

East Central Regional Arts Council

Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund Legacy Grant Guidelines for *artists & culture bearers*

reflects revisions adopted by the ECRAC Board on June 15, 2026

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- Fiscal Year 2026 -
Grant Application Deadlines: Oct. 1, 2025 & Feb. 1, 2026
- Fiscal Year 2027 -
Grant Application Deadlines: Oct. 1, 2026 & Feb. 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 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, 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 some 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 – \$2,000

The ECRAC Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund Legacy grant for artists and culture bearers provides up to \$2,000 in project funding for artistic personal growth. Artists in any artistic discipline and at any professional level are welcome to apply. Applicants must be a permanent resident, for at least 6 months of one of the East Central Minnesota Counties of Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine, and the sovereign Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe lands, the service area also known as Region 7E.

The proposed grant project should directly benefit the Region 7E artist. An open to the public component is required and the event must benefit Minnesotans (occur in Minnesota).

Grant proposals must outline a specific art project designed to: develop your artistic skills; develop your business skills as an artist; or developing and/or using skills for engaging with audiences or communities.

Grant proposals must outline a time and location for activities including the open to the public event. If the artist chooses, if the grant proposal is funded, they can work with ECRAC staff to have the open to the public event at the ECRAC gallery in Hinckley. In that case, the event date and details will be scheduled after the proposal is funded.

The artwork and rights to the works resulting from grants given to artists by the East Central Regional Arts Council are the sole property of the grant recipient.

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 serve with your proposed grant project:

- Young children
- School age children
- Teens or youth
- Adults – general public
- Adults – professionals or peers
- Adults – artists
- Adults – learners
- Adults – seniors or elders
- 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?

For individual artists and culture bearers ECRAC expects to see 1 of these 3 outcomes in the application:

- Developing your artistic skills.
- Developing your business skills.
- Developing and/or using skills for engaging with audiences or communities.

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 that 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
- You 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 those 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.

From artist and culture bearer applicants ECRAC expects that you will provide either quantitative or qualitative measurements or both. The methods of measurement to document your outcome can be:

- Making structured observations during project activities.
- Self-surveys regarding my knowledge and skills before and after the project.
- Audience surveys at my open to the public event.
- Having audience members describe their own impressions during my public event.
- Having my mentor review/critique the project.

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 has separate ACHF applications for organizations and individuals. Both are eligible to apply for ACHF funding as described in the grant guidelines. Please contact ECRAC staff regarding any eligibility, application, or grant project questions.

WHO CAN APPLY?

INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS & CULTURE BEARERS are individuals who create, perform, teach, preserve, or share artistic or cultural practices, traditions, knowledge, or artistic expressions within their community. Formal training, degrees, or professional experience are not required.

You may apply if you:

- Are an artist or culture bearer who is **18 or older**.
- Have lived for at least **6 months** in one of these areas:
 - Chisago County
 - Isanti County
 - Kanabec County
 - Mille Lacs County
 - Pine County
 - The sovereign Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe lands
- Submit **proof of residency** with your application. This is a new requirement.
- Are a **U.S. citizen** or **lawful permanent resident**.
- Do not have any overdue or incomplete grant reports with ECRAC.
- Have not received a **Misuse of Funds** determination from the Minnesota State Arts Board or any Minnesota Regional Arts Council.

The grant supports artists and culture bearers who are creating, producing, or presenting an arts project. Your project must also include a **community engagement component**, showing how community members will participate in or benefit from the project.

GRANT FUNDING LIMITS

The grant request for ECRAC ACHF Grants to Individual Artists can be up to \$2,000.

Larger grant requests may be made through ECRAC Individual Artist Mid-Career Grant Program (\$3,600) or the Essential Artist Award (\$9,000). Younger artists can be funded through the K-12 Scholarship Program (\$599). Please contact ECRAC staff if you have questions regarding which program is most appropriate for you.

Individual applicants are not required to provide a match for this ACHF Legacy program, but matching funds are encouraged and are evidence of an artist's need and support for their grant proposal.

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).

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.

Special Requirements for Art Project Equipment Purchases

Grant funds may support equipment purchases when they are tied to clearly defined project activities and outcomes. Equipment-only requests are not eligible for funding.

