



# GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW GUIDE

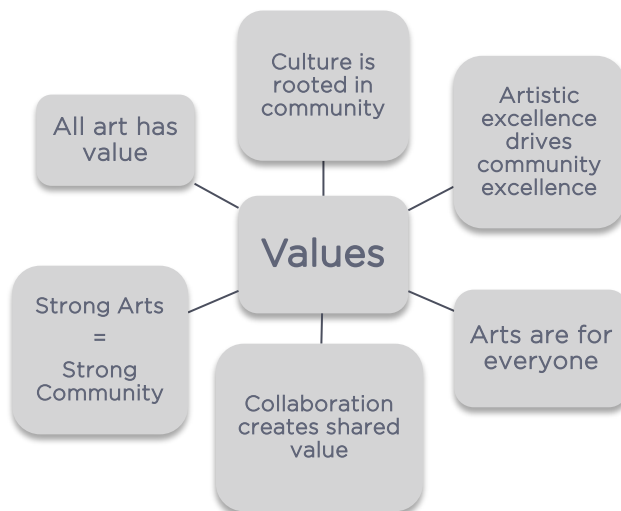
## ABOUT METRO ARTS

METRO ARTS, Nashville's Office of Arts + Culture, is a department of Metro Government of Nashville-Davidson County and was created by Metro Charter in 1978. Metro Arts serves as the designated driver and facilitator of programs, policies and practices that support our arts and cultural vibrancy.

The work of Metro Arts is anchored in the idea that arts and culture are created and consumed in a dynamic ecosystem within the community. Nashville's creative ecosystem is substantially more robust than comparable cities, with a large number of nonprofit cultural organizations, small and large arts-related businesses, music and publishing corporations, schools and universities, and individual artists and creative workers of all types. Supporting all of these formal and structured creative entities are the thousands of Nashvillians who attend and support arts activities throughout the city.

Metro Arts believes that ALL Nashvillians should be able to participate in a creative life. In order to facilitate an equitable community through the arts, we must first have a common belief system. Metro Arts believes that 1) the ability to express and celebrate cultural traditions is vital to a democratic society; 2) artists and cultural creators have a unique role in re-imagining a more equitable reality; and 3) the future of the arts and culture ecosystem is dependent on the inclusion of those who have historically been underrepresented.

Mission + Vision | to drive a **EQUITABLE** and **VIBRANT** community through the arts



## Metro Arts Scoring Process

Review panels play an important role in Metro Arts' grant-making process by providing breadth in experiences and diversity of perspectives. Panelist must live in Davidson County, disclose any real or potential conflicts of interest, and uphold the values articulated in the [Metro Arts Cultural Equity Statement](#). We aim to recruit panel members who truly care about the arts and reflect our community through diversity in age, race/cultural identity, neighborhoods, physical abilities, professional expertise and personal interest.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Review all grant application materials, including narratives, proposed budget, support materials, and GivingMatters.com profile data.
2. Review grant descriptions and scoring criteria.
3. Provide a score and accompanying comments for each section of the application. Applicants will have access to their score sheets after awards have been announced. Many applicants use this feedback to strengthen future applications.
4. Preliminary scores and comments must be completed prior to the panel review day.
5. On the panel review day, you will review and score applications with the other assigned panelists in a public meeting format. You will be able to ask clarifying questions of the applicant's in this meeting. All questions must be related to the project proposal being reviewed.
6. After all applications have been reviewed, each application will be assigned an average score. The panel will review these scores and vote to approve them before the panel meeting is adjourned.

## APPLICATION SECTIONS

**GivingMatters.com Profile Data:** Maintaining a profile on this site is a requirement of all Metro Arts applicants. The profile provides a substantial overview of the nonprofit that includes its mission, background, recent accomplishments, program descriptions, governance, senior leadership, and financial history. Profiles provide reviewers with a snapshot of the history and current operations of the organization applying for funding. GivingMatters.com profiles are included as attachments to the application.

**The Art:** All answers in this section should address artistic and cultural merit. Components discussed here will include the type of artistic genres that will be used in programming, qualifications of the lead artist(s), how standards will be defined, and what artistic goals/outcomes the program will produce.

**The Community:** Answers provided in this section describe the organization's ability to engage the community effectively. Answers should include evidence that the organization understands the community it is trying to serve, evidence that the program offerings are something that fills an artistic/cultural need, and that the program has been developed with a focus on arts access.

