

METROPOLITAN



R E G I O N A L  
A R T S C O U N C I L

## *Next Step Fund*

*Funded by The McKnight Foundation\**

**Funds of up to \$5,000 to professional artists in any discipline for the purpose of career development and artistic achievement.**

### **Grant Guidelines and Application July 2011 – June 2012**

*\* to support an environment in which artists are valued leaders in our community, with access to the resources and opportunities they need to succeed.*

Metropolitan Regional Arts Council  
2324 University Avenue West, Suite 114  
St. Paul, MN 55114

651-645-0402

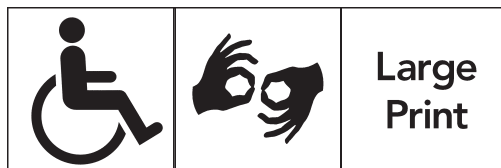
fax 651-523-6382

email: [mrac@mrac.org](mailto:mrac@mrac.org)

website: [www.mrac.org](http://www.mrac.org)

MN Relay Service, dial 7-1-1 (or 1-800-627-3529)

This information can be made available in the following alternative formats: Braille, large print, audio tape and computer disk. We also can help your group find a language interpreter to translate these guidelines. To accommodate your request, the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council will need at least 10 working days.



## WHO MRAC SERVES

MRAC serves Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington counties. We work in urban areas as well as greater metropolitan communities. We serve formal and informal groups with annual expenses less than \$400,000. Groups do not need to be classified as tax-exempt by the IRS in order to apply.

## MRAC'S VISION FOR THE METRO AREA



## MRAC'S MISSION

The Metropolitan Regional Arts Council increases access to the arts in 7-county metropolitan area communities by providing information, organizational support and grants.

## MRAC'S FUNDING SOURCES

As one of 11 regional arts councils in Minnesota, MRAC is funded by an appropriation from the Minnesota Legislature, the Legacy Amendment Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, and by the McKnight Foundation.

## WE'D LIKE TO GET TO KNOW YOU!

**Call us** - 651-645-0402

### Stop by the office

2324 University Avenue West, Suite 114  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55114

**E-mail us** - [mrac@mrac.org](mailto:mrac@mrac.org)

**Check out our website** - [www.mrac.org](http://www.mrac.org)

**Sign up for our monthly e-newsletter** at our website [www.mrac.org](http://www.mrac.org)

## WHAT MRAC OFFERS YOU

### Grant programs

**Community Arts**—up to \$5,000 for arts activities in all disciplines. Recommended for smaller arts groups; newly formed groups; community-based and volunteer groups; or first-time initiatives.

**Arts Activities Support**—up to \$10,000 for arts activities in all disciplines.

**Arts Learning**—up to \$10,000 for arts learning activities in all disciplines.

**Capital**—up to \$10,000 to purchase equipment and related supplies and services, or to make capital improvements.

**Organizational Development Project**—up to \$10,000 for projects that strengthen the management or administration of nonprofit arts groups.

**Creative Intersections**—up to \$15,000 to support innovative and effective partnerships that integrate arts and culture into plans for community development and enrichment.

**Next Step Fund**- *Funded by the McKnight Foundation*—up to \$5,000 for professional artists in any discipline for the purpose of career development and artistic achievement

**Management Consulting Fund**—up to \$1,500 for small management consulting projects designed to strengthen the management or administration of arts groups.

**Management Training Fund**—up to \$600 for staff and volunteers of nonprofit arts groups to attend management workshops, classes or seminars.

**Emergency ADA Access Fund**—up to \$600 for unforeseen project or program costs to facilitate access for persons with disabilities.

### Training, workshops and services

MRAC'S grant application workshops help applicants learn how to write a successful MRAC grant. MRAC's training programs and workshops provide opportunities to enhance management skills. All activities are detailed on our website. MRAC's website also provides links to resources of interest to MRAC constituents including PDF versions of most MRAC publications.

### Advocacy

MRAC is committed to giving voice to the needs of small and volunteer arts organizations throughout the metro area.

