

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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
GRANTS COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 2024**

**ONLINE MEETING**

**Committee Members Present** were

Cecil Barron-Jensen, Co-Chair of the Grants Committee  
Julie Wake, Co-Chair of the Grants Committee  
Marc Carroll, Council Chair  
Jo-Ann Davis, Council Vice Chair  
Emily Bramhall  
Donna Haghghat

**Staff Members Present** were

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

**Prepared on 7/18/24**

Co-Chair Cecil Barron Jensen called the meeting to order at 1:01pm and asked Deputy Executive Director David Slatery to read the Open Meeting Law statement:

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

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

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

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

Cecil then asked if Committee Members had reviewed the minutes of the last meeting Committee at that time and clarified that if they had reviewed the minutes, they were voting to accept them based on that review- it was not necessary that any member had attended the prior meeting. Emily Bramhall moved to approve the minutes; Committee Co-Chair Julie Wake seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Simone Early and Mark Snyder were absent all were in favor, and it was

RESOLVED: that the Grants Committee approves the minutes of the August 4, 2023 Grants Committee Meeting in the form presented to the Grants Committee.

This marked the first meeting of the Grants Committee since Cecil Barron Jensen and Julie Wake were appointed as its Co-Chairs and the first meeting for many other appointees. As such, Cecil asked all Committee Members and staff to briefly introduce themselves. After introductions, Cecil asked Executive Director Michael Bobbitt for his Executive Director's report.

Michael let Committee Members know that over the past several months, a major analysis of grantmaking has been undertaken and advancement continues to be a major strategic priority. Trends in equitable grantmaking have been explored as well. Grant application guidelines have been revised and outreach promoting grant opportunities has been energized. The Agency has gone from 18 grant programs to 12 programs and further consolidation is being explored. Under the leadership of Senior Director of Program Operations Jen Lawless the programs team is now operating as a department with ample cross-program collaboration taking place. Michael then reviewed the Grants Committee Charter; the charter is available upon request.

Cecil thanked Michael and let Committee Members know they'd next hear a robust presentation on grantmaking by Jen that would help them determine where to focus the Agency's attention and to determine where further consolidation might be possible. The presentation will also give Committee Members a sense of the depth and breadth of Mass Cultural Council's impact across the Commonwealth.

Jen explained that the presentation would provide a look back at grantmaking in the current and previous fiscal years and a preview of proposed changes to grantmaking for the coming fiscal year. The purpose of the presentation is to give the Grants Committee a chance to provide feedback and ask questions before the staff creates a final draft of the FY25 spending plan which will be presented to the Committee and the full Council in August for their review and endorsement. No votes would be taken today. Jen then shared her presentation; a copy of the presentation is available upon request.

After the data presentation Jen paused and Committee Members were invited to ask questions. Council Vice Chair Jo-Ann Davis noted that 4,500 creative individuals applied for grants, but only 384 received funding and asked how the Agency could keep those individuals engaged if they were not receiving grants. Jen and Michael shared that this is the exact reason why advancement work is a priority right now. Relationships are being built across state government with the goal of identifying other sources of support for artists. The Agency also regularly sends an e-newsletter including non-Mass Cultural Council artist opportunities; this is an enormously popular publication. Michael added that the number of creative individuals in MA is probably far larger than we understand it to be at this time.

Emily Bramhall asked if staff had looked at the number of people organizations who received grants served and if there might be overlap. Jen stated that this had not been considered as part of this presentation. Michael added that having worked at large and small arts organizations, he knows that access to funding is related to the number of staff the organization has. The impact of the dollars given to smaller organizations is greater for smaller organizations. It is also challenging to say no to more than 500 cultural organizations in one year; once we truly understand how large the cultural sector is this will become an even greater challenge.

Cecil thanked Jen and Michael for the thoughtful presentation, noting that their work would help navigate the challenge Michael identified.

Jen then continued and invited program staff to present grant program snapshots to the Committee explaining proposed changes for FY25; she noted that while there was no slide for the Grants team, they do an enormous amount of work and grantmaking would not happen without them. No major changes to their operation are proposed for FY25. The staff then gave a brief presentation on each grant program.

Cecil thanked Jen and the staff and opened the meeting for questions and comments from Committee Members.

Co-Chair Julie Wake shared that she was impressed with the Grants for Creative Individuals program and inspired to create a similar opportunity at the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod; she also applauded the Agency's Card to Culture program noting that the cross-agency partnership takes the responsibility of vetting income off of the grant maker.

Michael asked Jen to speak briefly about the idea of evaluating the quality of artwork. Jen explained that in this year's Grants for Creative Individuals grant reviewers looked at where artists were in the life cycle of their careers to balance the success rate of more experienced artists and less experienced artists. Reviewers were also careful to balance artistic disciplines. Michael added that since we are the state government we are here to fund the sector, not just the best of the sector.

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