



Preliminary Biennial Plan – 3.12.25

Mission

SEMAC exists to encourage, promote, and assist regional arts development by providing leadership, outreach, advocacy, mentorship, grants, and services.

Region

SEMAC has served as the designated regional arts council for Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, and Winona counties, including the Prairie Island Indian Community since 1977.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2022 numbers, the total population of the 11-county region is 520,313, which is just over 9% of Minnesota's total population. 83.3% of the population is white, 6.4% is Hispanic, 4.4% is Black, 3.6% is Asian, 1.9% is of two or more races, .4% is American Indian and Native Alaskan, and .1% is Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. 5.4% of the population are veterans, 10.3% are people with disabilities (all ages), 18.9% are seniors, and 9.3% are living in poverty. The top three non-English languages spoken in the region are Hmong, Somali, and Spanish. In the last election, the region voted overwhelmingly conservative. Of the 23 State Senators and Representatives currently representing the region, 18 are affiliated with the Republican Party.

Rochester, the third largest city in the state with a population of more than 121,000, is centrally located in the region. There are also several mid-size towns, including Albert Lea, Austin, Faribault, Northfield, Owatonna, Red Wing, and Winona, which each have populations of between 16,500 and 27,000. However, the region is primarily rural with many small towns that have fewer than 5,000 residents, including Caledonia, Chatfield, Mantorville, and Zumbrota, and dozens of even smaller towns with populations under 1,000, including Lanesboro which has 723 residents.

The region is home to the Mayo Clinic, one of the State's largest employers, and to Hormel Foods, which is an economic driver and philanthropic entity impacting Mower County in particular. The 11-county region has forty-three K-12 school districts, four community college campuses, and five colleges and universities. The Minnesota State Academies for the Deaf and the Blind are located in the region. The region also boasts access to nature, including 11 State Parks, the Zumbro River and Root River watersheds, and the Mississippi River runs along its eastern border.

There are several vibrant arts communities in the region, each with multiple arts organizations, support from local non-arts groups, and active communities of artists working in multiple disciplines. Noteworthy among these are Lanesboro, Northfield, Red Wing, Rochester, and Winona.

The majority of arts organizations in the region are small and have limited, if any, paid staff and are mainly managed by volunteers. However, there are also many large arts organizations, 18 of which recently were awarded Operating Support grants from the Minnesota State Arts Board. A total of 114 arts organizations who have sought support from SEMAC since July 2015 are registered in the grant interface.

Needs Assessment

SEMAC's FY2026-2027 Biennial Plan was informed by the results of an on-line Needs Assessment Survey as well as by information and feedback gathered through nearly 100 one-on-one conversations SEMAC's executive director engaged in with artists, arts administrators, directors of nonprofit non-arts organizations, teachers, and other community leaders throughout the 11-county region since June 2023 when she was hired. Board members also met with individuals in their counties and submitted written notes to be considered.

The Needs Assessment Survey was written by the executive director and members of an ad hoc committee of the Board and was open from September 15 through October 31, 2024. It was publicized through multiple channels including SEMAC's October e-newsletter and two e-mail blasts, each of which was sent to more than 1,200 contacts; several social media posts from September 25 through October 31 on Facebook and Instagram; a month-long Meta ad in October targeting specific zip codes throughout the region; and press releases sent to 37 media outlets. The Meta ad resulted in 18,692 impressions and 265 clicks on the link. To supplement these publicity efforts, staff, Board, and Arts Advisory Panel members sent direct e-mails with information about and a link to the Survey to their friends and colleagues.

In total, we received 223 responses to the Survey in the following categories: 50 from individual artists, 34 from grant coordinators from arts organizations, 14 from grant coordinators from non-arts organizations, 51 from those with other paid or volunteer roles at arts or non-arts organizations, 14 from people with previous ties to SEMAC or to another arts or non-arts organization, and 60 from individuals who selected "none of the above". SEMAC's staff and Board were impressed with the number of responses which more than doubled our expectations and pleased with the distribution of these across categories.

Key Findings

While survey respondents had a generally favorable view of SEMAC (for example, 63% of respondents ranked interactions with SEMAC staff as "excellent" and a majority of arts

organizations felt SEMAC's current programs served the region well), several key areas for improvement were identified by staff and Board after review of SEMAC's Needs Assessment Survey report:

- **Increase Awareness of SEMAC and Engagement with Underrepresented Groups** (Addressed in Work Plan Priority #1)
 - Low survey participation from counties other than Olmsted and Winona, indicating SEMAC's low engagement with those counties
 - Low survey participation from BIMPOC individuals (4% of survey respondents vs. 16.7% living in our region according to US Census 2022), indicating SEMAC's low engagement with these groups
 - Low awareness of SEMAC and of its programs (25% of unaffiliated respondents indicated they were completely unaware of SEMAC)
 - Limited rural/small town arts opportunities
 - Rural communities need more encouragement and example projects

- **Adjust Grant Amounts** (Addressed in Work Plan Priority #3)
 - 46% of respondents overall wanted larger grant amounts (rising expenses are a concern and organizations want to keep their programs affordable)
 - A desire for smaller grant amounts also was expressed, for individual artists through a simpler application process as a way of encouraging young/new artists to apply and for organizations (esp. for very small organizations, \$5,000 can be more than they need/can manage)
 - Organizations expressed interest in more flexibility with the grant structure and amounts
 - Arts organizations also expressed a need for support in addition to programming grants, things such as staff trainings and strategic planning particularly to address the changes causing stress on the arts post-COVID

