



2018 MAP Grantees, left to right: *Lives on the Line*; *My Park, My Pool, My City*; *Bakanal de Afrique/Wey You Dey?*

# 2020 MAP Fund Grant Cycle Reviewer Guide

---

## Table of Contents

LETTER FROM LAUREN SLONE	1
REVIEW PROCESS TIMELINE	2
2020 REVIEW STRUCTURE	3
ASSESSING PROPOSALS FOR ALIGNMENT	5
SCORING RUBRIC	7
CONFLICTS OF INTEREST	10
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS	11



**September 3, 2019**

Dear Reviewers,

On behalf of MAP Fund, I want to thank you for participating in the evaluation process. Your dynamic experiences, aesthetic interests, and demonstrated generosity to your colleagues in the field is of utmost value to us and our work.

Your review cohort shares the responsibility of interpreting MAP's funding priorities based on your expertise and observations of trends in both the live performance community and the larger American socio-political landscape. I will be accountable to you and to our applicants in ensuring that lines of communication are welcoming and clear, and that the scoring process is as fair and considerate as possible.

To that end, Syeda Malliha, MAP's Program Associate, and I will be available by Slack, Submittable's interface, and email to support your questions (both philosophical and technical). Do not hesitate to reach out throughout the review period! I'm particularly interested in checking in on moments when your personal tastes and biases intersect with or complicate your evaluation of alignment. We'll talk it through together. I also want to offer a gentle reminder that you will not be able to complete these in one sitting. Please make sure you get a head start right away out of respect for the organizations and artists who spent time and effort putting the applications together, and so that Syeda and I may quickly address any questions that you have.

With excitement and gratitude as we move into this part of the cycle together,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lauren'.

Lauren Slone  
MAP Fund Director of Grants + Research



## REVIEW PROCESS TIMELINE

**December 9, 2019:** Participation checklist sent to all reviewers

**December 18, 2019:** 7:00 p.m. ET

Zoom meet and greet (optional). Online opportunity for MAP staff and reviewers to connect prior to the review process. More details to come.

**December 19, 2019:** Signed Letters of Agreement and 1099s due

**January 6, 2020:** All remaining items on the participation checklist completed

**January 13-February 3, 2020:** Review One (three weeks)

- **January 10, 2020:** Reviewers will receive access to their first docket.
- **February 3, 2020:** Deadline to submit scores is **12 p.m. ET.**
  - After all scores have been submitted, MAP staff will rank projects, make a cut, and create new dockets for each reviewer.

**February 10-24, 2020:** Review Two (two weeks)

- **February 7, 2020:** Reviewers will receive access to their second docket.
- **February 24, 2020:** Deadline to submit scores is **12 p.m. ET.**
  - After all scores have been submitted, MAP staff will rank projects, make a cut, and create new dockets for each reviewer.

**March 2-9, 2020:** Review Three (one week)

- **February 28, 2020:** Reviewers will receive access to their third docket.
- **March 9, 2020:** Deadline to submit scores is **12 p.m. ET.**
  - After all scores have been submitted, MAP staff will rank projects, make a cut, and create a final docket for each reviewer.

**March 16-23, 2020:** Review Four (one week)

- **March 13, 2020:** Reviewers will receive access to their final docket.
- **March 23, 2020:** Deadline to submit scores is **12 p.m. ET.**
  - After all scores have been submitted, MAP staff will share the final list that the review cohort will have collectively recommended for funding.

**March 23, 2020:** Honorariums processed and sent out

**April 1-17, 2020:** Period for review cohort to share process feedback with MAP staff

## 2020 REVIEW STRUCTURE

Historically, MAP has used a two-part review system: a remote voting process to hone the pool to the most viable proposals, and a live panel dialogue process to make the final selection of awards. In 2019 and 2020 grant cycles, we are experimenting with using only a remote voting structure. This change marks a conscious move away from the so-called “consensus model,” where a select, small group comes to final agreement through discussion and negotiation—a process which centralizes power in five or six individuals who have the time and/or resources to participate.

In the new model, reviewers abide by the vote throughout the review process within an online structure that gives many more people of various career stages/identities/geographies/etc. the ability to participate. Through Slack, reviewers have unlimited opportunities to confer with each other about program alignment, review criteria, and larger issues such as cultural appropriation. ***However, reviewers do not use the space to advocate for or against particular artists or projects.***

We know that this shift means giving up some benefits inherent in a live meeting—collective familiarity with the final funded projects (since every reviewer does not read every project)—a unique depth of conversation around proposals or meta field issues that are otherwise difficult for colleagues to have, and possibly, vocalized advocacy on behalf of specific artists. Nonetheless, we believe we may achieve greater equity in our grantmaking by shifting away from concentrating power in a select group, removing barriers to participation, and distributing decision-making much more widely, so we are experimenting with this new method to see what it brings.

