



## Live Arts Boston (LAB) Information Session Transcript

\*Beginning of presentation, welcome slide and Catherine Morris, Director of Arts & Creativity at the Boston Foundation.\*

**Catherine:** Hey everyone, welcome to the Live Arts Boston Information Session presented by the Boston Foundation. We're so glad that you've made the decision to consider applying for this grant initiative, and we have so much we want to share. Now I just must tell you, for those that are new to it or have applied for it or even have been a recipient of it, Live Arts Boston has the same name, but it has a completely different infrastructure and experience.

So, I want to provide an overview of what this information session is going to cover. One, you're going to meet the team. The Live Arts Boston team, the Arts & Creativity team at the Boston Foundation. Then, we're going to talk about the introduction; the history of Live Arts Boston, how it started, what the changes are, the major changes, just so you can have an understanding about it. Then we're going to get into the meat of it; the grantee experience. There are four phases, so outside of it not just being a grant supporting individual artists and presenting organizations, we're talking about how really trying to transform and add value to what is going to make you all exceptional, amazing, and just adding to the arts and culture ecosystem. Following that, we'll talk about some key dates, eligibility in terms of who can apply and what disciplines are supported. Then we're going to get into how to apply; we have a new grants management system called Smart Simple, so we just ask you to pay attention to those details. And then, towards the end, we're going to have an open Q&A. Feel free to ask your questions, no question is a dumb question at all! Please – you'd be surprised at what even we don't know sometimes, so please ask your question. And then we'll do some follow up if we need to, feel free to reach out to our team, email us at [lab@tbf.org](mailto:lab@tbf.org). So, without further ado, let's get into the team.

So, who am I? I am the Director of Arts & Creativity here at the Boston Foundation. For those who may know what I've done prior to this, I'm also the Founder and Artistic Director of Boston Art and Music Soul Fest. I'm a huge fan of arts and culture, I have spent my entire life dedicated to supporting arts and culture, so very excited to be a part of this organization and to be able to provide those platforms for artists like yourselves. Next, we'll introduce Dylan! Dylan Mitchell...

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**Dylan:** Thanks, Catherine. Hi everybody, my name is Dylan Mitchell and I'm the Program Associate for Community Wealth here at the Boston Foundation. Community Wealth is a combination of our arts and creativity team, our business equity team, and our neighborhoods and housing team. So, I kind of work in between all three of those. I've been at the Boston Foundation for about seven and a half months and have been in Boston for about eight months. Before that, I was studying undergraduate in DC at George Washington University; but I'm originally from New Orleans. And then one fun fact about me is that when I was in New Orleans, in probably middle school and in high school, I had a brass band

named BluKrewe. So, we would do, you know, jazz funerals second lines, birthdays, or just like any events that would happen. But that's my fun fact. So, I will pass the baton onto Laura!

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**Laura:** Hi, my name is Laura Reyes, I use the She/Her series pronouns, and I am the Program Officer here for Arts & Creativity at TBF. In my free time I'm also an artist myself, I'm a bassoonist, I freelance a lot in the greater Boston and Greater New England area, if you are a performing musician chances are we've probably played together, so feel free to say hi or shoot me an email, but I'm excited to dig into Live Arts Boston, so let's do it.

So, what is Live Arts Boston? If you're familiar with the old program you probably know we used to support new, live projects only as a final product, with 60 plus artists at \$15,000 each in grant funding. Our new program, that is co-partnered with the Barr Foundation, supports 30 artists of all disciplines in all stages of career. It is important to note that for this LAB cycle, we are very excited to welcome all stages of career, whether you're emerging, not quite emerging or not quite professional level yet, whether you've been performing professionally for 30 years or creating artistic community, we want everybody who feels like they'll benefit from this program to apply. We've also increased the grant funding – previously it was \$15,000 each for 60 artists, now it's \$30,000 per grantee for 30 artists. We're really deepening the support that we can through funding, and through the programming we'll get into in a little bit. Previously LAB also used to only support new work, we are now doing new work and existing work. If there's a project you had in mind that you've been looking for support, or looking to build up and bring to the greater Boston area, if there's just an idea that you've had, if you've already had an idea and a project that you really love but you can think of so many ways to revitalize it, uplift it, and raise the level of the product and the project, all are welcome to apply, as long as you're very very clear with what your idea is or what the concept is, and how Live Arts Boston is going to benefit you as an artist and your creative output. The Experience, previously used to be about 12 months, now this is going to be a bit of a longer, 18-month cycle, which will give us more time to work with you and you more time to grow and improve as you move through it. It all starts with a two-stage application process that we'll talk about a little bit later, with projects taking place between December 2025 and June of 2026. It is important to note that your projects cannot take place before December 2025 and cannot take place after June 2026. If you've already done the project you're thinking of applying for, or the performance or whatever it is, by the end of the LAB cycle, if you are accepted, it has to be in a different stage or iteration, or elevated level as compared to when you first applied.

