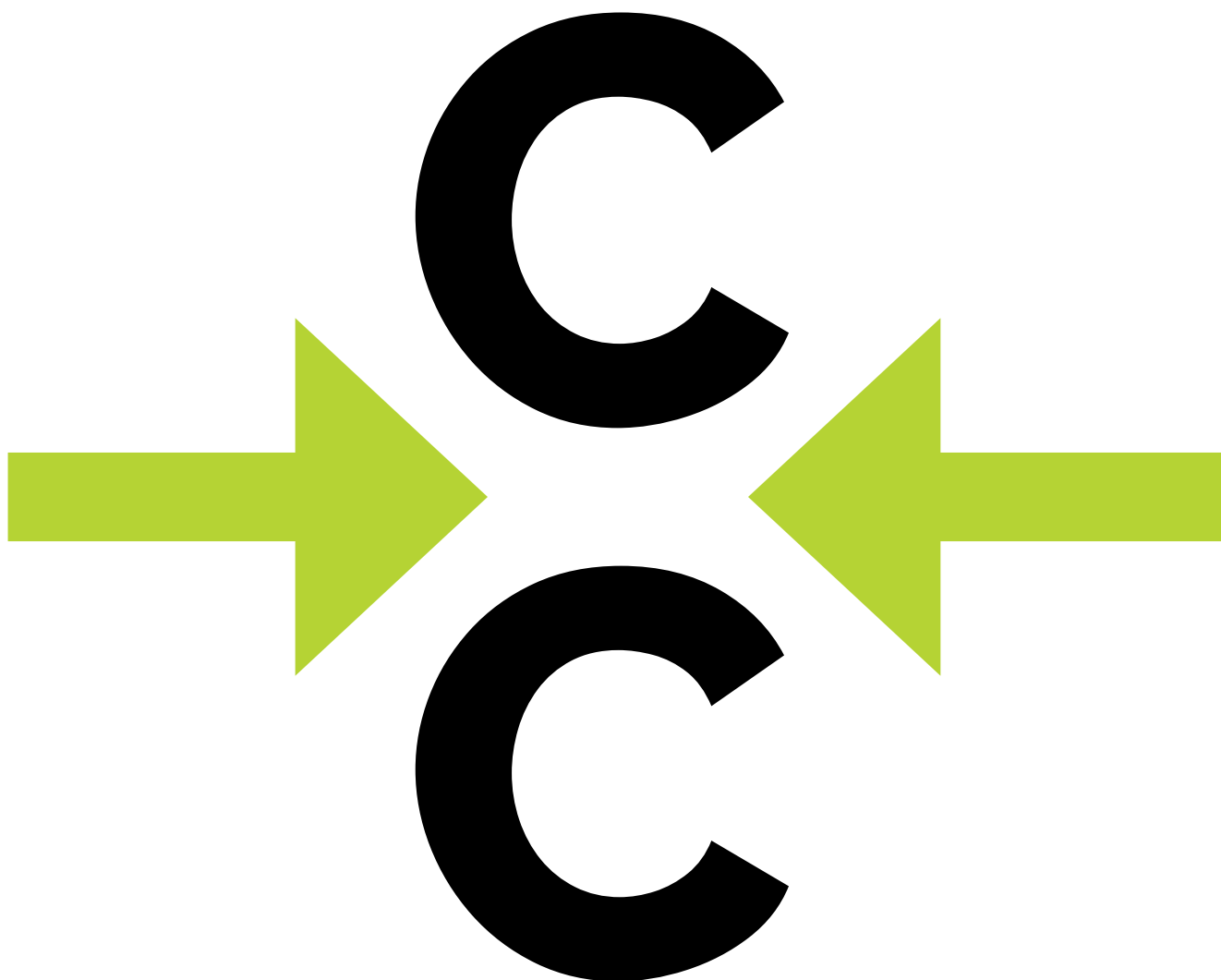
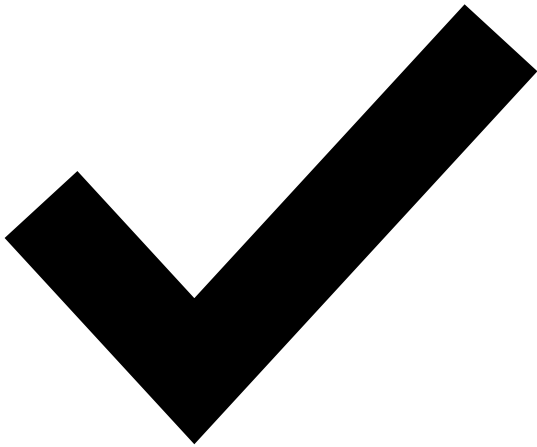


Grant Program Overview and Application Instructions



Creative Connections is made possible by the voters of Minnesota, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

Dates



Contact

creativeconnections@mrac.org

Important Dates

Application opens in Submittable

October 1, 2025

Deadline

**Monday, November 10, 2025,
12 noon CST**

Eligible funding period

March 2, 2026–May 31, 2027

Parts

1.

