

East Central Regional Arts Council

Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund Legacy Grant Guidelines for Organizations

East Central Regional Arts Council
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www.ecrac.org
320-336-0200

- Fiscal Year 2026 -

Grant Application Deadlines: Oct. 1 2025; Feb. 1 & April 1 2026

- Fiscal Year 2027 -

Grant Application Deadlines: Oct. 1 2026; Feb. 1 & April 1 2027



This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota thanks to a legislative appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.



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 for artists and arts organizations. 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. The agency website is: 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 does ECRAC consider 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 2025 Minnesota Legislative Session: Arts and Arts Access funding 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 subdivision 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 2025 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 subdivision 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 2025 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."

In addition, also from the 2025 Minnesota Legislative Session: "Notwithstanding any other provision of law, regional arts council grants or other arts council grants for touring programs, projects, or exhibits must ensure the programs, projects, or exhibits are able to tour in their own region as well as all other regions of the state."

GRANT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The intent of ECRAC grant programs for organizations is to increase the quantity and to stimulate and maintain high quality arts experiences in the region. Grants are made to eligible organizations engaged in the creation or production of art, art services, or sponsorship of art activities. Arts in all disciplines are supported by the Council based on ECRAC's definition of art.

ECRAC has funding for organizations and artists under a few separate applications and guidelines. Contact ECRAC staff at either 320-336-0200, or by email at grantinfo@ecrac.org, if you need assistance in determining which category to apply for your project and to determine current funding availability. Please note that the Regional Arts Council funds art projects which are high in quality and merit, projects which are well planned, include qualified artists as proven by their artistic résumés, have a strong community impact, and are clearly needed and valued by the community they serve. Currently ECRAC does not fund planning projects with this grant. However, arts organizations can get planning funding via the ECRAC Essentials Support Grant.

The ECRAC Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund Legacy grant for organizations provides \$5,000 to \$20,000 in project funding for groups wishing to offer quality arts activities in any art discipline to communities within the East Central Minnesota Counties of Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Pine, and also the sovereign Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe lands. Projects should benefit Minnesotans. Grant proposals must outline specific arts projects that may include related costs for artists and other personnel, supplies, equipment rental, equipment, and other expenses needed to carry out the art project. Grants are available to organizations (501c3 non-profits, units of government, groups that use a fiscal sponsor). Projects must be open to the public.

Independent School Districts may apply; however, there is also an ECRAC Art in Our Schools Grant Program with \$5,000 grants available and no match required. This is a separate application form with the same deadlines. Please contact ECRAC staff if you have any questions about funding for schools, or about which application form to use.

There are also grants from \$600-\$5,000 for organizations, public entities, and schools under the ECRAC Small/Arts Project Grant for Organizations. This is also a separate application.

Project Matching Funds Definitions

To receive an Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund (ACHF) grant, applicants must provide **cash support equal to at least 10% of the total project cost**. This is called a “cash match.”

What Counts as a Cash Match

Your cash match can include:

- **Earned income** from ticket sales, fees, or merchandise
- **Other grants or contributions** from outside sources
- **Cash on hand** already committed to the project
- **Important:** *In-kind contributions do not count toward the required cash match.*

Understanding In-Kind Contributions

In-kind support refers to **donated materials, labor, or space** that have a clear dollar value and are committed to your project. Examples might include:

- Free use of a venue
- Volunteer time from skilled professionals
- Donated supplies or printing services

These contributions should be **significant and clearly documented**. After your project is complete, you'll need to provide a statement from the donor confirming the value of their in-kind support. ECRAC offers **sample in-kind donation voucher forms** to help with documentation just ask if you need one.

