

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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
GRANTS COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 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  
Simone Early  
Ashley Occhino  
Mark Snyder

**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, and Chief Human Resources Officer  
Jen Lawless, Senior Director of Program Operations  
Ann Petruccelli Moon, Deputy Chief of Staff  
Carmen Plazas, Communications & Community Engagement Manager  
Dan Blask, Program Manager  
Charles Baldwin, Program Officer  
Amy Chu, Program Officer  
Kalyn King, Program Officer  
Erik Holmgren, Program Manager  
Summer Confuorto, Program Officer  
Timothea Pham, Program Officer  
Carolyn Cole, Program Officer  
Lisa Simmons, Program Manager

**Prepared on 9/17/24**

Erik Holmgren, Program Manager

Co-Chair Cecil Barron Jensen called the meeting to order at 1:02pm. She welcomed Committee Members and staff and explained that she and Co-Chair Julie Wake would co-lead the meeting. She then 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

Co-Chair Julie Wake then asked if Committee Members had reviewed the minutes of the last meeting held on June 12, 2024. If so, she would look for a motion to approve the minutes. Mark Snyder moved to approve the minutes; Cecil seconded the motion. By roll call vote all were in favor except for Simone Early who was not present on June 12<sup>th</sup> and chose to abstain. There were no absent members. It was thereby

RESOLVED: that the Grants Committee approves the minutes of the June 12, 2024 Grants Committee Meeting in the form presented to the Grants Committee.

Cecil then asked Executive Director Michael Bobbitt to begin the presentation on FY25 spending plan and grant program allocations.

Michael, joined by Senior Director of Program Operations Jen Lawless, gave a high-level overview of the proposed spending plan and reviewed Advancement-related grantmaking including grants to Mass Humanities, MASSCreative, New England Foundation for the Arts, and MITx Arts Entrepreneurship Online Program. A copy of the presentation is available upon request.

Cecil then asked Deputy Executive Director David Slatery to review the Conflicts of Interest list to ensure its accuracy prior to the presentation on each grant program.

Dave explained that under state ethics law Council Members may not take official action pertaining to any organization in which they have a financial interest, employment, or board membership; rather than leaving the room for the vote on grant recommendations, their conflicts of interest are disclosed on a list, and they state that they abstain from discussing or voting on any organization which is disclosed as a conflict on the list. He asked Committee Members to review conflicts of interest list in their materials and indicate if there are any updates. Vice Chair Jo-Ann Davis asked David to remove MASSCreative from her list as she is no longer on their Board. There were no further updates.

Julie asked if the grant supporting MITx is intended to be a one-year or multi-year commitment. Michael explained that it will be a one-year commitment. Julie then asked staff to give their presentations on their programs.

Program Manager Erik Holmgren reported on Social Prescription. Staff is recommending a \$100,000 grant to Art Pharmacy for their continued work scaling the program. The grant will support at least 600 doses of arts prescriptions across the Commonwealth and represents a new revenue stream for cultural organizations.

Cecil shared that social prescription is the Mass Cultural Council initiative she is most frequently asked about as a Council Member.

Chair Marc Carroll asked how the number 600 doses was reached and if that referred to the fiscal year or the calendar year. Erik explained that the number referred to the fiscal year and was recommended by Art Pharmacy after their conversations with Mass General Brigham and another major insurance partner.

Julie asked for clarification on the work representing a new stream of funding for the cultural sector. Erik explained that cultural organizations who participate are paid by Art Pharmacy for the prescribed visits.

Program Manager Sara Glidden gave a report on new "Operating Grants for Organizations" organizational support program and the existing "Cultural Investment Portfolio" version of organizational support which the Agency is slowly winding down and transitioning from.

Emily Bramhall asked what the dollar amount would be for Operating Grants; Sara explained that grants will range from \$6K to approximately \$60K though the maximum grant amount has not yet been set. The Council will know more specifics about the grants when they are brought forward for approval in November.

Cecil asked if the Committee could look at the grant application for Operating Grants and a link to the application was shared by the Zoom meeting host via chat. Copy of such application document is available upon request.

Sara also provided a brief update on the Gaming Mitigation Program which would open the application for its fifth round in November 2025. There were no questions.

Program Officer Carolyn Cole gave an update on Cultural District Initiative Investment Grants; the same allocation as FY24 is recommended with three new districts anticipated. Carolyn also mentioned that the program would be paused until FY25, and no additional new districts would be considered while the program undergoes a redesign. There were no questions.

Program Manager Lisa Simmons gave an update on plans for the Local Cultural Council program which would see a 3.6% increase in FY25 and the new Tribal Cultural Council program which would fund between four and six Tribes. There were no questions.

Erik Holmgren returned to share an update on YouthReach which is the longest running grant program supporting Creative Youth Development programs in the country. FY25 represents the third year of funding for 85 organizations in a three-year cycle.

Program Officer Amy Chu gave an update on STARS Residencies which is transitioning to become School-Based Projects; the guidelines will adjust slightly so the program can accept more projects than in previous years.

Ashley Occhino asked what changes would be made to the STARS guidelines and Amy explained that previously grants funded partnerships between artists and schools, now the program would allow schools to apply directly or in partnership with an artist and that the program would be open to projects other than residencies such as school theatrical productions or workshops.

Erik then shared that EdVestors (for the Youth Arts Impact Network), the Huntington Theatre (for Poetry Out Loud), and Heath Resources in Action (for teaching artist fellowships) would also receive Creative Youth Development grants. There were no questions.

