

# East Central Regional Arts Council

## Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund Legacy Grant Guidelines for Essentials Support (formerly known as Operating Support Grants)

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- Fiscal Year 2026 -  
Grant Application Deadlines: March 1, 2026  
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# Table of Contents

EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL ARTS COUNCIL (ECRAC) INTRODUCTION	3
❖ What is ECRAC's definition of art?	4
ARTS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE FUND (ACHF) LEGACY GRANT OVERVIEW	5
❖ 25 Year Legacy Goals	
❖ Definitions of ACHF Key Areas	
GRANT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	7
❖ ECRAC Grant Program Outcomes	
❖ Grant Project Outcomes & Measuring Results	
ELIGIBILITY	10
NOT FUNDED BY ECRAC	11
GRANT FUNDING LIMIT	13
WHERE AND HOW TO APPLY ONLINE	13
DEADLINES	14
- What determines a project's start date	14
GRANT REVIEW PROCEDURE & CRITERIA	15
ECRAC'S CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY	18
GRANT PAYMENTS	18
FINAL GRANT REPORT & EVALUATION	19
❖ Misuse of Funds Policy	
GRANT TERMINATION OR REVOCATION	19
APPEALS POLICY & PROCEDURE	20
APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS	21
- Application Instructions for Organizations	
QUESTIONS & GRANT FUNDING CREDIT LINE	24

# EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL ARTS COUNCIL (ECRAC) INTRODUCTION

The East Central Regional Arts Council (ECRAC) is a regional grant-making agency that supports the arts through funding from the Minnesota State Legislature and The McKnight Foundation. The Council distributes grant awards to artists, culture bearers, arts and other non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and local units of government and provides technical assistance for these grants.

## **Mission/Vision/Values:**

ECRAC's mission is to support the arts and bring the life enhancing values they afford to Region 7E residents. The vision is that all Region 7E residents can participate, appreciate, create, and invest in the arts. The values of ECRAC are arts in action; integrity; artistic merit; and legacy. ECRAC is committed to providing opportunities for all in the arts by fostering inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility in our organization and in the Region 7E arts community.

The East Central Regional Arts Council accomplishes this mission through programs and special initiatives in support of the arts. The work program of the Arts Council includes the following: Grant programs for organizations (501(c)3 non-profits, units of government, schools, or other groups using a fiscal sponsor) are the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, Art in Our Schools, the Small/Art Project Assistance Grant, Resiliency Grant and the Essentials Support Grant (formerly General Operating); Grant Programs for individual artists such as the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, the Resiliency Grant, ECRAC Individual Artist Mid-Career and Essential Artist Award Programs, and - IMAGE - the annual regional art show. Other resources include hosting various grant workshops, an arts library, art display equipment rental, an art gallery, and providing other arts related technical assistance and resource information.

ECRAC receives funding through appropriations of the Minnesota State Legislature and through The McKnight Foundation. These funding sources enable ECRAC to provide grant funds for local or regional arts projects in these Region 7E counties of Minnesota: Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Pine, and Mille Lacs; including the sovereign Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe lands. All grants are contingent upon the availability of funds. Funds are offered to organizations and individuals for a variety of arts projects that develop or enhance local arts, arts organizations, artists, or art audiences.

The East Central Regional Arts Council is an independent 501(c)3 non-profit. The address is 540 Weber Avenue South, Suite 109, Hinckley, Minnesota, 55037. You can reach ECRAC by telephone at 320-336-0200, and by email at [grantinfo@ecrac.org](mailto:grantinfo@ecrac.org). The agency website is: [www.ecrac.org](http://www.ecrac.org).

*It is always best to contact staff of the ECRAC for assistance well in advance (see the grant deadline section) prior to submission of a grant application to determine current funding availability, and for information on the correct application form to use. This also allows applicants time to review the grant guidelines and to ask pertinent questions regarding your proposed grant project.*

## ❖ What is ECRAC's definition of art?

Art can describe several things: a study of a creative skill, a process of using the creative skill, a product of the creative skill, or the audience's experience with the creative skill. The Regional Arts Council defines "arts" as activities resulting in the artistic creation or artistic performance of works of the imagination. When we say arts, we are speaking very broadly of visual, performing, media, literary, and interdisciplinary art forms through which we learn about, explore, shape, and express the human experience. Every project funded by ECRAC must be an art project. These activities include the disciplines listed in ECRAC's online application form. The list of disciplines is part of the National Standard for Arts Information Exchange which was developed by the National Endowment for the Arts and other state, regional, and national organizations. Arts agencies are required to report on their activities using this standard set of codes. The Regional Arts Council uses these disciplines to define and report the art project activities supported.

