

## **Metropolitan Regional Arts Council FY24-25 Biennial Plan**

### **Mission Statement:**

The Metropolitan Regional Arts Council (MRAC) improves arts access for communities in the seven-county Metropolitan area through support to artists and organizations.

### **Vision**

- Artists and arts organizations thrive.
- Arts engagement takes place in every community.
- The public actively values and celebrates the arts and artists.

### **Guiding Principles**

- We take into account the needs and interests of constituents in our region when developing programs and services.
- We strive to maintain transparent decision-making processes and information that is accessible for the public.
- 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.

### **Region - Background, demographics, other context for the plan**

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. 4129 characters

In 1977, the Minnesota legislature established a system of eleven regional arts councils to distribute state government appropriations to small arts organizations around the state. The Metropolitan Regional Arts Council (MRAC), which serves the 7-county Twin Cities metropolitan area, is the largest of the regional arts councils. Each regional arts council is an autonomous organization designated to assess arts needs, develop programs and services to meet those needs, and distribute funds to arts programs in its region. All of the regional arts councils began as programs of larger regional development commissions. MRAC was a program of the Metropolitan Council until 1989, when MRAC became an independent nonprofit organization.

The Metropolitan Regional Arts Council (MRAC) serves Region 11 - also known as the metro - which includes Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington counties. Geographically, the metro only covers 3.5% of the state, but is home to an estimated 3,153,879 people, making up 55% of the state's population. This is a 2.54% increase since the last biennial plan and 10.6% increase since 2010.

According to Minnesota Compass, the 2021 demographics of the metro are: Persons of Color 29.2%; American Indian .6%; Asian 8.2%; Black or African American 10.7%; LatinX 6.8%; Two or more races 2.9% and; White 70.8%. Individuals with a disability make up about 10%.

The Metropolitan Council population forecast for 2050 reports a Metro area population of 4 million people including a doubling of Black, Latino and Asian populations. This report estimates that at that time, 44% of Twin Cities residents will be people of color or BIPOC.

These growth trends are important for MRAC to understand who is in the metro, how to best reach them and what we should prioritize to meet our mission and vision. Specifically, MRAC has identified Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color (BIPOC), People with Disabilities (PWD) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Two-spirited (LGBTQIA2+) communities as priorities based on historical underfunding and ongoing disparities due to systemic inequities.

Specifically, MRAC serves arts organizations and fiscally-sponsored groups with annual expenses of \$400,000 or less; cultural and non-arts organizations with annual art programming expenses of \$400,000 or less and; individual artists in the metro. However, a significant number of organizations that receive MRAC grants have budgets of less than \$100,000. Additionally, in FY23, with a grant from the McKnight Foundation, MRAC offered the Artists' Futures grant to include Native artists residing throughout the state of MN. This is the first time MRAC has offered a grant program to individuals living outside of the Metro, but we felt it was important to expand our geography to reach more Native artists.

In FY22, MRAC received 1,401 applications and awarded 394 grants totaling \$4,191,969. Of which, 110 were individuals that received \$547,217 and 253 were organizations or fiscally sponsored groups that received \$3,644,752.

MRAC recruits community members from the metro area to serve as panelists that review grant applications and make funding recommendations to the MRAC Board of Directors. In FY22, 254 individuals contributed their time to serve as panelists. Of those panelists, 51% identified as BIPOC, 34% of all panelists identify as being part of the LGBTQIA2+ community and 15% identified as being a PWD. We also partnered with Cow Tipping Press, an organization committed to changing the narrative about developmental disabilities, to include an individual with an intellectual/developmental disability to serve as a panelist.

On March 13, 2020, in response to Gov. Walz's Emergency Executive Order 20-01 declaring a peacetime emergency, all of MRAC's programs and services went remote. We closed our physical office, and all MRAC staff have been working from home since. Currently, all MRAC workshops, applicant meetings and services, panel workshops,

panel reviews, grant scoring, and board meetings are conducted virtually - with the exception of some in-person meetings with constituents.

