

**Bend Cultural Tourism Fund
Commission Meeting
Approved Meeting Minutes
February 28, 2022, 12:30pm-2:30pm
ZOOM Meeting**

In Attendance: Sandy Anderson; Rika Ayotte; Liora Sponko; Leah Rutz; Michael Gesme; Miguel Edwards; Eli Ashley (new); Amy Renalds (new); Valerie Warren, nonvoting member, arrived 1:30pm; Laurel MacMillan, Administrator; Shari Crandall, Minutes.

Absent: None

Guests: Lauren Silver, Zoom Grants

The meeting was called to order at 12:35pm.

I. Welcome/Introductions

MacMillan opened the meeting. Introductions were made by those in the ZOOM room, including Lauren Silver from Zoom Grants, and BCTF Commission candidates Eli Ashley and Amy Renalds.

II. Approve New Commissioners, Eli Ashley and Amy Renalds

Renalds, who moved from Palo Alto, CA to Bend 6 years ago, works at Hydro Flask as a community ambassador and executive assistant. Renalds has community grant funding experience both as a grant recipient and on a selection committee. Renalds champions arts and culture; she appreciates Bend's support of these, particularly demonstrated by BCTF.

Ashley moved to Bend 17 years ago. He has a 35-year background in nonprofit organizations, management of performing arts and related festivals. Since moving to Bend, Ashley has served on several local organizations, such as City Club of Central Oregon and United Way of Central Oregon. He loves the outdoors; he sees BCTF supercharging Bend arts and culture activities.

Action: Anderson moved, Sponko seconded, to approve Eli Ashley and Amy Renalds as new Commissioners.

Vote: The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

III. Commissioner Recruitment/Executive Committee Nominations

MacMillan noted BCTF Bylaws provide for 9 to 11 commissioners. With addition of the two new commissioners today, there are now nine. (See below: Current Commissioners, February 2022) As requested by the Commissioners last meeting, Visit Bend and BCTF promoted the vacancy. MacMillan requested the Commissioners keep in mind likely candidates.

Current Commissioners, February 2022

| | Position | First Name | Last Name | Executive Committee | End of Term* | Term Year |
|---|--|------------|-----------|---------------------|--------------|-----------|
| 1 | Visit Bend Board or Staff Member (nonvoting) | Valerie | Warren | | 2022 | Second |
| 2 | At Large | Sandy | Anderson | | 2021 | First |
| 3 | At Large | Rika | Ayotte | Chair | 2021 | Second |
| 4 | At Large | Liora | Sponko | Member | 2022 | Second |
| 5 | At Large | Leah | Rutz | | 2023 | First |
| 6 | At Large | Michael | Gesme | | 2023 | First |
| 7 | At Large | Miguel | Edwards | | 2023 | First |
| 8 | At Large | Eli | Ashley | | 2024 | First |
| 9 | At Large | Amy | Renalds | | 2024 | First |

*Term ends December 31

With respect to the Executive Committee, MacMillan requested an additional commissioner, who preferably has one to two years BCTF experience, to serve with Ayotte and Sponko.

IV. Grant Review Portal Training/Refresh

MacMillan addressed the FY2021 scoring frustrations that arose from nonseparation of the Marketing and Catalyst grants. Zoom Grants, for no additional fee, has now bifurcated the two categories.

Silver presented technical aspects, drilling down into the Zoom Grant portal. Having noted the scoring questions for FY2022 have not yet been populated she used FY2021 examples.

Zoom Grants is a tab system through which users navigate. Upon opening an application, panelists will confirm no conflict of interest. Each application will be designated under Marketing Grant or Catalyst Grant. Upon accessing an application, panelist will scroll to the appropriate field of questions then read, score, and assign an estimated grant amount for each application reviewed. Panelists may change their scoring and comments up to the end of the grant review process on April 21, 2022, at which time MacMillan will lock the fields.

Panelists are encouraged to include constructively worded comments and/or questions in the provided portal areas for each application. Applicants may request these comments after the Commission's recommendations have been approved by the Visit Bend Board. MacMillan will use the entries for applicant feedback; in addition, the notes and April 21, 2022 Minutes will be entered onto the website; panelists' names will be redacted before posting.

Panelists may return to the dashboard at any time; they may log out and log into the system and return to any of the applications as desired. The program is printer friendly. Panelists can build quick and helpful reports; they can export raw scores into excel. If there are any questions regarding the program, panelists may contact Silver or MacMillan.

