



## ***FY18-19 Biennial Work Plan***

### ***Executive Summary***

Established in 1994, the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council (MRAC) increases access to the arts in the 7-county Twin Cities metro area by providing grant opportunities and services to arts organizations and artists. MRAC is one of eleven Regional Arts Councils in Minnesota.

For the first time in history, the Twin Cities 7-county region topped 3 million people in 2015, representing 55% of all state residents. Looking closer, the five counties that added the most residents between 2010 and 2015 on net were Hennepin (+69,278), Ramsey (+25,037), Dakota (+15,938), Anoka (+13,994), and Washington (+12,879). (Source: Minnesota Office of the State Demographer). The region includes urban, suburban and rural communities.

The majority of MRAC's funding comes through the Minnesota State Arts Board (MSAB) and is primarily from appropriations from the Minnesota State Legislature from the State's general fund and the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. MRAC also receives a generous grant to support its Next Step Fund program from The McKnight Foundation.

Since the Arts and Culture Legacy Amendment was approved in 2008, MRAC has experienced significant growth in its grantmaking capacity, which now exceeds \$3 million annually since the Amendment's inception. As a result, MRAC has experienced a corresponding increase in inquiries; requests for technical assistance, applications, panel review days and volunteer panelists. More recently, MRAC has welcomed new executive leadership and program staff. Together, they have brought a wealth of new talents, experience and expertise to the organization.

- We meet our constituents where they're at and recognize their unique needs.
- We act with integrity, ensuring that all constituents are treated in a fair, respectful and consistent manner.
- We're committed to advancing inclusion and racial equity in all aspects of our work.
- We work with our community partners to promote and advocate for the arts.

## Needs Assessment Survey

A Survey Monkey survey was sent to 755 emails that were listed as the contacts for grants submitted in FY17, FY16 & FY15. The survey was first sent on January 20, 2017 with a reminder on February 1. The survey was closed on Feb. 6, 2017 with 241 respondents, a 32% response rate.

Several major themes emerged from the 2017 constituent survey as follows:

- Improve the training process of panelists who review funding proposals and diversify the composition of panels in terms of racial/cultural diversity, gender, age, nonprofit experience and artistic disciplines represented.
- Streamline current grant applications to be more accessible and user-friendly.
- Recognize the unique needs of small, grassroots organizations and barriers faced in applying for funding, especially first time applicants.
- Increase awareness and understanding of the disparities that exists for communities of color and other underrepresented communities.
- Develop a communications and outreach strategy for engaging with diverse communities and sharing grantees' stories about their funded projects.
- Continue to provide timely, relevant and accessible education and training opportunities for groups and organizations.

**February 2017:** MRAC board approved final Mission and Vision statements and provided feedback on draft Strategies.

**March 2017:** MRAC staff revised Strategies and prepared draft Goals & Metrics that relate to the MSAB's 25-year goals and indicators. MRAC board discussed major themes from the 2017 Constituent Survey and provided feedback about the proposed Strategies, Goals & Metrics.

**April 2017:** MRAC staff revised Strategies, Goals and Metrics for board review. MRAC Executive Committee provided additional feedback and recommended changes to ensure that MRAC's FY18-19 work plan both responds to constituents' diverse needs and strengthens the organization's internal capacity to keep pace with organizational growth.

MRAC board gives preliminary approval of new strategic plan and FY18-19 biennial plan.

Further, the board approved a resolution to authorize the Executive Committee to approve the final strategic plan/FY18-19 biennial plan after the public meeting is held on May 3, 2017.

**May 2017:** Notice of the public meeting on May 3, 2017 to review the new strategic plan and FY18-19 biennial plan was provided through MRAC's April and May 2017 e-newsletters and on social media. Seven people attended. A written record of the public meeting and comments will be kept on file in the MRAC office for a period of one year.

**MRAC's Executive Committee approved MRAC's FY18-19 Biennial Plan by unanimous electronic ballot on May 11, 2017.**

access.

Funded by: General Fund, Arts Access, Arts Cultural Heritage of Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund.

