

East Central Regional Arts Council

Small/Art Project Grant Guidelines

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

**East Central Regional Arts Council
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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
General & 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, 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 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

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 particular 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.

Small/Art Project Grants for organizations provides \$600 to \$5,000 in project funding with a 50% match (1-1) provided by the applicant for a wide variety of arts projects involving the creation, sponsorship, publication, performance, and/or exhibition of art 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. Arts producing activities or services for artists/arts organizations should result from the project. There are three application deadlines per year for this program (see the deadline section for details). There is no limit on the number of grants that can be received each fiscal year, but applicants are limited to submitting one application, per grant program, per deadline. Projects must be open to the public.

Independent School Districts may apply for Small/Art Project Grants; 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.

There are also grants from \$5,000-\$20,000 for organizations, public entities, and schools under the ECRAC Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund for Organization. This is a separate application form with the same deadlines. In addition, a smaller sudden opportunity grant, the Resiliency Grant, is also available with a rolling deadline, year round.

Project Matching Funds Definitions

For Small/Arts Project Grants, the applicant must show evidence of a match of at least 50% of the total costs of the project. Matching funds may consist of cash, in kind contributions, earned income, and/or other grants. Cash support of at least 10% of the total cost of the project is required. The cash match can include earned income, other grants/contributions, and cash on hand. In kind cannot be included as part of the cash match.

In kind includes donated material, labor, or space that can be given a dollar value and is committed to the project. In kind should be significant items. After the project is completed, documentation must be provided for in kind contributions from the donor indicating the value of the in kind donation. ECRAC does have sample in kind donation voucher forms, if needed.

Special Requirements for Art Project Equipment Purchases

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

❖ ECRAC Grant Program Outcomes

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

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

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

- 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 included in these guidelines. 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:

- Minnesota 501(c)(3) organizations that are **not registered** with both the Minnesota Secretary of State and the Minnesota Attorney General ([if required](#)) at the time of application. Organizations that are not registered when they apply will not be eligible for review of the grant application by ECRAC.
- 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 FUNDING LIMITS

The grant request range for ECRAC Small/Art Project Grants to organizations is \$600-\$5,000.

These grants may provide up to 50% of the total project cost. Eligible applications will show at least 10% cash support (i.e. not in kind) for the project. The cash match can include earned income, other grants and contributions, or cash on hand. In kind cannot be included as part of the cash match.

Matching funds may consist of: cash on hand, in kind contributions, earned income, or other grants or contributions. 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 the in kind is committed (i.e., letter from donor indicating commitment and value). ECRAC does have sample in kind donation voucher forms, if needed during the project to document the donation.

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. Individual artist required attachments include artist résumé, mentor résumé and/or other project expense details. Both types of applications require you to complete and submit the online application, 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

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 the 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 & 2026
January 20	February 1, 2026 & 2027	April 30, 2026 & 2027	May 15, 2026 & 2027	June 30, 2027 & 2026

**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 and 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 performers) 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 your organization is eligible and that your application is accurate, complete, and clearly describes the artistic impact and outcomes of your project.
- After submission, ECRAC staff will review your organization and the proposed grant project for eligibility. Applications submitted by ineligible organizations, or that propose activities listed in the *What ECRAC Does Not Fund* section will be deemed ineligible and will not move forward to panel or Board review.
- 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 and 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?

The ECRAC Board of Directors makes final funding decisions for eligible applications through a majority vote. 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

Please note that grant applicants may not discuss their application with ECRAC grant review panelists or ECRAC board members following the grant deadline until the ECRAC board has acted on the application. Communication regarding an application with ECRAC board members or panelists during this time will result in the application being deemed ineligible for 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 persons will be asked to leave.
- Grant reviews – applicants may attend and are not allowed to provide additional information.
- All discussion of grant applications is public record.
- Persons wishing to address the Council (not a grant applicant) must notify ECRAC at least 24 hours in advance.
- An agenda is available at the meeting, or on the ECRAC website.

❖ REVIEW CRITERIA

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

These factors constitute the grant review standards: merit and artistic quality; ability of the applicant to accomplish the project; demonstrated need for the project; and serving an underrepresented constituency. If the application is determined to be complete, an art project, and of sufficient artistic quality to indicate further review, the following 4 grant review criteria will be discussed.

❖ 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 administrated, 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

Grantees will receive notification regarding the ECRAC grant funding decision. If funded, a contract called the Notification of Grant Award (NGA) and a Request for Payment (RFP) form will be included in the notification. In cases where the grant is less than the full amount requested, or if the ECRAC Board of Directors has stipulated revisions, the applicant will receive them and a revised approved budget in the NGA. If the grantee agrees with the approved budget and other terms of the contract, an authorized signer of the grantee (or fiscal sponsor, if applicable) must sign and submit both forms to ECRAC. The NGA contract also requires the signature of the project director, within 45 days. No funds will be authorized until the NGA contract and RFP have been executed. Funds will then be approved and forwarded to the grantee within 45 days of receipt of the NGA and RFP. If stipulated by the ECRAC Board of Directors they may split grant payments by providing initial grant funds after the receipt of the NGA and RFP, and the final payment after receipt of a successful interim progress review. If so, details will be included in the NGA and RFP notification.

Additionally, before the first grant payment of a fiscal year is made to a grantee ECRAC requires grantees to complete *Grant Management Training (GMT)*. If requested, travel expenses incurred related to this training can be reimbursed by ECRAC. However, most GMT sessions are now held online.

GRANT REVISION REQUESTS

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

FINAL GRANT REPORT & EVALUATION SUMMARY

Grant recipients must submit a final report to ECRAC. Organizations have 60 days, from the end of the grant project date as proposed in the approved application and as stated on the NGA and RFP. ECRAC may also require an interim report or may conduct a mid-point grant progress review. The final report must be the ECRAC online format provided in the grant portal and will include: project narrative; documentation of press releases & project publicity, website pages, and news articles. The final report will show how grant funds were used and will provide documentation of income and expenses pertaining to the project. Grantees are required to keep all copies of proofs of payment for 3 years in case of audit. The final/financial report form will also include all documentation on the outcome evaluation of the grant project. The Regional Arts Council cannot provide any grant funds to applicants who have outstanding or unaccepted grant final reports or unsatisfactory interim progress reviews.

MISUSE OF FUNDS POLICY

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

GRANT TERMINATION OR REVOCATION

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

ECRAC will rescind its grant commitment if:

- a grantee does not submit their signed NGA and RFP within 45 days, or
- upon request, the recipient does not agree to, or return any required grant stipulations at the time the NGA and RFP are due.

APPEALS POLICY & PROCEDURE

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

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

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

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.

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 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 uploaded with the application. ECRAC uses this form to verify the legal name and tax identification information of organizations 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.

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

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

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

- TIPS ON COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OTHER ECRAC SERVICES

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

- Art Gallery 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
- 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, or your organization, would like further information regarding these services.

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

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

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

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

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 newsletter mailing list!

ECRAC Mission

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

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

- 1. the logos required in the contract (ECRAC and/or ACHF Legacy) found at <https://www.ecrac.org/manage-my-grant/press-kit>**
- 2. the credit line in your NGA contract,**
- 3. and the hashtag/s below for social media use.**

This activity is made possible in part by a grant from the East Central Regional Arts Council with funds appropriated by the Minnesota State Legislature from its general fund.

or

This activity is made possible in part by a grant from the East Central Regional Arts Council with funds appropriated by the Minnesota State Legislature from its general fund and the arts and cultural heritage fund.

#ecrac

#ArtsLegacy