



EXPANDED ACCESS TO ARTS AND CULTURE GRANT PROGRAM



Application Review and Scoring Handbook CYCLE THREE

WWW.FRESNO.GOV/EAAC

Table of Contents

I.	Purpose	3
II.	Roles and Responsibilities	3
A.	Parks, Recreation and Arts Commission (Commission)	3
B.	Application Review Committee (ARC) Members.....	3
C.	Parks, After School, Recreation and Community Services (PARCS) Department.....	3
III.	ARC Member Application and Selection	4
IV.	Conflict of Interest	4
V.	Required Training.....	5
VI.	ARC Member Commitment	5
VII.	ARC Group Formation	5
VIII.	The Grant Application Review and Scoring Process.....	8
A.	Step One: Eligibility Review and Redaction	8
B.	Step Two: Grant Application Assignment and Initial Review Period	8
	Clarifying Questions During the Initial Review Period.....	10
	Conflict of Interest Disclosure and Recusal Process	10
C.	Step Three: ARC Application Discussion Meeting	10
	ARC Application Discussion Meeting Agenda	11
	Observation by the Public	11
D.	Step Four: Score Tabulation and Ranking	12
IX.	Commitment to a Competitive and Transparent Process	12

I. Purpose

This purpose of this handbook is to outline the procedures for administering a transparent and competitive review and scoring process.

II. Roles and Responsibilities

There are multiple parties involved in facilitating the grant application review process. General roles and responsibilities are identified below.

A. Parks, Recreation and Arts Commission (Commission)

1. Oversee implementation of the scoring process to ensure that grant applications are reviewed in a transparent and competitive process.

B. Application Review Committee (ARC) Members

1. Apply to be on the ARC.
2. Complete required training and conflict of interest reporting.
3. Review this handbook, grant guidelines and scoring rubrics.
4. Review and score applications using scoring rubrics.
5. Participate in discussion and submit final scores.

C. Parks, After School, Recreation and Community Services (PARCS) Department

1. Share the ARC application widely to ensure the ARC composition is diverse and representative.
2. Ensure ARC members meet the requirements that are outlined in the grant guidelines.
3. Schedule training for ARC members and track training completion.
4. Schedule and facilitate ARC review meetings as part of a public process.
5. Assign ARC groups and applications for review using a randomized process.
6. Facilitate a structured, transparent and competitive scoring process following the ARC handbook and the grant guidelines.
7. Collect and monitor conflict of interest disclosures and assign alternate scoring members as necessary, consulting with the City Attorney's Office as applicable.
8. Collect and anonymize scoring sheets.
9. Distribute scoring sheets to applicants upon completion of Cycle Three.
10. Track attendance and process stipends for ARC members who complete all requirements of service.

11. Respond to questions or issues not contemplated in this handbook using sound professional judgement. Any such actions shall be documented to ensure transparency.

III. ARC Member Application and Selection

1. Interested applicants shall complete an application, and shall:
 - a. Be available to attend all required trainings and meetings. PARCS will provide a preliminary schedule during the application process.
 - b. Meet the criteria for reviewers outlined in the grant guidelines.
 - c. Submit the ARC application on time.
 - d. Disclose potential conflicts of interest at the time of application, and throughout the review and scoring process.
2. Demonstrate a commitment to a transparent and competitive process.
3. Not be a board member, officer, Executive Director and/or staff of applicant organizations or fiscally sponsored organizations that are applying for funding.
4. PARCS will review ARC Member applications for eligibility. Eligible applications will be presented to an ad hoc advisory subcommittee consisting of three (3) PRAC members. The subcommittee will review applications, evaluate applicants based on the information provided, and may conduct interviews as part of its review process. Upon completion of its review, the subcommittee shall provide recommended selections to PRAC for consideration. Final selection and appointments of ARC members shall be made by PRAC.
5. Applicants or fiscal sponsors that submit a grant application will not be permitted to participate in the ARC.

IV. Conflict of Interest

For the purposes of this process, a potential conflict of interest may be economic, personal, professional, relational or otherwise. The conflict or perceived conflict may include sources of income, personal finances, real property, investments, employment, related businesses, loans, gifts, charitable fundraising/donations, amorous relationships, familial relationships, personal relationships or any other interest not listed that may lead to the perception of bias or predetermination in application review. An undisclosed conflict may compromise the integrity of the process - when in doubt, ARC members should choose to recuse.

