



**REGIONAL ARTS  
COMMISSION**  
OF ST. LOUIS

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**Regional Arts Commission  
Grants & Programs Committee Minutes  
February 6, 2025 via ZOOM  
9:30 a.m.**

**Call to Order**

Ochoa called the February 6, 2025, meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. and asked Lea to conduct the Committee roll call.

**Committee Members in Attendance**

Tino Ochoa, chair, Robert Arbuthnot, Beverly Isom, David Wilson, Gerad Ewing, Jerry Gennaria, ex-officio

**Staff Attendees**

Vanessa Cooksey, Charlie Bosco, Ann Haubrich, Leigh Winter, Angie Peters, Chloe Smith, Lea Sutherlin

**Approval of Minutes**

Ochoa then called for a motion to approve the minutes from the November 14, 2024, Grants & Programs Committee meeting.

**Motion made by Wilson, seconded by Isom, and unanimously carried to approve the November 14, 2024 Grants & Programs Committee minutes. Votes were as follows:**

**Yea – Ochoa, Arbuthnot, Isom, Wilson, Ewing, Gennaria**

**Nay – none**

**Abstain - none**

Ochoa called for the following reports:

**FY 2025 Work Plan [Grants & Program Committee] (Cooksey & Haubrich)**

Haubrich asked Cooksey to highlight the FY 2025 Work Plan (included in the packet for this meeting) and noted that she would highlight Grants and Programs.

Cooksey welcomed Ewing to his first RAC meeting and shared the following highlights of the 2025 Work Plan – approved by the Executive Committee at its January 23 meeting: (1) the FY25 work plan is divided into two sections [a] general administrative accomplishments - deliverables that affect the entire business, and [b] grants and programs accomplishments - deliverables related to the organization's mission and benefits to the sector; (2) main idea of (deliverables) of each sentence is bolded in the work plan; (3) Haubrich has highlighted four deliverables specifically related to grants and programs; (4) the





complete work plan will be shared broadly at the March Board meeting; and (5) committees are being shown the parts of the work plan relevant to their specific areas prior to the board meeting.

Cooksey then asked Haubrich to describe the work plan highlights related to Grants and Programs.

Haubrich highlighted the Grants & Programs deliverables as part of the FY 2025 Work Plan as follows: (1) Community Arts Training Institute [CAT] - graduate 16 fellows, completing Cohort 27 and setting the stage for program updates; (2) Grantmaking - distribute \$4 million in Artist, Organizational, and Program Support Grants by the end of August; (3) Artist INC. Live - Graduate 25 artists in partnership with Mid-America Arts Alliance - concluding the three-year pilot in November; and (4) Compliance - maintain compliance with arts grant reporting requirements in partnership with the City of St. Louis, CDA, and the US Treasury Department, with completion targeted for December.

**Theory of Change Internalization (Cooksey & Haubrich)**

Haubrich asked Cooksey to elaborate on the internalization process of Theory of Change (TOC) as it relates to the Grants & Programs Committee.

Cooksey reminded that the TOC had been unanimously approved by the full Commission at its December 2024 meeting and shared the following highlights: (1) over the next two quarters, Dr. Rob Harvey will lead an internalization process involving the board, staff, and external stakeholders; (2) goal of internalization is to ensure everyone understands and can articulate the TOC before it is publicly released and to make any necessary adjustments based on feedback; (3) TOC "invest" component, will directly influence grantmaking including organizational grants, supporting cross-sector collaborations, and artist grants aimed at improving artists' financial stability and quality of life; and (4) this year's grantmaking is already in progress, and the Grants & Programs Committee will be involved in determining how to implement the TOC through grantmaking practices in the future, starting in FY25.

Cooksey then asked Haubrich to comment.

Haubrich expressed optimism about the upcoming changes post FY25 and highlighted the importance of exploring how to implement these changes effectively while keeping the community informed.

Ochoa emphasized the need for accountability and clear communication and assured that this Committee is on board and ready to support the process.

Haubrich thanked Ochoa, and acknowledged the significant contributions from Gennaria who served as the FY24 Grants & Programs chair. Haubrich noted that Gennaria helped in navigating the challenges of researching a lottery system for Hotel/Motel grants and brought a perspective toward clarifying and implementing change in a thoughtful manner.

Ochoa expressed appreciation for Gennaria's input and leadership.



**FY 2025 Hotel/Motel Grants Update (Haubrich)**

Haubrich acknowledged the Grants team, including Chloe Smith, Leigh Winter and Charlie Bosco, for their hard work and noted that the 2025 Hotel/Motel grants application process is currently underway. Haubrich then reported the following: (1) Organizational Grants - pre-application deadline was January 28 and 15 applications received; (2) office hours will continue every Tuesday during the month of February; (3) regular deadline for both Organizational Grants and Program Support Grant applications is March 3 - the Commission will vote on these grants at its June meeting; (4) Artist Support Grants – will move to a single cycle this year, with workshops and office hours in April and a deadline of May 12 - the Commission will vote on these grants in July; (5) artists and arts organizations, either calling, emailing, showing up to Snacks with RAC and/or office hours with a lot of questions – wanting to put their best foot forward; and (6) the lottery system pilot concept has been discussed at length, and G&P has decided not to implement it this year due to the significant changes that will be made to the grant process in 2026.

Haubrich asked Gennaria to comment.

Gennaria noted the following regarding a lottery system pilot: (1) need more in-depth analysis to determine if there is any bias built into the system, prior to making any recommendation of implementing a lottery system into the process; (2) goal is not to complicate but to be fair in the process; and (3) considering the current climate, should maintain status quo and make sure process is fully transparent and defensible to artists and organizations, as well as the public, that RAC serves.