Program Manager Dan Blask gave an update on Grants for Creative Individuals, a program that was new in FY24. No major changes will be made to the program in FY25 though it is anticipated that the Agency will be able to give 50 more grants this year than last year.

Vice Chair Jo-Ann Davis recalled that in previous years the Council was able to see examples of artwork by funded individuals and asked if this might be possible in the future. Dan explained that staff shared examples of artwork at a recent celebration for grantees in Somerville and that it would be wonderful to share a similar slideshow at a future Council Meeting.

Ashley Occhino noted that memo regarding Grants for Creative Individuals indicates that special guidance and attention is being given to applicants who receive SNAP and MassHealth benefits; Ashley applauds this. Dan shared that staff works with Work Without Limits on this element of the process to avoid having Mass Cultural Council grants result in a disruption of benefits.

Program Officer Timothea Pham provided an update on the plans for Festivals & Projects. In FY24 the Agency was able to give 740 grants and anticipates making the same number of grants in FY25. There were no questions.

Program Officer Charles Baldwin reported that UP Innovation Fund grants would also remain unchanged in FY25 though the grant amount would be slightly lower due to the closure of two organizations who ceased operations.

That concluded staff presentations on recommended grant program allocations and there were no further questions. Julie asked for a motion to approve all recommendations and bring them forward to the full Council at its next meeting. Cecil moved to approve the recommendations; Emily Bramhall seconded the motion. By roll call vote Committee Members unanimously voted to approve the following

WHEREAS the Massachusetts State Budget for Fiscal 2025 has been signed into law and contains an appropriation \$25,895,000 (plus \$955,000 in earmarks) for the Mass Cultural Council for FY25 (the "FY24 State Budget"); and

WHEREAS previously today Mass Cultural Council's Executive Committee recommended to the Council for approval a draft of the FY25 Budget and Program Allocation Plan submitted by staff; and

WHEREAS, based on such Plan, staff has recommended grant allocations for Mass Cultural Council programs to the Grants Committee at its meeting on August 8, 2024 ("Grants Committee Meeting"),

NOW THEREFORE, it is hereby

RESOLVED: That, the Grants Committee, recommends that the Council approve the allocation of grants and processes and procedures presented at the Grants Committee Meeting in accordance with the following resolutions:

RESOLVED: To recommend to Mass Cultural Council a grant to Mass Humanities totaling \$977,389 as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting;

RESOLVED: To recommend to Mass Cultural Council a grant to NEFA of \$70,000, as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting;

RESOLVED: To recommend to Mass Cultural Council a grant to Mass Creative for \$30,000 as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting;

RESOLVED: To recommend to Mass Cultural Council a grant to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (or related entity) for \$100,000 for the MITx Arts Entrepreneurship Online Program as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting;

RESOLVED: To recommend a grant of \$100,000 to Art Pharmacy for continuation of the Social Prescription program as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting;

RESOLVED: To recommend endorsement of the approach by staff to provide \$7,200,000 in unrestricted operating support grant to cultural organizations under both the Cultural Investment Portfolio program and new Operating Grants for Organizations as described in the memo provided at the Grants Committee Meeting.

RESOLVED: To recommend endorsement of the approach by staff to provide of the fifth cycle of the Gaming Mitigation Program as described in the memo provided at the Grants Committee Meeting;

RESOLVED: To recommend up to \$870,000 in Cultural District grants as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting;

RESOLVED: To recommend an allocation to the Local Cultural Councils totaling \$5,700,000 as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting;

RESOLVED: To recommend up to \$103,950 in allocation to Tribal Cultural Councils as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting;

RESOLVED: To recommend grant allocations to YouthReach program in the amount of \$1,870,000, as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting;

RESOLVED: To recommend to Mass Cultural Council grants of \$1,500,000 to the STARS program, as described and presented at the Grants Committee Meeting;

RESOLVED: To recommend a grant of \$36,000 to the Youth Arts Impact Network with EdVestors, \$25,000 in support of the NEA-funded Poetry Out Loud program and a grant of \$18,000 in leftover funds provided by the Linde Family Foundation for the now-concluded Creative Youth Development Teaching Artist Fellowship program to Health Resources in Action, all as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting;

RESOLVED: To recommend to Mass Cultural Council allocate \$2,175,000 for at least 435 grants of \$5,000 as part of Grants for Creative Individuals Program (plus

any unused funds from any other approved grant program for additional grants) as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting ;

RESOLVED: To recommend approval of the Projects/Festivals program with a grant allocation totaling \$1,850,000 as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting;

RESOLVED: To recommend to Mass Cultural Council \$480,000 in UP Innovation Fund Grants, as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting; and

RESOLVED: To recommend to Mass Cultural Council a \$50,000 grants to ArtsBoston acting on behalf of the Network Arts Administrators of Color, and a \$100,000 grant to Open Door Arts for the Arts and Culture Accessibility Resource Hub, all as presented at the Grants Committee Meeting.

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

Marc Carroll

- a. Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra
- b. The Rivers School

Jo-Ann Davis

- a. The Care Center
- b. Springfield Museums

Cecil Barron Jensen

- a. Artists Association of Nantucket
- b. Egan Maritime Institute
- c. Nantucket Cultural District

Julie Wake

- a. Arts Foundation of Cape Cod

Cecil thanked Committee Members for their time and attention and congratulated the staff noting that it's exciting to see grant programs evolve. Jo-Ann, who previously Chaired the Grants Committee, congratulated the Co-Chairs on the successful meeting.

There were no further questions and Cecil, as Co-Chair, adjourned the meeting at 2:30pm.