**Needs Assessment:**

**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.**
1. For this biennial plan, there were 5 different types of needs assessments included.
    - a. Ongoing needs assessment that takes place during and after every grant round;
    - b. Focus groups with individual artists of color that were held in March 2022;
    - c. One-on-one interviews with Access Advisors took place in August & September 2022;
    - d. Individual engagement, partner events, and community survey to LatinX community September 2022;
    - e. Needs Assessment survey - October - December 2022;
    - f. Focus Groups with artists and arts-involved community members from Disabled/Disability, Native American, LatinX, and Scott & Carver counties were held in November and December 2022.
  2. Our process typically follows these steps:
    - We determine what we need to learn, develop a set of questions, and timeline;
    - We identify who we need to collect feedback and information from;

- We decide what the best method will be to collect the information (ie. survey, focus group, interviews, etc);
  - We create the tool and/or hire consultants;
  - Implement plan;
  - Collect and analyze data;
  - Determine strategies based on findings.
3. The primary methods were emailed electronic surveys, focus groups and interview conducted in-person and over Zoom. The emailed surveys primarily target people and groups that have had previous experience with MRAC. Our focus groups generally consist of people that have never applied for a grant before and/or have no relationship with MRAC.
- a. MRAC has a regular practice of on-going needs assessment that is integrated into all of our programs. We survey all applicants, including people that started a draft but never submitted the application and individuals that requested and/or met with staff before the deadline to ask about potential challenges or barriers. This feedback provides a better understanding of the application process and if needs were addressed. We also surveyed all panelists that served to review applications and provide recommendations for funding. We received a total of 357 survey responses in 2022.
  - b. The McKnight Foundation partnered with MRAC on their Seeding Cultural Treasures program to support individual artists of color. As a part of developing this program we worked with 11 artist advisors that each hosted focus groups. There were a total of 112 participants that shared their specific needs, challenges, and what they felt it would take for artists of color to succeed.
  - c. MRAC staff interviewed six (6) advisors about accessibility needs for disabled/artists with disabilities.
  - d. MRAC staff met with 80 LatinX artists, cultural bearers and individuals with artistic projects and LatinX-led groups; held events with 4 LatinX-led and serving organizations and reached 50 participants and; sent out a LatinX Community Survey with 19 responses and 14 follow up conversations.
  - e. We sent out an 18-question survey to our listserv with 6000 emails and shared it on the MRAC facebook page with 2.9k followers in October - December. We received 156 responses.
  - f. We hired 4 consultants to facilitate focus groups with artists and arts-involved community members from Disabled/Disability (21 participants), Native American (19 participants), LatinX (21 participants), and Scott & Carver counties (17 participants). We chose these groups because they are the most underfunded communities at MRAC.
4. Key findings identified through the needs assessment: Also see attachments

MRAC's mission is to improve arts access for communities in the seven-county Metropolitan area through support to artists and organizations. Our primary tool has been to provide financial support through a grantmaking process that is decades-old, so we wanted to learn about:

- what challenges and needs people have with creating arts access at this time;
- what is getting in the way of people applying to MRAC;
- what challenges are applicants experiencing when they do apply;
- what do we need to consider and change about our system and practices to mitigate barriers and distribute funds more equitably and;
- what else can we offer to support arts access in the region?

We found common themes across all the needs assessment processes.

Demographic data from survey respondents:

- 56% of respondents have budgets of \$100,000 or less
- 28% have budgets under \$25,000
- Received responses from all counties – 81% from Saint Paul & Minneapolis
- 42% identified as BIPOC-led organization (proportionate to population except LatinX)
- 57% identified as White-led organizations
- 11.5% identified as disability-led organizations
- 16.7% identified as LGBTQIA2+-led organizations

The top responses to the following question gave us insight on the challenges our constituents are experiencing, and how they would like MRAC to support their needs.