**ARPA Funds Update (Cooksey & Haubrich)**

Haubrich provided the following ARPA funds update: (1) nearly all ARPA funds have been allocated; (2) engaged with two main groups within the tourism grants – [a] the larger organizations that applied and were selected for the tourism grant, [b] last year decision was made to shift several grantees from the Hotel/Motel fund to ARPA funding, [c] have met with both groups to date and gathering information while continuing to collaborate, [d] Dr. Harvey has facilitated meetings with the two groups, and the team is moving forward with working through final steps of the ARPA grants; and (3) team is focusing on understanding the impact of ARPA and determining how RAC can best support these organizations to ensure they remain sustainable through the tourism grants.

Haubrich asked Cooksey to comment on the St. Louis Film Project.

Cooksey provided the following update on ARPA funding for the St. Louis Film project: (1) all funds have been allocated; (2) finalizing communications with five [5] filmmakers selected for the project, in partnership with Continuity; (3) out of 115 applicants, 87 were eligible for grants of up to \$100,000 for film and multimedia projects; (4) a panel of 8 industry experts reviewed and scored the applications, and narrowed it down to a top 10, from which a small committee selected the final five; (5) Continuity currently working with the filmmakers to finalize ARPA subrecipient agreements to ensure compliance with U.S. Treasury requirements; (6) once signed agreements are in place, funds will be released; (7) the program aims to foster a filmmaking community in St. Louis; (8) once agreements are finalized, a news release will be issued, and media attention will be sought for an event in March 2026; (9) the filmmakers



will also be engaged in professional development and connected with other industry professionals, similar to the St. Louis Mural Project; and (10) announcements are expected within 2 to 4 weeks.

### **Program Updates (Haubrich)**

#### **CAT Institute**

Haubrich provided the following update on the Community Arts Training Institute (CAT): (1) approaching the conclusion of Cohort 27 - consisting of 16 fellows; (2) March 1 - the fellows, working in teams of four and partnering with Great Rivers Greenway, will pitch their lab projects; (3) each team can possibly receive a \$5,000 grant; (4) the CAT graduation will be held on March 7; and (5) emphasis on the fellows' role as ambassadors and highlighted the ongoing effort to align the CAT program with RAC's Theory of Change.

Haubrich asked Cooksey to further discuss this alignment and the future of CAT.

Cooksey shared the following: (1) RAC is reassessing its priorities and resources to achieve its goal of becoming a top 10 arts and culture travel destination; (2) facilitated conversation with the team determined that CAT is important but may want to consider partnering with other organizations to continue the program; (3) next step is to gather feedback from commissioners and present a recommendation for CAT's future; and (4) this process is timely, and an opportunity to re-evaluate and potentially restructure the program to align with RAC's theory of change and core mission.

Discussion held covering the following key points: (1) the long-term development of the CAT program, including how to improve the learning and work experience based on alumni feedback; (2) financial impacts of COVID-19, the program's cost-effectiveness, and the allocation of resources, including increases in CAT funding over the past several years; (3) review of the program's operational structure, including staff support and process improvements, while preserving the program's original goals; (4) affirmed that the CAT program aligns with the broader mission of RAC and is a worthy investment; (5) CAT alumni are effective ambassadors of RAC; and (6) immediate next step is to gather feedback from commissioners and consider potential partnerships for the program.

#### **Artist INC**

Haubrich shared a brief program update on Artist INC as follows: (1) a professional development program for individual artists; (2) consists of two parts – [a] Express Weekend - condensed, virtual weekend program (held in December) that provides a quick, intensive learning experience for 40 artists, and [b] Live Series - 8-week live program {held in the fall} that meets in person once a week, now in its 3rd year, and helps artists learn about business management, marketing, partnerships, and showcasing their work; (3) the program has received positive feedback from the St. Louis community, with survey results showing strong outcomes for the artists participating in the program; and (4) she [Haubrich] and Cooksey will meet with Artist Inc. representatives, following this meeting, to determine the dates for the upcoming Live Series.



### **Open Discussion**

Vanessa Cooksey outlined RAC's internalization plan for Theory of Change (TOC) as follows: (1) deep dive into the theory of change framework with staff and commissioners, focusing on people, money, and data inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and the impact statement; (2) utilizing staff meetings every other week to discuss and internalize the TOC, led by Dr. Rob Harvey; (3) establish office hours for commissioners to engage and ask questions about the framework and tactics; (4) dedicate time at commission meetings, starting in March, to engage commissioners around the TOC; (5) conduct a concurrent campaign to share the framework with external stakeholders, including the Mayor, County Executive, and other key partners, to garner support and understanding before making a public announcement at the end of the year; (6) ultimate goal is to ensure that the TOC is deeply understood and believed in by staff, commissioners, and stakeholders, and that it will bring value to the region, making St. Louis a top 10 arts and culture travel destination, resulting in more joy and prosperity for residents, creatives, and organizations.

Cooksey also noted that during a recent Governance Committee meeting, thinking about the Board training for September and the Board/Staff retreat in June.

Brief discussion held regarding recent political shifts and impact, if any, on RAC grantees.

Ochoa expressed appreciation for all the important updates presented at this meeting.

### **Adjournment**

Motion made by Isom, seconded by Gennaria, and unanimously approved to adjourn the February 6, 2025 Grants & Programs Committee meeting at 10:33 a.m.

### **Votes were as follows:**

**Yea – Ochoa, Arbuthnot, Isom, Wilson, Ewing, Gennaria**

**Nay – none**

**Abstain - none**

Submitted by

L. Sutherlin, Exec. Asst. & Commission Administrator

### **Attachments**

- Grants & Programs Committee Minutes, November 14, 2024
- FY 2025 Work Plan