- **Improve Application, Grant Review Process, Capstone Requirement, and Reporting** (Addressed in Work Plan Priority #3)
 - Feedback from organizations on grant application and reporting process included many who said the application process was moderately difficult or difficult, and that the reporting process was difficult or very difficult
 - Comments that panel members are biased and do not read applications carefully
 - Artists and small organizations requesting more grant writing support
 - Requirement of Capstone Event for individual artists can be burdensome – need for more flexibility

- **Provide Opportunities for Professional Development and Networking for Artists** (Addressed in Work Plan Priority #2)
 - Requests for more professional development opportunities for individuals
 - Requests for more professional development opportunities for organizations (specifically mentioned marketing/communications, budgeting/financial reporting, Board training, volunteer recruitment and retention, and strategic planning)
 - Requests for more networking opportunities for artists
 - Interest in networking, collaboration, and shared resources among arts organizations

- **Improve Communications and Website** (Addressed in Work Plan Priority #1)
 - Respondents indicated they would like SEMAC's help promoting arts activities in the region (including social media, local promotions, and an arts calendar)
 - Several comments that SEMAC's website is difficult to navigate

These findings support similar feedback the Executive Director received during her one-on-one meetings. Additional takeaways were:

- **Networking** (Addressed in Work Plan Priority #1) Facilitate conversations designed to allow participants to communicate with others in the region on specific issues, challenges, and actions most relevant to them.
- **Art, Nature, and Wellness** (Addressed in Work Plan Priority #1) Strong interest among arts and non-arts organizations in interdisciplinary partnerships exploring the intersection of art, nature, and wellness.
- **School Residency Grants** (Addressed in Work Plan Priority #4) From teachers and school administrators when asked about low demand for the school residency program: there is a strong interest in having students interact with artists and exposing students to new art forms and processes, but the main obstacle to schools applying is limited time.
- **Support for Young Artists** (Addressed in Work Plan Priority #4) Explore offering small grants to individuals (i.e. \$1,000) with a simplified application process and without a capstone event requirement aimed at supporting artists and culture bearers who may just be graduating or starting out in their art career. This would introduce them to applying for grants and provide them with the income or resources they need to continue making work. Various other ideas emerged about ways SEMAC could support younger and new artists in addition to grants, such as mentorships, cohorts, etc.

Description of the planning process

Although the opportunity to develop this Biennial Plan and envision the future of SEMAC was on the mind of the new executive director the day she was hired in June 2023, the planning process formally began on December 10, 2024, with a day-long in-person meeting of SEMAC's three staff members, contracted communications manager, and chair of the Board to review and discuss the results of the Needs Assessment Survey (see attachment in Needs Assessment section above.) A summary of these results was presented to the full Board at their December 17 meeting, with the majority of that meeting devoted to discussing the report and identifying key findings to be reflected in SEMAC's Plan.

With these key findings in mind, the executive director drafted Work Plan Priorities with the staff and presented these to the Board at their meeting on January 14, 2025. In response to the Board's input and in consideration of the organization's capacity and resources, staff continued to review and edit these throughout the planning process.

Also at the January Board meeting, we heard from invited guest Andi Sutton, Executive Director of the Southeast Regional Sustainable Development Partnership with the University of Minnesota Extension, who presented the findings of a recent study she conducted with the Southeast Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) and the Center for Urban Regional Affairs (CURA), *Pathways to Prosperity: Evaluating Collaboration Opportunities for Southeast and South Central Minnesota Funders to Better Serve Inclusion and Equity-Focused Grantees*. The goal of this study was to identify how Southern Minnesota funders could best equip resilient communities-focused organizations that are BIPOC-led and BIPOC serving to realize their goals and spark transformative change at the community level.

Sutton shared eight primary findings from the study: traditional philanthropy is failing BIPOC-led organizations in that it favors well-resourced groups; short-term funding = short-term impact; funders need to trust BIPOC-led organizations to lead change; one size does not fit all, i.e. rural and urban organizations have different needs; risk-averse funders are stifling innovation; reporting burden hurts impact; relationships matter more than metrics; and be aware of "equity talk" without "equity walk". She also shared recommendations from the study for funders: provide technical support, offer flexible funding, develop relational strategies, increase cultural awareness, and advocate for systems change. Although SEMAC acknowledges this work is never done and there is a lot we have yet to learn, the findings of the study are reflected in the Biennial Plan, primarily with its focus on outreach and inclusion, as well as simplifying the grant process and offering more grant writing support.

Grants Committee meetings in January and February focused on discussions of possible changes to SEMAC's grant programs in response to the Needs Assessment. A final draft describing the updated grants programs was finalized by the executive director and Committee members via e-mail throughout February.

On February 27, a meeting was held for Board members to review the final drafts of the Work Plan Priorities, Program Information, and Budget sections of the Biennial Plan. Seven of eleven members attended, and one additional member submitted notes.

On March 3, the Grants Committee reviewed a final draft of the grants programs and provided input on final questions regarding the new programs.

The executive director was primarily responsible for creating the budgets for FY2026 and 2027 to align with the Plan. She worked with a financial consultant at Propel NonProfits.

On March 11, the Board approved the preliminary plan. The plan was posted on the SEMAC website on March 13. This and the public meeting were publicized in the March e-newsletter sent to more than 1,200 contacts, in an e-mail blast, in a social media post, and through an ad buy on Facebook. Staff and board also sent direct e-mails to colleagues and community leaders inviting them to share their thoughts. A link to a Google Form was provided for written feedback or questions.

Work Plan for Grants, Programs, and Services

SEMAC will promote regional arts development in FY 2026 – 2027 by offering financial support to artists and culture bearers, non-profit arts organizations, and non-arts organizations through six grant programs; by providing services to artists, culture bearers, and organizations such as grant writing workshops and professional development opportunities; and by promoting arts activities to the general public through a monthly e-newsletter and an on-line regional arts calendar. (A complete list of services is in the Program Information attachment.)

