

# Program Guidelines: Arts

## Inquiry Instructions

This document provides information to help determine if your organization fits within our arts program grantmaking guidelines, and to help you prepare to submit an initial inquiry.



## Application Overview

1. Read these guidelines and call us at 612-333-4220 to discuss your inquiry.
2. Familiarize yourself with our online grant application process at [www.mcknight.org/apply](http://www.mcknight.org/apply).
3. Visit the arts program section of our website and follow the instructions to start a new application.



## Deadlines

Inquiries Received	Board Consideration
October 15	February
January 15	May
April 15	August
July 15	November

*NOTE: The online application system is accessible for two weeks prior to deadline. Board consideration is pending full proposal invitation.*



## Questions?

Please visit [www.mcknight.org](http://www.mcknight.org) or call us at 612-333-4220.

## Program Goal and Strategies

Minnesota thrives when its artists thrive. The goal of McKnight’s arts program is to support working artists to create and contribute to vibrant communities.

As creators, innovators, and leaders, Minnesota’s working artists are the primary drivers of our heralded arts and cultural community, and arts organizations play a crucial role in fostering and amplifying their work. McKnight’s arts grantees are organizations that prioritize compensation to artists; enable unique artistic opportunities; facilitate meaningful relationships between artists and their communities; demonstrate a deep understanding of their field; are responsive to broad trends and work to eliminate deep and persistent cultural, economic, and racial barriers.

Unique to the fields and markets in which they work, these organizations provide support structures to advance the work of Minnesota’s artists and to recognize their essential contributions.

Using our two arts strategies as a guide, successful grant applicants will be able to describe how McKnight support will advance the ability of Minnesota’s working artists to thrive.

1. We fund organizations, programs, and projects that fuel **exceptional and diverse artistic practice**. Grantees advancing this strategy provide support structures for working artists to develop and share their work. For example, they:

- Develop, exhibit, publish, produce, or promote new work or compelling interpretations of existing work, and

facilitate community-embedded arts practices.

- Serve artists with connections to funding, physical space, networking, and other opportunities.
- Provide funding and other material supports to artists for professional development, networking, and technical assistance.
- Enable Minnesota artists to participate in locally curated dialogues with artists about practice inside and outside the region, or interdisciplinary dialogue between artists and other sectors.
- Facilitate experimentation and collaboration.

2. We fund and leverage local and national collaborations, knowledge, and policies that maximize the **value of artists’ work in their communities**. Grantees advancing this strategy provide support structures based on data and networks that bolster artists’ value inside and outside the arts sector. For example, they:

- Enable sectorwide capacity development.
- Conduct research that enhances capacity for arts advocacy, field sustainability, and managerial excellence.
- Elevate perceptions of artists as primary drivers of our arts and cultural sector.
- Advance arts organizations and artists as partners in community development, leveraging collaboration among cultural, municipal, and economic development interests.

To learn more about our arts grantmaking approach — including artist support structures, our logic model, and our theory of change — please visit [mcknight.org/arts](http://mcknight.org/arts).

# The McKnight Foundation

Founded in 1953 by William and Maude McKnight, the Minnesota-based family foundation had assets of approximately \$2.2 billion and granted about \$88 million in 2015. Program interests include regional economic and community development, Minnesota's arts and artists, early literacy, youth development, Midwest climate and energy, Mississippi River water quality, neuroscience research, international crop research, and rural livelihoods.



## Mission

The McKnight Foundation, a Minnesota-based family foundation, seeks to improve the quality of life for present and future generations. We use all our resources to attend, unite, and empower those we serve.



## Contact

The McKnight Foundation  
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T 612-333-4220 F 612-332-3833  
[www.mcknight.org](http://www.mcknight.org)  
@mcknightfdn  
/mcknightfdn

## How to Apply

The first step is to familiarize yourself with these program guidelines. If you are unclear about your organization's fit with our funding strategies, call the arts team at 612-333-4220. If you choose to submit an inquiry after we speak, visit [mcknight.org/apply](http://mcknight.org/apply) and follow the instructions to start a new application.

We will respond via email four to six weeks after receiving your inquiry, either to decline funding or to provide instructions to submit a full proposal online.

## Eligibility and Types of Support

We provide operating and project grants to organizations in Minnesota. With very few exceptions, to be eligible for a grant, applicants must be classified by the Internal Revenue Service as tax-exempt, nonprofit organizations. We discourage the use of fiscal agents.

Units of government may apply for funding for special projects, although we will not fund activities that are traditionally the responsibility of government. We consider capital grants only in exceptional circumstances; please discuss any capital proposal with a program officer before submitting a request.

## What We Don't Fund

Foundations can be most effective by concentrating their resources in a few areas. This means we cannot support worthy projects outside our program interests.

For example, we do not generally make grants for organizations that:

- do not pay their artistic staff;
- are historic in nature;
- use art primarily for rehabilitation or therapy;
- primarily present rather than produce art;
- have produced art for less than two years;
- primarily serve youth, or are primarily arts education or social service based; or
- have operating budgets of less than \$100,000.

Also, we generally do not fund:

- singular productions, events, exhibitions, or festivals;
- scholarships or direct support for individuals;
- conferences, including attendance or travel (except when related to existing McKnight support);
- endowments, except in rare cases;
- activities that have a specific religious purpose; or
- lobbying prohibited by the Internal Revenue Code (see note below).



## Questions?

Please visit [www.mcknight.org](http://www.mcknight.org) or call us at 612-333-4220.

### Note on lobbying and public policy analysis

The Foundation may consider funding requests for efforts such as advocacy. However, as required by the Internal Revenue Code, the Foundation will not fund attempts to influence specific pending or proposed legislation, including referenda, local ordinances, and resolutions. For more information, visit our website at [www.mcknight.org](http://www.mcknight.org).

Tell us what you think about our application process at [www.mcknight.org/survey](http://www.mcknight.org/survey).