

Metropolitan Regional Arts Council

2026-2027 Biennial Plan

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 information that is accessible for the public.
- 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.

Table of Contents		
Part 1	About MRAC and Our Region	2
Part 2	MRAC's Needs Assessments	4
Part 3	Planning Process	7
Part 4	Strategic Plan	9
Part 5	Grant Programs & Services	11
Part 6	Grantmaking Process	14

Please note: the tables in this document include descriptive alt text for screen readers, but due to character count limitations, do not contain the complete information in each table. If you would like this information in a different format, please reach out to us via email at info@mrac.org.

Part 1: About MRAC and Our Region

Individual Demographics of Region 11

MRAC serves Region 11 (also known as the seven-county metropolitan area), 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 3,163,104 people, or about 55% of the state's population. This is a 0.29% increase since the last biennial plan and 11% increase since 2010. Of the metro's population, 40% (1,281,565 people) live in Hennepin county and 3.38% (106,922 people) reside in Carver county. Although the metro is considered the urban region of the state, we have counties that consist of urban, suburban, and rural communities, with Scott County being primarily rural.

According to Minnesota Compass, the demographics of the metro include 27.5% persons of color, .4% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 7.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, 9.9% Black/African American, 6.7% Hispanic/Latino, 4.4% two or more races, and 70.4% white. Individuals with a disability make up about 10% and members of the LGBTQ+ community make up about 11%.

MRAC Grantmaking

In FY24, we awarded 311 grants totaling \$5.03 million dollars. Of the 311 grants, 191 awards totaling \$4,434,294 went to groups and organizations. Additionally, MRAC awarded 120 grants totaling \$595,635 to individuals. Of the 120 individual awards, 84 were awarded with Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund dollars in the amount of \$415,635 and 36 were awarded with McKnight funds in the amount of \$180,000.

MRAC recruits community members to serve on our grant application review panels. We use those reviews to make funding recommendations to the MRAC Board of Directors. In FY24, 162 individuals from all seven metro counties contributed their time as panelists. Of those panelists, 49% identified as BIPOC, 35% of all panelists identified as being part of the LGBTQ+ community, and 16% identified as being a PWD.

Additionally, MRAC went through a strategic planning process in FY24. After four years of rapid change, due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic, we spent the year reflecting, analyzing, and evaluating data, and developed a plan to strengthen our ability to serve the region.

MRAC Priority Groups

MRAC collects demographic and geographic data to understand who is in the metro. We can then strategize on how to best reach them and decide what we should prioritize to meet our mission and vision. Specifically, MRAC has identified Black, Indigenous, and/or people of color (BIPOC), people with disabilities (PWD), and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) communities as being historically underfunded at MRAC.

In 2019, MRAC identified the above communities as priorities for multiple reasons.

- For BIPOC communities, our data showed that there were disparities in our distribution of funds and resources.
- For the disability community, our data was limited to what we received from our decade-long partnership with VSA Minnesota, the state organization on arts and disability. VSA served as an intermediary for MRAC to improve access to the arts for people with disabilities. However, their funding was not exclusively going directly to people with disabilities and they sunset in 2019. This increased the need for MRAC to build our internal accessibility capacity.
- For the LGBTQ+ community, we had not collected any data up to that time.

We set goals that have been foundational for our last three biennial plans:

- fund proportionate to population for demographic communities,
- ensure that funding reaches every metro county,
- improve our data collection for all communities, so that we could see who our funds were reaching,
- collect reliable data to guide our strategies and decisions, and
- build our internal capacity to be accessible for people with disabilities.

Since then, we have reached the goal of funding proportionate to population and even exceeded it for some communities. The exceptions are the Latino/Hispanic and disability communities, but we are less than 1% away for both. It is our intention to maintain this minimum funding distribution. Additionally, we have adopted practices to remediate all external materials for accessibility and offer a variety of accommodations upon request.

Targeted Organizational Funding

MRAC specifically works to fund smaller organizations that historically have a more difficult time securing funding. We serves arts organizations and fiscally sponsored groups with annual expenses of \$400,000 or less as well as cultural and non-arts organizations with annual art programming expenses of \$400,000 or less. Additionally, a significant number of organizations that receive MRAC grants have budgets of \$100,000 or less.