METROPOLITAN



REGIONAL  
ARTS COUNCIL

# CONTENTS

## GUIDELINES

Next Step Fund Program .....	2
• Program Description	
• Deadlines	
Eligibility.....	3
Before You Apply – Technical Assistance .....	4
How to Apply .....	5
Criteria .....	6
Résumé .....	7
Regional Arts Council Data .....	7
What Happens After You Apply? .....	8
Work Samples (required only of finalists) .....	9

# PART I GUIDELINES

## Next Step Fund Program Description

The Next Step Fund provides project grants up to \$5,000 to professional artists in any discipline for the purpose of career development and artistic achievement. Applicants can be at any stage of their career, but must demonstrate achievement in their artistic field and have a history of public presentation or community contribution. Successful projects will communicate a clearly defined set of activities that respond to a compelling challenge or opportunity for the individual applicant. MRAC will award approximately 30 Next Step grants in FY2011. Consequently, this will be a highly competitive program.

MRAC seeks to promote the incorporation of the arts into the daily lives of communities. By providing an artist with a Next Step grant, MRAC hopes to strengthen a metro region in which artists and creative communities thrive. While MRAC recognizes the need for sustained financial support for established artists, the limited resources in this program are focused on projects that promote professional advancement. This is not a fellowship program. An ideal Next Step project is one that helps an artist:

- overcome a barrier to significant, long-term success;
- professionalize or increase artistic output and quality;
- complete a project that marks a significant milestone in their career;
- reach a new community or market.

The following are some examples of eligible projects (this list is not intended to be exhaustive):

- The acquisition of equipment to help an artist increase quality, diversify or otherwise improve upon their artistic process or product.
- The development of a business plan or creation of promotional materials (e.g. a portfolio for a visual artist, a DVD for a performing artist, a CD for a musician or composer, etc.).
- Participation in a training, master class or workshop that will enhance the artist's abilities (enrollment in a degree or certificate program is not eligible).
- The production or presentation of a *significant work that represents a milestone* in an artist's career.
- The production or presentation of a work that reaches a new community or market (e.g. geographic region, cultural community, galleries, curators, professional network, etc.).

## Online Application Deadline

	<i>Application Deadline*</i>	<i>Panel Review</i>	<i>Award Notification</i>	<i>Earliest Project Start Date*</i>
Fiscal Year 2011-2012	11:59 P.M. March 5, 2012	June 14, 2012	June 27, 2012	June 27, 2012

\* MRAC does not fund projects that have already started. Please see page 8 for a definition of "earliest project start date."

# Eligibility

## Who does this program fund?

- Emerging, mid-career and established artists, working in any discipline, who have evidence of artistic excellence respective of their career stage.
- Applicants must have resided in Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott or Washington County during the entire year prior to the deadline (March 5, 2011 - March 5, 2012).
  - Projects do NOT need to take place within the seven-county metro area, but the outcomes must be of benefit to the region. For example, an artist may seek funds to exhibit work outside of the region, but they must explain how doing so is also a benefit to the seven-county Twin Cities metro area.
- Applicants must be 18 years of age or older.

## Who does this program NOT fund?

- Individuals seeking to begin a career as an artist, or make a professional transition to the arts. Finalists will be asked to submit professional work samples demonstrating artistic excellence.
- Artists currently enrolled in a degree or certification program in his/her respective art form, unless the applicant can prove they maintain a career as a professional artist outside of their educational program.
- Arts administrators seeking support for their administrative profession.

## What does this program NOT fund?

- Projects being produced by an organization. This program provides support for the professional and artistic development of an artist independent from their organizational identity. For example, a choreographer may apply for an independent study, but not to produce or stage a work marketed as a production of their dance company. MRAC has other grant programs to fund arts projects of organizations.
- Fellowship support to sustain an established artist's profession. There must be a clearly defined project that helps an artist take the "Next Step" in their career.
- Activities that engage in political lobbying, serve the religious socialization of participants or discriminate against persons or groups.

