



# METRO NASHVILLE ARTS GRANTS & FUNDING FY25 PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

\*Subject to change with feedback

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Mission: We believe that arts drive a more vibrant and equitable community. We strive 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 that involve residents in all forms of arts and culture.

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# Allocation

# Previous Grant Cycles Metro Arts Grant Program Allocation - Operating

**Operating Grant Distribution by Percentage Amount Awarded**

Fiscal Year	Large	Mid-Size	Medium	Small	Micro	
<b>FY23</b>	\$1,491,287 (47%)	\$1,087,341 (40%)	\$450,489 (14%)	\$40,252 (13%)	\$3,446 (0.1%)	
<b>FY24</b>	\$1,471,288 (28%)	\$1,210,218 (23%)	\$752,410 (14%)	\$271,322.80 (5.2%)	\$84,123.18 (1.6%)	With supplementary payments /balloon

## Previous Grant Cycles Metro Arts Grant Program Allocation - Thrive

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>FY23 Allocation - \$(Confirming)</b>	<b>FY24*** Allocation \$908,000</b>
	<b>158,600 – Category 1</b>	<b>908,000</b>
	<b>20,000 – Category 2</b>	<b>1,805,265 (Post-Supplementary Metro Payments)**</b>
		<b>Difference - \$897,265</b>
<b>Awarded Totals</b>	<b>178,600 *</b>	<b>908,000*</b>

Source : \*Metro Arts Thrive Award page \*\* Metro Nashville Finance  
\*\*\* No category distinction in FY24



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# FY25 Metro Arts Grant Program Allocation – Staff

- **Recommendations to Consider :**

\$3,263,200 (Overall Grant Budget)

- \$900,000 (Proposed Allocation for Overall Thrive Grant Funding Budget ) =

\$2,363,000 (Proposed Allocation for Overall Operating Support Grant Budget)

**M.A Staff Recommends - that the allocation for Thrive be placed at \$900,000 to match the level of funding as awarded FY23-24**

- **Justification:** Given the significant increase in funding from \$xxxxx to \$908,000 during the FY23-24 cycle, we propose maintaining the Thrive allocation at \$900,000 for the upcoming fiscal year. This decision underscores our commitment to sustaining good faith efforts toward equitability. Recognizing that the additional funding provided by the larger Metro Nashville Government during FY23-24 will not be available this cycle, \$900,000 is a feasible and sustainable amount that aligns with Metro Arts' operating budget. Our aspiration is that \$900,000 would be a starting point of increased Thrive funding in the future- in no way can we return to less funding for the Thrive Program.



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# Panelist

## Panelist Criteria – Staff

- Must live or primarily work in Davidson County.
- Have a keen interest in the arts (as a working artist, participant, audience member, advocate, educator, etc.)
- Must not be an employee of Metro government (including Metro Nashville Public Schools).
- not be an employee of an organization applying for grant funding
- Must have a basic understanding or previous experience of grant-making or previous grant panelist experience
- **This is the same as FY23-24**
- **Recommendations to Consider :**
  - **Payment to Panelist (M.A Staff Recommends \$350)**
  - **Conflict of Panelist and Applicant ( M.A Staff Recommends that a panelist should not also be able to be an Operating Grant or Thrive project applicant)**
  - **Any other conflicts would be outlined in a signed COI form as provided by Metro Legal**
- **Justification :** Metro Arts recommends compensating panelists \$350 to recognize their expertise, align with industry standards, and promote equitable access to participation. This ensures a high-quality, diverse review process. Additionally, panelists should not apply for Operational or Thrive grants to maintain objectivity, transparency, and trust in the grant review process. This policy aligns with ethical standards and safeguards the integrity of Metro Arts' funding decisions.



# Panelist Operating & Thrive Review Criteria - Staff

- Review grant guidelines and scoring criteria.
- Review all grant application materials, including narratives, proposed budget, support materials, and Submittable.com profile data.
- Provide a score and accompanying comments for each section of the application using the scoring criteria and rubrics.
- Complete Preliminary scores and comments must be completed prior to the end of the panel review day.
- Review these scores and vote to approve them before the panel meeting is adjourned.
- **This is the same as FY23-24**
- **Recommendations to Consider :**
  - **Change of Venue for Scoring ( M.A Staff Recommends that a panelist scoring be done in-person)**
  - **Change of Time Frame for Scoring ( M.A Staff Recommends that a panelist scoring be done in-person, over a two-day period for each funding category)**
- **Justification :** Metro Arts recommends conducting panelist scoring in person to enhance collaboration, transparency, and accountability, ensuring more equitable and informed evaluations. Additionally, implementing a two-day scoring period for each grant category provides adequate time for thorough review, prevents fatigue, and allows for category-specific focus. Historically scoring location and timeframe was not apart of criteria but would take roughly 4 weeks to complete.