**ECRAC Art Disciplines**

Discipline	Code	Discipline	Code	Discipline	Code
Dance	01	Visual arts	05	Photography	08
Dance, ballet	01A	Visual arts, experimental	05A	Media Arts	09
Dance, ethnic or jazz	01B	Visual arts, graphics	05B	Media Arts, film	09A
Dance, modern	01C	Visual arts, painting	05D	Media Arts, audio	09B
Music	02	Visual arts, sculpture	05F	Media Arts, video	09C
Music, band	02A	Design arts	06	Media Arts, tech/experimental	09D
Music, chamber	02B	Design arts, architecture	06A	Media Arts, screen/scriptwriting	09E
Music, choral	02C	Design arts, fashion	06B	Literature	10
Music, new-experimental, electronic	02D	Design arts, graphic	06C	Literature, fiction	10A
Music, ethnic	02E	Design arts, industrial	06D	Literature, non-fiction	10B
Music, jazz	02F	Design arts, interior	06E	Theater, playwriting	10C
Music, popular	02G	Design arts, landscape architecture	06F	Literature, poetry	10D
Music, solo/recital	02H	Design arts, urban/metro	06G	Interdisciplinary	11
Music, orchestral	02I	Crafts	07	Folk/Traditional Arts	12
Opera/Musical Theater	03	Crafts, clay	07A	Folk/Traditional dance	12A
Opera	03A	Crafts, fiber	07B	Folk/Traditional music	12B
Musical Theater	03B	Crafts, glass	07C	Folk/Traditional crafts/vis arts	12C
Theater	04	Crafts, leather	07D	Folk/Traditional storytelling	12D
Theater, general	04A	Crafts, metal	07E	Humanities	13
Theater, mime	04B	Crafts, paper	07F	Multidisciplinary	14
Theater, puppetry	04C	Crafts, plastic	07G		
Theater for young audiences	04D	Crafts, wood	07H		
Theater, storytelling	04E	Crafts, mixed media	07I		

Source: Minnesota State Arts Board

## **ARTS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE FUND (ACHF) LEGACY GRANT OVERVIEW**

In November 2008, Minnesotans passed the clean water, land, and legacy amendment to the Minnesota Constitution. As a result, over twenty-five years, three-eighths of one percent of the state's sales tax will be dedicated as follows:

- 33 percent to a clean water fund,
- 33 percent to an outdoor heritage fund,
- 14.25 percent to a parks and trails fund, and
- 19.75 percent to an arts and cultural heritage fund.

Proceeds from the arts and cultural heritage fund “may be spent only on arts, arts education and arts access and to preserve Minnesota’s history and cultural heritage.”

Funding for this grant program is dependent on the receipt of an appropriation from the Minnesota legislature from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

The Minnesota State Legislature has appropriated a significant portion of the arts and cultural heritage fund to the Minnesota State Arts Board and Minnesota’s eleven regional arts councils. These funds help make arts experiences more accessible and available to Minnesotans throughout the state.

Artists, culture bearers, arts organizations, community groups, human service organizations, public agencies, educational institutions, and others are invited and encouraged to take advantage of the ECRAC ACHF Legacy Grant program in Region 7E.

To see a comprehensive list of all Legacy Amendment projects funded by the arts and cultural heritage fund, outdoor heritage fund, clean water fund, and parks and trails fund visit the Legislative Coordinating Commission's searchable Web site at:  
<http://www.legacy.leg.mn>

### **❖ 25 Year Legacy Goals**

The 25-Year Vision, Framework, Guiding Principles, and Ten-Year Goals for the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund (PDF) was presented to the legislature on January 15, 2010 and can be found online at <http://www.arts.state.mn.us/pubs/pubs/achf-25-year.pdf>

### **❖ Definitions of ACHF Areas**

Following the direction of the Minnesota State Legislature, the ECRAC Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund will support activities in three key areas. ECRAC ACHF Legacy arts project funding may be spent only on arts and arts access, arts education, and arts and cultural heritage as defined. Ultimately, the fund is intended to create a strong arts legacy in Minnesota.

**Arts & Arts Access (AAA): Investing in high quality arts activities and expenses for all Minnesotans.**

ACHF funding will support artists and arts organizations in creating, producing, and presenting high-quality arts activities; to overcome barriers to accessing high-quality arts activities; and to instill the arts into the community and public life in this state. Such grant activities may be, but are not limited to:

- Investing in activities that make the arts available to people who might not otherwise have access due to economic, geographic, or physical barrier.
- Ensuring that artists and arts organizations have sufficient financial support to create high quality art.
- Investing in the long-term health and vitality of the arts sector by supporting capacity-building and professional development.
- Investing in efforts that enable Region 7E residents to connect with arts/arts experiences and performances.
- Investing in efforts to fully integrate the arts into local community development efforts.
- Investing in efforts to integrate the arts into local and regional economic development planning.
- Investing in public art that is available throughout the region.
- Recognizing and rewarding artists/arts organizations/arts providers for exceptional artistic quality and service to their audiences and/or the region.
- NEW from the 2023 Minnesota Legislative Session: Arts and Arts Access funds must be used “to support Minnesota artists and arts organizations in creating, producing, and presenting high-quality arts activities; to preserve, maintain, and interpret art forms and works of art so that they are accessible to Minnesota audiences; to overcome barriers to accessing high-quality arts activities; and to instill the arts into the community and public life in this state. Grants provided under this paragraph must prioritize artists and arts organizations that plan to present art from communities that have been historically underrepresented in the arts or that improve access to the programs and projects for groups, including youth and historically underserved communities, that have struggled to access arts programming in the past.”

**Arts Education (AE): Investing in lifelong learning in the arts**

ACHF funding will support high-quality, age-appropriate arts education for residents of all ages to develop knowledge, skills, and understanding of the arts. Such activities may be, but are not limited to:

- Investing in efforts that enable Region 7E residents to connect with arts learning opportunities and residencies.
- Ensuring that artists/arts organizations/arts providers can invest in professional development and workshops.
- Ensuring that arts learning opportunities and professional development are available.
- NEW from the 2023 Minnesota Legislative Session: Arts Education funds must be used “for high-quality, age-appropriate arts education for Minnesotans of all ages to develop knowledge, skills, and understanding of the arts. Priority in the award of grants under this paragraph must be given to providing educational opportunities to underserved communities with grants for organizations or entities providing opportunities to K-12 students throughout the state for arts education, including access to arts instruction, arts programming, museums, and arts presentations.”

