

**Bend Cultural Tourism Fund  
Commission Meeting  
Amended Minutes  
Wednesday, March 8, 2023 - 1:00pm to 3:00pm  
Visit Bend Office  
750 NW Lava Rd #160, Bend OR 97703**

**In Attendance:** Rika Ayote; Leah Rutz; Eli Ashley; Amy Renalds; Miguel Edwards; Sandy Anderson; Valerie Wilson, nonvoting Visit Bend staff member; Laurel MacMillan, Administrator; Shari Crandall, Minutes.

**Absent:** Liora Sponko; Michael Gesme; Steven Arrasmith.

**Guests:** Kevney Dugan, President/CEO Visit Bend.

The meeting was called to order at 1:00pm.

### **I. Welcome**

After the meeting was opened, introductions were made among those present. MacMillan reminded Commissioners: Ayote stepped down from Chair of the Executive Committee, Renalds and Edwards will replace her as Co-Chairs.

MacMillan provided a brief review of agenda.

### **II. Minutes for November 28, 2022**

**Action:** Edwards moved, Rutz seconded: the November 28, 2022 Meeting Minutes are approved as written.

**Vote:** The Commission unanimously approved the Minutes.

### **III. Budget**

Wilson reported Wanda Tigard, who has been doing Visit Bend's day-to-day finances, has replaced Greenstone Financial Reporting for compiling and producing the BCTF financial package.

Wilson noted revenue is down from the FY23 budget projections; the funds for this grant cycle may be close to \$400,000. The final determination for available funding will be presented at the grant review meeting on Thursday, May 4, 2023.

Ashley understood the grant recipients receive 75% of their total amount in July, but asked why some recipients showed a roll over amount each month in the financial report, while others showed paid in full. Wilson explained grantees initially receive 75% of the award amount, the remaining 25% is only paid upon BCTF's receipt of the recipient's final report. Therefore, the 25% amount is carried forward each month until the amount is paid, it then is then entered as a \$0. Grantee's final report, without extenuating circumstances, is due 30 days after its event.

### **IV. Grant Review Refresh and Best Practices**

MacMillan noted each Commissioner has been through the grant review process at least once. For review, she pulled together the PowerPoint slides from last year. For this meeting, MacMillan will not do a Zoom Grant Portal training; instead, she will be happy to provide assistance to the Commissioners when their review goes live. MacMillan provided an overview of the topics to be covered in this meeting: Dates/Deadlines; BCTF Goals; Web Portal; Panelist Grant Award Recommendation; Marketing/Program Grants; Catalyst Grants; Application Review Best Practices; Conflict of Interest Policy; and the May 4 Panel Meeting Expectations.

#### Dates and Deadlines

- Grant Application Deadline: Friday, April 7, 2023, 5:00pm;
- Grant Portal Open to Commissioners: Monday, April 10, 5:00pm;
- Grant Review Working Meeting and Commission Meeting: Thursday, May 4 – location to be determined
  - 9:00am Commission Meeting begins, applicants will be placed in alphabetical order, Commissioners will first review Marketing applications
  - 12:00pm Lunch Break
  - 12:30pm Resume Working
  - 3:00pm Panelist Submit Final Scores

3:30pm Funding Recommendation Deliberations

4:00pm Final Scores and Funding Recommendations forwarded to Visit Bend Board for approval

4:15pm Happy Hour?

- Grant Period: July 1, 2023 to June 24, 2024.

MacMillan will complete a final review of the applications from Friday, April 7 through Monday, April 10, at which time she will forward the applications to the appropriate Commissioners. Those Commissioners who have not been recused due to conflicts of interest will participate in the final funding deliberations.

### BCTF Goals

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

- Attract incremental tourists to Bend during the shoulder seasons and winter months;
- 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

- Following the submittal deadline, MacMillan will send out the list of applicants to the Panelists;
- Panelist is to let MacMillan know whether there is a conflict of interest with any applications;
- Panelist will not see or review the grant if there is a conflict of interest;
- MacMillan will send panelists a link after April 10 with access to the grant portal;
- The portal remains open until the end of our meeting on May 4, no decisions are final until that day.

