



Application

181008 - FY 2026-2027 Regional Arts Council Documents - Final Application

181673 - FY 2026-2027 Regional Arts Council Documents  
Regional Arts Councils

Status:	Submitted	Original Submitted Date:	03/31/2025 10:05 AM	Submitted By:	Leslie Hanlon
		Last Submitted Date:	06/01/2025 1:31 PM	Last Submitted By:	Leslie Hanlon

Applicant Information

Primary Contact:

Legal Name\*

Leslie  
First Name

Middle Name

Hanlon  
Last Name

Alternate Name

Leslie  
First Name

Hanlon  
Last Name

Organization Information

Legal Name:\*

Central Minnesota Arts Board

Alternate Name

City\*

Foley

Narrative

Title

Your council's name or acronym followed by FY 2026-2027 Preliminary Biennial Plan (e.g., Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council FY 2026-2027 Preliminary Biennial Plan)

(100 characters max)\*

Central MN Arts Board FY2026-2027 Preliminary Biennial Plan

Mission statement

The biennial plan must include the regional arts council's mission statement which must describe the overall philosophy and aims of the organization concerning local and regional arts development.

(1,000 characters max)\*

Central MN Arts Board's mission is to invest in the arts throughout Benton, Sherburne, Stearns and Wright counties.

We aim to foster a thriving, collaborative and innovative arts community through partnerships and financial support. We strive for excellence in leadership and the responsible distribution of arts funding. Through this, we increase the quality of life in our region by engaging residents in the arts, enhancing education and improving arts access. Finally, we nurture artists' professional needs and expand opportunities to create, showcase and profit from their work.

Region - Background, demographics, other context for the plan

(5,000 characters max)\*

Provide any necessary context about your region (i.e., economic, demographic, geographic, cultural, etc.) or about your organization that has a meaningful impact on your planning or your programs and services.

Region 7W, located along the I-94 corridor north of the Twin Cities, spans 2,968 square miles across Benton, Sherburne, Stearns and Wright counties, with a population of 455,933 (2024 census). The Mississippi River, a portion of the Northstar Commuter Rail and the Lake Wobegon Trail run through our region, which includes 64 cities and 80 townships. The rural areas, comprising nearly half the population, consist of both traditional and underrepresented

audiences. The region is home to several diverse cultures, including the largest Somali population outside the Twin Cities and a growing Hispanic population.

The City of St. Cloud is at the center of a quickly growing urban hub made up of the adjacent cities of Sauk Rapids, Sartell and Waite Park. St. Cloud is the third largest city in Greater Minnesota. Twenty-five percent of the region's population resides in and around St. Cloud.

Southeast from St. Cloud, along the Highway 10 corridor, is another collection of towns which includes Elk River, the region's second biggest city, and Monticello, which has been enjoying an explosion of arts activities in the way of public art installations, artist residencies and the development of a community arts organization, MontiArts. This part of the region also includes St. Michael and Albertville, with thriving theater and music programs. Another growing center of arts activity are the cities of Sauk Centre and Melrose, both located in the far northwestern reach of Region 7W. Both communities have thriving arts initiatives that include intentional and numerous public art installations, artist residencies and community art projects such as an annual chalk festival. These efforts are literally changing the face of these cities. Sauk Centre's 501 Arts Lab draws membership from as far as 40 miles, providing an invaluable service to regional artists.

7W boasts several small cities with large representations of artists who are active and visible within their communities. Some examples include the cities of Buffalo and Delano, which each have their own artist guilds or councils, as well as the city of Avon, home to the unique Avon Hills Folk School, located in rural Stearns County. The small town of Holdingford has embraced Arts in Motion, situated on the Lake Wobegon trail, which hosts exhibitions, artist residencies and serves as a home for several local arts groups.

St. Cloud is home to the Great River Educational Arts Theater, one of the largest community theater organizations outside of the Metro region. 7W is home to two symphony orchestras (St. Cloud and Buffalo), a municipal band that boasts a history of more than 125 years, and a growing collection of public art. Through the work and championing of local culture bearers and advocates, we have seen groups establish an African Arts Day, an annual Juneteenth celebration and, recently, both a Hispanic Heritage Festival and a Somali Festival in the city of St. Cloud, in addition to well-established Pride Festivals. These events have become an important opportunity to celebrate artistic heritage and expression across communities.

