



183437 - FY 2026-2027 Regional Arts Council Documents
Regional Arts Councils

Applicant Information

Legal Name: *	Region 2 Arts Council
Alternate Name	R2AC
City *	Bemidji

1/14

community leaders, artists, and culture-bearers. The Anishinaabe Arts Initiative Council (starting as the Native American Arts Initiative) has been active for 34 years.

Geographic Region

Region 2 covers 7.8% of Minnesota's total square mileage, making it the 6th largest among the eleven regional arts councils. We are in a very rural area, 10th in population among the 11 Minnesota arts regions. But Region 2 is 8th in economic impact per capita, outranking more highly populated areas (Creative MN report, 2017).

Population

Our region is the second least populated region in the state, accounting for 1.49% of Minnesota's population. According to the 2020 Census, the total population increased by 3,247, bringing the total to 85,270.

Beltrami County Demographics

- 71.8% White
- 22.5% Native American/Alaskan Native
- 0.9% Black/African American
- 0.9% Asian
- 0.1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- 3.8% other races

Mahnomen County Demographics

- 43.7% White
- 44.2% American Indian/Alaskan Native
- 0.8% Black or African American
- 3.2% Hispanic or Latino
- 10.1% two or more races

Poverty Rates

4 of our counties fall in the lowest 25% of median income in the state. Mahnomen and Beltrami Counties have the highest poverty rates per capita in the state, ranking 1st and 2nd. Clearwater County ranks 4th.

Arts Organizations (2025)

Bagley Area Arts Council, Bagley

- Art classes, workshops, and community events.

Bemidji Community Theater, Bemidji

- Theater productions, workshops, and community events.

Bemidji Community Theater, Bemidji

- Puppetry, podcasting, theater productions, workshops, and community events.

Bemidji Symphony Orchestra, Bemidji

- Symphonic concerts, community events, and educational programs.

Clear Waters Life Center, Clearbrook

- Art classes, workshops, and community events.

Four Directions Development, Bemidji/Redby

- Anishinaabe Art Exhibition, craft, visual arts, dance, food, storytelling, and fashion.

Gizhiigan Arts Incubator, Mahnomen

- Art exhibitions, workshops, and community events.

Headwaters Music and Arts, Bemidji

- Fiddle Camp, pottery studio, music lessons, art classes, performances, and community events.

Heartland Arts Inc., Park Rapids

- Art exhibitions, performances, workshops, and community events.

Kitchen Sink Productions, Park Rapids

- Theatre productions

Lake of the Woods Art Guild, Baudette

- Art exhibitions, workshops, and community events.

Loon Country Arts, Bemidji

- Art classes, gallery exhibitions, and community events.

Manoomen Arts Initiative, Mahnomen

- Public art projects, community events, and workshops.

Mask and Rose Theater, Puposky

- Theater productions, workshops, concerts, community events, sculpture garden, artist retreat, exhibitions.

Nemeth Art Center, Park Rapids

- Art exhibitions, educational programs, and community events.

NordaGonvick Rosemalers, Leonard

- Art workshops

Northern Light Opera Company, Park Rapids

- Workshops, theater-making, musical theater productions, and community events.

Northern Artist Association, Bemidji

- Art exhibitions, and workshops.

Park Rapids Lakes Area Arts Council, Park Rapids

- Art exhibitions, performances, workshops, and community events.

Pride in the Arts, Bemidji

- Arts fair, community events.

Watermark Art Center, Bemidji

- Art exhibitions, workshops, classes, and community events.

Artist Activities in Region 2

- Art Exhibitions: Showcasing their work in galleries and public spaces.
- Workshops and Classes: Teaching skills in various art forms, including painting, sculpture, music, and dance.
- Community Events: Organizing and participating in events that bring people together to celebrate the arts.
- Public Art Projects: Creating installations and murals that enhance public spaces.
- Performances: Putting on theater productions, concerts, and other live performances.
- Educational Programs: Providing opportunities for people of all ages to learn about and engage with the arts.

July of 2024, R2Arts employed a new ED, coinciding with conducting multiple surveys, a system-wide equity audit, and a board member training program through Propel.

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.

