

Mission Statement:

The Metropolitan Regional Arts Council (MRAC) improves arts access for communities in the seven-county Metropolitan area through support to artists and organizations.

Vision

- Artists and arts organizations thrive.
- Arts engagement takes place in every community.
- The public actively values and celebrates the arts and artists.

Guiding Principles

- We take into account the needs and interests of constituents in our region when developing programs and services.
- We strive to maintain transparent decision-making processes and accessible public information.
- We meet our constituents where they're at and recognize their unique needs.
- We act with integrity, ensuring that all constituents are treated in a fair, respectful and consistent manner.
- We're committed to advancing inclusion and racial equity in all aspects of our work.
- We work with our community partners to promote and advocate for the arts.

Region - Background, demographics, other context for the plan

Provide any necessary context about your region (i.e., economic, demographic, geographic, cultural, etc.) or about your organization that has a meaningful impact on your planning or your programs and services.

The Metropolitan Regional Arts Council (MRAC) serves Region 11 - also known as the metro - which includes Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington counties. Geographically, the metro only covers 3.5% of the state, but is home to an estimated 3,075,563 people, making up 55% of the state's population.

According to Minnesota Compass, the demographics of the metro in 2017 are as follows: Persons of Color 27.2%; American Indian .6%; Asian 7.9%; Black or African American 9.7%; LatinX 6.4%; Two or more races 2.7% and; White 72.8%. Individuals with a disability make up about 11%.

These statistics contribute to the 26% growth of Minnesota's population of color since 2010 – making up the fastest-growing segment of the state's population.

Additionally, Carver, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington Counties are expecting growth of at least 10 percent through 2030.

These growth trends are important for MRAC in understanding who is in the metro, how to best reach them and what we should prioritize to meet our mission and vision.

MRAC was established in 1994 as one of eleven Regional Arts Councils increasing access to the arts and serving every county in the state.

Specifically, MRAC serves arts organizations and fiscally-sponsored groups with budgets of less than \$400,000; non-arts organizations with art budgets of less than \$400,000 and individual artists in the metro. However, the majority of organizations that receive MRAC grants and services have budgets of less than \$100,000.

In FY18, MRAC received 1,389 applications and awarded 520 grants totaling \$3,460,670. Of which, 484 were organizations and fiscally-sponsored groups, and 36 were individual artists. Additionally, through a partnership with VSA Minnesota, the state organization on Arts and Disability, 14 grants totaling \$114,256 were made to help make arts programming, activities and facilities more accessible to people with disabilities.

MRAC relies on community members from the metro area to serve as panelists that review grant applications and make funding recommendations to the Board of Directors. In FY18, 241 individuals contributed their time to serve as panelists. 20% were Indigenous and people of color - an increase of 45% since FY16.

In MRAC's FY16-17 biennial plan, it was stated that, "...the fact that the current staff of seven people has only one person of color, have prompted MRAC to develop some intentional actions.". Currently, MRAC has 8 employees and 13 Board of Directors. Of the staff, 6 are people of color and of the board, 7 identify as being a person of color or Indigenous. Having undergone internal analysis and intentional restructuring in relation to diversity, MRAC is better positioned to undertake informed and effective decisions involving intentional and strategic approaches to identifying disparities, being culturally informed, and responding to the region's needs.

Needs assessment

(10,000 characters max)*

The biennial plan must be based on a needs assessment carried out in a manner which ensured input from the arts community and the arts involved public. The

components of the needs assessment shall be determined by the regional arts council and may consist of any combination of constituent meetings, focus groups, program evaluations, mail, e-mail, online, or telephone surveys, individual interviews, or other evaluative tools. The assessment shall be conducted to assess and prioritize constituent needs, to evaluate appropriate community and regional resources to meet those needs, and to determine the practicality of continuing existing programming activities, service and grants assistance programs, or the feasibility of developing new programs, services, or grants by the regional arts council. The needs assessment shall be updated at intervals determined and announced by the regional arts council, but no less frequently than once every four years. The results shall be included in the biennial plan.