The six grant programs SEMAC will offer in FY 2026 – 2027 are Project Support for Individual Artists and Culture Bearers, Rural Arts, Artists and Culture Bearers in the Schools, Programming Support for Organizations, Organizational Sustainability and Capacity Building for Arts Organizations, and General Operating Support for Arts Organizations. Noteworthy changes made to the grant programs as a result of the Needs Assessment as compared to the previous biennium include:

- grant amounts were increased for individuals and organizations
- individuals may apply to the Rural Arts Grant and this grant now requires a collaboration with one or more community organizations to ensure even the smallest communities in our region receive funding and to promote community-building through the arts
- individuals may apply for the Artists and Culture Bearers in the Schools grant, which will remove primary responsibility for this residency program from teachers and potentially increase the number of opportunities for K-12 students to interact with artists and culture bearers

- a new grant program was developed, Organizational Sustainability and Capacity Building, to provide support arts organizations expressed needing to ensure their stability and future strength

With the addition of an Outreach and Accessibility Manager to the staff, SEMAC's capacity to offer services has expanded significantly. We will offer more one-on-one grant coaching, develop and circulate a resource list for artists and culture bearers, increase the number of grant-writing workshops annually, and identify ways to make our programs and services more accessible. In partnership with Springboard for the Arts, Propel NonProfits, and Minnesota Association for Volunteer Advancement, SEMAC will improve upon our previous artist workshops and expand to include workshops for arts organizations.

In the previous biennium, SEMAC made improvements to its communications and promotions through an e-newsletter sent to more than 1,200 contacts monthly, social media, and printed postcards and handouts. In response to the Needs Assessment, we will continue this work to increase awareness of SEMAC and encourage participation in the arts with an on-line regional arts calendar to be promoted to the general public.

SEMAC is committed providing grants and services with a goal of equity and inclusion. This spring, we will see the results of the Equity Audit that Exposed Brick Theatre was hired to conduct by the Forum of Regional Arts Councils (FRACM). SEMAC will use the audit and the data we have collected on our grantmaking since FY 2023 to focus our outreach efforts. Our data show that, during that time period, 12.2% of SEMAC's grants to individuals were awarded to people of color, whereas the region's BIMPOC population is 16.8%. Looking at SEMAC's grantmaking history by county, we see that Dodge, Freeborn, Houston, Mower, Steele, and Wabasha are under-represented. These counties represent 32.6% of the region's population, whereas 19% of SEMAC's grants since FY 2023 were awarded to individuals and organizations in these counties.

The Work Plan Priorities, detailed actions, and measurable outcomes in the next section address the 25-year Arts Legacy goals.

Work Plan Priority #1 – Expand Outreach, Inclusion, and Accessibility Efforts

- Conduct targeted outreach to counties and communities historically underserved by SEMAC, including Prairie Island Indian Community
- Offer grant writing workshops for individuals and organizations on Zoom and in communities underserved by SEMAC in partnership with local organizations
- Partner with organizations serving underserved populations to provide grant coaching and language services to applicants
- Identify diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility goals for SEMAC and take steps to implement

- Expand SEMAC’s social media network and increase number of e-newsletter subscribers
- Improve regional arts calendar on website and promote this resource to the general public
- Develop interdisciplinary partnerships to engage the community in conversations about the role of art, nature, and wellness

Measurable outcome

New individuals and organizations from the counties and communities historically underserved by SEMAC will engage with SEMAC, as grant applicants, grant recipients, workshop participants, and partners, and there will be increased awareness within the general public both of SEMAC’s impact and of opportunities to participate in regional arts activities.

Which 25-year arts legacy outcome will this priority help achieve

People of all ages, ethnicities, and abilities participate in the arts.

Minnesotans believe the arts are vital to who we are.

Plan for measuring results

SEMAC will collect demographic information from applicants, workshop participants, and people who receive grant coaching and language services and compare this to similar data from previous years to track whether the number of new people from the counties and underserved communities being targeted has increased. SEMAC will pay close attention to the demographics of grantees to measure the results of our outreach efforts. Our goal will be to increase the percentage of grants awarded to BIMPOC individuals from the current measure of 12.2% to 15% and to raise the percentage of individual and organizational grants awarded to underserved counties from 19% to 24%. Increased numbers of e-newsletter recipients, social media followers, and people using the calendar on the website also will help measure how much the region believes the arts are vital to their lives.

Work Plan Priority #2 – Provide Professional Development and Networking Opportunities for Artists, Culture Bearers, and Organizations

- Offer professional development workshops for artists in partnership with Springboard for the Arts with facilitated opportunities for networking

- Offer arts management training opportunities for arts organizations in partnership with Propel Nonprofits and Minnesota Alliance for Volunteer Advancement (MAVA) with facilitated opportunities for networking
- Develop a resource list for artists with other grant opportunities, organizations offering professional support and training, residencies, etc.
- Identify a plan to coordinate in-person networking events and take steps to implement

Measurable outcome

Individual artists, culture bearers, and leaders of arts organizations will learn new skills and have access to information and resources that allow them to advance their personal careers and lead with confidence. Participants will feel connected to and supported by the regional arts community.

25-year arts legacy outcome

The arts thrive in Minnesota.

Plan for measuring results

We will distribute surveys following each workshop or training seeking input on skills and useful information gained by the participants and to learn if their connections in the region increased because of the networking opportunities included. The results will be shared with our contract partners and reviewed by SEMAC staff to inform future planning.