Our needs assessment started in April 2024 consultants from Exposed Brick Theater, who conducted a series initial interviews with past and current Staff, Board, and Anishinaabe Arts Initiative Council members and public meetings for an equity audit. We are currently waiting for the final results of the audit, but the ED met with a member of the auditing team prior to our biennial planning meetings for input into the process.

From July through March, the ED conducted listening sessions at arts organizations, community events, and with individuals throughout our region:

- July 11th: Individual meetings with members of AAI council
- July 18th: Listening session and survey with Lake of the Woods Artists Association at Baudette (8 in attendance including organization officers)
- July 26-7th: Tabling at Anishinaabe Arts Festival
- July 31st: Meeting with new board of Paul Bunyan Playhouse (4 members in attendance)
- August 1st: Meeting Bagley Area Arts Council (10 members in attendance)
- August 3rd: Meeting with Northern Light Opera Company (4 members in attendance)
- August 6th: Tabling at Baudette Night Out, community survey
- August 7th: Tabling at Red Lake Pow Wow
- August 12th: Meeting with Heartland Arts board/Park Rapids (12 members present)

- August 13th: Meeting at Gizhiigan Arts Incubator with the Mahnomen Arts Initiative (6 members present)
- August 17th: Tabling at Park Rapids Pride
- August 22nd: Meeting at Northwest Indian Community Development Center (2 members present)
- August 24th: Tabling at Wild Rice Days in Mahnomen and Bemidji Pride
- September 27th: Tabling at Armory Arts Concert in Park Rapids
- September 28th: Individual Interviews at Park Rapids Arts Leap
- October 12th: Meeting with board members of Heartland Concert Series (5 members present)
- October 19th: Tabling at Bemidji State Opera
- October 8th: Tabling at Bagley Arts and Crafts Fair
- December 13th: Indigenous Artists Listening Session at Northwest Indian Community Development Center (12 in attendance)
- November 12th: Meeting with Bemidji Community Theater (6 members present)
- January 6th: Meeting with Heartland Arts board/Park Rapids (12 members present)
- March 13th: Indigenous artist meeting in Redby, Red Lake Nation (30 individuals present)

Town halls were conducted on January 8th and 13th. These town halls were advertised by PSA, social media posts, and email campaigns.

- January 8th: Town Hall from 5:30-8:00 PM (12 community members present)
- January 13th: Town Hall from 5:30-8:00 PM (10 community members present)

In July, R2Arts started conducting online in-person surveys at a variety of events; the survey results were tabulated on February 3rd. We received a total of 125 surveys from artists and arts-interested members of the community. This is 40 more than our last biennial plan yielded. The full results of the survey are attached, but the highlights are:

Key Demographics

- Counties: Most respondents are from Beltrami (56%) and Clearwater (16%).
- Age: The majority of participants are 61 or older (44%) and 41–60 years old (29%).
- Race: The majority identify as White (58%), followed by American Indian/Alaska Native (24%).

Engagement in Arts and Culture

- Event Attendance: A significant 98% of respondents attend arts and cultural events, showcasing high engagement.
- Artists and Organizers: 64% identify as artists or culture bearers, while 39% plan arts events, and 64% volunteer for arts activities.
- Teaching/Instructing: 37% are involved in teaching arts or cultural activities.

Region 2 Arts Council Impact

- Familiarity: 87% are somewhat or very familiar with Region 2 Arts Council.
- Funding Influence: 46% of respondents or their organizations have received grants, and many have attended grant-funded events.
- Visibility: 98% of respondents view arts and culture as somewhat or very visible in their communities.
- Importance: Arts and cultural activities are very important to the quality of life for 84%.

Barriers to Participation

The top challenges include timing of events (23%), cost (17%), and lack of prior knowledge (16%).

Strong Support for Arts Initiatives

Respondents overwhelmingly support initiatives like:

- Offering grants for nonprofit organizations to provide arts activities (91%).
- Supporting artists to learn new skills, teach, or create art (92%).
- Helping people apply for grants (84%).
- Maintaining updated resources for arts events (89%).

The biennial planning committee then met twice in February to review the results of these different assessments.

