



REGIONAL ARTS
COMMISSION
OF ST. LOUIS

Organizational Grant FAQs

I CANNOT ACCESS MY ACCOUNT. WHO DO I CONTACT?

Blackbaud Grantmaking is the RAC grant management system. For technical assistance when using the grantmaking system, please email MS_RACSTL_Grantmaking@blackbaud.com.

HOW WILL I COMMUNICATE WITH RAC REGARDING MY APPLICATION?

Add noreply@yourcause.com AND mail@grantapplication.com AND grants@racstl.org to your address book or safe senders list to ensure you receive all communications from RAC.

IS AN ORGANIZATIONAL GRANT RIGHT FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION?

- Organization needs working capital to sustain their day-to-day operations to support operational needs like salaries, technology, and overhead.
- Organization strives to build fundraising, planning, and other systems to strengthen their funding sources and sustain the organization over time.
- Organization aspires to build a strong and sustainable infrastructure to provide programming that will have the greatest impact.
- Organization intends to foster innovation and risk-taking by developing its bandwidth to take advantage of suitable opportunities as they arise.

IS THERE A PRE-APPLICATION REQUIREMENT?

Organizational Grant applicants are not required to submit a pre-application. However, submitting a pre-application is an opportunity to receive RAC staff feedback on your application and to make changes before the final submission. To have your application reviewed by RAC staff before the final deadline, please submit a pre-application via the grantmaking system between January 21 and January 28, 2025. Feedback from RAC staff on the pre-applications will be provided by February 24, 2025. The final application deadline is March 3, 2025.

WHAT ARE THE KEY GRANT DATES AND DEADLINES?

Click [here](#) for a comprehensive list of important grant dates and deadlines.

WHAT ARE THE ORGANIZATIONAL GRANT RESTRICTIONS?

Click [here](#) to review the list of programs, projects, or events that RAC does not fund.

WHAT ARE THE GRANT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS?

Eligible organizations meet the following requirements:

- **Mission and purpose:** Arts and culture mission-driven nonprofit organization. The organization's primary purpose must be the creation, presentation, or utilization of arts and culture.

- **Local focus:** Arts and cultural activities of the applicant organization must occur in St. Louis City and/or St. Louis County.
- **Nonprofit 501 (c) (3) organization:** In “good standing” as a nonprofit corporation in the State of Missouri and 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or a unit of federal or local government such as a library, county, or municipal agency.
- **Arts programming:** The proposed program’s primary purpose must be the creation, presentation, or utilization of arts and culture; programming must be publicly accessible.
- **Timeframe:** The activities and/or operations for which the applicant is applying must take place between July 1, 2025, and June 31, 2026.

IS THERE A CAP ON A REQUEST AMOUNT?

- Organizations with annual operating budget of \$2,000,001 and up may apply for up to \$100,000.
- Organizations with annual operating budget up to \$2,000,000 may apply for up to \$50,000.
- Organizations with annual operating budget up to \$500,000 may apply for up to \$25,000.

ARE MATCHING FUNDS REQUIRED?

Organizational Grant awards do not require matching funds. However, RAC encourages organizations to identify and secure diverse revenue streams.

WHAT ARE THE FUNDING CRITERIA?

- **Artistic Essentials (weighted at 40%):** An organization that produces or presents culturally and artistically significant work that supports a full creative life for every St. Louisian.
- **Community Benefit (weighted at 30%):** An organization that demonstrates broad community benefit and contributes to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the community.
- **Capacity & Sustainability (weighted at 30%):** An organization that intentionally plans for operational and/or program capacity and sustainability.

HOW CAN I COMPLETE THE RAC BUDGET FORM WITHOUT PURCHASING EXCEL?

An alternative to using Excel is to recreate the template in Google Sheets or Apple Numbers. Google Sheets is free, but you will have to recreate the template and get it as close as possible to the Excel version. Make sure to include the two sections and all top horizontal column headers. **The budget will need to be saved as a PDF to be uploaded into the system.**

WHAT DOES THE APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS ENTAIL?

Once the application closes on March 3, 2025, application reviewers will read and rate all applications assigned to them within the online grantmaking portal. At this point, staff may move an application score down one to four points based on financial, operational, or reputational risk. Staff will then review the ratings to determine the applications with the greatest score variance.

Applications with the greatest score variance will be discussed during a virtual meeting that includes each reviewer assigned to the application and RAC staff. During this meeting, reviewers will provide a second rating for the applications discussed. Not all applications will be reviewed during the virtual meeting—only those with a large variance in ratings. All virtual meetings will be recorded and the transcripts published on the website so that applicants may review them.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE GRANT APPLICATION REVIEWERS?

Application reviewers play a central role in RAC’s annual grantmaking process. Reviewers commit to the following:

- Attend/view an orientation session to learn how to review the applications according to the guidelines and review criteria.
- Read the assigned applications, including videos, photos, recordings, or other work samples by the communicated deadline.
- If necessary, attend a virtual review meeting with other panelists to discuss and rate applications with the greatest variance in scoring from the first round of reviews.
- If necessary, hear appeals and render a final rating.
- Provide feedback on the application review process for improvement purposes.

HOW ARE FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS REVIEWED? DOES THE FINANCIAL REVIEW DIRECTLY IMPACT AN APPLICATIONS RATING?

Financial Review Panel for Organizations with Budgets of \$500,000 or More

For organizational applicants with an annual budget of \$500,000 or more, a Financial Review Panel will review budgets, financial documents, and the organizational health worksheet for added due diligence during the application process. The Financial Review Panel will not score applications but provide comments regarding the financial stability of the organization to help inform the Application Reviewers in the scoring of applications. Financial Review Panel members include RAC commissioners and individuals with nonprofit finance expertise.

