

FY 21 Final Report to MSAB from the Lake Region Arts Council

Approved at the LRAC Board meeting, Sept. 21, 2021

Use of this report:

This document has been prepared to meet the requirements of the Minnesota State Legislature to qualify the Lake Region Arts Council for receipt of a block allocation to be used in funding local arts development programs and activities. In addition, this FY21 Final Report is to provide a basis for decisions to be made by the Lake Region Arts Council regarding overall activities as a Regional Arts Council and to act as a guide against which progress can be measured as the Council strives to attain its stated goals in this biennium (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021).

Planning Process

The Planning Process for this Biennium has relied on several assessment tools, including the regional needs assessment survey done in January, 2019, (see attachment), on site interviews with grantees, input from our grantees final reports, workshop/networking evaluations and a LRAC Board self-assessment tool.

The prioritized critical issues gleaned from the FY19 needs assessment survey related to the work of LRAC are:

- LRAC should provide networking opportunities
- LRAC should provide workshop opportunities
- Public awareness and education about the arts is vital
- Increase accessibility to LRAC services and grants to underrepresented groups
- Encourage building partnerships and relationships with underrepresented groups
- Individual artists need more direct help to connect with arts resources
- There is an increased need for operational support
- Need to hold LRAC workshops, networking meetings and events in a wider variety of locations within the region

The LRAC dedicates its McKnight Foundation funding to the needs of individual artists, for which the critical issues were:

1. Need funding resources for artists
2. Need marketing/advertising expertise and guidance
3. Need space/opportunities to display art or performance space
4. Need opportunities to network with other artists

Prioritized critical issues related to COVID 19 Impact, based on input from in person interviews and surveys.

Funding of grant programs maintain the same level as pre COVID

Increased need for operating support funding

Grant flexibility to adapt to postponements, cancellation and changes in grant activities

Support for using technology to move activities online/virtually

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic LRAC made the following adjustments:

Board meetings and grant reviews were held virtually, beginning in March, 2020 and continuing to June, 2021.

LRAC offices and galleries were closed to the public starting in March, 2020 and continuing to June 30, 2021

Flexibility was given to FY21 grantees who had to cancel/postpone activities. See grant section for details.

Grants *

Provide a narrative summary reflecting on the grants that you awarded, include your observations related to number of applications, successful marketing, training you provided, and other interesting activities related to awarding grants this year across all your funding sources.

LRAC Grant Programs	# Req.	# Funded	% Grants Funded	\$ Requested	\$ Funded	% Dollars Funded
Project Grants	17	12	70%	\$37,930	\$32,130	85%
Operating Support Grants	14	14	100%	\$56,630	\$56,630	100%
Legacy Grants, Individual	7	5	71%	\$48,820	\$29,579	60%
Legacy Grants, Organization	20	18	90%	\$210,765	\$179,765	85%
Legacy Local Gov. Grants	0	0	0%	\$0	\$0	0%
Career Development Grants	15	11	73%	\$17,710	\$12,504	70%
Artist Quick Start Grants	6	5	83%	\$4,500	\$3,750	83%
Fellowships	2	1	50%	\$10,000	\$5,000	50%
Arts Mentorship	0	0	0%	\$0	\$0	0%
Total	81	66	81%	\$386,359	\$319,358	83%

During fiscal year 2021, the Lake Region Arts Council awarded grants as shown above. A detailed listing of all grants awarded has been submitted to the MN State Arts Board in a separate document. Legacy Local Gov. grants and Arts Mentorship grants were suspended in FY21 due to impact by COVID 19.

Summary of Grants Awarded

This year 83% of the requests were funded, up from 78% in FY 20. These figures indicate that we are not able to sufficiently meet the need that exists. This inability to adequately fund the requests we receive has existed since these statistics have been tracked beginning in 1999.