**Question 1:** What challenges are you experiencing with creating, presenting, producing, and supporting arts access at this time?

- Fundraising 80%
- Not enough time 43%
- Exhaustion 38%

We believe that these challenges are related, and want to ensure that MRAC's systems and practices don't perpetuate and exacerbate these challenges. Additionally, responses from the focus groups and advisors had similar responses revealing challenges with grant writing, the application process, and bias in the panel.

**Comments from the focus groups and advisors:**

- Grant writing is “unpaid labor” for artists
- Time spent working on applying prevents doing the art
- Feeling overwhelmed by the grant writing process

- Turned off to apply, writing the grant is difficult, and required a high degree of access and experience
- Make grants easier to apply for
- Feeling “too small” for the grants; especially since the process felt too overwhelming
- Need to address bias in the panel process - feelings of being artistically judged, which is emotionally and professionally challenging
- Every community is nuanced and unique, and requires nuanced and adaptable strategies for success - there should be consideration given to holding everyone to the same “standards”

**Question 2:** In addition to financial support, what other services and resources do you need?

- Workshops & Trainings 36%
- Peer Networks 33%
- Other 25% - many in this category provided more detail about workshops and peer network ideas

**Additional Comments:**

- Workshop topics and ideas: Printing, marketing, bookkeeping, graphic designing, editing, Board member recruitment/training, space, accountants, legal consulting, advancing social media reach, rejuvenation and wellness
- Learning more about what other similar orgs are doing and identifying what gaps exist (peer networking)

**Question 3:** How can MRAC support you after you receive a grant?

- Marketing & Promotions
- Regular check-ins

**Additional Comments:**

- Help us get the word out about our project! Our biggest challenge is just getting the word out - communications takes an enormous amount of time and specific skill to do well, and we don't have enough staff to focus on it.
- Check in with us. Reach out. Ensure we matter.
- Continued reminders for filling out information after the grant timeline has been completed. We are a small staff and struggle to remember everything.

**General themes and lessons learned:**

- Positive feedback about access to MRAC staff
- Critical feedback about the grant process - specifically, the application being too difficult and time consuming, and panelists not understanding their intent.

- Lack of confidence to compete for funding
- The pandemic has impacted everyone differently.
- Everyone is still experiencing change and transition.
- We can't rely solely on technical solutions for real-people issues.
- Language, culture and systems are real barriers - not just for non-English speakers. We operate within the culture of grantmaking, which is unique in itself.
- Going remote has increased accessibility - concerns about decreasing virtual options for people with disabilities.
- Engagement with new communities takes time, and may require multiple points of contact before there is an attempt to submit an application
- Meanwhile, providing opportunities for consistent engagement outside of applications can help with building relationships
- It is important for MRAC to be as adaptive and accommodating as possible for different needs including providing materials in multiple languages, accepting applications in multiple languages and different formats, etc.
- Every community is nuanced, has different needs, and requires different strategies.

**Case Study:** We held separate focus groups in Scott county for the LatinX and white communities, and learned very distinct cultural differences.

- LatinX focus groups were held in bodega-like stores, restaurants, and a hair salon.
- Less comfortable identifying as artists, but valued cultural practices and the importance of teaching and passing along cultural knowledge.
- Most were not aware of MRAC and programs.
- White (non-Hispanic) community was more comfortable identifying as artists and valued opportunities to sell artwork.
- Some were aware of MRAC programs, but felt inadequate to apply.
- Others are able to build their clientele and find other sources of support for their artwork, and programming.

### **Description of the planning process:**

**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.**

August:

- Reviewed biennial planning documents
- Biennial Plan required components.
- 25- year framework guiding documents: MN State of Innovation, MN Legislative Guide and the MN State Arts Board.
- Office of the Legislative Auditor 2019 Evaluation Report on MN State Arts Board Grant Administration

- MRAC's FY22-23 Biennial Plan Narrative

September:

- Started needs assessment planning
- formed a board and staff working group
- drafted survey questions
- recruited 4 consultants to facilitate focus groups with members of the LatinX, Native American, Disability/Disabled, and Scott and Carver counties.

