

**italicized items are online directions of the Minnesota State Arts Board, fiscal agent*

Title

DRAFT East Central Regional Arts Council FY 2024-2025 Preliminary Biennial Plan
March 10, 2023

Mission statement

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

East Central Regional Arts Council's mission is to support the arts and bring the life enhancing values they afford to Region 7E residents.

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.

ECRAC serves Region 7E. Region 7E includes the Minnesota Counties of Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, and Pine. Cities include Braham, Cambridge, Hinckley, Isanti, Milaca, Mora, North Branch, Ogilvie, Onamia, Pine City, Princeton, Taylors Falls. Sandstone. Shafer, Wyoming, and others. Region 7E is geographically one of the smallest in the state with a square mileage of 750,536.6.

Demographics - Region 7E was home to 171,703 people in 2021, comprising 3.0% of the state's total population. The region saw a 4.8% population increase since 2010, making it the seventh largest of the 13 economic development regions (EDRs) in total population, and the sixth fastest growing. In comparison, the state of Minnesota saw a 7.6% gain from 2010 to 2021.

Chisago County is the largest county in Region 7E and is the 18th largest county of 87 in the state, with just under 57,500 people in 2021. It added 3,582 people, a 6.6% increase, since 2010, the 20th fastest growth rate. Isanti County experienced the largest growth in the region with an increase of 4,090 people and now has nearly 42,000 people. The next largest county is Pine County with 29,302 people but has declined in population since 2010, while Mille Lacs County has increased slightly and has 26,867 people, and Kanabec County is the smallest county in the region with 16,159 people, the 52nd largest county in the state.

Population Change – With an aging population, Region 7E has experienced a natural decrease – more deaths than births – of -177 people from 2020-2021. However, the region gained population because of net migration with an increase of 2,776 residents moving into the area, mostly from other parts of the state or U.S. In total, there was an increase of 2,580 people due to the combination of migration and natural increase.

Region 7E has an older population than the rest of the state, with 18.4% of residents aged 65 years and over, compared to 16.8% statewide. In addition, Region 7E had a much higher percentage of people in

the 45 to 64 year old age group, but consequently had a lower percentage of people in the 25- to 44-year-old age group, typically the leading edge of “prime working years”. A large portion of the area’s population is a part of the Baby Boom generation, which is creating a significant shift in regional demographics over time. Between 2000 and 2020, the group 55 years or older added more than 27,000 residents.

Region 7E’s population is less diverse than the state’s but is becoming more diverse over time. In 2020, 90.5% of the region’s residents reported white alone as their race, compared to 77.5% of residents statewide. At 1.9%, Region 7E had a higher percentage of American Indian or Alaska Natives than the state, but otherwise had much smaller percentages of people of all other race and origin groups, especially Black or African American, Asian, and Hispanic or Latino origin. With just under 8,000 people, the largest racial or ethnic group other than White is people of Two or More Races, which increased 246% from 2010 to 2020. Conversely, the region saw a 0.5% decline in the number of white residents. Every other group saw increases and three groups (Black or African American, Asian, and Hispanic or Latino origin) grew faster than 30% over two decades up to 3,750 residents.

Without much international in-migration, Region 7E is now home to 2,913 foreign born residents, or about 1.7% of the total population. The number of immigrants in the region increased by 26.8% since 2010, higher than the statewide growth rate of 8.2%. Just under 40% (1,132 people) of these immigrants were from Asia, while the second largest number was from Central and South America, accounting for 28% of the region’s foreign-born. Lastly, there were 506 people from Europe, but this population has decreased since 2010.

Despite the more rapid recent growth, Region 7E is projected to experience a slight population decline in the next 20 years. According to the State Demographic Center, Region 7E is expected to lose just 458 residents from 2023 to 2043, a 0.3% decrease. By comparison the state of Minnesota is projected to grow 9.4%.

Population growth is expected to happen in older age groups. Region 7E is projected to add 9,000 people aged 75 years and over, as well as about 2,500 people in the 45- to 54-year-old age group. However, Region 7E is projected to lose over 4,800 people under 45 years of age, and about 7,100 people in the 55 to 74 year old age group – as current Baby Boomers continue to age.