**Eligibility:**

- Federally tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts organizations located in the seven county metro area with annual operating expenses of less than \$400,000.
- Federally tax-exempt nonprofit, non-arts organizations and community education units with annual arts programming expenses of less than \$400,000 located in the seven-county metro area.
- Informal and/or unincorporated arts-focused groups and one-time arts projects located in the seven-county metro area with expenses of less than \$400,000. Informal and/or unincorporated groups must apply using a federally tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit fiscal sponsor located in Minnesota, with the sponsorship agreement formalized on or prior to the deadline.
- The applicant group must have a board of directors or advisory committee that provides input on the project and oversight of the grant funds.

**Arts Learning Grants:**

Provides grants of up to **\$10,000** for high-quality, arts education activities in any arts discipline to develop knowledge, skills, and understanding about the arts and/or learning through the arts. Projects must have clearly articulated, measurable learning objectives that will be evaluated. A cash match of 25% is required for projects.

Two grant review rounds are offered each year.

Evaluated on artistic quality, educational value, ability, community need/support, diversity and access.

Funded by: Arts Education of the Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund.

**Eligibility:**

- Federally tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts organizations located in the seven-county metro area with annual operating expenses of less than \$400,000.

### **Capital Grants**

Provides grants up to \$10,000 to purchase equipment and related supplies or services or to make capital improvements. One grant review round of Capital grants is offered each year.

A cash match of 10% is required for Capital requests.

Evaluated on community need & support, diversity, access, situation, solution and ability.

Funded by: General Fund

#### **Eligibility:**

- Federally tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts organizations located in the seven-county metro area with annual operating expenses of less than \$400,000 with at least a two-year history of programs or services in the seven-county metro area.
- Federally tax-exempt nonprofit, non-arts organizations and community education units with annual arts programming expenses of less than \$400,000 located in the seven-county metro area.
- Informal and/or unincorporated arts-focused groups and one-time arts projects located in the seven-county metro area with expenses of less than \$400,000. Informal and/or unincorporated groups must apply using a federally tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit fiscal sponsor located in Minnesota, with the sponsorship agreement formalized on or prior to the deadline.
- The applicant group must have a board of directors or advisory committee that provides input on the project and oversight of the grant funds.

### **ADA Access Improvement Fund**

A partnership with VSA Minnesota, for grants up to **\$15,000** to arts organizations that own or are the principal tenants of buildings to make capital improvements to fully accommodate people with disabilities, or for arts organizations to increase their capacity to engage people with disabilities with their programming and services in significant and long-term ways. Two grant review rounds are offered each year.

Evaluated on artistic quality, artistic challenge, ability, community need/support, diversity and access.

Funded by: Arts & Culture Heritage Fund

fiscal sponsor located in Minnesota, with the sponsorship agreement formalized on or prior to the deadline.

- The applicant group must have a board of directors or advisory committee that provides input on the project and oversight of the grant funds.

### **Management Training Fund**

Provides funds of up to \$600 for staff and volunteers of nonprofit arts groups on a rolling basis to attend management related workshops, seminars, classes or conferences in the state of Minnesota. To ensure qualification for reimbursement, requests must be received at least 14 days before committing to the expense.

Evaluated by: Relevancy of the requested training for the applicant

Funded by: General Fund

### **MRAC Arts Achievement Award**

Recognizes two organizations annually with a **\$5,000** award---one in the “metro” (Minneapolis and St. Paul) and one in the “greater metro” (Anoka, Carver, Scott, Washington, Suburban Hennepin, Suburban Ramsey) areas of the region that particularly exemplify artistic excellence. These honorees are recognized for their outstanding accomplishments and artistic contributions at MRAC’s annual meeting held in July.

Evaluated on the strength of the nomination by MRAC’s Board of Directors.

Funded by: General Fund

### **Next Step Fund**

MRAC’s only grant program for individual artists provides grants up to **\$5,000** to professional artists in any discipline for the purpose of career development and artistic achievement. An ideal Next Step project is one that helps an artist:

about particular issues, and peer learning opportunities that are less formal in nature. Session topics are also developed according to input from constituents.

MRAC maintains an active list of 200 presenters who offer a wealth of expertise and experience about various issues. MRAC has standing relationships with MAP for Nonprofits-Nonprofits Assistance Fund, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, the University of St. Thomas, and Hamline University to help with identifying expert guest speakers.