V. Required Training

Prior to initiating scoring, all ARC members and PARCS staff involved in facilitating the process will be required to complete the following training:

- 1. Implicit bias and ethics in public service
- 2. The Brown Act
- 3. An orientation on fair and impartial grant application review
- 4. The ARC Handbook
- 5. Conflict of Interest disclosures

VI. ARC Member Commitment

It is estimated that participation in the ARC will require a time commitment of **approximately 38 hours or more** over a several-week period. ARC members will receive a stipend for their completion of training, reviewing, and scoring grant applications. ARC members who do not complete the entire service will not receive a stipend.

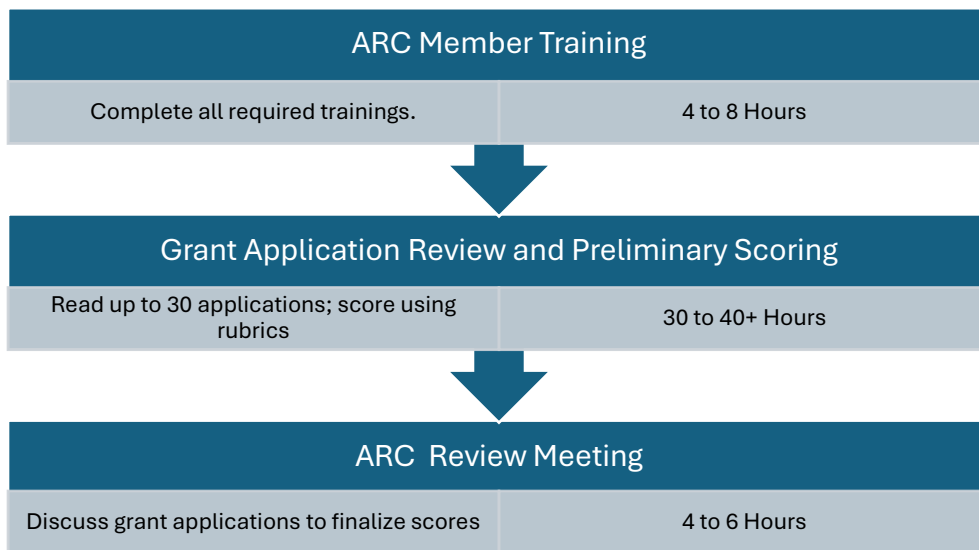


Figure 1 - ARC time commitment throughout the review process

VII. ARC Group Formation

- 1. There will be a total of thirty (30) ARC members. Using a randomization, twenty-five (25) members will be split evenly between five groups to form limited term ad-hoc subcommittee Groups A – E, with alternates
 - a. The ad-hoc subcommittees shall:
 - i. Be formed by resolution of the Fresno City Council.

- ii. Consist solely of less than a quorum of the whole ARC.
 - iii. Disband once the application review is completed and scoring recommendations have been submitted to staff for presentation to PRAC for consideration.
2. There will be five (5) trained “alternates” available in the event of resignation, illness, recusal or absence.
 3. Each grant application will be reviewed by a panel of five (5) members.
 4. In each group, member #5 must be from outside of the City of Fresno, but within the state of California.

PARCS may increase the total number of members (above 30) and/or reduce the minimum number of reviewers per group/proposal from five (5) to a minimum of three (3) if it is deemed necessary. This option may be exercised if the number of grant applications received exceeds 150, if several reviewers are unable to fulfill their commitment, or if doing so is determined to be in the public interest to avoid excessive delays due to other unanticipated circumstances. Exercising this option would deploy alternates to form up to five additional groupings. For example, Group A would become Group A-1 and Group A-2 each with 3 reviewers.