Special Requirements for Art Project Equipment Purchases

If your organization is requesting grant funds to purchase equipment as part of a project, please keep the following guidelines in mind:

What You Must Include

- A **clear, detailed plan** explaining how the equipment will be used to support the project
- A **signed statement** confirming that the equipment will **not be sold** without prior approval from ECRAC (*This may include a Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) filing, if applicable*)

If You're Using a Fiscal Sponsor

- You must create an **equipment purchase agreement** that outlines **who will own the equipment** after the grant period ends

Important Notes

- Simply purchasing equipment **does not qualify as a fundable project**—equipment must support a broader artistic or cultural initiative
- **Schools are not eligible** to use these funds for equipment purchases

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:

- Young Pre-K children
- School age children
- Teens or youth
- Adults – general public
- Adults – professionals or peers
- Adults – artists
- 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 project activities you will have to evaluate your grant project outcome. In the application proposal ECRAC will ask you to describe the outcome evaluation planned for your project. You will provide either quantitative or qualitative measurements or both. When funded your grant final report must include a summary of these evaluation results.

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- Organizations

ECRAC has separate ACHF applications for organizations and individuals. Both are eligible to apply for ACHF funding. Please contact ECRAC staff regarding any eligibility or application questions.

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. Applicants must submit their annual organization or department specific budget with these application proposals. Agencies, organizations, or groups located in and serving Region 7E, meeting any one of the following three conditions are eligible to apply for grants:

- A public agency or organization such as a local unit of government, school, or tribal government. Arts budgets must be isolated from the larger entity's budget and the group must have an advisory committee for the proposed project.
- A Minnesota private, non-profit organization which has obtained a 501(c)3 tax-exempt status under the Internal Revenue Code and is registered with the Minnesota Secretary of State and Department of Revenue. If located outside of Region 7E, the project should be located in and must benefit the Region, and the applicant should include their list of Region 7E Advisory members with their board member details.
- A local group or organization that does not meet the above requirements but applies through a fiscal sponsor that does qualify. It is the responsibility of the group to find a fiscal sponsor and enter into an agreement with them. Your group must have its own board of directors or advisory committee that provides input on the project and oversight of the grant funds.

A fiscal sponsor is any Minnesota non-profit, tax-exempt organization or governmental unit which applies to the Regional Arts Council on behalf of an organization not meeting non-profit tax-exempt requirements. The fiscal sponsor must sign the certification form, and if funds are received, sign the grant contract (also called the Notification of Grant Award) and the Request for Payment. The fiscal sponsor is legally responsible for the project and proper management of grant funds. The fiscal sponsor must enter into a formal written agreement with the sponsored group carrying out the project clarifying the responsibilities of each party. A copy of this agreement must accompany the application. A Sample Fiscal Sponsor Agreement is available online at ecrac.org. The fiscal sponsor is not responsible for the completion of the project or the final report but is responsible for the verification of these activities and the management of grant funds.

Applicant groups cannot be:

- Organizations found in violation of any Minnesota State Arts Board or Regional Arts Council Misuse of Funds policy.
- Applicants that are currently a direct recipient of the State of Minnesota's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.
- Organizations registered with the MN Secretary of State as a profit-making Minnesota business (e.g. Business Corporation, Limited Liability Corporation, Limited Liability Partnership, MN Public Benefit Corporations, etc.).
- Individuals. Examples of this would be artists or musicians, booking agents, or performing groups looking for contract work with an organization. The organization itself needs to complete the grant planning and application processes and is responsible for the project if funded.
- Private, alternative, charter, parochial, or home schools (this includes school support organizations such as PTAs, PTOs, school foundations, etc.).
- Organizations whose main purpose is to raise funds for another person, organization, or cause.

GRANT LIMITS – \$5,000 - \$20,000

The grant request range for ECRAC ACHF Grants to organizations is \$5,000-\$20,000.

Smaller organization grant requests may be made through ECRAC's Small/Art Project or the Resiliency Grant Programs. Please contact ECRAC staff if you have questions regarding which program is most appropriate for your grant request.

ECRAC requires a 10% cash match of the total project expenses for ACHF Legacy Organizational Grants. The cash match can include earned income, other grants/contributions, and cash on hand. In kind cannot be included as part of your 10% cash match.

