

**GENERAL
OPERATING
SUPPORT
GRANT
GUIDELINES**



**METRO
ARTS
NASHVILLE**

Who We Are



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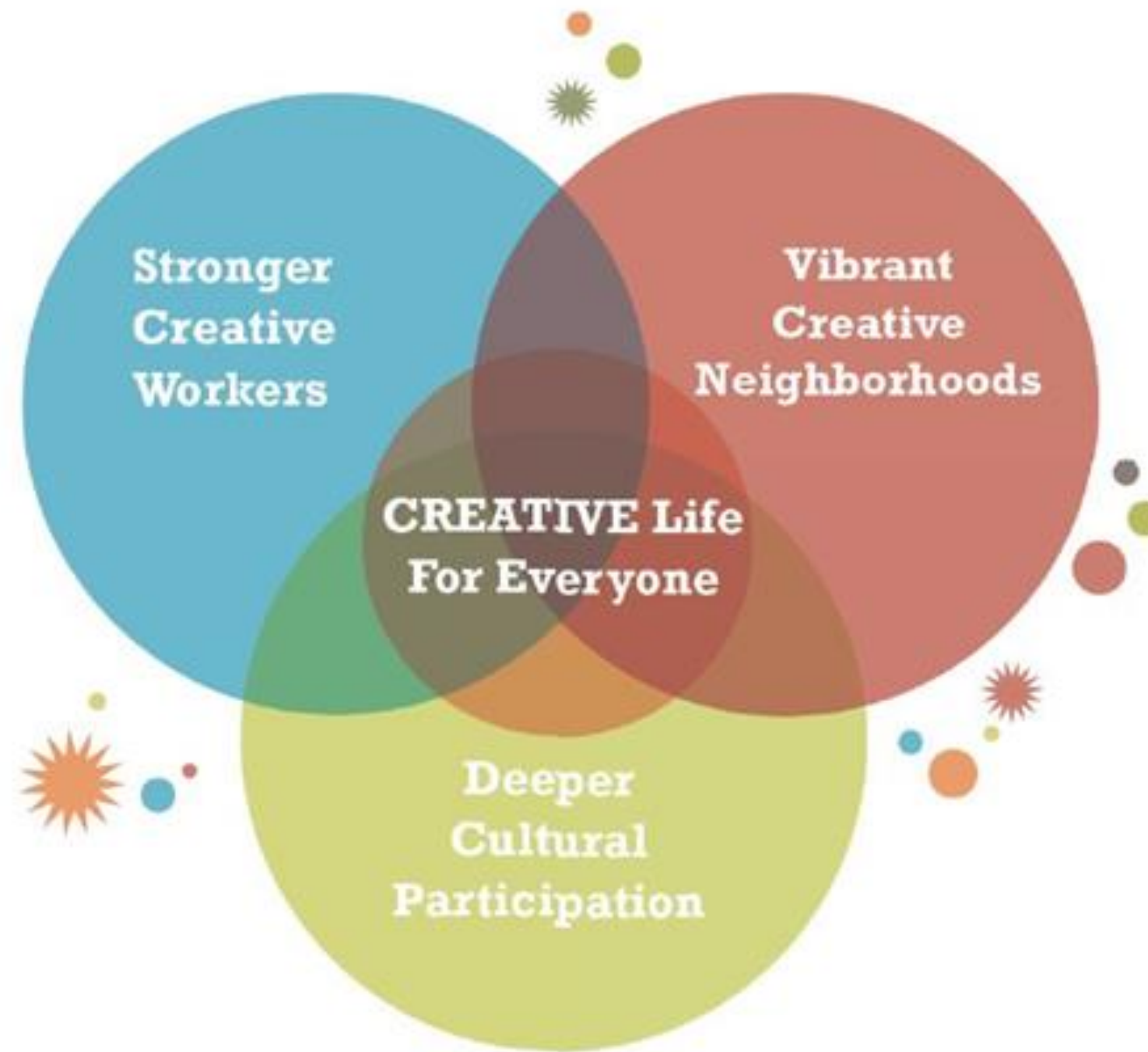
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Restorative Arts Manager

About Metro Arts

Metro Nashville Arts Commission or “Metro Arts” is the Office of Arts + Culture for the city of Nashville and Davidson County. Metro Arts is a branch of Metro Government that strives to ensure that all Nashvillians have access to a creative life through community investments, artist and organizational training, public art and creative placemaking coordination, and direct programs. We believe that arts drive a more vibrant and equitable community. Metro Nashville Arts Commission was established by Metro Ordinance in 1978.