MacMillan reiterated that she will send the applicant list to the Commissioners; if Commissioner has a conflict of interest, s/he is to notify MacMillan; that commissioner will not see or review that particular grant. If Commissioners are unsure whether they have a conflict, contact MacMillan.

### Panelist Grant Award Recommendation

- Panelist enters what s/he thinks would be a fair grant award based on the initial review of the grant applications;
- This recommendation will be averaged with other panelists' recommendations and will establish a starting point for award discussion;
- Do not recommend more than the applicant requested;
- Please make sure the point recommendation reflects the total score;
- If an application scores less than 80 points, applicant it is not eligible for funding;
- Do not let the total of grant awards exceed the amount budgeted for the full grant pool (TBD).

For each application reviewed, Panelist will recommend a score between 0-100 and also enter a proposed funding amount. The average scores and funding amounts per applicant create a starting point for the panelists' funding deliberations. Each panelist has a different process to assess scores and funding amounts; each process works.

Ayote reported she goes through all assigned applications and then goes back over the applications to assess her recommended amounts. Edwards found his assessment began to change as he proceeded through the applications, necessitating a final reevaluation of scores/amounts. Some panelists print out the applications; others do an entirely electronic assessment.

MacMillan encouraged constructive notes and comments in the portal. These provide important information that can be shared with applicants on how panelists (anonymously) scored and designated funds. She reminded Commissioners that they will be able to amend their scores/amounts at any time before deliberations close on May 4. Several agree the panelists' knowledge and experience have been very helpful in their final scoring/funding deliberations. MacMillan reported applicants will not be present during the review/funding process.

### 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 seasons and winter months;
- Targeted marketing for arts and cultural activities designed to attract visitors from outside a 50-mile radius of the city of 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.

Marketing Grants are the meat of BCTF. The event must be in Bend during the shoulder/winter season (not July/August); the funding is for marketing to attract tourists. BCTF introduced the definition of “Culture” last year; this year it is included as a preapplication question. Potential applicants have called about their projects, MacMillan asks them to consider how their events meet the “Culture” standard defined by BCTF.

### Catalyst Grants

- No more than 25% of total grant fund;
- Intended to support the bold ideas that aren’t 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;
- Idea is to eventually get them to the level of Marketing Grant Program;
- Smaller grants.

MacMillan steers applicants with new ideas to Catalyst Grants – the application is shorter, the funding amounts are smaller, the reporting isn’t as robust, and the hope is that the developed new idea may eventually qualify for a future marketing grant.

### Application Review Best Practices

- Do applicants answer the question asked clearly?
- Does the budget directly tie to the narrative?
- Read the applications as though you are neutral (even if you may know more about the organization or program);
- Questions about the narrative? Ask MacMillan, who will get clarification from applicant before the May 4 meeting;
- Comment and score as you go along—you can change your scores and add comments during the grant review meeting May 4.
- Panelist comments are important for staff to provide later feedback to applicants, these comments are public record;
- Think about precedents set with funding decisions.

Applicant’s budget should stand on its own, if it doesn’t panelists need to think about how applicants would be using BCTF funding.

If Panelist has a question pertaining to a specific application, other panelists likely have a similar question. MacMillan asks Commissioners to forward the question to her before the May 4 meeting; she will contact the applicant to obtain clarification and share applicant’s response with the panelists.

With respect to precedents made through prior funding decisions, panelists need to consider how funding will impact future grant awards. Prior to defining “Culture” in previous cycles, a few sporting/beer events were approved. Citing with specificity particular previously funded events, some potential applicants are now asking whether their sporting/beer events would qualify for funding. MacMillan doesn’t say “no” but encourages the applicant to consider and describe how their event fits within BCTF’s “Culture” definition.

### Conflict of Interest Policy

- Commissioners, administrators, and staff members associated with an organization submitting a grant application will publicly recuse themselves from the evaluation and discussions regarding that grant;
- Commissioners who have a conflict WILL NOT participate in financial allocation portion of meeting;
- 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 Commissioners 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.

#### May 4 Panel Meeting Expectations

- Panelists will use their computer for scoring and comments during an In Person Meeting (location TBD);
- Panelist will have read, commented and scored the applications in advance;
- Comments are provided to the applicant if requested, they often are;
- Panelists will participate in the discussion of each application (unless there is a conflict of interest);
- Keep conversation to the facts of the application and not on larger BCTF procedural or policy changes (Minutes will record these for future discussion).