- Virtual 5-7 p.m.: Thursday January 23, 2025: Reviewed results of listening sessions and town halls
- Virtual 5-7 p.m.: Thursday Feb 13, 2025: Reviewed survey results, developed priorities to present to the board

The full board reviewed and approved the biennial plan as a part of several board meetings:

- September-November Board Meetings: report on listening sessions, tabling and feedback from DEIJ audit
- Virtual 5-7 p.m.: Thursday January 16, 2025 - reviewed results of listening sessions and town halls
- Virtual 6-8p.m.: Thursday Feb 20, 2025 - reviewed survey results and proposed priorities. Established priorities for the Biennial Plan.
- In-Person 5-8 p.m.: Thursday March 20, 2025 - integrated Propel board training and establish priorities into a work plan

Key Findings

Fostering Networks

- There is a clear demand for improved networking and communication among artists, organizations, and communities. Suggestions like monthly Zoom mixers and an online artist directory align with the goal of creating a robust arts ecosystem in Region 2. These initiatives would strengthen connections and make collaboration easier across the region.

Increasing Visibility

- Better promotion of arts events through a centralized database is a priority. A comprehensive communication strategy—leveraging social media, local media, and other advertising channels—would increase awareness of opportunities and events, positioning Region 2 as a vibrant arts hub.

Inclusivity and Community Engagement

- The emphasis on inclusivity, particularly in increasing BIPOC representation and supporting diverse artistic expressions, underlines the potential for Region 2 to become a leader in equitable arts programming. Community-driven projects and regular forums show a strong commitment to listening to and engaging with the broader population.

Overcoming Barriers to Participation

- Addressing challenges like cost, transportation, and accessibility barriers is key. Partnering with local organizations and transportation services to make events more accessible would enhance participation and inclusivity, further solidifying the region's reputation as an arts hub.

Support for Artists

- The suggestions to streamline grant writing processes, provide workshops, and offer funding for emerging and established artists highlight a strong commitment to supporting the creative community. These efforts will attract and retain talent in the region.

Youth and Intergenerational Programs

- Prioritizing youth engagement and programs that facilitate intergenerational knowledge sharing adds depth to the region's arts ecosystem. These initiatives showcase a forward-thinking and inclusive approach, making the region a place where the arts thrive across generations.

When developing priorities from these key findings, the board was asked to align the priorities with the values established in our 2022-23 work with a consultancy firm: RESPONSIVENESS, CONNECTION, CELEBRATION, CURIOSITY, INCLUSIVITY & EQUITY.

PRIORITIES

Make Region 2 a Hub for the Arts Community (aligns with all values)

Integrate Values into Programming (aligns with all values)

Intergenerational Knowledge Sharing (CONNECTION, CURIOSITY, INCLUSIVITY & EQUITY)

Community Partnerships and Collaboration (RESPONSIVENESS, CONNECTION, INCLUSIVITY & EQUITY)

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

Organized Networking Opportunities:

- Monthly Zoom meetings
- Improved website navigation
- Online artist directories I
- In-person events.

Improved Communication and Visibility of R2Arts and Our Services:

- Better promotion of arts events, including a centralized database or online platform listing arts events, artist profiles, and community resources.
- Collaborative efforts and partnerships with local businesses, schools, libraries, and community centers are essential to increase visibility.
- A comprehensive communication strategy via social media, newsletters, press releases, and alternative advertising.

Representation and Inclusivity:

- Organizational programming should reflect diversity, inclusivity, and community engagement values.

Youth Engagement:

- Several suggestions called for enhancing programs that involve young people in the arts, such as dedicated grant programs for youth arts initiatives.
- Intergenerational knowledge-sharing programs were highly suggested for passing on cultural traditions.

Supporting Artists:

- Improve grant writing assistance, with possible funding for grant writers to ease the process for artists.

- Emphasis was placed on supporting new and emerging artists through professional development opportunities.

Accessibility Challenges:

- Barriers such as cost, transportation, and venue accessibility were noted as significant issues preventing wider participation in arts events.
- Suggestions included partnerships with transportation providers and ensuring venues are accessible to all.

Community Partnerships and Collaboration:

- Building stronger partnerships with local schools, organizations, and community groups to extend the reach of arts programming.
- Networking within Region 2 and across neighboring regions for collaborative initiatives.

Grant Programs and Funding:

- Revising grant structures to support established programs with consistent results and creating entry-level grants for new applicants.