To aid in grant review, MacMillan encouraged Commissioners to download, from the BCTF website, and read the grant questions for both Marketing and Catalyst grants before actually going into the applications. MacMillan and the Executive Committee attempted to streamline the grant questions for FY2022. If panelist has any questions contact MacMillan.

V. Reminder of 2022 Grant Timeline - Deadline March 31, 5pm

MacMillan provided the following approved Grant Timeline. Originally the Commission agreed the Grant Deadline would occur on March 25. However, that deadline has been moved back to Thursday, March 31, 2022.

| Date | Activity | Outcome/Action |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| October 14, 2021 | BCTF Commission meets to discuss updates to 2022 Grant Applications and Review Process | List of recommended updates for Laurel/Ex. Committee members make to the 2022 application - Completed |
| November 15, 2021, 2pm | BCTF Winter Commission Meeting | Completed |
| By January 7, 2022 | Application goes live on website, open for submission | Laurel open for technical assistance questions; Commission promotes grant actively within community - Ongoing |
| February 28, 12:30pm | Spring BCTF Commission Meeting and Panel Training | Prepare Commissioners and external reviewers to review FY2022 grants through online portal and process for Grant Review meeting |
| Thursday, March 31, 2022 | Grant Deadline 5pm | (changed from March 25) |
| April 1, 2022 | Grant Portal Open | Laurel will send links |
| April 1- April 21, 2022 | Grant Review period | Around three weeks to review |
| One Week before the meeting | BCTF Commission Packets out | Laurel sends to Commissioners |

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| April 21, 2022, 9-4pm | BCTF Grant Review Meeting | BCTF forwards recommended grants (and supporting info) after meeting to Visit Bend Board |
| Before May 9, 2022 | BCTF Executive Committee meets with Visit Bend Board for Q&A on Grant Recommendations | VB Board has clear understanding of how grant scoring and funding recommendations were reached. |
| By May 17, 2022 | Visit Bend Board Approval | VB Board approves grant awards |
| May 18-20, 2022 | Award Letters/Declined Letters ready | Laurel sends letters out |
| July 1, 2022 | Appropriate funds distributed | VB distributes 75% of awarded funds |

VI. Grant Review Meeting Protocols/Process

MacMillan’s PowerPoint presentation included the new Bend Cultural Tourism Fund logo which adds the terms “A Visit Bend Project” to increase community recognition of Visit Bend’s roll in the fund; all BCTF recipients will be required to include the logo in their marketing.

BCTF Goals

Through a stable source of funding for cultural tourism program development, expansion, and marketing, BCTF will:

- Attract incremental tourists to Bend during the shoulder seasons and winter months: only events occurring in July and August are excluded from receiving grants;
- Diversify Bend’s tourism offerings;
- Enrich and cultivate Bend’s arts and cultural assets;
- Establish Bend as a premier cultural tourism destination;
- Increase Bend’s appeal to attract new long-term investment into the community.

Web Portal

- Applications close March 31, 2022 at 5:00pm. To date, applicants have not yet submitted applications-this is not unusual, applications are typically submitted the last few weeks before the grant deadline;
- MacMillan will send a list of applicants after the deadline;
- Panelists will notify MacMillan of known conflict of interest for any applications - Conflict of Interest is about perception, sometimes it may fall in a gray area. Ask MacMillan if any questions or concerns (see Conflict of Interest Policy, page 5);
- If the panelist has a conflict, panelist will not see or review the application;
- MacMillan will send panelists a link on or shortly after April 1 for access to the grant portal;
- The portal will remain open until the end of the meeting on April 21, 2022.

Panelist Grant Award Recommendation

- Panelist enters what s/he thinks would be a fair grant award based on initial review of the grant applications;
- This recommendation will be averaged with other panelists’ recommendations and will establish a starting point for the award discussion on April 21, 2022;
- Do not recommend more than the applicant has requested;
- Make sure the recommendation reflects the panelist’s total score;
- Due to finite funds, if an applicant scores less than 80 points, applicant is not eligible for funding. Note, BCTF diverged from that parameter last grant cycle because the funds available included revenue accrued from FY2020 and FY2021;
- Do not let the total grant awards exceed the amount budgeted (e.g. \$300,000 for the full grant pool; TBD for FY2022).

