



Power of culture

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

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

**MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL
GRANTS COMMITTEE**

TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 2020

ON-LINE MEETING

Chair Victoria Marsh called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM

Committee Members Present were
Victoria Marsh, Chair, Grants Committee
Nina Fialkow, Chair, Mass Cultural Council
Marc Carroll, Vice Chair, Mass Cultural Council
Barbara Schaffer Bacon
Karen Barry
Kathy Castro
Cecil Barron Jensen

Staff Members Present were
Anita Walker, Executive Director
David Slatery, Deputy Director
Bethann Steiner, Communications Director
Jen Lawless, Operations Director
Ann Petruccelli Moon
Sara Glidden
Erik Holmgren
Charles Baldwin

Prepared on 7/23/20

Victoria Marsh opened by referring to the Open Meeting Law Statement and then by reviewing the meeting's intended purpose: creating an opportunity for Committee members to learn about the rest of the agency's programs. The Committee had learned about half of the program at the prior week's meeting and today were going to see the other half. Victoria then asked Anita Walker to frame up the day.

Anita explained that one staff member from each program would present. Following their presentations, staff would have an opportunity to listen to Committee members and hear their priorities. Anita explained that the budget for the coming year is still unknowable, but that the theme of "Recover, Rebuild, Renew" would be the framework since so many organizations are trying to rebound from the effects of Covid-19. Anita emphasized the importance of Renewal stating that there is a need for organizations to seize the moment and review what part of the old programs needed to be revised and take the opportunity to address systemic racism and need for diversity, equity and inclusion. Anita also reviewed the four pillars of the strategic plan: building community and well-being, economic vitality, youth, and DEI, and then moved the meeting along to presentations from staff.

Erik Holmgren went first and reviewed the YouthReach and SerHacer programs in the Creative Youth Development area and explained that both promote integration of substantive out of school time in the arts, humanities, and sciences into a collaborative response to the needs of young people and communities. Erik reviewed the latest grant cycle statistics: 35 new programs were brought in, and grants were increased. Erik then explained the Amplify program where grants are project-based grants and go directly to young people enrolled in YouthReach and SerHacer programs.

Jen Lawless asked Erik to walk through the Music Educator/Teaching Artist (META) Fellowship. He gave a brief update and also discussed a new teaching artist program that was interrupted by Covid. Unfortunately, funding for that program has been postponed by the prospective funder's board for one year.

Barbara Schaffer Bacon asked if the agency works with independent teaching artists or solely teaching artists affiliated with institutions and Erik explained that the STARS program's fellowships work with independent teaching artists. META and the new teaching artist program are targeted at teaching artists affiliated with organizations; stipends for those

programs go directly to organizations in an effort to emphasize the importance of teaching artists.

Karen Barry asked if there was any discussion on redirecting funding to working artists. She was curious if with less funding would the programs remain the same but have a lower funding level and asked what the next steps would be if there was a shortfall. Staff explained that teaching artists were included in the first round of Covid mitigation funding, and that the CYD organizations who support teaching artists received a good deal of CARES Act funding and used it to retain teaching artists. Anita explained that CYD is a field of practice and CYD teaching artists have a unique set of skills. Jen concluded by explaining that in a smaller budget year the team would make grant sizes smaller before making the list of grantees smaller.

Sara Glidden was up next representing the Cultural Investment Portfolio. She walked Committee members through goals for the Portfolio, Gateway, and Projects grant programs that support organizations of every size. **Barbara** asked how many of those organizations are not arts organizations but rather organizations that have arts components. Sara explained that the Portfolio grantees were predominantly cultural organizations, but that 36 were cultural affiliates – cultural programs that exist within larger organizations, many are colleges, one is a social service organization.

Cecil Barron Jensen asked what kind of projects are funded. Sara responded: public programming done by cultural organizations, cultural programs done by organizations that are not fully cultural-i.e. Boys & Girls Clubs programming, Council on Aging, social service organizations that have cultural programming to help reach a social service goal. Also, Projects funds programs that engage with the larger public, dance training, educational programs, projects that work with youth and theater production, public concert series. It is a very wide range.

Anita added that the strategy behind this is to build relationships with organizations we don't already know. Projects has enabled the team to bring more diverse and often smaller organizations into the portfolio and broadened our grant list.

Cecil followed up asking how the agency reaches organization it doesn't already know. Sara responded that they work with the Communities team to look at local cultural council (LCC) applicants and let them

know about the opportunity, also community foundations across the state. The team members also do targeted outreach to the Network for Arts Administrators of Color, to Portfolio grantees, and they hold at least six public info sessions each year.

Karen asked if the agency inquired as to what historical organizations receive from community preservation funds. Sara explained that organizations had to tell us all the details about where their funding comes from. Karen expressed concern about the level of need and asked if there was a glass ceiling in Gateway; if organizations are ever moved out of the Portfolio to make room for new organizations to move in from Gateway. Sara responded that there are organizations that have fallen out of Portfolio due to internal issues or not meeting the requirements. The premise behind regular formula funding is that organizations benefit from unrestricted funding that is predictable and reliable.

Victoria asked Jen to weigh in having looked at the data so extensively. Jen responded that the agency had added to the pool but not removed anyone from it. Barbara called the situation a fabulous dilemma and acknowledged that some difficult choices may be coming if funds are reduced.

Jen then asked **Charles Baldwin** to walk the Committee through the UP Program.

Charles gave a brief description of the program and then told the Committee about the one grant the program it has: The Innovation Fund which helps organizations think about creative solutions to barrier removal, to spark creative solutions and new ideas that address barrier removal with funding to minimize risk. It is a flat grant of \$3K and is given on a first come, first served basis. This year the agency received 25 applications and awarded 15.