#### **Region 7W has a total population of 455,933 and 2,968 Square Miles**

\*Regional Data According to US Census Bureau 2024 estimates

**Stearns** – population 160,977

##### **1,390 Square Miles**

White 84.6%  
Black/African American 10.2%  
American Indian/Alaska Native .6%  
Asian 2.3%  
Hispanic/Latino 4.9%  
Two or more races 2.1%  
10.3% speak languages other than English at home  
7.9% of those under 65 are estimated to be living with a disability  
11.1% of the population live in poverty

**Benton** – population 41,600

##### **413 Square Miles**

White 89.2%  
Black/African American 6%  
American Indian/Alaska Native .7%  
Asian 1.3%  
Hispanic/Latino 3.8%  
Two or more Races 2.8%  
6.6% speak languages other than English at home  
8.3% of those under 65 are estimated to be living with a disability  
9.1% of the population live in poverty

**Sherburne** – population 102,206

##### **451 Square Miles**

White 90.1%  
Black/African American 5%  
American Indian/Alaska Native .7%  
Asian 1.8%  
Hispanic/Latino 3.6%  
Two or more Races 2.3%  
4.5% speak languages other than English at home  
6.4% of those under 65 are estimated to be living with a disability  
6.1% of the population live in poverty

**Wright** – population 151,150

##### **714 Square Miles**

White- 92.4%  
Black/African American 2.9%  
American Indian/Alaska Native .5%  
Asian 2%  
Hispanic/Latino 3.7%  
Two or more Races 2.2%  
4.6% speak languages other than English at home  
5.9% of those under 65 are estimated to be living with a disability  
5.3% of the population live in poverty

**St. Cloud** – population 71,013

White- 69.7%  
Black/African American 18.2%  
American Indian/Alaska Native .4%  
Asian 3.9%  
Hispanic/Latino 4.1%  
Two or more Races 5.9%  
People in poverty- 19.8%

**Elk River** – population 27,342  
 White- 86.6%  
 Black/African American 3.9%  
 American Indian/Alaska Native .1%  
 Asian 1.1%  
 Hispanic/Latino 3.7%  
 Two or more Races 5.9%  
 People in poverty – 4.8%

#### Attachment (optional)

#### Needs assessment

(10,000 characters max)\*

The biennial plan must be based on a needs assessment carried out in a manner which ensured input from the arts community and the arts involved public. The components of the needs assessment shall be determined by the regional arts council and may consist of any combination of constituent meetings, focus groups, program evaluations, mail, e-mail, online, or telephone surveys, individual interviews, or other evaluative tools. The assessment shall be conducted to assess and prioritize constituent needs, to evaluate appropriate community and regional resources to meet those needs, and to determine the practicality of continuing existing programming activities, service and grants assistance programs, or the feasibility of developing new programs, services, or grants by the regional arts council. The needs assessment shall be updated at intervals determined and announced by the regional arts council, but no less frequently than once every four years. The results shall be included in the biennial plan.

In this section, describe:

1. When the needs assessment was completed.
2. The process used to generate input from the arts community and the arts involved public.
3. The methods and/or tools used to gather input.
4. The key findings identified through the needs assessment.

#### FY26-27 Needs Assessment Activities:

The CMAB conducted the following Needs Assessment activities

- Two electronic needs assessment surveys – one focused on the general population & the other on the arts involved community. These surveys were collected between October - December 2024; advertised and distributed through electronic communications, print media and individual outreach. The surveys were advertised on our social media platforms to increase the visibility of the surveys to a wider audience than those who currently receive CMAB communications.
- In October 2024, CMAB staff conducted nine in-person and one virtual Listening Sessions in the following locations:
  - Monticello
  - Buffalo
  - Delano
  - Melrose
  - Waite Park/St. Cloud
  - Paynesville
  - Sauk Centre
  - Sherburne Wildlife Refuge
  - Elk River
  - Virtual session

The locations were intentionally selected to reflect both communities that see several grant applications and awards each year and communities that are underrepresented in grant submissions. Staff from local city government, libraries and schools were encouraged to attend, as well as arts invested individuals. Several shared the needs assessment surveys through their e-newsletters or posting QR codes that took people directly to the survey.

- Internal staff analysis of grant programs, award percentages, funding percentage of total cost, and funding distribution across region.
- Throughout the year, CMAB staff attended several events focused on community engagement where they distributed information on how to get involved in CMAB outreach activities. (Juneteenth Celebration; Conversation on Race; United Way of Central Minnesota convenings, St. Cloud Chamber Emerging Leaders as examples of key outreach)
- Detailed review of Final Report feedback from FY24-25 in November of 2024. We consider applicant feedback all year long, and when possible and reasonable, make adjustments to policies and practices that can change in real time.
- Individual conversations with grantees and applicants were conducted on an on-going basis.

#### Key Findings:

Needs Assessment activities revealed widespread support for the arts and the programs offered by the CMAB.