Based on Financial Review Panel comments and Reviewer comments/scores, RAC staff may move an application score down one to three points based on financial or operational risk.

Financial Review for Organizations with Budgets of Less Than \$500,000

For organizational applicants with an annual budget of less than \$500,000, RAC staff may move an application score down one to three points based on financial risk. Red flags include missing required financial documents, the lack of contingency plan or lack of diverse revenue streams, and other factors based on reviewer comments.

HOW ARE GRANTS RATED?

Each application will be scored according to RAC's review criteria and the rating system, shown in the table below.

- There are three review sections that correspond to RAC review criteria: Artistic Essentials; Community Benefit; and Capacity/Sustainability.
- Each review section has three questions, for a total of nine questions in the application.
- Each review section is weighted and conveys the corresponding points possible for each question. Application question responses can be rated exemplary, strong, good, fair, or weak – and given a score within the provided point range.

The maximum number of points available is 100.

Additional RAC Staff Scoring

RAC staff will have the option to move an application score down one to four points based on financial or reputational risk.

To mitigate reputational risk for the applicant/grantee and for RAC, RAC staff may elect to move an applicant score down one point based on responses to the Organizational Health Worksheet. Reputational risk stems from events that cause an organization an embarrassment or threat to its brand, programming, or operations.

Additionally, there may be Commission-approved recommendations or stipulations that are part of a grantee's contract, based on reviewer comments.

The points assigned to each question in the application are used to determine final award amount. Points are combined to provide an overall application score. All scores for an application are then averaged for the final application score.

Final application scores are determined in whole numbers. Most applications will receive an average that is not a whole number. For example, if an application receives a 60.7 overall score, this means the application's final score is 60. The final score is determined by the whole number that precedes the decimal and will not be rounded up nor down.

HOW DOES THE PANEL REVIEW PROCESS WORK?

The panel process requires a panel review of applications with the greatest score variance—allowing reviewers to revisit applications where there may have been a misunderstanding or even bias. **Please note, not all applications will be reviewed at the panel meetings, just applications with a great variance in reviewer ratings.**

WILL APPLICANTS NOT REVIEWED AT THE PANEL MEETING BE ELIGIBLE TO FILE AN APPEAL?

Yes, all applicants will be able to file an appeal if they have cause. If an applicant finds a misstatement of fact was made upon reading reviewer comments OR listening to the recording of the application's review; or if the applicant can demonstrate the application's review was based on criteria or application requirements other than those appearing in the RAC guidelines, an appeal may be filed with RAC staff.

WHY ARE APPLICANTS NO LONGER ABLE TO PRESENT THEIR APPEALS TO THE REVIEW PANEL?

RAC is streamlining many of its processes to save time for applicants, reviewers, and staff. To ensure efficiency, RAC staff will present the appeal, if eligible, based on the filed appeal.

WILL VIRTUAL MEETINGS BE OPEN TO ALL APPLICANTS OR ONLY THOSE BEING REVIEWED?

All virtual meetings will be recorded and the transcripts published on the website so that applicants may review them.

CAN I SUBMIT VIDEOS OR VIDEO LINKS AS WORK SAMPLES?

Yes, you can submit video links as work samples. Please include your links in a word document and upload the document as a PDF. **All work samples need to be saved in one PDF document to be uploaded into the system.**

HOW IS ORGANIZATIONAL GRANT FUNDING DISTRIBUTED?

The available source of funding for RAC Organizational Grants is not sufficient to meet applicant demand. The final distribution of funding is dependent on several factors. These variables factor into the final funding matrix:

- The available funding
- The number of applications submitted
- The applicant score
- The number of applicants awarded funding

Given the above information, the percentage **for funding for which your application is eligible may not be your grant award amount.**

IF MY ORGANIZATION IS APPROVED FOR A GRANT, HOW WILL I BE NOTIFIED?

If awarded a grant, applicants will be notified via the Blackbaud online grantmaking portal and a direct email.

WILL APPLICANTS BE ABLE TO VIEW SCORES, WHETHER OR NOT THE GRANT WAS MADE? ADDITIONALLY, IF WE DO NOT RECEIVE RAC FUNDING IN 2025, WILL WE RECEIVE FEEDBACK TO BETTER POSITION OURSELVES FOR FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES?

You may request your scores and reviewer feedback in order to improve your grant application for the next opportunity by emailing grants@racstl.org.

WHAT DOCUMENTS ARE REQUIRED AS PART OF MY APPLICATION?

- Organizational Budget Template ([Download from RAC Website](#))
- Organizational Health Worksheet ([Download from RAC Website](#))
- Most recent Form 990 submitted to IRS
- Board of Directors List (list to include roles and affiliations)
- Financial Statements for the two most recently completed fiscal years and most recent audit (if available). Financial Statements will include a Statement of Financial Position (also known as a Balance Sheet) and a Statement of Activities (also known as a Profit & Loss Statement). *Please note that if appropriate financial statements are not uploaded, it will impact the application score.*
- Up to 3 Work Samples
- Staff List, including title (for organizations with budgets \$500,000+ OR organizations with more than 10 full-time employees, upload Senior Staff List, including title)
- Critical Review (a Critical Review is a published analysis or critique of presentation/show/performance/exhibition that evaluates the strength and/or weaknesses of said presentation's execution, ideas, or content) (optional)
- DEI Statement, Policy, or Plan (optional)
- Strategic Plan (optional)

WHAT ARE THE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS?

RAC will issue final report instructions and the report form through the Blackbaud online grantmaking platform. Each grantee is required to submit a final report on or before August 15, 2026. Should a grantee not complete the reporting requirement, they will be ineligible to apply for RAC grants in the future.