October - December:

- Needs Assessment Survey and Focus groups
- Sent out survey and posted to social media
- Consultants recruited, planned and facilitated focus groups
- Reports with key findings and recommendations were submitted and reviewed

January:

- Review and analyze data
- staff planning and strategy discussions

February:

- Began writing plan
- presented needs assessment findings and draft to MRAC Board

March:

- Public Meetings on March 13 at 12:00 and 5:30pm
- collected feedback at meeting and via google survey
- made appropriate edits
- Board approval on March 28, 2023

April - Submit biennial plan

**Work plan for grants, programs, and services – Overview**

**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.**

**Priority 1: Support organizations and artists to be responsive to their artistic goals and communities.**

Due to the pandemic, we simplified our grant programs and went from 9 programs in FY20 to 3 programs in FY21. Specifically, we created the Flexible Support program with grants up to \$15,000 to create arts access and stay connected with audiences. We also created the Equity Response program, with grants up to \$2,500 to address the increased disparities experienced by communities of color, the disabled community, and



LGBTQIA2+ communities. We also continued to offer the Next Step Fund for individual artists funded by the McKnight Foundation.

In FY21, we received 1,148 applications and awarded 432 grants totaling \$4,312,489.

Although we were proud to offer Equity Response, we learned that the grant size did not meet the needs we hoped to address. In FY22, we expanded the program to groups for \$10,000 (Arts Impact for Groups) and individuals for \$5,000 (Arts Impact for Individuals).

We continued our outreach and engagement to reach more diverse constituents, and saw a 22% increase in total grants received between FY21 and FY22. It was challenging for staff because there was a 60% increase between round 1 & 2 of Flexible Support in FY22. This put a lot of stress on our staff capacity, and had a significant impact on the funding rate for applicants.

In FY22, we received 1,401 applications and awarded 394 grants totaling \$4,191,969.

In FY23, we are offering the same four programs with a grant budget of \$4,208,500. Additionally, the McKnight Foundation funded the development of the Artists' Futures program, which offers \$35,000 to 10 artists of color.

**Priority 2: Distribute state funds equitably throughout the region.**

MRAC believes that responsible stewardship of public dollars requires equitable practices and distribution of funds. This is an important part of how we can improve our role as part of the statewide arts grantmaking system.

In FY20, MRAC identified Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color (BIPOC), People with Disabilities (PWD) and LGBTQIA2+ communities as priorities based on historical underfunding and ongoing disparities due to systemic inequities. We set a baseline goal to fund these communities proportionate to population, and created new programs to advance these goals. Although there has been progress, we are still experiencing inequities embedded in our grantmaking system.

We cannot expect different outcomes if we keep using the same systems. Outreach is only one step to inform people of the system, but it does not eliminate the barriers in the system. After 4 years of engagement - building relationships, learning about needs, and addressing challenges - we don't believe that reaching people is our only problem.

As directed by feedback in the 2019 and 2022 needs assessment, we want to simplify the application process, take a critical look at the panel process, and ultimately take out the gatekeeping so we can support the sector with more care and less judgment. We plan to extend the engagement process into the next biennium to reimagine our grant process and practices.

**Priority 3: Strengthen MRAC's organizational and staffing capacity.**

Being an equitable organization requires an organizational culture that considers the wellbeing of both the external community being served and the internal community that is serving.

The MRAC board and staff teams are working towards an organizational culture that is driven by our principles. In FY24, we hope to engage in a process that will bring greater alignment between MRAC policies, goals, strategies and operations.

We will take time to reflect on recent challenges and understand the full impact of our decision. Strategic conversations will set MRAC on a clear path that is in alignment with our stakeholders and allows for a renewed approach to organizational practices.