# Panelist Operating & Thrive Scoring Guideline – Staff

- Same as FY23-24
- **Recommendations to Consider : NONE**
- **Justification :** Metro Arts recommends maintaining the current panelist scoring guidelines, as there is no change to the application process that would necessitate a revision. The existing scoring framework has proven effective in aligning with the community-driven nature of the grant process, ensuring inclusivity, equity, and responsiveness to community needs. Keeping the guidelines intact supports continuity, respects the established approach, and upholds trust in a process that prioritizes community voices and perspectives.



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# Metro Arts Operating Grant Implementation

# Operating Support Grant Applicant Criteria – Staff

- **This is the same as FY23-24**
- **Recommendations to Consider: NONE**
- **Justification:** Metro Arts recommends no changes to the operating criteria, as the application process remains unchanged and continues to align with the program's goals. The current criteria reflect a community-driven approach, ensuring inclusivity, equity, and responsiveness to local needs. By maintaining consistency, we preserve a trusted framework that supports applicants and reinforces Metro Arts' commitment to empowering the community through a transparent and equitable process.

# Operating Support Grant Guidelines - Staff

- **This is the same as FY23-24**
- **Recommendations to Consider: Addition of a Midpoint Report**
- **Justification:** Metro Arts recommends no changes to the operating criteria, as the application process remains unchanged and continues to align with the program's goals. The current criteria reflect a community-driven approach, ensuring inclusivity, equity, and responsiveness to local needs. The only addition to the process is the implementation of a Midpoint Report, which will help gauge any potential concerns or updates, especially given the truncated grant cycle. By maintaining consistency and adding this new element, we preserve a trusted framework while ensuring effective monitoring and support for grantees.



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# Metro Arts Thrive Funding Program

# Thrive Project Funding Applicant Criteria – Staff

- **Recommendations to Consider:**
- **Art Collectives (Metro Arts Staff is recommending to not allow any organization holding a Nonprofit status to be eligible for Thrive Funding.)**
- **Add option with Artist Collectives (Artist Collectives are art organizations that do not hold nonprofit 501c3 status, or a group(s) of individual arts. Ex. Neighborhood groups) Art Collectives must have an artist identified to lead the project.**
- **Justification :** Metro Arts recommends removing nonprofit organizations from Thrive funding considerations to level the playing field for organizations that lack the resources or privilege to obtain nonprofit status. Many grassroots, artist-led initiatives and community-based groups are excluded from funding opportunities simply because they do not have 501(c)(3) status, despite their valuable contributions to the arts and culture of our community. By directing nonprofit organizations to apply under the Operating Support grant category, we ensure that Thrive funding is focused on artist collectives and neighborhood groups—organizations that operate outside traditional nonprofit structures but still play a vital role in fostering creativity and inclusivity. This adjustment ensures that more organizations, regardless of their formal legal status, have equitable access to funding opportunities.



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# Thrive Project Funding Guidelines - Staff

**Recommendations to Consider: 1-6** Metro Arts recommends several key updates to the Thrive funding guidelines for FY24-25 to maintain compliance, consistency, and ensure alignment with program objectives. These adjustments address specific concerns and reinforce the program's commitment to equity, transparency, and community engagement:

**1. Removal of Murals as Eligible Projects - Justification** : Murals are temporary by nature and do not consistently meet the guideline of being "open and accessible to the public" over time. While murals can be impactful, their transient existence often does not provide sustained access for the public, which is a core tenet of Thrive funding. This change ensures that funded projects have lasting, equitable public access.

**2. One Submission Per Applicant - Justification**: To streamline the process and ensure fairness, limiting applicants to one submission prevents overrepresentation and ensures all organizations have an equal opportunity to be considered for funding. This adjustment allows for more diverse participation while maintaining balance in the grant process.





# Thrive Project Funding Guidelines - Staff

**3. Background Checks for Youth-Engaging Projects – Justification** : Any projects involving youth will now require documentation that background checks have been completed for individuals working directly with minors. This ensures the safety and well-being of young participants and upholds the highest standards of responsibility and care in youth engagement.

**4. Priority Funding for Underrepresented Council Districts – Justification** : To further promote equity, we recommend giving priority to projects located in underrepresented council districts. This ensures that funding is directed toward areas that may have historically lacked access to arts and cultural opportunities, fostering inclusivity and supporting underserved communities.