When we're talking about the experience with what LAB grantees will go through, we have the four phases that really move you through that 18-month cycle. The first phase, (Re)Define Self as Artist: Personal Growth and Health & Wellness Exploration is really about where you're at now and where you want to move. Being an artist can be exhausting, time-consuming, it can mean juggling a lot of things at once and hoping nothing falls to the floor, you're going to be working specifically with a health and wellness practitioner, and you're going to set up an accountability plan for yourself of how you want to grow, how you want to heal, how you want to learn how to take care of yourself, your mental and physical health, because you cannot create if you're not at peak performance. That means making sure your mental and physical health are where they should be so you can put yourself fully into your practice, and into the experience, and grow holistically rather than just doing what you need to do to survive.

Phase two is about Career Coaching and Accountability. There is a lot of confusion between the word mentor and the word coach; mentor we see as going through personal aspects of your life, your personal development even as it pertains to your professional life, but mentorship is when you're really connected personally with one individual. A coach you'll also be really connected with, but the career coaching that's going to be baked into this process is about your professional development and your professional life, and how to think through maybe professional problems, or thought processes when it comes to working with an organization, or as part of an organization, negotiating contracts, anything as it pertains to your professional life. These coaches will have artistic training in mind, they've worked with

artists in the past, so this will be part of your team that you'll meet with regularly. The health coach and your career coach as you work through your accountability plan.

Phase three, a super exciting phase, about the business of creativity, your training and your professional development. There will be seminars, about once a month, that are going to work on professional development areas that you might really want to grow in and work through. So things like how to set up an LLC, how do you set up your 501(c)3 if that's in the cards for you, how to do your taxes as an artist, how to fundraise, everything that really comes into a self-sustaining, long-term arts career, we're going to try to bring to you in professional development. There will be a quiz when you first join that will help with the health & wellness exploration and let your practitioners know where you are, but also help us gauge what you need from professional development, what you're looking to learn, and how you plan to grow through working in these seminars.

And then our final phase, Phase four, is about Creative Works in Progress: Ideation, Collaboration, and Constructive Feedback. We know as artists that constructive feedback is part of the process, and whether it's solicited or unsolicited, we're always going to get it, but this is really going to be a time for you to share your artistry with your colleagues, with the cohort, and to learn how to take constructive criticism, and even unconstructive criticism, how to sleep on it, bake it into how you're going to change and grow your project, and ultimately, how to decide whether it's something you want to take, leave, or think about and consider in the future. This is also going to be centered around how to give constructive feedback, so when you're working with an artistic colleague, or in working with a friend or collaborator, how do you give them feedback and maybe how do you help evaluate their work in a way that is constructive and helpful but also benefits the both of you in your relationship and long-term artistry. So those are the four phases.

So, when you hear something like four phases, you're also going to think about time commitment. We imagine the seminars are going to take about 6-8 hours total, with one seminar per month. We imagine that your individual and group coaching will be about 3-5 hours per month, depending on the requirements and growth. If there's a seminar about becoming a 501(c)3 Nonprofit and you already are, you might not go to that particular seminar, so the time commitment that month might be a little bit less for you. BUT, we do expect, and this will be later on in the presentation as well but I want to say it now, but we do expect that those who are accepted and accept as well to be a part of this LAB cohort to be a part of this new revitalized model, you will attend at least 70% of these seminars and at least 70% of what we're offering for you. Outside of that, real time skill application will be at least 6-8 hours per month, so we imagine total per month, you'll be spending about 15-20 hours on everything LAB. This might sound like a lot, 70% attendance requirement might sound like a lot, but it is your growth and development, dependent on how much you dedicate yourself to this process. If you aren't going to be able to attend a lot of the seminars, if this sounds like a lot of time, it might be helpful to you in the future, but if you know that 15-20 hours per month isn't quite attainable, I would stay connected to LAB, see what we do, but we're really hoping that you'll all invest yourselves fully to this process, your growth, and your artistry.