In this section, describe:

1. When the needs assessment was completed.
 2. The process used to generate input from the arts community and the arts involved public.
 3. The methods and/or tools used to gather input.
 4. The key findings identified through the needs assessment.
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1. The online survey portion of the needs assessment opened on February 4 and was closed on March 4, 2019. Needs assessment circles were held between February 9 - March 8, 2019.
 2. The design of the needs assessment process began in January and followed MRAC's guiding principles to accomplish the following goals:
 - a. Collect demographic data about respondents so we can identify needs that are specific to the diverse groups of the metro;
 - b. Gather insights about experiences with MRAC programs, services and staff so we can maintain positive relationships or make improvements where necessary;
 - c. Reach MRAC constituents, that is individuals that have some experience with MRAC, as well as residents in the metro that are under-represented in MRAC's applicant, recipient and workshop attendee pools.

We developed a 27-question survey and sent it out to our listserve with 6000 emails in our February e-newsletter. Additionally, we shared it on our facebook page with 2,590 followers and received 383 completed surveys, which is a 65% increase from our 2017 survey. **(constituent survey attached)**

Additionally, in the effort to reach the arts-involved public beyond people that already know about MRAC, we hired three consultants to do outreach and facilitate

9 talking circles with 84 participants in Saint Paul and Minneapolis. Each circle was a minimum of 2 hours with the facilitator, then an additional 30 minutes to 1 hour for Q&A with an MRAC staff.

Circle Questions: **see in attachment**

Consultants include:

Ini Augustine is the CEO of SocialWise Media Group. She was an Aspiring Businesswoman of the year for NAWBO Iowa, The National Association of Women Business Owners. She started her career with Dun & Bradstreet at the age of 15, and became the youngest Financial Data Consultant in the history of the company. In 2006, Ini Augustine was named Businesswoman of the year for her work on the Business Advisory Council to Congress.

Ini is a Josie R. Johnson Fellow with the African American Leadership Forum. Ini is the host of a weekly show/podcast, Street Genius radio. Each Thursday at 2PM, on 98.9 KRSM, Street Genius Radio examines the reality of entrepreneurship for female, black, Latino, Asian, and Native American business owners.

Donte Curtis is the owner of Catch Your Dream Consulting/Coaching where he mentors, inspires, and trains individuals and teams nationwide on leadership development, racial equity, entrepreneurship, and making effective change. Donte supports his clients to excel in their dreams and discover new alternatives. With over eight years of facilitation experience, Donte is adept at fostering the collective wisdom in the room and creates space to make sure everyone's voice is heard. Probably one of the most energetic people you will ever meet, Donte lives a life that is dedicated to leadership, social justice, and liberation.

Candida Gonzales A Puerto Rican native of South Minneapolis, Candida Gonzalez studied Latin American Art and History at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA, and went on to get her M.Ed. at The University of Minnesota in 2003. She is passionate about education, community engagement through the arts and equitable arts access. In her 15 years of education work in Minneapolis, most recently as Arts Coordinator at Roosevelt High School, she worked on building art programs that focused on equitable arts opportunities, inclusivity of underserved populations, and deeper, culturally relevant arts experiences for youth and communities of color. Through her work she has also focused on providing opportunities and development for emerging artists of color. She approaches her work by centering at the intersection of art, activism, healing and personal/community empowerment. She is deeply invested in the concept of using art and community design as tools to wage love and healing. She recently left GoodSpace Murals, the public art business that she co-founded and ran for two years, leading the administrative visioning and development, project management and curriculum design. She is currently working as an independent art consultant developing community art projects with a social justice lens.

3. We used two main methods for collecting information: online SurveyMonkey questionnaire and talking circles.
 - a. A 2-part SurveyMonkey questionnaire with 27 questions that built off the 2017 survey to give us comparison data over time.

Part I of the survey:

- Collected demographic data about respondents

Part II of the survey:

- Evaluated experience with MRAC programs and services
- Helped to identify gaps in programming and services - areas to improve and make adjustments

- b. Talking circles that focused primarily on reaching art-involved individuals from outside MRAC's constituency - specifically from demographics that are under-represented in our applicant and grant recipient groups (ie. people of color and indigenous people, people with disabilities, ages 55+, etc).