Further discussion:

Ayotte noted the panelist’s initial recommended grant award amount issue arises every year; there is no exact formula. Each panelist has his/her own approach to reviewing, scoring, and identifying a recommended amount. Some panelists focus on budget/line items that specifically warrant funding; others, calculate dollars based upon total scores; and still others, the initial

amount is based upon other factors. Some create spreadsheets, others do not. It is okay to create one's own approach; individual diversity is good for making final award calculations. If there are panelists who desire feedback regarding strategies, Ayotte encouraged them to reach out to others who have gone through previous funding cycles.

MacMillan reminded the Commissioners the initial recommended amount is a best estimation based upon their first review. The initial recommended amount may be any percentage of the total amount applicant requested. All scores for an application will be averaged and panelists may change scores and recommended amounts until the end of the April 21 meeting. Anderson reported she found it helpful to hear the panelists' discussion and did change some scores based upon those discussions.

Marketing/Program Grants

Cultural tourism grants are intended to attract tourists to regionally based arts and culture projects, activities or events with a measurable and positive economic impact on the community of Bend. Grants may support:

- Programs designed to generate incremental tourism activity in the City of Bend during the shoulder season and winter months - originally, the grants encompassed part of September and part of June which received 10 points, whereas October through May received 20 points, and the last half of June, July, August and first half of September received 0 points. To expand the applicant pool, BCTF expanded funding events occurring anytime between September 1 and June 30. Accordingly, the 20/10/0 allotted points system was eliminated;
- Targeted marketing for arts and cultural activities designed to attract visitors from outside a 50-mile radius from Bend;
- The development of packages or special promotions for arts or cultural tourism activities;
- Research projects related to existing or potential cultural tourism programs with the intent of increasing cultural tourism activity in the City of Bend; or
- Other forms of tourism promotion that adhere to ORS 320.350.

Catalyst Grants

- Receive no more than 25% of the total grant fund;
- Intended to support bold ideas that are not yet fully developed, but can demonstrate extraordinary potential for increasing Bend's off-season cultural tourists;
- Provide funding to propel the development of an event or activity that will support the local economy and cultural organizations;
- The idea is to eventually move the concept to the Marketing grant level;
- These receive smaller grant awards.

Discussion regarding Marketing and Catalyst grants:

Remembering that Catalyst Grants receive only up to 25% of the total grant awarded, MacMillan recommended beginning with Marketing applications, since this category is the "bread and butter" of BCTF. She also noted the Catalyst grant's Return on Investment (ROI) is not as tight compared to the Marketing grant.

Edwards recalled last year BCTF granted funds for applicants with less than an average of 80 points and for those holding events outside Bend, for example High Desert Makers at the Expo Center in Redmond. MacMillan replied last year was an anomaly, primarily due to the significant funds available and the calculating challenge that resulted awarding applicants with a score of 75% or above. The Visit Bend Board was not happy with funding events outside Bend. Pursuant to ORS, the City of Bend Transient Room Tax (TRT) allotted to BCTF is to attract visitors from outside a 50-mile radius to positively impact the economy of Bend, not other Central Oregon Communities. Grantees with an event occurring outside Bend have been asked to provide supporting data showing visitors spent the night in Bend. MacMillan discourages potential applicants who want to hold an event outside of Bend.

In reply to a query from Renalds, MacMillan explained: On July 1, 2022, Visit Bend disperses 75% of the FY2022 award amount to the grantee; Visit Bend pays the final 25% upon BCTF's receipt of grantee's final report following its event.

Application Review Best Practices

- Does the applicant clearly answer the asked question?

- Does applicant's budget directly tie into the narrative - the budget should be able to stand alone, is there a disconnect between the narrative and the budget?
- Read the application as though you are neutral (even if you know more information regarding the organization or program) and remember some nonprofit applicants have professional grant writers while many businesses and new nonprofits do not - judge the application on its merits, not on how well a grant has been written;
- If panelist has a question regarding the narrative, contact MacMillan who will attempt to get clarification from the applicant before the April 21 meeting;
- Comment and score as you go along - you can change the scores and add comments during the April 21 grant review meeting;
- Comments are important for staff to provide feedback to the applicant. Comments are public record, but anonymous.