Part 2: MRAC's Needs Assessments

For this biennial plan, we used two different methods for assessing the needs of our constituents. First, we conduct ongoing needs assessments that take place during and after every grant round (generally starting in the fall through early spring). This includes questions about the effectiveness of our guidelines and application processes. Second, we conducted a general needs assessment survey November 2024–January 2025 that had options for both individuals and organizations/groups.

We also carry out annual funding distribution analysis by collecting demographic and geographic data from all our applicants. After each grant round, we look at applicant and grantee data to evaluate which communities we are reaching, how our funds are distributed, and where there are any gaps.

For our previous plan, we ran a robust needs assessment with focus groups and interviews and then used that data to compare and identify any similarities and changes. We will conduct another large needs assessment, including more of the arts-involved public, for the 2028–2029 biennial plan.

Assessment Framework

To support our mission, our primary tool has been to provide financial support through a grantmaking process that is decades old. To make sure we are meeting the needs of today's communities, we want to address several questions:

- What challenges and needs do people have in creating arts access?
- What challenges do applicants experience when they apply for our grants?
- What should we consider and change about our current systems and practices to mitigate barriers and distribute funds more equitably?
- What else can we offer to support arts access in the region?

To answer these questions, we typically follow these steps:

1. Identify the individuals or groups we want to collect information from.
2. Determine specific questions and create a timeline.
3. Decide the best method for collection (i.e. survey, focus group, interviews, etc.).
4. Create the tool and/or hire consultants.
5. Implement the plan.
6. Collect and analyze data.
7. Determine strategies based on findings.

Assessment Method

During this biennium, we relied primarily on emailed electronic surveys to conduct our assessments. We have a regular practice of surveying applicants at the end of every grant round. In addition to applicants that completed a submission, we include in our survey pools every individual or group that received applicant services or that started work on an application.

We ask about their experiences working with staff, using resources like guidelines and webinars, and navigating our grant interface. This feedback provides a better understanding of the application process and if needs were met, or if there were challenges that need to be addressed.

For the general needs assessment, we sent out a survey request to our email subscribers and social media followers. The 20-question survey had three sections: demographics, needs and challenges, and MRAC programs and services. We received 223 responses. We received 136 responses for two of our grant programs in FY25. The results from the third grant won't be available until later in 2025.

On the next two pages, you will see our key findings from these three assessments.

Key Findings

FY25 General Survey	
Responses (223 Total)	Distribution
By County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 61% Minneapolis/Hennepin • 23% Ramsey • 5% Washington • 4% Dakota • 2% Anoka • 1% Scott • 4% that provided no answer • (no responses from Carver)
By Demographic Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38% identified as BIPOC • 54% identified as white • 21% identified as disabled • 21% identified as LGBTQ+
Groups/Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 54% had budgets of \$100,000 or less • 21% had budgets of \$25,000 or less

Survey Question	Results
Question 1: What are the biggest challenges you face when creating arts programming and/or supporting arts access?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 84% fundraising • 36% insufficient staff/capacity • 26% not enough time
Question 2: Typically, how much time does it take to plan, implement, and close out a project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than one year: 42.4% groups/organizations and 29.8% individuals • At least one year: 30.3% groups/organizations and 39.5% individuals
Question 3: What type of funding is most critical for you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General operating: 57% groups/organizations (individuals did not have this option, but about 16% selected "other" and provided details about needing unrestricted funds) • Project support: 30% groups/organizations and 67% individuals • Capacity building/professional development: 6% groups/organizations and 10% individuals

Survey Question	Results
Question 4: In addition to financial support, what other services and resources do you need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40% workshops & trainings • 40% peer networks • 28% other resources (many in this category provided details about workshop topics, capacity, and networking ideas)

The top responses to the above questions gave us insight on the challenges our constituents are experiencing, and how they would like MRAC to support their needs. Results are either combined across the group/organization and individual responses or the differences are noted.