In addition to the review structure itself, we take the following actions to create an anti-oppressive evaluation process in accord with MAP’s organizational goals and values:

### **Hiring reviewers with intention:**

- The review cohort’s composition reflects demographic dimensionality, especially with respect to race, gender, geography, area of expertise, and experience;
- Nominations are always sourced from MAP’s constituents rather than staff;
- Reviewers rotate annually and participants must wait 3 years until they are eligible to serve again in this capacity;
- This year, MAP’s honorarium (\$1,350) is offered as compensation for approximately 45 hours of labor (\$30/hour). While this work is often framed as a “service to the field,” we acknowledge that inadequate compensation is a significant barrier to participation.



**Mitigating bias and the influence of white supremacy in proposal evaluation:**

- Through private voting across four rounds of evaluation, reviewers use their scores, rather than their panel experience or live debate skills, to advocate for projects that imagine—and ultimately co-create—a more equitable and vibrant society.
- Incorporating Animating Democracy’s “[Aesthetic Perspectives: Attributes of Excellence in Arts for Change](#)” as an additional resource to encourage personal bias awareness and more expansive thinking:
  - We require that all reviewers read the [Short Take](#) version of the framework. This is an essential reference for completing your scores. We also recommend reading through the [Full Framework](#) version, as time permits. Among all 11 attributes, “coherence,” “cultural integrity,” “disruption,” and “risk-taking” seem to surface as frequent touchpoints that aid deeper reflection;
  - While not all of MAP’s applicants and grantees would describe their work as “arts for social change” work (nor are they required to), we have found that the framework’s generative questions provide language that helps reviewers think more deeply about how to look for alignment with MAP’s goals across a vast range of aesthetic approaches and identities within the applicant pool.
  - Reflecting on the questions present in the “Short Take” may shift reviewers’ sense of how the proposal aligns, resulting in a different score than they might have given otherwise. ***They are used precisely because of their potential to shift scoring behaviors*** (especially toward more advocacy for projects led by artists disproportionately affected by white supremacy and other systemic oppressions).
  - Here is a concrete example of that kind of shift from one reviewer:
    - *After an initial read, I was ready to give the project a 2, but was having difficulty articulating why with any specificity. I went back to MAP’s goals, and did a refresh on a few of the attributes in the Short Take. With further reflection, I realized my own sense of whether or not I would want to “see the work” was getting in the way of the fact that the proposal demonstrated strong alignment with the program in a variety of ways. As a result, I changed my score to a 4 and made an effort to be more conscious of correlations between my taste and my numerical assessment.*



**Requesting that reviewers take personal accountability for:**

- Asking questions about what you believe are the existing hierarchies or power inequities both within the arts and the larger socio-political climate in the U.S. today;
- Checking in on your expectations and assumptions about artistic practice, process and product;
- Practicing openness in your reception of unfamiliar artists and organizations;
- Noticing if or when you tend to score artists with whom you are familiar more highly than those with whom you are not familiar;
- Evaluating each project's alignment on its own terms, rather than through side-by-side comparisons with other projects within the applicant pool;
- Using the Slack channel as a facilitated common space to share questions and concerns about meta-issues that surface during proposal reviews;
- Looking for evidence of research, investigation, and/or experimentation within each unique application. Rather than expecting artists to fit into specific constraints, how can your sense of what "inquiry" looks like expand, by virtue of encountering the applicants' ideas?

**Creating a feedback-rich, listening environment:**

- MAP offers several modalities for reviewers to reflect on their experiences, needs, and wants, and staff are responsible for annually iterating all aspects of the program's philosophy, language, structures, processes, personnel, etc. based directly on reviewer feedback;
- As part of their assessment, reviewers are required to provide comments as feedback for applicants. This effort helps applicants feel that their work has been received with care and consideration within a vulnerable process that often includes unpaid labor.

**ASSESSING PROPOSALS FOR ALIGNMENT**

Rather than imposing rigid definitions which can in no way serve as an appropriate measurement for every project, we invite you, the 2020 review cohort, to expansively interpret the program goals (articulated below) according to your individual knowledge and expertise:

*The program is designed to support original live performance projects that **embody a spirit of deep inquiry**, particularly works created by **artists who question, disrupt, complicate, and challenge inherited notions of social and cultural hierarchy across the United States**.*



*Funded projects address these concerns through the processes of creating and distributing live performance to the public, and/or through the content and themes of the work itself. MAP is committed to anti-racism, and does not support cultural appropriation or oppressive project language, structures, or content.*