Part 1: Grant Description and Eligibility: who can apply, what kinds of proposals are eligible, when your proposal can happen, and other important information about the grant.

2.

Part 2: Application Content Overview: the questions you will be asked in the narrative section, information about budgeting, eligible and ineligible expenses, and the application's budget plan spreadsheet.

Contents

The following is the information you need to fill out an application for the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council's 2026 Creative Connections grant. Read this document thoroughly.

Once you submit your application through our online portal, you **cannot make changes** and **cannot resubmit an application in whole or in part**. If your proposal is funded, parts of your application are considered public information.

3.

Part 3: Preparing to Apply and Application Instructions: what you need before you begin your application and how to use Submittable, our online application portal.

4.

Part 4: Application Assistance and Additional Resources: MRAC staff contact information for application assistance and materials such as application templates and the scoring guide.



Part 1: Grant Description and Eligibility

Part 1: Grant Description and Eligibility

What does this grant provide funds for?

Creative Connections provides **up to \$5,000** for artistic proposals in Minnesota **led by individuals**.

Proposals must focus on creating access to the arts for Minnesotans and/or engaging with Minnesota communities through artistic endeavors.

Who is eligible to apply for this grant?

Any individual meeting the following parameters can apply:

1. **Residency and citizenship requirement:** Applicants must have a primary residential address in one of the seven metro counties (Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, or Washington). Applicants must also be a US citizen or have attained permanent resident status in the United States.
2. **Residency duration requirement:** Eligible applicants must reside in the seven-county metro region for **at least six (6) months** prior to the application deadline (from May 10, 2025) and continue to do so for the entirety of their proposed grant period. If a grantee moves away during that time, MRAC may recall the grant funds.

What types of grant requests are eligible?

Regardless of the type of grant request, qualifying applications will clearly describe how grant-funded activities will do any of the following:

1. Connect Minnesotans with arts and cultural experiences; and/or

2. Integrate artists and/or artistic engagement to accomplish a community's non-arts goals; and/or
3. Provide Minnesotans with opportunities for arts learning; and/or
4. Pass along expressive cultural traditions.

Who should benefit from the proposal?

The primary beneficiaries of proposed activities must be community members, rather than the applicant. At least three (3) Minnesotans other than the applicant must participate in the proposal as beneficiaries (for example, if you are designing an art-making activity for children, at least three kids must be involved).

Proposals primarily focused on developing the applicant's own needs and creative interests are not eligible. Individuals interested in these types of proposals should instead consider [**Next Step Fund**](#).

How much grant funding can I apply for?

All eligible applicants may request up to \$5,000.

Additionally, a portion of funds for this grant will be set aside for individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or a person of color (BIPOC); and/or a person with a disability; and/or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+); and for all applicants from Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Scott, and Washington counties.

When can my proposal happen?

The eligible funding period is March 2, 2026–May 31, 2027 (approximately 15 months). All grant-funded activities must take place between these dates.

Part 1: Grant Description and Eligibility

If any proposal activities occurring outside of this period are included in the application, the entire application may be deemed ineligible.

When can I spend the grant funds?

All grant funds must be spent and all expenses incurred between March 2, 2026, and May 31, 2027.

Definition of Incurred Expenses

Incurred expenses are promises to pay. Because grants are not guaranteed, applicants may not make any *promises to pay* (i.e. incur an expense) before the grant funding period begins. As such, all grant-related contracts or agreements must be both **entered into** (*signed*) and **executed** (*paid or fulfilled*) within the funding period.

Examples include bookings with artists or venues, artist fee agreements, and any other formal agreement for goods or services where payment is promised, whether or not cash changes hands at the time the agreement is signed.

If any expenses (both incurred and spent) or reimbursements made outside of this period are included in the application, the entire application may be deemed ineligible.

Where can I execute my proposal?

All proposal activities must take place within the geographical borders of Minnesota. Ineligible proposal expenses include costs for relocating the applicant's legal address/residence outside the state of Minnesota, travel expenses to or from Minnesota, and procuring visas.

Note: you may engage an out-of-state artist or consultant within your proposal, but their travel

expenses to or from Minnesota cannot be included in your proposed budget.

How do I submit an application?

