

# ANNUAL FINAL REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021

## For Region 6E, 6W, and 8

Submitted to  
Minnesota State Arts Board  
as  
fiscal agent  
for

### **SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA ARTS COUNCIL**

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*Michele Knife Sterner, President*

*Anne O'Keefe-Jackson, Treasurer*

*Erica Volkir, President-Elect*

*Georgette Jones, Board Member at Large to Executive Committee*

*Caroline Koska, Secretary*

*Nicole DeBoer, Executive Director*

### **Attachments**

SMAC FY21 Grant & Services Information.pdf

SMAC FY21 Highlights.pdf

SMA1 FY20 Grants Awarded.pdf

SMAC FY21 Financials.xlsx (Unaudited Income & Expense Report\* on Regional Arts Council Template)

*\*An audited 2021 financial report, with a breakdown of spending by program, will be submitted by*

*December 31, 2021*



## **SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA ARTS COUNCIL**

### **Regions 6E, 6W & 8**

#### **REPORT ON FISCAL YEAR 2021**

The goals and objectives included in our biennial plan have been addressed during fiscal year 2021. See the attached report showing all FY2021 grantees, including project descriptions and funding sources, as well as the "FY2021 Highlights" document for further detail and additional examples of how we have met our goals and objectives.

#### **Priority Goals and related accomplishments**

##### **PRIORITY 1: GRANT PROGRAMS - Provide effective and efficient grant programs for the production or sponsorship of art for individual artists, organizations, communities, schools, and youth**

In Fiscal Year 2021 we awarded a total of \$523,021 in grants to 92 area organizations and artists under 12 separate programs.

SMAC announced the guidelines for grant categories at least six weeks in advance of the deadline. Grants were posted on our website, announcements sent out via press releases, email, notices on our website and social media channels. SMAC staff provided grant workshops, plus one-on-one assistance over the phone, via email and in-person. SMAC maintained a toll-free phone number and easy access via email, as well as through our website. Grant programs are also advertised in our monthly digital newsletter. Constituents needing help with the on-line application process were assisted by SMAC staff, SMAC board members and local arts organization staff and volunteers.

Our work with communities and local government agencies to encourage arts activities has resulted in high quality art projects throughout the region. Although we had fewer applicants in our traditional "project" grants due to the pandemic and all of the uncertainty surrounding that, we saw arts organizations move forward with virtual projects and other projects that kept their audiences safe yet involved.

Using McKnight dollars, we awarded 16 adult artist grants through two programs (Emerging Artist, and Established Career Artist) which allowed them to grow in their skills, visibility and artistic career. Our individual artists, who's practice involved secluded work time during the pandemic, found great support

in our artist grant funding. We awarded three grants to students through our Art Study Opportunity for Youth Grant Program which allowed regional students to participate in summer programs and professional artist mentorships. Through a new grant program called “Artist Equity” we will be able to lift up three BIPOC artists and grow their artistic career.

Since the start of the pandemic we have hosted daily staff meetings, monthly board meetings, monthly committee meetings, gallery receptions, monthly learning & networking sessions for both arts organizations and individual artists, and our regularly scheduled grant webinars and grant support events all in a virtual format. While not perfect, we have also realized that there are definite benefits to outreach and communication virtually. We plan to implement virtual and online technologies into all of our future work.

**PRIORITY 2: STRONG ORGANIZATION: Maintain a strong and highly functional staff and board of directors and their capacity to strengthen arts organizations and artists while acting as responsible stewards of public and private funds in service of the arts.**

The SMAC Board consists of at least one representative (in some cases co-representatives) from each of the counties in our service region. In addition to attendance at board meetings, our board members participate through committee work and service on grant review panels. Standing committees include Long Range Planning, Marketing & Fundraising, Nominating, Equity, Annual Celebration Planning, Grant Program, Audit and Artist Retreat Planning committees. Committee activities are reported at each board meeting. SMAC held two board strategic planning retreats in January 2021 where the focus was on where we go as an arts organization after the pandemic. Titled “Navigating Uncertain Times” we followed training materials by the Wallace Foundation and worked through scenarios for the future of the arts. Board education sessions were incorporated into board meetings. Board members use this training to inform their work at SMAC as well as to share with constituents in their counties.