The key dates: information sessions we're doing right now, from October through November. The application is going to be opening Monday December 11, 2023, at 9:00am ET, Boston time, it'll close on Friday January 12<sup>th</sup> at 4:59 ET, Boston time, the round 1 review, which has an open application, we expect to happen March 2024, Round 2 review we expect to take place April 2024, and tentative notifications are late May 2024. And those dates will be updated on our website as well.

Eligibility! Super important! Everybody who considers themselves or identifies as a performing or visual artist, a creator, a cultural practitioner that is living or based in the Greater Boston area (as defined by our Geographic Area Served) is eligible to apply. Groups such as bands or collaborations are eligible to apply – there is the aspect of the lead applicant which we'll talk about a little bit later. Small performing arts nonprofits with budgets of less than \$450,000 and 501(c)3 status are eligible to apply. We do want to emphasize that this version of LAB is a little bit individual-based, so if you are

part of a collaboration or a group or an organization, and there is a leader or there's an individual that you've identified that could really benefit through the growth from this process, you can send them on behalf of your organization. When we also talk about the Greater Boston Area, before I get to the final bullet points, I just want to point out the map that is on the right side of the screen but also the QR code on the bottom, it will take you to our website that has that map. This is how the Boston Foundation identifies the Greater Boston Area, this outlines our geographic served, so if there's anybody who lives in any of these areas that you see on the screen, please encourage them to apply, we know that sometimes the outskirts of the Geographic Area Served might not know that we serve them, but we're really trying to hit all the areas that the Boston Foundation covers, not just Suffolk county. Final two bullet points; graduate and undergraduate students are not eligible to apply. Being a student is a full-time job, it's hard, it's a lot of work, and you do need to focus on your studies. With the time commitment that this LAB cycle requires, unfortunately, graduate and undergraduate students are not eligible at this time. You must also be at least 18 years old to apply, that doesn't mean if you're working in a collaboration or in a group that any of the members can't be under 18, but, the lead applicant that will be moving through this process has to be.

Supported disciplines! When we talk about art forms that we support, we support dance, theater, opera, musical theater, music including all the genres listed below (Rap, Rhythm & Blues/Soul, Classical, Contemporary, Rock/Pop, Electronic/EDM, Indie, World, Fusion, Jazz, Folk, Singer-Songwriter), performance art, circus arts, folk and traditional arts, spoken word, literary and/or performance festivals, and any inter- or multi-disciplinary combination of the above. Projects can also include a visual art or film component, that cannot be the main component, but it can include it. We're really looking for any blend, inter- or multi-disciplinary combination of the disciplines we listed above. The world is really your oyster when it comes to your discipline and your performance art and we're hoping that all of our applications reflect the really rich and diverse arts scene that's in the Greater Boston area.

So now, what if I'm applying as part of a group? So a collaborator is considered someone who is a co-owner of the project and a generative member of the team. So somebody that helps contributes ideas, helps manage logistics, helps take part in the administrative work, maybe also a performer or contributes to creating the artistic content. One applicant, one of the collaborators, must be considered the lead applicant. This person is going to be receiving the grant funds if you're selected, they must play a principal role in the project, they must fulfill all of the eligibility requirements, not necessary for all of the collaborators as I mentioned before, just the lead applicant whose name is on the application. They will also be a key point of contact for the LAB team, so all of our correspondence will be going through them. Make sure if you're choosing a lead applicant, they're someone that's very responsive to emails, very responsive to messages, able to attend the things we might need them to, and must be at least 18 years old. Again, to apply as the lead applicant. Another note that we want to add about collaborations and groups, make sure your relationships are strong. Make sure you're really close and you understand and you have a really good creative and working relationship with this person, we have seen in the past relationships that end up getting frayed or frazzled, because of the stress or because of the workload or maybe you have two different artistic directions that you don't really agree on and your experience in Live Arts Boston will suffer if the relationships with your collaborators aren't really strong and transparent and open and honest. So, if you are going to be applying as part of a group, if you are going to be collaborating, err on the side of caution because we've seen it before, and we want this cohort to really grow and work well together and not have to worry about things like that.

