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FY24 PANELIST HANDBOOK

**Vision**

The Council envisions a Michigan where communities celebrate creative expression and every person has access to, or participates in, arts and cultural experiences.

**Mission**

The Council guides the distribution of resources to ensure that Michigan communities thrive from the civic, economic, and educational benefits of arts and culture.

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Grant panels play an important role in the review of the Michigan Arts and Culture Council’s (MACC) grant applications. Each year, over 150 people offer their time and expertise to help MACC fairly and openly distribute public funds to support arts and culture across Michigan. MACC thanks the panelists for the experience & expertise that they bring to the review process*.*

# Panel Process Overview

**Thank you!**

MACC awards grants via a competitive process. To provide an open environment in which to review applications for funding, MACC utilizes a peer panel review process.

The panel process places great importance on the review of applications by professionals in the arts, arts and cultural management, and related fields. Peer professionals from the state and nation evaluate, score and rank grant applications based upon published program criteria found in the guidelines. They provide MACC with the depth of experience and expertise that is the foundation of their informed funding decisions.

Council staff provide access to all applications to be reviewed in **advance** of the panel meeting. Applications are reviewed using the SmartSimple system (<https://macc.smartsimple.com/>). Panelists must be comfortable working with computers and have internet access.

Panelists will have access to:

* A link to the program guidelines
* A list of applications to be reviewed by you (and the other members of your review group)
* The Review Criteria
* The ability to score and comment on each application **prior** to the panel meeting.

Panelists who have questions or need clarifications necessary for the review of any application should contact the Program Manager.

# Basics of Scoring Grant Applications

* Each application is assigned a Primary and Secondary reviewer. BUT…panelists must review and score ALL applications in their review group.
* Panelists should score and provide written comments on all applications prior to the meeting.
* While reviewing, once the SUBMIT button is clicked, comments and scores are final. For scoring consistency, it is recommended you save your work and then submit once all the applications have been read.
* During the virtual panel review date, scores and comments may be adjusted.
* Applications are NOT to be compared to any other applications or organizations (past or present)**.**
* Applications must be scored based on merit, how well the applicant answered the questions in the guidelines, and NOT on need or other factors. Reviews are based on the application itself. No second-hand/hearsay information is permitted.
* If you are unable to open the attachments or view portions of the application, please contact the Program Manager as soon as possible.

It is important to provide written comments in the system in a manner that matches the numeric score you assign. Please be sure that your comments are constructive in nature.

**The Role of Primary and Secondary Reviewers**

Each application is assigned a Primary and Secondary Reviewer. During the in-person review, the Primary Reviewer will provide a brief summary of the organization and/or request, as well as comment on each of the criteria sections provided in the guidelines. The Secondary Reviewer will then provide additional comments directly after the Primary Reviewer. It is not necessary to repeat what has already been stated, but panelists may concur, make additional comments or offer contrasting viewpoints. The remainder of the panel members will then be asked for general comments.

**General Rule, Applications Can Be Scored Accordingly:**

* 95 or higher - excellent application
* 90 – 94.9 - very good application
* 85 – 89.9 - good application
* 80 – 84.9 - fair application
* 79.9 or below - not considered for funding

**Note About Bias:** As representatives of a state arts and culture agency, MACC Council Members and staff are working to recognize and reduce bias. Biases are normal, and everyone has them. Thought processes make shortcuts to process information, and as a result, can sometimes lead to bias. There are a couple different types of bias to be mindful of:

Explicit Bias may be a person’s mindset toward a particular subject. Such as, they like macaroni and cheese or absolutely does not like mushrooms.

Implicit Bias tends to be a bit concealed, and many may not be aware of their own implicit biases. Implicit Bias refers to the attitudes (unintentional) that may affect a person’s behaviors, decisions, and judgements.

For panelists, implicit bias may be exhibited through:

* letting previous experiences with an applicant bias a response
* letting grammar, syntax and/or punctuation bias a response
* letting assumptions about an organization, based on budget size or project size, bias a response
* letting personal preferences (discipline, subject, matter, geography or audience served) bias a response

For panelists to avoid bias, focus on the criteria and how well the applicant addressed the criteria. A further discussion of what constitutes a conflict of interest can be found below on Page 6.

Panelist work is confidential, so please do not share any comments, scores or outcomes. Panelists should not contact applicants or discuss the application with applicants present at the review. Panel scores and comments will be made available after the funding announcement. Individual names associated with the panel scores and comments are confidential and will not be made available to applicants.

# SmartSimple Step-by-Step Grant Reviewer Instructions

**Video tutorial:** MACC staff have prepared a five-minute video overview of reviewing in SmartSimple. Link below.

<https://bit.ly/4287QdP>

**Written Tutorial:** MACC staff have prepared a screen shot overview of reviewing in SmartSimple. Text and photos below**.**

1. Log into SmartSimple and ensure you are on the correct portal. Either select “Reviewer Home” on the top right ribbon or select the bulleted icon and select “Common” and “Reviewer” from the dropdown. If the “Reviewer Home” tab is missing, contact your Program Manager. The Panelist Handbook and Guidelines for each program are available from the Reviewer Home Page as well as the information about the panel date, time, and link to online meeting.