SMAC board and staff, with the assistance of grant review panelists and input from grant applicants, continually work to make our grant programs accessible and effective. Grants are tracked through our database and our online grant system. A sub-committee of the SMAC Board (the Grants Committee) spends time reviewing and making recommendations to the SMAC Board for changes that will strengthen our grant programs – or simply make them easier to understand for our applicants. A separate sub-committee of the SMAC Board (the Equity Committee) looks at our systems and processes to find ways to reduce barriers for all constituents to engage in the arts, especially historically marginalized communities in our region.

SMAC has continued to refine rubrics to assist grant panelists in their evaluation of grant applications. Panelists are trained to apply the criteria consistently as they review grants. Grant panelists are appointed by the SMAC board and represent a broad range of backgrounds, geography and expertise in artistic disciplines.

**Priority 3: EQUITY AND DIVERSITY - Actively and effectively connect with all constituents and work to define and address barriers and issues of access.**

SMAC has been immersed concentrated work for the past four years by reviewing our processes & systems with a lens of diversity, equity and inclusion.

- Staff and board have been involved in intercultural development inventory (IDI) counseling
- Our Equity Committee – made up of 6 board members – was created to take stock of where we were at and then create goals for FY21 and beyond and inform the board’s decisions using an IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity & accessibility) lens.
- Our Equity Taskforce – usually made up of 6 artists who directly come from underrepresented/underserved communities in our region – took a hiatus in FY21 due to the pandemic but our connections and relationships with the previous year’s Taskforce continued and impacted our decisions as a Board.

Two direct outcomes of the Equity Taskforce greatly impacted our grant programs. First we created an “Artist Equity” grant program. The intent of this Artist Equity grant is to aid Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other artists of color with projects that will advance their skills and artistic careers. SW MN Arts Council acknowledges that systems currently in place have historically marginalized and underserved indigenous people of the Americas and communities of color. We are committed to closing access gaps in the arts, breaking down barriers, and building bridges across communities. It is vital that we support artists in writing their own narratives, and we hope to do so by providing dedicated resources and recognition to artists of color in our region. In addition to the creation of this new grant program that was launched in FY21, SMAC instituted a system of “priority scoring” for applicants across grant programs for BOTH organizations and for individual artists. In continuing efforts to address equity and remove systematic barriers to the arts, our board set priorities where eligible grant applications will receive bonus points in the scoring process. Bonus points are given for being a first time applicant, underserved applicant (BIPOC, LGBTQIA2S+, and people living with a disability) and those applicants from counties in our SW MN region suffering from art scarcity.

We have continued our outreach efforts to underserved communities in our region. The year’s focus was reaching out and engaging diverse communities in the SMAC Region. Building relationships and understanding SMAC grants and services was the objective. We are seeing more and more interaction and relationship building with these communities and continued outreach plans on our FY22 calendar.

**Priority 4: PROMOTION OF THE ARTS - Promote, celebrate and advocate on behalf of arts creators, providers, and appreciators in SW MN.**

SMAC publicizes regional arts activities via our monthly digital newsletter, robust website that includes a detailed regional calendar and regular email, as well as with social media messaging and posters throughout the communities involved. SMAC staff and board members attend events throughout the region and advocate for the arts in communities and schools. SMAC encourages board, staff and constituents to attend Arts Advocacy Day to communicate with their legislators about the importance of the arts in their districts.

SMAC’s executive director is an active member of the Forum of Regional Arts Councils of Minnesota (FRACM). The FRACM conducts best practices sessions prior to each in-person board meeting. They

conduct peer reviews of biennial plan proposals and provide input on grant programs and other services. The executive directors of the Minnesota Citizens for the Arts and the Minnesota State Arts Board and the arts program director for the McKnight Foundation are regularly invited to FRACM board meetings. Other arts organization and foundation representatives are invited to make presentations at FRACM board meetings. Surveys seeking input are conducted with participants in FRACM programs. In addition, the SMAC executive director serves on the MN Citizens for the Arts Board and is active in promoting the arts legislatively.

The SMAC Art Gallery provided 6 regional artists (all SMAC grantees) the opportunity to have a solo exhibit in an accessible space. Receptions and artist talks were held honoring each artist. In FY201 all of those exhibiting artists had the opportunity to participate in virtual receptions featuring their work. These virtual receptions and accessible digital exhibit tours have created far more visitors and exposure than expected. Future plans for gallery exhibits will always include a virtual component.

