

Program Support Frequently Asked Questions

The following FAQs address changes to the RAC Program Support application. This document is for information purposes only.

I cannot access my account. Who do I contact?

RAC has implemented a Blackbaud product as our new grants platform. Our previous grantmaking system was retired by the provider in 2020. **All applicants need to create a new account to apply.**

For technical assistance when using the grantmaking system, please email MS_RACSTL_Grantmaking@blackbaud.com.

Why won't all applications be reviewed by a panel as they have been in the past?

RAC expects a large number of applications due to the hiatus from grantmaking. Consequently, RAC updated the review process to streamline the amount of work required of reviewers and staff. The streamlined process requires panel review of applications where ratings largely varied—and where comments vastly differed—allowing reviewers to revisit applications where there may have been a misunderstanding or even bias. The time saved also creates more staff capacity.

With not all applications being reviewed at the panel meeting, will those applicants NOT reviewed at the panel meeting be eligible to file an appeal?

Yes, all applications will be able to file an appeal if they have cause. Upon reading reviewer comments OR listening to the recording of the application's review, if an applicant finds a misstatement of fact was made; 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.

Why has RAC changed the rating scale?

To make the rating process easier for reviewers and staff in the decision-making process, RAC changed the rating scale to 1-10. This rating scale is based on the NEA's scale, which is considered a public grantmaking best practice.

If you are a new organization and applying for first-time funding, with no actual audience numbers to report and you are building staffing, etc., how can that be addressed in the application?

If it is a new program or if you are unsure of audience numbers and/or staffing, you may provide estimates for your program. These same questions will be posed in the final report so RAC may gain a better understanding of program results.

For the past few years, funds went first to the highest rated applications and lower rated programs received less based on availability. Is that still the case? Is an applicant who receives a rating of five guaranteed 50% of funding or may they receive less based-on availability of funds?

Receiving a rating of five does not equate to receiving 50% of the request. RAC will fund from the highest scored applications until there are no longer funds based on the amount the applicant is eligible

Program Support Frequently Asked Questions

The following FAQs address changes to the RAC Program Support application. This document is for information purposes only.

to receive. That may mean some fours receive funding—or not. It may also mean all fours receive funding; it also may mean none are funded.

Will virtual meetings be open to all applicants or only those being reviewed?

Only applicants being reviewed will be invited to attend the virtual meeting. Please note: all virtual meetings will be recorded and published on the website so that applicants will be able to view and listen to the meeting.

How does a financial statement from the most recently completed fiscal year—when an organization is coping with the effects of a global pandemic—inform reviewers about our organization without skewing an applicant's rating?

RAC recognizes that a financial statement from the most recently completed fiscal year is not reflective of the organization at its best, given the global pandemic that began in 2020. Insofar as an organization's financial budget can be utilized to consider an organization's capacity, it is not the sole indicator of capacity. Additionally, an organization's financial statement can provide a sense of how and where a program fits into the greater picture of an organization.

If applicants are not able to address their financial status in the application, we urge applicants to add a note directly to their (uploaded) financial statements, explaining how the organization is addressing financial challenges during the (continuing) time of COVID.

As mentioned in the 3/2/22 virtual workshop, reviewers will be reminded to not rate an application negatively due to financials in the pandemic. They will be instructed to pay close attention to the program budget.

RAC is also collecting this data to benchmark how our region's arts and cultural groups are weathering the pandemic.