COVID 19 Impact

The LRAC Executive Director conducted phone interviews with regional arts organizations to assess what kinds of support would have the most value during the COVID 19 pandemic. Top three responses were:

1. Be as flexible as possible with grantees, allow changes in performance dates, deadlines, approved activities, and conversion of funds for projects to operating expenses.
2. Keep funding levels in FY21 as close to pre COVID levels as possible
3. Access to the technology to move organizational operations and activities to online platforms and the technical support to use them.

LRAC responded by:

Allowing FY21 Op. Support grants impacted by Coronavirus restrictions, to shift approved expenses to a different Op Support category and allow payment of FY21 Op. Support grants final 20% prior to submission of final reports.

Allowing LRAC non Op. Support grants, impacted by Coronavirus with unspent funds due to cancellation to convert those funds to operating support expenses. The grant would add the outcome of: "Minnesota arts organizations report having access to the resources, information, personnel, audience, etc. they need."

Rescheduling FY20 Arts Mentorships to summer of 2021

Extend FY19, 20 and 21 grant deadlines to June 30, 2022.

FY 21 the LRAC Board approved to extend the FY20 COVID response of discontinue requiring a 20% match for Project grants and to allow the return of non-arts organizations as applicants for Legacy grant funding.

Services*

Provide a narrative summary reflecting on the services your region offered, include your observations related to number of people served, successful marketing, training you provided, and other interesting activities related to serving your region this year across all your funding sources.

Services Snapshot:

Service	Funding Source	Comments
Arts Newsletter	Legacy	Emailed every mo. to over 1,200 households, ranked as important in Needs Assessment Survey
Artist Registry	Legacy	Lists 40 regional artist, ranked as important in Needs Assessment Survey
LRAC Website	Legacy	Has over 800 visits/mo. average, ranked as very important in Needs Assessment Survey
LRAC Facebook Page	Legacy	Has over 7,000 followers, ranked as very important in Needs Assessment Survey
Networking Meetings	Legacy	LRAC held 2 virtual networking meetings, ranked as important in Needs Assessment Survey
Workshops	Legacy	LRAC held and sponsored over 12 virtual workshops, ranked as very

		important in Needs Assessment Survey
Regional Media Promotion	Legacy	LRAC produced over 26 videos promoting artists, arts organizations and arts events, feedback is that the videos are very valuable
Equitable Access Program	Legacy	See detailed info below
Artist Cohort Program	Legacy	See detailed info below
Galleries, Main and Solo gallery space Closed to the public on 3.2020 /COVID 19 thru June 2021	McKnight Foundation	11 exhibits per year, average attendance is 150 viewers per exhibit, but it varies greatly.
Springboard for the Arts office	McKnight Foundation	Connects and helped 800 artists, provided 58 hours of virtual workshops and 12 artist residencies, ranked as very helpful in Needs Assessment Survey

FY21 Measurement of success: In FY21 of those receiving services from the LRAC, 75% will indicate that the services provided by LRAC are important or very important to them and have provided access to a variety of resources they need.

End of year measurement shows that 80% of those responding to the FY19 Needs Assessment Survey* indicated that the services provided by LRAC are important or very important to them and have provided access to a variety of resources they need.

*LRAC was scheduled to conduct a FY20 Needs Assessment survey in March 2020, due to the COVID 19 disruption, the survey was cancelled and we are relying on the FY19 Needs Assessment for our measurements of success and FY21 interviews and surveys with artists and arts organizations.

FY21 COVID Measurements of success: There were three rounds of in person virtual check ins with grantees and arts organizations during FY21. The purpose of the check-ins was to determine how COVID was impacting their organizations and grants and how LRAC could be responsive to their ever changing needs. Feedback was that they highly valued LRAC’s allowing flexibility in changing grants impacted by COVID. They highly valued that our grant funding remained at pre-COVID levels although because of all the uncertainty the number of grant applications were down. Unexpected feedback, that because of federal support programs such as Payroll Protection Loans, and ACT funding the need for LRAC Operating Support was not as critical as reported in check-ins in early FY21. All contacts did express concern about what would happen when the federal programs were no longer available, especially if COVID continues to restrict public activities. This feedback will be taken into consideration in LRAC’s FY22-23 Biennial Plan.