In September of 2020, SMAC's Annual Arts Celebration was held virtually. We held time for the traditional, required meeting elements and also offered digital performances and/or pre-recorded videos that highlighted each of our 18 counties served. We engaged new audiences for our online celebration and continue to showcase those 18 digital pieces to future audiences.

We have continued to increase the use of social media (via Facebook and Instagram) and email communications through Constant Contact to disseminate information regarding grant deadlines, events, workshops and arts opportunities in our region but also throughout the state. Press releases continue to be effective ways to encourage newspaper articles in regional print media. Thanks to "Google Alerts" we are able to track news articles about SMAC activities. We regularly make personal contact with constituents at arts events throughout the region.

**Priority 5: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE/CAPACITY BUILDING - Develop artists' and arts providers' capacity to succeed.**

Staff treats every interaction whether direct or indirect with the intention of developing artists and organizations capacity to succeed.

SMAC hosts online webinars and grant workshops prior to each grant round and when possible or via virtual means meets one-on-one with individuals, organizations or government entities who are interested in or have questions about our grant programs. Grant staff is quick to set up a Zoom meeting as well as being available to travel to the inquiring community if the need is great, or if multiple people want to learn more about our programs – again following CDC recommendations for safe gatherings.

Due to the pandemic, SMAC wasn't able to host their traditional annual Artist Retreat, Arts Organization Summit or Artist Gathering for 2021. However, we hosted monthly virtual conversations for organizations & the arts and separately for individuals & the arts. These conversations provided a casual environment for our communities to share, network, and generate ideas and inspirations together. Our monthly artist conversations have become a way to lift up the work of an artist in our region and ask

questions via online meeting. Our feedback from these conversations has been extreme appreciation for the networking opportunities it presents.

Online grantwriting webinars were conducted regularly. Videos of the webinars are recorded and provided online for viewing after the live event.

The SMAC website [www.swmnarts.org](http://www.swmnarts.org) provided up-to-date information on resources related to COVID-19 complications and virtual opportunities, available grants, news and arts opportunities, on-line grant forms, recorded webinars, calendar of arts events (including virtual), and links to arts resources.

### **Overall Goals for SMAC Programs:**

- Support artists and arts organizations in creating, producing and presenting high-quality arts activities
- Overcome barriers to accessing high quality arts activities
- Instill the arts into the community and public life in our region
- Support high quality age appropriate arts education for residents of all ages to develop knowledge, skills, and understanding of the arts
- Support events and activities that represent the diverse ethnic and cultural arts traditions including folk and traditional artists and arts organizations represented in this region.

### **Target Population**

- Arts Organizations
- Cities
- Counties
- Schools
- Other nonprofit organizations
- Individual Artists
- All Residents of the 18 counties of our service region in southwest Minnesota

### **Program Outcomes**

- Artists and arts organizations have increased their capacity to create, present & produce high-quality arts activities
- Residents of southwest Minnesota have increased access to quality arts activities
- Residents of southwest Minnesota have access to arts learning opportunities
- Residents of southwest Minnesota have access to activities that represent the diverse ethnic and cultural arts traditions represented in this region

## Measurement Tools

- SMAC Database – number of applicants, number of grantees, types of projects, geographic distribution of funds, number of successful first time applicants
- Grantee final reports – project evaluation results, number of audience members, participants and artists
- Site evaluations – quality of projects and events
- Number of attendees at SMAC sponsored events and art gallery exhibit
- Surveys of grantees, participants and constituents
- Information gathered by other means from grantees, participants, grant panelists, audience members, arts-interested public

## Monitoring & Evaluation of Grants

All grant recipients are required to submit a final report within 60 days of their project completion. The final report includes financial information and number of people served as well as narrative response to specific questions about the project and examples of how the project was advertised and promoted. Twenty percent of the grant award is withheld until the final report has been received and approved. Every effort is made to evaluate projects on site by board members, panelists and staff. The SMAC board is provided with a summary of information received from the final reports

## SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA ARTS COUNCIL

### Fiscal Year 2021 Board of Directors Affiliations

**John White**, Ortonville (Big Stone County): photographer, writer, retired journalist; has served on the boards for CURE, Chippewa County Historical Society, Entrepreneurial Assistance Network, Pioneer Public TV, and Upper MN Valley RDC Tourism; involved with Big Stone Arts Council. Elected 11/13