Matching funds may consist of: cash, in kind contributions, earned income, or other grants. In kind are donated items such as materials, labor, and space that can be given a dollar value and are a significant part of the project. Applicants must be able to prove that in kind is committed (i.e., letter from donor indicating commitment and value). ECRAC does have sample in kind donation voucher forms, if needed.

Applicants are required in the grant application budget form to identify where all grant project funds will be expended. All matching funds included in the budget should be committed to the grant project.

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/culture bearers. Schools, and units of government, use the organization form and guidelines. If in doubt about which application to use, contact ECRAC staff.

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 10 working days' notice.

You may access the ECRAC website for the online application forms at 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.

For organizations the required attachments include artist and project director résumés, board/advisory member information, fiscal sponsor agreements (if applicable), equipment use plan and your annual organization budget. All applications require you to complete and submit the online application form, provide a project budget and detailed budget explanation, and work samples.

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 . 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.

Grant questions? You can reach ECRAC by telephone at 320-336-0200 and by email at: grantinfo@ecrac.org.

DEADLINES

- After you submit your grant proposal, please expect a waiting period of **about 2 to 3 months** before the East Central Regional Arts Council (ECRAC) makes a final decision.
- If your proposal is approved, your project must be **completed by the end of the next fiscal year**.
- To help you plan, we've listed the **earliest possible start dates** and the **required completion dates** below.
- **Please note:** If all available grant funds are awarded before a deadline, that deadline may be **cancelled**. We encourage you to apply early to ensure your proposal is considered.
- **Need help?** ECRAC staff are happy to provide **guaranteed technical assistance** if you contact us **before the technical assistance deadline**. After that date, support will depend on staff availability, but, we'll do our best to answer your questions.

The grant deadline dates for Fiscal Years 2026-2027 are:

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE DEADLINE	GRANT DEADLINE at 11:59 p.m.	FINAL APPROVAL BY	EARLIEST START DATE	LATEST END DATE
September 20	October 1, 2025 & 2026	December 31, 2025 & 2026	January 15, 2026 & 2027	June 30, 2027 & 2028
January 20	February 1, 2026 & 2027	April 30, 2026 & 2027	May 15, 2026 & 2027	June 30, 2027 & 2028
March 20	April 1, 2026 & 2027	June 31, 2026 & 2027	July 15, 2026 & 2027	June 30, 2027 & 2028

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

Understanding Your ECRAC Grant Start Date

- Your project's **start date** is the moment it officially begins. This could include activities like rehearsals, advertising, public announcements, paying fees, or ordering supplies and printed materials.
- ECRAC **cannot fund projects that have already started**. That means you must **wait until you receive your official grant award notification** before printing or sharing any publicity materials.
- **No expenditures can be made before your start date**. This includes signing contracts, making payments, or purchasing supplies. Any costs incurred before your approved start date **cannot be covered by the grant** and may make your project ineligible.
- If you're unsure whether your project has already started or what counts as a start date, please reach out to ECRAC staff. We're here to help clarify and support your planning.

GRANT REVIEW PROCEDURE & CRITERIA

1. **Your application is your responsibility**. You're in charge of making sure it's accurate, complete, and clearly communicates your project's value.
2. After you submit, ECRAC staff will review your application to confirm it meets basic eligibility and completeness requirements. This information will be shared during the grant review meeting.
3. The **ECRAC Board of Directors** makes the final decision about whether your application is complete and eligible.
4. You'll receive an email confirming that your application was received and letting you know when the grant review meeting will take place.
5. You're **strongly encouraged to attend** the review meeting to observe the process. However, please note that **you won't be able to add or clarify any information** during the meeting.

Who Makes the Funding Decisions?

- Final funding decisions are made by the ECRAC Board of Directors through a majority vote.
- ECRAC staff do **not** vote or influence funding decisions. Their role is to introduce applications, explain eligibility status, and take meeting notes.

