



**REGIONAL ARTS
COMMISSION**
OF ST. LOUIS

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**Regional Arts Commission
Grants & Programs Committee Minutes
May 22, 2025 via ZOOM
9:30 a.m.**

Call to Order & Committee Members in Attendance

Chair Ochoa called the May 22, 2025, Grants & Programs Committee meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and asked Le a to conduct the Committee roll call.

Committee Members in Attendance

Tino Ochoa, chair, Robert Arbuthnot, David Wilson, Gerad Ewing,

Yea – Ochoa, Arbuthnot, Ewing, Wilson

Nay – none

Abstain - none

Committee Members Absent

Anita Hagerman, Beverly Isom, Jerry Gennaria, ex-officio

Staff Attendees

Vanessa Cooksey, Pacia Anderson, Charlie Bosco, Ann Haubrich, Chloe Smith, Lea Sutherlin

Approval of Minutes

Chair Ochoa then called for a motion to approve the minutes from the February 6, 2025, Grants & Programs Committee meeting.

Motion made by Ewing, seconded by Arbuthnot, and unanimously carried to approve the February 6, 2025 Grants & Programs Committee minutes. Votes were as follows:

Yea – Ochoa, Arbuthnot, Ewing, Wilson

Nay – none

Abstain - none

Chair Ochoa called for the following reports:

FY 2025 Hotel/Motel Grants Update (Haubrich)

Haubrich began by thanking everyone and then explained that the grants team has been extremely busy due to being in the middle of Organizational, Program Support and Artist Support grant rounds, and that recent system changes implemented by Blackbaud have caused some initial disruptions but are expected to improve over time. She then highlighted the following: (1) broader challenges, including the rescinding of NEA grants that affected





several RAC organization grantees; (2) RAC grantees affected by fallout from the recent tornado; and (3) to address the impact of the grant rescissions, she (Haubrich) and Smith are conducting research on 19 grantees who lost funding, estimating a total loss of around \$500,000, and are gathering information to understand how these organizations are coping and exploring possible ways for RAC to assist, which would be discussed later during this meeting. Before moving on to other topics, Haubrich invited Cooksey to speak about grant allocations and budget details.

Cooksey highlighted the following: (1) ongoing crises affecting the arts and culture sector, including the NEA grant rescissions and recent tornadoes; and (2) staff has met multiple times to develop a recommendation, to be presented to the full Commission, as a strategic response to use approximately \$2 MM of the \$4 MM in rollover funds in the following several ways - [a] increasing Organizational Support by adding \$800,000 to the existing arts organization support budget to fund more organizations - expanding the list from 96 to 122 - thereby leveraging savings and supporting more arts organizations, especially those in outlying areas affected by recent funding cuts [b] maintaining Artist Support by continuing the \$1 million budget for artist grants, despite high demand, with \$3.4 million in requests [c] Program Support - using savings in the program support budget to aid arts organizations in need [d] establish a relief fund by creating a \$1 million relief fund to assist organizations impacted by the NEA rescissions and tornadoes, providing small, immediate grants during the initial crisis period - envisioned as the "2085 Fund," aligning with RAC's upcoming 40th anniversary - by 2085, RAC will be 100 years old, and [e] restoring STL Symphony funding by using \$200,000 to fulfill the original planned ARPA funds allocation for the SLSO, aiming to maintain goodwill and support community resilience.

Cooksey added that the recommendation will also include a potential adjustment to RAC's grants policy to allow FY24 and FY25 grantees to request changes in their use of grant funds to address their ongoing tornado relief needs.

Ochoa shared his agreement and appreciation to the team for their input.

Wilson concurred.

Update on Artist Support Grants, Program Support Grants, and Organization Grants

Haubrich asked Smith to share the Grants Comparison Chart 2022-2025, and highlighted comparisons for Artist Support Grants, Program Support Grants and Organization Grants. She also mentioned that thorough due diligence was conducted, and specifically, Gratza reviewed the 30 organizational applications, organizations with budgets of \$500,000 or more, and his recommendations, along with any red flags, were shared with the finance review panel.

Discussion held regarding eligibility, cut-off points, scoring, grant levels, appeal process, and anticipated vote on final list during June.

ARPA Funds Update (Haubrich)

Haubrich gave the following update on ARPA funds: (1) successful convenings held of ARPA Tourism cohorts on April 17 and 18 - led by Dr. Robert Harvey, who conducted a group consultancy for each session; (2) participant



assessments; (3) RAC staff received good information and data from each session; and (4) next steps - fulfill the ARPA requirements and beyond, and preparing these organizations to lead, in the cultural tourism arena and in general.

Program Update (Haubrich/Anderson)

CAT Institute

Haubrich announced that Pacia Anderson was recently named poet laureate for St. Louis City, then asked Anderson to share her report on the CAT Institute.

Anderson shared the following presentation which highlighted the CAT Institute Cohort 27: (1) CAT is longest running sustained community arts training program of its kind in the US; (2) what it means to work in the community with others who are not in the arts sector; (3) capstone project – opportunity to pitch for grant funds from RAC; (4) 10 eight hour sessions held bi-weekly on Saturdays at RAC's space in Cortex; (5) graduated 15 of 16 selected fellows - attended by Cooksey and Gennaria; (6) faculty included five lead facilitators, four lab team liaisons, seven guest presenters and one MSW; (7) partnerships – VLAA [Sue Greenberg] and Great Rivers Greenway [GRG]; (8) updated curriculum; (9) outstanding administrative support – Charlie Bosco; (10) cohort culture; (11) exit interviews; (12) looking to expand partnerships; (13) outcomes – including being conservative with the budget; and (14) what's next – lab team projects highlighted on RAC website, additional lab team partnerships, and RAC's 40th anniversary party.

Ewing expressed gratitude for the "outstanding lab team presentation" and emphasized that it was evident significant learning took place throughout the process.

Open Discussion

Cooksey discussed the following: (1) offered to address any questions about the discussed topics; (2) noted she had a scheduled meeting with Board Chair Gennaria to formally request approval to initiate the process of using \$2MM of rollover funds; (3) possible request for an ad hoc full commission meeting since this decision is significant for the budget and requires board approval; and (4) expressed appreciation for this Committee's questions during the session, as they help prepare for the official presentation to Gennaria and the full board.

Haubrich mentioned that organizational review panels were convened where applications had a sizeable variance in scoring, which are expected to conclude this week, and as a result, the scores and rankings will be available next week.

Roll Call & Adjournment

Chair Ochoa called for a motion to adjourn. Motion made by Arbuthnot, seconded by Wilson, and unanimously approved to adjourn the May 22, 2025 Grants & Programs Committee meeting at 10:34 a.m.

Votes were as follows:



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Yea – Ochoa, Arbuthnot, Wilson, Ewing

Nay – none

Abstain - none

Submitted by

L. Sutherlin, Exec. Asst. & Commission Administrator

Attachments

- Grants & Programs Committee Minutes, February 6, 2025

