

# ANNUAL FINAL REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024

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

Submitted to  
Minnesota State Arts Board  
as  
fiscal agent  
for

### **SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA ARTS COUNCIL**

509 W Main Street, PO Box 55

Marshall, Minnesota 56258

[www.swmnarts.org](http://www.swmnarts.org)

(507) 537-1471 or 1-800-622-5284

*Cheryl Avenel-Navara, President*

*Kristine Shelstad, Vice President*

*Mark Wilmes, Treasurer & President-Elect*

*Anna Johannsen, Board Member at Large to Executive Committee*

*Caroline Koska, Secretary*

*Nicole DeBoer, Executive Director*

### **Attachments**

SMAC FY24 Grant & Services Information.pdf

SMAC FY24 Highlights.pdf

SMAC FY24 Grants Awarded.pdf

SMAC FY24 Financials.xlsx (Unaudited Income & Expense Report\* on Regional Arts Council Template)

*\*An audited 2023 financial report, with a breakdown of spending by program, will be submitted by*

*December 31, 2024*



## **SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA ARTS COUNCIL**

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

### **REPORT ON FISCAL YEAR 2024**

The goals and objectives included in our biennial plan have been addressed during fiscal year 2024. See the attached report showing all FY2024 grantees, including project descriptions and funding sources, as well as the "FY2024 Highlights" document for further detail and additional examples of how we have met our goals and objectives.

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

**PRIORITY 1: GRANT PROGRAMS - Provide effective and efficient grant programs for the production or sponsorship of art for individual artists, non-profit organizations, units of government including tribal government, communities, schools, and youth**

In Fiscal Year 2024 we awarded a total of \$692,522 in grants to 154 area organizations and artists under 12 separate grant programs.

SMAC announced the guidelines for grant categories at least six weeks in advance of the deadline. Grants were posted on our website, announcements sent out via press releases, email, notices on our website and social media channels. SMAC staff provided grant workshops, plus one-on-one assistance over the phone, via email and in-person. In addition, we provided one dedicated day each month to walk-in assistance with no advance notice required. SMAC maintained a toll-free phone number and easy access via email, as well as through our website. Grant programs are also advertised in our monthly digital newsletter. Constituents needing help with the on-line application process were assisted by SMAC staff, SMAC board members and local arts organization staff and volunteers.

Since the start of the pandemic we have offered grant panels and monthly board meetings virtually. Because of this commitment, in FY24 we have realized relationships and engagement from people new to SMAC and especially those representing or a part of BIPOC and traditionally underserved communities. Our panels are fully offered in the virtual platform of ZOOM, while our Board meetings are offered as a hybrid option (in-person or virtual connection).

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

The SMAC Board holds space for one representative from each of the 18 counties in our service region. In March 2024, the Board voted changes to our bylaws to offer seats on the SMAC Board for each of our Dakota nations: Cansayapi Oyate and Pejuhtizizi Kapi. We are building relationships and trust with these government entities to find representatives to fill those seats. As a membership non-profit, our members will ratify those bylaw changes by vote at our Annual Meeting, October 26, 2024.

In addition to attendance at board meetings, our board members participate through committee work and service on grant review panels. Standing committees include Long Range Planning, Marketing & Fundraising, Nominating, Equity, Annual Celebration Planning, Grant Program, Audit and Artist Retreat Planning committees. Committee activities are reported at each board meeting. SMAC held a board strategic planning retreat in January 2024 where the focus was “Outreach & Engagement: What it means to serve the arts in your county” led by Rina Rossi & Natalie Kennedy.

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

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

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

SMAC has been on a journey of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility for nearly a decade. Staff and board have been involved in intercultural development inventory (IDI) counseling and we continue to bring new board members on board with this mentoring experience. We have purpose and intention build into our grant programs & processes to uplift new applicants, applications that are led by or serve BIPOC communities and geographic equity in our distribution of funds. In addition, accessibility in both our physical and virtual offerings continues to be a topic and priority.

The Artist Equity grant program, whose intent is to aid Black, Dakota (and other regional Indigenous artists), Latinx, and other artists of color with projects that will advance their skills and artistic careers, continued to reach new artists in its third year of existence. SW MN Arts Council acknowledges that

systems currently in place have historically marginalized and underserved indigenous people of the Americas and communities of color. We are committed to closing access gaps in the arts, breaking down barriers, and building bridges across communities. It is vital that we support artists in writing their own narratives, and we hope to do so by providing dedicated resources and recognition to artists of color in our region. Stronger relationships and trust bridges were built with Dakota artists living in two sovereign nations within the SMAC region. Efforts to offer work sample photography resources and one-on-one grant writing workshops were met with interest and resulted in reaching new artists who submitted grant applications for taking their art to the next level.

In FY24, SMAC hosted an Americorps Vista Fellow through partnership with Move for America, a MN-based non-profit. The Move for America Fellowship Program is an immersive learning experience for emerging leaders to move across America's cultural, political, and geographic fault lines to live, learn, and serve. SMAC titled our fellow an "Arts Ambassador" and tasked them to engaging in our small communities by living in them for 7-10 days and learning first-hand the needs and challenges facing artists and arts organizations.

