



**REGIONAL ARTS
COMMISSION**
OF ST. LOUIS

2025 PROGRAM SUPPORT GRANT GUIDELINES

Pre-Applications/Applications Open: Tuesday, January 21, 2025
Application Deadline: Monday, March 3, 2025

www.racstl.org/programsupport

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Program Support Grants

Because RAC is invested in the health and success of the St. Louis area arts and culture sector, we are providing fiscally-sponsored programs and non-arts organizations that produce arts programming (including arts programs produced by St. Louis universities) with the opportunity to apply for program support funding.

The Program Support Grant category provides a one-year program or project support grant in the production and/or presentation of artistic activities. These projects or programs serve to broaden and deepen audience/community participation and increase access to the arts for visitors and residents throughout the St. Louis region and must occur in St. Louis city or county.

Application Review Criteria

- Artistic Essentials (weighted at 40%): A non-arts organization or fiscally-sponsored project that produces or presents culturally and artistically significant work that supports a full creative life for every St. Louisan.
- Community Benefit (weighted at 30%): A program that demonstrates broad community benefit while advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.
- Capacity (weighted at 30%): A non-arts organization or fiscally-sponsored project that intentionally plans for program capacity.

Rating System

Reviewer ratings correlate to the application criteria and are designed to simplify the review process for the applicant and reviewers.

Please note that every year is a fresh start for applicants and RAC approaches its grantmaking with a “zero-based” principle – for example, if a program received a grant in the amount of \$10,000 in 2024, it is not guaranteed to receive that amount in 2025.

No Matching Fund Requirement

Matching funds are not required for Program Support grant applicants.

Please note: Although there are no matching fund requirements for Program Support grants, RAC encourages organizations to plan for and secure diverse revenue streams and to indicate those in the budget.

How Much May We Request?

For 2025, non-arts organizations or a fiscally-sponsored project may apply for up to \$10,000.

Grantmaking Process

RAC follows a four-stage grantmaking process. The entire process is online: **(1) Request; (2) Decision-making; (3) Grant Management;** and **(4) Analysis.** These stages are explained in the grant guidelines that begin on the following page.

Submission Notification

Once an application is submitted through Blackbaud, an applicant will receive email notification regarding submission. If an applicant does not receive an email from grants@racstl.org, the application has not been submitted.

Grantmaking System Technical Assistance

For technical questions while working in the online system, please email MS_RACSTL_Grantmaking@blackbaud.com.

PROGRAM SUPPORT GRANTS

2025 GRANT GUIDELINES

APPLICATION DUE DATE: Monday, March 3, 2025

GRANT ACTIVITY PERIOD: July 1, 2025- June 31, 2026



I. REQUEST

BACKGROUND

The Regional Arts Commission's (RAC) Program Support Grant provides a one-year program or project support grant in the production and/or presentation of artistic activities to non-arts organizations or fiscally-sponsored projects.

These projects or programs serve to broaden and deepen audience/community participation and increase access to the arts for visitors and residents throughout the St. Louis region and must occur in St. Louis city or county.

IS A PROGRAM SUPPORT GRANT RIGHT FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION?

- A project may consist of one or more specific events or activities; it may be part of or all of an applicant's regular season or activities. Applicants that undertake a single short-term project in a year – i.e.: a ten-day jazz festival– could apply for the event, or they could identify certain components (such as the presentation of a key artist and the associated activities) for their application.
- Applicants may apply for any or all phases of a project, from its planning through its execution.
- Programs may be new and untested or ongoing with proven track records.
- Programs may cover a broad range of singular or multiple artistic disciplines.

PROGRAM SUPPORT GRANT RESTRICTIONS

[Click here](#) to review the list of program support grant restrictions.

GRANT ELIGIBILITY

Eligible organizations meet the following requirements:

- **Local focus:** Arts and cultural programs 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.
- **Timeframe:** The program for which you are applying must take place between July 1, 2025, and June 31, 2026.

CAN I APPLY USING A FISCAL SPONSOR?