**Georgette Jones, Watson** (Chippewa County): Secondary English Teacher, Speech Coach, Middle School Play Director, HS Fall Play Director, Community Education Theatre Coordinator, actor/director Marshall Area Stage Company, board of directors, actor, director Lac qui Parle Players, Madison. Appointed 1/16

**Anna Johanssen, Windom** (Cottonwood County): former alternative learning center art teacher for K-12; fiber artist; attends and supports the visual arts, music, theatre; Remick Gallery board of directors. Appointed 1/19

**Kristen Kuipers, Jackson** (Jackson County): Pianist, organist, vocalist, conductor, Rhythm of the River music festival board in Jackson, performed in theatre productions, music teacher, Jackson Center for the Arts board member. Elected 1/19

**Cheri Buzzeo, Spicer** (Kandiyohi County): Production Coordinator at the Willmar Community Theatre/The Barn Theatre and is an arts advocate and supporter. Elected 9/19

(Lac qui Parle County - OPEN)

**Mark Wilmes, Tyler** (Lincoln County): President & Artistic Director of the Lake Benton Opera House Board, managing editor for the Tyler, Lake Benton and Hendricks newspapers. Elected 1/20

**Michele Knife Sterner, Marshall** (Lyon County): Visual artist and involved with the Marshall Area Stage Company; experienced in traditional American Indian style dancing; works with the "Access, Opportunity, and Success" program at Southwest Minnesota State University. Elected 11/16

(McLeod County – Open)

**Darlene Kotelnicki, Litchfield** (Meeker County): theatre enthusiast, volunteer and supporter, former board member of Greater Litchfield Opera House. Appointed 8/20

**Jessica Welu, Slayton** (Murray County): communications director at Southern Regional Development Corp., writer/poet, planning member of Slayton mural project. Elected 1/21

**Cheryl Avenel-Navara, Worthington** (Nobles County): arts enthusiast; educator with advanced training for underserved and minority students; several years of experience with minority groups including disabled and new immigrants. Elected 1/21

**Erica Volkir, Pipestone** (Pipestone County): Former president of Fairmont Opera House, current Vice-President and Board Member of Pipestone Performing Arts Center, Executive Director of the Pipestone Area Chamber of Commerce and CVB, actress, dancer. Elected 9/17

**David KelseyBassett, Lamberton** (Redwood County - present): Visual artist – screenprinting, musician/performing artist, writer, dance instructor. Elected 8/17 8

**Anne O'Keefe Jackson, Morton** (Renville County): Native artist and arts supporter, former artist coordinator at Dakota Wicohan. Elected 10/15

**Shawn Kingsinger, Luverne** (Rock County – co rep): Executive Director for the Palace Theatre in Luverne, Vice President of Green Earth Players Community Theatre, a board member of Luverne Street Music and Artistic Director for the Luverne High School Theater. Elected 2/20

**Louella Voigt, Luverne** (Rock County – co rep): enjoys singing in her community and Church choir and is on the board for the Blue Mound Area Theatre, which manages the Palace Theatre. Elected 2/20

**Alison Nelson, Kerkhoven** (Swift County): Arts supporter and initiator who is involved with many arts disciplines, and writes a weekly column published in four local newspapers. Elected 5/19

**Betsy Pardick, Clarkfield** (Yellow Medicine County): Musician and arts supporter. Elected 9/19

## **SMAC STAFF**

### **Executive Director – Nicole Johnson-DeBoer**

April 2010 to present. Visual artist; vocalist; graphic design & marketing freelancer for multiple businesses, organizations and festivals; University of MN Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships 'Resilient Communities' member; former Creative Director for The Schwan Food Company; previous Artist Career Counselor for Springboard for the Arts; former president and secretary, Lyon County Historical Society; high school Booster Club(s) member; grant review panelist for SW MN United Way.

### **Financial/Grants Administrator –Caroline Koska**

June 2011 to present. Former vocalist in Prairie Arts Chorale; performer in Marshall Area Stage Company's musical theatre productions; Lake Benton Opera House theatre productions; pianist & flutist and piano teacher; former coordinator, Marshall Area Fine Arts Council, former board of directors Lyon County Historical Society.

### **Marketing & Accessibility Coordinator – Krystl Louwagie**

August 2016 to present. Visual artist; Hamline University graduate with a degree in Studio Art and Art History; professional face painter.