All applications are filled out and submitted through Submittable, our online application portal. Refer to [Application Instructions](#) (page 12) for a Submittable overview.

Applications in other formats will not be accepted without prior approval and arrangement with a program officer. Refer to [Application Assistance](#) (page 13) for contact information.

What types of proposals have been funded in the past?

Please see our award announcement for the [2025 Arts Impact for Individuals Grant](#).

How are the funds for this grant allocated to applicants?

Funds will be awarded to the highest scoring applications.

Additionally, a portion of funds for this grant will be set aside for individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or a person of color (BIPOC); and/or a person with a disability; and/or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+); and for all applicants from Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Scott, and Washington counties.

How are applications reviewed and scored?

MRAC trains community members and peers to become review panelists. This includes artists, arts professionals, and other individuals from all seven metro counties. The [Application Scoring Guide for Review Panelists](#) (page 13) shows the criteria used to evaluate each application.

Applications are grouped by county, and then 4–8 panelists score each application. The scores from each panelist are averaged, and that average score determines the application's ranking. Grant funds are awarded based on these panel score rankings and MRAC Board–approved budget allocations. The MRAC Board of Directors awards as many applications as possible until the allocated funds for Creative Connections run out. Based on annual budget changes and application volume, the funding rate for MRAC grants fluctuates from year to year.

What if I have received an individual grant from MRAC before?

Individuals may not have more than one **open** individual, state-funded (Arts Impact for Individuals and Creative Connections) grant at a time. A grant is not considered closed until you have submitted your **Final Report** and it is approved by MRAC staff. For grants prior to FY26, your Final Report is due two months after your Proposal End Date.

Further, grant proposal timelines cannot overlap, i.e. the Proposal End Date of one grant must occur before the Proposal Start Date of the next grant.

Grantees with an open FY25 Arts Impact for Individuals grant (applied October 2024, awarded March 2025) may not have a Creative Connections

grant open at the same time. If you have an open Arts Impact for Individuals grant, all grant-funded activities must be completed, all funds spent/all expenses incurred, and your FY25 Final Report submitted and approved before the Proposal Start Date of your FY26 Creative Connections proposal for your application to be eligible.

If you have an open Arts Impact for Individuals grant from FY24 or before, you must submit your Final Report and have it approved **before submitting an application** for FY26 Creative Connections.

Please note that prior grants awards do not guarantee future grant awards.

What are the tax implications of receiving this grant?

This grant award may affect your individual taxes. Successful grantees will be required to submit a W-9 form with their legal name and personal social security number or ITIN. The grant check will be written to the name and address on the W-9 form. All grant checks in this program will be made to individuals (LLCs or businesses are not accepted). All grantees will receive an IRS Form 1099-NEC from MRAC for the tax year the check was issued.

Please note that MRAC staff are not tax professionals and cannot advise on how much the grant will affect individual tax situations. Applicants and grantees are encouraged to contact a tax preparer for more information on tax liability.

Who is not eligible for this grant?

Entities such as nonprofits, for-profits, schools, and groups with fiscal sponsors may not apply for this program. While this grant program may be

appropriate for individuals who are connected to organizations, it is designed to support individual applicants.

Proposals may be in partnership with an organization, but proposals managed by an entity other than the applicant, such as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, should instead consider **Flexible Support**.

Individuals in partnership with any state agency, public entity, or nonprofit organization that receives a legislative appropriation or legislatively mandated grant from the state of Minnesota's arts and cultural heritage fund for FY26 may not receive a Creative Connections grant.

2.

Part 2: Application Content Overview

Part 2: Application Content Overview

This section includes the questions you will be asked in the narrative section of your application, information about how you will provide your proposal budget, and lists of eligible and ineligible expenses. It does not include every application question.

We encourage you to review all the questions by starting an application in Submittable once the application window opens on October 1, 2025. You can also review the [Application Questions and Explanations](#) document (page 13) at that time.

About the Proposal Narrative

You will answer the following questions in Submittable. Each textbox will display a character limit (**inclusive** of letters, numbers, spaces, and paragraph breaks).

Do not include hyperlinks in narrative text boxes, as the panel review will be limited to the content of your application. Any hyperlinks will be deleted and may affect your application's eligibility.

You can use the [Narrative Drafting Document](#) (page 14) to work on rough drafts of your narrative answers.