A Creative Life For Everyone



METRO ARTS

NASHVILLE OFFICE OF ARTS + CULTURE

About Metro Arts

Metro Arts' grant programs fund nonprofit organizations of all sizes and disciplines and project-based grants through funding allocated by the Metro Council. Our grant programs support creative work that addresses one or more of the community outcomes we seek to achieve:

- Stronger Creative Workforce
- Vibrant, Creative Neighborhoods
- Deeper Cultural Participation

Year-to-year, Metro Arts funding, approvals and awards are contingent on the budget allocated to Metro Arts each year through the Metro Nashville government process. Funding is not guaranteed, and overall funding may vary from year to year.



Grant Eligibility Criteria

Operating Support grants provide funding for the general operations of arts-focused nonprofit organizations based in Davidson County.

An arts-focused organization is one whose primary mission is to directly support the performance, exhibition, or instruction of art and whose majority of programming supports the performance, exhibition, instruction, creation, or education in the arts.

Art refers to several artistic genres including, but not limited to dance, film and media arts, craft, literary arts, music, performance art, multidisciplinary work, theater, or visual arts. Please contact us if you have questions regarding the definition of an arts-focused organization.



Grant Eligibility Criteria

To receive an Operating Support grant from Metro Arts, the applicant must meet all the following criteria:

- Produce, present, or directly support artistic programs, projects, or works
- Have a primary mission to directly support the performance, exhibition, or instruction of art
- The majority of programming must support the performance, exhibition, instruction, creation, or education in the arts
- Be chartered in the state of Tennessee and tax-exempt under the IRS Code Section 501(c)(3)

Grant Eligibility Criteria

- Have an IRS Letter of Determination with an effective date of exemption of May 1, 2025, or earlier*
 - *Organizations with less than one year 501(c)(3) status may be considered eligible with evidence of operating with nonprofit fiscal sponsorship and artistic programming for at least one year. Please contact us as soon as possible if you believe that you might fall into this category, so that we can review your eligibility together prior to your completion of an application.
- Be active and in good standing with the Tennessee Secretary of State's Business Services Division and Office of Charitable Solicitations, indicating the agency is currently duly registered to solicit public funds in Tennessee
- Have a business address located in Davidson County
- Operate the majority of its programs in Nashville



Grant Eligibility Criteria

- Have background checks for all adults who work with youth. If the organization works directly with minors (defined as persons under age 18), the applicant will be required to submit an attestation form that attests that all adults who participate in the programming or instruction of minors at the organization have satisfactory background checks within the last 5 years. This includes organizational staff, artists, and contract staff.
 - The background check attestation form is available in the resource guide. Download and complete that form so that you can include it in your Submittable application.

Grant Eligibility Criteria

There are certain types of organizations that cannot receive Metro Arts Operating grants:

- Non-arts organizations
- Organizations who receive operational budget amendments ("line items") from Metro, except for those that are provided by the Metropolitan Charter
- "Friends of" organizations, MNPS-affiliated booster clubs, and other organizations whose primary purpose is to support government agencies or initiatives
- Colleges or universities
- Public broadcasting stations
- Arts organizations that operate as a legal subsidiary of a non-art nonprofit organization
- Organizations whose primary purpose or activities involve religious practices or intent



Eligible Expenses

Grant funds **CAN** be used for:

- Salaries
- Artist, technical, and/or administrative professional service fees
- Program/project supplies
- Performance space/facility rental/rent
- Marketing and promotion
- Printing and publications
- Consulting fees
- Equipment rental and/or purchase
- Fundraising activities

Eligible Expenses

Grant funds **CANNOT** be used for:

- Capital improvements
- Reduction of debts
- Activities and/or programs with religious practices or intent
- Political lobbying activities
- Purchase of real estate property

Grant Cycle Time Frame

All FY27 grant activities must take place between the effective date of the contract, which is defined as beginning on the date the contract is signed by all required parties and filed with the Metro Clerk, and ending on the last date of the Metro fiscal cycle, June 30, 2027.

Closeout reports are due July 15, 2027.

If awarded, payment disbursement can be expected to begin in October 2026 (upon timely submission of required grant acceptance forms and contract processing). Proposed grant activities should begin no earlier than October 1, 2026.