Work Plan Priority #3 – Administer Grant Programs with a Focus on Improving Processes

- Provide financial support in the form of grants to individual artists, culture bearers, arts organizations, and non-arts organizations (including schools, local government and tribal entities, etc.)
- Simplify grant applications and reporting requirements
- Improve website navigation and reduce accessibility barriers to grant information
- Review all e-mail templates used for grant communications for clarity and to ensure information is up to date
- Recruit new Arts Advisory Panel members to ensure diverse representation of arts expertise and cultural backgrounds, and participation from all 11 counties
- Continue diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-bias training for Panel members

Measurable outcome

Grant funds are awarded following SEMAC's policies and procedures, including the Conflict of Interest Policy, and a majority of applicants report that the process is uncomplicated and transparent.

25-year arts legacy outcome

People trust Minnesota's stewardship of public arts funding.

The arts are interwoven into every facet of community life.

People of all ages, ethnicities, and abilities participate in the arts.

Plan for measuring results

A survey will be sent to all applicants after each grant round seeking information about the application process. The Executive Director also will read all final reports and follow-up with applicants personally to learn more about their experience. On SEMAC's blog we also post monthly Impact Stories to share how particular grant-funded activities affected the artist, culture bearer, organization, audience, and community at large.

Work Plan Priority #4 – Ensure SEMAC Continues to be a Good Steward of Public Funds

- Hire a consultant to work with staff and Board to review and update bylaws, mission, vision, and goals, and to develop a long-range strategic plan
- Set a plan to celebrate SEMAC's 50th anniversary in FY2028
- Review, update, and consolidate organization's policies and procedures
- Evaluate General Operating Support Grant Program with changes to be implemented FY2028
- Assess Artists in the Schools Grant Program with changes to be implemented FY2027 or 2028
- Research and develop a micro-granting or guaranteed income program for individual artists and culture bearers to launch in FY2028
- Continue annual diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings for SEMAC staff and Board
- Establish a committee of the Board to develop equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility goals for SEMAC; integrate these throughout the work plan; and track progress

Measurable outcome

Work on this Priority will result in a long-range plan, easy to reference policies and procedures, improvements to the General Operating Support and Artists in the Schools Grant Programs, development of a new grant program to better serve individual artists and

culture bearers, and a continued commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility throughout SEMAC's work.

25-year arts legacy outcome

People trust Minnesota's stewardship of public arts funding.

Plan for measuring results

SEMAC will monitor participation numbers and frequency of engagement in our programs and services as an indication of support and trust among artists, community leaders, organizations, and the general public throughout our region.

Program Information

SEMAC will promote regional arts development in FY 2026 and 2027 by offering financial support totaling \$925,000 per year to artists and culture bearers, non-profit arts organizations, and non-arts organizations through these grant programs:

- 1) Project Grants for Individual Artists and Culture Bearers encourage individual artists and culture bearers to take the next step in their creative pursuits by providing the financial support needed to experiment, take on a challenge, or deepen their practice. The grant proposal must be to support the creation of new work and include an opportunity for public engagement with that work.
- 2) Rural Arts Grants bring arts experiences into the smallest rural communities in southeastern Minnesota with populations below 7,500. The lead applicant can be an individual artist or culture bearer living in the SEMAC region or a non-profit organization in the rural community where the project is proposed to take place. Proposed projects must include a collaboration with a local community partner – a non-profit organization, library, government department or agency, tribal entity, etc. – opportunities for active community engagement, and an accessible public event.
- 3) Artists and Culture Bearers in the Schools provide students in grades K-12 with opportunities to work directly with artists and culture bearers during the school day. Grant activities must supplement the school's arts curriculum and not be a substitute for these requirements. The lead applicant can either be an individual artist or culture bearer living in the SEMAC region or the school in which the residency will take place. Written acknowledgement from the secondary applicant (school or artist) confirming their commitment and role in the proposed activities is required. No public event is required however the participating school must agree to share the residency in their district's communications to families, with the School

Board, and with any local press contacts to raise awareness of the importance of the arts.

- 4) Programming Support Grants for Organizations support activities directly involved in the creation, performance, publication, and exhibition of the arts with a focus in one or more of the three key areas identified in the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund Legacy Amendment – Arts Access, Arts Education, and Cultural Heritage. Nonprofit arts and non-arts organizations (non-profits, schools, local government and tribal entities) are eligible to apply, and collaborations between arts and non-arts organizations are encouraged. An accessible public event is required.
- 5) Organizational Sustainability and Capacity Building Grants is a new program. It will provide the support nonprofit arts organizations need to adapt to change, work on new strategies, develop competencies, or improve processes and systems. Examples of eligible proposals include feasibility studies for accessibility, strategic planning, financial consultation, and professional development opportunities for staff. Proposals to purchase new equipment to be used for arts programming also will be considered, if the applicant can make a strong case for how it would increase the organization's ability to better serve the needs of its community and/or contribute to the future financial health of the organization. In addition to a written final report, representatives from organizations receiving this grant must participate in a public forum to share information gained and the impact of the grant on their organization.
- 6) General Operating Support Grants are available to nonprofit arts organizations with operating expenses of less than \$174,000 to strengthen and stabilize their organization by supporting administrative and other overhead expenses over the course of two years (biennial grant). Recipients of this grant must submit an interim report after Year One to receive Year Two payment.

Grant Making and Monitoring Process

Grant applications are posted 30 days prior to the submission deadline. Staff is available throughout that time period for questions and, if an applicant submits their application at least one week prior to the deadline, they can request the staff review it and provide input. Applicants also can request one-on-one grant coaching support.