List of Narrative Questions

- What is the name or title of your proposal? (50 characters max, about 8–10 words)
- Provide a short description of your proposal (200 characters max, about 30–40 words)
- *Proposal Goals and Activities*: What are the primary goals of your proposal? What specific activities will you undertake with this grant funding? How do these activities meet your stated goals? (3,000 characters max, about 450–600 words)
- *Arts Access and Communities*: How will this proposal create access to the arts for Minnesotans and/or engage with Minnesota communities

through artistic endeavors? Describe the Minnesota community or communities that will benefit from your proposal. Consider discussing how aspects of their lives (such as age, culture, disability, gender, geography, race, or other aspects) make them a community and relate to their participation, if applicable. (2,500 characters max, about 350–450 words)

- *Community Connections and Experience*: How will this proposal respond to your community or communities' specific need(s) or interest(s)? What is your connection to this community or communities? What experience do you have with this kind of proposal? If you are new to this work, what past experiences will help you succeed? (2,500 characters max, about 350–450 words)
- Where do you envision proposal activities taking place? (600 characters max, about 75–100 words)
- Provide a timeline of funded activities. They must take place during the eligible funding period (March 2, 2026–May 31, 2027). Please provide months and years (for example, "July 2026: Theater performances"). (1,000 characters max, about 150–200 words)

About the Budget Plan

General Budget Information

Your request for MRAC funds **may not exceed \$5,000**. You may request less than \$5,000 if that will cover your expenses. There is no advantage or disadvantage to asking for an amount smaller than the maximum. Budget expenses should clearly align with your proposal narrative.

Funding for this grant comes from Minnesota's arts and cultural heritage fund through a legislative appropriation. As required by the Minnesota State Arts Board, these funds may be granted for an entire proposal or for part of a proposal, as long as

Part 2: Application Content Overview

the recipient accounts for the entire cost and can demonstrate that they have adequate resources to complete the entire proposal.

MRAC Funds vs. Total Proposal Cost

You will state the total amount of funds you are requesting from MRAC and describe what these funds will be used for.

If the amount you are requesting from MRAC **will cover your entire proposal**, that is all you need to include.

If your proposal requires funds **beyond the those requested in your MRAC grant application to be completed successfully**, you will need to provide a list of additional funding amounts, funding sources, and whether that funding is secured or pending.

Note: listing a funding source as pending **does not** render your application ineligible.

Submittable Budget Plan Spreadsheet

In the Creative Connections application on Submittable, you will input your budget into the Budget Plan Spreadsheet. It will include columns for the Expense Description and Dollar Amount. You can use the [Budget Plan Drafting Sheet](#) (page 13) to estimate your expenses before inputting them into Submittable.

The application will ask if your proposal requires additional funds beyond your MRAC request to be completed. If you answer "yes," you will enter the additional funding amounts, funding sources, and whether that funding is secured or pending in a separate spreadsheet.

Eligible Expenses

Eligible cash expenses may include the following. This is not a complete list, and you may request expenses not shown here.

Proposal leader compensation (including taxes), payments to other collaborators/personnel, supplies, space and/or equipment rental, marketing and promotion, accessibility-related costs (you will need to be specific), mileage/travel (within Minnesota only), or other expenses.

Additionally, applicants may request funds for equipment purchases. Equipment must be directly related to and necessary for the proposal. Equipment purchase funding is **limited to up to 25% of the amount requested**. For example, if you are requesting \$5,000 in funding, only \$1,250 may be requested for equipment purchases.

Ineligible Expenses

Applicants may not request funds for any of the following:

- Activities that violate applicable federal, state, or local laws, rules, regulations, or ordinances.
- Activities that are essentially for the religious socialization of the participants or audience.
- Activities that attempt to influence any state or federal legislation or appropriation.
- Unrealized income and non-cash expenses such as scholarships or in-kind support; development of endowments; debt reduction and building cash reserves; expenses to purchase alcoholic or THC-infused beverages or to pay associated costs (servers, insurance, licenses, etc.); the purchase of real estate property; or expenses for facilities improvements to commercial or residential properties.
- Costs for relocating the applicant's legal address/residence outside the state of Minnesota or costs for proposals that will take place

Part 2: Application Content Overview

outside the geographic boundaries of the state of Minnesota.

- Any proposal designed to raise funds/regrant/donate funds on behalf of another person, organization, or cause. MRAC funds cannot be donated to another organization or person.
- Applicants cannot request funds that substitute for other state dollars. This includes:
 - Requests in which any portion of the proposal budget will be used to pay an artist or arts organization to provide essentially the same services that an ongoing teacher, teaching staff, or arts specialist previously provided or would be expected to provide in a school setting.
 - Requests in which the proposal will replace discontinued or nonexistent arts programs that should be fulfilling the state's arts curriculum requirements in schools.

3.

Part 3: Preparing to Apply and Application Instructions

Preparing to Apply

The most successful proposals are well conceived before starting the application process in Submittable. Take time to plan your request and consider compiling the following information before you begin.

