



METRO ARTS

NASHVILLE OFFICE OF ARTS + CULTURE

Operating Support Grant Criteria & Guidelines

FY27 GRANT CYCLE | FOR ACTIVITIES TAKING PLACE October 2026 – June 2027

APPLICATION DEADLINES

Optional Preliminary Review: Friday, June 5, 2026, 4:59 p.m. CST

Final Deadline: Friday, June 26, 2026, 4:59pm

Submit all applications online at <https://mnac.submittable.com/submit>

For application assistance or for first-time applicants, please contact us at Arts.Grants@nashville.gov

Metro Nashville Arts Commission

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 196300

Nashville TN 37219-6300

615.862.6720 phone | 615.862.6731 fax

arts@nashville.gov | metroartsnashville.gov

@metroartsnash on Instagram, Facebook and BlueSky



Funding for this program is provided by the Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County

Nondiscrimination Policies, ADA Compliance & Accessibility

The Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, or ability in admission to, access to, or operations of its programs, services, or activities. Discrimination against any person in recruitment, examination, appointment, training, promotion, retention, discipline, or any other employment practices because of non-merit factors shall be prohibited.

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

Individuals who have hearing impairment and require auxiliary aids and services for effective communication in the programs, services, or activities of the Metro Nashville Arts Commission are invited to make their needs and preferences known to the ADA Compliance Coordinator. This notice can be made available in alternative formats through the office of the ADA Compliance Coordinator, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

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.

Si necesita ayuda con el idioma, háganoslo saber. Obtendremos un intérprete que puede ayudarnos a comunicarnos entre nosotros.

إذا كنت بحاجة إلى مساعدة لغوية ، فالرجاء إخبارنا بذلك. سوف نحصل على مترجم يمكنه مساعدتنا في التواصل مع بعضنا البعض.

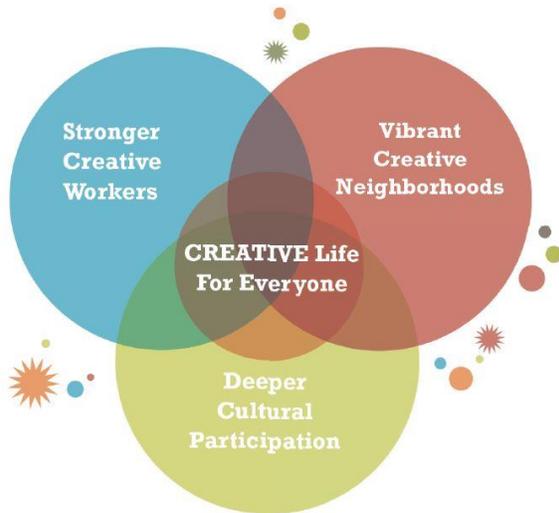
Ji kerema xwe em bizanin eger hûn bi alîkariya înglîzî re pêdivî ye. Em ê wergirtineke kurdî bibînin ku dikare alîkariya me bi hev re biaxivin.

Forward inquiries concerning nondiscrimination policies, other than ADA compliance, to:

Metro Human Relations Commission, 150 2nd Ave N., Suite 217, 37201 P.O. Box 196300, Nashville, TN 37219-6300

About Metro Arts Grants

A Creative Life For Everyone



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

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.

All funding approvals and awards are contingent on the budget allocated to Metro Arts each year. Funding is not guaranteed, and overall funding may vary from year to year.

About Metro Arts

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.

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.

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)
- Have an IRS Letter of Determination with an effective date of exemption of May 1, 2025, or earlier*
- Must be active and in good standing with the Tennessee Secretary of State's Business Services Division
- Have a business address located in Davidson County
- Operate the majority of its programs in Nashville
- 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.

*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.

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

Metro Arts only provides Operating Support grants to eligible organizations. For project support, please see Thrive Grant Guidelines. Please contact Metro Arts staff with any questions regarding eligibility.

Eligible Expenses

Metro Arts grant funding can only be used to pay for certain types of operating costs. Examples of allowed expenses are listed below. Please contact us with questions about eligible expenses.

Grant funds <u>CAN</u> be used for:
Salaries
Artist, technical, 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

Grant funds <u>CANNOT</u> be used for:
Capital Improvements
Reduction of Debts
Activities & Programs with Religious Practices or Intent
Political Lobbying Activities
Purchase of Real Property

Grant Cycle Time Frame

All FY27 grant activities must take place between the effective date of the contract, which is defined as the date the contract is signed by all required parties and filed with the Metro Clerk, and June 30, 2027. Final reports and closeout forms 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: 1) donations restricted to endowment funds, 2) in-kind contributions, or 3) donations or funds raised for capital projects. The information below will help you understand which grant category your organization falls in.

- **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

Access to resources and funding is a privilege. By honoring budget size in the formula, there is acknowledgement that smaller organizations have less access to resources and funding and require greater support of their total operating budget.