Attachment (optional)

Survey Results Followed by Public Meeting Results.pdf

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.

FY25 Biennial Plan Schedule Overview

July - January – Visits to Arts Collectives (Manoomin, LOW, Bagley, Heartland), Event Surveys

November-December – Survey Requests through Constant Contact/Grant Portal

Virtual Town Halls: Wednesday, January 8th and Tuesday January 14th

Biennial Planning Meeting, Virtual 5-7 p.m.: Wednesday, Feb 3 (Reviewing results of listening sessions and town halls).

Biennial Planning Meeting, Virtual 5-7 p.m.: Thursday Feb 13 (Review Survey results, committee recommendations and formulate priorities)

Board Meeting In-Person 5-8 p.m.: Plan Approval, Thursday March 20, 2025

Biennial Plan Draft Posted: Tuesday, March 25

Virtual/In-Person Open Meeting 4-5 p.m.: Friday, March 28th, 2025

Plan (First Draft) Due April 2nd, 2025

In November 2022, current and former Region 2 Arts Council Board, staff, and Anishinaabe Arts Initiative Council members participated in our Values and Sustainability consultancy. A set of institutional values was established in this process that guide our planning process: RESPONSIVENESS, CONNECTION, CELEBRATION, CURIOSITY, INCLUSIVITY & EQUITY. These values were central to all of our discussion.

Biennial planning has been done in committee with plans then brought to the board as a whole. Three committees were involved in our biennial plan: Policy, Grants, and an ad hoc Biennial Plan Committee.

Policy Committee: Chelsea Otman-Rak (Beltrami County), Leslie Nicolson (LOW County), Georgia Connelly (Hubbard County), Anna Larson (Mahnomen County).

Grants Committee: Holly Alcott (R2Arts Grants Manager), Shawna Wendler (LOW County), Laurie Turner (Mahnomen County), Nancy Schmidt (Hubbard County).

Biennial Planning Committee: Terry Boal Lienbach (Beltrami), Anna Larson (Mahnomen County), Holly Alcott (R2Arts Grants Manager), Bonnie Friberg (Clearwater County), Laurie Turner (Mahnomen County).

The FY2025 committee and board meetings in which the biennial plan was discussed:

FY25 Policy Committee Schedule

Virtual 7 p.m.: Tuesday October 15, 2024

Virtual 8:15 p.m.: Monday, November 04, 2024

Virtual 7 p.m.: Tuesday Feb 11, 2025

FY25 Grants Committee

Virtual 7 p.m.: Wednesday November 06, 2024

Virtual 7 p.m.: Wednesday Feb 12, 2025

Board Meetings

Virtual 5-7 p.m.: Thursday November 14, 2024

Virtual 5-7 p.m.: Thursday January 16, 2025

Virtual 6-8p.m.: Thursday Feb 20, 2025

In-Person 5-8 p.m.: Thursday March 20, 2025

We strive to engage our board members closely in the Biennial Planning process; inviting their visions and insights, assessments and questions. In the end, the Executive Director, Grants Manager, and Finance Manager are responsible for writing up the plan to be shared with the public and approved by the Board of Directors. The biennial plan is first approved by the board as a draft, then subsequent drafts are put in front of the Board for approval until the final Biennial Plan and Biennial Budget have been approved.

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.

Two-Year Workplan for Region 2 Arts Council

Year 1: Foundation & Engagement

Priority: Make Region 2 a Hub for the Arts Community

- **Fostering Networks:**
 - Launch monthly **Connect2Arts meetings** to facilitate brainstorming and build community. Evaluate impact mid-year and adjust frequency as needed.
 - Establish an **Artist Marketplace/Forum** by August, providing a digital and physical space for resource sharing.
- **Visibility:**
 - **Spotlight on Local Artists Campaign** in monthly newsletter online gallery and youtube channel. Feature weekly artist profiles in newsletters and across social platforms.
 - Host the annual **Celebration of Fellows** in May as a community event honoring grant recipients.
 - Roll out **Pop-Up Art Galleries** with local business partnerships secured in March.
- **Staffing Investment:**
 - Expand the **Outreach Coordinator Position** to a full-time **Outreach Manager** role in order to manage online resources and organize pop-ups.