**The following section provides more detail including which state goal each priority aligns with, the objectives, and indicators for how we will measure progress.**

**Statewide Goals:**

1. People of all ages, ethnicities and abilities participate in the arts
2. The arts are interwoven into every facet of community life
3. Minnesotans believe that the arts are vital to who we are
4. People trust Minnesota's stewardship of public arts funding
5. The arts thrive in Minnesota

**MRAC Priority 1: Support organizations and artists to be responsive to their artistic goals and community needs. Aligns with goals 1-5**

**Objective 1a: Provide grant programs that are responsive and compliant**

Indicators:

- MRAC has clear guidelines that describe the grant process, criteria and eligibility requirements to the public.
- MRAC guidelines comply with the Minnesota State Arts Board fiscal sponsorship agreement.
- MRAC has open communication and staff are available for public engagement.

**Objective 1b: Advocate for the arts**

Indicators:

- MRAC constituents will better understand the importance of grassroots advocacy and participate in MCA's annual Arts Advocacy efforts.
- MN Legislators will value and support the general fund and legacy appropriations for the arts in Minnesota.

**Measurable outcome:** Metro organizations and artists will have support to create access to the arts for their communities.

**Plan for measuring results:** We gather qualitative and quantitative data regarding grant applicant services, and panel participation. Data is collected through surveys, one-to-one zoom meetings, email communications, and tracking engagement.

**This next objective relates to MRAC priorities 1 & 2:**

- 1. Support organizations and artists to be responsive to their artistic goals and community needs. Aligns with goals 1-5**
- 2. Distribute state funds equitably throughout the region. Aligns with goals 1,3,4,5**

**Objective: Engage the community in the development of a new grant process.**

Indicators:

- The application process is simplified.
- The selection process is more equitable.
- There are less barriers in the application process.
- There is increased support for grantees to deliver successful projects.

**Priority 2: Distribute state funds equitably throughout the region. Aligns with goals 1,3,4,5**

**Objective 2a: Promote a culture of inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility in the arts.**

Indicators:

- Operationalize principle-driven processes for making decisions.
- Develop internal systems that are adaptable, responsive, and culturally-informed.
- Disparities in funding will decrease for priority communities.
- Relationships and trust with priority communities will increase.

**Objective 2b: Broaden the participation of people with disabilities in the arts.**

Indicators:

- Build internal and external capacity of knowledge and practices that increases accessibility.
- Elevate the voices of disabled/people with disabilities in the arts through semi-annual Arts and Disability Forum Virtual events.
- Decrease barriers for people with disabilities in MRAC's grant process.
- Increase funding to the disabled/disability community.

**Objective 2c: Increase access to MRAC resources for the LatinX community.**

Indicators:

- Increase access points to MRAC with multi-lingual and cultural services.
- Decrease barriers to MRAC's grant process.
- Increase funding to the LatinX community.

**Measurable Outcome:** MRAC will see a decrease in funding disparities, and access to services.

**Plan for measuring results:** We will track demographic and geographic data as it relates to percentage of applications received and percentage of dollars going into different communities throughout the metro.

**MRAC Priority 3: Strengthen MRAC's organizational and staffing capacity Aligns with goals 4-5**

**Objective 3a: Hire, support and develop staff**

Indicators:

- MRAC will have the appropriate staff capacity to manage all programs, provide quality services and attention to constituents.
- MRAC staff will feel supported, have confidence and grow their capacity to provide knowledgeable and quality services to the region.

**Objective 3b: Recruit, support and develop the board**

Indicators:

- MRAC will have board members that represent the demographic and geographic diversity of the region - including representation from all 7 counties.
- MRAC board members will feel supported and be confident in their ability to govern the organization.
- MRAC board members will be engaged as thought partners and advocates for the organization.

**Objective 3c: Update Strategic Framework**

Indicators:

- MRAC board and staff will strengthen relationships.
- MRAC board and staff will update organizational goals.
- MRAC will have alignment in policies, goals, strategies, and operations.