Important Communication Guidelines

- To keep the process fair for everyone, applicants may **not contact ECRAC board members or grant review panelists** about their application after the deadline until the board has made its final decision.
- Any communication during this time may result in your application being **disqualified** from funding.

OPEN MEETING POLICY: All grant review meetings are open to the public.

- 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 people 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 or on the ECRAC website.

HOW ECRAC REVIEWS GRANTS/GRANT REVIEW CRITERIA

The East Central Regional Arts Council (ECRAC) is committed to distributing grant funds **fairly and equitably** supporting a wide range of art forms and reaching communities across the region, including those that have been historically underrepresented.

Each application is reviewed **on its own merits**, in the order it's received. Projects funded by ECRAC are expected to reflect **artistic excellence** and meaningful community impact.

What Reviewers Look For

If your application is complete, clearly represents an art project, and meets ECRAC's standards for artistic quality, it will be evaluated using these four key criteria:

1. **Artistic Merit & Quality** – Does the project demonstrate creativity, originality, and artistic strength?
2. **Capacity to Carry Out the Project** – Does the applicant have the skills, resources, and plan to successfully complete the project?
3. **Community Need** – Is there a clear need or demand for this project within the community it serves?
4. **Inclusive Impact** – Does the project serve or uplift communities that are underrepresented in the arts?

Grant Review Criteria Specifics

❖ Merit and artistic quality of the project – 10 points available

Grant review considerations used to address this criterion may include:

1. How does this proposal instill the arts into community and public life?
2. How does this proposal provide a high-quality arts experience?
3. How does this proposal give access in Region 7E to a quality arts experience?
4. How does this proposal help to develop knowledge, skills, and understanding of the arts?
5. Do the artist résumés and any work samples substantiate the artistic merit and quality of the project?
6. Does the project expand the organization's or artist's artistic capabilities and/or the artistic experiences of the audience.

- ❖ **The ability of the applicant to accomplish the project or program outcomes and activities as proposed. This is demonstrated by providing evidence of a mission and history of projects, a planning process, qualifications of the artistic and administrative personnel, a publicity plan and previous successful grant or other efforts. – 10 points available**

Grant review considerations used to address this criterion may include:

1. Did the applicant explain the planning process for the project and was it appropriate for the project?
2. Is the project budget feasible and does it demonstrate fiscal responsibility?
3. Are the marketing and publicity plans appropriate for the project and applicant?
4. Are the outcome and the outcome evaluation plan appropriate for the project and applicant, and are the outcome evaluation costs included as an expense in the project budget?
5. If this applicant is a past ECRAC grant recipient have their grant projects been appropriately administered, and were the reporting requirements followed?
6. Do all key project personnel and the project director's résumés substantiate organizational ability?
7. If the applicant is an organization, did they summarize their group's purpose/mission and their arts programming history? Does this project advance this applicants mission?

- ❖ **Applicants must demonstrate a demand/need for the grant project or program in the community served. – 10 points available**

Grant review considerations used to address this criterion may include:

1. Does the applicant define the community served?
2. Does the application demonstrate community involvement and support for the project?
3. Will the applicant be able to market the project effectively to the community served?
4. How does the project meet the artistic needs of the applicant?
5. Will the project meet the artistic needs of the defined community?
6. How does the budget demonstrate a financial need?

- ❖ **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 activity.
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 the project's venue publicly accessible? In what ways does the grant project ensure that people with disabilities can participate? 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?
7. If there is a financial cost for participants of your project, 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.

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 by email 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

- Once your grant application has been reviewed, you'll receive an email from ECRAC with the funding decision.
- If your project is approved, you will receive via email, for electronic signatures:
- A **Notification of Grant Award (NGA)** contract
- A **Request for Payment (RFP)** form

If your grant is partially funded or if the ECRAC Board requests changes, you'll receive a revised budget and updated terms in the NGA.

To move forward with payment:

- An authorized representative of your organization (or fiscal sponsor, if applicable) must sign and return both the NGA and RFP forms.
- The **project director** must also sign the NGA within **45 days**.
- No funds will be released until these signed documents are received by ECRAC.