Additional comments:

- Workshop topics included marketing assistance and accounting training
- Capacity needs included board member recruitment and training, staff/volunteer recruitment, and space needs
- Networking needs included opportunities to meet with peers and potential funders

FY25 Individual Grant Surveys

Across 136 responses to Arts Access for Individuals and Flexible Support grant surveys:

- 73% agreed that the application questions were straightforward and easy to understand
- 67% agreed that MRAC's grant process makes arts funding accessible to their community
- 40% reported that they spent 10 hours or fewer on their application
- Top three MRAC resources used:
 - 79% grant guidelines
 - 44% application template
 - 43% staff assistance

Respondents listed the top three barriers or challenges experienced during the application process

- 13% understanding how to answer the application questions
- 10% newness to grant writing process
- 8% challenges unrelated to grant process

FY23 and FY24 Funding Distribution Analysis

Out of a total 1,789 applications

- An average of 40% of funding went to BIPOC communities
- An average of 16% of funding went to people with disabilities
- An average of 40% of funding went to people that identify as LGBTQ+
- We funded every county, with Hennepin County receiving an average of 57% and Carver county receiving an average of 1%

Part 3: Planning Process

In the 2024–2025 biennial plan, we prioritized updating MRAC’s strategic framework. After four years of reacting and responding to the overlapping crises brought on by the pandemic, racial unrest in our region, and growing polarization of communities, the MRAC board and staff spent FY24 reflecting and evaluating our programs, services, and outcomes to develop a strategic plan for the two subsequent bienniums. This was a two-part process with consultants Dr. Mai Moua of Dr. Mai Moua Consulting, Inc. and Kabo Yang of Propel Nonprofits.

We worked with Dr. Moua on a relationship-building phase between the board and staff. It was important for us to be in the right relationships with each other before jumping to strategy. Dr. Moua took us through Enneagram testing to understand the different and diverse approaches to work and relationships of each person in the organization.

Following this, we worked with Kabo Yang on the development of the strategic plan in four key phases. We created a Strategic Approach Team (SAT) made up of board and staff members whose role was to champion the process within the organization and to drive it forward with the consultant. The SAT engaged with a broader set of community members and laid the groundwork for powerful and informed engagements.

The SAT did an analysis of critical trends and factors related to MRAC’s internal and external environments. This included a situational analysis, an infrastructure assessment, and a community trends analysis. We did this by reviewing and analyzing past needs assessments, biennial plans, programs, services, and funding distributions/outcomes.

The next step was to hold a strategy development retreat, where the SAT presented its findings to the full board and staff and facilitated conversations to gather more input. Finally, the information from the retreat was used to draft key initiatives and related operational and financial strategies. The final strategic plan was approved by the board on January 28, 2025. This strategic planning process is the backbone of the 2026–2027 biennial plan.

Date	Activities
February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Virtual Strategic Plan Kick-Off and intro to Enneagram with board and staff• All board and staff took the Enneagram and met one-on-one with Dr. Moua• In-person board and staff meeting for collective grounding, reflection, and initial visioning for the future
March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enneagram assignments to meet with other board and staff that shared type to get to know each other and answer a set of questions
April 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board and staff retreat• Deeper dive into each Enneagram type• Small group work with diverse set of types to begin addressing MRAC-related issues
May–August 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SAT reviewed, analyzed, and drafted all materials leading to the board and staff strategic retreat• Reviewed previous needs assessment reports and MRAC's funding distribution in preparation for strategic planning retreat• Reviewed biennial planning documents:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ 25-year framework guiding documents: MN State of Innovation, MN Legislative Guide, and the MN State Arts Board

Date	Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Office of the Legislative Auditor 2019 and 2024 Evaluation Reports on MN State Arts Board Grant Administration ○ MRAC's FY24–25 Biennial Plan Narrative
September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board and staff Strategic Planning Retreat • Started needs assessment planning • Drafted survey questions
October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed strategic plan draft
November–December 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs Assessment Survey conducted with constituents, sent via email and social media • Finalized strategic plan to be incorporated in biennial plan
January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed and analyzed survey responses • MRAC Strategic Plan approved by board
February 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submitted Biennial Plan draft to MRAC Board
March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public meetings presenting Biennial Plan on March 10, 2025, at 12 noon and 5:30 pm • Collect feedback at meeting and via Google survey • Made appropriate updates • Board approval on March 25, 2025
April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit final Biennial Plan

Part 4: Strategic Plan

MRAC's new strategic plan has three primary focus areas: Community Impact, Organizational Effectiveness, and Advocacy. The work plan below integrates biennial intended outcomes and indicators that align with the five statewide goals. These focus areas were themes that came out of our planning process. We don't believe we have to reinvent the wheel, but we can refine it to ensure we are serving everyone in the region. Now that the plan is complete, the MRAC staff will begin developing the detailed work plan for each goal and strategy.