After reading each proposal in your docket, you will answer a short series of questions (outlined in pages 7-9) including your familiarity with the artists, your numerical score (a quantitative evaluation of the proposal's degree of alignment with MAP's goals), and comments / feedback for the applicant as necessary. Here are a few descriptions from previous reviewers who noticed program alignment in their dockets:

- *Western influences / POVs / artistic techniques that surfaced in the proposal were articulated as one way of working among many, rather than as the default standard.*
- *Experimentation within artistic forms and/or social practices was evident in the project description and/or work samples.*
- *If the proposed project drew from existing repertoire or traditions, a compelling rationale for how the new adaptation contributed to a more equitable and vibrant society was included.*
- *When artists were not of the communities whose stories they were sourcing to create the project, an articulation of ethical practices and relationship-building was evident in the narrative.*
- *A plan to compensate all creative team members and/or project participants in some way was reflected in the project budget (honorarium, salary, in-kind, barter, meals, transportation, etc.).*
- *Research strategies and collaborative practices articulated in the project narrative were anti-oppressive.*

## SCORING RUBRIC

Questions #1-4 and 7 are for internal use only. The responses to questions #5-6 will be shared with applicants who request feedback.

### 1) Do you have a conflict of interest with this proposal?

- Yes
- No

Please see page 10 for detailed information about conflicts of interest.

---

### 2) Are you familiar\* with any artists listed on this application?

- Yes
- No

\*Familiarity can include everything from "I've never met them, but I've heard of that person's name before" to "Yes, this is a friend/colleague that I know well." Selecting "no" means that you've never met or heard of the artists prior to encountering this proposal.

### 3) Have you experienced\* the live work of any artists listed on this application?

- Yes
- No

\*Selecting "yes" means that you have been an audience member.

### 4) How well does the proposed project align with MAP's goals?

- "4" indicates that the project strongly aligns.
- "3" indicates that the project mostly aligns.
- "2" indicates that the project has very little alignment.
- "1" indicates that the project has no alignment.

\*Should you select a "3," "2," or "1," the following will pop open for you:

- Select all that apply. "I selected my score because the following area(s) needed more detail or further explanation:"
  - Audience intentions or the live performance experience/environment intentions
  - Budget information
  - Creative process
  - Cultural integrity
  - Partnerships / collaborations



- Project logistics / plan
- Work sample choice
- NA - all proposals elements were clear or communicated thoroughly enough to understand the project

Your score will be combined with scores from other reviewers assigned to this proposal. The proposal will receive one averaged score that will represent its ranking in the overall pool of applications. Its rank will determine whether or not it moves forward to the next review period, or ultimately, receives funding.

**5) Please briefly fill in the blank: “In a future proposal for this project, I recommend that the applicant \_\_\_\_\_.”\***

\*Keep in mind that this comment will be shared as feedback with applicants who do not receive funding. Please offer a specific suggestion that could bring more clarity to your or someone else’s understanding of the project.

**In MAP’s experience, this is an example of a helpful comment:**

In a future proposal for this project, I recommend that the applicant devote more space to describe how they plan to build relationships with community members, and the level of agency community members may have to shape their stories/representation in the project.

**An example of an unhelpful comment:**

In a future proposal for this project, I recommend that the applicant selects better work samples.

While, this comment indicates that you struggled with the work sample portion of the application, written as is, it does not explain to the applicant what you mean by “better.” Did you mean better quality of film documentation? Or perhaps something that better reflects the proposed project? In these instances, specificity is key.

**6) If any, which Aesthetic Perspectives Attribute was most helpful in your consideration of this proposal?**

- Coherence
- Commitment
- Communal Meaning
- Cultural integrity
- Disruption
- Emotional Experience
- Openness

- Resourcefulness
- Risk-taking
- Sensory Experience
- Stickiness
- None of the above

**7) This is my passion vote.**

- Yes
- No

Every reviewer receives one “passion” vote per docket. No matter what your numerical score is, selecting “yes” to the passion vote signals the following:

- 1) You would fund this project without question, and/or
- 2) You feel strongly that the project should move forward for further consideration by other reviewers. You feel enough is there that you want others to have an opportunity to weigh in.

The passion vote is a mechanism to mitigate against the flattening effects of simply averaging scores. It is also a way for reviewers to signal strong advocacy for a project that can be factored into the proposal’s trajectory across Reviews 1-3.

Regardless of its ranking, any proposal that receives a majority of passion votes (2 out of 3 reviewers assigned to a specific proposal use the passion vote) will automatically move forward for further consideration. So, let’s say a proposal is ranked #299 out of 800 proposals, and we are inviting only the top-scoring 200 proposals to move forward to Review 2. It received a 4, 3, and 1 numerically. It also received 2 passion votes. This means that even though its averaged numeric rank alone isn’t high enough to move it forward, the passion votes will secure a spot for it in Review 3.

