



**Regional Arts Commission
Grants & Programs Committee Minutes
March 5, 2026 via ZOOM
10:00 a.m.**

Call to Order & Committee Members in Attendance

Chair Fiorello called the March 5, 2026, Grants & Programs Committee meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. and asked Sutherlin to conduct the Committee roll call.

Committee Members in Attendance

Sam Fiorello, chair, Rhonda Carter-Adams, *Matt Coble (**Non-Voting Committee Member*)

Yea – Fiorello, Carter-Adams, (Coble, acknowledged)

Nay – none

Abstain - none

Committee Members Absent

Gerad Ewing

Rudy Nickens

Tino Ochoa, ex-officio

Staff Attendees

Vanessa Cooksey, Charlie Bosco, Ann Haubrich, Chloe Higgins, Leigh Winter, Lea Sutherlin

Approval of Minutes

Chair Fiorello called for a motion, and seconded by Carter-Adams, to approve the November 6, 2025 Grants & Programs Committee minutes.

Haubrich noted revisions needed to the November 6, 2025 minutes.

Chair Fiorello asked Sutherlin to make the revisions to the November 6, 2025, and send via email to the Grants & Programs Committee for final review and a vote.

The November 6, 2025 Grants & Programs Committee minutes were approved via email quorum on March 25, 2026. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Fiorello, Carter-Adams, Ewing, Nickens

Nay – none

Abstain - none





Chair Fiorello then called for committee member introductions and expressed gratitude to all participants. He then called for the following reports:

2026 Grantmaking

Haubrich shared that the role/responsibility of the Grants & Programs Committee is to vote on the recommendations that the Grants Team makes to the Committee. Haubrich then outlined the upcoming internal grants process for 2026 as follows: (1) no new applications will be accepted for 2026; (2) funding will be consistent with 2025 levels at 80%; (3) existing grantees will undergo due diligence to confirm continued eligibility; (4) artist support grants: 402 applications received in 2025; 135 will be funded at 80% of prior awards after due diligence; and (5) notification to Artist Support grantees will occur by end of March, with payouts in November.

Calendar

Haubrich asked Winter to share the Internal Grantmaking Calendar on screen, and noted the following: (1) due diligence meetings with organizations are ongoing, scheduled through March/April; (2) SMU Data Arts Survey deadline extended to March 20th - 77 organizations have completed, 29 partially completed, 23 not yet started; (3) final reports for 2025 grants are due August 17th [hard deadline]; (4) Grants Committee remaining meetings scheduled for 2026 including June 4, August 27th, and November 12; (5) the grant period for 2025 ends on June 30th with final reports due August 17th; (6) distribution of 2026 grant agreements will occur in September and October; and (7) planning for 2027 grants includes an *extra* Grants & Programs Committee meeting to learn about and discuss organizational grant funding models.

Due Diligence Meetings

Haubrich noted that the Grants Team is conducting due diligence meetings with approximately 70 organizations, prioritizing groups who had financial red flags on their 2025 application and/or those with stipulations on their grant agreement.

Bosco shared the following takeaways from his meetings to date: (1) most organizations he met with have budgets under \$250,000; (2) there is a high interest in the SMU Data Arts partnership, especially in understanding financial and programmatic data; (3) there is a desire for RAC to facilitate more networking among grantees; (4) these groups are experiencing rising operational costs, notably venue expenses; (5) the groups continue prioritization of artist compensation even during budget cuts; and (5) the need exists for board development and fundraising support.

Higgins shared the following: (1) general operating support is highly valued; (2) financial uncertainty due to operational costs and staffing challenges; (3) marketing and audience outreach are ongoing challenges; and (4) positive interactions with RAC and staff are appreciated.

SMU Data Arts Partnership

Winter shared the following: (1) praised SMU Data Arts team for their responsiveness; (2) the cultural data profile is aiding data collection and benchmarking; and (3) current survey responses - 129 total organizations; 77 complete, 29 partial, 23 not started.



2027 Grants Planning & Early Strategizing in Alignment w/Strategic Roadmap

Haubrich shared the following: (1) preparing for the 2027 grant cycle, with strategic alignment to the RAC Strategic Roadmap; (2) key dates include – [a] special planning meeting in April - date to be confirmed, [b] June 4th - Grants Committee review and preparations, [c] June 26th - Staff and Board retreat focusing on the presentation of grant models, [d] end of July - announcements about the 2027 grant process, [e] September 17th - Board vote on the 2027 Artist Fellowship. The 2027 cycle aims to streamline the grantmaking cycle and align with strategic goals.

Chair Fiorello emphasized the importance of a comprehensive planning session and suggested a full-day meeting to deeply engage with the strategic roadmap.

Open Discussion

Cooksey addressed recent media attention regarding RAC's audit, and assured staff is handling the situation appropriately.

Discussion held toward an additional meeting date possibly in April.

Haubrich indicated the possibility of hiring a facilitator to guide the additional meeting. She outlined the following regarding the meeting's agenda: (1) Mk Sadiq to provide historical context on RAC's grantmaking; (2) Jen Benoit Bryan, executive director of SMU Data Arts, who has authored a report on the arts sector during uncertain times, to set the contextual background; (3) Rick Gratza, leader of the finance review committee, to discuss his process for reviewing financials post-grant applications; (4) the team would share analysis of their due diligence grantee meetings, along with research on local arts agency funding models, and grant-making practices across various cities; (5) consider presenting two or three different funding models for discussion to ensure a thorough and accountable process aligned with RAC's strategic roadmap; and (6) plans to hold a detailed conversation during the June retreat with the full commission.

Coble highlighted the following points: (1) the importance of thoughtfully integrating AI into the grant process to enhance efficiencies and support better decision-making, emphasizing that AI should complement human judgment and be part of ongoing discussions; (2) recognizing common needs of organizations [as mentioned earlier by Bosco and Higgins] and exploring shared services such as development, marketing, donor attraction, or accelerator programs that could benefit multiple organizations; the overall strategy is to strategically incorporate AI and shared resources to improve processes, outcomes, and models.

Roll Call & Adjournment

Chair Fiorello thanked everyone for their great work and expressed that he looks forward to working with all members of this Committee. He then called for a motion to adjourn.

Motion made by Carter-Adams, seconded by Fiorello, and unanimously approved to adjourn the March 5, 2026 Grants & Programs Committee meeting at 10:02 a.m. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Fiorello, Carter-Adams (Coble, acknowledged)

Nay – none





**REGIONAL ARTS
COMMISSION**
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Abstain - none

Submitted by,
L. Sutherlin, Exec. Asst. & Commission Administrator

ATTACHMENTS

- Grants & Programs Committee Minutes, August 28, 2025
- 2025 Crisis Response Grants List
- 2026 Artist Support Funding Approach Analysis