Priority: Integrate Values into Programming

- **Values-Inspired Initiatives:**
 - Organize the **Values-Inspired Art Contest** in April, with submissions judged on inclusion and sustainability criteria. Showcase winning works during the Celebration of Fellows in May.
 - Develop **Values-Based Grading/Evaluation Criteria** by August to refine grant application reviews and professional development programming.
- **Community Storytelling Projects:**
 - Launch the **"Stories of Us" Initiative** in September, focusing on empowering marginalized voices through oral history workshops.
- **Staffing Investment:**
 - Expand the **Outreach Coordinator Position** to a full-time to pursue "Stories of Us".

Priority: Intergenerational Knowledge Sharing

- **Facilitating Cultural Knowledge Transfer:**
 - Begin **Heritage Preservation Workshops** in March. Partner with cultural practitioners to offer skills like weaving, pottery, or dance.
- **Youth and Senior Engagement:**

- Adjust grant scoring by August to encourage intergenerational collaboration.

Priority: Community Partnerships and Collaboration

- **Building Partnerships:**
 - Establish connections to area schools interested in integrating arts into educational settings, create a list of contacts by February. Begin planning for following academic year.
- **Overcoming Barriers:**
 - Plan and conduct **Hyper-Local Programming** starting in June to bring workshops and performances to rural communities.

Year 2: Growth & Impact

Priority: Make Region 2 a Hub for the Arts Community

- **Fostering Networks:**
 - Expand Artist Meetups to include themed sessions (e.g., grant writing or technical skill workshops). Evaluate the forum usage and optimize its functionality.
- **Visibility:**
 - Expand Pop-Up Art Galleries to additional venues, including outdoor spaces in warmer months.
- **Staffing Investment:**
 - Leverage the Outreach Manager role to foster deeper community connections and introduce quarterly networking events.

Priority: Integrate Values into Programming

- **Values-Inspired Initiatives:**
 - Build upon the first year's success by scaling the Values-Inspired Art Contest and adding workshops led by participants.
- **Community Storytelling Projects:**
 - Publish a digital collection from the "Stories of Us" initiative.

Priority: Intergenerational Knowledge Sharing

- **Facilitating Cultural Knowledge Transfer:**
 - Introduce advanced workshops based on feedback from year one.
- **Youth and Senior Engagement:**
 - Increase frequency of All-Ages Art Events.

Priority: Community Partnerships and Collaboration

- **Building Partnerships:**
 - Deepen relationships with schools through extended artist residencies. Introduce collaborative projects between schools and local artists.
- **Overcoming Barriers:**
 - Scale the roaming workshops with more locations and a wider variety of artistic disciplines, ensuring accessibility for underserved areas.

Attachment (optional) Workplan timeline.pdf

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

Work Plan Priority 1 (2,000 characters max)

Make Region 2 a Hub for the Arts Community

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

Measurable Outcome (150 characters max) Increase participation in online directories, calendar, forums and galleries.

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 No

People of all ages, ethnicities, and abilities Yes

participate in
the arts

People trust
Minnesota's
stewardship
of public arts
funding

No

The arts
thrive in
Minnesota

Yes

Plan for
measuring
results (1,000
characters
max)

We will conduct running assessments of the use of these networking resources that includes key demographic information.

Is there a
second work
plan priority?

Yes

Work Plan Priority 2 (2,000 characters max)

Integrate Values into Programming

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

Measurable
Outcome (150
characters
max)

Our values will be visible to the community through our programming

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

The arts
thrive in
Minnesota

Yes

Plan for
measuring
results (1,000
characters
max)

Our annual survey and post-program evaluations will include questions about each of our values and the evidence of them in our work.

Is there a
third work
plan priority?

Yes

Work Plan Priority 3 (2,000 characters max)

Promote Intergenerational Knowledge Sharing

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

Measurable
Outcome (150
characters
max)

Our programming will bring together elders and youth through arts activities

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

Yes

community
life

Minnesotans
believe the
arts are vital
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

The arts
thrive in
Minnesota

Yes

Plan for
measuring
results (1,000
characters
max)

Artists and events organizers will be asked about these demographics and their interaction in post-activity reports.