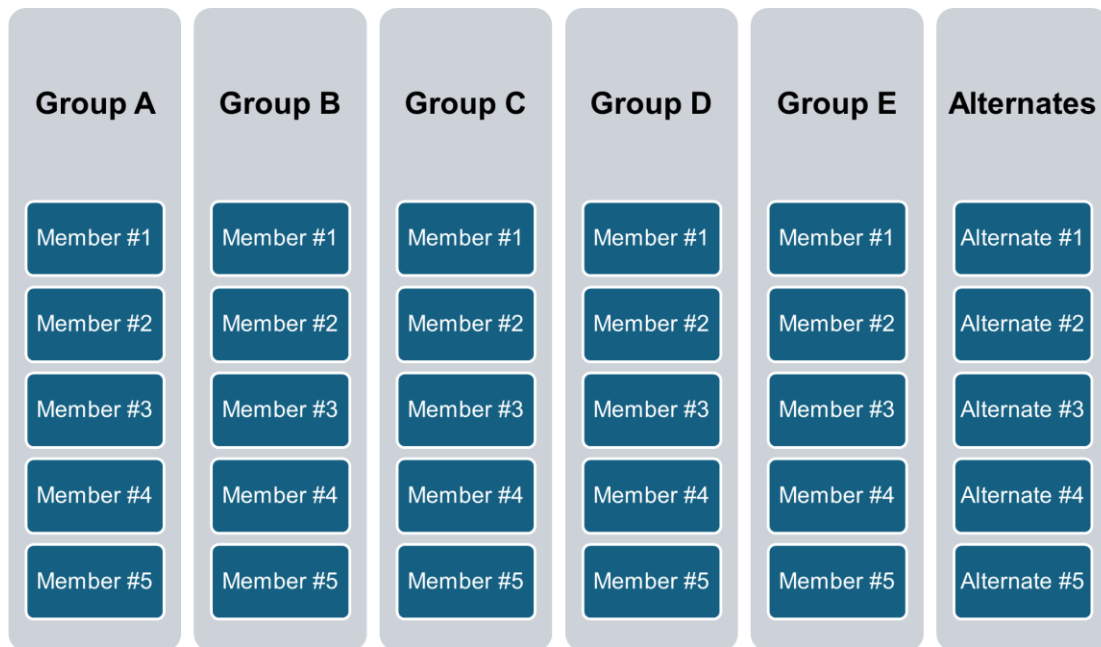


Figure 2 - ARC Grouping

APPLICATION REVIEW COMMITTEE (ARC) FORMATION PROCESS

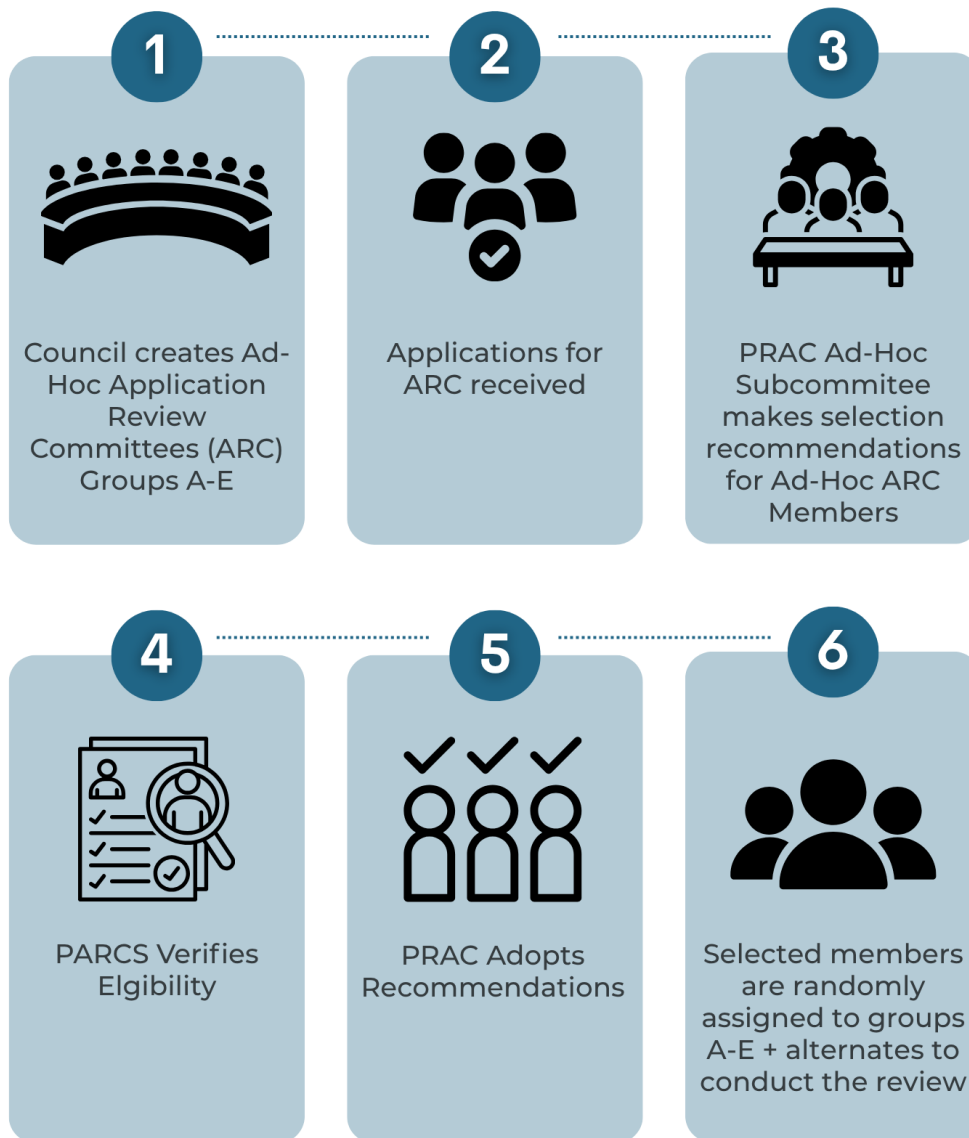


Figure 3 - ARC Formation Process

VIII. The Grant Application Review and Scoring Process

A. Step One: Eligibility Review and Redaction

1. Eligibility Review: Following the application deadline, PARCS staff will review all submitted applications to determine whether they satisfy the eligibility requirements set forth in the Grant Guidelines. Applications that do not meet the eligibility requirements will not be scored. PARCS will notify the applicant(s) if they are determined to be ineligible.
2. Eligibility Determination: Applications that do not meet the eligibility requirements will not advance to the scoring process and will be removed from further consideration. PARCS will provide written notice to applicants determined to be ineligible. Eligibility determinations are final and not subject to appeal.
3. Application Redaction: Eligible applications will be assigned an application number for tracking purposes.
4. Application Redaction: Applicant contact information will be redacted prior to review. The name of the applicant organization and/or fiscal sponsor will not be redacted to facilitate conflict-of-interest disclosures and recusal. References to the organization or individuals contained within the narrative budget or other application materials will be redacted.

B. Step Two: Grant Application Assignment and Initial Review Period

1. Using randomization, up to thirty (30) applications will be assigned to each ARC Group (Groups A-E)
2. After random assignment of grant applications to each group is completed, conflict of interest statements will be reviewed by PARCS staff.
3. A conflict of interest screening list will be provided to each group. The list will include all applicant organizations and names associated with that organization. ARC members will be responsible for reviewing that list and indicating any potential conflicts.
4. If a conflict of interest is identified, the grant application(s) will be reassigned by PARCS to an Alternate who will join the subcommittee. Conflicts that are not disclosed may result in removal from the panel, score disqualification and suspension from participation in scoring future cycles.