FY 21 was the fourth year for the Artist Cohort Program and our Equitable Access Program.

- **End of year satisfaction survey: Artist Cohort Program** continues to be successful. There were 6 participants. All 6 achieved a 100% completion rate. When surveyed 100% of participants either valued, highly valued or very highly valued all Cohort program activities.

- In FY22 the program will be suspended for 1 year. The Artist Cohort Program will alternate every other year with the Artist of Color Cohort funded by the McKnight Foundation. The Artist Cohort program will return in FY23.
- **End of year observations: Equitable Access Program**, LRAC continued to build relationships with the following underserved groups:
 - Pelican Rapids Multicultural Committee, supported their Festival of Nations event
 - Moorhead Pangea Festival, supported multi-cultural event
 - Connexiones, Morris, MN supported their Cultural Day arts activities
 - Invited 2 artists of color to apply for open LRAC Board positions.
 - LRAC staff and Board members who are people of color will help design a pilot project for artists of color.

LRAC will continue to seek out artists and organizations that represent diverse and underserved communities.

Overall Success and Evaluation

Use this space for additional comments that do not fit in another section but you have included in your final report.

The following are additional indicators of success that LRAC identified in their FY 20-21 Biennial Plan, Work Plan:--

1. In FY 21 of those receiving grants from the LRAC 75% will indicate that their project was artistically successful, reached the target constituency and had community impact.

End of year measurement shows that 75 % of those receiving grants indicated that their project was artistically successful, and 75% reached the target constituency and had community impact. Evaluation method: Grantee Final Reports

2. In FY 21 of those receiving services from the LRAC, 75% will indicate that the services provided by LRAC are important or very important to them and have provided access to a variety of resources they need.

End of year measurement shows that 80% of those responding to the survey indicated that the services provided by LRAC are important or very important to them and have provided access to a variety of resources they need. Evaluation method: FY19 Needs Assessment Survey

3. In FY21 75% of those responding to the FY 19 Needs Assessment Survey will agree that LRAC awards grants with fairness to all applicants.

End of year measurement shows that 94% of those responding to the survey indicated that LRAC awards grants with fairness to all applicants.

Evaluation method: FY 19 Needs Assessment Survey

4. In FY 21 75% of those surveyed will indicate that LRAC acts as a responsible steward of public funds.

End of year measurement shows that 99% of those responding to the survey indicated that LRAC acts as a responsible steward of public funds.

Evaluation method: FY 19 Needs Assessment Survey.

5. In FY21 LRAC will communicate a minimum of 5 times per year informing regional legislators of arts activities and issues. LRAC will maintain membership in MCA, AFTA and participate in Arts Advocacy Day.

End of year evaluation: A total of 5 mailings were sent to regional legislators announcing LRAC and MSAB grants that were awarded in their districts. Legislators also receive our monthly eNewsletter and were invited to our Annual meeting. Three grantees sent letters of appreciation to their legislators. In FY21 LRAC paid dues to MCA and AFTA. LRAC participated in virtual Arts Advocacy Day, February, 2021.

The FY21 Board satisfaction survey, administered in May, 2021, did indicate a decrease in Board members who felt: “confidence that the Board has a strategic vision for the organization” and “that most or all board members understand the mission and purpose of the organization”. The decrease from FY20 satisfaction survey to FY21 for these questions was a movement from Very confident to Mostly confident. While not a critical change, as Executive Director, I do think it is a reflection of the need to move to all virtual meetings and having no Board Retreat or in person Annual Meeting in FY21. To address this, LRAC had an in person Annual Meeting in July, 2021 and has scheduled an in person Board Retreat in Oct. 2021 where we will review the Statewide Arts System and the LRAC mission, goals and work plan.

Attachments:

1. Needs Assessment Survey, 2019- on file at MSAB
2. MSAB budget template, FY21 EOY, unaudited