- **Arts & Quality of Life:** 77% of general survey respondents say arts and culture are extremely important to their community's quality of life.
- **Arts Participation:** 63% of general survey respondents want more opportunities to participate in the arts.
- **CMAB Satisfaction:** 55% of arts community respondents are very satisfied with CMAB programs and services; another 44% are satisfied.
- **Grant Program Value:** Arts community surveys rated all twelve CMAB grant programs as 'very important'.
- **Funding Needs:** Listening session participants emphasized the need for increased award amounts to keep pace with rising costs.
- **Funding Equity:** Internal analysis shows a considerable decline in applications from Elk River and Paynesville.
- **Marketing Support:** Surveys and listening sessions revealed a strong need for resources to help artists and organizations reach new and diverse audiences.
- **Networking & Education:** Frequent requests for more networking opportunities and continuing education. Related to this, individuals were also interested in opportunities to collaborate and learn from each other
- **Support for creating digital content:** artists expressed that they need help learning to create quality work samples, websites, online classes, etc
- **Exhibition spaces:** Artists consistently identified the lack of exhibition spaces, in particular for emerging artists

**How CMAB programs and services for the coming biennium respond to the key needs identified above:**

1. **Continuing grant funding for local arts organizations, artists and others:**  
CMAB works closely with grantees and potential applicants to provide flexibility and stability through our 11 grant programs. Through individual conversations and workshops, we help grantees select the appropriate program to apply to when seeking funding, as well as guidance in how to write their application. Staff provide draft reviews and ensure applications are complete before panel review.
2. **Funding Needs:** Listening session feedback and internal staff analysis identified the need for increased award amount. As a result, this biennium, CMAB will increase the maximum award amounts for the Project Grant rounds and our operating support program, Community Arts Support. The Teaching Artist Grant, a McKnight funded program, will also have an increased award amount. We will also increase the Artist Career Development grant budget so more artists are funded each year.
3. **Funding Equity:** Internal analysis shows a decline in applications from Elk River and Paynesville. In the coming biennium, we will prioritize outreach activities in these communities to ensure that artists and organizations have equitable access to funding opportunities.
4. **Marketing support:** In response to needs assessment data, we will host a mini-series of workshops on marketing. We will invest in advertising for the Around the Cloud website to grow the number of regional visitors. Additionally, we promote funded events on our website, e-communications and social media platforms. Funding to support marketing activities can be included in several of our grant programs.
5. **Networking and continuing education opportunities:** Addressed through targeted workshop and networking opportunities offered virtually and in person. We will keep virtual options for programming indefinitely to improve and widen access across the region.
6. **Support for creating digital content:** Two programs for artists support these needs: Artist Learning Grant and Artist Career Development. Organizations may fund activities like these through the Project Grant Program, Organizational Development and Community Arts Support. In the coming biennium, we will also host a mini-series of workshops on how to build a website.
7. **Exhibition spaces:** CMAB supports this need through media platforms and promoting lists of local display/exhibit opportunities and connecting individuals with this information. Grant programs provide funding support for organizations to host artist residencies and exhibitions.

**Attachment  
(optional)**

---

**Description of the planning process****(5,000 characters max)\***

The biennial plan must include a description of the biennial planning process used by the council including a list of the steps included in the development of the biennial plan and the participants involved in the biennial planning process.

Staff outlined a proposed list of needs assessment activities that was presented to the board for input. The CMAB Board of Directors were provided with the survey results, final report feedback and listening session feedback prior to the November 2024 meeting. At the November meeting, an initial conversation of suggested priorities and program changes were discussed, based upon the needs assessment data.

During the meeting directors discussed and arrived at a consensus regarding specific adjustments to programs and services and provided input on work-plan priorities to guide and focus CMAB's work in the following biennium.

**CMAB planning timeline:**

- **Needs Assessment:** Electronic surveys, October 2024 – December 2024, Listening Sessions held in nine locations around the region and one virtual during October 2024
- **Reflection and Assessment of Programs and Services:** staff analysis of grant programs, award percentages, funding percentages of total project cost, and funding allocations conducted between November - February 2025. Including assessment of individual meetings and communications, final report feedback review and outreach activities
- **First draft of Biennial plan to Board:** February 18, 2025
- **2nd Board and Staff Biennial Plan Meeting:** February 25, 2025
- **Draft of the FY26-27 Biennial Plan:** Posted online February 28, 2025
- **Public Meeting:** March 5, 2025, Two meetings: noon – 1pm & 5 – 6pm
- **Adjustments based on feedback:** March 5 – 10, 2025
- **Board Final Approval of the Plan:** March 13, 2025
- **Submit Biennial Plan to the MN State Arts Board:** April 1, 2025
- **Biennial Plan Review by Advisory Committee:** April 2025 TBD

**Attachment  
(optional)**

---

**Work plan for grants, programs, and services - Overview****(4,000 characters max)\***

The biennial plan must include a work plan which contains a description of services, programs, and grants available from the council, and the goals and objectives of these activities as related to the needs assessment, and the 25-year arts legacy outcomes.

The Central MN Arts Board provides funding, services, and programs that support artists, non-profit organizations, and communities in the region. Guided by the 25-year arts legacy outcomes, we aim to ensure the arts are

interwoven into community life, accessible to all, and a thriving part of our region’s cultural identity. Like all RAC’s, our programs are shaped by ongoing needs assessments, ensuring they remain relevant and impactful.