## How many Next Step Fund Grants may an individual receive?

Individuals are welcome to submit one (1) Next Step grant application per MRAC fiscal year. Applicants who are awarded funding are NOT eligible to apply the following MRAC fiscal year.

# Before You Apply – Technical Assistance

## **Application Workshops**

MRAC offers free application workshops that address the application process and criteria specific to the Next Step Fund grant program. You are encouraged to attend a workshop to gain a deeper understanding of the program, learn about changes in programs, get questions answered. Application workshops will be held in the beginning of February. Dates and locations will be posted on our website by January 3rd.

## **Grant Library**

MRAC maintains a library of successful Next Step Fund grant applications and recorded panel discussions. Applicants are encouraged to review grant applications and panel discussions to enhance their understanding of the process and improve their applications.

## **Staff Assistance**

Application workshops, the grant library and the grant guidelines are your best resources for the Next Step Fund grant program. If you still have questions after utilizing these resources, MRAC has two program directors for the Next Step Fund who can answer technical questions prior to submission. Program Directors are unable help with the design of your project or give feedback on draft proposals.

For applicants in Carver, Dakota, Ramsey, Scott, Suburban Hennepin and Washington counties, please contact Bob Burns, bob@mrac.org or 651-523-6386.

For applicants in Anoka county and Minneapolis, please contact Greg Nielsen, greg@mrac.org or 651-523-6381.

## **Website**

Visit [www.mrac.org](http://www.mrac.org) to find additional information about MRAC programs, workshops and events, and to register for application workshops.

# How to Apply?

The Next Step Fund application must be completed and submitted using an online application process. We will not accept submissions in any other format, including email. MRAC uses software developed by Foundant Technologies to manage its online applications. To submit an online application, you must have a user account.

## To log in to your Foundant account or set up a user account.

- Go to the MRAC website ([www.mrac.org](http://www.mrac.org))
- Hover the mouse over “**Grants**” in the navigation bar.
- Click on “**Next Step Fund – Individual Artists**”
- Click on the link under “**How to apply**”.
- Click “**Log On**” or “**Create New Account**”\*

OR

- Go to <https://www.grantinterface.com/common/logon.aspx?urlkey=mrac>
- Click “**Log On**” or “**Create New Account**”\*

\* if you have previously applied to the Next Step Program, please use the same account. If you forgot which email address you used for your account, please contact MRAC.

## Registering a ‘New User’ account

To register a new user account, perform the following steps:

- Go to <https://www.grantinterface.com/common/logon.aspx?urlkey=mrac>
- Click on the button labelled “Create New Account.”
- Complete the registration form. All fields marked with an asterisk (\*) are required fields.
- DO NOT forget your registered email and password, as you will need this information whenever you access your draft application, or should you apply again in the future.

## Opening a new grant application to the Next Step Fund

To open a new application to the Next Step Fund, go to:

<https://www.grantinterface.com/common/logon.aspx?urlkey=mrac>, log on using your email address and password, then:

- Look to the “requests” list located on the left side of the screen.
- Click on the link titled, “Apply.” Doing so will take you to the “Application Page.”
- Click on the link titled, “McKnight Next Step Fund.” Doing so opens an application form.

## Completing the application form

TIP: The online application form allows for you to periodically save your work. Once saved, you may log off and return at a later time to complete the application. There are two buttons on the application form page (located at the top and bottom) that allow you to save. They are labelled “Save As Draft.”

## Submitting your completed application

- When finished, click the “Submit Form” button located at the bottom of the page. IMPORTANT! Your application will not be eligible if you do not officially submit your application by 11:59 p.m. on the day of the deadline. Also, once you click “Submit Form” you will no longer be able to access and edit your application. DO NOT click “Submit Form” until you are finished with the draft!

# Criteria

The narrative portion of the application is the foundation for the panel's review of your application. The first criterion will focus on you, the artist. The second will define the project for which you are seeking support. Each criterion will be submitted as a text field on the online application form. You may prepare your responses in another software program (e.g. Microsoft Word), and cut-and-paste your responses. However, please note the character limit for each criterion, detailed below.

