Grant Guidelines 2019-2020

MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FUND

Consulting support up to $2,000 for focused and targeted management projects.

Application Deadline:
Last Business Day of the Month

Earliest Grant Expenditure Date:
One complete month after the deadline

Program Director:
Bethany Whitehead

Contact Information:
bethany@mrac.org | 651-523-6388

Review our guidelines, and contact MRAC with questions or for support. Alternative formats and translation available. MRAC will need 10 business days to obtain translation services.

Metropolitan Regional Arts Council
2324 University Avenue West, Suite 114
St. Paul, MN 55114
651-645-0402 | mrac@mrac.org

As one of 11 regional arts councils in Minnesota, MRAC is funded by an appropriation from the Minnesota Legislature and the Legacy Amendment Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. In November, 2008, Minnesotans passed the Clean Water, Land & Legacy amendment to the Minnesota Constitution, which created the 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.”
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Management Consulting Fund provides grants of up to $2,000 to cover consulting fees related to small projects designed to strengthen the management or administration of the group. Projects should be small, and engage staff, board, and/or volunteers in a learning oriented process. Projects must advance the mission of the group AND have the potential for significant impact. Groups can receive two MCF grants per MRAC fiscal year, but the first project must be complete before applying for a second project.

Proposals must be completed and received by MRAC by the last business day of the month at 11:59:59 p.m. Projects may start on the first day of the second month after the deadline, i.e. if the deadline is January 31, then the project can start March 1.

Examples of projects funded:
➔ Board governance (board development plan, board coaching, review of bylaws or policies)
➔ Organizational strategic pre-planning (prioritizing organizational issues and capacity)
➔ Access for persons with disabilities (completion of an ADA plan)
➔ Equity work, including creation of an equity plan or internal work to be a more equitable organization
➔ Fund development (individual donor campaign, developing a fundraising plan)
➔ Pre-planning for an Organizational Development Project (pre-planning for a major project; strategic planning, leadership succession, website redesign, or a marketing plan)
➔ Evaluation and planning for website development
➔ Evaluation and advisement for technological needs (database, ticketing systems)
➔ Developing focus groups, audience surveys, or evaluation tools

BEFORE APPLYING - RESOURCES

The Metropolitan Regional Arts Council is a hands-on grantmaker and program directors want to help you prepare a strong application that will be ready for panel review. We strongly encourage you to reach out to the program director before you submit an application, especially if you are a first-time applicant in the grant program. Additional assistance is provided in the following ways:

1. Program Directors- MRAC Program Directors are available for questions on eligibility and program intent, project idea development, grant attachment verification, and can, upon request, review your application materials in advance of the deadline.
2. Grant Application Workshops- MRAC offers free grant application workshops a few times throughout the year for this grant program. Check the online calendar for dates and times: www.mrac.org/events.
3. Previously Funded Grants- You may visit www.mrac.org, click on “Grants” and follow links to view “Recent Grant Awards” and request up to 3 previously successful applications per grant program to be emailed as pdfs; contact your program director to have these sample grants sent.
4. **Online Resources**- Visit [www.mrac.org/grants/grant-resources](http://www.mrac.org/grants/grant-resources) to access templates, technical how-tos for the grant interface, links to sites to find demographic information, and a glossary of terms.

5. **First Fridays with Program Directors**- The first Friday of the month from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. there are open office hours where you can drop in and have conversation with MRAC Program Directors. No RSVP is needed. Please check MRAC calendar in case of changes.

**HOW TO APPLY AND ELIGIBILITY**

MRAC grant applications **MUST** be completed and submitted online by **11:59:59 p.m.** on the last business day of the month. Applications are submitted via the MRAC grant portal accessible from our webpage; at [www.mrac.org](http://www.mrac.org) select ‘Manage My Organizational Grant.’ Groups should only use one grant record per organization, while there can be multiple users per organization. Contact MRAC with any difficulties accessing the online portal, but note that **technical assistance is available only until 5:00 p.m. on the deadline day.** We do not accept incomplete or late applications. Please read guidelines thoroughly to ensure eligibility.

All applicant groups **AND** art projects or activities **MUST** be located within the seven-county (Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, Washington) Twin Cities metro area.