Community Impact will focus on our external relationships, services, and grant programs, as well as meeting the needs of the region. In FY24, MRAC hired a communications manager and an engagement manager; together they will work on developing robust communications and outreach/engagement strategies. We are rolling out additional outreach to counties and communities that have been more challenging for us to fund. We are also revising our guidelines and applications to be clearer and more accessible. The MRAC Board has begun evaluating our data, applicant pool, funding distribution, and revisiting our funding goals to ensure we are meeting the current needs.

Organizational Effectiveness will be looking internally to make sure that we have the staff capacity, relationships, and knowledge to carry out our services and programs. Additionally, we want to invest in our board's capacity to govern appropriately to reinforce the work of the team. We want to be deliberate about creating the conditions for the board and staff to have the appropriate relationships for a healthy organization.

Advocacy is about ensuring we are doing what we can to raise awareness and educate the region. We want people to understand how these resources function and that the arts make Minnesota a better place to live. We will uplift the economic and social impacts of the arts, and empower artists, organizations, and the arts-involved public to be arts advocates. Additionally, we will strengthen relationships with key partners to better position MRAC as a strong advocate.

Focus Area 1: Community Impact	
Goal 1:	Ensure responsible stewardship of public resources through accountable and equitable grantmaking.
Strategies:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Establish customized outreach and funding metrics for counties and communities.2. Assess and respond to grantee training needs and knowledge development.3. Increase applications from low-applicant counties through targeted partnerships, goals, and relationships.4. Explore various grantmaking methods including organizational partnerships and multiyear grants.5. Collect and analyze data to enhance grantmaking processes.
Goal 2:	Contribute to developing vibrant arts communities throughout the seven-county metropolitan area.
Strategies:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Position MRAC as a convener of artists and arts organizations.2. Hold strategic presence in communities and community events to deepen relationships.3. Clarify and prioritize engagement to align with capacity and resources.4. Develop responsive and relevant technical assistance services.5. Operationalize processes as a storyteller of grantee impact.

Focus Area 1: Community Impact

Intended Outcome:	Metro organizations and artists will have support to create access to the arts for their communities.
Indicators of Success:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliant guidelines that describe the grant process, criteria, and eligibility requirements to the public. • Simplified application process with fewer barriers. • Implementation of principle-driven processes for making decisions. • Development of internal systems that are adaptable, responsive, and culturally informed. • Maintenance of baseline funding distribution that is proportional to population. • Ensure funding gets into every county. • Be a reliable and trusted resource in the metro arts and arts-involved communities. • Constituents feel informed and understand MRAC's goals and decisions.

Focus Area 2: Organizational Effectiveness

Goal 1:	Support a strong team environment through informed and adaptive practices.
Strategies:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a collaborative board and staff environment through role clarification and communications. 2. Ensure board and staff reflect the population served. 3. Prioritize professional development opportunities to support staff and board growth and performance.
Goal 2:	Strengthen the infrastructure to support programs and administration.
Strategies:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and revise equity framework to support decision-making and organizational priorities. 2. Conduct organizational rebranding to promote MRAC to the public. 3. Clarify and prioritize engagement to align with capacity and resources. 4. Establish the infrastructure for a collaborative and cohesive remote work environment.
Intended Outcome:	MRAC will have the appropriate capacity, knowledge, and tools to carry out organizational duties to advance our mission and vision.
Indicators of Success:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRAC will have the appropriate staff capacity to manage all programs and provide quality services and attention to constituents. • Staff will feel supported, have confidence, and grow their capacity to provide knowledgeable and quality services to the region.

Focus Area 2: Organizational Effectiveness

- MRAC will have board members that represent the demographic and geographic diversity of the region, including individuals from all seven counties.
- Board members will feel supported and be confident in their ability to govern the organization.
- Board members will be engaged as thought partners and advocates for the organization.
- MRAC will have a new equity framework that reflects what we have learned, accomplished, and envisioned for the future.
- MRAC will update its brand and implement a communications plan for reaching wider and deeper into the region.