When will you receive funds?

- Once the signed NGA and RFP are submitted, ECRAC will process your payment within 45 days.
- In some cases, the Board may choose to split the payment: An initial payment is made after the forms are received; a final payment is made after a successful interim progress review. If this applies to your grant, the details will be clearly outlined in your NGA and RFP.

Grant Management Training (GMT) Requirement

- Before receiving your first payment of a fiscal year, you must complete Grant Management Training (GMT).
- Most sessions are now held online, but if you need to travel for training, ECRAC can reimburse those expenses upon request.

GRANT REVISION REQUESTS

Requesting Changes to Your Grant Project or Budget - If you need to make changes to your grant project or budget, ECRAC is here to help, but you must get written approval before making any changes.

- Please contact ECRAC staff in writing before making any adjustments to your project as described in your application, or the approved budget listed in your Notification of Grant Award (NGA).

- Significant changes such as shifting project dates, altering goals or outcomes, or adjusting any budget line item by 20% or more (if over \$600) must be preapproved by the Regional Arts Council.
- No changes to your project or contract can be made without this prior approval.
- Need help? Instructions for submitting a revision request are available, and ECRAC staff are happy to guide you through the process

FINAL GRANT REPORT & EVALUATION SUMMARY

To close out your grant, you'll need to submit a final report to ECRAC. Here's what you need to know.

Timing

- You have 60 days (for organizations and 30 days for individual artist grants) from the end of your project (as listed in your approved application and NGA/RFP forms) to submit your final report.
- ECRAC may also request an interim report or conduct a mid-point progress review, depending on your project timeline.

What to Include

Your final report must be submitted using the ECRAC online format in the grant portal. It will include:

- A **project narrative** describing what you accomplished
- Documentation of **publicity efforts** such as press releases, website pages, and news articles
- A breakdown of **how grant funds were used**, including:
 - Income and expenses related to the project
 - Proofs of payment (e.g., receipts, invoices)

Important: Please keep all payment documentation for **at least 3 years** in case of audit.

Evaluation

The final report also includes an **outcome evaluation**, showing the impact of your project and how it met its goals.

Funding Restrictions ECRAC cannot release any additional grant funds to applicants who:

- Have **outstanding or incomplete final reports**
- Receive an **unsatisfactory interim progress review**

Misuse of Funds Policy

The East Central Regional Arts Council (ECRAC) is committed to responsible stewardship of public funds. If there are concerns about how grant money is being used, ECRAC staff will:

- Carefully document any questions or findings related to possible misuse of state grant funds
- Reach out to the grantee to discuss these concerns and request additional information

Who Makes the Final Decision?

Any formal decision about misuse is made by the **ECRAC Board of Directors**. If misuse is confirmed, it may affect both the current grant and your eligibility for future funding.

ECRAC Reporting Requirements of Misuse of Grant Funds

Confirmed cases of misuse are reported to the **Minnesota State Arts Board** and the **Forum of Regional Arts Councils of Minnesota**, in alignment with statewide accountability standards.

GRANT TERMINATION OR REVOCATION

Sometimes, changes happen—and ECRAC understands that. Here's what you need to know if a grant contract needs to be ended.

Ending a Grant Contract

- You may **request to end your grant contract at any time** by submitting a written notice to ECRAC.
- Ending the contract doesn't automatically remove your responsibilities, some obligations may still apply based on the terms of the agreement.

ECRAC's Right to Terminate

- ECRAC may **terminate the contract** if the grantee doesn't follow one or more of the agreed-upon conditions.
- Contracts may also be ended **by mutual written agreement** between ECRAC and the grantee.

APPEALS POLICY & PROCEDURE

ECRAC is committed to a fair and transparent grant review process. If you believe that the **established review procedures were not followed**, you may request an appeal.

Please note: You **cannot appeal decisions based on artistic merit**. Artistic judgments made by the review panel or board are final.