**Grant Programs** CMAB offers a range of grants to increase access to the arts, support artist and organizational development, and strengthen arts organizations. Our project-based funding allows organizations to create engaging public art, host cultural events, and expand arts education. We also provide general operating support for established arts organizations, addressing the critical need for sustainable funding, as highlighted in our Needs Assessment.

For individual artists, our grants encourage professional growth, creative exploration, and career development. We provide funding for artists to attend training, acquire essential tools, and showcase their work, ensuring they have the resources to thrive. Based on feedback from our arts community, we have increased funding caps and adjusted application deadlines to better align with real-world needs.

**Training and Professional Development** To support grantees and emerging applicants, CMAB offers workshops on grant writing and professional development. We are expanding our offerings by training staff to deliver the Springboard for the Arts Work of Art series, a direct response to regional requests for more accessible professional development opportunities. We also plan to offer two workshop series this coming biennium: website development and marketing, based on needs assessment feedback. An informal monthly networking session will be launched in the fall of FY26, which directly responds to artist feedback.

The Teaching Artist Roster Program provides artists with structured training to integrate their work into schools and community settings. This initiative enhances arts education while creating new career pathways for artists. We also host artist-led workshops based on community demand, ensuring that learning opportunities remain relevant and accessible.

**Showcases and Public Engagement** To elevate local talent, CMAB facilitates artist showcases, including the Teaching Artist Showcase, which we are planning in conjunction with the Arts Educators of Minnesota Conference in FY26, and the Individual Artist Showcase during the summer St. Cloud art crawl. These platforms provide visibility and networking opportunities for artists while strengthening connections with educators, organizations, and the public.

**Arts Promotion and Community Engagement** CMAB maintains the Artist Registry and AroundtheCloud.org, an online arts and culture calendar, to promote events and connect the community with artistic opportunities. We also issue media releases and provide panel stipends to recognize the time and expertise of those who contribute to our grant review process.

**Flex Funds** To remain responsive to emerging needs, CMAB allocates Flex Funds as part of our budgeting process. These funds provide grantmaking flexibility, allowing us to support meritorious projects and address priority goals identified in our biennial plan.

Through these initiatives, CMAB ensures that arts funding is strategically invested to expand access, support artists and organizations, and enrich the cultural landscape of our region.

Attachment  
(optional)

Are you ready  
to work on  
work plan  
priority 1?\*

Yes

Work Plan Priority 1 (2,000 characters max)

Priority 1: Sustain the effective delivery of programs and services through leadership transition.

The CMAB’s executive director, Leslie LeCuyer, retired on April 1, 2025 after over 21 years of service to the organization. The new executive director, Leslie Hanlon, was hired as assistant director and worked alongside LeCuyer in preparation. In addition, all but one staff member has been hired within the last two years, resulting in a significant shift in institutional knowledge and experience.

Actions:

1. Ensure continuity in grant programs: maintain existing grant cycles, guidelines and panel review processes to ensure a seamless experience for applicants.

2. Support staff during transition: provide professional development, clear role expectations and regular check-ins to maintain staff engagement and confidence.

3. Engage the Board and Stakeholders: keep the board, artists and arts organizations informed and involved in transition process.

4. Evaluate internal processes: assess administrative workflows and identify areas for efficiency and/or improvement.

5. Foster team collaboration and cohesion: establish clear communication channels and team building initiatives to support a strong, cohesive staff and ensure effective service for grantees and applicants.

State one measurable outcome the council expects to produce through Priority 1 activities.

Measurable Outcome (150 characters max) Grant programs remain stable, operations run smoothly, stakeholders remain engaged and applicants, board and staff report high satisfaction.

Which of the 25-year arts legacy outcomes will this measurable outcome address (select all that apply)?

The arts are  
interwoven  
into every  
facet of  
community  
life

Yes

Minnesotans  
believe the  
arts are vital

Yes

to who we  
are

People of all  
ages,  
ethnicities,  
and abilities  
participate in  
the arts

Yes

People trust  
Minnesota's  
stewardship  
of public arts  
funding

Yes

The arts  
thrive in  
Minnesota

Yes

Plan for  
measuring  
results (1,000  
characters  
max)

To measure the effectiveness of CMAB's leadership transition, we will track grant program stability, staff support, stakeholder engagement, internal processes. Grant continuity will be assessed by monitoring application numbers, adherence to guidelines, and applicant satisfaction through feedback. Staff support will be measured via retention rates, participation in professional development, and quarterly check-ins. Board and stakeholder engagement will be evaluated based on meeting attendance, outreach efforts, and feedback. Internal processes will be reviewed through workflow audits and staff input, identifying areas for efficiency. Team collaboration will be tracked by participation and staff assessments on communication and morale. Success will be indicated by smooth operations, engaged stakeholders and a strong, cohesive staff. Regular meetings with the board's executive committee will provide oversight, ensuring stability and responsiveness to challenges.