**Arts & Cultural Heritage (ACH): Building bridges between Minnesotans through arts and culture**

ACHF funding may be used for events and activities that represent the diverse ethnic and cultural arts traditions, including folk and traditional artists and art organizations, represented in this state. Such activities may be, but are not limited to:

- Providing Region 7E residents with opportunities to celebrate our cultural heritage through events and activities that represent the range of Minnesota’s ethnic and cultural arts traditions including festivals.
- Ensuring that Region 7E residents can experience folk/traditional arts of diverse cultures by supporting the work of traditional and folk artists/arts organizations.
- NEW from the 2023 Minnesota Legislative Session: Arts and Cultural Heritage funds must be used “for events and activities that represent, preserve, and maintain the diverse cultural arts traditions, including folk and traditional artists and art organizations, represented in this state.”

## GRANT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This program provides general operating support to high quality, established arts organizations that produce, present, or exhibit works of art; to organizations that provide a broad range of services to artists; and to community arts groups that make arts learning available to regional individuals of all ages and abilities.

**NEW GRANT AMOUNT!** The Essentials Support (formerly known as General Operating Support) grant program offers \$3,000 to \$10,000 of funding to qualified organizations to maintain their ongoing organizational operating needs. This program recognizes that organizations with an established record of programmatic service and administrative stability should have access to funds to support their organizational goals and objectives, and to maintain their ongoing programs, services, and facilities without any emphasis on new initiatives or programs as justification for funding.

This grant program is not intended to fund any specific arts projects and/or events. Its purpose is to provide funding for organizations' existing ongoing arts operating expenses such as facility expenses, utilities, office or art supplies, equipment, organizational insurance, general advertising (not for a specific event), memberships to other organizations, etc. **NEW!** Organizations can include staffing costs of up to 50% of the grant request. Organizations seeking funding for specific arts projects or events should apply via ECRAC's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund Grants for Organizations Program and/or the Small/Arts Project Grants Program.

Information regarding all ECRAC grant programs can be found at [ecrac.org/grants](http://ecrac.org/grants). Please contact ECRAC staff via telephone at 320-336-0200, or by email at [grantinfo@ecrac.org](mailto:grantinfo@ecrac.org) if you have questions regarding which grant program best fits your organization's funding needs.

### **Special Requirements for Art Project Equipment Purchases**

Grant requests from organizations for project equipment purchase must include: a detailed plan for the use of the equipment; and a statement certifying they will not sell the equipment without prior ECRAC approval including the possibility of UCC filing. Organizations using a fiscal sponsor must develop an equipment purchase agreement outlining who will own the equipment at the end of the grant period. The act of only purchasing equipment does not constitute a fundable grant project. Schools cannot purchase equipment with this fund.

## **❖ ECRAC Grant Program Outcomes**

It is important for grantees to understand that funding for this program comes from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund (ACHF), a fund created by the people of Minnesota to support the arts. Because our fellow citizens have made this commitment, we have an obligation to be intentional about arts projects: the outcomes, impacts and results, and the community benefits. Therefore, outcomes and outcome evaluation are an important part of the funding proposal; in fact, they are a legislatively mandated requirement.



ECRAC's very broad ACHF outcomes are: artists and the arts are visible in communities; artists develop their practice; organizations develop capacities that advance the arts; people access arts experiences; people develop arts skills or knowledge; people have meaningful arts experiences; and people make connections to ideas, organizations, or one another.

In the application you will identify which of the following best describes the majority of the people you will to serve with your proposed grant project:

- You Pre-K children
- School age children
- Teens or youth
- Adults – general public
- Adults – professionals or peers
- Adults – artist
- Adults – learners
- Adults – seniors or elders (older adults)
- Inter-generational groups (e.g., families)
- Communities (e.g., neighborhoods or cities)
- Organizations
- People in institutional settings
- People who might have difficulty communicating (e.g., reading, writing, or speaking)
- People who may have sensory difficulties (e.g., vision or hearing)
- People who may have mobility difficulties
- People who may have cognitive difficulties

In the application you will also identify the kind of possible changes or effects expected with your art grant project. Which of ECRAC's very broad program outcomes best describes the kind of change you expect from your project?

- Artists and the arts are visible in communities
- Artists develop their practice
- Organizations develop capacities that advance the arts
- People access arts experiences
- People develop arts skills or knowledge
- People have meaningful arts experiences
- People make connections to ideas, organizations, or one another

Having your own specific outcome in mind for your proposed grant project means that the people you serve are supposed to be different in some way as a result of this project. In the application proposal you will identify what kinds of specific changes or effects you expect to see in the people to be served by this grant project.

- An emotional response or reaction
- A changed attitude about something or someone
- A new awareness about something or someone
- A new intention or motivation to take some course of action
- A changed perception of themselves or others
- A new or expanded understanding or knowledge about some topic
- A new or expanded skill in some area
- A change to their behavior after this experience
- Changes to their relationships with someone else: could be new, strengthened, enriched, or changed in some other way
- Your organization will have a new or improved ability or capacity to do something
- A change to some other condition (for example, some kind of individual well-being, community strength, etc.)

In summary, your proposed art grant project outcome will be: who you will serve; which of ECRAC's broad ACHF program outcomes you expect as a result of the art project; and, finally, the specific change you expect to see in the people served by your project.