Comments/notes made in the Portal or during the May 4 meeting are public record; MacMillan reiterated these be stated constructively. The calculated average will be based upon the number of panelists who review the particular application. Panelists will have three weeks to read/evaluate/score/rank the assigned applications. MacMillan encouraged Commissioners to begin the review process early and to be fully prepared at the May 4 meeting to participate in robust discussion to help make funding recommendations. She emphasized, if policy or procedural issues arise, these will be captured in the Minutes and the issue will be discussed at a later meeting. The location of the May 4 meeting is to be determined. Those who have suggestions for the meeting location, contact MacMillan.

#### **V. BCTF Technical Assistance and Outreach**

##### Conversation with Funders March 16

The list was long; Visit Bend has done effective marketing.

##### Live Evergreen video on our website

New this year, Visit Bend created a microsite for BCTF which mirrors Bend Sustainability Fund. A video of MacMillan discussing BCTF is on the site. At a commissioner's inquiry regarding the number of views, Wilson will obtain those numbers and provide them to the Commissioners.

##### Office Hours

The word is getting out: more applicants have connected with MacMillan, and earlier than in the past. In addition to receiving numerous calls regarding potential applications, MacMillan has scheduled many speed meetings with several new potential applicants, many of whom have new ideas. The meetings run from about five to seven minutes at Backporch Coffee Roasters. The discussions have been respectful and honest. She explains BCTF is a unique program and provides pertinent information. She stated it will be interesting to see who applies.

#### **VI. Grants Final Reports**

MacMillan reported the attendance numbers for the funded events were disappointing. And, then briefly addressed the following BCTF grant recipients:

BendFilm (FY22) had to scale back its proposed plans due to Covid.

Out Central Oregon (FY22) had several issues which resulted in the resignation of a key board member, who was BCTF's liaison, and changes to its all-volunteer staff. The new staff was unaware of the BCTF funding amount for marketing Winter PrideFest; also, the organization's new website failed to include the requisite BCTF logo as a funder of Winter PrideFest. After speaking with MacMillan, the new staff has included the logo on its the website. Per Instagram, the event appeared successful and well attended; the social media was very good. Someone from the organization will need to submit a final

report within the next 30 days. If necessary, given the current state within the organization, MacMillan is willing to push back that deadline a bit.

Eastern Oregon Railroad (FY21) is a volunteer nonprofit in which the project was one volunteer's passion. When that person left, the remaining board members expressed their desire to not market out-of-town attendees. It has been difficult to get the requisite final report.

Wanderlust (High Desert Museum)(FY21) was purchased by another person. The new owner was not a participant in the application for funds; she hasn't cashed the check. She would like to make the project happen this fall. If the event goes forward, Wilson reported Visit Bend would need to reissue the check because the original check is now stale-dated.

Big Butte Challenge/Cascade Relays (FY21), in association with the Deschutes Historical Society, had planned to create podcasts at the top of each butte. The Historical Society contacted MacMillan to advise of problems dealing with the organizer. The results of the project were much different than what had been defined in the application. The organizer reported problems with creating the project for shoulder/winter months and it dropped the cultural component for which it received the original funds; it changed the date of the project to summer. Accordingly, MacMillan explained BCTF would not issue the final payment. The applicant organization is non-compliant and been banned, at least for now, from submitting future applications.

Dirty Freehub (FY21), through Kevin English, will not apply for FY23 funds. The organization is very grateful for the funds granted by BCTF. It has succeeded in what it wanted to accomplish – the organization created podcasts to which people listen and who then want to travel to Bend to experience the gravel trails Bend offers.

Cascades Theatrical Company (FY22) utilized the BCTF funds to promote its shows through TV ads and rack cards, rather than the awarded film component. These marketing tools were deemed "close enough" for what BCTF originally approved.

High Desert Museum (FY22) changed the name of the event to "Imagine Your World" rather than "Living Stories." The organization does a good job tracking museum visitor demographics. In its final report, the March event had more than 54%, almost 10,000, out of town visitors. High Desert Museum has won several national awards.