Is there a  
second work  
plan priority?

Yes

#### Work Plan Priority 2 (2,000 characters max)

##### Priority 2: IDEA - Inclusion, diversity, equity and access

Ensuring inclusion, diversity, equity and access in arts funding is essential to building a vibrant and representative creative community. We recognize that barriers – whether geographic, economic, linguistic or disability-related – can limit participation. By proactively reaching underserved communities, improving accessibility and ensuring equitable funding distribution, we will support a more inclusive and diverse arts ecosystem in the region.

##### Actions

1. Targeted outreach and relationship building with low-application communities.
2. Offer grant writing workshops specifically in low-application communities, with a focus on first time applicants.
3. Provide one-on-one coaching or office hours to help underrepresented applicants navigate the process.
4. Maintain an IDEA budget line to support trainings and key expenditures.
5. Offer application materials in multiple formats and languages for accessibility.
6. Strengthen the Arts Access grant program, providing funding for initiatives that reach underserved communities.
7. Continuously evaluate and refine internal processes to improve accessibility and equity in grantmaking and services.

State one measurable outcome the council expects to produce through Priority 2 activities.

Measurable  
Outcome (150  
characters  
max)

Inclusion, diversity, equity and access will be advanced by reducing barriers, expanding outreach and ensuring equitable arts funding in our region.

Which of the 25-year arts legacy outcomes will this measurable outcome address (select all that apply)?

The arts are  
interwoven  
into every  
facet of  
community  
life

Yes

Minnesotans  
believe the  
arts are vital  
to who we  
are

Yes

People of all  
ages,  
ethnicities,  
and abilities  
participate in  
the arts

Yes

People trust  
Minnesota's  
stewardship  
of public arts  
funding

Yes

<b>The arts thrive in Minnesota</b>	Yes
<b>Plan for measuring results (1,000 characters max)</b>	Number of applicants and panelists from low-application communities increases. Monitor the percentage of grants awarded to underrepresented groups and/or that specifically engage underserved groups. Measure participation at outreach events, workshop participation and one-on-one sessions. Monitor IDEA budget to ensure funds are allocated toward training, accessibility improvements and outreach initiatives. Measure number of applicants who utilize accessibility resources or accommodations during the application process.
<b>Is there a third work plan priority?</b>	Yes

---

**Work Plan Priority 3 (2,000 characters max)**
**Priority 3: Increased outreach and professional development opportunities**

To strengthen our regional arts ecosystem, we are committed to expanding outreach and professional development opportunities. By prioritizing engagement in underrepresented communities, offering responsive workshops, and building strategic partnerships, we will equip artists and organizations with the skills and resources they need to thrive and create impactful programs for our communities.

**Actions**

1. Prioritize outreach activities in low-application communities such as Elk River and Paynesville.
2. Provide workshops focused on topics driven by needs assessment responses, such as marketing, building a website or crafting effective artist statements.
3. Send a staff member to the Springboard for the Arts Work of Art Facilitator training in order to host the Work of Art workshops on a rotating schedule.
4. Develop partnerships with local libraries, community centers, and economic development organizations to host workshops and reach broader audiences.
5. Offer virtual workshops to increase accessibility for artists who cannot attend in person, as well as record and post workshops on our YouTube page.
6. Assess the possibility of creating a learning cohort made up of staff from our operating support grantees focused on exchanging best practices and collaboratively addressing common challenges.

State one measurable outcome the council expects to produce through Priority 3 activities.

**Measurable Outcome (150 characters max)** The arts ecosystem will be strengthened by expanding outreach, offering responsive workshops and building partnerships to support artists and arts orgs.

Which of the 25-year arts legacy outcomes will this measurable outcome address (select all that apply)?

<b>The arts are interwoven into every facet of community life</b>	Yes
<b>Minnesotans believe the arts are vital to who we are</b>	Yes
<b>People of all ages, ethnicities, and abilities participate in the arts</b>	Yes
<b>People trust Minnesota's stewardship of public arts funding</b>	Yes
<b>The arts thrive in Minnesota</b>	Yes
<b>Plan for measuring results (1,000 characters max)</b>	Track number of outreach/workshop events, attendance and applications submitted, post workshop surveys measure participant satisfaction and knowledge gained, views and engagement metrics for online content.
<b>Is there a fourth work plan priority?</b>	Yes

---

**Work Plan Priority 4 (2,000 characters max)**
**Priority 4: Accountability and Transparency**

**Actions**

1. Provide applicants with clear access to program guidelines and offer support in understanding eligibility, criteria, and application requirements.
2. Expand panelist recruitment to increase awareness and foster broader engagement.
3. Maintain a strong commitment to transparency by adhering to the spirit of the open meeting law.
4. Enhance public access to grant impact data by promoting and maintaining a regional grant award map and an annual report summarizing grant distribution and outcomes

State one measurable outcome the council expects to produce through Priority 4 activities.