**Objective 3d: Develop a communications strategy for sharing change, stories and lessons learned.**

Indicators:

- MRAC is a reliable and trusted resource in the metro arts and arts involved communities.
- Constituents feel informed and understand MRAC's goals and decisions.

**Measurable Outcome:** MRAC will have the appropriate capacity to carry out organizational duties to advance MRAC's mission and vision.

**Plan for measuring results:** The MRAC staff team meets weekly for collective check-ins and programmatic discussions. MRAC board and staff meet during monthly board

meetings, and we will hire a consultant to facilitate a process to help us determine goals, strategies and metrics.

## **Program Information**

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

## **Grant Programs & Services**

MRAC will offer 3 grant programs; 1 for 501(c)(3) organizations and fiscally sponsored groups, and 1 for individuals that are funded by the state's general fund and legacy fund and MRAC will be running a cohort program for BIPOC artists that is funded by the McKnight Foundation.

In FY24, MRAC will be offering 2 state funded programs:

1. **The Arts Impact for Individuals grant** provides up to \$5,000 for artistic projects in Minnesota led by individuals who identify as any of the following: Black, Indigenous, and/or a Person of Color (BIPOC); and/or disabled/a person with a disability; and/or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual/Agender, Two-Spirit (LGBTQIA2+) creating access to the arts for communities and/or engaging with communities through artistic endeavors. Individuals must have a primary address in Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott or Washington county. There is \$400,000 available for this program.
  - Arts Impact for Individuals
    - Application deadline: October 23, 2023
    - Panel Review: January 18- February 16, 2024
    - Board approval date: March 26, 2024
2. **The Flexible Support grant** provides funding to help groups create and sustain Minnesotans' access to the arts. Projects could include arts programming, and/or projects that strengthen the organizational capacity or operations of groups providing access to the arts.
  - Flexible Support
    - Application deadline: November 6, 2023
    - Panel Review: March 8- April 5, 2024

■ Board approval date: April 23, 2024

Because we are combining Arts Impact for Groups into Flexible Support, there is \$4,301,763 available for this year's Flexible Support grant. We have set aside \$3,000,000 specifically for groups whose leadership is 51% or more people who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC); and/or disabled people/people with disabilities; and/or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual/Agender, Two-Spirit (LGBTQIA2+). These groups may request up to \$25,000. Other eligible groups may request up to \$15,000.

3. Artists' Futures Cohort Program: Funded by the McKnight Foundation, 10 artists and culture bearers of African, Afro-Latinx, Afro-Caribbean, Latinx, Chicanx, Asian/Pacific Islander, and SWANA (South West Asian and North African) descent residing in the 7-county metropolitan area, and artists who are Native American/American Indian/Native Alaskan residing in Minnesota and the 11 Tribal nations that share the same geography were selected to receive \$35,000 each for professional development, skill building and networking. AF Outcome: AF exists to provide support that allows artists to grow their ability to take creative risks, and build technical skills that could contribute to a sustainable and successful career in the arts.

In support of the grant programs, assistance is provided in the following ways:

1. Online Resources at the Grant Resources page ([mrac.org/grants/grant-resources](http://mrac.org/grants/grant-resources)) to access templates, technical how-tos for the grant interface, links to sites to find demographic information, and a glossary of terms.
2. Language Translation - we provide guidelines and other materials in Spanish and Haitian Creole. With advanced notice, materials can be translated into different languages, and we can contract an interpreter and/or translator to assist during the application process. We also accept applications in different languages.
3. Accessibility - MRAC works to ensure that grant guidelines, workshop presentations, and any other written materials are created with accessibility principles in mind. We can also provide materials in Braille, Large Print, or other formats with advanced notice. Additionally, applicants with disabilities wishing to use other means to apply can work with MRAC staff to adapt our typical processes including, but not limited to, using Microsoft Word, providing verbal responses that MRAC will share via audio recording or transcription.
4. Grant Application Workshops – MRAC offers grant application workshops to learn about the grant program, how to apply, and who to contact. Recorded workshops are also posted online prior to the deadlines.