To ensure eligibility, all applicants are strongly encouraged to read these guidelines thoroughly. Please contact MRAC if you have any questions.

**Applicant groups must be one of the following:**

- Federally tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts organization with annual operating expenses of less than $400,000.
- Informal and/or unincorporated arts-focused group with expenses of less than $400,000. The applicant group must have a board of directors or advisory committee that provides input on the project and oversight of the grant funds, and a Minnesota-based 501(c)3 fiscal sponsor.

**Applicant groups cannot be:**

- Groups that have an MRAC funded Organizational Development project already in process for the same management topic.
- Non-arts Nonprofits.
- A public entity such as a unit of state, local, or tribal government.
- Organizations registered with the MN Secretary of State as a profit-making Minnesota business (e.g. Business Corporation, Limited Liability Company, Limited Liability Partnership, MN Public Benefit Corporations, etc.). Single member LLCs and sole proprietorships may apply using a fiscal sponsor.
- Individual artists.
• Public, private, alternative, charter, or home schools (this includes school support organizations such as PTAs, PTOs, school foundations, etc.).
• Community education units may not apply for management related grants for their arts programs. However, a community education unit may serve as a fiscal sponsor.

This program does NOT fund:
• Project expenses other than consultant fees (examples: retreat costs, refreshments, software, fiscal sponsor fees, etc. must be paid from some other funding source).
• Continuation of an MRAC funded Organizational Development project already underway.
• Projects that have received or are seeking support from any other MRAC grant program.
• Requests in which any portion of activities are located outside the seven-county metro area.
• Earliest Grant Expenditure Date: MRAC does not fund projects that are already underway. This grant program is not a reimbursement program.
• Project End Date: MRAC funds received in FY19 cannot have activities that extend beyond June 30, 2021.
• Ongoing needs or activities that have been delivered in the same way and for the same purpose on an ongoing basis. Examples: production and distribution of an annual brochure, grant writing, staffing/general operations.
• Requests for continuation of projects previously funded by this program, without significant justification of new need.
• Activities that attempt to influence any state or federal legislation or appropriation; to support activities that are essentially for the religious socialization of the participants or audience; or discriminate against persons or groups.
• Travel expenses to or from Minnesota. You may engage an out-of-state artist within your project, but their travel expense to get to or from Minnesota cannot be included in a MRAC request.

During each MRAC fiscal year (July 1 – June 30), groups may receive:
➔ 1 Arts Project Support grant
➔ 1 Arts Learning grant
➔ 1 Organizational Support grant (Organizational Development or Capital)
➔ 2 Management Consulting Fund grants

◆ Groups can apply to both Organizational Support deadlines (Organizational Development or Capital) but may only receive one Organizational Support award per MRAC fiscal year.
◆ Eligible groups that have a MRAC-funded project in process may apply for a subsequent grant in the same program category if the project from a previous fiscal year is completed before MRAC’s published earliest grant expenditure date for the new project. A Management Consulting Fund project must be complete before a new one is awarded.
Groups may not apply for funding in multiple grant programs for the same project. Each project may ONLY be funded by one MRAC grant.

Specific Program Requirements:
The Management Consulting Fund provides grants of up to $2,000 to cover consulting fees related to small projects designed to strengthen the management or administration of the group. These grants may be used to conduct an assessment, resolve an issue, or create and/or implement a plan.

Projects must be **bite-sized**, articulating a focused project that is clearly within the scale and scope of a small management project and makes sense given the group's capacity (human resources, financial resources, time line, etc.).

Projects must be **learning oriented** engaging staff, the board of directors, and/or volunteers to ensure that completed work results in organizational learning that the group can carry into the future. Projects must advance the mission of the group and have the potential for significant impact.

Projects may not be absent of the **group's engagement**. Projects where a consultant provides a service without teaching or coaching organizational members does not meet the intent of this program. The group’s staff, board and/or volunteers should be adequately involved in planning and implementing the project. These are not intended to be one-on-one learning projects; more than one person from the group should be involved.

Before submitting an application, your group must **select the consultant** and other personnel who will participate in the project. MRAC maintains a database of consultants who have worked with small organizations and groups and can provide names upon request.

This grant program **does not fund project expenses other than consultant fees**. Fiscal sponsor fees, transportation, retreat expenses, etc. are not eligible expenses in this program.