Conflict of Interest Policy (Prior to this meeting, MacMillan provided each Commissioner with the full Conflict of Interest Policy-the following bullet points contain highlights of the Policy.)

- Commissioners, administrators, and staff members associated with an organization submitting a grant application will publicly recuse themselves from the evaluation and commission discussions regarding that grant;
- Commission members will declare a conflict of interest and will abstain from voting on grant applications involving organizations with which they or their immediate family members are members of the governing board or would receive financial benefit;
- No Commissioner can submit an application from their own organization;
- Grant evaluation scoring will be calculated as an average of all submitted scores. This will eliminate the possibility of an application being disadvantaged because of recused votes;
- The Commissioners' evaluations and related written comments are matters of public record.

MacMillan further noted:

The Conflict of Interest Policy has been changed: a staff member may not submit an application; a commissioner who is a board member of an applicant organization must recuse him/herself and cannot read, score or participate in the final funding conversation. If there can be a perception that a commissioner has a conflict, it is better to not review/score/vote for final funding. Last year two commissioners were named, unknowingly to them, in two applications - they recused themselves. If a Commissioner has any question or concern regarding a conflict of interest, speak with MacMillan.

April 21th Panel Meeting Expectations

- Panelist will use own computer for scoring and comments during the meeting;
- Panelist will have read, commented, scored all assigned applications and entered initial recommended award amounts in the three-week period before the April 21 meeting;
- Panelist will participate in the discussion of each application (unless there is a conflict of interest), constructive grant discussion is important and panelists learn from each other;
- Panelists are to keep the conversation to the facts of the application, not on larger BCTF policy or procedure. Note though, any policy or procedural change recommendations or concerns that arise in the meeting may be stated. These will be recorded in the Minutes for future discussion, usually the next fall quarter meeting.

Discussion then turned to whether the April 21, 2022 meeting will be held via Zoom and/or In-Person; and, whether BCTF would include, as in prior meetings, an open Question and Answer (Q/A) period for applicants to attend the April 21 meeting.

- **Zoom and/or In-Person**

MacMillan reported the FY2021 Zoom meeting was a nightmare. Oregon's Covid protocols now allow In-Person meetings. However, she is aware of the ongoing concerns and asked the Commissioners' preference. Ashley has a previous commitment to be out of the area for the month of April, he is available for Zoom. There is still hesitancy for some to meet in person. While not perfect, the Commission agreed, barring a new uptick in Covid and related protocols, the April 21 meeting will be a hybrid that includes Zoom and In-Person. In addition, Ayotte suggested BCTF provide Uber Eats for those attending via Zoom, and lunch for those attending in person.

Action: MacMillan will look for an appropriate room that provides enough space for in person distancing and also provides for Zoom meeting and Zoom Grants capabilities. She will arrange for lunch options.

- Open Q/A Period for Applicants

For historical context: While not subject to Oregon's Public Meeting Laws, the Commission initially chose to adhere to an open meeting format in the desire for complete transparency; the panelists' day long discussion of applications and policy/procedure, scoring and funding calculations were open to the public. After these meetings, panelists and the administrator were approached by a few dissatisfied, sometimes aggressive, applicants. Some panelists felt uncomfortable openly discussing thoughts/concerns regarding certain applications.

In 2019 the Commission moved to a model in which morning and later afternoon work sessions were closed to the public specifically to allow open, frank discussion of the applications. During the morning work session, the panelists would identify fact specific questions to further clarify for a few applications. In an open midday 2-hour Q/A meeting, the administrator would present the specific questions to applicants, if applicant's representative was present. Following the applicant's response and during the open meeting, the panelists would then finalize their scores, which were then averaged and broadcast on a screen. Applicants would know immediately whether their projects would be funded at some level. The applicants would leave and the late afternoon session would convene to discuss actual funding amounts. Recorded minutes of the closed meetings thoroughly detailed the panelists' discussion, without identifying speakers, and published online. In addition, MacMillan has reached out to unfunded applicants to explain why, at times creating robust conversation.

In addition, MacMillan reported unfunded applicant representatives have described feeling mortified when the scores appeared, desiring to leave the room quickly without being seen.

MacMillan expressed the desire to create a better process; she asked the Commissioners: Is an open midday Q/A meeting with applicants helpful? Does the Commission wish to retain the open meeting? If retain, does the Commission want the scores published at the open meeting?