Bend Photo Tours (FY21) planned a photo summit which was ruined by Covid, resulting in an inability for attendees to travel to Bend. While the organization checked off its BCTF Catalyst Grant deliverables, the planned event did not happen.

Central Oregon Center for the Arts (FY21, FY22) has completed the feasibility study; their report is dense. The organization is progressing, meeting its milestones. It has more phases it must achieve and will be applying again for its third Catalyst grant. Commissioners noted that so long as applicant's "project" is different and the organization continues to make progress, the Commissioners will review this new application. The organization reports it has made progress, in part, due to BCTF funding.

Edwards asked the Commissioners to look at the precedent BCTF is setting - does BCTF want to fund this organization a third time? The Commissioners seemed to agree: the concept of building a new Bend arts facility is large and will require numerous steps before it can enter the brick-and-mortar capitol project phase, at which time it may be able to apply for funding through the Bend Sustainability Fund.

Paula Dreyer (FY21 Catalyst-headphones; FY22 Marketing) reported she didn't have the planned fall concert due to headphones supply chain issues, nor did she have the May event due to weather challenges. However, she did produce the winter concerts. She intends to apply for FY23 with plans to do a video shoot to market the concerts.

High Desert Makers (FY21) application was denied for an event planned for Redmond. The organization did not apply in FY22. It now plans to move the event to OSU-Cascades and intends to reapply for funding.

Tower Theatre Foundation "Stage the Change" was a success but the out-of-town attendance numbers were significantly down because student travel had declined due to Covid.

During today's discussion, the following topics arose for consideration during Commissioners' FY23 review process and/or for potential future dialogue:

- Does the Commission want to further address awarding Catalyst grants to one entity over several funding cycles? If yes, what are the desired parameters?
- Other than awareness that visitor numbers have not yet rebounded to pre-covid status, does the Commission want to discuss how to deal with decreased out-of-town attendance ROI numbers for this funding cycle? Future cycles?
- For future applications, does BCTF wish to ask applicant a question regarding back up plans if the planned event and/or marketing of that event cannot occur as described in the application?
- Leadership issues, particularly with volunteer nonprofit boards, and lack of transparency of BCTF funding arose in the last two cycles. Does BCTF want to ask a question regarding management? Key staff? Require applicant's board members to sign a letter of support? Or, just have panelists keep this issue in mind as they review each application?
- How does the Commission wish to deal with non-compliant applicants? Does it need to create a policy addressing the issue (for example, see Big Butte Challenge/Cascade Relays above)? What should the repercussions be for an applicant's non-compliance? Further, does BCTF/Visit Bend insert language in the award contract to include terms regarding grantee responsibility for executing the plan as described in the application?
- How does BCTF execute good stewardship of the funds awarded, particularly with respect to Marketing grants? In what ways can BCTF do damage control?
- MacMillan will be meeting with Scalehouse who wants to do a project with BendFilm, but both organizations want to write separate applications. A similar issue arose with the previous Wanderlust application that included the High Desert Museum. However, that application was approved because the event was to be put on by Wanderlust, but to be held on the Museum's property. In the past, BCTF voiced an appreciation of the partnering of two or more entities. In this particular case, would both be applying for the same project? How would the marketing costs be distributed? Does one of the entities want to submit an application for an event other than the one proposed? Will BCTF require a letter of support from the second entity? Other concerns?

## **VII. Visit Bend Marketing Push Update**

Wilson worked with the Visit Bend Marketing manager, Kelli Carrow. They did some tweaks to the former BCTF marketing plan. Focusing on what was successful in previous years, they chose to drop A&E but included print ad, storyline, and/or print/eblasts through The Source and The Bulletin/GO magazine. Due to newsletter opportunities and the number of out-of-area subscribers, Wilson and Carrow added Bend Magazine.

With the uptick of potential applicant queries following Visit Bend's marketing pushes, MacMillan asked to receive, and Wilson agreed to provide, the marketing timetable so MacMillan can be better prepared.

The Commission asked whether a future question in the preapplication process could be included asking how applicant learned of BCTF grant programs.

## **VIII. Cultural Happenings Around Town/Other Topics**

Macmillan has attended several concerts. Ayote took her daughter to the Virginia Riggs Children Concert and Instrument Petting Zoo at Bend High School: the event was packed and the children had a blast.

## **X. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:10pm.