5. MRAC Program Directors are available for questions on eligibility and program intent, project idea development, and will, when possible, review application materials for eligibility in advance of the deadline.

**Grant Program Criteria - Please see attachment for full guidelines with eligibility**

MRAC grant programs are evaluated on a set of criteria to advance the legacy goals established by the Minnesota State Arts Board and Regional Arts Councils. MRAC applications focus on the alignment of three primary criteria: the applicant's purpose, the proposed project, and the community served. Applicants are asked to consider the following questions when writing their applications.

**Non-grant programs and services:**

In addition to our grant programs, MRAC has been offering quarterly virtual events to elevate the voices of disabled/people with disabilities in the arts. The Arts and Disability Forum is a virtual event for arts groups seeking to be more accessible, arts groups serving and/or made up of people with disabilities, and individual artists with disabilities who want to learn strategies from peers to embrace and uplift their inherent power.

Additionally, through our extended engagement process, we will determine the best way forward for offering workshops, trainings and peer networking opportunities.

**Grantmaking and Monitoring process**

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.

**Grant process:** The steps below describe how we currently process grants, however, there is potential for the process to change as we plan to continue engagement to address the consistent feedback we hear about challenges and barriers in this process.

**Step 1: MRAC grant guidelines and deadlines are shared with the public.**

**Step 2: Applicant services**

- a. MRAC Program Directors provide grant application workshops to help applicants prepare grant applications. Workshops cover MRAC programs, funding, eligibility, program scope, and the details of applying and;
- b. They are available for questions on eligibility and program intent, project idea development, and will, when possible, review application materials for eligibility in advance of the deadline.

**Step 3: Grant deadline, intake and determine eligibility**

Every program has a set deadline for when applications must be submitted. The process for application intake begins immediately to check for organizational eligibility, followed by an initial review of the narrative for project eligibility.

#### **Step 4 - Please see attachment for MRAC's Panel Policy**

#### **Step 5: Board Approval**

The MRAC Board of Directors receives a summary of every grant application, and recommendations for awards. MRAC staff reports on the recommendations for board discussion and approval. Board members with a conflict of interest must declare the conflict, and cannot vote for that recommendation. The board's funding decisions may be appealed solely on alleged procedural errors. There is no right of appeal based on the size of the grant awarded or on disagreements with the review panel's assessment of an application.

#### **Step 6: Communications**

Applicants receive notification via email of the board's decision, shortly after the board meeting. Also, a list of funded projects is posted on the MRAC website, facebook page and via e-newsletter.

Two weeks before the project end date, all grantees receive an email to check in on progress, and remind them about the final report deadline.

#### **Step 7: Grant agreements and final reports:**

After board approval and notification, recipients have 30 days to fill out the grant agreement and provide a current Form W9. Once received, MRAC executive director approves the grant agreement and initiates the payment process.

After the project is complete, grantees have two months to submit a final report with a narrative about the activities and financials before the grant is closed.

Responsibilities of grantees:

- See attached sample grant agreement for details.
- Executing the project as written and approved by the board of directors.
- Crediting legacy funded projects with logo and language.
- Communicating any project changes for approval by Program Directors. All communications and changes are documented in recipient's grant record in the Foundant grant interface.
- Submitting a final report with a narrative about the activities and financials about how the funding was expended before the grant is closed.

**Public Meeting: 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 date(s) and location (s) of the public meeting (s). How was the public informed? Who participated in the meeting?**

We held two virtual public meetings on Tuesday, March 13, 2023. One at 12:00pm and the second at 5:30pm. We sent an invitation to our listserve on March 6 with an accessible draft of the biennial plan. We communicated that both meetings would have an ASL interpreter and closed captioning, and offered other accommodations by



request. Kathy Mouacheupao, executive director, was the primary presenter with technical assistance provided by Masami Kawazato and Sam Stahlmann. There were 36 registrations, of which, 20 people attended.