Once an application is submitted, the Grants Program Manager reviews it to confirm the applicant is eligible, the application is complete, and the budget does not include disallowed expenses. The Executive Director then reviews the narrative sections of the application to ensure the proposed project does not break any rules.

Eligible applications for the Project Support for Individual Artists and Culture Bearers grants, Rural Arts grants, and Programming Support Grants for Organizations are assigned

to Arts Advisory Panel members for their review. Subcommittees of the Board review applications for the remaining grants programs, Artists and Culture Bearers in the Schools, Organizational Sustainability and Capacity Building, and General Operating Support. The Panel is comprised of artists, arts professionals, and other community members who support the arts and who live in the SEMAC region. Panelists may serve up to two consecutive three-year terms. Interested individuals apply to join the Panel. The Executive Director interviews the applicant and makes a recommendation to the Board for a vote.

Panelists and Board members are given three to four weeks to review the grants assigned to them independently. The Executive Director facilitates a meeting on Zoom during which the reviewers discuss each application based on the review criteria. These meetings are open to the public and recorded. The link to the recording and the panelists' written comments are shared with the applicants after awards are announced.

The following three criteria are used to review all grants: 1) artistic merit and quality of the project or program, 2) demand or need for the project or program by the applicant or by the constituents served, and 3) ability to accomplish the project or program they describe or the organizational goals as presented. At the conclusion of the public review meeting, each reviewer assigns a score from 1 – 5, with 5 being the highest, to each criterion for each application. The Grants Program Manager calculates the average score for each application and creates a list of applications in order from highest to lowest score. The Executive Director identifies the funding available for that grant round and then identifies which applications to present to the Board for approval by starting at the top and going down the list until funds run out. This list is presented to the Board for a vote.

It should be noted that the Panel and Board are asked to verbally declare conflicts of interest with a grant application prior to discussion of that application at the panel review meeting and prior to any discussion or vote on that application at the Board meeting. Panel members or Board members with a conflict are assigned to a breakout room on Zoom. If a meeting is held in-person, the person with a conflict will be required to leave the room.

Awards are announced the day after the Board meeting at which the applications were approved. Applicants are notified at that time as well and those receiving grants are sent a contract. Within two weeks after the contract is signed, the grant check is mailed. The earliest start date for a grant project is 90 days after the submission deadline.

Grantees are required to follow the terms of their contracts and to submit a final report within 30 days after their stated end date. The form for this is made available to them on the grant interface as soon as the contract is signed, allowing them to preview the information they will be asked to provide. If as the project unfolds the applicant must make a change to the budget, timeframe, or another aspect of the proposed project, they must submit a Request to Modify for the approval of the Executive Director. In addition to the final report serving as a source of information about the outcomes of a grant funded project, Board members attend public activities for these projects in the county they represent and submit a Monitoring Report Form. This form asks if SEMAC was acknowledged and if the project was what they expected from having read the grant proposal. It is reviewed by the

Executive Director and shared with the full Board. Staff also attend grantees' activities and report on them to the Board.

See the attachment for more details about SEMAC's grantmaking process, application requirements, scoring rubrics, terms of the grant contract, and responsibility of grantees. By-laws also are included.

Grant Program Descriptions

See below for eligibility guidelines and rules, grant project restrictions, disallowed expenses, and review criteria applicable to all grant programs.

Project Support for Individual Artists and Culture Bearers

These project grants are meant to encourage individual artists and culture bearers to take the next step in their creative pursuits by providing the financial support needed to experiment, take on a challenge, or deepen their practice. Individuals creating new work in all disciplines, including but not limited to, painting, photography, printmaking, textiles, music, dance, theater, performance, storytelling, literary arts, intermedia arts, and traditional arts are encouraged to apply.

There are two categories for these project grants: Emerging Artists may apply for \$2,000 - \$4,000 and Advancing Artists may apply for \$3,000 - \$6,000. To be eligible to apply as an Advancing Artist, an applicant must demonstrate that they have received regional or national recognition for their previous work.

The grant proposal must be to support the creation of new work and include an opportunity for public engagement with that work. This public component could be an exhibition, a performance, a reading, or another in-person activity, or it could be a series of events. As long as this component is accessible and meaningfully engages the general public, the applicant can determine the format that best supports their project. The applicant will be asked in the grant application to identify a specific date for the public component for SEMAC to use for promotion and to send a representative to monitor.

Applicants who apply to present, adapt, or translate existing work such as a piece of music, a play, etc. will be asked to describe why they chose that specific work, how their choice advances their own creative pursuits, and how the proposed project fulfills the grant program's focus to support the creation of new work. If you have any questions about this requirement, please contact the office before applying.

Individual Artists and Culture Bearers Grants are offered two times annually with submission deadlines of July 28 and January 28. The earliest start date for a grant submitted July 28 is November 1 and for a grant submitted January 28 the earliest start date is May 1.

Rural Arts Grants

These project grants are meant to bring arts experiences into the smallest rural communities in southeastern Minnesota with populations below 7,500. Eligible projects can be in any discipline, including but not limited to, painting, photography, printmaking, textiles, music, dance, theater, performance, storytelling, literary arts, intermedia arts, and traditional arts.

The lead applicant can be an individual artist or culture bearer living in the SEMAC region or a non-profit organization in the rural community where the project is proposed to take place. Proposed projects must include a collaboration with a local community partner – a non-profit organization, library, government department or agency, tribal entity, etc. – opportunities for active community engagement, and an accessible public event. Grant amounts range from \$3,000 - \$6,000.

Rural Arts Grants are offered two times annually with submission deadlines of September 30 and March 30. The earliest start date for a grant submitted September 30 is January 1 and for a grant submitted March 30 the earliest start date is July 1. Partner organizations may not submit for the same project during the same grant round.