Matching Funds

Metro Arts Operating Support grants do not require a cash match. Grantees are not required to show matching funds.

Grant Categories

Organizations' budget size and the most recently completed fiscal year's revenue as shown on their IRS tax form determine the grant category for each applicant. Operating revenue includes funds raised by an organization for its annual operating budget only. Not included in this calculation are:

- Donations restricted to endowment funds
- In-kind contributions
- Donations or funds raised for capital projects.

Grant Categories

- **Micro Organizations:** Revenue of less than \$25,000 during the most recently completed fiscal year.
- **Small Organizations:** Revenue between \$25,000 to \$99,999 during the most recently completed fiscal year.
- **Medium Organizations:** Revenue between \$100,000 and \$499,999 during the most recently completed fiscal year.
- **Mid-Size Organizations:** Revenue between \$500,000 and \$2,999,999 during the most recently completed fiscal year.
- **Large Organizations:** Revenue of \$3,000,000 or more during the most recently completed fiscal year.

Award Amounts

- Applicants do not apply for a specific award amount; rather, they are eligible for an award based on the category size.
- Award amounts are calculated based on the operating revenue as shown in the organization's most recently completed fiscal year IRS Form 990.
- Award amounts will be determined by calculating the “base percentage,” shown in the formulas below. The formulas show the maximum possible award.
- The actual award will be scaled to the available budget for the allocation available for each size category.

Award Amounts

Base percentage formulas:

- **Micro Base Percentage:** 75% of most recent revenue, with a maximum of \$18,750.
- **Small Base Percentage:** 50% of most recent revenue, with a maximum of \$50,000.
- **Medium Base Percentage:** 25% of most recent revenue, with a maximum of \$125,000.
- **Mid-Size Base Percentage:** 17% of most recent revenue, with a maximum of \$120,000.
- **Large Base Percentage:** 1.8% of most recent revenue, with a maximum of \$200,000.

Award Amounts

- Awards will range within their corresponding category. The actual award amount will be scaled to the available budget.
- All awards are subject to scaling based on the available budget.
- All funding approvals and grant amounts are contingent on the budget allocated to Metro Arts and are not guaranteed year-to-year.
- Please refer to the [previous year's Operating Grant Awards](#) to view examples of actual award sizes by category.

Size Category Transition

- Organizations whose revenue exceeds the maximum threshold of any category by up to 10% will have the award size calculated as the midpoint percentage between the two categories.
- For example, if an organization's revenue is \$105,000 (5% over the \$100,000 threshold between small and medium), then the organization will be categorized as a medium organization, but the award will be calculated as 37.5% of the revenue (the midpoint between the percentages for small [50%] and medium [25%]).

How to Submit an Application

Metro Arts utilizes an online application system called Submittable. All applications must be completed and submitted using this system. The application portal can be accessed at <https://mnac.submittable.com/submit>. Keep in mind that submitted applications are considered public record and can be reviewed by the public.

Submittable is a non-Metro-based platform. Technical questions about the portal (account set up, technical difficulties, etc.) should be directed to <https://www.submittable.com/help/submitter/>.



Nondiscrimination Policies, ADA Compliance & Accessibility

Questions, concerns, complaints, requests for accommodation, or requests for additional information regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act may be forwarded to Metro Arts' ADA Compliance Coordinator:

Vivian Foxx, Metro Nashville Arts Commission, P.O. Box 196300,
Nashville, TN 37219-6300

Vivian.Foxx@nashville.gov (615) 862-6721, TTY Relay Service
800-848-0298



Nondiscrimination Policies, ADA Compliance & Accessibility

INTERPRETATION SERVICES: Should an individual need language interpretation, Metro Arts will secure assistance using a Metro approved over-the-phone or in-person interpretation service.

At Metro Arts, we strive to embody practices that ensure that all people can fulfill their rights of cultural expression and belonging, participation, learning, and livelihood within the arts ecosystem. This includes specific commitment to people who have been historically underrepresented in mainstream arts funding, discourse, leadership, and resource allocation, including, but not limited to, people of color, people of all ages, differently-abled people, LGBTQ people, women, veterans, and the socio-economically disadvantaged.