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1. Assigned applications are visible in the “Assigned Applications” Tab. Click on the “Accept/Decline” button next to one of the applications. Review the information in Conflict-of-Interest (COI) box below. If there is a COI, enter an explanation of the conflict then click “Declare Conflict”. If COI is selected, then you are done reviewing that grant application. If there is no COI, click “Accept Review”.

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***Further explanation of Conflict of Interest***

To avoid a perceived conflict of interest, MACC has established the following policy regarding reviewers who are affiliated with, or stand to gain from, a grant seeking organization: *“No reviewer shall in any way act upon an application on behalf of an organization which he/she is affiliated with as a board member, is employed by or stands to gain financially from the grant.”*

Any type of monetary association or affiliation with the applicant or any situation that places a panelist in a position where they feel that they cannot make an unbiased review must be disclosed. If a conflict is acknowledged, the panelist will be asked to leave the room during the review of the application.

An individual is considered to be affiliated with an organization if the individual or a member of the immediate family (a spouse, unmarried partner, or child) is:

* 1. a director, officer, trustee or employee;
  2. a contracted professional fundraiser or public relations officer;

1. an independent contractor who has received fees or payments in the year preceding the filing of the affiliation statement;
2. a contributor, directly or through an entity which she/he controls, of an amount which is more than five percent of the organization’s annual budget for the year.
3. The application will now be in the “Draft Reviews” Tab.

* *Please Note*: If a determination is made that there is a COI while reviewing the grant application, select the “Conflict of Interest” button at the bottom and proceed to the next application.

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1. Click the “Open” button. The Reviewer Portal is a dual window with the “Application,” “Organizational Profile,” and “Application Guidelines” accessible from the left window and the “Panelist Instructions” and “Criteria” tabs accessible from the right window. The “Panelist Instructions” will have additional instructions from the Program Manager and may be empty.

The Application can be viewed as a single document by clicking the “View Application” button or can be viewed in individual sections by clicking through the “Budget” and “Narrative/Attachment” tabs. The Organizational Profile can be viewed by clicking the “View Organizational Profile” button.

When ready to begin reviewing the application, click the “Criteria” tab. Read the instructions in the grey box for each Criteria and comment and score accordingly.

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1. Click on the “Save Draft” button periodically and before moving on to the next application to save changes. When ready, click the “Submit Review”. Clicking the “Submit Review” button will take the screen back to the home page. Notice the “Assigned Applications” went down by one and the “Submitted Reviews” went up by one. Once the application has been submitted, comments and scores cannot be changed until the day of the panel review. If “Submit Review” was clicked by mistake, contact the Program Manager.

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Repeat steps 2-4 until all applications have been scored, commented on, and submitted.

# How to Prepare for the Day of the Grant Review Panel

MACC staff have prepared an eleven-minute video overview of what to expect the day of the panel review.

<https://bit.ly/4287QdP>

# Panelist Stipend

Panelists receive a small stipend for their service.

Any person or organization receiving payments from the State of Michigan must register with SIGMA VSS (Statewide Integrated Governmental Management Application Vendor Self Service)**.** SIGMA VSS vendor/payee file is the State of Michigan centralized database maintained by the Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget (DTMB) for all receiving MCACA payments.

Required information includes the payee’s name, social security number (SSN) or federal tax identification number (FEIN), and mailing address. SIGMA also collects the payee’s financial institution (bank) routing and account number for electronic funds transfer (EFT).

The State of Michigan relies on the identification of payees through pre-established registration and coding in order to process payments. The SIGMA VSS website is designed so that all individuals, organizations, including school districts, can easily and quickly register to do business with the State of Michigan **and** update existing vendor/payee information as needed.

**If you or your organization has never been a recipient of payments from the State of Michigan, you must register with SIGMA VSS in order to receive them.** If you have received state payments, then you’re registered and only need to update information as changes occur.

“SIGMA VSS” website location [https://www.michigan.gov/budget/0,9357,7-379-](https://www.michigan.gov/budget/0%2C9357%2C7-379-88641_88644_88650---%2C00.html) [88641\_88644\_88650---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/budget/0%2C9357%2C7-379-88641_88644_88650---%2C00.html)

REMINDER: SIGMA VSS website are administered by the Michigan Department of Management and Budget (DMB). Please direct questions to:

**Payee Registration Helpline:** Toll Free: 1-888-734-9749

**Payee Registration Email:** [DIGMA-Vendor@michigan.gov](mailto:DIGMA-Vendor@michigan.gov)