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

SMAC publicizes regional arts activities via our monthly digital newsletter, robust website that includes a detailed regional calendar and regular email, as well as with social media messaging and posters throughout the communities involved. Our marketing coordinator posts on social media multiple times each day and has collected an impressive following by sharing arts activities & opportunities across the region and even statewide – whether funded by SMAC or not. SMAC staff and board members attend events throughout the region and advocate for the arts in communities and schools. SMAC encourages board, staff and constituents to attend Arts Advocacy Day to communicate with their legislators about the importance of the arts in their districts. New in FY24, SMAC produced 5 'Impact Stories' highlighting a grant-funded art project, arts organization or artist. These impact stories have been shared with the communities we serve and our legislators. More Impact Stories are in the works.

SMAC's executive director is an active member of the Forum of Regional Arts Councils of Minnesota (FRACM). The FRACM conducts best practices sessions prior to business meetings. They conduct peer reviews of biennial plan proposals and provide input on grant programs and other services. The executive directors of the Minnesota Citizens for the Arts and the Minnesota State Arts Board and the arts program director for the McKnight Foundation are regularly invited to FRACM board meetings. Other arts organization and foundation representatives are invited to make presentations at FRACM board meetings. Surveys seeking input are conducted with participants in FRACM programs.

The SMAC Art Gallery provided 6 regional artists (all SMAC grantees) the opportunity to have a solo exhibit in an accessible space. Receptions and artist talks were held honoring each artist. In FY2024 all of those exhibiting artists had the opportunity to participate in virtual receptions featuring their work. These virtual receptions and accessible digital exhibit tours have created far more visitors and exposure than expected. Future plans for gallery exhibits will always include a virtual component.

In September 2023, SMAC's Annual Arts Celebration was once again offered in-person. Hosted in Tyler, a community and county we had not celebrated in since the 1970's, we held time for the traditional, required meeting elements and also offered local artist studio tours, a historic theatre tour and performance by our 2023 Prairie Disciple, Lee Kanten.

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

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

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

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

SMAC was pleased to host our annual Artist Retreat in May 2024. Over the course of two days, over 50 artists of all levels & abilities took part in 12 technical and inspirational learning sessions on the Danebod Folk School site in Tyler, MN. The retreat-like atmosphere encourages attendees to try new mediums and broaden their appreciation of art... and of each other.

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

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

**Overall Goals for SMAC Programs:**

- Support artists and arts organizations in creating, producing and presenting high-quality arts activities
- Overcome barriers to accessing high quality arts activities
- Instill the arts into the community and public life in our region
- Support high quality age appropriate arts education for residents of all ages to develop knowledge, skills, and understanding of the arts

- Support events and activities that represent the diverse ethnic and cultural arts traditions including folk and traditional artists and arts organizations represented in this region.

### **Target Population**

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

### **Program Outcomes**

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

### **Measurement Tools**

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

### **Monitoring & Evaluation of Grants**

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

## SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA ARTS COUNCIL

### Fiscal Year 2024 Board of Directors Affiliations

**Judy Beckman**, Ortonville (Big Stone County): vocal musician – Sweet Adelines and competitive chorus, tourism director, writer; involved with Big Stone Arts Council. Elected 11/21 [*Left position in December 2023 – currently open*]

**ME Fuller, Montevideo** (Chippewa County): author of 2 books of published fiction, visual artist, community organizer; Elected 2/23

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

**Gillian Singler, Lakefield** (Jackson County): chair of Humanities at MN West Community & Technical College, English instructor, writer/publisher/poet. Elected 2/22 [*Left position in December 2023 – filled by Eunice Woodberry of Jackson in August 2024*]

**Ana Serrano, Willmar** (Kandiyohi County): artist, community supporter of Latinx artists & orgs, business owner. Elected August 2023.

**Kristine Shelstad, Madison** (Lac qui Parle County): Director of Madison Mercantile (arts gallery and performance space), board member of Rotary Clubs, Veteran Service Organizations, Junior Vice Commander of VFW Post 1656, Retired Army Lieutenant Colonel. Elected 11/21

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

**Dr. Erin Kline, Marshall** (Lyon County): Associate Director of Diversity & Inclusion @ SMSU, musician, visual artist, writer; Elected 1/23

**Lisa D Hill, Hutchinson** (McLeod County): vocalist, lawyer, active in Rotary. Elected 8/24 (**BOARD POSITION was open for FY24**)

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

**Tiffany Holmes, Dovray** (Murray County): orchestra member and violin teacher. Elected 2/24

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

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

**Su Kyung Lee, Lamberton** (Redwood County - present): Visual artist focused on digital technologies. Elected 1/24

**OPEN** (Renville County)

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

**Jessica Mata Buenrostro, Kerkhoven** (Swift County): visual artist, dancer, member of Kerkhoven Arts Council. Elected 3/23

**OPEN** (Yellow Medicine County)

## **SMAC STAFF**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Communications Assistant –Jessican Stolen**

January 2024 to present. Managing newspaper editor for CherryRoad Media; photographer; Southern New Hampshire University graduate.