Household Income – \$71,170, median household incomes were lower in Region 7E than the state, where the median income in 2020 was \$73,382. Just over 35% of the households in the region had incomes below \$50,000 in 2020, similar to statewide. Similarly, only 30.8% of households in Region 7E earned over \$100,000 per year, compared to 35% percent of households statewide. Data source: [ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REGION 7E 2022 REGIONAL PROFILE](#), Updated October 2022

The poverty rate from 2015-2019 in the State of Minnesota was 9.7%. In Region 7E the three northern counties have some of the highest poverty levels: Kanabec, 10.0%; Mille Lacs, 12.4%; and Pine, 11%. The two southern counties in Region 7E are doing a bit better than the state as a whole in terms of poverty levels: Chisago, 6%; and Isanti, at 7.3%. The statewide indicator for children under the age of 18 living in poverty was 12.2%. However, Mille Lacs County has level of 17.1% of children under the age of 18 in poverty. In fact, Mille Lacs County’s poverty rate (12.4%) is in the top twenty of all counties in Minnesota. Data source: [Minnesota Public Health and Environmental Data by County](#).

The percentage of students in public schools who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch is commonly used to understand how many school-age children live in lower-income households. For Region 7E 38.7% of K-12 students receive free and reduced lunches with Chisago County being the lowest at 25% and Mille Lacs County the highest at 49.5%. Data source: [Minnesota Department of Education, Student Enrollment Data for Special Populations: Free and Reduced Price Lunch Eligibility](#).

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.*

Planning enables ECRAC to listen to the needs of its constituency and to respond with programming for designed to benefit all residents of 7E. The planning process used by the East Central Regional Arts Council included both informal and formal needs assessment and planning. To survey a broader group the ECRAC Needs Assessment survey was in-depth and included those in the arts community and other constituents were also asked to respond. The needs assessment was completed in December 2022.

Needs assessment input was received with the following methods: from constituents in the form of an online survey distributed and open to all and which was highlighted by all Region 7E media with purchased advertisements, and public service announcements; it was also distributed via the ECRAC newsletter and the ECRAC website, and advertisements on social media (both to those already following ECRAC and to others targeted by their city of residence); via grant information sessions in which input was solicited regarding needs from attendee interviews;-and by reviewing outcome evaluations and written grantee evaluations;

Key Findings from the ECRAC Needs Assessment Survey

For existing ECRAC grants and services, all grants and services were either highly valued or extremely valued. Feedback was for ECRAC to continue providing the grants and services with adjustments to

remove barriers. The needs assessment also addressed equitable distribution and the following are being incorporated: partnering even better with existing providers of services to underrepresented groups and community groups; ECRAC should have a focus on serving underrepresented groups/artists; and ECRAC should build more relationships with underrepresented groups and community groups. The ECRAC board of directors has made a commitment to overcoming bias and to building diversity and inclusion in both the grant-making and providing services priorities. In addition, due to the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic constituents are requesting a different kind of technical assistance support, workshops, and networking than in the past.

Please note that in the Forum of Regional Arts Councils of Minnesota (FRACM) Policy Manual, as publicly funded programs, "RACs' regranting of state funds must maintain high standards of fiscal responsibility and be conducted in an open manner without discrimination on the basis of national origin, race, color, creed, religion, disability, gender, status with regard to public assistance, gender preference, marital status or political affiliation." ECRAC has always been committed to this responsibility and equity. In the context of ECRAC programming and services under-represented people and groups are defined based on age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, culture and race. ECRAC has an IDEA (inclusivity, diversity, equity, and accessibility) Strategy in place.

Changes are being, and have been, made to how services are provided. ECRAC has and will continue to update policies, grants, workshops, networking, calendar, newsletter, and the online presence. This is to increase the number of people able to use ECRAC grants and services with as few barriers as possible. ECRAC remains committed to inclusivity, diversity, equity, and accessibility.

Attachment (optional) needs assessment results.pdf

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.

Planning enables ECRAC to listen to the needs of its constituency and to respond with programming designed to benefit all residents of 7E. Planning started in 2022 with both Policy Manual updates and the needs assessment process. The ECRAC Executive and Policy Manual Committees met and discussed the regional needs and how best to serve constituents. The Executive Committee includes the Board Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, the Treasurer, and the Secretary. The Policy Manual Committee includes the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and the Treasurer.

These committees discussed about the demographics of the region, they highlighted the responsibilities of being a Regional Arts Council to the Minnesota tax payers and to the residents of the region, and they discussed established and revised ECRAC policy and processes, they also reviewed the Needs Assessment Survey data. Recommendations were given to the full board.