4. Key findings: **see in attachment**

Description of the planning process:

3,000 characters max)*

The biennial plan must include a description of the biennial planning process used by the council including a list of the steps included in the development of the biennial plan and the participants involved in the biennial planning process.

MRAC staff started the biennial planning on November 20, 2018 during our weekly staff meetings as outlined in the schedule below. Board members were invited and encouraged to join us for any of the meetings.

November

November 20 – Biennial Overview – covered purpose, required sections of the plan and timeline of planning so that everybody will share understanding of the process and their role in informing and implementing the plan.

December (links below are prezis used to discuss these topics)

4: 25 Year Framework – we looked at language from 3 different guiding documents: MN State of Innovation, MN Legislative Guide and the MN State Arts Board.

11: MRAC's FY18-19 Biennial Workplan – Reviewed FY18-19 plan.

January

2: Analyzed needs assessment design by asking questions like: What do we want to learn? How do we want to learn? Who do we ask?

8: Continued Needs assessment design

15: Finalized needs assessment and began roll out of design

*additionally, we put out an RFQ, interviewed and hired 3 consultants to serve as Outreach and Facilitators for needs assessment talking circles.

February

5: Reviewed current programs and deadline calendar

12: Continued review of current programs and deadline calendar.

19: MRAC's Racial Equity Task Force (all staff and 4 board members) identified priorities, objectives, outcomes, indicators and evaluation method for next biennium

26: Board approved new calendar and programmatic adjustments

Throughout February, needs assessment survey went out and circles were happening in Saint Paul and Minneapolis.

March

5: Online surveys closed

8: Talking circle reports due

26: Board report on Needs Assessment results

28: Final meeting with Circle consultants

Throughout March, we analyzed survey and circle findings and began drafting our biennial plan.

April

22: Sent out invite for public meeting via e-newsletter

23: Board approved biennial plan for public review

24: Posted biennial plan draft on MRAC website for public review

Throughout April, finalize guidelines and deadlines for FY20 so they can be published by June

May

7: Public Meeting

14: Make any necessary changes

15: SUBMIT TO MSAB

2,000 characters max)*

The biennial plan must include a work plan which contains a description of services, programs, and grants available from the council, and the goals and objectives of these activities as related to the needs assessment, and the 25-year arts legacy outcomes.

Statewide Goals:

- People of all ages, ethnicities and abilities participate in the arts
- The arts are interwoven into every facet of community life
- Minnesotans believe that the arts are vital to who we are
- People trust Minnesota's stewardship of public arts funding
- The arts thrive in Minnesota

MRAC Goal 1: Support organizations and artists to be responsive to their artistic goals and community needs.

Objective 1a: Implement a grant process that is transparent and compliant

Indicators:

- MRAC has clear guidelines that describe the grant process, criteria and eligibility requirements to the public.
- MRAC guidelines comply with the Minnesota State Arts Board and state grant-making policies.
- MRAC has open communication and staff are available for public engagement.

MRAC Goal 2: Distribute state funds equitably throughout the region.

Objective 2a: Conduct an organizational evaluation of programs and services.

Indicator: MRAC will have accurate data and deep analysis of regional needs, and programmatic gaps to make informed decisions about future programs and services.

Objective 2b: Develop strategies to advance inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility in the arts.

Indicators:

- An equity framework is developed and applied to MRAC's work
- Operations will change
- Disparity gaps will decrease
- Underrepresented organizations and artists are connected to MRAC

Objective 2c: Become an ADA accessible organization

Indicators:

- Build ADA capacity throughout organization (physical space, programming, staffing, etc)
- Develop an ADA grantmaking program for access to the arts for people with disabilities

Objective 2d: Establish strategic partnerships in communities across the metro

Indicators:

- MRAC is a reliable and trusted resource in the metro arts community

MRAC Goal 3: Strengthen MRAC's organizational and staffing capacity

Objective 3a: Hire, support and develop staff

Indicator:

- MRAC will have appropriate staff capacity to manage all programs, provide quality services and attention to volume of applications.
- MRAC staff will feel supported, have confidence and grow their capacity to provide knowledgeable and quality services to the region.

Program Information

(5,000 characters max)*

Describe the grants and other forms of assistance the council will provide, the review criteria for evaluating grant requests, and eligibility requirements.