**Measurable**

**Outcome (150 characters max)** CMAB will build public trust through transparency, clear guidelines, broad engagement, open meetings, and accessible grant impact data.

Which of the 25-year arts legacy outcomes will this measurable outcome address (select all that apply)?

The arts are interwoven into every facet of community life

Minnesotans believe the arts are vital to who we are Yes

People of all ages, ethnicities, and abilities participate in the arts

People trust Minnesota's stewardship of public arts funding Yes

The arts thrive in Minnesota

**Plan for measuring results (1,000 characters max)** Track and report the number of funded proposals that successfully achieve the stated outcomes in CMAB applications and align with MN RAC goals, publicly share CMAB board meeting dates/times and how the public can observe, ensure board members and regional residents have clarity on any program changes reflected in CMAB guidelines and integrated into application materials.

Is there a fifth work plan priority? No

**Program information**

(7,000 characters max)\*

Describe the grants and other forms of assistance the council will provide, the review criteria for evaluating grant requests, and eligibility requirements.

The CMAB will offer the following grant programs in the coming biennium. All applicants must be located in Benton, Sherburne, Stearns or Wright counties, with the exception of Project Grants (see below)

**1. Project Grants**

Funds to increase access to arts focused events throughout the region; Maximum grant of \$9,000 with a 10% match required. Evaluated on Artistic Merit & Quality, Demonstrated Need, Ability, and Equity & Sustainability.

**Eligibility:**

- Must support arts focused activities
- Nonprofit 501(c)3 organizations
- Community groups with nonprofit fiscal sponsorship
- Public Schools
- Local government entities (city, township and county)
- Out of Region nonprofit 501(c)3, schools or local government
  - Eligibility for groups located outside Region 7W is determined by contacting CMAB staff after completing the demonstrated service section of the application.

**2. Arts in Residence Grants**

Funds in support of a unique arts experience that ties into a lesson plan or curriculum. Maximum grant \$3,500 with no match required. Evaluated on Artistic Merit & Quality, Demonstrated Need, Ability, Outcomes & Evaluation.

**Eligibility:**

- Nonprofit 501(c)3 organizations
- Community groups with nonprofit fiscal sponsorship
- Public schools



- Local government

### 3. Community Art Support Grants

General operating support for Nonprofit Arts Organizations with a minimum of two years of service to the community. Funds up to \$12,000 or 20% of the last fiscal year's annual operating expenses will be awarded per fiscal year in a two-year granting cycle. A minimum request of \$5,000. Evaluated on Artistic Merit & Quality, Community Need & Ability.

#### Eligibility:

- Established nonprofit 501(c)3 arts organizations that do not receive general operating support from the Minnesota State Arts Board.
- Applicants must have annual operating expenses below \$250,000 and have a two year history of arts programming

### 4. Student Arts Scholarships

Funding for students pursuing an arts-related major from an accredited institution; \$2,000 maximum; Students must be seeking their 1st undergraduate degree and may be awarded a maximum of 4 Student Arts Scholarships. Evaluated on Artistic Merit and Quality and applicant Ability.

#### Eligibility:

- Individuals planning to attend an accredited institution full-time and major in an arts-related field
- A current resident of Benton, Sherburne, Stearns or Wright counties for a minimum of six months prior to application who will remain a resident during the scholarship period. Recipients may attend a school outside the region but must maintain residence in Region 7W
- US Citizens or individuals with permanent resident alien status

### 5. Arts Organization Development Grants

Funds to support activities that contribute to organizational sustainability, growth and improvement. Proposals may include staff/board development, workshops and conferences, resource development, financial planning, volunteer management, equipment purchases and to fund a portion of a new staff position. Emerging arts organizations may apply for funds to support the process of obtaining 501(c)3 status. Applicants may receive up to \$10,000 in grant funds during a CMAB fiscal year. Evaluated on Artistic Merit & Quality, Equity & Sustainability, Demonstrated Need and Ability.

#### Eligibility:

- Nonprofit 501(c)3 arts organizations
- Arts groups with nonprofit fiscal sponsorship requesting support to become a 501(c)3 nonprofit
- An arts affiliate operating distinct arts focused programming hosted within a Region 7W nonprofit 501(c)3

### 6. Public Art Grant

Funds for the creation and installation/implementation of temporary and permanent art works that are free and open to the public. There is no maximum grant amount for this program. Grants are based on project needs and available resources. Requests must include 25% matching funds from non-CMAB sources. Evaluated on Artistic Merit & Quality, Demonstrated Need and Ability.