Ultimately the result of all the discussions, and the approved document, were then brought to a public meeting was on March 14, 2023, and the Preliminary Biennial Plan approval was March 21, 2023. Additionally, after the Preliminary Biennial Plan review by the Minnesota State Arts Board suggestions made will be discussed and incorporated into the 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.

The 4 priorities of the East Central Regional Arts Council, as identified below, were found to be of very high priority in the needs assessment and they are linked to the 25-year arts legacy outcomes too.

Work Plan Priority 1

Provide technical assistance opportunities, arts information services to artists and arts organizations. This includes resources related to IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility) and, as or if needed to the pandemic.

Strategies- Foster visionary, skilled arts leaders and organizations; and serve as a clearinghouse of information on best practices and successful programs for artists and organizations providing arts programming.

Measurable Outcome

Measurable Outcome - People develop arts skills or knowledge

Which of the 25-year arts legacy outcomes will this measurable outcome address?

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

The arts thrive in Minnesota

Plan for measuring results

Quantitative: numbers, rating, totaling, or comparing including attendees and surveys.

Review program statistics.

Work Plan Priority 2

To offer grants to artists and organizations providing arts activities.

Strategies- Provide a portfolio of grants to artists, skilled arts leaders, and organizations providing arts programming and services.

Measurable Outcome

People develop arts skills or knowledge and People access arts experiences

Which of the 25-year arts legacy outcomes will this measurable outcome address?

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

The arts thrive in Minnesota

Plan for measuring results

Qualitative: observations or narratives without any pre-determined categories of information to look for the outcomes as they emerged from the experience.

Surveying stakeholders about their knowledge skills, attitudes, behaviors, or motivations before and after opportunities.

Work Plan Priority 3

Provide art exhibit space to artists and arts organizations.

Strategy - exhibit regional artist's artwork and exhibit artwork in Region 7E.

Measurable Outcome

People access arts experiences.

Which of the 25-year arts legacy outcomes will this measurable outcome address?

The arts thrive in Minnesota

Plan for measuring results

Quantitative: numbers, rating, totaling, or comparing including attendees and surveys.

Review the program statistics.

Work Plan Priority 4

Oversee all aspects of East Central Regional Arts Council administration.

Strategies - Provide an accountable arts organization system and be responsible stewards of public and other funds.

Measurable Outcome

The organization provides and develops capacities that advance the arts.

Which of the 25-year arts legacy outcomes will this measurable outcome address?

People trust Minnesota's stewardship of public arts funding

Plan for measuring results

Qualitative: observations or narratives without any pre-determined categories of information to look for the outcomes as they emerged from the experience.

Developing a baseline and surveying stakeholders (constituents, board members, funders) about their knowledge skills, attitudes, behaviors, or motivations during and after biennium.

Grant Program information

By ACHF funding program describe the grants and other forms of assistance the council will provide, the review criteria for evaluating grant requests, and eligibility requirements.

ACHF Arts and Arts Access - Investing in high quality arts activities and experiences for all Region 7E residents

Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund Grants for Individuals -\$2,000

October 1, February 1, & April 1 deadlines

With a required open to the public event to be held at ECRAC

Review Criteria: These factors constitute the grant review standards: merit and artistic quality; ability of the applicant to accomplish the project; and demonstrated need for the project including underserved populations.

Eligibility Requirements: The applicant must be any individual artist who is a permanent resident (for at least 6 months) in one of the five Minnesota counties of: Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, or Pine. The applicant must be at least 18 years of age. The applicant must be an individual artist and not working on a collaborative project. In addition, artists are limited to one active ECRAC grant at a time.

ACHF Art Project Grants for Organizations - \$5,000 to \$20,000

October 1, February 1, & April 1 deadlines

Review Criteria: These factors constitute the grant review standards: merit and artistic quality; ability of the applicant to accomplish the project; and demonstrated need for the project including underserved populations.

Eligibility Requirements: organizations, units of government, schools and nonprofits or art groups that use one of these as a fiscal sponsor.

Resiliency Grants for Artists and Art Organizations - up to \$600

Rolling deadline July 1 to June 30 each fiscal year ACHF Funding

Review Criteria: These factors constitute the grant review standards: merit and artistic quality; ability of the applicant to accomplish the project; and demonstrated need for the project including underserved populations.

Eligibility Requirements: artists or art organizations and cannot have more than 3 resiliency grants each fiscal year.