If you are intending to apply for an Organizational Development grant that is in any way related to the work to be completed with this Management Consulting Fund project, the MCF project must be complete before the OD grant earliest grant expenditure date for which you are applying.

There is **no cash match, and no project budget required** for the Management Consulting Fund program. If the project cost exceeds the $2,000 request amount, it is helpful to describe in the narrative how the group intends to fund the difference.
File Uploads
You will upload several files. Document uploads must be a MS Word, MS Excel, or PDF document. It is highly recommended to create an Application Packet within the grant interface to assure your documents uploaded correctly; errors in formatting may have an adverse affect on your application.

Format ALL upload documents as follows:
- US Letter paper size (8.5 x 11) in portrait orientation with at least ¾ inch margins
- A text font equivalent to Times 12-point or larger (15 characters per inch)
- Use criteria headers within the document, but do not use Word function Headers or Footers as this affects formatting

Files you will upload:
- Narrative (one upload – no more than two pages)
- Consultant Resume (one upload – maximum two pages)
- Project Personnel (one upload – multiple pages)
- Board of Directors/Advisory Committee (one upload – one page)
- Organizational Income and Expense (one upload – one page)

1. Narrative (one upload – no more than two pages)
The narrative portion of your application is designed to help you address these criteria and briefly outline your organization’s mission and history. Please provide enough information to help the panel evaluate your project in relation to each of the four criteria. Assume the panel is not familiar with your group, your discipline, nor the community you intend to serve. The panel will apply all four criteria to the application as a whole. Upload a narrative of no more than two (2) pages, addressing all four of the Management Consulting Fund criteria.

Community Need & Support
- How do you define your community? Describe the individuals your organization serves (i.e. artists, attendees, participants, etc.).
- Describe the community that your organization or group serves by describing the diversity of people within this community (e.g. racial, ethnic, cultural, age, gender, ability, geographic, and/or economic, etc.).
- 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 (e.g. collaborations and partnerships; financial contributions; volunteer time; in-kind donation of services, supplies or space)?
- In what ways has your group made attempts to be more equitable and inclusive in its programming, outreach, engagement, and leadership?

Organizational Challenge
• Describe the underlying situation, problem, opportunity, issue, or need that this project intends to address. Note: you must be able to name the problem before you seek funding for a solution!
• How will exploring/solving this situation lead to a significant or long-term benefit to your group?
• What’s compelling about this project at this point in time?
• Why is this project a priority for your organization?

Organizational Solution
• Now that you’ve outlined the problem or opportunity, what’s the solution? What outcome do you plan to achieve with this funding?
• What are the specific activities for which you seek funding?
• When will these activities take place and how long will they take to complete?
• How will the consultant work with key personnel to ensure organizational learning?
• Who are the personnel who will participate in the project? Who is the consultant and how was this individual selected?
• What are the tangible or intangible takeaways from this project?

Ability
• Describe the planning process for your project. In what ways are your board members or advisory committee involved?
• Are the group’s employees/volunteers, board/advisory committee members adequately involved and qualified for their roles in this project?
• Is the project clearly “doable” given your group’s resources, project budget, allotted time frame, etc.?
• What is the timeline for your project milestones?
• How do you know that this consultant is the right fit for this project? What qualifications, skills, or past experiences does the consultant have that help them to best understand this project?
• How will you evaluate the project and its outcomes in relation to your stated organizational goals?

2. Consultant Resume (one upload – maximum two pages)
Upload a maximum two-page biography or resume of your consultant. This information should include details that demonstrate the consultant’s ability to carry out your organization’s proposed project and evidence that they have worked with groups of your size in the past.

3. Project Personnel (one upload – multiple pages)
Upload a list of the key people and groups involved in your project. Briefly describe their qualifications for the project. Do not include the mission or history of your organization in this section. You may submit up to one page of information per person/group. Multiple pages must be submitted in one upload. Individuals and organizations named on this list and in the narrative must know at the time of the application that they are included in the project.

4. Board of Directors/Advisory Committee (one upload – one page)
You are required to have a board of directors or advisory committee, encompassing three individuals as a minimum. Upload a one-page list of your board/committee members indicating their profession, organizational affiliation and/or area of expertise. This is a public document so you may choose to omit contact information.