## The Artist

Use this section to describe your artistic vision, your body of work, and your professional goals. This section may be very similar to an artist statement, but should also emphasize professional accomplishments that evidence your body of work, the stage of your career, and connection to community.

**(No more than 4,000 characters - approximately one page)**

- Describe your work and your artistic vision. Briefly note any significant accomplishments that demonstrate achievement in your artistic field. (This will also be evidenced in your résumé). How does your art have a life 'outside of the studio' (i.e. connection to community)?
- What are your career goals, both professional and artistic? Where are you in meeting those goals (i.e. evidence of career stage)?
- What significant barriers or unique opportunities exist that hinder or would help you in achieving your goals? Instead of focusing on "a lack of money," re-frame the discussion on those opportunities that would be available were money not a factor.

## The Project

This section should focus on the project for which you are seeking funding. Be as specific as possible, and be sure to make a strong connection between the proposed project and your unique needs as an artist.

**(No more than 4,000 characters - approximately one page)**

- Describe the project for which you are seeking funding. Please be specific.
- How will this project help you advance artistically and professionally? Please be sure to relate this discussion to your artistic and professional goals, respective of your career stage (i.e. emerging, mid-career or established).
- Projects should be manageable in scope relative to the \$5,000 award. Although a detailed budget is not required, it will be helpful to the panel if you briefly note the major expenses and timeline related to this project. If more than \$5,000 is required, what additional sources of income will be secured?

**For projects taking place outside the metro area:** If your project takes place in or is intended to help you reach a community outside the seven-county metro area of Minnesota, you *must* identify the connection between the project and your career as a metro area-based artist (i.e. how will this project strengthen your work or presence in the Twin Cities).

# Résumé

Your résumé can be no more than two (2) pages in length. You will submit your résumé via an upload to the online application form.

**About the résumé:** Please include a résumé that lists your professional experience and successes, achievements, publications, honors, credentials, education, work experience (if relevant), etc. This résumé should evidence achievement in your artistic discipline, and demonstrate a history of public presentation or community contribution. The panel will use this résumé to help evaluate:

- your degree of achievement in your artistic discipline;
- your history of public presentation or community contribution, respective of your career stage;
- your artistic and professional goals in the context of your career stage;
- whether your proposed project is appropriate, given your professional history.

## **About the upload process:**

Your résumé must be a Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, or Portable Document Format (PDF) file before uploading.

If it is not in one of these formats, panelists will not be able to read your résumé, and you will be deemed ineligible. If you only have a paper version of your résumé, you may perform a “Fax to File” function through the application website. Fax to File is a feature that will provide you with a PDF file for a document faxed to a temporary number. To perform a Fax to File:

- Go to <https://www.grantinterface.com/common/logon.aspx?urlkey=mrac>, and log in using your email address and password.
- Go to the “tools” menu list on the left side of the webpage.
- Click “Fax to File.”
- Follow the instructions.
- Do not forget to upload the resulting PDF document to your application form. *The Fax to File feature does not automatically upload your résumé to your application.*

## **To upload your résumé:**

- Open your draft online application form (see “How to Apply,” page 5 for more info).
- Scroll down to the application form’s section titled “Résumé.”
- In the section titled “Résumé upload,” click the button titled “Browse...”
- Select your document as you would when attaching a document to an email.
- Once selected, you must click the “Save As Draft” button to complete the upload. At this point your draft application should list the name of your uploaded beneath the “Browse...” button. You can replace this uploaded document at any time before submitting. To do so, simply redo the steps above.

# Regional Arts Council (RAC) Data

MRAC is required to collect demographic data for all its applicants. The information listed in the section titled “Regional Arts Council (RAC) Data Form” will not be considered by panelists as part of their review of your application. If an audience field does not apply to your project, simply enter “0”.