GRANT PROGRAMS:

1. Management Training Fund: Up to \$600 for fees and registration to access professional development opportunities.
2. Management Consulting Fund: Up to \$1,750 for "bite-size" projects to assist with focused organizational issues.
3. Community Arts Grants: Up to \$5,000 for arts projects.
4. Arts Activities Support Grants: Up to \$10,000 for arts projects.
5. Arts Learning Grants: Up to \$10,000 for projects for people of all ages to develop knowledge, skills and understanding of the arts, and to increase learning through the arts.
6. Organizational Development: Up to \$10,000 for projects that strengthen the management and/or infrastructure of nonprofit arts groups.
7. Capital Grants: Up to \$10,000 to purchase equipment and related supplies and services, or to make capital improvements.
8. Next Step Fund: Funded by the McKnight Foundation, provides project grants up to \$5,000 to professional artists in any discipline for the purpose of career development and artistic achievement.

In FY20, MRAC staff, board and an ADA Advisory Committee, will begin to develop an ADA Access to the Arts program. By FY21, MRAC will have hired a new Program Director and will launch the new program.

CRITERIA

MRAC grant programs are evaluated on a set of criteria to advance the legacy goals established by the Minnesota State Arts Board and Regional Arts Councils.

Applicants are asked to consider the following questions when writing their applications.

Community Need & Support

- How do you define your community? Describe the individuals this project will serve.
- What shared interest, need, or demand exists within this community as it relates to your work? How will your project benefit the community that you have described?
- In what ways have members of the community shown their support for your project?

Equity & Inclusion

- Within the context of your community, describe how your project identifies and addresses barriers to engaging historically marginalized and underserved people may otherwise have limited access to your proposed activity.
- If your community is based on geography, how are the above people represented throughout your geography? In what ways is this project inclusive of that diversity?
- In what ways does your project ensure that people with disabilities can participate?
- If there are financial costs associated with your project, what considerations are made for those who may find such costs a barrier?

Ability

- Describe the planning process for your project.
- What is the timeline for your project?
- How will you promote your project?
- How will you evaluate the project and its outcomes in relation to your stated artistic and community goals?

Artistic Quality

- Describe the concept and design of your project (what, where, when).
- What are the artistic goals? How is artistic success defined for this project?
- Who are, or will be, the artists and project leaders? How are, or will, the artists be selected?
- Describe the focus of your project. Where will artistic energies/resources be directed—primarily on process or on the quality of the artistic product, or both?

Artistic Relevance

- Why did you select this project?
- In what ways will your project be artistically relevant to the artists, the audience, attendees and/or participants? In what ways will the event engage or stimulate your audience?

Organizational Challenge

- Describe the underlying situation – problem, opportunity, issue, or need – that your project intends to address.
- What is compelling about this situation? How will addressing this important opportunity/need have a significant, long-term impact on your organization? How might this project lead to an enhanced ability for you to accomplish your artistic vision? Why is this a priority at this moment in time?

Organizational Solution

- What is the solution your group proposes to address the organizational challenge?
- What is your work plan and timeline? What activities will you undertake? Who was involved in the planning? What are the specific activities or steps in this organizational development project? When will these activities take place and how long will they take to complete? Who will participate in this project?
- Who are the key personnel involved in this project?
- If your project includes equipment purchases, describe how the equipment will help you accomplish the overall goals of the project. If total equipment purchases, including supplies and service, are \$1,000 or greater, a vendor bid form with three vendor bids needs to be uploaded and included as part of this application.

TRAINING SERVICES AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to our grant programs, MRAC offers a series of free Arts Management Trainings to help arts groups and organizations be as strong and effective in their work as possible.

Also, MRAC Program Directors host monthly **First Fridays** gatherings as space for constituents to work, share ideas, and build relationships with MRAC staff and others in the arts community.

Grantmaking and monitoring process

(5,000 characters max)*

Provide a detailed description of the council's grant making process including the review process, the terms of the grant contract with grant recipients, the time needed and process followed in paying grant recipients, the responsibilities of grantees, and the grant monitoring process.

