

Next Step Fund Scoring Guide for Review Panelists

About Next Step Fund

The Next Step Fund is made possible with support from the McKnight Foundation and provides up to \$6,000 to individual artists in any arts discipline. Requests must outline strategies that will help the applicant sustain the trajectory of their artistic career, overcome a barrier to success, and/or leverage a beneficial career opportunity.

The Next Step Fund Application

Each application requires the artist to answer specific questions about their artistic vision and practice, significant accomplishments, professional and/or artistic development goals, and current strategies or opportunities used to meet their goals.

Additionally, applicants describe the specific proposal for which they are seeking funding from MRAC, including proposal goals, major activities or tasks, and how the proposal aligns with their goals as an artist.

The applicant must also provide a detailed budget proposal that clearly aligns with their proposal narrative.

Finally, there will be up to five (5) work samples. These samples demonstrate how the artist has explored creating work that expresses their artistic vision and how their work reflects where they are in their artistic career. Work samples are not scored independently or based on quality.

Application Scoring Instructions

You will provide a score of 1 to 5 for six criteria, with 5 being the highest, for a possible maximum score of 30. Use the following scale:

5 = outstanding

4 = good/great

3 = average

2 = poor

1 = does not meet requirements

A highly rated application will give a clear and convincing view of who the artist is, what they create, their art career/professional development goals, and how the proposal will help them meet those goals.

You should review each application holistically, using all details provided by the applicant to make your scoring decisions.

Scoring Criteria

Each category reflects a different aspect of the application. Rate how well the applicant addressed each aspect, how clearly their proposal aligns with their stated artistic goals, and how much detail is provided about their proposal.

Sections of the application to review are suggested with the criteria, but you should review the application as a whole throughout.

For each criterion, you will provide a personal comment about your score, describing for the applicant what was done well or where there could be improvement, such as additional details or more specificity.

Artistic Vision (5 pts)

The applicant clearly defines work, artistic vision, and unique artistic or professional accomplishments. (About You section)

Artistic Goals and Career (5 pts)

The applicant clearly and convincingly states artistic and/or development goals in alignment with the artist's career stage. The applicant clearly identified opportunities or outlined strategies to reach their stated goals. (About You section)

Body of Work (5 pts)

The work samples clearly depict the applicant's artistic discipline(s) and are consistent with the art form(s) explored and stage of artistic development described in the application. The work samples show artistic potential and dedication to a creative practice. (Work Samples)

Note: work samples are not scored independently or for artistic quality, but to demonstrate artistic vision/creative process/career stage.

Proposal Idea (5 pts)

The proposal is a clear and compelling response to the unique goals of the applicant and is appropriate and timely for their current career stage. (Your Proposal section)

Proposal Goals (5 pts)

The proposal goals align with the artist's stated career goals and shows a clear plan to move toward achieving those goals. The proposal demonstrates how it will help the applicant maintain the trajectory of their artistic career, overcome a barrier to success, and/or leverage a beneficial career opportunity. (Your Proposal section)

Proposal Feasibility (5 pts)

The budget and timeline are thoughtful and will allow the artist to successfully complete the proposal. (Budget Plan Spreadsheet)