For inspiration, artists and community leaders interested in this grant program are encouraged to see these resources: *Heartland, Heartwork: A Field Guide to Place and Possibility for Rural Leaders* published by Springboard for the Arts (springboardforthearts.org/books/) and the Department of Public Transformation's Activate Rural program (publictransformation.org/activate-rural).

Artists and Culture Bearers in the Schools

These residency grants are meant to provide students in grades K-12 with opportunities to work directly with artists and culture bearers during the school day. Grant activities must supplement the school's arts curriculum and not be a substitute for these basic requirements and can be in any discipline, including but not limited to, painting, photography, printmaking, textiles, music, dance, theater, performance, storytelling, literary arts, intermedia arts, and traditional arts.

The lead applicant for this grant can either be an individual artist or culture bearer living in the SEMAC region or the school in which the residency will take place. Written acknowledgement from the secondary applicant (school or artist) confirming their commitment and role in the proposed activities is required. Grant amounts range from \$2,000 - \$4,000.

No public event is required however the participating school must agree to share the residency in their district's communications to families, with the School Board, and with any local press contacts to raise awareness of the importance of the arts.

Artists and Culture Bearers in the Schools Grant applications open August 1 annually and are accepted until the funds are spent. Applications received by the first of each month will be reviewed that month and applicants will be notified by the end of the following month. The earliest start date for a residency must be 90 days from the first of the month when the application is reviewed. (For example, if an application is submitted September 1, the applicant will receive notice by October 31 and the earliest start date for the residency would be December 1.)

Programming and Project Support for Organizations

These grants are meant to support activities directly involved in the creation, performance, publication, and exhibition of the arts with a focus in one or more of the three key areas identified in the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund Legacy Amendment – Arts Access, Arts Education, and Cultural Heritage. Nonprofit arts and non-arts organizations (non-profits, schools, local government and tribal entities) are eligible to apply and collaborations between arts and non-arts organizations are encouraged. An accessible public event is required.

Proposed budgets should give priority to paying fees to artists, creative production team members, and people providing technical support to help create and support a thriving arts ecosystem throughout southeastern Minnesota.

Grant amounts range from \$3,000 - \$11,000 per application. Arts organizations receiving Operating Support from MSAB are eligible to receive one grant per year for up to \$11,000. All other arts organizations are eligible to receive two grants per year for a maximum total of up to \$16,000. These arts organizations may use a fiscal sponsor. Non-arts organizations with 501(c)3 status are eligible to receive one grant per year for up to \$6,000. Partner organizations may not submit for the same project during the same grant round.

Programming and Project Support for Organizations Grants are offered two times annually with submission deadlines of September 30 and March 30. The earliest start date for a grant submitted September 30 is January 1 and for a grant submitted March 30 the earliest start date is July 1.

Organizational Sustainability and Capacity Building

These grants are meant to provide the support nonprofit arts organizations need to adapt to change, work on new strategies, develop competencies, or to improve processes and systems.

Examples of eligible proposals include feasibility studies for accessibility, strategic planning, financial consultation, and professional development opportunities for staff. Proposals to purchase new equipment to be used for arts programming also will be considered, if the applicant can make a strong case for how it would increase the

organization's ability to better serve the needs of its community and/or contribute to the future financial health of the organization. In addition to a written final report, representatives from organizations receiving this grant must participate in a public forum to share information gained and the impact of the grant on their organization.

Arts organizations with 501(c)3 status are eligible to apply. Grant amounts range from \$1,000 - \$5,000. Grant recipients may reapply every three years, i.e. an organization receiving this grant in FY2026 may not apply again until FY2029.

This grant opportunity is limited to between 5 and 10 awards annually. Organizational Sustainability and Capacity Building Grant applications open January 1 annually and are accepted until the funds are spent. Applications received by the first of each month will be reviewed that month and applicants will be notified by the end of the following month. The earliest start date for use of the grant funds must be 90 days from the first of the month when the application is reviewed. (For example, if an application is submitted February 1, the applicant will receive notice by March 31 and the earliest start date for the residency would be May 1.)

General Operating Support

Nonprofit arts organizations with operating expenses of less than \$174,000 are invited to apply for these grants to strengthen and stabilize their organization by supporting administrative and other overhead expenses over the course of two years (biennial grant). Grant amounts are up to \$5,000 per year. Recipients of this grant must submit an interim report after Year One to receive Year Two payment.

Arts organizations with 501 (c) 3 status only are eligible to apply. Colleges, universities, and local government entities are not eligible. Applications open July 1 and are accepted until the funds are spent. Applications received by the first of each month will be reviewed that month and applicants will be notified by the end of the following month. The earliest start date for use of the grant funds must be 90 days from the first of the month when the application is reviewed. (For example, if an application is submitted February 1, the applicant will receive notice by March 31 and the earliest start date for the residency would be May 1.)