So, how do I apply? The application is completely open for the first round. Anybody can apply; any person that identifies with all of the eligibility requirements, that is in one of our supported disciplines. Please please please apply, the application opens on December 11, 2023, with the deadline being January 12, 2024. It's going to be through Smart Simple with Dylan, who you met earlier, will take you through. There's going to be an eligibility quiz, you're going to have to do a residence verification so a picture of a recent bill, an accurate and up to date driver's license with your current address, not a former address, your current address, because you have to live within our Geographic Area

Served. And work samples, it will also ask you for a brief and compelling artist statement and program and project overview. The second application, the second round if you're invited, is going to go a lot deeper into those topics, but for this first application, it will be just a brief artist statement and project overview. The review process of the first round will consist of a large panel review with 150 applications advancing to Round 2. If you advance to Round 2, you will be notified via email, you will also be notified if you do not advance to Round 2, but with Round 1 being open, Round 2 is not open. Just to be clear about that.

Round 1 finalists, ones who are notified, will be invited to submit full proposals, you'll have between 2 and 3 weeks, and you will submit your final Round 2 application on Friday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, by 4:59pm ET, Boston time. Examples of the questions that will be on that application, the Round 2, more in-depth one, will be your career aspirations, your long-term professional vision; right now as it is, what you see it being, with the assistance of Live Arts Boston. Full artistic project/program information, you touched on it a little in your Round 1 application but we're really going to ask you here to dig deep, tell us about your artistry, your program, your project, your ideas, your dreams, and your vision! Your proposals of existing work, if you have any since we're not just accepting new and live work, we're accepting all types of project proposals, will need to be open to transformational change by the end of the grant cycle.

So just a quick example, let's say I ran a concert series, it went really great, it was successful, it targeted the audience I wanted, I had great engagement and attendance, but there's some things I can see needing fixing or modification or revamping. I can apply to this version of LAB with that existing project, but in order to be eligible, in order to qualify, it needs to be in a completely different transformative, elevated version, by the end of the grant cycle. If you will be applying with an existing project, just make sure you're very clear on where you could see it going, how you could see it growing, and where you see LAB aiding that, or how you see this process making it a completely new version by the time you're finished. Works that have already received LAB funding are ineligible to receive a grant unless it is in a restructuring phase of it's development. So kind of very similar to the example I said before; if you've already won a LAB grant, congratulations, but for a project it'll need to be different by the end of this cycle. Be sure to articulate how, where, and why you see that happening very clear in the application, otherwise the reviewers will think it's the same application twice, and you don't want to be not qualified just because of that.

Things to remember; we will be doing office hours and there will be technical support available during the process. We'll either send out an email about it or there'll be a sign-up form on the website - I will say definitely check in on the website to see if there's any updates because we'll be updating the site as we go. Then we'll have a second panel of reviews for all eligible applications for the second round and they will select the final 30 for this version of LAB's cohort. We expect those notifications to go out May of 2024, and there will be feedback available for Round 2 applicants who do not receive funding.

Some final details about LAB. You'll see on the right there's the graphic of the geographic area served once again, just to remind you of where that boundary is. It is also available on the TBF website. Final projects, again, must be presented to Greater Boston audiences before June 30, 2026. All artists must be paid, including the applicant where relevant – just want to reiterate to please, please, please pay your artists. The arts culture in Boston can be really difficult and sometimes it can be very hard to get paid for doing this job, and for showing your work, so make sure to pay your colleagues, your collaborators, your creators, where you can, when you can, and as you can. All proposals must have a clear artistic vision in connection with a very clear career vision – if you write in your application in Round 1 where you see your career going, but your project or proposals don't align with your career goals or vision, it's going to be hard for the review panel to connect how this proposal and your long-term aspirations are helping each other or how they're coexisting. Make sure there's a very clear connection and through-line through everything you're sending for review. As I mentioned earlier grantees must participate in at least 70% of the sessions held across all phases. Again, if that sounds like it might be difficult for you, maybe sit this one out, wait for the next round, or figure it out, apply when you can. We

just want to make sure, you're going to get out what you put into this process so 70% may seem high but at the end of the day it's really going to help you holistically as an artist, in your health, in your mental health, in your career development, all of the above. Funds may be used to support any aspect of the project except for fundraising and full-length albums, and requests can support touring work outside of Greater Boston, BUT the project must be primarily shared within our geographic area served. The graph on the right.