## ❖ **Grant Project Outcomes & Measuring Results**

During and after the grant you will have to evaluate your grant outcome. In the application proposal ECRAC will ask you to describe the outcome evaluation planned. You will provide either quantitative or qualitative measurements or both. When funded your grant final report must include a summary of these evaluation results. For reference the term project in this section refers to the activities included in the ECRAC grant during the active grant period (July 1 to June 30).

The following are the methods you will choose from in order to document the progress toward your art project outcomes:

- Reviewing program statistics or other documents related to the project
- Reviewing or critiquing a portfolio, experience, or other artifacts of the project (by experts, peers, or others)
- Conducting interviews with stakeholders
- Conducting focus groups with stakeholders
- Creating one or more case studies about the project
- Making structured observations of stakeholders during project activities
- Surveying stakeholders about their knowledge skills, attitudes, behaviors, or motivations
- Gauging stakeholder priorities using interactive methods such as sorting cards or voting
- Having stakeholders describe or capture their own impressions using PhotoVoice, talk-aloud interviews, making maps or illustrations, journaling, etc.

The term stakeholder suggests the people data is gathered from. It could be participants, audiences, community members, artists, project partners or organization staff. This depends on the project.

## ELIGIBILITY

ECRAC serves the non-profit arts organization community in Region 7E Minnesota counties: Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Pine, and also the sovereign lands of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. Eligible organizations must be located in one of these and must be a Minnesota private, non-profit arts organization which has obtained, for at least a year, 501(c)3 tax-exempt status under the Internal Revenue Code and have registered with the Minnesota Secretary of State and Department of Revenue. Applicants must submit their annual organization budget with these proposals. Applicants must not have been disqualified for ECRAC grant funding (due to overdue or incomplete past final reports or other grantee issues.)

Your organization must also meet all of the following requirements:

1. Your organization must be a 501(c)3 tax exempt organization physically located in Region 7E.
2. Your programming, services, or activities must take place in Region 7E in Minnesota, and must primarily serve and engage Region 7E audiences and participants.
3. Your organization must be an arts organization defined as producing arts, presenting arts, a community arts school, or an artist service agency. For the purposes of this program, public or private pre-K-12 schools, colleges, or universities; radio and television stations; libraries; friends of the libraries; zoos; children's museums; historical societies or museums; natural history museums; civic organizations; human service organization; or other community service agencies do not meet the definition of "arts organization."
4. Your organization must have a history of at least two years of arts programming and services prior to applying and at least one year as a designated 501(c)3 non-profit per your IRS determination letter.
5. Your organization must be a regional arts organization. Local chapters of state or national organizations are only eligible to apply if they are administratively independent or receive little or no funding from their parent group.
6. Your organization cannot have an annual organizational budget over \$174,000.
7. Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support grantees are not eligible for this funding.

## WHAT IS FUNDED?

ECRAC ACHF Essentials Support Grant proposals may include the following expenses based on your organizations identified needs and proposed outcomes.

- General operating expenses (e.g. – facility rental (not purchase) costs, operational insurance, Directors and Officer's insurance, office or art supplies and equipment, utilities, general (not project specific) advertising, and phone or internet service, etc.)
- Board and staff training in non-profit or art best practices.
- Long range planning consultations (except fundraising).
- Purchase of equipment or small capital expenses necessary to the mission of the arts organization. (3 quotes (1 from a Minnesota vendor) and an equipment use plan are required for all capital expenses over \$500.)
- Expenses related to ADA compliance, or upgrades, in the facility used.
- Memberships in organizations such as your local chamber of commerce, GPS 45:93, or the Minnesota Council of Non-Profits, etc. Travel (within Minnesota) for staff and board members to attend meetings, conferences, or trainings provided by these or other membership organizations.
- NEW! Staffing costs of up to 50% of the grant request.

This grant program is NOT intended to fund specific arts projects or events. Its purpose is to provide funding for organizations' ongoing operating expenses such as those named above: facility rental expenses; utilities; office or art supplies; equipment; organizational and/or D&O insurance, etc. Organization art project grant requests must be made through the Small/Art Project Assistance Grant Program and/or the ACHF Organization Grant Program. Please contact ECRAC staff if you have questions regarding which program is most appropriate for your grant request.

## NOT FUNDED BY ECRAC

- Organizations that do not meet the eligibility criteria listed in the Eligibility section.
- Applications that do not have an arts and/or culture related focus.
- Applicants not located in or grant activities that do not take place in Region 7E or for activities that would relocate the applicant outside of Region 7E or Minnesota.
- Any travel outside of Minnesota.
- Activities of a for-profit project, organization, or business or from other direct recipients of the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.
- Projects when funds are requested for deficits in projects or programs begun prior to the project's earliest start date. In other words, payment of any debts incurred before the grant begins or outside of the grant start and end dates cannot be approved.