Eligibility Guidelines and Rules for All Grant Programs

Grant Eligibility Per Year by Applicant Type

Individual Artists and Culture Bearers are eligible to receive two grants total:

- one Individual Artist and Culture Bearer Grant or one Rural Arts Grant, and
- one Artists and Culture Bearers in the Schools Grant

Arts organizations receiving MSAB Operating Support are eligible to receive two grants total:

- one Programming Grant and
- one Organizational Sustainability and Capacity Building Grant

Arts organizations in rural communities with populations below 7,500 are eligible to receive four grants total:

- two Programming Grants, or one Programming Grant and one Rural Arts Grant as the lead or co-applicant, and
- one Organizational Sustainability Grant and
- General Operating Support

Arts organizations NOT in rural communities who do NOT receive MSAB Operating Support are eligible to receive four grants total:

- two Programming Grants and
- one Organizational Sustainability Grant and
- General Operating Support

Non-arts organizations and local government entities in rural communities with populations below 7,500 are eligible to receive one grant:

- one Programming Grant or one Rural Arts Grant as the lead or co-applicant

Non-arts organizations, colleges or universities, and local government entities NOT in rural communities would be eligible to receive one grant:

- one Programming Grant

K-12 schools would be eligible to receive two grants:

- one Programming Grant and
- one Artists in the Schools Grant either as the lead applicant or as the co-applicant with an artist as the lead applicant

Applicant Eligibility Rules

Every individual must meet all of the following conditions to apply for a SEMAC grant:

1. You must be at least 18 years of age on the final submission deadline and not currently enrolled in high school.
2. You must be a United States citizen or resident alien.

3. You must have been a full-time resident of the SEMAC region for at least six months and agree to reside in Minnesota for the duration of the proposed grant activity.
4. You may not apply until all final reports from all previous SEMAC grants have been submitted and approved. Thus, grantees who are in good standing are eligible to reapply every fiscal year (July 1 to June 30).
5. You may not apply as an emerging artist at any time after having received funding as an advancing (or established) artist.
6. Unsuccessful applicants may apply again as early as the next deadline.

Every organization must meet all of the following conditions to apply for a SEMAC grant:

1. They must be located in the SEMAC region.
2. They have a clearly defined Mission Statement, preferably on the website
3. They must be a nonprofit organization.
4. They have current 501(c)(3) status **OR** one of the following applies
 - Local government or tribal entity,
 - Non-religious K-12 school, college or university,
 - A Minnesota fiscal sponsor with current 501(c)(3) status has agreed to accept grant funding on behalf of the Applicant. For nonprofit arts organizations only.

Grant Project Restrictions

Grant proposals may not include any of the following:

- 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.
- Benefits, fundraisers, donations, and re-granting money (including outside scholarships, endowment funds, and/or prize money).
- Feasibility studies.
- Capital improvement, construction, or purchase of real property.
- Historic preservation projects.
- Activities that violate federal, state, or local laws, ordinances, or policies.
- Programs designed to fulfill K-12 Minnesota Academic Standards in the Arts. Grants to schools must supplement rather than supplant the school's prescribed curriculum. In addition, K-12 schools may not apply for funding of
 - Core arts teaching
 - Equipment (such as band instruments)
 - Student transportation or field trips
- Organizations are discouraged from charging artists a fee to participate and, whenever possible, encouraged to include payments to artists who will exhibit, perform, provide technical support and/or advise on the proposed program.

- In applications for Individual Artist Grants, fees paid to Capstone Event venues cannot exceed 10% of the funds requested from SEMAC.
- Projects related to class, course or degree requirements.

Disallowed Expenses

The following budget items may not be included in grant proposals:

- Costs for relocating the applicant's legal address/residence outside the state of Minnesota.
- Out of state travel or activities that take place outside the geographic boundaries of the state of Minnesota.
- Expenses incurred prior to the start date, including publicity and grant writing.
- Living expenses. However, artist fees are strongly encouraged.
- Legal fees, except for copyrights or royalties.
- Purchase of alcoholic beverages.
- Grant writing expenses.

Review Criteria

All grants are reviewed and scored on the following three criteria:

- Artistic merit and quality of applicant's past work and of the project
- Demand or need for the project by the applicant or by the constituents served
- Ability of the applicant to accomplish the project they describe

SEMAC Services

In addition to grantmaking, SEMAC offers the following services to artists, arts organizations, and the general public:

- Grant writing workshops
- Grant coaching
- Language translation services (by Project FINE)
- Resource list for individual artists and culture bearers
- Professional development workshops and trainings (by Springboard for the Arts, Propel NonProfits and Minnesota Alliance for Volunteer Advancement)
- E-newsletter
- Social media promotion of regional arts events
- On-line regional arts calendar