Focus Area 3: Advocacy

Goal 1:	Contribute to the education and advocacy around state arts funding, including the Legacy Amendment.
Strategies:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Optimize MRAC's position to increase awareness of state funding and the Legacy Amendment. 2. Develop educational content and materials accessible to arts advocates. 3. Ensure MRAC representation within key partnerships and coalitions.
Goal 2:	Leverage MRAC's partnerships and inform advocacy relating to the impact of arts access and funding.
Strategies:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Position MRAC as an educational resource for public policy decisions and actions related to the arts. 2. Support the arts community to be advocate partners. 3. Identify and prioritize participation in partnerships and coalitions.
Intended Outcome:	All Minnesota residents will have access to the arts and an improved quality of life.
Indicators of Success:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constituents will better understand the importance of grassroots advocacy. • Grantees will understand and value the state arts funding system and sources. • Constituents will actively advocate for the arts. • MRAC will establish and strengthen important relationships for collective action. • Minnesota legislators will value and support the general fund and legacy appropriations for the arts in Minnesota.

Part 5: Grant Programs & Services

Our Grants

MRAC will offer three grant programs: one for 501(c)(3) organizations and fiscally sponsored groups funded by the state's general fund and Legacy fund, one for individual artists funded by the Legacy fund, and one for individual artists funded by the McKnight Foundation. Additionally, MRAC will be closing out the Artists' Futures cohort program that is funded by the McKnight Foundation.

Flexible Support

This grant provides funding to help organizations/groups create and sustain Minnesotans' access to the arts. Groups' primary addresses must be within Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, or Washington county. This program supports the production of artistic projects and/or projects that strengthen the organizational capacity and operations of groups providing access to the arts.

All groups may request up to \$25,000. MRAC has set aside a portion of funds specifically for groups whose leadership has a majority of people who identify as Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC); and/or people with disabilities; and/or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+).

In FY26, the projected grant budget for Flexible Support is \$3,975,387 with \$565,896 from General Fund, \$2,773,275 from Arts and Arts Access, \$477,143 from Arts Education, and \$159,073 from Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

Creative Connections

This new grant program provides up to \$5,000 for artistic projects in Minnesota led by individual artists that have a primary address in the seven-county metropolitan area.

The goal of this grant is to provide funding that connects Minnesotans with arts and cultural experiences; and/or integrates artists and/or artistic engagement to accomplish a community's non-arts goals; and/or provides Minnesotans with opportunities for arts learning; and/or passes along expressive cultural traditions.

MRAC has set aside a portion of funds specifically for individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC); and/or people with disabilities; and/or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+).

In FY26, the projected grant budget for this program is \$700,000 coming from Arts and Arts Access.

Next Step Fund

Funded by the McKnight Foundation, this grant provides up to \$6,000 to professional artists in any discipline for the purpose of career development and artistic achievement.

In FY26, the projected grant budget for this program is \$180,000 coming from a grant provided by the McKnight Foundation.

Artists' Futures Cohort Program

Funded by the McKnight Foundation, ten BIPOC artists and culture bearers residing in the seven-county metro and artists who are American Indian/Native Alaskan residing in Minnesota and the eleven tribal nations that share the same geography were selected in FY23 to receive \$35,000 each for professional development, skill building, and networking. This program ends in FY26.

Grant Review Criteria and Eligibility Requirements

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. Applications are framed differently for individuals and organizations/groups, but generally, applicants are asked to consider and answer the following questions.

About your You or Your Organization/Group:

What are the overall goals, mission, and/or intentions?

Describe any previous arts programming you or your organization/group has produced. If new, describe arts programming you or your organization/group will produce.

Project/Program Design:

Provide a project/program name and description (1–2 sentences)

What activities that will take place during your project/program?

What are the primary goals of your project/program?

Where do you envision activities taking place?

Provide a timeline of project activities that will take place during the grant period

Arts Access:

Describe the Minnesota community or communities that will benefit from the project/program, and how they will participate. Consider describing aspects of their identities.

How are you and any collaborators positioned to serve this community or communities?

How will this project/program create (or contribute to the organization/group's capacity to create) meaningful access to the arts for the intended participants?