Deadlines

All FY27 grant applications must be submitted before one of the following deadlines:

- **Friday, June 5, 2026, 4:59pm CST: Optional Preliminary Review Deadline**
- **Friday, June 26, 2026, 4:59pm CST: Final Deadline**

Important Dates

(subject to change)

Activity	Date
Application period	May 8, 2026—June 26, 2026
Optional preliminary review deadline	June 5, 2026, 4:59pm
Final deadline	June 26, 2026, 4:59pm
Review panels	July 29-30, 2026
Commission approval	August 19, 2026
Award notifications	August 20-21, 2026
Contracting	September 2026
Payment disbursement	Beginning October 2026
Grant period start date	Date of contract execution*
Final spend date	June 30, 2027
Final closeout report due	July 15, 2027

**The grant spending period begins upon the full execution of the contract, anticipated in September. Grantees are encouraged to promptly sign and return contracts to avoid delays.*

Information Sessions

- Monday, May 18, 2026, 10:00am-11:00am: Virtual information session (sign up on the Metro Arts website)
- Thursday, May 21, 2026, 4:00pm-5:00pm: In-person information session (Metro Southeast, 1417 Murfreesboro Road, Nashville, TN 37217)

Applicants who are unable to attend a live information session can access a pre-recorded video on the Metro Arts website.

Preliminary Review Period

- All applicants may submit an application by the optional preliminary review deadline. Metro Arts staff will review the application to confirm eligibility.
- Submitting by the preliminary deadline allows applicants to receive application review, feedback, and time for corrections and revisions before the final deadline.
- We are especially encouraging first-time applicants and those who have not received funding in the past are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the preliminary review deadline.

Review Process

- All grant applications are reviewed for technical eligibility by Metro Arts staff after the final deadline.
- Applicants that fail technical review for a reason that can be corrected (i.e., an administrative or clerical error) will have a short period to make corrections to their application.
- Please note that not all reasons for technical denial will be able to be corrected. Applications will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and applicants will be contacted by Metro Arts staff as needed. An application may be disqualified at any time if an organization or proposal is deemed ineligible.
- Applicants that advance beyond technical review will be evaluated and scored by a community grant review panel.



Scoring + Funding Formula

We have a community review process at Metro Arts. Community panelists will use a rubric to evaluate and score each application. Panelist scores will be combined and averaged to determine the final score.

Applicants whose applications score at the 70 to 100 percent level will be awarded funds in alignment with the base percentage for their funding category and scaled to the available budget. Award allocations are made based on Metro Arts funding availability and are not guaranteed year-to-year.

Eligibility and panel review notes are kept electronically by Metro Arts. After grant awards are announced, applicants may contact Metro Arts staff to obtain a copy of scores and comments for their records.



Funding Approval

The panelists' scores are reviewed by the Arts Commission Grants Committee and are used to determine which applications are recommended for funding. The Metro Arts Commission reviews all recommended grant awards and is the authorizing body to approve all awards.

All Commissioners and panelists are required to disclose any conflicts of interest prior to reviewing or approving grant allocations. Metro Arts makes every attempt to identify any conflicts. If a conflict of interest is identified among a panelist, the panelist will not score the application nor participate in discussion of the application. If a conflict is identified among a Commissioner, the Commissioner is required to abstain from allocating an organization's funding or engaging in deliberation of the applicant's grant award.



Award Notification and Management

Grant award notifications will be issued through Submittable, including instructions for accepting the grant. Applicants awarded a grant will be required to submit a budget upon notification of an award. Grant awards will be publicly announced via press release and posted on the Metro Arts website.

Award Notification and Management

Applicants denied funding will be directly notified through Submittable. Applicants that are denied may contact Metro Arts for information regarding the denial and additional information.

Metro Arts uses the Submittable platform throughout the lifecycle of the grant, including communications about reporting and other requirements. Grantees are responsible for notifying Metro Arts of any changes in contact information during the grant period.

Metro Arts reserves the right to cancel any grant contract if the organization's work is not administered as proposed in the application and may request the return of all or a portion of the grant funds awarded.



Grant Disbursement

Awarded grant funds are distributed in one payment for the full grant amount after the execution of the grant contract. Please note that the contracting and payment process typically takes 4-6 weeks, as the contract and payment approvals require multiple signatures and steps across the Metro government. Payments are processed through a centralized finance department. All applicants that are awarded funds must register in the Metro iSupplier vendor payment system. More information can be found on the [“How To Do Business with Metro”](#) website. Specific instructions will be provided with award notices.