So now, we've gotten to Smart Simple, and I'm going to pass it over to my colleague Dylan!

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**Dylan:** Thanks, Laura. So I know many of you are wondering, how do I actually apply to this new version of LAB? And that's simply through our new grants management software called Smart Simple. This is where you'll be able to access and apply for the lab application, where reviewers will leave their feedback on your applications, and where you will also be able to see any other opportunities that we have at the Boston Foundation, such as Safety Net. Grants or the Brother Thomas Fellowship. One important thing to note about Smart Simple is that it will link your application to your email. So it's really important that you have access to the email address you provided throughout the whole application process. If you want to change your email or your email isn't valid, the one you had before, then you can simply email [grantsinfo@tbf.org](mailto:grantsinfo@tbf.org) and they will go through that process with you.

So, the next steps in setting up your account, it's really two different pathways depending on if you're returning applicant or a first-time applicant, If you're a returning applicant, then we already have your information in the system. That means that you've applied on TBF's Smart Simple platform for an opportunity before. And if you don't remember your password, you can simply click the reset password, it'll send you an email and you'll follow those prompts. If you are a first-time applicant, it's a little bit of a different process. You'll choose register on the TBF Smart Simple, home page, and you'll apply as an individual under registration options. So that'll be the second option on the left of the screen where it says as an individual or part of a group of individuals. You'll click that and submit your contact information and set your password. For both first time applicants and returning applicants, it's really important that you fill out your profile. So your profile is just a way for us to confirm your information and make sure your application is linked to the correct email address. So if you look at the bottom right corner where it says, welcome to Luke Skywalker, you'll see something highlighted in white and circled in a red pen. That message will not disappear until you complete your profile. And if that message is still there, you won't be able to see any other funding opportunities. So once you finish your profile, then you'll be able to see all of the funding opportunities.

Again, if you look in the right corner where it says, welcome Dylan Mitchell in the right corner. In the bottom right corners is funding opportunities. You'll click that and you'll access this page of funding opportunities. So once the Live Arts Boston grant goes live, it'll appear in this drop-down list and you'll click it to complete the eligibility quiz, round one, and hopefully round two.

So, one question that we've gotten a lot is what makes a strong LAB application. And that really depends on The artistic and proposal narratives, and the work samples. With this new version of LAB, we're really focusing on the individual. If you look through the four phases, it's really individual base and less focused on the project or performance. So it's really important the panelists get to know who you are as a person who you are as an artist, your artistry, your history, your principles. We want to know who you are as a person and how going through LAB will progress you? How going through those four phases will elevate you? You know, give clear and detailed answers regarding your vision, your project plan, and your career goals, Providing specifics wherever you can. And then it's really important to note how do you envision your impact as an artist and growth as a professional going through this version of LAB. One really important thing to note is that the panelists probably will not know you. Um, So, it's really important that you be clear and concise in your answers. It's also great to get feedback from a friend, from a family member, a peer, or a collaborator because if they

aren't able to understand it, then the panelists probably won't be able to understand it. Regarding work samples, videos wherever possible are great. Just keep in mind that the reviewers in the panels will be going over multiple applications so make sure those work samples don't exceed six minutes in total. You also just want to make sure it's visible and audio. We don't need the highest production just so that somebody can understand, see and hear your work samples. And it's also important to provide any times, context, passwords, and anything that's relevant that you want the reviewer to know about your work examples.

And so, if you have any questions, please email us at [lab@tbf.org](mailto:lab@tbf.org) or you can visit our page at [tbf.org/lab](http://tbf.org/lab). Or scan this lovely QR code, that Laura made.



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