Note that passion votes will not be collected in Review 4 or impact the ranking that creates the final list. Therefore, rather than ensuring that a proposal will receive funding, passion votes only ensure that it will be considered again by a new review cohort.



## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

As you open each proposal in your online docket, the first question in the review window will be, “Do you have a conflict of interest with this proposal?”

- If the answer is yes, no further questions will open. Select “Finalize Review” and move on to the next proposal — no additional actions are needed.
- If the answer is no, the rest of the scoring questions will pop open in the review window for you to complete your review.

### MAP’s definition of “conflicts of interest”:

A reviewer is considered to have a conflict of interest with a grant applicant if they have a relationship with that individual as:

- An employee;
- A fundraiser or public relations person;
- An independent contractor who has received fees or payments in the past 12 months;
- Has had and or is having a relationship of an intimate nature with the grant applicant;
- Will benefit directly or indirectly from the grant applicant’s funding from MAP Fund.

In the event of conflict of interest with an applicant, the reviewer will not participate in:

- Any aspect of the decision-making process in connection with any matter that involves the applicant directly or indirectly;
- Any discussion or vote concerning the application;
- Any attempt to influence the votes or opinions of fellow MAP Fund board members, reviewers, staff members, or consultants;
- Soliciting, accepting, or agreeing to accept any gift of money, goods, loans or services, or entering into or participating in any other arrangements for personal benefits, which would improperly influence or have the appearance of improperly influencing them in their MAP Fund related duties.

Proposals will not be adversely affected by the assertion of a conflict of interest. In those instances, the proposal will receive an automatic score of “4” (out of 4), that will be factored into their overall average / rank.



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Are there any restrictions on the numerical score?**

Your voting is unrestricted, meaning that you may give as many 4s, 3s, 2s, and 1s as you feel correspond with the projects that are present in your docket.

### **Can I change my scores?**

Yes! You have the opportunity to save your scores as you go through each round of review, and revise them as needed. However, once you submit your scores for a given round, you will not be able to change them.

### **I'm unsure if I have a conflict of interest with this proposal.**

Please email MAP staff with the particulars of the circumstance. We will work with you to determine whether or not it's appropriate for you to score the proposal.

### **How should I account for things like grammar errors or poor audio / video quality?**

These factors should not be taken into consideration in your scoring. Your scores also should not be connected to whether or not an applicant has strong written English skills or access to the highest-quality documentation.

### **What if I'm not sure if a project is eligible?**

Please reach out to MAP staff — we're available to read through the proposal and weigh in on unclear eligibility.

### **What should I do if I read problematic elements in the proposal, i.e. evidence of cultural appropriation?**

Please reach out to MAP staff if you have concerns about a specific proposal. You may also use the Slack channel to connect with how other reviewers are identifying and scoring proposals that may be more challenging to assess.

### **Where can I find examples of projects MAP has funded previously?**

Look through 2019 MAP grantees [HERE](#).

### **How should I think about the various disparities in budget scope and scale across proposals?**

We understand the budgets to be in flux and aspirational. As a snapshot projection, it may open up any number of questions for you from the ethics of compensation, to fundraising viability, to field-wide issues regarding race, privilege, and (real or perceived) access to resources. We welcome you to bring those larger questions to the Slack channel without direct mention of the project itself.



Ideally, the budget section should play a supporting role in your assessment of alignment. In other words, it is one element among many that are contributing to your evaluation, and it should not carry disproportionate weight (for example, being the sole factor that would cause you to change a score of “1” to a “4”).

**Do all of the attributes need to be present in the proposal in order for it to score highly?**

No, not at all. Applicants are not asked to address the attributes in their proposals, nor is there any requirement for them to demonstrate that their project has “communal meaning,” for example. You are not being asked to find them, nor are you obligated to give a high numerical score in terms of alignment for a proposal that has any particular attribute.

There is no easy or direct correlation between whether or not you believe that there is evidence of any attributes in the proposal and the score you choose (for example, the presence of 5 attributes should equal the score of 2 or something like that). Again, they are here primarily to expand your thinking, not to serve as check-boxes.

**How much should I weigh certain aspects of the proposal over others when I score projects? For example, if the work samples are really strong but I have questions about the budget, what should I do?**

Endeavor to come up with a score that reflects the application as a whole. No single component should unduly influence the score more than any other component. We like to encourage applicants to think of their application like a gem with many facets, each contributing an important dimension to the whole. If you are concerned about one dimension (like the budget), it can impact your score, but should not necessarily drop the score by several points on the scale.

Similarly, if you sense strong alignment in only one aspect of the proposal, it shouldn’t raise your score by several points. The score of a “4” (the highest number you can give) means that all aspects of the proposal (description, work samples, budget, etc.) cohere to signal strong alignment with MAP’s goals.