5. The number of applications each group reviews will vary based on how many applications are submitted. For example: If there are 150

applications submitted, each group will be assigned up to 30 applications to review ($150/5=30$). Applications will be split evenly amongst groups.

6. Copies of redacted applications and review sheets will be provided to reviewers to read and score independently.
7. A minimum of 20 days will be allotted to read and score grant applications by subcommittee members independently.
8. ARC members shall limit their review to the application materials provided, and shall not independently research, contact applicants, or attempt to guess missing or unclear information using other sources.
9. **Prohibition on Communications:** During the application review and scoring process, applicants, ARC members, PRAC members, and any person acting on their behalf, shall not directly or indirectly communicate regarding any pending grant application outside of publicly noticed meetings, officially published technical assistance workshops, or communications facilitated by PARCS. All applicant questions, clarifications, and responses shall be routed through PARCS. Any attempt to influence, discuss, or advocate for a grant application outside of the authorized process may result in disqualification of the application, recusal of the reviewer, or other correction action deemed appropriate by the City.
10. ARC members shall not discuss any applications or scores to avoid unintentional serial meetings which are prohibited by the Brown Act.
11. ARC members shall individually read, evaluate, write comments, and log a preliminary score for each application. In preparation for the discussion meeting, ARC members shall submit the preliminary review sheets by the deadline provided by PARCS.
12. PARCS staff will review the preliminary scores to ensure that the review was fully completed. Any scores with an extreme point spread (i.e. one reviewer scored all 1's and one reviewer scored all 5's) will be noted for discussion. Scores between reviewers need not match, but extreme variance in range is a sign that discussion is needed.
13. ARC members shall keep applications and initial scoring confidential during the initial review process.
14. ARC members must complete all reviews to participate in the discussion meeting. Incomplete scoring may be completed by an alternate or excluded from consideration.