How to File an Appeal

- Submit your appeal **in writing** to the ECRAC Executive Director
- You must do this **within 10 days** of receiving your grant decision
- Clearly explain the specific part(s) of the review process you believe were not followed

What Happens Next

- ECRAC will review your appeal and respond within **45 days**
- The Board may choose to **approve, deny, or table** the appeal based on whether procedures were properly followed

NOT FUNDED BY ECRAC

To ensure fairness and alignment with public funding guidelines, the East Central Regional Arts Council (ECRAC) does not fund the following types of projects or expenses:

Project Focus & Eligibility

- Applications that do **not center on arts or culture**
- Applicants who are **not based in Minnesota**, or whose grant activities **do not take place in Minnesota**
- Projects led by **for-profit businesses or organizations**
- **Travel costs outside of Minnesota**
(Note: You may include out-of-state artists in your project, but their travel to/from Minnesota cannot be covered by the grant)

Funding Restrictions

- Projects that request funds to **cover past debts or deficits** from activities that began before the approved grant start date
- Applications that propose to **match other ECRAC-funded grants** with this funding
- Requests for **new building construction, real estate purchases, or endowment funds**
- Expenses related to **alcohol**, including beverages, servers, insurance, or licensing
- **Fundraising events**, where the primary goal is to raise money and donors receive tax-deductible acknowledgments
- Requests for **general operating support**
(Arts organizations may apply separately for the ECRAC Essentials Support Grant)

Accountability & Compliance

- Projects that **cannot clearly track and report how grant funds are spent**
- Use of Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund (ACHF) dollars to **replace traditional public funding**
(ACHF funds must supplement, not substitute, state general fund or capital investment dollars)
- Spending ACHF dollars on **administrative, indirect, or overhead costs** that are not directly tied to the funded project *(Grantees must document all grant-related costs and submit proof with the final report)*

Ineligible Activities

- Projects that involve **political lobbying** or aim to influence public policy
- Religious organizations or projects focused on **religious instruction or socialization**, including parochial schools
- Activities that **require artists to pay excessive fees** to exhibit or perform
- Events or programs that are **not open to the public** or **not ADA accessible**

Promotion Requirements

- Grantees who do **not promote their project** or **don't use the required ECRAC and ACHF logos** or credit line in a **legible font** during project promotion

Fair Review Process

- Applicants who **contact ECRAC board members or grant panelists** about their proposal after submission and before final approval
(*This may result in disqualification*)

For ACHF requests from Region 7E schools, ECRAC cannot provide funds for these activities or the following.

- Supplanting discontinued or non-existent arts programs in schools.
- Paying an artist or arts organization to provide essentially the same services that an ongoing teacher or arts specialist would be expected to provide.
- Compensating school employees or personnel in full or in part.
- In-school projects by students or projects carried out exclusively by or for student organizations or programs by schools that are limited in access to the public or serve only students or staff.
- Tuition for teachers to earn degrees, meet licensure requirements, or meet continuing education requirements to retain a teaching license.
- Purchasing equipment for or improving facilities within K-12 public schools. The exception will be if a non-profit arts group uses the school facility for rehearsal, classes, performances, or exhibitions, and it needs equipment or facilities improvements for its own work. The arts group could apply for and receive an ECRAC ACHF grant and could develop a cooperative agreement with the school that spells out how the school could also benefit from the purchased items or improvements.

Legal Compliance

All grantees are responsible for following **federal, state, and local laws and regulations** when using grant funds. If these requirements are not met, ECRAC may **terminate the grant** or require that funds be returned

Important Eligibility Reminder

ECRAC has made every effort to clearly explain its eligibility guidelines. However, we reserve the right to declare an application **ineligible**, even if the reason is **not specifically listed** in the guidelines.

If you're unsure whether your project qualifies, please **reach out to the ECRAC office**. We're here to help clarify and support you through the process.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN THE APPLICATION FORM

Before starting your online application, take time to understand the East Central Regional Arts Council (ECRAC) grant process. This will help you prepare a strong proposal and avoid common pitfalls.

