METROPOLITAN REGIONAL ARTS COUNCIL

The Grant Review Process

Summary

The grant review process begins with a staff review for completeness and eligibility. Applications found to be complete and eligible are next presented to a panel which reviews and rates them based on MRAC's published criteria. Finally, the panel's ratings are presented to MRAC's Board of Directors for review, discussion and Board action. Each part of this process is described below.

Staff Role

The MRAC staff reviews each application to ensure completeness and eligibility. Applicants are contacted if their application is deemed ineligible or if clarification is needed. Staff members do not at any time communicate their opinions about an application to panelists nor do they participate in rating applications.

Panel Orientation

A review panel that has been approved by the MRAC Board of Directors and is representative of the seven-county metropolitan area's arts and cultural communities is convened by the staff. The panel is presented with their responsibilities in line with MRAC's mission and values, panel policies, review criteria and review procedures. Grant applications are distributed in advance to the review panel. Panelists read and evaluate each application based on review criteria published in MRAC program guidelines.

Role of the Panel Chair

The Chair is a non-voting member of the review panel whose primary responsibility is to conduct the review process according to MRAC's policies and procedures. The Chair insures that each proposal receives a thorough evaluation based on MRAC's published review criteria. The Chair directs the panel deliberation toward respectful, constructive and informative criticism.

Panel Review Meeting

The date and location for the panel review meeting are sent to all applicants. Panel meetings are open to the public in the spirit of the Minnesota Open Meeting Law: applicants and members of the public may attend the meeting but may not make comments or presentations in any form, and recording devices are allowed as long as they are not disruptive to the proceedings and an operator stays with the device at all times.

Prior to the panel review being called to order, the Chair reminds the panel of MRAC's review criteria, process, procedures, and open meeting policy.

The Chair calls the meeting to order and proceeds as follows:

The Chair introduces each application (organization name) and asks if any panelists have a conflict of interest. Panelists with conflicts leave the room until the discussion and rating for that application have been completed. Panelists are not asked to provide their reasons for declaring conflicts.

1. The Chair provides a brief description of the project request and announces the amount of the request.
2. The Chair asks the panel to initiate the discussion. Panelists comment on how well the application meets review criteria. A panelist's comments should, at all times, be related to MRAC review criteria and provide insight into how and why the panelist anticipates assigning the application a particular rating.
3. The Chair reviews panel comments to insure that all criteria have been covered and that there is enough information to provide feedback to the applicant about how the panel arrived at its ranking. The Chair asks if panelists have final comments. Final comments, if any, are made.
4. The Chair asks each panelist to numerically rate the application. Panelists may not abstain from rating an application. The numerical rating is recorded by the staff and an average is computed. Once the panel rating is assigned, the application is not discussed again.
5. Steps 1-5 are repeated for each application until all applications have been reviewed and rated. Staff presents the panelists with the record of individual panelist's ratings and the resulting average rating for each application.
6. The Chair announces that the applications' averaged ratings will be passed to the MRAC Board of Directors for their consideration in making grant awards. The Chair asks panelists to verify that the list accurately reflects their ratings, and asks for a motion/second to pass the information to the Board. Panelists vote on the motion. If the motion does not pass, the Chair and panel discuss panelist concerns until a resolution is made.
7. When the motion passes, the Chair adjourns the meeting.

Board Review and Action

MRAC staff presents a list of the applications and their ratings in ranked order based on the panel's averaged ratings to the Board of Directors. The Board Liaison provides feedback about the panel proceedings. The Board reviews the panel rankings and discusses how funds will be awarded. The Board may elect to provide an application full funding, partial funding or no funding.