Is there a
fourth work
plan priority?

Yes

Work Plan Priority 4 (2,000 characters max)

Build Community Partnerships and Collaboration

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

Measurable
Outcome (150
characters
max)

Region 2 will build our network of collaborators and create new community partnerships

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

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)

We will keep a running account of our community partnerships and collaborations and compile them in an annual report.

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.

Overview of Grant Programs (see attached for review criteria for evaluating grant requests, and eligibility requirements)

DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK

Key findings-

Organized Networking Opportunities:

- Monthly Zoom meetings
- Improved website navigation
- Online artist directories
- In-person events.

Improved Communication and Visibility of R2Arts and Our Services:

- Better promotion of arts events, including a centralized database or online platform listing arts events, artist profiles, and community resources.
- Collaborative efforts and partnerships with local businesses, schools, libraries, and community centers are essential to increase visibility.
- A comprehensive communication strategy via social media, newsletters, press releases, and alternative advertising.

Representation and Inclusivity:

- Organizational programming should reflect diversity, inclusivity, and community engagement values.

Youth Engagement:

- Several suggestions called for enhancing programs that involve young people in the arts, such as dedicated grant programs for youth arts initiatives.
- Intergenerational knowledge-sharing programs were highly suggested for passing on cultural traditions.

Supporting Artists:

- Improve grant writing assistance, with possible funding for grant writers to ease the process for artists.
- Emphasis was placed on supporting new and emerging artists through professional development opportunities.

Accessibility Challenges:

- Barriers such as cost, transportation, and venue accessibility were noted as significant issues preventing wider participation in arts events.
- Suggestions included partnerships with transportation providers and ensuring venues are accessible to all.

Community Partnerships and Collaboration:

- Building stronger partnerships with local schools, organizations, and community groups to extend the reach of arts programming.
- Networking within Region 2 and across neighboring regions for collaborative initiatives.

Grant Programs and Funding:

- Revising grant structures to support established programs with consistent results and creating entry-level grants for new applicants.

Region 2 Values- responsiveness, inclusivity, equity, curiosity, connection, and celebration.

Needs- Based on our focus groups and biennial planning survey, the pilot grant programs and schedule we've designed have been considered and accepted as an opportunity for Region 2 Arts Council to look at the grant programs through the lens of our values, and encourage and reflect sustainability in the granting cycle.

OVERVIEW OF GRANT PROGRAMS (see attached for criteria for evaluating grant requests, and eligibility requirements)

In our needs assessment, there was overall approval of our current grant programs, which had undergone programmatic revision in FY 2023 and FY 2024. The season/series grant (in its second year) received very positive feedback. Based on this, the grants committee recommended only one new program: the sudden opportunity grant. Our focus on the grant programs in the upcoming biennium will be on accessibility to and increased ease in the grant writing process, and revising scoring criteria to reflect our values.

All of our grants, except for the new Sudden Opportunities Grant, have a single annual deadline. They are scored within a month of the application deadline and put up for approval in the following board meeting. Artists will have their funds available within 2 months of the deadline for application. All grants funded by state general and legacy funds are reviewed by a community panel.

GRANT PROGRAMS for ORGANIZATIONS and NON-PROFIT ENTITIES

- Season/Series Arts Support Grant: up to \$18,000 (made possible by the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund)
- Arts Access Grant: up to \$6,000 (made possible by the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund)
- Community Arts Support Grant: up to \$7,000/year for two years (made possible by the State General Fund and Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund)

GRANT PROGRAMS for ARTISTS

- Artists Engage Community Grant - up to \$6,000 (made possible by the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund) Evaluation by Community Panel
- Individual Artist Support Grant - up to \$2,000 (made possible by the McKnight Foundation) Evaluation by Community Panel
- Anishinaabe Arts Initiative Grant - up to \$1,000 (made possible by the McKnight Foundation) Evaluation by AAI Council
- Anishinaabe Arts Initiative Fellowship - up to \$5,000 (made possible by the McKnight Foundation) Evaluation by AAI Council

AWARDS FOR ARTISTS

- Artist Fellowship Award - \$6,000 (made possible by the McKnight Foundation) Evaluation by R2 Board

GRANTS FOR ARTISTS and SMALL NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

- Sudden Opportunity Grant - up to \$500 (funded by interest income) NEW entry-level grant, rolling deadline/2 week turn-around, evaluation by Executive Director with board consultation.