**MRAC's monthly e-newsletter** provided stimulating and timely information for constituents and colleagues.

**Media Releases:** Are sent promptly to various media outlets directly after grant awards are approved.

**MRAC website:** Offers timely and relevant information for applicants, grantees and community partners.

### ***Grant Library***

Because MRAC distributes public funds, submitted applications are public information. MRAC maintains a library of these grant applications, recorded panel discussions and panel attendance. Applicants are encouraged to review grant applications and panel discussions to enhance their understanding of the process and improve their applications. If notified in advance, MRAC's program directors can identify the successful applications most relevant to an applicant's project. MRAC also has a computer workstation for applicants. Please contact MRAC to use this service.

**Objective: 1a** *Develop clear funding guidelines that support the advancement of artists and arts organizations.*

**Outcome:** As a result, an evaluation of MRAC's programs and services will be conducted to assess their impact and effectiveness by June 30, 2018. We will implement changes to grant program eligibility guidelines and prepare a rollout plan for 2019-20 guidelines.

**Indicators:** Success will be measured by 70% of applicants annually indicating in a survey that MRAC's new guidelines are accessible and user friendly.

**Evaluation Method:**

Evaluation will occur through the program evaluation initiative and by tracking information from our grant applications in all MRAC grant programs.

**Objective: 1b** *Increase access to MRAC's resources for underrepresented organizations and artists through intentional outreach and engagement.*

**Outcome:** As a result, we will identify priority organizations and groups for outreach and engagement, develop strategies and launch activities by June 30, 2018. Of those who were targeted for outreach activities, we will see an increase in applicants attending workshops and participating in 1:1 meetings with program directors by June 30, 2019.

**Indicators:** Success will be indicated by the increased number of underrepresented organizations and artists applying for MRAC grant programs.

**Evaluation Method:**

Evaluation will occur by tracking demographic information of applicant organizations participating in targeted outreach and engagement efforts.



**Objective 1e:** *To act as strong advocates for the arts.*

**Outcome:**

As a result, MRAC will communicate a minimum of 4 times per year with regional legislators about the impact of the arts through a log of contacts with legislators, membership in Minnesota Citizens for the Arts (MCA), and participation in MCA's annual Arts Advocacy Day.

**Indicators:** Success will be measured by legislators continue to express their confidence and support in MRAC's programs and services.

**Evaluation Method:**

Evaluation will occur through tracking information shared with legislators at Big Check events and through MRAC's monthly e-newsletters.

## **Priority 2**

Develop deep knowledge, trust, and relationships between and with communities to eliminate barriers and advance inclusion and racial equity.

**Statewide Goal #3** People of all ages, ethnicities and abilities participate in the arts  
**#5** The Arts Thrive in Minnesota

**Objective 2a:**

***Work with MRAC board and grantee community leaders to develop a common framework and understanding of MRAC's inclusion and racial equity goals. The new racial equity framework and goals are developed and shared with MRAC's constituents, partners and general public by June 30, 2018.***

**Outcome:** As a result, we will develop a common framework for communicating MRAC's inclusion and racial equity goals.

## Priority 3

Strengthen MRAC's organizational capacity, staffing and internal systems to continuously improve programs, services and support panelists.

### **Statewide Goal #5 The Arts Thrive in Minnesota**

***Objective 3a: Adjust program eligibility guidelines and staffing complement to ensure a balanced and reasonable workload for managing growth in grant applications.***

**Outcome:** As a result, the program evaluation will be completed to review current program eligibility guidelines with a staffing plan to support programs and services.

**Indicators:** Success will be defined by having more clearly defined guidelines and annual staffing plan.

**Evaluation Methods:** Evaluation will occur through review of annual grant programs and meeting goals for panelists.

### ***Implementation:***

The intent of this new strategic plan is to guide MRAC's long-term planning and program development efforts for the next three to five years and serve as an important resource document. The strategies and goals listed are broad in scope as we anticipate that this important work will extend beyond the FY18-19 biennium.

For the next two years, MRAC will prioritize the three strategy areas with its financial and staffing resources. Internally, MRAC will integrate these activities that support these strategies into its current programs. Staff and board will develop work plans to focus their respective efforts to carry out these strategies and regular updates on progress reports will be shared at both MRAC's board meetings and through annual program reports to the Minnesota State Arts Board.