



*Power of culture*

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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL  
PROGRAMS COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2024**

**ONLINE MEETING**

**Committee Members Present** were

Cecil Barron-Jensen, Co-Chair of the Programs Committee  
Julie Wake, Co-Chair of the Programs Committee  
Marc Carroll, Council Chair  
Jo-Ann Davis, Council Vice Chair  
Emily Bramhall  
Ashley Occhino  
Mark Snyder

**Staff Members Present** were

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

Co-Chair Julie Wake called the meeting to order at 1:02pm and asked Deputy Executive Director David Slatery to read the Open Meeting Law statement. David read the Open Meeting Law statement. Julie then asked if Committee Members had reviewed the minutes of their last meeting held on August 8<sup>th</sup> and called for a motion to

**Prepared on 11/18/24**

approve them. Emily Bramhall moved to approve the minutes; Mark Snyder seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Simone Early and Donna Haghighat were not present all were in favor, and it was

RESOLVED: that the Programs Committee approves the minutes of the August 8, 2024 Grants Committee Meeting in the form presented at the meeting.

Julie, joined by Co-Chair Cecil Barron Jensen, briefly explained the decision to change the name of the Committee from Grants to Programs. "Programs" more accurately reflects the true work of the Committee at a high level and as it aligns with the Agency's strategic plan, which is focused not only on grantmaking, but also advancing the Agency and the cultural sector. Committee Members indicated their understanding and support for the decision and there were no questions asked. Julie then asked Senior Director of Program Operations Jen Lawless for her report.

Jen brought the Committee's attention to the memos included in their materials which provide an update on work being done within and across all program areas. She also provided an update on how the Agency will distribute grants to organizations in FY25. As Mass Cultural Council has continued to pursue its equity and inclusion goals, staff has engaged in outreach efforts and recruited more applicants to apply to its programs – many for the first time. Thanks to advocacy efforts by the Council, staff, and Agency partners and support from the Governor and many members of the state legislature, the Agency has received increases in its allocation in recent years. Still, many applicants are being turned away. Staff did an analysis and realized that 8% of its grantees received 57% of its funding in FY24; much of this was due to organizations who received grants from multiple programs. In FY25 Mass Cultural Council will allow organizations to receive either an organizational support grant (Cultural Investment Portfolio, Operating Grants for Organizations, Creative Projects for Schools, Festivals, or Cultural Districts grant) **OR** a Gaming Mitigation Fund grant. The Cultural Facilities Fund has also shifted from a one-year wait period to a two-year wait period. This will enable grant dollars to go further; 45 additional organizations will receive operating support in FY25 because of this shift. Michael will have direct conversations with the leaders of impacted organizations about the change.

Emily expressed that she is in support of the changes but is curious if the change will have a jarring impact on the affected organizations as she imagines this could be a large deduction. Jen explained that in many cases current grantees have already had to make a choice as a lot of smaller guardrails have been up. This shift will be the largest shift yet, but Gaming Mitigation grants tend to be substantial with the largest grant amounting to \$200,000. Barring any major changes in gambling activity staff anticipates Gaming grants will still be quite large. Jen is hopeful that knowing they can still receive a large Gaming grant and that many additional organizations who would have been turned away will receive funding, will soften the disappointment.

Cecil also expressed support for the change and added that the two-year wait for the Cultural Facilities Fund would probably help smaller organizations have an opportunity to apply and be successful.

Jen added a few additional updates to her report: the Grants for Creative Individuals application is open, there are three new Cultural Districts applying for designation and they will be presented to the Council at its November meeting, staff is working with its

consultant, Civic Moxie, to redesign the Cultural Districts Initiative which is paused and not accepting additional applications at this time, and the first Tribal Cultural Council has launched and will begin taking applications on November 1.

Emily asked if the Grants for Creative Individuals program includes a waiting period like the Cultural Facilities Fund. Program Manager Dan Blask explained that there is a three-year waiting period.

Ashley Occhino asked if Civic Moxie would evaluate current Cultural Districts only or if it was an evaluation of the whole program. Program Officer Carolyn Cole explained that Civic Moxie would evaluate the entirety of the program.

Julie thanked Jen for her robust report and asked Program Manager Sara Glidden to begin her presentation on the Financial Health Analysis Tool. Sara shared a PowerPoint presentation; a copy of the presentation is available upon request.

Julie asked if there was a trend to see who was most in need. Sara said there wasn't any one sector that stood out, perhaps a little bit of a stronger showing from the performing arts. Cecil asked how this information could help inform future grantmaking and program direction. Sara explained that, due to many grantees being new to the Agency, this represents an opportunity for an ongoing conversation to assess needs and determine if support comes from within Mass Cultural Council or from other state agencies and beyond. Staff is currently sharing a monthly list of opportunities for cultural organizations; a lot of these resources include financial health consulting.

Michael added that at their November meeting, the Council would see a presentation on the cultural asset mapping work the Agency engaged in that would illuminate just how large the cultural sector in Massachusetts is. There is a lot more work to be done.

Ashley commented that she would love to see room for organizations with fiscal sponsors as they play a large role in their communities.

There were no further comments or questions for Sara.

Program Manager Erik Holmgren then gave a brief update on Arts Prescriptions and the National Endowment for the Arts' Arts & Health Initiative – the Agency is seeking a grant from the NEA to support and expand its social prescription work. After his report Julie commented that several of her Cape Cod colleagues were well-aware of the arts prescriptions work and were in the process of becoming part of the network. There were no further comments or questions for Erik.

Julie then asked David to review the conflicts-of-interest list and there were no questions or additions, so she moved to the final agenda item: approval of additional grant recommendations for FY25. Jen Lawless explained that the Committee was reviewing recommendations for **Festivals & Projects, Creative Projects for Schools, and Operating Support for Organizations** which includes the Cultural Investment Portfolio and Operating Grants for Organizations for recommendation to the full Council at its November meeting. Full details regarding the grant recommendations were included in the meeting materials. There was no discussion, and no one had questions for Jen. Julie asked for a motion to recommend for approval by the Council the grants within each of the three programs. Mark Snyder moved to approve the recommendations; Emily

Bramhall seconded the motion. By roll call vote and noting that Simone and Donna were absent it was

RESOLVED: To recommend approval by the full Council of \$7,200,000 in unrestricted operating support grants to cultural organizations under the Cultural Investment Portfolio and new Operating Grants for Organizations program as described in the memo provided at the Programs Committee Meeting.

RESOLVED: To recommend to the full Council approval of up to \$1,500,000 in Creative Projects for Schools grants as presented at the Programs Committee Meeting.

RESOLVED: To recommend to the full Council approval of the Festivals & Projects program with a grant allocation totaling \$1,850,000 as presented at the Programs Committee Meeting.

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

1. Marc Carroll
  - a. Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra
  - b. The Rivers School
2. Jo-Ann Davis
  - a. The Care Center
  - b. Springfield Museums
  - c. MASS Creative
3. Cecil Barron Jensen
  - a. Artists Association of Nantucket
  - b. Egan Maritime Institute
  - c. Nantucket Cultural District
4. Julie Wake
  - a. Arts Foundation of Cape Cod
5. Ashley Occhino
  - a. Fall River Arts and Culture Coalition/One South Coast Chamber Foundation
  - b. Southeastern Massachusetts Visitors Bureau
  - c. SouthCoast Community Foundation
  - d. Society of Arts and Crafts

The end of the meeting agenda had been reached and Julie, as Co-Chair, adjourned the meeting at 2:13pm.