# What Happens After You Apply?

- MRAC staff reviews all applications for eligibility. Applications that do not follow format (e.g. submitting a résumé longer than two pages) may be deemed ineligible.
- A peer review panel reviews all eligible applications based upon the program criteria (see page 6). Panelists will rate each application on a scale of 1-10 (10 being high). This step will be performed through the online site.
- A smaller selection of the highest rated recipients will be asked to submit work samples for a final review. Finalists must submit work samples within one week of notification. Finalists will then be re-evaluated by the panelists with work samples providing context to the written application.
- The panel submits recommendations to the MRAC board of directors, which makes the final decisions on funding.
- Within 30 days of the final panel review, applicants receive a letter notifying them of the board's decision. A list of funded applications is also posted on the MRAC website.
- 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 your application. Appellants must request an appeal in writing within 30 days of notification of the board decision. Call MRAC at 651-645-0402 for a copy of the appeal process.

## Definitions

### **What determines a project's start date?**

MRAC does not fund projects that are already under way. For the Next Step Fund program, MRAC will not reimburse artists for activities and their related expenses that have already taken place. However, eligible activities may be part of a larger project.

# Work Samples (only required of finalists)

Please review all information carefully. Only those applicants who are invited to the second round of review will be asked to submit a work sample.

Your narrative response to the grant criteria will remain the foundation for the panel's review of your request. Work samples, like the résumé, provide the review panel with context to your previously submitted written application. Therefore, your work sample should correspond as closely as possible to the application request. Generally, samples should be of work completed within the past four years.

All work samples must be submitted electronically through the MRAC Dropbox account. Dropbox is a file hosting service operated by Dropbox, Inc., which uses cloud computing to enable users to store and share files and folders with others across the Internet using file synchronization. In less technical terms, it is "a web-based folder that we share." The use of Dropbox will not only save time, but will also eliminate the environmental waste caused by disposable CDs and DVDs.

Detailed instructions as to how to submit using Dropbox will be sent to finalists.

You may submit your work sample using ONE of the following mediums. Please choose the medium that you feel best represents your project:

- Audio
- Video
- Digital Image
- PDF
- URL (must comply with formatting rules for the above mediums)

## Formatting Requirements

### Audio

- Work sample of 3 – 5 minutes in length.
- Work samples must already be cued to the start point and may not exceed 5 minutes in length.
- Files must be in an unprotected music format and MAY NOT BE a DRM protected music file (such as M4P, M4A, WMA, M4B).
- If you are performing with others, describe yourself to help the panel identify you. For example, "I am playing the violin," or "I am the lead singer."

### Video

- Work sample of 3 – 5 minutes in length.
- Work samples must already be cued to the start point and may not exceed 5 minutes in length.
- Must be a MPEG (.mpg) file.
- If you are performing with others, describe yourself to help the panel identify you. For example, "I am the performer in the green costume," or "I am the character named Joe," or "I am playing the violin," or "I am the lead singer."

### Digital Image

Submit up to six (6) digital images.

- Formatted as a jpeg (.jpg) file.
- Formatted to open directly to the proper viewing orientation (vertical or horizontal).
- Saved at the highest quality in your software program.
- Do not embed images in PowerPoint, MS Word, or Adobe.

Try previewing your images on a different computer if possible to make sure the images are readable. Images that cannot be opened, or are formatted improperly, will not be viewed by the panel

### PDF

- Written material must be submitted as a .pdf file.
- Maximum of five (5) pages.
- Formatted, double-spaced on 8 1/2" x 11" paper with a minimum one-inch margin on all sides.
- Font size must be 12 pt. or larger.

### URL

- The URL address must be submitted as a hot link imbedded in a .pdf file.
- The URL link must comply with the formatting rules of allowable work sample mediums (Audio, Video, Digital Image, PDF).
- Panelists will spend no more than 5 minutes reviewing the URL.
- URLs that cannot be opened, or are formatted improperly, will not be viewed by the panel.

### **Retention of Work Samples**

- All work samples remain the property of the artist.
- Work samples will be deleted from the MRAC Dropbox once the MRAC board has approved panel recommendations.

\* If a work sample is not available, contact the MRAC staff to discuss alternatives.