#### Eligibility:

- Nonprofit 501(c)3 organizations
- Community groups with nonprofit fiscal sponsorship
- Schools
- Local government entities (city, township and county)

### 7. Arts Access Grant

Funding to support efforts to directly engage underserved audiences in order to increase access to the arts and celebrate diverse cultural expression. Underserved audiences include, but are not limited to, BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities, individuals with disabilities, elderly individuals, at-risk youth and people living in low-income circumstances. Evaluated on Artistic Merit & Quality, Demonstrated Need and Ability. Applicants must identify the specific underserved group that will be served.

#### Eligibility:

- Nonprofit 501(c)3 organizations
- Community groups that have nonprofit fiscal sponsorship

### 8. Individual Artist Award

Provides awards to outstanding individual artists living in region 7W. The purpose of the award is to recognize and support individual artists in various stages of their careers. Evaluated on Artistic Merit & Quality. Funded by McKnight Foundation.

#### Eligibility:

- A self-proclaimed artist at least 18 years of age
- Current resident of Benton, Sherburne, Stearns or Wright counties and a resident of MN for a minimum of six months prior to application
- A US citizen or permanent alien resident

### 9. Artist Career Development

Provides funding in support of projects, training opportunities, creative time, purchases and other activities that assist artists in making the next step in their creative development and artistic careers. Evaluated on Artistic Merit & Quality, Need and Ability. Funded by McKnight Foundation.

#### Eligibility:

- A self-proclaimed artist at least 18 years of age
- Current resident of Benton, Sherburne, Stearns or Wright counties and a resident of MN for a minimum of six months prior to application
- A US citizen or permanent alien resident

### 10. Artist Learning Grant

Provides funding for artists to attend a class, training or workshop and/or purchase equipment and supplies in

support of professional development and learning. Evaluated on Artistic Merit & Quality, Ability and Need. Funded by McKnight Foundation.

**Eligibility:**

- A self-proclaimed artist at least 18 years of age
- Current resident of Benton, Sherburne, Stearns or Wright counties and a resident of MN for a minimum of six months prior to application
- A US citizen or permanent alien resident

**11. Teaching Artist Grant**

Provides funding for individuals on the CMAB Teaching Artist Roster to conduct arts learning activities in community settings. Evaluated on Artistic Quality & Merit, Demonstrated Need and Outcomes & Evaluation. Funded by McKnight Foundation.

**Eligibility:**

- Individuals listed on the CMAB Teaching Artist Roster

In addition to these 11 grant programs, the CMAB offers a bi-annual training, the Teaching Artist Roster Program, to help artists turn their creative process into a curriculum so they can lead workshops in school or community settings. As discussed above, the CMAB also provides a number of services each year including: grant writing workshops and topic driving workshops such as marketing or copywright.

**Attachment  
(optional)**

---

**Grant making and monitoring process**

**(5,000 characters max)\***

Provide a detailed description of the council's grant making process including the review process, the terms of the grant contract with grant recipients, the time needed and process followed in paying grant recipients, the responsibilities of grantees, and the grant monitoring process.

**APPLICATION PROCESS**

Applications are submitted through Foundant, CMAB's online system. Accommodations can be made when this presents a barrier. Applications and program guidelines are available online a minimum of 60 days prior to a program's deadline.

Applicants are encouraged to contact the CMAB office for assistance; working sessions are available in person, by phone or virtually before grant deadlines to provide additional support. The website lists draft review deadlines, application deadlines, and board review dates.

**APPLICATION DRAFT REVIEW**

Before an application is submitted, a draft review can be requested. Draft reviews are optional and do not guarantee funding.

**REVIEW PROCESS**

Once submitted, staff verify eligibility. Applications are electronically assigned to the review panel at least two weeks before the panel meeting. Review of eligible applications takes place within one month of the deadline. All applicants will be notified of the Board's decision.

During review, each application will receive a score on a scale from 0 to 30. An applicant must attain an average score of 15 to be considered for funding.

In select grant programs, final average scores may be adjusted down 10% based on applicant's grant history\* and compliance with their contract. Applicants that have not previously been funded receive a 10% increase in their final average score.

\*Grant history considerations include contract violations, and serious grant audit findings. Directors will consider grant history up to two fiscal years prior to the year of the application.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Board members, staff, and panelists disclose conflicts of interest and abstain from reviewing or scoring affected applications.

**GRANT APPEAL PROCESS**

Applicants denied funding may appeal based on procedural errors. There is no right of appeal based on the size of grant awarded or disagreements with panel's assessment of the application relative to the CMAB published review criteria. Applicant may make an appointment with staff for assistance in determining a valid appeal.

**GRANT CONTRACTS**

Awarded grantees must sign a contractual agreement within 30 days of notification. Failure to provide any required documents can result in the cancellation of a grant commitment.