Get Familiar with ECRAC Grant Funding

- Read through the full grant guidelines before beginning your application.
- The application includes questions that help reviewers assess:
 - Eligibility
 - Artistic quality and merit
 - Capacity to complete the project
 - Community need
 - Equity and inclusion for the previously underserved

Support & Technical Assistance

ECRAC offers **technical assistance** to help you develop your proposal. This includes: One-on-one support from ECRAC staff (available by request); **Grant Information Sessions** are available online (YouTube, Zoom), in person, or can be hosted in your community; Online tutorials that explain ECRAC's grantmaking philosophy and process

Important: Support from staff does **not guarantee funding**. You are responsible for the content, accuracy, and completeness of your application

Grant Application Workshops

ECRAC offers workshops to help applicants feel confident and informed throughout the grant process. These sessions are:

- **Held monthly or by appointment** to fit your schedule
- Designed to help you **understand ECRAC's grant programs and application process**
- A great way to get **tips on writing a strong, competitive proposal**
- An opportunity to **ask questions and receive feedback** on your project ideas
- Available **online (via YouTube and Zoom)** and **in person**—you can even **host a session in your own community!**

Grant Library ECRAC maintains a collection of **submitted and funded grant applications** to help applicants learn from past successes. Reviewing these materials can strengthen your own proposal.

- The library is open during regular staff hours: **9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.**
- **Appointments are required**—please call ahead to schedule your visit

To explore previously funded projects, visit www.ecrac.org/grants-available and scroll to the bottom of the page.

Tips for Completing Your Application

- The grant portal opens **4–6 weeks before the deadline**. Give yourself plenty of time to plan and write. Contact ECRAC staff **early** if you need help—especially before the technical assistance deadline.
- Reach out to confirm: Which grant program best fits your proposal and whether funding is still available either by phone: 320-336-0200 or by email: grantinfo@ecrac.org
- Based on past experience, ECRAC recommends that the **application be completed by a representative of the applicant organization** rather than by a professional grant writer or an artist featured in the proposal. This helps ensure the proposal reflects the organization's goals, capacity, and commitment to the project. If you're unsure who should take the lead in writing the application, please **reach out to ECRAC staff**. We're happy to help clarify and support your planning process.

Using the Online Application

- Use only the **online forms** provided on the ECRAC website: www.ecrac.org/grants-available
- **Do not mail or email** any application materials because only online submissions will be accepted.
- Please keep your responses **within the designated space limits** and use the **correct file type** for each upload. To ensure fairness and consistency, **extra pages or materials not specifically requested or in the wrong file format** will not be reviewed by ECRAC or the grant panel.

Submitting Your Application

- Submit your completed application **before 11:59 p.m. on the deadline date**. Late submissions are not eligible.
- Make sure your application includes **all required materials** because incomplete applications may be disqualified.

After Submission

- Share a copy of the final proposal with everyone involved in the project to ensure shared understanding and agreement.

Additional Services from ECRAC

The East Central Regional Arts Council (ECRAC) offers a wide range of services to support artists, organizations, and communities across the region. These resources are designed to strengthen creative work, foster collaboration, and connect the arts to broader community and economic development goals.

Available Services

- Art Gallery showcasing regional artists
- Arts Resource Information to support planning and growth
- Community & Economic Development Support through arts-based initiatives
- Arts Library with materials for inspiration and learning
- Workshops for artists and arts organizations
- Grant Information Sessions to guide applicants through the process
- Grant Writing Technical Assistance available by request
- Art Show Display Equipment Rental for community events
- Annual IMAGE Art Show celebrating local artists
- Meeting & Event Space available for arts-related gatherings

If you or your organization would like to learn more about any of these services, please contact ECRAC. We're here to help.

QUESTIONS & GRANT FUNDING CREDIT LINE

ANY QUESTIONS???

Call: 320-336-0200 or email: grantinfo@ecrac.org
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 enewsletter 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