Applicants must also submit a detailed budget proposal indicating all their expenses.

Review Criteria

The review criteria are Project/Program Design and Arts Access. A highly rated application will clearly demonstrate how the two criteria align with each other.

Panelists will rate each criterion from 1 to 5, where 5 is the top score. Criteria ratings are then combined for a total application score of 2 to 10. Scores are then averaged across panelists for a final rating. Panelists are asked to use the full scale as they rate applications.

Other Services for Applicants

In support of the grant programs, MRAC also provides the following assistance:

Language translation: with advanced notice, materials can be translated into different languages, and we can contract an interpreter and/or translator to assist during the application process. We also accept applications in different languages.

Accessibility: MRAC works to ensure that grant guidelines, workshop presentations, and any other written materials are remediated for accessibility. We can also provide materials in braille, large print, or other formats with advanced notice. Additionally, applicants with disabilities wishing to use other means to apply can work with MRAC staff to adapt our typical processes including (but not limited to) using word processing software in place of our grant interface or providing verbal responses that MRAC will share via audio recording or transcription.

Grant application workshops: we offer webinars to teach applicants about the grant programs, how to apply, and who to contact. Recorded workshops are also posted online prior to the deadlines.

Staff assistance: MRAC staff are available for questions on eligibility and program intent, project idea development, and will, when possible, review application materials for eligibility in advance of deadlines.

Non-grant Programs and Services

In addition to our grant programs, MRAC will be offering a series of virtual and in-person events to build the capacity of our constituents to be strong and effective in their work. According to our post-grant surveys and needs assessment efforts, constituents need workshops, trainings, and peer networking opportunities. Workshop topics include, but are not limited to, marketing and promotions, volunteer recruitment and retention, fundraising, and reaching diverse audiences. Additionally, constituents have consistently expressed the need for spaces to meet artists and organizations to broaden their networks and learn from one another.

Part 6: Grantmaking Process

Process

We use the following steps for every grant program.

Step 1: Grant Announcement

MRAC grant guidelines and deadlines are shared with the public via our website, email, and social media.

Step 2: Applicant Services

MRAC staff provide grant application workshops to help applicants prepare grant applications. Workshops cover program overview and purpose, eligibility, timelines, and details about applying.

Staff are also available for a minimum of six weeks to meet one-on-one with potential applicants to answer questions on eligibility and program intent, project/program idea development, and when possible, will review application materials for eligibility in advance of the deadline.

Step 3: Grant Deadline and Eligibility Determinations

Every program has a set deadline for when applications must be submitted. Once an application is submitted, it cannot be changed. Submitted applications are split equally to all assigned program staff, and they check for individual, organizational, project, and budget eligibility. This step typically takes up to 6 weeks.

Step 4: Panel Review

Community members from every county in our region sign up to be review panelists. They are given training and review criteria for each application (see Grant Review Criteria and Eligibility Requirements above). The scores from all panelists are averaged to give a final application score.

Step 5: Board Approval

Following the panel review, the MRAC Board of Directors will receive a summary of every grant application, and recommendations for awards. MRAC staff reports on the recommendations for board discussion and approval. Board members with a conflict of interest must declare the conflict and 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 disagreements with the review panel's assessment of an application.

Step 6: Communications

Within one week of the board decisions, applicants receive notification via email about the status of their application. Also, a list of funded projects is posted on the MRAC website and social media networks and shared via e-newsletter. Two weeks before the project end date, all grantees receive an email to check in on progress and remind them about the final report deadline.

Step 7: Grant Agreements and Final Reports

After board approval and notification, recipients have up to 30 days to fill out the grant agreement and provide a current form W-9. Once received, the MRAC executive director approves the grant agreement and initiates the payment process. After the project is complete, grantees have two months to submit a final report with a narrative about the activities and financials before the grant is officially closed.

Responsibilities of Grantees

Grantees must execute the project as written and approved by the board of directors, communicate any project changes for approval by program staff, and credit Legacy funded projects with logo and correct language. All communications and changes are documented in the recipient's grant record in our Submittable grant interface. Project changes must be approved by program staff to ensure changes are consistent with the originally approved grant proposal. After their project is complete, applicants must submit a final report with a project narrative and financials detailing how the funding was expended before the grant is closed.