SEMAC Budget FY 2026

Southeastern Minnesota Arts Council (SEMAC)			Arts &	Arts	Arts & Cult			
PROJECTED BUDGET: Fiscal year 2026		General Fund	Arts Access	Education	Heritage	McKnight	Other	
		2026 State	2026 State	2026 State	2026 State	Foundation	Funds	2026 Total
REVENUE								
1	State of Minnesota: Appropriations for 2026	\$191,991	\$922,811	\$187,547	\$62,516	\$0	\$0	\$1,364,865
2	State of Minnesota: Carryforward from 2025	\$0	\$100,000	\$40,000	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$150,000
3	McKnight Foundation	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$90,000	\$0	\$90,000
4	Other Income	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
5	Interest	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,000	\$2,000
6	TOTAL REVENUE	\$191,991	\$1,022,811	\$227,547	\$72,516	\$90,000	\$2,000	\$1,606,865
EXPENSES								
Programs and Services								
7	Grant Programs and Services							
a	Individual Artists and Culture Bearers Grants	\$2,000	\$40,000	\$6,000	\$2,000	\$90,000	\$0	\$140,000
b	Rural Arts Grants	\$4,000	\$45,000	\$6,000	\$5,000	\$0	\$0	\$60,000
c	Artists in Schools Grants	\$2,000	\$0	\$28,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$30,000
d	Programming and Project Support for Organizations	\$5,000	\$420,000	\$70,000	\$25,000	\$0	\$0	\$520,000
e	Organizational Sustainability and Capacity Building Grants	\$25,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$25,000
f	General Operating Support Grants	\$38,000	\$112,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$150,000
g	Grant Coaching and Language Services	\$0	\$2,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,000
h	Grant Writing Workshops	\$800	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$800
8	Grant Programs and Services, Operations and Support	\$30,000	\$175,000	\$45,000	\$11,000	\$0	\$0	\$261,000
9	Subtotal Grant Programs and Services	\$106,800	\$794,000	\$155,000	\$43,000	\$90,000	\$0	\$1,188,800
10	Nongrant Programs and Services							
a	Artist Professional Development Workshops	\$600	\$4,200	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,800
b	Arts Management Trainings	\$500	\$5,500	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$6,000
c	Board, Panel, and Staff Trainings	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$10,000
d	Regional Arts Promotion	\$8,000	\$5,000	\$2,000	\$1,000	\$0	\$0	\$16,000
11	Nongrant Programs and Services, Operations and Support	\$17,000	\$57,000	\$38,000	\$6,500	\$0	\$0	\$118,500
12	Subtotal Nongrant Programs and Services	\$36,100	\$71,700	\$40,000	\$7,500	\$0	\$0	\$155,300
13	Total Programs and Services	\$142,900	\$865,700	\$195,000	\$50,500	\$90,000	\$0	\$1,344,100
14	Fundraising	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,000	\$2,000
15	General Administration	\$49,091	\$85,000	\$7,909	\$2,272	\$0	\$0	\$144,272
16	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$191,991	\$950,700	\$202,909	\$52,772	\$90,000	\$2,000	\$1,490,372
17	SURPLUS/CARRYFORWARD to FY 2027 or (DEFICIT)	\$0	\$72,111	\$24,638	\$19,744	\$0	\$0	\$116,493
Line 6	Is the sum of lines 1 through 5							
Line 7	Add as many subitems as necessary to clearly indicate all grant programs and services costs							
Line 9	Total of all lines under line 7, plus line 8							
Line 10	Change the subitem names, and/or add as many subitems as necessary to clearly indicate all nongrant programs and services costs							
Line 12	Total of all lines under line 10, plus line 11							
Line 13	Add line 9 and line 12							
Line 16	Add lines 13, 14, and 15							
Line 17	Line 6 minus line 16							

SEMAC Budget FY 2027

Southeastern Minnesota Arts Council (SEMAC)			Arts &	Arts	Arts & Cult			
PROJECTED BUDGET: Fiscal year 2027		General Fund	Arts Access	Education	Heritage	McKnight	Other	
		2027 State	2027 State	2027 State	2027 State	Foundation	Funds	2027 Total
REVENUE								
1	State of Minnesota: Appropriations for 2027	\$191,991	\$922,811	\$187,547	\$62,516	\$0	\$0	\$1,364,865
2	State of Minnesota: Carryforward from 2026	\$0	\$72,111	\$24,638	\$19,744	\$0	\$0	\$116,493
3	McKnight Foundation	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$90,000	\$0	\$90,000
4	Other Income	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000
5	Interest	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,500	\$2,500
6	TOTAL REVENUE	\$191,991	\$994,922	\$212,185	\$82,260	\$90,000	\$7,500	\$1,578,858
EXPENSES								
Programs and Services								
7	Grant Programs and Services							
a	Individual Artist and Culture Bearers Grants	\$2,000	\$40,000	\$6,000	\$2,000	\$90,000	\$0	\$140,000
b	Rural Arts Grants	\$4,000	\$45,000	\$6,000	\$5,000	\$0	\$0	\$60,000
c	Artists in Schools Grants	\$2,000	\$0	\$28,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$30,000
d	Programming and Project Support for Organizations	\$5,000	\$410,000	\$60,000	\$45,000	\$0	\$0	\$520,000
e	Organizational Sustainability and Capacity Building Grants	\$25,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$25,000
f	General Operating Support Grants	\$38,000	\$112,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$150,000
g	Grant Coaching and Language Services	\$0	\$2,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,000
h	Grant Writing Workshops	\$800	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$800
8	Grant Programs and Services, Operations and Support	\$38,000	\$162,000	\$50,000	\$11,000	\$0	\$0	\$261,000
9	Subtotal Grant Programs and Services	\$114,800	\$771,000	\$150,000	\$63,000	\$90,000	\$0	\$1,188,800
10	Nongrant Programs and Services							
a	Artist Professional Development Workshops	\$600	\$4,200	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,800
b	Arts Management Training	\$500	\$5,500	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$6,000
c	Board, Panel, and Staff Trainings	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$10,000
d	Regional Arts Promotion	\$8,000	\$5,000	\$2,000	\$1,000	\$0	\$0	\$16,000
e	Arts, Nature, and Wellness Program TBD	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,500	\$4,500
11	Nongrant Programs and Services, Operations and Support	\$25,000	\$57,000	\$38,000	\$6,500	\$0	\$500	\$127,000
12	Subtotal Nongrant Programs and Services	\$28,100	\$71,700	\$40,000	\$7,500	\$0	\$5,000	\$152,300
13	Total Programs and Services	\$142,900	\$842,700	\$190,000	\$70,500	\$90,000	\$5,000	\$1,341,100
14	Fundraising	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,000	\$2,000
15	General administration	\$49,091	\$85,000	\$7,909	\$2,272	\$0	\$0	\$144,272
15	General Administration	\$49,091	\$85,000	\$7,909	\$2,272	\$0	\$0	\$144,272
16	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$191,991	\$950,700	\$202,909	\$52,772	\$90,000	\$2,000	\$1,490,372
17	SURPLUS/CARRYFORWARD to FY 2027 or (DEFICIT)	\$0	\$72,111	\$24,638	\$19,744	\$0	\$0	\$116,493
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