Grant process

1. MRAC grant guidelines and deadlines are shared with the public by June 1.

2. Grant application workshops and draft reviews:

MRAC Program Directors provide grant application workshops to help applicants prepare grant applications. Workshops cover MRAC programs, funding, eligibility, program scope, and the details of applying.

Additionally, Program Directors offer draft reviews and one-on-one consultation with applicants while preparing applications.. Draft reviews and consultation are based on a first come, first serve basis.

3. Panelist recruitment:

MRAC staff make no decisions about grant applications beyond basic eligibility. MRAC uses a peer-panel process to thoughtfully evaluate applications and make funding recommendations to the board of directors. Each panel consists of up to nine people recruited by staff from the broadest possible range of artistic disciplines, professional experiences, county representation from within the metro, age, gender, ability, race and cultural background. Panelists are required to attend a two-hour orientation approximately one month before the panel meeting and a re-orientation on panel day. Each panelists will have up to 25 applications to review at least 3 weeks before the panel meeting. Panelists are offered a \$125 stipend at the completion of the panel review process. We anticipate convening approximately 32-35 panel meetings with up to 315 panelists in FY20 and FY21.

4. Panel meetings and scoring applications:

MRAC panel meetings are public, open meetings. Constituents are encouraged to attend and listen to the reviews to gain a fuller understanding of the process and

hear the panelists' comments directly. Applicants may listen, but may not make presentations or interact in the panel's discussion. All grant reviews are recorded and available to applicant groups. The panel discussion is moderated by MRAC staff. Panelists are asked to declare any conflicts of interest before the discussion begins. Any panelist with a conflict is asked to leave the room, then remaining panelists comment on how applicants address the criteria in their application. After up to 10 minutes of discussion, panelists use a 6-point scale to rate the application. At the end of the day, all the scores are averaged and applications are ranked from highest to lowest. All of the highest ranked applicants are funded until the funding runs out for the day. All panels are observed and monitored by an MRAC Board liaison for consistency and oversight of panel process.

5. Board Approval:

Summaries of every grant application and their score is compiled into a rank summary document for MRAC's Board of Directors. MRAC staff reports on the recommended applications for board discussion and approval. Board members with a conflict of interest cannot vote for that recommendation. The board's funding decisions may be appealed solely on alleged procedural errors. There is no right of appeal based on the size of the grant awarded or on disagreements with the review panel's assessment of an application.

6. Communications:

Applicants receive notification via email of the board's decision, usually the day after the board meeting. A list of funded applications is also posted on the MRAC website, facebook page and via e-newsletter. Applicants receive an audio file of the review and may request feedback from a Program Director.

Every grant recipient receives an auto-email 2 weeks before project end date to remind them of final report and check in on progress and completion on time.

7. Grant agreements and final reports:

After board approval and notification, recipients have 30 days to fill out the grant agreement and provide a current Form W9. Once received, MRAC executive director approves the grant agreement and initiates the payment process. Payments are paid in full and issued twice a month.

Grant recipients have two months to submit a required final report with a narrative about the activities and financials about how the funding was expended before the grant is closed.

Responsibilities of grantees:

- ***see attached sample grant agreement for details.***
- Executing the project as written and approved by the board of directors.
- Crediting legacy funded projects with logo and language.

- Communicating any project changes for approval by Program Directors. All communications and changes are documented in recipients grant record through Foundant grant interface.
- Submitting a final report with a narrative about the activities and financials about how the funding was expended before the grant is closed.

Public meeting 1000 characters

Each council must hold at least one public meeting to solicit reaction to its preliminary biennial plan before it is approved and submitted to the Arts Board.

Provide the date(s) and location(s) of the public meeting(s). How was the public informed? Who participated in the meeting (types and numbers of attendees)?

MRAC sent out the first public meeting notification on Friday, April 19, 2019 via e-newsletter to our listserve with 6000 email addresses.

The plan draft was reviewed and approved by the MRAC board on April 23, 2019 and uploaded to the MRAC website on April 24, 2019.

MRAC held a public meeting at the MRAC office (2324 University Avenue, Suite 114, Saint Paul, MN 55114) on May 7, 2019 from 5:30-7:30pm to share the biennial plan draft and to allow for questions, concerns and feedback. The public meeting was also shared via facebook live for access to the information for those that could not attend in person.