Essential Arts (formerly known as Operating Support) Grants for arts organizations– \$3,000 to \$5,000
ACHF Funding

March 1 deadline for a July 1 to June 30 grant period

Review Criteria: These factors constitute the grant review standards: artistic merit and artistic quality; ability of the organization to accomplish stated goals and objectives; and demonstrated need of the organization including ability to provide service for underserved populations.

Eligibility Requirements: nonprofit arts organizations in Region 7E.

Small/Art Project Assistance Grant - \$5,000 State General Fund

October 1, February 1, & April 1 deadlines

Review Criteria: The merit and artistic quality of the project, ability of the applicant or organization to accomplish the project; and a demand/need for the grant project or program in the community served including underserved populations.

Eligibility Requirements: organizations, units of government, schools and nonprofits or art groups that use one of these as a fiscal sponsor.

Scholarships for K-12 Kids – up to \$600 State General Fund

March 1 deadline - General Fund

Review Criteria: Primary considerations for reviewing applications will be artistic quality and merit of the proposed project, and the student artist's goals and (age appropriate) artistic background.

Eligibility Requirements: High school, middle school, or elementary school intending to enhance their artistic talents. The student must live in one the following Minnesota counties: Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs or Pine. If the student is under 18 the parent will enter into the grant contract with ECRAC.

ACHF Arts Education - Investing in lifelong learning in the arts in Region 7E.

Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund Grants for Individuals -\$2,000 See above for details.

ACHF Art Project Grants for Organizations - \$5,000 to \$20,000 See above for details.

Resiliency Grants for Artists and Art Organizations - up to \$600 See above for details.

Art In Our Schools Grant - \$5,000 General Fund

October 1, February 1, & April 1 deadlines

Review Criteria: Artistic Quality and Merit; merit of the residency plan, including the artist or field trip schedule; community (open to the public) component; and ability of the school to accomplish the project

ACHF Arts and Cultural Heritage - Building bridges between people via arts traditions in Region 7E.

Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund Grants for Individuals -\$2,000 See above for details.

ACHF Art Project Grants for Organizations- \$5,000 to \$20,000 See above for details.

Resiliency Grants for Artists and Art Organizations - up to \$600 See above for details.

Funded with Other, The McKnight Foundation Funds:

Individual Artist Mid-Career Grants - \$3,600

October 1, February 1, & April 1 deadlines - McKnight Funding

Those applications found to be complete and eligible are then reviewed according to the following grant review criteria: quality of the artist's work; quality of the proposed project; and the artistic résumé.

Essential Artist Award for Professional Artists - \$9,000

March 1 deadline - McKnight Funding

Review Criteria: include the artistic quality of the work samples submitted, and the merit and feasibility of the Essential Artist Award plan and the ability to accomplish.

Grant guidelines will be updated for the FY 2024-2025 biennium by August 15, 2022.

Please note that the definition for previously underserved populations is as follows: The applicant should describe how the project identifies and proactively addresses barriers to engaging historically marginalized, targeted, and underserved people and identities that may otherwise have limited access to your proposed activity. Examples might include: IPOC (Indigenous people and People of Color including Native American, Black/African/African American, Afro Latinx, Caribbean, Chicana/Mexican, Central American, South American, Middle Eastern/North African, Southeast Asian/Asian/Pacific Islander); immigrants and/or refugees; economically disadvantaged individuals; older adults; people with disabilities; LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual) people

Other Forms of Assistance to be provided:

- grant writing technical assistance, online grant info sessions, grant final report training, past approved grant application library, assistance with grant change requests
- providing information on IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility)
- providing information on COVID-19 related resources, if needed
- Reimbursements for Zoom subscriptions for artists, groups of artists, and arts organizations
- Training reimbursements for artists, groups of artists, and arts organizations

Other continued:

- Essential Arts e-newsletter
- ECRAC website
- At least 2 art shows per year including the annual IMAGE Art show which had it's 35th year in 2022
- Art show display and other equipment rental
- Arts library
- Workshops for artists and art organizations (including hybrid)
- Referrals to other services or service providers when needed
- Partnering even better with existing providers of services to underrepresented groups and community groups; ECRAC should have a focus on serving underrepresented groups/artists; and ECRAC should build more relationships with underrepresented groups and community groups. The ECRAC board of directors has made a commitment to overcoming bias and to building diversity and inclusion in grant-making and providing services. In addition, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic constituents are requesting a different kind of technical assistance support from the past.

Grant making 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.

