SW MN Arts Council
Grant Panelist Orientation

PART 5: Reading & Scoring Tips

READING A GRANT APPLICATION

- Applications include answers to narrative questions and attachments of resumes, work samples, budget, surveys, etc.
- Make sure to allow plenty of time to read and score the applications. Especially at first, it may take 20-30 minutes per application, so it's a good idea to plan on looking through a few per day over the two weeks rather than waiting until right before the meeting.
- Focus on the content of the application, not on the style or expertise of the writing.
- Look to see whether the narrative and the supporting documents agree.
- You should be able to envision the project after reading the application.
- Projects can be about an end product or process, and neither of those is better than the other.
- On the day of the panel, comments should be focused on the criteria, so make note of evidence of the criteria in the application.
- There aren't necessarily good or bad answers to the questions; consider what makes sense for the project and applicant.
- Assume the best intentions from the applicant.
- Assume that all applicants need the money they're asking for – financial need isn't a criterion, and organizations are encouraged to have healthy fund balances.
- The majority of organization applicants have small overall budgets – keep that in mind with your expectations of them.
- Keep expectations for artists at an appropriate level for their career stage.
- If you are reviewing a grant that would be funded with state funds, you'll see that they have to answer questions about how they will evaluate the project. Don't expect a lot for evaluation– applicants should list the outcomes they are hoping for and have an appropriate way to measure them.
- Don't compare applications; consider each on its own.
- Feel free to contact SMAC staff (info@swmnarts.org or 800-622-5284) if you run into any questions, can't access work samples, etc.

SCORING A GRANT APPLICATION
- Art can be very subjective, but panelists are asked to view projects and work samples through SMAC's particular lens, as outlined in the Evaluation Scoresheet and Rubric documents for the grant program. (See Part 3 for specific guidelines on scoring this grant program.)

- We also ask you to honor and acknowledge the aesthetic choices the organization or artist has made, and to offer your scores within those artistic choices. You might not, for example, respond to *magic realism* or may not like *creative nonfiction*, however we ask you not to let your own aesthetic biases prevent you from seeing the artistic quality and merit of the proposal.
- Similarly, don't give more credit than is due simply because the proposal is within the artistic discipline/theme you particularly admire.
- The Scoring Rubric (see the link within your evaluations) will help you determine what score to give if the applicant meets (or exceeds, etc.) the requirements for each of the criteria.
- Some criteria are worth a higher percentage of the overall score than others.
- Applicants must score at least 50% (average/moderate) on each of the criteria and overall to be considered for funding.
- Your scores can be changed during panel discussion. Often, another panelist will bring up something you hadn't thought about, that ends up changing your perspective and score.
- Some panelists tend to score generally lower, while others score higher, which is fine – just be consistent in how you are scoring each application.