5. Organizational Income-and-Expense Statement (one upload – one page)
Download and complete the Excel Spreadsheet form with income-and-expense amounts for your last fiscal year (must be a 12-month period). Include the dates of your last fiscal year (the entirety of this date range must be in the past). Please describe the circumstances surrounding a substantial year-end surplus or deficit in the space provided on the Excel Spreadsheet, or within your Narrative. If you submit a Quickbooks Profit & Loss or another form developed by the organization, assure that it fits on one page and the same requested information is reflected.

⇒ This document should be an accurate overview of income and expenses for the organization or group and MRAC expects to see surpluses or deficits on this form.

Arts groups with less than a year of programming are not required to submit an Organizational Income-and-Expense Statement.

6. Fiscal Sponsor Letter- (one upload – for informal groups ONLY)
A fiscal sponsor is a tax-exempt organization that receives MRAC grant monies and manages the financial aspects of the project on behalf of a group that does not have tax-exempt status. Your fiscal sponsor must be a federally tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located in Minnesota, be registered with the IRS with a Minnesota address, and must be active as a Nonprofit Corporation with the Minnesota Secretary of State.

You will need to upload a letter on the fiscal sponsor’s letterhead that outlines the agreement between your organization and the fiscal sponsor. The letter must include the following:
- The name of the organization and the project being proposed
- Fiscal sponsor’s EIN which is also known as a Federal Tax Identification Number
- The mission of the applicant group
- Signature of the fiscal sponsor contact
- A date within three months of the grant deadline

OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION
Within the online grant interface, in addition to demographic information about your group and intended participants, you will be asked to submit the proposed outcomes and the evaluation plan for the project. This is for reporting and tracking purposes and is not shared with the panel, but is shared with the Minnesota State Arts Board. It is important for the application to also include this information within the grant narrative.
Outcomes Proposed
In two sentences, describe the measurable outcomes you hope to achieve through this project. What skill, knowledge, attitude, behavior or condition will change? Who will be affected by the change? Your answer may be brief. Examples of outcomes may include: “Staff require fewer hours weekly to complete marketing tasks because of new plan.” or “Board meetings are shorter because the financials are presented in a clearer way and don’t require as much discussion.”

Evaluation Plan
In two sentences, describe your methods for evaluating your anticipated outcomes. Examples of evaluation methods may include, but are not limited to: Audience/participant surveys, board meeting discussions, data tracking, etc.

REVIEW AND DECISION PROCESS
1. **Staff**: MRAC staff review all applications for eligibility.
2. **Panel**: Eligible applications are reviewed monthly by a panel of four trained MCF panelists. An applicant’s scoring may fall within a certain threshold which would require further clarifying information to determine successful funding; groups in this situation will receive follow-up questions after the panel review which must be addressed satisfactorily before the board will approve funding.
3. **MRAC Board of Directors**: The panel submits its recommendations to the MRAC board of directors who make the final decision on funding. Within two weeks of the panel review, applicants receive notification via email of the board’s decision. If you would like to receive panel comments on your application’s review, you may contact your program director. You may reapply for the same project for the following or future deadlines, but applications that are denied funding twice are not allowed to be resubmitted.
4. **Appeal**: Appeals must be made in writing within 30 days of the notification of the board decision. Contact MRAC for a copy of the appeal process.

IF FUNDED
- An authorized signer for your group or organization will need to complete an online grant agreement.
- A W9 form will need to be uploaded by the applicant. If fiscally sponsored you will need a W9 from your fiscal sponsor.
- Funds are sent via check to the address on file in the online account within one month of the signed agreement being signed. Make sure the address is current with all necessary information and mail can be received at this location.
- The group will need to use the appropriate language and logos on all promotion of the funded activities.
- Groups are required to spend the entirety of the MRAC grant award.
• An online final report is due 2 months after the project end date that was entered at the time of application. You must show expenditures at or greater to the budgeted amount or funds will need to be returned.

• Any project changes to the activities, timeline, or budget need to be approved in writing by the program director. Reach out with any questions or changes to the project before changing the project, as not all project changes can be approved.

• Overdue final reports may affect future eligibility to apply for and/or receive MRAC funding.