Excerpt from the ECRAC Policy Manual

Principles for Grantmaking:

Members of the East Central Regional Arts Council recognize that they play an important role in supporting the arts in their communities; that their role is sustained by the public trust; and that certain

obligations follow from that trust. Members are committed to basing their work on principles that reflect those obligations.

Members, volunteers, and staff of the East Central Regional Arts Council:

- Deal respectfully with applicants, and grantees, as well as those simply seeking information about their programs.
- Are accessible and respond clearly, promptly, and as fairly as possible to requests for information and meetings.
- Make readily available basic information about their programs, funding priorities, and application requirements.
- Respect the confidentiality of applicants, grantees and donors and use discretion in communicating with others about specific organizations and individuals.
- Are thoughtful and purposeful in their grantmaking and periodically review and evaluate their mission, priorities, policies, and practices.
- Recognize the increasing cultural diversity of the communities they serve and proactively seek to reflect this diversity in grantmaking and in the membership of the Council and staff.
- Adhere to the highest standards of ethical behavior and maintain an appropriate conflict of interest policy for staff and board members.
- Are aware of and fulfill their fiduciary and legal responsibilities."

Grant making and monitoring process

ECRAC follows a several step process concerning grant review and evaluation. All applications must be received online by the deadline date and time. Staff then reviews the submitted grant applications for completeness and accuracy. Grant applications are then distributed via the online grant portal to the Arts Council board members for the grant review. If there is a grant review panel (occasionally) the full board receives the written grant review notes before their next meeting and is ultimately responsible for approving the grant.

Grant applicants or other interested persons may attend the grant review meeting but may not offer additional information. During the online review, the Council (or grant reviewers) rates each application on a scale. Applications are rated individually according to the criteria published in the East Central Regional Arts Council Grant Program Guidelines. Funding is then allocated based on a blind ranking of the proposals up for review during the grant review meeting.

Once grant funding is approved by the Board of Directors, a Notification of Grant Award(NGA)/Terms of Contract is sent to grantees with a Request for Payment (RFP) form. Grantees have 45 days to return. After the signed NGA and RFP are returned, and a once a year grantee final report training has taken place, ECRAC processes the payment for the project within 30 days of the NGA/RFP receipt. Grant files are kept which contain all pertinent information such as any correspondence, the grant application, data collection information, the NGA and RFP, information on any contacts with the grantee, etc. Grant file information is also kept online in the online Foundant system.

The grantee is expected to complete the grant project as proposed and as approved. They are also expected to know and follow the terms of their contract and approved budget with ECRAC. If there are unexpected changes the grantee is asked to contact staff or go to the ECRAC website for instructions on how to make a grant revision. The ECRAC Board of Directors signs up to monitor grant funded events. At that time they complete a "grant funded event monitoring form" which is then included in the grant file.

A grant final report is due within 30-60 days of the completed project. At ECRAC the final report must include documentation of how the grant funds were used, and all other income and expenses relating to the project. This is usually in the form of a receipts or cancelled checks. The purpose is two-fold, to ensure that the grant funds were spent as proposed and to ensure the terms of the contract were followed. An example of this is ensuring that the 10% cash match for the project was reached, if there is one. ECRAC has instituted the State Arts Board Misuse of Funds Policy and implemented it in FY 2020.

Final report documentation also includes items such as photos, programs, and outcome evaluation summaries. ECRAC reserves the right to conduct audits of randomly selected projects. This can either be a fiscal or program audit. Grantees are required to keep documentation of projects for a three-year period. Reviews of the final reports are conducted by the Grant Program Officer under supervision of the Executive Director and are reported to the ECRAC board both routinely as they are submitted and collectively as part of a current application's past grant history used to establish ability to accomplish the project.

A sample ACHF grant contract for organizations is provided as an attachment.

Attachment (optional) ACHF Org Letter NGA RFP Template.pdf

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 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 East Central Regional Arts Council advertised their public meeting via both the Region 7E media via public service announcement and paid advertisements and on the Arts Council website. Constituents were also notified of the opportunity to provide input through the newsletter and in the news section of the ECRAC website. ECRAC held the public meeting for the preliminary Biennial Plan on Tuesday, March 14, 2023, at 4 p.m. via Zoom. This public meeting was held in order to receive input from the general public as well as the established arts community. Information from the public meeting will be incorporated into the final plan at the ECRAC Board Meeting on March 21, if needed, before submission of the Preliminary Biennial Plan before submission to the Minnesota State Arts Board on April 3, 2023.

Placeholder for attendee information.

Requests for attachments noted above should be emailed to director@ecrac.org