- Applicants with either unacceptable or past due ECRAC final grant reports, or applicants that contact ECRAC members/panelists regarding the proposal before final grant approval.
- Applications when funds are to be used to match other ECRAC grants or grant applications.
- Requests for new building construction, purchase of real property, or endowment funds.
- Fundraising events.
- Over 50% of the grant request for staffing or contract employee expenses.
- Organizations that are not open to the entire public or are not ADA accessible.
- Religious organizations or projects that are for the religious socialization of participants or audience.
- Activities that engage in political lobbying or intend to influence public policy.
- Applicants that have been found to be ineligible for ECRAC funding.
- Projects when artists are required to pay excessive entry or exhibition fees in order to exhibit or perform at the organization seeking funds.
- Organizations that will not use the proper ECRAC funding credit line (in a legible font) and that don't use both the ECRAC logo and the ACHF Clean Water Land and Legacy logo, as required. Also, projects that will not take responsibility for their own publicity, media coverage, and public relations, or won't provide timely promotion.
- Projects that try and substitute traditional sources of funding with an ACHF grant. The Minnesota Constitution requires that arts and cultural heritage fund dollars must be used to supplement not substitute for traditional sources of funding. All recipients of ACHF dollars must ensure that they are in compliance with this constitutional requirement.
- Projects unwilling to track and report costs appropriately. ACHF grant dollars must not be spent on administrative costs, indirect costs, or other institutional overhead charges that are not directly related to and necessary for the specific projects or activities that will be funded with Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund dollars. If awarded Arts and Cultural Heritage Funds, a grantee must track and be able to clearly document what portion of ACHF funds is spent on direct program or project costs and what portion of ACHF funds is spent on administrative costs, indirect, or overhead costs that are "directly related to and necessary" to carry out the programs or projects that are supported with ACHF dollars. In order to ensure this, ECRAC requires that proof of all grant related costs are submitted with the final report.
- Applicants with a Misuse of Funds determination from the Minnesota State Arts Board or a Minnesota Regional Arts Council.

Note: ECRAC has attempted to provide a thorough and clear articulation of its eligibility rules, but it reserves the right to declare an application ineligible for reasons not explicitly stated here. If you have questions about the eligibility of your project, please contact the ECRAC office. Grantees are responsible for complying with all federal, state, and local laws, rules, regulations, and ordinances in relation to the use of these funds. Failure to comply may result in termination or forfeiture of the grant.

## **GRANT FUNDING LIMIT – NEW \$3,000 to 10,000!**

The funding amount for ECRAC Essentials Support Grants is \$3,000 to \$10,000. Matching funds are not a requirement of this grant.

Special Requirements for Equipment Purchases: Purchases of equipment or small capital expenses necessary to the mission of the organization are allowable with this grant fund. Requests from organizations for equipment purchase must include: a detailed plan for the use of the equipment; and a statement certifying they will not sell the equipment without prior ECRAC approval. In addition, all equipment purchases of over \$500 are required to have 3 price quotes in the grant application. One of these quotes should be from a Minnesota vendor.

### How Many ECRAC Grants Are Organizations Allowed to Receive In One Fiscal Year?

An organization may be awarded an Essentials Support grant and still be eligible to apply for and receive funding from other ECRAC project grant programs, as appropriate. Only one Essentials Support grant is available to organizations annually and the grant is approved for an ECRAC fiscal year (July 1 to June 30).

## **WHERE AND HOW TO APPLY ONLINE**

ECRAC has competitive grant programs. Because of that, a reasonable amount of planning time should be allowed to develop a grant proposal application. Grant writing technical assistance is provided by ECRAC staff upon request by the grantee. The staff person can best be of help to you if you contact them in advance of the application technical assistance deadline. However, if time is available, they will still answer questions after the assistance deadline. Keep in mind that assistance from an ECRAC staff person does not imply that grant funding will be received.

There are different application forms for organizations and for individual artists. Schools, and units of government, use the organization form and guidelines. If in doubt about which application to use, contact ECRAC staff.

Applicants must use the ECRAC online application form for the specific category of funds requested. Upon request the application and grant guidelines can be made available in alternative formats. To accommodate your request for an alternative format, ECRAC will need at least 10 working days' notice.

You may access the ECRAC website for the online application forms at [www.ecrac.org/grants](http://www.ecrac.org/grants) . You will find information on past funded grant projects at the bottom of the webpage.

For the online grant portal, used to access the upcoming grant applications and your previous grant proposals, go to <https://www.ecrac.org/manage-my-grant>

Do not apply for more than one grant per grant program deadline. Be sure to include all attachments with your application, or your application will be considered incomplete and thus ineligible.

Be sure to include (upload) all attachments with your application or your application will be considered incomplete and thus ineligible. Required attachments include: Personnel, and Board Chair/President résumés, board member information, annual organization budget, signed certification page, up to 2 brochure pdfs, and, if applicable, 3 price quotes for equipment plus an equipment use plan.

Applicants cannot submit any grant application proposal materials by mail, in person, or by email. The online application materials are at: [www.ecrac.org/grants](http://www.ecrac.org/grants) . The ECRAC grant portal is available at: <https://www.ecrac.org/manage-my-grant> Completed applications must be submitted online before 11:59 p.m. on the deadline date.

Questions? You can reach ECRAC by telephone at 320-336-0200 and by email at: [grantinfo@ecrac.org](mailto:grantinfo@ecrac.org).

## DEADLINES

The deadline for submitting Essentials Support proposals is March 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. When you apply please be aware that it will take a couple of months before a final decision is reached.

All Essentials Support Grant start dates will be July 1<sup>st</sup> of each respective year. The grant period will end June 30<sup>th</sup> of the following calendar year.

The scheduled grant deadline dates for FY 2026 & 2027 are:

GRANT APPLICATION DEADLINE*	GRANT START DATE	GRANT END DATE
March 1, 2026 & 2027	July 1, 2026 & 2027	June 30, 2027 & 2028

*\*If a deadline date falls on a weekend or holiday, the deadline will be 11:59 p.m. on the next working day.*

ECRAC staff are happy to answer questions and provide assistance when needed! Assistance is offered based on staff availability.

