

SMAC Statement of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Access

Revised 1/15/2026 & approved 1/27/26

The Southwest Minnesota Arts Council (SMAC) acknowledges that the region we serve occupies the traditional, ancestral & contemporary lands of the Dakota people. With this statement we commit our organization's support of the Dakota and all indigenous people. It is our hope that the arts can bring healing and strengthen relationships.

SMAC recognizes arts and culture as inherent and vital aspects of life in the eighteen counties and two sovereign nations that we serve. Art is a proven proponent of healthy, balanced, and prosperous communities. The creation and experience of cultural and artistic expression contribute to both individual and community well-being. We believe in the ability to build increased connectivity and economic strength through supporting cultural and artistic expression of all social identities including race, tribal affiliation, ethnicity, national origin, age, gender, sexuality, religion, ability, socioeconomic background and the intersectionality of these identities.

SMAC acknowledges that systems currently in place have historically marginalized and underserved indigenous people of the Americas, communities of color, people living with diverse abilities and members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. We are committed to closing access gaps in the arts with urgency and accountability.

Tackling the issues of equity and inclusion requires commitment, respect, patience, determination, and flexibility. SMAC understands that there is no one single way to achieve equitable results, however we are committed to a sustained effort in breaking down barriers and building bridges across communities.

As stewards of public funds, SMAC embraces the unique opportunity to ensure that all residents of our region have access to quality arts experiences. SMAC is committed to engaging in the relationship building, self-reflection, community discourse, and hands-on work imperative to make our region a place where all artistic communities can thrive. SMAC will continue to dedicate resources to educate ourselves, modify our practices and shift our own organizational culture to challenge disparities as we move toward equitable arts communities. We embrace our responsibility to lead equity work in funding, while informing and

learning from equity and inclusion in the artistic practices and programming of our constituents.

SMAC is dedicated to fostering safe spaces where every person is empowered to contribute and create, knowing they belong to a community that honors their identity and supports their artistic journey. We stand together in embracing difference, encouraging dialogue, and creating opportunities for all to thrive.

Recent study (2025)

LINK to STATEWIDE EQUITY RESEARCH: <https://swmnarts.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/FORUM-Statewide-Equity-Audit-and-Evaluation-Report.pdf>

LINK to SMAC-only version of same research: https://swmnarts.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/EQUITY_SMAC-FORUM-Statewide-Equity-Audit-and-Evaluation-Report_SMAC-Chapter.pdf

DEFINITIONS: The framework for building inclusive spaces

Inclusion & Belonging. **Inclusion** is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued. An inclusive climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions so that all people can fully participate in the organization's opportunities. **Belonging** means individuals can show up as their whole selves without compromise, see themselves reflected in leadership and programming, and know their presence and cultural traditions are vital to the collective.

Diversity. The presence of difference within a given setting which may include race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, language, abilities/disabilities, sexual orientation, marital status, socioeconomic status, education, geographic region, national origin, and more.

Equity. Equity is the act of identifying and eliminating the barriers within the procedures, processes and distribution of resources by institutions or systems that have prevented the full participation of marginalized groups while

guaranteeing the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people.

Access. The opportunity for a person living with a disability to acquire the same information and materials, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use. This includes the intentional design or redesign of technology, policies, products, services, and facilities that increase one's ability to use, access, and obtain the respective item.