



# THE PLAIN DEALER

## Nearly 70 arts and cultural groups to get money from the Issue 18 cigarette tax

Nearly 70 groups OK'd for Issue 18 money

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Plain Dealer Reporter

A big chunk of money raised by Cuyahoga County's Issue 18 cigarette tax will help pay general operating expenses for 68 newly approved arts and cultural organizations for the next three years.

The tax, 1.5 cents per cigarette, is expected to bring in about \$17 million this year, the first year it's being collected, and perhaps less than that annually over the decade-long life of the tax as the number of cigarette consumers declines.

Most of the revenues are expected to go toward operating costs for the institutions that won approval this week through a review of their work and management.

Seventy-two institutions submitted applications to a panel of nine arts and culture experts from outside Ohio, which convened this week and commented on the strengths and weaknesses of each application. Panelists scored the institutions for their programs and services, quality of management and impact on the community.

Institutions qualified for support if they scored 75 or higher out of 100. The first checks are expected to be cut in January, after each organization's portion of the grant money has been determined.

The Cleveland Museum of Art earned the highest score, 97, and was lauded by panel members for its collections and community impact. With an annual budget of more than \$36 million, it is the second-largest institution that applied for the grant.

Smaller organizations had strong showings, as well. The Joyful Noise Neighborhood Music School, with an annual budget of about \$28,000, earned a 79. Joyful Noise provides musical instruments and instruction to children of elementary-school age in the city of Cleveland.

"As small as we are, any grant we get is going to be a big help to us," said founder Ric Wilberg.

Panelist Maury Okun, executive director of three music and dance organizations in Detroit, praised the arts and culture scene in Cleveland.

"It's much more diverse and deep than what I had expected," he said.

Among other institutions that scored in the 90s: Apollo's Fire, the Cleveland International Film Festival, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Playhouse Square Foundation, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum and Young Audiences of Northeast Ohio. All applicants and their scores are listed at [www.cacgrants.org](http://www.cacgrants.org).

The largest applicant was the Cleveland Orchestra, with a budget of \$41 million, which scored 85. Panel members praised the orchestra's artistry and acknowledged its importance to Northeast Ohio but criticized its application as lacking in financial detail.

"The finances were impossible to understand," said Maureen J. Rolla, deputy director of the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh.

Gary Hanson, the orchestra's executive director, said he was impressed by the grants process and pleased to be approved for funding.

"We were scrupulously compliant in completing the application, and we believe it was a fair and clear

representation of our financial position [through] June 30, 2006, which was what was required," Hanson said.

The four organizations that didn't qualify were Independent Pictures, the Dunham Tavern Museum, Village Television and the Musical Theater Project.

Bill Rudman is director of the Musical Theater Project, a 7-year-old performance and education group with an annual budget of about \$180,000. He said not qualifying was a disappointment, but he praised the rigor and transparency of the process.

"When you're talking about public funds, what is necessary and appropriate is you bring that peer review in, and that is appropriately where the control lies," Rudman said. "That's what makes this process so pure."

Cuyahoga Arts and Culture, the nonprofit agency created to administer the tax, will decide at a board meeting Tuesday, Nov. 13, how much of the tax will be allocated each year to operating support and how much will go to a second type of grant awarded for special projects.

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