### ❖ What determines a project's start date?

The start date for an ECRAC grant is defined as “the point at which the project is set in motion (e.g. rehearsals, advertising and public notification, payment of fees, ordering and/or paying for supplies or printed material, etc.).” ECRAC does not fund projects that are already underway. Grantees must wait until their notification of grant award before printing and/or disseminating publicity materials. No funds can be expended prior to the project start date. Funds incurred before the project start date (such as entering into a contract) cannot be included in the grant project and may make your project ineligible. Please contact ECRAC staff if you are unclear about whether ECRAC would consider your project as already started.

## **GRANT REVIEW PROCEDURE & CRITERIA**

The accuracy, content, completeness, and merits of the application are solely the responsibility of the applicant. ECRAC staff will review all applications submitted for completeness and eligibility and will report this during the grant review. The ECRAC Board of Directors will have the final determination regarding application completeness and eligibility. Applicants or grant project directors will be notified of the receipt of their application and when the grant application review will take place by email. Applicants are strongly encouraged to attend the grant review meeting but will not be permitted to provide any additional information at that time.

The ECRAC Board of Directors, by majority vote, makes all final funding decisions. ECRAC staff do not participate in this grant review and funding process other than to introduce applications, to describe the status of the grant application completeness and eligibility review, and to take minutes.

Grant applicants may not discuss their application with ECRAC grant review panelists or ECRAC board members following the grant deadline until the ECRAC board has acted on the application. Communications regarding an application with ECRAC board members or panelists during this time will result in the application being deemed ineligible for funding.

All grant review meetings are open to the public.

### **❖ OPEN MEETING POLICY**

- ECRAC is covered by the spirit of the Minnesota Open Meeting Policy.
- Rules of conduct are in effect from the meeting start to adjournment.
- Members of the public audit the meeting only. Disruptive persons will be asked to leave.
- Grant reviews – applicants may attend and are not allowed to provide additional information.
- All discussion of grant applications is public record.
- Persons wishing to address the Council (not a grant applicant) must notify ECRAC at least 24 hours in advance.
- An agenda is available at the meeting.

### **❖ REVIEW CRITERIA**

The East Central Regional Arts Council makes every effort to distribute available funds fairly and equitably among the various art forms and across all geographic and cultural areas of the region. Organizations supported by ECRAC are expected to encourage and reflect the highest possible standards of artistic excellence. The Regional Arts Council will consider each application on its own merits. Applications are reviewed in the order received. In reviewing the applications, a grant review panel and/or the Regional Arts Council will use the following criteria listed in order of priority. Review meetings are open to the public.

If the applicant is determined to be an art organization of sufficient artistic merit and quality and has submitted an eligible application to indicate further review, the following standards will be applied. 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.



❖ **Merit and artistic quality of the organization's projects or programs 10 points available**

Grant review considerations used to address this criterion may include:

1. How does your organization instill the arts into your community and public life?
2. How does your organization provide high quality arts experiences?
3. How does your organization provide Region 7E residents access to quality arts experiences?
4. How does your organization help develop knowledge, skills, and understanding of the arts?
5. How does your organization determine and provide artistic merit and quality?
6. Are your organization's venue(s) and/or activities publicly accessible and ADA compliant?
7. How will operating support funds expand your organization's artistic capabilities?
8. If part of your mission, how does your organization help to represent diverse ethnic and cultural arts traditions?

❖ **The ability of the organization to accomplish the organization's goals as stated. This is demonstrated by providing evidence of qualifications of artistic and administrative personnel, program brochures, catalog and materials, and previously successful efforts. – 10 points available**

Grant review considerations used to address this criterion may include:

1. Is the organization's annual budget feasible and does it demonstrate fiscal responsibility?
2. Does the organization have effective program information such as brochures or other materials?
3. Is the outcome evaluation plan appropriate for the request? Are the proposed outcomes strong? Could the proposed activities reasonably achieve the outcomes? Can the reported evaluation findings be used to identify, plan, and implement adjustments to increase effectiveness of future activities? Be aware that achievement of outcomes is not a criterion at this time.
4. If this organization is a past ECRAC grant recipient, have projects been successful, and were reporting requirements followed?
5. Do all organization résumés substantiate organizational ability?

❖ **Applicants must demonstrate a demand/need for the organization in the community served. – 10 points available**

Grant review considerations used to address this criterion may include:

1. How does the organization define their community served?
2. Does the application demonstrate community involvement and support for the project?
3. Does the organization effectively provide arts activities to the community served?
4. How does the proposal meet the needs of the arts organization?
5. How does the proposal meet the artistic needs of the community served?

❖ **Applicants must demonstrate equity and inclusion for the grant project or program in the community served. – 6 points available**

Grant review considerations used to address this criterion may include:

1. Does the applicant 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 activities.

Examples might include:

BIPOC (Indigenous people and People of Color including Native American, Black/African/African American, Afro Latino, Caribbean, Chicano/Mexican, Central American, South American, Middle Eastern/North African, Southeast Asian/Asian/Pacific Islander); immigrants and/or refugees; economically disadvantaged individuals; people with disabilities; LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual) people; older adults; and pre-K children.

