. Michael added that non-profit status doesn't benefit everyone, especially newer and some BIPOC organizations who prefer an LLC – this was something staff learned from the Agency's BIPOC Outreach Coordinators.

Karen asked if there is a need component. Sara explained that there is a question of impact of the pandemic on the organization's finances and that is one of the proposed prioritizations. Barbara asked how that is evaluated. Sara explained that there is a specific question about income and expenses – information that can be directly drawn from tax returns – and reminded Committee Members that a financial consultant was working with staff on this question.

Barbara asked if educational institutions such as those who are presenters like ArtsEmerson or the Fine Arts Center at UMass Amherst will be ineligible, and Sara responded that programs with parent organizations are ineligible. Barbara asked if they have a separate 501c3 would they be eligible and Sara responded that yes, they would. Erik noted that educational institutions have been eligible for a number of other pandemic relief programs and Michael added that educational institutions are, for the most part, not fully cultural.

Barbara shared that three new performing arts centers opened within 20 miles of her home in Hampshire County during the pandemic. They have never received funding from Mass Cultural Council, and one has reinvigorated Holyoke. Sara stated that while these new organizations might not be able to show economic impact of the pandemic, they would be new applicants and possibly in under-resourced communities.

Barbara asked if the Agency still used the word "rural" in its guidelines and communications. Sara explained that language is important, and staff had been using

that word however they found it limiting and had opted for a broader definition of historically under-resourced communities and opined that perhaps more elegant language is needed to convey the fact that this will include rural communities as well.

Jo-Ann, noting the time, asked what the next steps would be. Is the plan to bring the guidelines for both programs before the full Council on May 23rd and to vote today solely to approve a recommendation that staff continue work on both programs? David stated that this is correct.

Jo-Ann then asked staff to prepare a Q&A document based on questions the Grants Committee asked during today's meeting and knowing that the full Council will also have questions. Karen agreed a Q&A document would be a good idea and that ideally it would be shared with the Council well in advance of the meeting so that Members would have time to thoughtfully review all information about the programs. Jo-Ann agreed with Karen's point about sharing information well in advance and stated that she does not want to start at square one on May 23rd. Michael let Committee Members know that staff would prefer to get their thoughts as soon as possible so that their feedback and questions can be addressed in the final internal meetings in advance of May 23rd. Jo-Ann suggested staff use the questions asked during today's meeting as the basis for the document, get it to Council Members early, ask them to read it carefully and to come prepared on May 23rd with any additional questions.

David noted that his understanding therefore was that staff is being asked to create a more expansive version of the memo that will include a Q&A section based upon questions raised today. They will do that and to the extent that they can do it quickly will do so. The regular Council materials for the May 23rd meeting will be sent by Monday, May 16th. David added that while feedback from Council Members is extremely valuable, they can only deliberate in a public meeting so they should forward any specific questions directly to staff so they can be teed up for the May 23^d meeting.

Jen stated that staff is trying to get full guidelines publicly posted by May 31st. The idea is that from now until then the team is going to take all feedback but will not the full guidelines by the Council meeting. There will be a detailed summary including a Q&A; full and final guidelines will be available the following week.

Jo-Ann explained that she did not want to reinvent the wheel, she only wants to give Council Members basic answers to questions asked during the Grants Committee meeting today. Karen added that Council Members should be invited to share whatever is on their mind directly with staff and have their questions answered in open session. This will also give a nudge to Council Members that this is a big vote. David agreed with Karen that Council Members should share any feedback or questions with staff directly, not with each other via group email.

Jo-Ann asked for a motion to approve the recommendation and enable staff to continue their work so that the grant programs can be presented to the full Council for a vote on May 23rd.

Barbara expressed that she wants to support the idea of having guidelines publicly posted by May 31st but that if the Committee votes to move this forward the Council won't see everything. Barbara feels the areas of prioritization within the program for organizations need more details. She is concerned the Agency will end up with groups

spending time proving that they create jobs if they know they won't check other boxes and feels staff needs to more clearly frame how each prioritization factor will be evaluated.

David thanked Barbara and noted that this type of feedback is exactly what staff is seeking and it will inform development of the guidelines. Staff has avoided going into minute detail and bringing complete detailed guidelines or proposed score sheets to the Council in the past. Jo-Ann clarified that that level of detail is not needed. Jen explained that both programs are still being finalized and to Barbara's point there is one multiple choice check box question that gets at economic impact and one about tourism. Applicants are not going to be asked to submit a long, written statement under each question. Staff's intent and the Committee's direction is that the door is not being left open for people to overdo things.

Barbara explained that she is trying to anticipate the response once a funding list is published. Clarity is needed. She is not asking for more detail and if questions are check boxes, it is hard for her to understand how responses will be weighted. Barbara asked if it would be stated that this program is not first come, first served as other programs have been. Jen clarified that none of the previous Covid programs were first come, first served. There will be weighted prioritizations and it will be clear how weighted each element is. That has yet to be completely finalized, that is what staff is working on and the input from today's meeting is a key component.

Michael noted that the Agency has \$60M to address a huge much larger need, so there will most likely be a certain level of dissatisfaction in any event.

Jo-Ann reiterated that what the Committee is voting on today is the recommendation that staff should continue their work designing these grant programs and that the programs will be presented to the full Council on May 23rd for the final approval.

Barbara moved to approve the recommendation; Kathleen seconded the motion. Noting that Che Anderson, Karen Hurvitz, and Cecil Barron-Jenson were absent it was unanimously

RESOLVED: To recommend to Mass Cultural Council that staff be instructed to proceed with developing, submitting and posting guidelines for and proceeding to implement the Pandemic Relief Program for Organizations and Pandemic Relief Program for Individuals as described in the memorandum presented to this meeting.

Jo-Ann moved to the final item on the agenda, a brief discussion about the purpose of the Committee's next meeting in June.

Jen stated that at this meeting Committee Members will hear a presentation on FY22 grantmaking data and have a preview of FY23 plans. Each program team will give a brief, high-level presentation on what they are thinking about for FY23 and noting any possible changes made to programs via the Agency's ongoing racial equity work. Committee Members will have an opportunity to respond and ask questions of the staff. The data presentation will be sent to Committee Members in advance. Michael added that he is looking forward very much to the data presentation as it will help to inform the Agency's recruitment priorities.

Barbara stated that she had a reservation at the beginning of the discussion on the pandemic recovery programs and that reservation lingers. She is concerned that the Agency didn't decide to reserve any resources to build any collaborations. She had suggested there might be an opportunity for service organizations to approach the Agency with a concept, or the Agency might identify service needs and that it might contract for those kinds of services. She wants to voice that not using resources in a leadership capacity to drive the sector forward is concerning though she acknowledges a new strategic plan is forthcoming.

Michael stated that service organizations are eligible to apply for funding. Also, with the development of the new strategic plan he hopes the Agency can have those conversations with the whole Council to try and be leaders in the field. Finally, staff is planning to develop a new grant program focused on capacity building.

Jo-Ann asked what the timeline around the strategic plan discussions is. Michael explained that the RFP would be posted soon for eight weeks. Staff will review submissions and recommend a few to the Task Force. The goal is for the contract to begin August 1.

There were no further questions and the end of the agenda had been reached. Jo-Ann, as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 2:24pm.