**5. Use of Fiscal Agents for Payment – Justification** : To comply with local and state laws with financial process and that ensure accountability, we require that payment be processed through a fiscal agent. This mechanism ensures that funds are managed responsibly and in compliance with Metro Arts' operational standards. These recommendations are designed to maintain the integrity of the Thrive funding program while ensuring that projects funded through Metro Arts align with the program's core values of equity, community engagement, and public access.



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# Thrive Project Funding Guidelines - Staff

**6. Grantee Application Timeline – Justification** : The Conciliation Workgroup recommends a two-week training period and an additional two-week timeframe for grantees to edit their proposals, secure fiscal sponsors, upload required documents and resubmit. This extended timeline ensures that grantees have sufficient support to refine their applications and meet all requirements. The following updates are designed to enhance accountability, allow time to complete the following documents, and clarify expectations:

- **Letters of Fiscal Agency and Agreement:** These documents ensure that all parties clearly understand their roles and responsibilities, providing the necessary structure for transparent financial management.
- **Updates for Previously Submitted Projects:** Allowing updates ensures that grantees can adjust their proposals to reflect any changes or improvements since their initial submission, maintaining flexibility within the process.
- **Grant Spending Plan:** If not previously included, the addition of a detailed spending plan ensures that funds are allocated effectively and transparently, promoting responsible financial management.
- **Fiscal Agents Contract:** Including the Fiscal Agent’s contract, along with the Fiscal Agency Letter of Agreement and exhibits, ensures compliance and protects both parties involved in managing grant funds. The upfront disbursement of 100% of the funding, helps streamline the funding process while providing grantees with the resources needed to begin their projects.



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# Fiscal Agents

## Previous Thrive Payment Mechanism

Previously, Thrive funding was processed through the procurement process, which was not the correct or method for disbursing funds to individuals for grants or funding. Despite this approach being used for nearly 10 years, it was determined that this method did not align with the Metro Code or state law. In 2024, as part of the Conciliation Agreement, a new and compliant funding mechanism was established. Through the collaboration of the Conciliation Work Group, the framework for using a Fiscal Agent was developed and recommended, ensuring that funds are distributed in a manner that is both transparent and in compliance with legal and financial standards.



## Thrive Project Funding Mechanism - FISCAL AGENT - Staff

•For the FY25 cycle, the Thrive program will comply with state and local policies requiring grants to be awarded exclusively to nonprofit organizations. Applicants who are not registered Tennessee 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations must work with a fiscal agent to receive a Metro Arts Thrive Project Funding. Applicants may select their own fiscal agent or choose from a list of vetted fiscal agents provided by Metro Arts. Fiscal agents may charge up to a 10% administrative fee, which will be determined by agreement between the applicant and the fiscal agent. Fiscal agents and applicants must complete a Letter of Agreement outlining their respective roles and responsibilities, including fund disbursement, reporting, and other logistics. Applicants will also be required to submit a Grant Spending Plan that details estimated project costs.

### •**Recommendations to Consider :**

- **Fiscal Agents to be the mechanism for which Thrive Awardees are paid.**
- **Confirmed List of Fiscal Agents – Metro Arts will provide a list of 5-7 fiscal agents who have pledged to be fiscal agents at 0% admin fee , while also still allowing an awardee to chose their own**
- **Those who would like to serve as Fiscal Agents may not also be considered for Thrive awards.**
- **Being a fiscal agent does not disqualify you as an Operating Support Grant awardee.**



# Thrive Project Funding Mechanism - FISCAL AGENT - Staff

## Justifications:

**1.Compliance with Legal and Financial Standards:** The use of Fiscal Agents ensures that Thrive Awardees receive payments in a manner consistent with financial and legal guidelines. This mechanism was developed in collaboration with the Metro Human Relations Conciliation Agreement and complies with all necessary requirements for transparent and accountable fund distribution.

**2.Confirmed List of Fiscal Agents:** Metro Arts/Conciliation Workgroup will provide a list of 5-7 trusted fiscal agents who have pledged to serve without charging an administrative fee. This ensures that awardees have access to reputable, cost-effective fiscal management services. Awardees are also free to choose a fiscal agent from outside the list if they prefer, providing flexibility while maintaining compliance.

**3.Maintaining Fairness and Objectivity:** To avoid conflicts of interest, those serving as Fiscal Agents will not be eligible to receive Thrive Awards. However, being a Fiscal Agent does not disqualify individuals or organizations from applying for Operating Support Grants (They must still meet all eligibility criteria as described in the guidelines). This ensures fairness in the grantmaking process while maintaining the integrity of the fiscal agency role.