2. Does the applicant explain how they are positioned to engage with and support the underrepresented community they described.
3. Are the underrepresented among the applicant's or the project's leadership, artists, and decisionmakers?
4. In what ways has the applicant made attempts to be more equitable and inclusive?
5. If the applicant is an organization or group that primarily serves people identified above, what are the unique ways in which they will engage with members of your community who are not yet connected to their work?
6. Is your venue publicly accessible? In what ways does the grantee ensure that people with disabilities can participate in their events? Examples might include ADA accessible venue, ASL interpretation, audio described performance, large print programs, sensory tours, etc. How will accessibility options be conveyed to the community? The grant reviewers will be asked to provide comments about inclusion of people with disabilities for this project.
7. If there is a financial cost for participants of your events, what considerations are made for those who may find such costs a barrier? Examples might include ticket discounts, scholarships, waived membership dues, transportation reimbursements, stipends, etc.

**NEW!** Eligible applications will need to receive a minimum score of 20 out of 36 in the review scoring to remain eligible. A score of 20, however, does not guarantee a grant award.

Based on the grant review standards and the recommendation of the grant review panel (if applicable), the East Central Regional Arts Council Board of Directors shall make one of the following decisions for each grant applicant: full funding of the amount requested; partial funding of the amount requested; full or partial funding with stipulations or budget revisions; table the request, pending receipt of additional information; or no funding.

The grant review panel (if applicable) will present its recommendations from the grant review in writing to the East Central Regional Arts Council Board of Directors. ECRAC relies heavily on the recommendations of the panel.

The ECRAC Board of Directors will determine if grant review procedures have been properly followed and will approve, disapprove, or table based on adherence to the procedures and guidelines herein described. They can also set stipulations for applicants based on these.

All grant applicants will receive a grant allocation notification within 30 days after the final funding decision is made by ECRAC.

## ECRAC'S CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

ECRAC observes strict procedures to prevent any conflict of interest. Any board or staff member of the Regional Arts Council with a direct financial or employment interest relating to any grant application to be reviewed will inform the Council of such affiliation prior to review of any grant application. The member will leave the room and not vote, rank, or participate in the grant review discussion. The Council reports annually on those members with affiliations who declared conflicts of interest. The ECRAC board chair and executive director have the authority to determine the existence and effect of a conflict of interest.

A conflict of interest exists if a Regional Arts Council board or staff member, or grant reviewer:

receives direct financial benefit from the organization or project being reviewed.

- serves as an employee or governing board member of an applicant organization.
- serves with or without pay as a consultant for the applicant being reviewed.
- has familial (or adversarial) relationship with an applicant or a staff or board member of an applicant organization.
- receives free tickets or other benefits from the grant applicant being reviewed.
- has a particular sensitivity for, or against, either the art form or subject matter.

## GRANT PAYMENTS

Grantees will receive notification regarding the ECRAC grant funding decision. If funded, a contract called the Notification of Grant Award (NGA) and a Request for Payment (RFP) form will be included in the notification. In cases where the grant is less than the full amount requested, or if the ECRAC Board of Directors has stipulated revisions, the applicant will receive them and a revised approved budget in the NGA. If the grantee agrees with the approved budget and other terms of the contract, an authorized signer of the grantee (or fiscal sponsor, if applicable) must sign and submit both forms to ECRAC. The NGA contract also requires the signature of the project director.

No funds will be authorized until the NGA contract and RFP have been executed. Funds will then be approved and forwarded to the grantee within 45 days of receipt of the NGA and RFP.

Additionally, before the first grant payment of a fiscal year is made to a grantee ECRAC requires grantees to complete Grant Management Training. If requested, expenses incurred related to this training can be reimbursed by ECRAC through the expense reimbursement voucher.

## **GRANT REVISION REQUESTS**

Grantees agree to notify ECRAC staff in writing, for prior approval, of any proposed changes to the grant project or any revision of the approved budget in the NGA. The Regional Arts Council must preapprove significant changes in the project such as changes in dates, project goals or outcomes, and/or budget changes of 20% or greater (per line item), if the amount is over \$600. No revisions are allowed to the NGA contract or to the grant project without ECRAC prior approval. There are instructions for this, if needed.

## **FINAL GRANT REPORT & EVALUATION**

Grant recipients must submit a final report to ECRAC. Grant recipients must submit their final report form online to ECRAC within 30 days of the end of the project. ECRAC may also require an interim report or may conduct a mid-point grant progress review. The final report must be the ECRAC online format provided in the grant portal and will include: narrative; copies of press releases from the year, any publicity received, website pages developed and showing ECRAC funding credit, and news articles. The final reports will show how grant funds were used, and will provide documentation of all income and expenses pertaining to the proposal, including all proofs of payment. The final/financial report form will also include all documentation on the outcome evaluation of the grant. The Regional Arts Council cannot provide any grant funds to applicants who have outstanding or unaccepted grant final reports or unsatisfactory interim progress reviews.

### **❖ Misuse of Funds Policy**

The East Central Regional Arts Council has a Misuse of Funds Policy. The ECRAC staff document their questions and conclusions about possible misuse of state grant funds. Staff then consult with the grantee regarding misuse concerns. Any determination of Misuse of Funds is made by the East Central Regional Arts Council Board of Directors. A misuse determination will impact the grant in question and future funding. Any Misuse of Funds determination is reported to the Minnesota State Arts Board and the Forum of Regional Arts Councils of Minnesota.

## **GRANT TERMINATION OR REVOCATION**

The NGA contract may be terminated at any time upon written request of the grantee. Such termination does not necessarily relieve the grantee of its responsibilities as set forth in the grant contract. ECRAC may terminate a grant contract at any time upon failure of the grantee to comply with one or more of the conditions of the grant contract. A contract may be terminated by mutual written consent of ECRAC and recipient. Occasionally, additional stipulations or conditions will be placed on the use of the grant funds. These conditions, or in some cases recommendations, from the Regional Arts Council will be clearly outlined in the NGA contract.