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. Awards will range within the category they fall in.

Base percentage formulas:

- Micro base percentage: 75% of most recent revenue, with a maximum \$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.

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 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/>.

Deadlines

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

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

Please submit early to avoid any last-minute technical difficulties. Metro Arts is not responsible for technical difficulties with the Submittable platform. The submission portal will automatically close after the final deadline. Applications that are not submitted before the deadline will not be captured or reviewed.

Important Dates *(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 30 – 31, 2026
Commission approval	August 20, 2026
Award notifications	August 21 – 24, 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

Metro Arts will host the following information sessions during the application period to review details regarding eligibility, the application and review process, and other logistics and process. First-time applicants and those who have not received funding in the past are especially encouraged to attend.

- Monday, May 18, 2026, 10:00am – 11:00am: Virtual information session (sign up on 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 an optional deadline for preliminary review. 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. 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. 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

Panelists will use a scoring 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 your records.

Funding Approval

The panelists' scores are reviewed by the Arts Commission Grants and Funding 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 also be publicly announced via press release and posted on the Metro Arts website.

Applicants denied funding will also be 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 well 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, jobs supported, 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 this grant. The credit policy and logo files are available on the [Partner Tools](#) section of the Metro Arts website.

Maintaining Good Standing

Maintaining good standing throughout the grant period is very important. A grantee maintains good standing by:

- Meeting all requirements stated in the guidelines and grant contract (including spending grant funds as described in the grant contract).
- Following the [Metro Arts logo and credit policy](#).
- Submitting and completing 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.
- Grantees must notify Metro Arts of any active investigations, reviews, or criminal or other misconduct proceedings of or against the grantee during the grant period.

An organization’s subsequent grant application may be denied eligibility if any of these requirements are not met. If you have any questions of 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 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

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.
- 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.
- Fill out an application on Submittable, including answering all required questions.
- Upload all required eligibility documents, including copy of 990, 990N, or 990EZ Postcard, IRS Letter of Determination with an effective date of exemption of May 1, 2025, or earlier, and background check attestation form if your organization works directly with minors.
- Submit application.

For further assistance or questions about FY27 General Operating Support Grants, please contact Metro Arts staff at arts.grants@nashville.gov.

Application Questions

All applicants must answer the seven (7) required, scored questions. The scoring rubric is included below. A resource guide including tips for preparing your responses is available on the Metro Arts website. The seven (7) scored questions are as follows:

1. What does your organization do?
Note: When applying on Submittable you will also upload photos plus optional, supplemental video or written materials that demonstrate your work.
2. 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.
3. How does your organization work with the community in making organizational and programmatic plans and/or decisions?
4. What is the impact of your organization's work?
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?
6. What specific organizational-level challenges are you encountering? How is your organization adapting and navigating those challenges?
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?

Scoring Rubric

Consider which rubric score and description best fits each response. The response doesn't have to fully match the stated description, and the range allows you to evaluate the response where it most accurately fits. Scores less than 7 should reflect a response to the question that is less than adequate.

Total possible points: 70

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
	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 merit and value of artistic programming is missing or hard to determine.	Artistic programming reflects organization mission. Merit and value of artistic programming is described. 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. Merit and value of artistic programming is described. Activities and programming are proportionally appropriate for the size of the organization.

2. 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
	Community is not identified. Applicant does not provide evidence of a desire, plan, or example of engaging underrepresented communities.	Community is generally described. Applicant states a desire to engage underrepresented communities but does not provide specific examples.	Community is clearly defined and applicant demonstrates one way of engaging underrepresented communities.	Community is clearly defined and applicant demonstrates evidence of engaging underrepresented communities through more than one strategy.

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

Did not answer	Does not meet criteria	Somewhat meets criteria	Meets criteria	Exceeds criteria
0	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
	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 voices are represented and essential in decision-making process. Provides one example of how community feedback directly impacts decision making.	Process shows authentic community collaboration, where multiple and diverse voices are represented and essential in decision-making process. Provides more than one example of how community feedback directly impacts decision making.

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
	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 strong 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.

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
	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 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 example of how organizational work uniquely contributes to the Nashville arts and creative community.

6. What specific organizational-level challenges are you encountering? How is your organization adapting and navigating 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
	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 one example of a challenge and evidence of adaptability and problem-solving.	Response shows a process of regularly monitoring and proactively addressing challenges. Describes more than one example of a challenge and evidence of adaptability, problem-solving, and lesson(s) learned.

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
	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 of how administrative staff, board members, and/or volunteers oversee planning, 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 represented in long-term plans. Response provides example of how planning is used as a tool for monitoring and evaluating ongoing organizational work. Response includes information of how administrative staff, board members, and/or volunteers oversee planning, appropriate for the size of the organization.