*Note: If an application is approved, the funds must be expended within 12 months of the approval date.*

*All grant contracts contain the following content modified to fit the appropriate program:*

**A. Authorized Use of Grant Funds**

The proposal was recommended and approved for funding by the CMAB directors based on the information and description contained in the grant application. Grantee is authorized to use the grant funds only to carry out the proposal in accordance with the specification contained in the grant application. Any changes to the content of the proposal or budget must be requested in writing and approved in advance by CMAB. Such changes not approved in advance may constitute a violation of the grant contract.

**B. Unauthorized Use of Grant Funds**

Upon a finding by CMAB that Grantee has made an unauthorized use of grant funds or that Grantee received grant funds but failed to submit required reports, and upon demand by the CMAB for repayment, the Grantee agrees to promptly repay such amounts to the CMAB.

**C. Acknowledgement**

Grantees are required to acknowledge CMAB support by using the appropriate credit line and logo(s) in printed materials, news releases, and website. When written credit is not applicable, grantees must give verbal acknowledgement before each event or performance and in media interviews. Evidence the acknowledgement was provided is required in all final reports.

**GRANT DISTRIBUTION**

80% of the grant award will be distributed to the Grantee or Fiscal Agent thirty (30) days before the listed start date unless there have been contingencies placed on the grant as specified in separate communications by the CMAB to the Grantee. The remaining 20% of the grant award will be released upon completion and acceptance of the Final Report.

**GRANT MONITORING PROCESS**

CMAB staff and board members may attend funded events and provide feedback to the board. Check in's with new grantees are scheduled to track progress. Randomized administrative site visits occur periodically.

**AMENDMENTS**

Significant project changes (budget, artists, dates, locations, etc) require CMAB approval via an amendment form.

**FINAL REPORTS**

All awardees must complete a final report within 60 days following the end date indicating the actual outcomes and expenditures associated with the grant. The Grants Manager and Executive Director review reports for impact, compliance and feedback.

**GRANT AUDITS**

CMAB trusts our grantees to describe what they are going to do and then follow-through to the best of their ability. If significant discrepancies occur an audit can be conducted that requires grantees to provide receipts and other means of verification on the actual use of the grant.

**Attachment  
(optional)****Public meeting**

(1,000 characters max)\*

Each council must hold at least one public meeting to solicit reaction to its preliminary biennial plan before it is approved and submitted to the Arts Board.  
Provide the date(s) and location(s) of the public meeting(s). How was the public informed? Who participated in the meeting (types and numbers of attendees)?

We held two virtual public meetings on Wednesday, March 5, 2025, one at 12:00pm and the second at 5:00pm. We advertised the meeting through a press release to our regional press, on our social media channels, as well as via our email newsletter and our webpage. The draft of the biennial plan was posted on our website on Friday, February 28, 2025. Four individuals participated in the noon session, including two individual artists and two individuals from arts organizations. Two individual artists joined the 5pm session. As is typical, more individuals registered to attend than actually participated.

**Attachment  
(optional)****Attach Files Here****Required attachments**

**Council's bylaws\*** CMAB\_ByLaws.pdf

**Board information**

- Names and affiliations
- Arts experience and background requirements for membership
- Nomination process - including a statement of the council's commitment and methods used to identify, recruit, and appoint board members to provide representation from all counties
- Rotation system - to ensure replacement of members on a regular basis

**Board information\*** CMAB\_BoardofDirectors.pdf

**Staff information**

- Names and titles
- Job descriptions

**Staff information\*** CMAB Staff Job Descriptions.pdf

**Is council part of a regional development commission?**

If yes, attach a memorandum describing the policies and procedures under which grants will be made including a statement that the regional development commission agrees to fund only organizations or projects which have been recommended by its arts advisory council and that the recommendations will be based on the regional arts advisory committee's review of the application's artistic merit, the applicant's ability, and the need for the project or program

**Is council part of a regional development commission?\*** No

**Is council using a 501(c)(3) fiscal agent?**

If yes, attach a letter of agreement between the council and its fiscal agent stating that the fiscal agent has no jurisdiction over the council's review and awarding of arts grants.

**Is council using a 501(c)(3) fiscal agent?\*** No

---

**Projected budget**

[Click here to download a blank: Biennial Plan Budget Template.](#)

**Biennial budget\*** CMAB fy2026-2027-budget.xlsx

---

**Certifications and Signature**

---

Certify that the nonprofit organization is registered and is in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State. Applicant can check the nonprofit's registration status using the following link: [Minnesota Secretary of State Business Search](#).

**The applicant is in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State of Minnesota\*** True

Attach a PDF file containing a list with the names of the applicant's

- Current board members,
- Staff members with authority to access grants funds or determine how those funds are used.

**Attach PDF file here\*** CMAB Grant Funds Access.pdf

**None of the individuals in the list provided have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last ten years\*** True

The signature of an authorizing official certifies that all information in the application is true and correct, the applicant meets all program eligibility criteria, and the applicant intends to use any granted funds only for allowable purposes.

**Authorizing Official\*** Leslie Hanlon

**Title\*** Executive Director