OVERVIEW OF OTHER PROGRAMS

- **Grant Writing Assistance:** Help with planning, writing, and submitting grant applications for Region 2 and non-region 2 grants.
- **Grant Search Assistance:** Support artists and organizations who are looking for funding.
- **Professional Development:** Free workshops and training opportunities for artists and arts organizations.
- **Technology Support:** Assistance with technical issues related to grant applications, such as resizing documents or uploading work samples.
- **Filming/Audio Services:** Video recording and editing of artist statements and other grant/promotional videos.
- **Graphic Design Services:** Creating promotional materials for artist-led events in the region.
- **Accessibility Support:** Flexible grant payment options and oral application processes for those with accessibility needs.
- **Grant Writing Station:** Access to a computer and workspace at their Bemidji office for grant-related tasks.
- **Online Galleries:** Curated galleries for artists of multiple disciplines and a specialized gallery for Indigenous artists.
- **Hyper-local Professional Development Programming:** Traveling, in-person workshops aimed at developing emerging artists in remote areas of the region.
- **Portfolio Development:** Free photography services for artist work samples
- **Newsletter/Blog:** News and events for the region arts community.
- **Artist Spotlight:** Promotion of regional artists.
- **Regional Arts Calendar:** Promotion of arts events.
- **Artist and Organizational Directories:** Resources to find artists and arts organizations in the region.
- **Social Media Promotions:** Arts events, news, and service promotions, with graphic design support.
- **Community Celebrations:** Celebration of fellows and community gatherings around art events.
- **Connect2Arts:** Monthly online meeting for members of the Region 2 community.
- **Artists Forum:** Online resources to connect artists for resource sharing and collaboration.
- **Stories of Us:** Collection of stories that celebrate how the arts connect families, build community and transmit culture, in podcast form.
- **Community Collaborations:** Joint programming with regional organizations.

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.

See attached for grant contracts and policies.

The review process: All of our grants with the exception of the new Sudden Opportunity Grant are reviewed by a community panel that also includes board members. The community panel is given training that is also available through a recording. One the grants manager or executive director have reviewed the grant for eligibility, the materials are made available to the grant panel. They are asked to score the grant according to a rubric before our panel meeting. They have the opportunity to change that score after the review panel discusses the application. The review panel discussion is open to the public for viewing, but non-panel members may not participate in the discussion and are kept anonymous from the panel. Our fellowships are awarded by the board and the AAI council. Applications to the above grants and fellowships are executed once-a-year (each grant/fellowship has a different deadline). The application is made available at least one month in advance of the deadline. The review process takes place within 3 weeks of the application closing date, and the decision of the review panel is presented for approval to the board at the following board meeting. Contracts will be ready for the recipients of the grants within 2 months of the review panel, and payments will not be made until the recipient signs a contract, and may be held until the start date of the project. The sudden opportunity grants are evaluated by the executive director, who will consult with the board when an application creates questions during the review/scoring process. This allows this grant to have a 2-week turnaround time from the date of application. This grant is offered on a rolling basis as long as the funds are available.

The responsibilities of the grantees vary by grant program (please see attached). All of our grants require a final report, and are subject to a possible site visit. Our organizational grants require a mid-term report of check-in.

Attachment (optional) R2AC FY26 Grant Deadlines Policies Grants Manager Position.pdf

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)?

The Region 2 Arts Council draft Biennial Plan and invitation to attend a virtual public meeting was uploaded to our website and promoted by social media, direct email and PSA on March 25, 2025. We had eight community members attend this meeting, and the feedback was positive as to our priorities and work plan. The meeting was held at 4:00 PM on March 28th.

Attachment (optional) R2Arts Biennial Plan FY26-27.pdf

Attach Files Here

Required attachments

Council's bylaws* Bylaws for R2Arts.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* Board Information.pdf

Staff information

- Names and titles
- Job descriptions

Staff information* R2Arts Staff.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.](#)

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*

Board Informationand Staff with access to grant funds.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*

Patrick C. Calder-Cariere

Title*

Executive Director