Grant Check In Meetings

Metro Arts staff will check in with grant recipients during the grant spending period, as it allows both the recipient and Metro Arts to ensure the work is progressing and to confirm that funds are being used in alignment with the grant's objectives. More information about check-in meetings and requirements will be shared with award announcements.

Final Closeout Report

Final closeout reports and all supporting materials must be submitted by July 15, 2027. The final closeout report may include organizational and program goals, outputs and outcomes, participant reach, number of supported jobs, and other metrics. A grant expense form and budget narrative are required as part of closeout.

Organizations should maintain financial records that show the use of all grant funds. At Metro Arts' request, grantees may be asked to provide documentation of expenses including, but not limited to, contracts, purchase orders, invoices, and bills.



Logo Usage and Credit Policy

All recipients of Metro Arts funds are required to include the Metro Arts logo on all online or printed publicity materials regarding the programs or projects funded pursuant to their grant. The credit policy and logo files are available on the [Partner Tools](#) section of the Metro Arts website at: www.metroartsnashville.gov.

As a reminder, as you're sharing about your work, tagging Metro Arts helps us continue to promote the work you're doing and better keep in touch with the work you're doing to let you know as other opportunities might become available.



Maintaining Good Standing

To maintain good standing throughout the grant period, a grantee must:

- Meet all requirements stated in the guidelines and grant contract (including spending grant funds as described in the grant contract).
- Follow the [Metro Arts logo and credit policy](#).
- Submit and complete all required documentation and activities, including but not limited to contracts, check-in meetings, final expense reports, closeout reports, and any other information that Metro Arts may request on or before the deadline.
- Notify Metro Arts of any active criminal or civil litigation, investigations, reviews, or criminal or other misconduct proceedings of or against the grantee during the grant period.

Maintaining Good Standing

An organization's subsequent grant application may be denied eligibility if any of these requirements are not met. If you have any questions about whether you are in good standing or if you are outside of these requirements, please contact Metro Arts staff.

If an organization loses its good standing status for any of the reasons above, the organization will be sent documentation in writing of what requirements have not been met and what steps need to be taken to return to good standing status. If an organization is not in good standing at the end of a grant cycle, future grant funds may be withheld until such time as the identified issues are resolved.



Auditing Policy

As a department of Metro government receiving federal funds, Metro Arts is required to review and audit up to 10% of distributed funds annually.

If an organization is selected for auditing, a site visit with Metro Arts staff will be scheduled at which time the organization may be asked to provide:

- Year-to-date grant expenditures
- Payment records
- Payroll records
- Electronic and printed promotional materials showing Metro Arts logo usage according to the Metro Arts Credit Policy
- Other documentation showing details as required by the Operating Support grant guidelines



Auditing Policy

Metro Arts will provide a detailed list of items that will need to be collected and reviewed prior to the scheduled site visit. A written report of the visit will be provided to the organization after the review is complete. Metro Arts staff may report negative findings to the Arts Commission and Metro's Office of Financial Accountability. Unresolved or recurring negative findings may result in a change to the organization's good standing status.

Application Checklist

- Read the FY27 Operating Support Grant Guidelines.
- Attend an information session and/or watch the pre-recorded informational video. (Check there! This video is separated into chapters, so you may choose to keep it and/or the guidelines open as you complete your application.)
- If you have any questions, please contact arts.grants@nashville.gov before applying.
- First-time applicants are encouraged to take advantage of the Optional Preliminary Review deadline. That's June 5, 2026 at 4:59pm.

Application Questions

All applicants must answer the seven (7) required, scored questions. The scoring rubric is included in the guidelines and on Submittable as you are completing the application. A resource guide including tips for preparing your responses is available on the Metro Arts website. There are a total of 70 possible points.

Application Questions

1. What does your organization do?

Did not answer	Does not meet criteria	Somewhat meets criteria	Meets criteria	Exceeds criteria
0	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
No answer provided.	Organization mission is not described. Artistic programming is not central to the organization.	Artistic programming is identified but not clearly tied to organization mission. Detail about value of artistic programming is missing or hard to determine.	Artistic programming reflects organization mission. Describes value of artistic programming. Activities and programming are proportionally appropriate for the size of the organization.	Artistic programming reflects organization mission. Mission and programming are compelling, significant, and original. Describes value of artistic programming. Activities and programming are proportionally appropriate for the size of the organization.

Application Questions

- How do you define the community or communities that your organizational work supports? As part of your answer, please comment on how your work increases accessibility to the arts.