Barbara asked Charles who are designated organizations area and how they are chosen. Charles explained that they either apply for designation or participate in the learning network to become designated.

Anita then moved ahead to Partnership Grants that are given to ArtsBoston, The Boch Center, BSO, Huntington Theater, Johnson String Project, John F. Kennedy Library Foundation, Mass Historical Society, New England Public Media, WBUR, WERS, WGBH Educational Foundation, and

WICN. Anita highlighted and further explained the media arts grants to NEPR, WBUR, WERS, WGBH, WICN that have been going on for 10 years and described the partnership as an exchange with the cultural sector. Jen further described Arts Boston's grant for NAAC, Huntington Theater's for Poetry Out Loud, the BSO's for the Traditional Arts Showcase, Johnson String Project's work with SerHacer, the Kennedy Library Forums, and Mass History Day.

Barbara commented she hoped we do anything we can to work directly with the NAAC leaders themselves, and wondered if the network needed to be affiliated with ArtsBoston or if it could be independent. Jen explained that the agency has several NAAC steering committee members on staff and lines of communication are clear and positive at this point.

Victoria proposed the group take a 5-minute break.

All returned from break at 2:02pm.

Victoria set up a discussion regarding Projects grants. Staff has proposed converting to simple unrestricted grants to support recovery and rebuilding in the wake of Covid's initial impact. Jen further explained that the intent is to redefine what a project is and ensure the agency is being responsive to the unstable environment.

Karen responded by saying that anything we can do to be able to give greater support at the Projects level is important to do. She'd like to see that happen, but also have a conversation about where we fund and what impact can we have to hit a greater constituency at this time. **Cecil** agreed that she liked the idea of converting grants to operating support but wanted to make sure smaller organizations still received funding. Jen clarified that they in fact would, the agency was solely looking at what it calls a "project." **Barbara** supported this intent but was a little muddied about what the team meant.

Anita explained that the idea is to be less restrictive since project work is challenging at this time, to continue to use money to bring these organizations in, but meet them where they are currently. With public facing events being few and far between, let's help organizations build capacity instead. Anita finished by asking Barbara how she would better use the funds. Barbara responded that she'd like to see something that shows the arts are working for communities, so the notion of public value

should not go away. Victoria concluded the discussion by asking if the shift is made to operating support, would the agency still consider applications from organizations that are new to us and the answer was yes.

Victoria moved ahead to a discussion on reclassifying and adding new eligible Gateway organizations to the Portfolio.

Anita explained that all organizations who are eligible to move to Portfolio are being told they will move when there is funding available. The discussion is now about how to move eligible organizations into the portfolio, or to know if the Committee would rather the agency hold back.

Jen asked Sara to talk about the eligible organizations. Sara explained that there are currently 12 who are through Gateway and if they are successful in the current review process will be eligible to move to the Portfolio. Victoria asked what the number typically is. Sara responded that this has only been the case in one other year and on that occasion 11 organizations moved into the Portfolio.

Karen asked if any organizations would be moving out of the Portfolio. Sara responded that three have decided to discontinue programming and that there are also two sets of mergers, so demand is decreased a bit. Karen followed up asking if organizations with a youth-focused mission are given priority or if any consideration was given to geographical region. Sara explained the application and panel process in detail.

Anita reminded the Committee that CIP launched a survey on June 1 to learn more about need within organizations and that each grant is just one piece of the puzzle with services being a part of each package as well.

Victoria thanked Anita for the reminder and stated that the survey would be crucial as decisions are made for the coming year.

Cecil commented that if she had to vote she would allow eligible organizations to join the Portfolio and Barbara agreed. Barbara further expressed that the agency would have to look through a DEI lens and make choices that way. Anita replied that the agency has talked to all organizations about putting out a DEI statement and that this is an opportunity to hold them to it.

Victoria noted the time and Jen asked if it would be helpful to talk about some potential changes to CYD funding.

Erik explained that next year is the third year of a three-year cycle and that new applications would be considered in January. In light of recent events the team would like to extend funding for an additional year as opposed to conduct a new application process. Erik cited that the organizations are in great need of assistance and that new applications would most likely not be able to be properly considered given the potential inability to conduct site visits.

Barbara responded that she was fully in support of the idea and noted that she'd like to take a look in the future at the geographic diversity of CYD funding. Kathy Castro asked for clarification on the three-year cycle and Erik further explained it.

Victoria suggested reviewing the calendar.

Jen explained that staff would take notes from today's discussion and consider them in their planning. She then reminded the Committee that at the full Council meeting on June 18th there would not be a planning meeting- just a regular "May" Council meeting, as there would still be no budget to discuss. After the state appropriation is set the team will move into our August committee meeting planning with a draft of a spending plan shown to the Executive Committee first, then to the Grants Committee the following week, and two weeks after that to the full Council for a vote. Jen noted that dates were all to be determined, and that all of this might happen in September, not August.

Dave explained that at first, we are anticipating shorter term budgets and will not have a full year budget to work with so it may take while until we have our typical annual budget meetings. **Bethann** explained that the budget and even the legislature's process is still very much unknown.

Barbara asked if it might be possible for the Grants committee to see the proposed budget before the Executive committee. Anita explained that the Executive committee helps to first take a look at the allocations of funding amounts for each program, then the Grants committee comes in to consider actual grant recommendations.

Karen requested to have the information presented by Sara and Erik at the meeting in an Excel spreadsheet along with all of the recommended grants from the August Board book so she could review it.

Jen agreed to provide her with that.

Victoria thanked Committee members and staff for their time and preparatory work and as Chair adjourned the meeting.