The Creative Connections application is divided into the following parts:

1. **Individual Information:** your legal name, primary residential address, and phone number. It will be optional to provide a public-facing name, demographic information (such as race/ethnicity, gender identity, veteran status, etc.), pronouns, and name pronunciation.
2. **Proposal Narrative:** the name of your proposal, a short proposal description, your proposal's goals, its overall plan and activities, and its timeline. Additionally, you will be asked about the community or communities your proposal will serve, the interests or needs the proposal meets through arts access, and your experience with this work. Refer to the [List of Narrative Questions](#) (page 8–9).
3. **Budget Plan:** the total amount of funds you are requesting and a description of expenses that will be covered by these funds. If your proposal requires funds beyond the MRAC grant to be completed successfully, you will need to provide a list of additional funding amounts, sources of that funding, and whether that funding is secured or pending. This is a requirement from the Minnesota State Arts Board. Refer to [About the Budget Plan](#) (page 9).
4. **Data, Outcomes & Evaluation:** artistic disciplines, an estimated number of participants and their demographics, outcome goals, and evaluation plans. This is considered public information, and your responses are shared with the Minnesota State Arts Board. If awarded funds, you will be required to submit a final

report that includes whether you achieved your stated goals and the results of your evaluation plan.

Application Instructions

Step 1. Create an account with MRAC's online Submittable portal

MRAC uses Submittable for all our grant applications. If you are a first-time applicant, you should create a Submittable account with your email address.

Use an email address you check frequently, as all our correspondence about your application will be sent through Submittable.

Note: Be sure to "safelist" notification emails from Submittable and check your inbox frequently. You can learn how to do so in this [**Submittable safelist email explanation article**](#). MRAC staff may reach out with questions or request additional information. If we do not hear from you within the timeline provided in the email, your application may be deemed ineligible.

If you are considering applying, we encourage you to make an account and review the application in Submittable when the application window opens on October 1, 2025. Familiarizing yourself with the Submittable interface can be useful when you are ready to input the information there!

Step 2. Fill out the FY26 Creative Connections Application in Submittable

The application in Submittable includes questions with checkboxes, date selection boxes, dropdown boxes, boxes for numbers, and text boxes for written answers. Additionally, you will need to type your proposal's planned expenses into the Budget Plan Spreadsheet.

Each text box will display a maximum character count, which is **inclusive** of letters, numbers, spaces, and paragraph breaks. There are no formatting options (bold or italics).

Do not include hyperlinks in narrative text boxes, as the review panelists will be limited to the content of your application. Any hyperlinks will be deleted and may affect your application's eligibility.

Certain application questions are only made available to view after you have answered prior questions, so it is best to fill out the application in order.

Submittable will auto-save your work every few minutes, and there is also a "save" button at the bottom of the form.

Step 3. Complete the application and hit "Submit"

You must answer every question marked "required" to complete the application. Be sure to double check all your answers, including budget amounts and totals, before you submit your application.

Once you submit your application, you **cannot make any changes** and **cannot resubmit an application in whole or in part**.

4.

Part 4: Application Assistance and Additional Resources

Part 4: Application Assistance and Additional Resources

Application Assistance

Email us at creativeconnections@mrac.org with any questions. Application assistance for Creative Connections opens Wednesday, October 1 at 9 am and closes Friday, November 7 at 5 pm.

MRAC staff are dedicated to creating an accessible application process for everyone. If you have any questions about accessibility or need an accommodation, please reach out to creativeconnections@mrac.org at least two weeks before the application deadline (by October 27, 2025). You can get assistance according to your preference, usually over email, phone, or Zoom.

To keep the process fair and balanced, staff may only provide application reviews related to eligibility. They cannot review content or make recommendations for improving the strength of the application.

Additional Resources

Below is a list of resources that can help you prepare your application. You will find all of them on the [Creative Connections webpage](#) once the application window opens on October 1, 2025.

Application Scoring Guide for Review Panelists

All eligible applications will be reviewed and scored by panel participants according to this guide.

Application Questions and Explanations

This document presents all the sections and questions so you can read through them beforehand. It also describes the reasons behind each question. The reasons for each question are provided in Submittable as you fill out the form online as well.

Please note that this is **not the application**.
You will need to fill out the form in Submittable.

Narrative Drafting Document

You can use this document to work on rough
drafts of your narrative answers.

Please note that this is **not the application**. If
you use this document to draft your answers,
you will need to transfer your answers to
Submittable.

Budget Plan Drafting Sheet

You can use this spreadsheet to estimate
your expenses before inputting them into
Submittable.