**The Organization:** This section of the application addresses the organization's overall health as a nonprofit organization. Much of the information used to score this section is found in the GivingMatters.com profile. Areas that influence the overall health of a nonprofit are the size and make-up of the governing board of directors, qualifications and abilities of staff, leadership demographics in relation to the population being served, regular organizational assessment, and short and long-term goal setting.

**Financial Health Assessment (Operating Support Only):** This section of the application will be adjudicated by a panel of qualified accountants or other financial professionals. Their scores will be based on a review of the organization's financial reports from the most recently completed fiscal years and the responses provided in the financial health assessment questions.

## HOW TO ASSIGN A SCORE

You will assign a numeric score to each section of the application: The Art, The Community, and The Organization. The numeric ranges shown here correlate with the scoring descriptions described below.

Inadequate	Fair	Good	Strong	Exceptional
0-9	10-17	18-22	23-26	27-30

**Exceptional:** The applicant *comprehensively* addresses an identifiable artistic/cultural need in the community. The applicant has provided *overwhelming* evidence throughout the application that demonstrates that all the funding criteria are met. The plans are clear, well-articulated, and appropriate. The budget is realistic, comprehensive, and carefully aligned with the narrative.

**Strong:** The applicant *strongly* addresses an identifiable artistic/cultural need in the community. The applicant has provided *clear* evidence throughout the application that demonstrates that all the funding criteria are met. The plans are clear, well-articulated, and appropriate. The budget is realistic, comprehensive, and carefully aligned with the narrative.

**Good:** The applicant *partially* addresses an identifiable artistic/cultural need in the community. The applicant has provided *adequate* evidence throughout the application that demonstrates that all the funding criteria are met. The plans are clear and appropriate, but are not well-expressed. The budget is realistic and reasonably aligned with the narrative.

**Fair:** The applicant *narrowly* addresses an identifiable artistic/cultural need in the community. The applicant has provided *insufficient* evidence throughout the application that demonstrates that all the funding criteria are met. The plans are appropriate, but with limited detail. The budget is incomplete or is not well aligned with the narrative.

**Inadequate:** The applicant *does not* address an identifiable artistic/cultural need in the community. The applicant has *not* provided any evidence in the application that demonstrates that the funding criteria are met. The plans are not appropriate and/or are lacking details. The budget is incomplete and/or does not align with the narrative.

<b>THE ART</b> <i>Scoring Criteria</i>		
<b>Artistic + Cultural Merit</b>	<b>Artistic Vision</b>	<b>Creative Workforce</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describes the unique artistic components, genres, and/or creative elements of the project</li> <li>• Programming demonstrates artistic excellence and cultural standards</li> <li>• Expands the artistic and cultural knowledge of artistic leaders and participants</li> <li>• Innovatively addresses an artistic/cultural need</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops creative and relevant artistic and cultural programs that are aligned with the organization's mission, vision, and goals.</li> <li>• Articulates specific artistic goals/outcomes</li> <li>• Utilizes an approach/process that details the creative content of the project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows evidence of employing qualified artists and program leaders</li> <li>• Engages supporting artists and program leaders who have applicable experience and cultural knowledge</li> <li>• Includes a wide range of artists, creators, and project staff from a variety backgrounds</li> </ul>

<b>THE ORGANIZATION</b> <i>Criteria</i>			
<b>Planning</b>	<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Governance</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project/programs align with organization's overall mission</li> <li>• Financial plan is appropriate for the size and scope of project or programs</li> <li>• Staffing plans are realistic and sustainable</li> <li>• Is financially stable and has a plan for avoiding operating deficits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior leaders have applicable experience, expertise, and are reflective of the community it serves</li> <li>• Recruits, evaluates, and retains a wide range of administrative and program staff that are reflective of the community it serves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultivates a board of directors that is reflective of the community it serves</li> <li>• Board of directors provides sound leadership and substantial financial support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilizes a board-approved strategic plan that regularly evaluates programs and processes for efficiency, professionalism, quality, and effectiveness</li> <li>• Creates and implements policies and procedures that increases equity and sustainability within the organization</li> </ul>

<b>THE COMMUNITY</b> <i>Scoring Criteria</i>		
<b>Accessible to the Community</b>	<b>Understands the Community</b>	<b>Benefits the Community</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project times, locations, facilities and technology are accessible to the public</li> <li>• Considers affordability in program development and/or offers free admission, scholarships, or sliding scale options</li> <li>• Engages participants through a variety of means</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands the community it serves (geographical, cultural, economic, racial, educational relevance, etc.)</li> <li>• Utilizes partnerships to effectively serve specific communities</li> <li>• Collects participant feedback and uses the results to improve community-focused programming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates social, educational, cultural and/or economic relevance for the community</li> <li>• Fosters deeper participation in arts and culture activities</li> <li>• Contributes to vibrant, creative neighborhoods</li> <li>• Engages a strong base of community volunteers to help the organization achieve its mission</li> </ul>

### FINANCIAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT (BASIC AND CORE OPERATING SUPPORT APPLICATIONS ONLY)

Forms 990, Audited Financial Statements, and narrative answers from the Financial Health section of each application are reviewed by a Financial Review Panel. This group of panelists consists of local CPAs or other finance professionals.