If your project includes the purchase of equipment, your application must include a detailed description of how the equipment will support project activities and goals. Individual applicants must also certify that the equipment will not be sold or transferred without prior approval from ECRAC. ECRAC may file a UCC financing statement to document its interest in the funded equipment.

Legal Compliance and Required Documentation

All applicants and grantees are responsible for complying with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

A current IRS Form W-9 must be submitted with your grant contract. ECRAC uses this form to verify the legal name and tax identification information of applicants that may receive grant funds, helping ensure compliance with grantmaking and financial reporting requirements.

Failure to provide required documentation or comply with applicable laws and regulations may result in an application being deemed ineligible, termination of an awarded grant, or the return of grant funds.

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.

Grant writing technical assistance is provided by ECRAC staff upon request by the grantee. 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.

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 You will also 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 and documents, go to <https://www.ecrac.org/manage-my-grant>

Do not apply for more than one grant per grant program deadline. Individual artists can't have more than one active ECRAC grant project at a time. Be sure to include all attachments with your application, or your application will be considered incomplete and thus ineligible.

Individual artist required attachments include artist résumé, mentor résumé, workshop details and instructor résumé and/or other project expense details such as an equipment use plan. Applications will be completed and submitted via online application, and you will need to provide a project budget and detailed budget explanation, and work samples. Be sure to include all attachments with your application, or your application will be considered incomplete and ineligible. Applicants cannot submit any grant application proposal materials by mail, in person, or by email.

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

DEADLINES

When you submit a grant application proposal, please be aware that it will take about 2-3 months before a final decision is reached by ECRAC. Another consideration is that grantees are required to complete the grant project before the end of ECRAC's next fiscal year. The earliest allowable starting dates and the corresponding end dates are listed below.

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

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

Technical assistance is guaranteed if you contact ECRAC staff before the technical assistance deadline. After that date, assistance will be offered based on staff availability. We will try our best to answer any questions.

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 with a mentor, or paying for workshop fees or purchases of equipment) 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

- Your application is your responsibility. Ensure you are eligible and that your application is accurate, complete, and clearly describes the artistic impact and outcomes of your project.
- After you submit your application, ECRAC staff will review it to confirm applicant and project eligibility. Grant applications will not move forward to panel or Board review if:
 - The applicant does not meet the Region 7E residency requirements described in these guidelines.
 - The proposed project includes activities listed in the *What ECRAC Does Not Fund* section.
 - Only eligible applications will advance to the panel review process.
- Your application will also be reviewed for completeness. Staff may note any application concerns for the review panel and Board. If reviewed, the ECRAC Board of Directors makes the final determination on application eligibility and completeness.
- You'll receive an email from administrator@grantinterface.com confirming that your application has been successfully received. You will also receive an email letting you know when the grant review meeting will take place.
- If eligible for review, 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.
- Grant reviewers are either the ECRAC Board of Directors or a panel of community members.

Who Makes the Funding Decisions?

1. The ECRAC Board of Directors makes final funding decisions for eligible applications through a majority vote.
2. ECRAC staff do not score applications or vote on funding recommendations. Their role is to support the review process by providing eligible application information, identifying completeness or other concerns, and documenting grant review discussions.

Communication Guidelines

To ensure a fair process for all applicants, please refrain from contacting ECRAC board members or grant review panelists regarding your application. Any communication may result in disqualification of your application. If you have any questions during this time, you are welcome to contact ECRAC staff for assistance.

ECRAC 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 an in person meeting, by request, or on the ECRAC website.

ECRAC'S CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

The East Central Regional Arts Council (ECRAC) is committed to maintaining transparency and fairness in all grantmaking processes. To uphold this commitment, ECRAC follows strict procedures to prevent conflicts of interest.

Any board or staff member with a direct conflict of interest connection to a grant applicant must disclose this relationship before the application is reviewed. That individual will recuse themselves from the discussion and decision-making process for that application, including leaving the meeting space (in person or virtual) during its review.

Each year, ECRAC publicly reports which board or staff members have declared conflicts of interest. If in question, the ECRAC board chair and executive director are responsible for determining whether a conflict exists and how it should be addressed.