Clarifying Questions During the Initial Review Period

1. While reading each proposal, ARC members may submit any clarifying questions they have for the grant applicant by a deadline to be identified using a link provided by PARCS.
2. To ensure a competitive process, questions shall be limited to clarifying in nature and shall not provide an opportunity to substantively change a response. Word counts shall be limited to ensure clarifying questions and answers are focused. Examples will be provided as part of training.
3. Questions will be provided to the grant applicant by PARCS, with a minimum of five (5) business days to reply.
4. A copy of all responses received by the deadline will be provided to all ARC members during the ARC Application Discussion Meetings.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure and Recusal Process

1. If at any point during the initial review process a conflict of interest or the potential perception of a conflict arises, ARC members shall notify PARCS staff immediately of their need for recusal.
2. PARCS staff shall record the recusal and reassign the review to an alternate ARC member.

C. Step Three: ARC Application Discussion Meeting

1. Each Ad-Hoc Subcommittee formed for the purposes of reviewing will be scheduled for an ARC Application Discussion meeting.
2. The meeting is estimated to last between four (4) to six (6) hours depending on the number of applications under review.
3. The meeting shall be held in a publicly accessible location (City Hall, Community Center, etc.)
4. The meeting facilitator will guide the group through the agenda, allotting equal time for all applications to be discussed one-by-one.
5. An ARC member may verbally comment on all proposals but is not required to do so.

ARC Application Discussion Meeting Agenda

The agenda for each **ARC Discussion Meeting** shall include the following general format:

1. Welcome and Introductions (~15 mins)
2. Overview of the agenda and process (~15 mins)
3. Grant Application Review & Discussion (~90 minutes)
 - Discussion shall be timed to a maximum of 10 minutes per application.
 - Facilitator shall post anonymized preliminary scores for discussion along with any clarifying information received as a result of ARC questions.
 - Following completion of each application's discussion, members shall submit their final scoring sheets.
4. Break #1 (15 Minutes)
5. Grant Application Review & Discussion continued (~ 120 minutes)
6. Break #2 (60 minutes) meal provided
7. Proposal Review & Discussion continued (~ 90 minutes)
8. Closing remarks (15 minutes)

Observation by the Public

1. Members of the public may attend the review meeting(s) online as an observer via zoom.
2. Public comment will not be taken, and observer discussion will not be permitted.
3. No actions shall be taken by any party to influence or interfere with the meeting or scoring. If an individual or group willfully interrupts the meeting and order cannot be restored, scoring may be paused and the room may be cleared.
4. PARCS will make a public viewing location available, such as a community center, for individuals who have limited access to Zoom or other virtual meeting platforms. To the extent practicable, the viewing location will be

separate from the location where scoring meets are conducted. Observers are expected to refrain from any conduct that may influence, or appear to influence, the review or scoring process, including verbal, physical, or auditory expressions of approval or disapproval such as clapping, cheering, booing, snapping, sighing, or similar reactions.

D. Step Four: Score Tabulation and Ranking

1. After all discussion meetings are completed, final scores will be entered into a spreadsheet for each application. This will produce a total score for each application.
2. Total scores will be divided by the number of reviewers to generate an average score for each application. Average scores will be logged to the second decimal (00.00).
3. Grant applications will then be ranked in numerical score order, with the highest scoring grant applications being recommended for funding.
4. The total amount awarded to each grantee will be determined in accordance with the grant guidelines and brought before the Commission via hearing to make recommendations to Council.
5. To identify the total amount awarded, a percentile threshold will be calculated using this calculation: $[\text{total average score}] / [\text{total points possible}] = \text{percentile threshold}$.
6. Tiebreaking: If two or more applications have a tied score, and there is not enough funding for all tied proposals, the proposals selected for funding will be selected using a lottery.

IX. Commitment to a Competitive and Transparent Process

The grant application review and scoring process shall be conducted in a competitive and transparent manner without interference of any kind.

No form of discrimination, harassment, intimidation or retaliation will be tolerated at any point in the process. Engaging in any of these behaviors may result in dismissal and/or disqualification.