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# Award Amounts

# Previous Operating Support Grant Award Amount

Base Percentage (+ Panel Recommendation) = Ask Amount

## Base Percentage

Micro (Operating Budget <\$25K)	75% of budget or 2K min grant
Small (Operating Budget \$25K-\$100K)	50% of budget or 3K min grant
Medium (Operating Budget \$100K-\$500K)	25% of budget
Mid-Sized (Operating Budget \$500K-3M)	17% of budget or 120K max grant
Large (Operating Budget >\$3M)	1.8% of budget or 200K max grant

## Panel Recommendation

An average panel score results in a score 0-100%, leading to the following:

<50%	Not funded <i>Conversation with Metro Arts staff, followed by opportunity for re-application</i>
50%-70%	Panel discussion for funding recommendation
70%-93%	Full ask
>93% or extraordinary leadership in any key advancement criteria	Additional funding recommendation on top of base award

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## Previous Operating Support Grant Award Amount

- The allocation formula used in last year's Thrive funding cycle was developed in good faith, with extensive community engagement and careful consideration of the needs of artists and organizations across Metro Nashville. This process involved input from a diverse range of stakeholders, ensuring that the funding distribution was equitable and responsive to the community's priorities. However, it was also based on the assumption that the overall Metro Arts budget would fall between \$13-14 million, which provided a financial framework for the allocation. As the budget dynamics change, we must reassess the allocation process to ensure it continues to align with available resources while maintaining our commitment to fairness and community-driven decision-making.
- The grey Column Represents – FY25 Applications adjusted using the formulas from FY23-24
- The yellow column represents – FY25 Applications adjusted using the formulas from FY23-25 and then scaled using the minimums and maximums of each category. The yellow is the total amount of Max Asks using the formula from FY23-24

9,981,398.67	6,474,747.08
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# Operating Support Grant Award Amount – Staff

## "FY25 Proposed Proportion of Applications per Category"

- In the community Engagement session this was known as “ Option 2”
- **Recommendation to Consider:**

FY25 Operating Option	Fund per Award	Allocated Total	Requested Total
Large Category   50% applicants awarded	100000 (4 out of 8)	\$400,000 (17%)*	\$800,000
Mid-Size Category   48% applicants awarded	50000 (10 out of 21)	\$500,000 (22%)*	\$1,050,000
Medium Category   50% applicants awarded	50000 (13 out of 26)	\$650,000 (28%)*	\$1,300,000
Small Category   73% applicants awarded	25000 (22 out of 30)	\$550,000 (24%)*	\$750,000
Micro Category   66% applicants awarded	12500 (16 out of 24)	\$200,000 (9%)*	\$300,000
		<b>\$2,300,000</b>	<b>\$4,200,000</b>

\* Overall allocation of operating budget.



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# Operating Support Award Amount – Staff

## Justifications – “Option 2”

The proposed category award allocation is designed to ensure a fair and competitive distribution of funds based on the number of applications received in each category. By assigning a set amount of funding per category, the allocation remains proportional to the demand and scale of the respective areas of focus. This approach allows for a clear and structured distribution of funds, where applications are scored and ranked within each category. The highest-ranking applicants in each category, up to the established cutoff, will receive awards.

This method is preferred because it maintains a competitive environment, ensuring that organizations are evaluated based on their peers within the same category. It fosters a more equitable process by preventing cross-category comparison, which can lead to disparities when organizations differ significantly in size, scope, or focus. By focusing on category-specific evaluations, this approach ensures that awards are allocated in a way that recognizes the unique needs and strengths of organizations within each category, while preserving fairness and transparency in the process.

**This is the Metro Arts Staff recommendation , as well as the voted recommendation from the Grants and Funding Committee.**



# Thrive Project Funding Amounts – Options – Staff

\* Overall Allocation of Operating Budget

FY25 Thrive Services Budget	A* Flat Funding (Top 180 Applicants)	B (24% of Ask)	B Surplus
900,000	\$900,000.00	890666.08	(+) \$9,333.9216

- Option A – Ranked Score of Top 180 flat funding amount of \$5,000
- Option B – All awardees receive 24% of ask , as long as score is over %70 (Smallest award \$480 – Largest award \$5,000)
- **Recommendations to Consider :**
  - **Option A - Staff is recommending Option A ,**
  - **Justification : as it does not leave a surplus and continues the ideology of award based on the merit of the application.**

