

**National Guild for Community Arts Education**  
**Guild Essentials Series**  
**“Navigating the Tension Between Money & Mission”**  
Presenters: Lecolion Washington & Meghan Jasani

## Key Outcomes

The session brought together ~165 registrants for a structured conversation on aligning financial strategy with organizational mission. Presenters Lecolion Washington and Megan Jasani (Community Music Center of Boston) covered mission/vision/values codification, board vs. management financial roles, and a practical **Mission to Money Matrix** tool. Participants engaged through two breakout rounds and open discussion, surfacing real-world examples of mission drift and program repositioning.

## Key Concepts Presented

- **Mission vs. Vision vs. Values:** Mission = what we do today; Vision = future state over a defined period; Values = decision-making lens that defines culture.
- **Mission Drift:** Aspirational missions are most susceptible; drift always surfaces in the budget and how dollars are spent.
- **Iceberg Metaphor:** Tension between money and mission originates *below the surface* — in assumptions, norms, and unwritten rules — not in policies or procedures.
- **Alignment Impact:** Misaligned vision/values cause counter-pulls that make everything cost more; alignment reduces burnout and inefficiency.

## Board vs. Management Financial Roles

- **Board:** Approves strategic plan and annual budget, provides fiduciary oversight, hires/manages CEO, guards against mission drift.
- **Management:** Executes strategy, manages staff and resources, reports financial performance back to governance.
- **Board Reporting Best Practice:** Lead with narrative answering four questions — *Where are we now? How are we performing? What's changing? What needs attention?* — before presenting raw financials.

## Mission to Money Matrix

### Four quadrants for evaluating programs/activities:

- **High Margin, Low Mission** — typically philanthropy/fundraising; funds mission work but watch for drift
- **Low Margin, Low Mission** — drain on staff and finances; candidates for wind-down
- **High Margin, High Mission** — protect, defend from cuts, and scale



- **Low Margin, High Mission** — mission-critical, often philanthropy-funded; ensure efficiency and staff sustainability

Programs can **move between quadrants** over time (e.g., CMC Boston's youth employment program evolved from general operating support → external funder → earned revenue contract).

## Discussion Highlights

- **Mission ≠ Programs:** Organizations must ask whether current programs still meet the mission, or whether mission/programs need to shift.
- **Perform-a-thon example:** Repositioned from fundraiser (low ROI ~\$10K-\$15K) to a programmatic community event; development team removed from responsibility.
- **Chasing dollars risk:** When funders drive programming decisions, the funder replaces the community as the mission driver.
- **Asset mapping:** Organizations should define where they end and build bridges to organizations that carry the work forward.
- **Regional competitions example:** Student recitals feed into donor-attended regional competitions — fundraising as outcome, not intention.

## Resources Shared

### Books & Publications

- The Sustainability Mindset: Using the Matrix Map to Make Strategic Decisions by Jeanne Bell
  - Shared by Rachel Fritz as a resource that helped her organization navigate conversations around sustainability and mission.

### Concepts, Frameworks, and Quotable Ideas Worth Including as Resources

While not linked in the chat, these emerged as key frameworks from the session and could be highlighted on your resources page:

- **Mission, Vision, and Values Alignment Framework** — definitions and distinctions discussed by Meghan Jasani.
- **Program Portfolio Analysis** — identifying programs as:
  - Compasses
  - Growth Charts
  - Hearts
  - Battery Drains
- **The principle that “Nonprofit is a tax status, not a business model.”** A central idea highlighted during the discussion.
- **Mission Drift** as an organizational learning and governance framework, discussed by several participants.



## Open Questions

- How do organizations with **multiple entities under one umbrella** maintain mission alignment across all programs?
- How do organizations balance supporting youth through the full career pipeline without drifting into non-youth-centric services?

## Looking Ahead

The discussion reinforced a collective understanding that financial sustainability and mission integrity are not separate endeavors. Rather, they require ongoing reflection, strong governance, transparent communication, and a willingness to engage in honest conversations about organizational values and priorities.

As community arts organizations continue to navigate changing economic conditions and evolving community needs, the relationships between money, mission, and people remain at the heart of effective leadership and long-term impact.