ECRAC will rescind its grant commitment if:

- a grantee does not submit their signed NGA and RFP with appropriate signatures within 45 days, or
- upon request, the recipient does not agree to, or return, required grant stipulations with the signed NGA and RFP.

## **APPEALS POLICY & PROCEDURE**

If an applicant can show cause that the established grant review procedures have not been followed, the applicant may file an appeal. There is no right of appeal for disputes of decisions of the East Central Regional Arts Council with respect to artistic merit.

To file an appeal, the applicant must notify the Regional Arts Council Executive Director in writing within 10 days of the notification of ECRAC's action and describe the point or points of issue with the grant review procedure. ECRAC will approve, disapprove, or table the appeal based on adherence to its grant review procedures within 45 days.

## **BEFORE YOU BEGIN THE APPLICATION FORM**

You will first want to familiarize yourself with basic information about East Central Regional Arts Council grant funding. Please read through this entire document before beginning the online application form. The application form includes specific questions which will assist the Regional Arts Council reviewers in determining eligibility, artistic quality & merit, ability, community need, equity & inclusion proposed.

Technical assistance is available for applicants who need advice in developing a grant proposal. The Regional Arts Council also conducts grant workshops, including online tutorials, that help applicants understand the grantmaking philosophy as well as the process for submitting successful grant applications. Assistance from staff does not imply funding for an application. The content, accuracy, completeness, and merits of the grant proposal are solely the responsibility of the applicant.

### **- TIPS ON COMPLETING THE APPLICATION**

The grant portal opens 4-6 weeks before the deadline. A reasonable amount of planning time should be allowed to develop an application. Grant writing technical assistance is provided by ECRAC staff as requested. The staff person can help you best if you contact them well in advance of the application technical assistance deadline. Assistance from the staff person does not, however, imply that grant funding will be received.

Contact the ECRAC office to determine the availability of funding and which of the grant areas your proposal fits into. The ECRAC Grant Program Officer phone number is: 320-336-0200. The email address is [grantinfo@ecrac.org](mailto:grantinfo@ecrac.org).

Attend an ECRAC Grant Information Session. This is not currently a grant requirement, but it is strongly recommended by the ECRAC Board of Directors. They are online as YouTube video tutorials, available by zoom, and in-person. You can even sponsor a Grant Information Session in your community!

Read over the application questions and contact the ECRAC if you are unclear about them, or the grant review criteria.

Use the online forms provided by ECRAC. The application materials are on the ECRAC website: <https://www.ecrac.org/grants-available>. The grant tutorials are also available here.

You will have to remain within the specified amount of space for answers. Do not submit additional materials. Additional pages and materials not requested won't be reviewed by the Council or by a grant review panel. Do not mail or email any application-related materials to ECRAC.

Complete and submit your online application before 11:59 p.m. of the deadline date. Applications submitted after this are ineligible.

To be eligible, your application must include ALL required materials. If not, the application can be found ineligible.

Give all people involved in the grant project a copy of the approved grant proposal to ensure agreement.

Best practices and past grant application history indicate successful grant applications are written by organization representatives and/or organization grant writers. ECRAC strongly advises organizations to follow this best practice. Contact ECRAC staff if you have questions concerning this distinction.

## OTHER ECRAC SERVICES

ECRAC provides a variety of services to the arts community in the region, including:

- Art Gallery
- Resource Information
- Identification of the connection between the arts and community and economic development
- Arts Library
- Workshops for artists and organizations
- Grant Information Sessions
- Grant Writing Technical Assistance
- Art Show Display Equipment Rental
- Art shows such as the annual IMAGE Art Show
- Space for meetings and art events

Please contact ECRAC if you, or your organization, would like further information regarding these services.

**Grant Application Workshops: Information sessions** are held monthly. Participants will learn about the grant programs, application process, and how to write an effective ECRAC grant application. This is a great opportunity to get your questions answered on your project ideas.

**Grant Library:** ECRAC maintains a library of submitted and funded grant applications. Reviewing these materials can enhance your understanding of the process and may improve your application. The application library is normally open during regular office hours (9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.). Our staff is happy to help you. Calling to make an appointment in advance is required.

To see a list of previously funded projects, visit this web page and scroll to the bottom:

<https://www.ecrac.org/grants-available>



## YOUR NOTES & GRANT IDEAS!

## QUESTIONS & GRANT FUNDING CREDIT LINE

**ANY QUESTIONS???** Call 320-336-0200  
or email [grantinfo@ecrac.org](mailto:grantinfo@ecrac.org) [www.ecrac.org](http://www.ecrac.org)

**East Central Regional Arts Council  
540 Weber Ave S  
Suite 109  
Hinckley, MN 55037**

### **STAY UP TO DATE!**

**Make sure you are on the ECRAC newsletter mailing list!**

### **ECRAC Mission**

**The ECRAC mission is to support the arts and bring the life enhancing values they afford to Region 7E residents.**

**If funded by this grant program, any publicity for your grant project needs to include:**

- 1. the 2 logos (ECRAC and ACHF Legacy) on the front page of these guidelines, found at <https://www.ecrac.org/manage-my-grant/press-kit>**
- 2. the following funding credit line,**
- 3. and these hashtags below for social media use.**

***This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the East Central Regional Arts Council thanks to a legislative appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.***

**#ecrac**

**#ArtsLegacy**