Procedures used by the Oregon Arts Commission (OAC) and the Bend Sustainability Fund (BSF)(also a Visit Bend project) were visited:

- Sponko explained OAC desired to give feedback to applicants but learned panelists would withhold comments in an open meeting. Therefore, OAC piloted closed panel meetings - OAC received little feedback from applicants regarding the closed meeting. This procedural change has worked for OAC.
- Warren explained BSF works differently than BCTF. Visit Bend staff does the background work on particular programs; the programs are then presented to an advisory board at a closed meeting for discussion and comment; Visit Bend reassesses the programs and submits selected programs to the public for vote.

Commissioners' comments and discussion included:

- The Q/A meeting is helpful but not essential;
- If the Q/A meeting is to be held, decreasing time allotted to 30 minutes would be sufficient for the few applicants to answer questions;
- The importance of transparency - meeting in person, demystifying the inner workings as contrasted to detailed minutes published online;
- If a panelist has specific questions while reviewing an application, MacMillan will attempt to get an answer from the applicant before the meeting. The questions asked during the open session have usually arisen in the morning work session and includes issues such as: explanation of a budget line item, determining whether reported additional funding was secured, etc.;
- BCTF has already utilized OAC definitions, following OAC closed panel meetings would be reasonable;
- A Commissioner, who has been on both sides as a BCTF applicant and panelist, noted the open meeting was not useful. In addition, issues and questions should have been vetted, the application should stand on its own.
- Very few, if any, funders provide open public meetings during the review process. Nor do funders provide applicant an opportunity to expand or further explain its application once submitted;
- Like OAC, the Commission could pilot the elimination of the open in-person meeting and conduct its discussion, scoring, funding calculation in a closed panel meeting;
- If BCTF eliminates the open session, prior notification to all applicants and posted detailed minutes of the closed session are necessary.

Action: Ayotte moved, Anderson seconded, the Commission will eliminate the open in-person Question and Answer meeting with appropriate notice to the applicants and detailed minutes posted.

Vote: Commissioners unanimously approved the motion.

VII. Approve November BCTF Minutes

Action: Anderson moved, Ayotte seconded, to approve the November 15, 2021 Minutes as written.

Vote: The Commission unanimously approved the Minutes.

VIII. BCTF Budget Report

MacMillan reported Scott Greenstone prepares the BCTF Budget. She will ask whether he can be present at the April 21 meeting.

Before Covid, BCTF awarded approximately \$200,000 per grant cycle. BCTF did not fund grants for FY2020 and TRT revenue continued to accrue over that period. Therefore, due to a surplus for the FY2021 grants; BCTF awarded \$320,000.

The revenue continues to grow and will do so through June, 2022, with an estimated FY2022 grant budget of approximately \$318,000. In addition, Kevney Dugan has offered to increase the BCTF fund with additional Visit Bend revenue to promote a more robust application pool for new arts and culture programs. Warren reported the estimated fund amount may then be closer to \$400,000. She reminded the Commission the whole amount need not be awarded.

Spoko asked the amount panelists should keep in mind as they score the applications.

Action: MacMillan will speak with Visit Bend and provide the budget amount before scoring begins.

IX. 2019 Grant Reports (if time allows)

MacMillan will provide the 2019 grant reports to the Commissioners at a later date.

X. Adjourn

Prior to adjourning, MacMillan asked whether anyone had attended any cultural events. Ayotte attended WinterFest at the Deschutes County Fairgrounds - it was great, there was a lot of elbow room, she bought a cool plant terrarium. Edwards also attended WinterFest as an artist, his sculptures were well received. He did miss having the event in Bend. Warren and MacMillan went to Campfire Thursday at the Campfire Hotel during which musicians and community members come together - it felt good. Renalds attended the BendFilm screening of the documentary "Buried-the Alpine Meadows Avalanche" at the Tower Theatre. The Tower was full and feels like we may be heading back in the right direction. Renalds also attended the Deschutes Public Library Foundation's Author/Author series that brings fabulous authors to the area. Usually, the presentations occur at Bend High School. However, with Covid, they are currently held online. Ayotte encouraged attendance at the Land Trust's nature nights. Tickets are available for the March 2 presentation on how to manage climate anxiety. Renalds confirmed, Land Trust's events are great, she posts them at Hydro Flask. Rutz noted March events are happening at Open Space.

The Commission meeting adjourned at 2:10pm.