A conflict of interest may include, but is not limited to, the following situations:

- Receiving direct financial benefit from the applicant organization or project.
- Serving as an employee or board member of an applicant organization.
- Acting as a paid or unpaid consultant for the applicant.
- Having a close personal (e.g., familial) or adversarial relationship with the applicant or their staff/board.
- Receiving free tickets, gifts, or other benefits from the applicant.
- Holding strong personal bias, positive or negative, toward the applicant's art form or subject matter

ECRAC recognizes that lived experience and community connections are valuable. This policy is designed to ensure that all applicants are reviewed fairly and equitably, while honoring the integrity of our decision-making process.

HOW GRANTS ARE REVIEWED and 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 eligible 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 and 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?

Detailed Grant Review Criteria

1. **Artistic Merit and Quality of the project – 10 points available (see the What does ECRAC Consider Art? section for details on what is considered art.)**

Does the proposed project demonstrate creativity, originality, and artistic strength? This part of the application may be assessed by the grant reviewers using the following considerations:

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 or the artistic experiences of the audience.

2. **Capacity to Carry Out the Proposed Project – 10 points available**

Does the applicant or the staff involved in the proposed project have the ability to accomplish the project's activities and outcomes? 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. This part of the application may be assessed by the grant reviewers using the following considerations:

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 managed, 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 or mission and their arts programming history? Does this project advance this applicants mission?

3. Community Need - - 10 points available

Applicants must demonstrate a demand or need for the grant project or program in the defined community served. This part of the application may be assessed by the grant reviewers using the following considerations:

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 financial need?

4. Inclusive Impact -- 6 points available

Does the project support or uplift communities that have been historically marginalized by traditional arts funding? Applicants must demonstrate equity and inclusion for the grant project or program in the community served. Examples of individuals and communities who may face systemic barriers and have been historically marginalized, and underserved include: Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, Economically disadvantaged individuals, Individuals living in institutions or group settings, LGBTQIA+ individuals, Older adults, People with disabilities, Pre-K children, Veterans. Applicants thoughtfully addressing barriers helps ensure that the proposed activity is inclusive and welcoming to all. Examples of barriers might include: transportation, cost, limited language access, lack of childcare or older adult care, digital access, physical accessibility issues or neuro-divergent processing needs, or cultural exclusion. This part of the application may be assessed by the grant reviewers using the following considerations:

1. Does the applicant describe how the project identifies and proactively addresses barriers to engaging historically marginalized, targeted, and underrepresented people and identities that may otherwise have limited access to the proposed activity in the past?
2. Does the applicant explain how they are positioned to engage with and support the underrepresented community they described.
3. Are underrepresented people 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, inclusive, and provide a sense of belonging?

5 If the applicant is an organization or group that primarily serves people historically marginalized and underserved, what are the unique ways in which they will engage with members of their community 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 in 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.

SCORING AND GRANT FUNDING DECISION

To remain eligible, applications must achieve a minimum score of 20 out of 36 in the review process. However, scoring 20 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 will present its recommendations in writing to the East Central Regional Arts Council (ECRAC) Board of Directors. The ECRAC Board relies heavily on these recommendations and will determine if the review procedures were properly followed. Based on this, the Board will approve, disapprove, or table the applications, and may set stipulations for applicants.

GRANT DECISION NOTIFICATION

All grant applicants will receive a grant allocation notification by email within 30 days after the final funding decision is made by ECRAC. To ensure you receive all grant application notifications, please add the email address **administrator@grantinterface.com** to your email contacts. This will help prevent important emails from going into your junk or spam folder.

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.

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 read sign and return both the NGA and RFP forms.
- The **project director** must also sign the NGA within **45 days**.
- **If it is a grant to an individual artist or culture bearer, only the artist needs to do so.**
- No funds will be released until these signed documents and any stipulations 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.
- The payment will be sent to the address used in the application process.
- 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

If your application is funded, you will be required to attend the Grant Management Training (GMT) with ECRAC's Grant Program Officer before receiving payment. This training provides an introduction to the ECRAC grantee process and outlines what to expect before, during, and after your grant project. Most sessions are now held online, but if you need to travel for training, ECRAC can reimburse those expenses upon request. Please note that this training must be completed once per fiscal year by each grantee.