Did not answer	Does not meet criteria	Somewhat meets criteria	Meets criteria	Exceeds criteria
0	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
No answer provided.	Community or communities are not identified. Applicant does not provide evidence of a desire, plan, or example of engaging historically underresourced communities.	Community or communities are generally described. Applicant states a desire to engage historically underresourced communities but does not provide specific examples.	Community or communities are clearly defined and applicant demonstrates one strategy of engaging historically underresourced communities.	Community or communities are clearly defined and applicant demonstrates evidence of engaging historically underresourced communities through more than one strategy.

Application Questions

3. How does your organization work with the community in making plans and/or decisions for programs?

Did not answer	Does not meet criteria	Somewhat meets criteria	Meets criteria	Exceeds criteria
0	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
No answer provided.	Process shows minimal or no community collaboration. No examples are provided of how community feedback is considered in decision making.	Process shows some community collaboration, where community feedback is considered in decision making.	Process shows authentic community collaboration, where multiple and diverse voices are represented in decision-making process. Provides example of how community feedback directly impacts decision making.	Process shows authentic community collaboration, where multiple and diverse voices are included and essential in decision-making process. Provides thorough example of how community feedback directly impacts decision making.

Application Questions

4. What is the impact of your organization's work?

Did not answer	Does not meet criteria	Somewhat meets criteria	Meets criteria	Exceeds criteria
0	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
No answer provided.	Response does not consider how community/ participants benefit or how artists benefit from organizational work.	Response includes some consideration of community/ participants benefit or artist benefit. Response lacks specific detail.	Response includes example of community/ participant benefits as well as artist benefit. Response includes description of goals and how progress is tracked.	Response includes compelling descriptions of community/participant benefits as well as artist benefit. Response includes clear description of goals and how success, evaluation, and impact are measured and monitored.

Application Questions

5. What is the vision for your work in the year ahead? How will your organization contribute to the quality and diversity of the creative and arts community within Nashville's arts ecosystem?

Did not answer	Does not meet criteria	Somewhat meets criteria	Meets criteria	Exceeds criteria
0	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
No answer provided.	Response does not include forward looking vision. Response does not provide examples of contributions to the Nashville arts and creative community.	Response demonstrates some commitment to moving the organization forward. Response vaguely describes how organizational work contributes to the Nashville arts and creative community.	Response demonstrates a vision and commitment to moving the organization forward. Response provides at least one concrete example of how organizational work uniquely contributes to the Nashville arts and creative community.	Response demonstrates a vision and commitment to moving the organization forward. The vision is compelling, intentional, and obtainable. Response provides more than one concrete example of how organizational work uniquely contributes to the Nashville arts and creative community.

Application Questions

6. What specific challenges is your organization having now and/or anticipating? How has or will your organization adapt to and navigate those challenges?

Did not answer	Does not meet criteria	Somewhat meets criteria	Meets criteria	Exceeds criteria
0	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
No answer provided.	Response provides example of one or more challenges but no evidence of adaptability or problem-solving.	Response provides an example of responding to a challenge and evidence of problem-solving.	Response shows a process of monitoring and proactively addressing challenges. Describes an example of a challenge and evidence of adaptability and problem-solving.	Response shows a process of regularly monitoring and proactively addressing challenges. Thoroughly describes an example of a challenge and evidence of adaptability, problem-solving, and implementation of lesson(s) learned.

Application Questions

7. Explain the process for long-term or strategic planning. If your organization does not have a long-term or strategic plan, how do you design programs and activities for the future?

Did not answer	Does not meet criteria	Somewhat meets criteria	Meets criteria	Exceeds criteria
0	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
No answer provided.	Explanation shows no evidence of intentional planning process.	Explanation of planning shows some evidence of a process. Response includes some evidence of internal or external factors. Response does not describe how the community's needs are represented in long-term plans.	Explanation of planning shows evidence of intentional process that considers internal and external factors. Response describes how the community's needs are represented in long-term plans. Response includes information on how administrative staff, board members, and/or volunteers make plans, as appropriate for the size of the organization.	Explanation of planning shows evidence of intentional process that considers internal and external factors. Response describes how the community's needs are determined and represented in long-term plans. Response provides example of how planning incorporates tools for monitoring and evaluating ongoing organizational work. Response includes information on how administrative staff, board members, and/or volunteers make plans, appropriate for the size of the organization.

Thank You!!!