<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Strong</b>	<b>Exceptional</b>
0-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10

<b>FINANCIAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT</b> <i>Scoring Criteria</i>	
<b>Basic Operating Support</b>	<b>Core Operating Support</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Profitability:</b> Does this organization cover its costs with unrestricted revenue? Is the percentage of unrestricted surplus over deficit at least 1%? (2 points)</li> <li>• <b>Revenue Dynamics:</b> Does the organization have diverse revenue streams? Are these revenue streams reliable? (2 points)</li> <li>• <b>Expense Dynamics:</b> Are expenses right-sized with the size and scope of the organization? Do changes in expenses match with changes in revenue? (2 points)</li> <li>• <b>Balance Sheet Composition:</b> Does this organization have positive net assets? Are the net assets mostly unrestricted? If there is debt, is there a realistic repayment plan in place? (2 points)</li> <li>• <b>Liquidity:</b> Does this organization have at least 2 months of cash and/or other unrestricted liquid net assets? Is the organization saving money for working capital or risk capital? If not, is there a plan to develop a reserve fund? (2 points)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Revenue and Expenses:</b> Does this organization cover its costs with unrestricted revenue? Does the organization have diverse revenue streams? Do changes in expenses match changes in revenue? Has the organization had positive net assets in the last 2 fiscal years? If not, was this addressed in the financial narrative? (5 points)</li> <li>• <b>Growth/Sustainability:</b> Has this organization shown growth in revenue development in the last 2 fiscal years? Are they in a healthy place to continue offering programs in FY18? Is the board regularly apprised of budget to actuals? Does the organization use an accounting system to manage money? Does the organization have a plan for handling cash flow issues? Have they developed, or are planning to develop, a reserve fund? (5 points)</li> </ul>

## CATALYST PROJECT SUPPORT (ARTS ORGANIZATIONS ONLY)

Catalyst Project Support Grants differ from other Metro Arts' grant programs. It is designed to support organizational assessment that gives arts organizations the time and money to identify what is holding them back from fully realizing their mission. Because of the internal facing nature of this program, this application includes very specific questions related to the issue the applicant has identified and how they plan to address it. The scoring rubric below is used to score applications in this category. Applications reviewed in this category can earn up to 5 points in each criteria with a maximum 30 points possible per application.

Inadequate	Fair	Good	Strong	Exceptional
0-9	10-17	18-22	23-26	27-30

<b>CATALYST</b> <i>Criteria</i>					
<b>Reflective Analysis</b>	<b>Significance</b>	<b>Catalyst</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Measurement</b>	<b>Sustainability</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides a completed analysis of the current situation related to the issue</li> <li>Proposes a solution that is viable and would result in increased organizational capacity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Makes a strong case for why this is the most pressing need for the organization at this time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies an outside advisor (or the type of advisor needed) who has the expertise to assist the organization with this project</li> <li>Makes a strong case for how this project will successfully address the issue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified key staff who will participate in the project</li> <li>Plans indicate that there will be little to no interruption to operations</li> <li>Board members are aware of the issue and are willing to participate in creating a solution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Articulates clearly how the organization will be different at the conclusion of the project</li> <li>Identifies how data will be collected and what the markers of success will be</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>States what is necessary to sustain change in this area</li> <li>Describes how the project will ultimately increase effectiveness in achieving their mission and serving their constituents</li> </ul>

## RANKING AND ALLOCATIONS

After the panel review meeting, Metro Arts staff will combine all of the panelists' scores from the public meeting, add the Financial Health score to that number, and assign a total score to each application. Applications are listed in order from highest to lowest to determine each application's *ranking*. Metro Arts staff and Commissioners will use these rankings to determine award allocations. Those with a higher ranking will receive a higher percentage of the amount they requested. Rarely do organizations receive the full request amount. The Grants Committee reviews the allocations and then sends those on to the full Commission for approval. Awards are announced immediately following Commission approval.