GRANT REVISION REQUESTS

We understand that plans can shift, and ECRAC is here to support you. If you need to make changes to your approved grant project or budget, please reach out before making any adjustments because some changes can't be made without prior written approval. This written contract revision is required to ensure your grant remains in good standing.

Here's how to proceed:

- Contact ECRAC staff before changing any part of your project as outlined in your original application or Notification of Grant Award (NGA), this includes artists, venue, etc.
- Significant changes such as shifting project dates, revising goals or outcomes, or adjusting any budget line item by 20% or more (if over \$600) must be reviewed and approved in advance.

Need help? Clear instructions for submitting a revision request for approval are available, and ECRAC staff are happy to walk you through the process. We're here to help your project succeed.

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

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 is Included

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 and who was served.
- Documentation of publicity efforts such as press releases, website pages, and news articles. You will be asked to submit photos of the project.
- A breakdown of how grant funds were used, including:
 - Income and expenses related to the project
 - Proofs of payment (e.g., receipts, invoices)
- A summary of your outcome evaluation showing the impact of your project and how the outcomes were measured.

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 because you may have to return grant funds and may impact your eligibility for future art grant 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.

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

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

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.

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 Region 7E of 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

NOT FUNDED BY ECRAC cont.

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*)
- **Artificial intelligence (AI)** cannot be used to fully generate art, application answers, or art grant proposals. Applications with excessive AI-generated content may be deemed ineligible. For additional information and to review ECRAC's full AI Policy visit ecrac.org.

IN ADDITION, ACHF GRANTS FOR INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS AND CULTURE BEARERS CANNOT SUPPORT:

- Projects that are **not primarily arts-focused** (see ECRAC's definition of art).
- Applicants who currently have **another active ECRAC Artist Grant**.
- **Activities involving an organization** where the applicant is employed.
- Community engagement activities that are **not open and accessible to the public**.
- Tuition, fees, or coursework toward a **degree or academic credential**.
- **Translation** of literary works created by someone else.
- Development of **curriculum, lesson plans**, teaching materials, or educational programs, including those used as part of K–12 employment.
- **Relocating** the applicant's legal residence.
- Project activities that **take place outside Region 7E** unless specifically approved in the grant award.
- **Travel outside Minnesota**.
- Establishing or **starting an arts organization**.
- Vanity publishing or **self-publication** expenses.
- **Costs or debts incurred before the grant start date**.
- Activities that support or promote **terrorism or violence**.

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.

ADDITIONAL GRANT APPLICATION INFORMATION

Proof of Residency

Applicants must upload one accepted proof of residency document with their grant application. Documents may be uploaded as a PDF or JPG file.

Submit one of the following documents showing your name and current address within Region 7E:

- Minnesota driver's license or Minnesota state ID
- Tribal identification card with current address (if applicable)
- Utility bill (electric, gas, water, internet, or similar) dated within the last 90 days
- Lease agreement or rental contract
- Mortgage statement or property tax statement
- Voter registration card

ECRAC may request additional documentation if residency cannot be verified from the materials submitted.

Public Funding and Privacy

ECRAC is an agency that distributes public funds. To ensure transparency and accountability, grant applications and most supporting materials are considered public records under Minnesota law.

Documents submitted to verify residency are used only to confirm eligibility and are not public records.

To protect your privacy, please do not include sensitive personal information in your application, such as Social Security numbers, financial account numbers, or other private information.

Tax Information

If you are awarded a grant, ECRAC will request a completed W-9 form before issuing payment. W-9 forms are collected only for tax reporting purposes and are not public records.

Grant funds awarded to individuals may be subject to federal and state income taxes. Please consult a tax professional if you have questions about your tax obligations.

OTHER ECRAC SERVICES

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

- 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 art events
- Annual IMAGE Art Show celebrating local artists
- Meeting & Event Space available for arts-related gatherings
- Annual Zoom reimbursements for art organizations or groups of artists
- Reimbursements for professional development, *Event Scholarships* for artists or art project personnel

Please contact ECRAC if you 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 (Monday – Wednesday 9 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 all previously funded projects, visit this web page and scroll to the bottom:

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

QUESTIONS & GRANT FUNDING CREDIT LINE

**ANY QUESTIONS? Call 320-336-0200
or email grantinfo@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!
www.ecrac.org**

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