Applicants are eligible to apply for up to \$10,000.00 with a fiscal sponsor (agent) in Program Support, provided that:

- The fiscal sponsor is a nonprofit corporation with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), preferably with a history of arts programming, or has tax-exempt status from the IRS with a fiscal sponsorship-based mission.
- Included in the application is a letter signed by the sponsoring organization executive director indicating their agreement to serve as a fiscal sponsor should a grant be made for the program.
- If an application is funded, the applicant and the fiscal sponsor must both sign the Terms and Conditions Agreement issued by RAC.
- If planning to apply with a fiscal sponsor, it is highly recommended that you come to one of the posted Office Hours sessions to discuss your application.

HOW MUCH CAN MY ORGANIZATION APPLY FOR?

The maximum amount of funding an organization can apply for and receive is \$10,000.

MATCHING FUNDS

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

WHAT ARE THE FUNDING CRITERIA?

Program Support Grant applications will respond to three grant review criteria:

1. Artistic Essentials (weighted at 40%)

A project or program that produces or presents culturally and artistically significant work that supports a full creative life for every St. Louisan.

- Application describes the program and resources necessary to carry out the program’s artistic activities, and the impact of those ventures on the organization.
- Conveys aspects of the program, including clear plans for programmatic execution such as location, dates, frequency, etc.
- Demonstrates cultural and artistic significance and how the program is relevant to the arts & culture sector and to artists.
- Indicates clear commitment to recruit, engage, and compensate artists—with an emphasis on St. Louis artists.
- Program demonstrates commitment to excellence of artistic craft and skills.
- Program contributes to innovation and new thinking in the art form and/or wider culture.
- Program plans for artistic growth or expansion of artistic aspirations or artistic risk.
- Work samples indicate alignment with the program and demonstrate cultural and/or artistic significance.
- Program goals, objectives, and outcomes are realistic and relative to the program activities and planned program execution.

- Assessment/Evaluation efforts are in alignment with the program.

2. Community Benefit (weighted at 30%):

A program that demonstrates broad community benefit and contributes to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the community.

- Programmatic attendance, participation, or other measures indicate that the community or constituency values the organization's programs.
- Conveys program's community impact through qualitative and quantitative data (examples include number of locations, zip codes, neighborhoods, and/or participants served).
- Demonstrates a link between artistic intention and audience experience.
- Some level of audience assessment is indicated.
- Program is known for creating an inclusive environment.
- Intentionally and strategically recruits diverse collaborators (volunteers, staff, board, donors, participants, etc.), and creatives.
- Develops meaningful collaborations with diverse neighborhoods and communities to provide equitable opportunities for creation and participation.
- Offerings and information about locations where programs are provided are intentionally accessible to all people, and available to the public.
- Program is making progress in reaching new audiences/community or strengthening relationship with existing audience.
- Demonstrates consideration of affordability in offerings (free and/or reduced-price admission, scholarship, etc.)
- Indicates the program contributes to the vibrancy, diversity, safety, and economic vitality of neighborhoods, communities, or the broader St. Louis region.
- Demonstrates healthy and/or consistent level of participation/community connection.
- Educational, interpretive, and/or other public activities broaden public involvement.
- Evidence of the degree to which the program is grounded in the community by media acknowledgement, partnerships and alliances, and relationships with broad cross-section of the community.

3. Capacity (weighted at 30%):

A project that intentionally considers its capacity to complete the program.

- Includes a realistic and balanced budget with a clear budget narrative.
- Budget identifies other existing or potential and realistic revenue streams.
- Contingency plan in place to support program completion.
- Conveys plans to maintain the program throughout the program year (if applicable).
- The organization indicates an active and engaged Board of Directors.
- Capacity statement complements what is known about the organization and the program, and the information provided in the budget.
- Planning and development, including goal setting, marketing, budgeting, and evaluation are appropriate to scope of the program.
- Evidence of the organization's and/or program's ability to plan its business and communications to the public, and implement its plans, track performance against its plan, and make appropriate corrections as circumstances change.
- Demonstrates sufficient human, financial, and organizational capacity to respond to changing environmental conditions.

PROGRAM SUPPORT GRANT APPLICATION REQUIRED DOCUMENTS CHECKLIST

- Program Support Budget Template ([Download from RAC Website](#))
- Organizational Health Worksheet (this form to be completed with information about the non-arts organization or the fiscal sponsor) ([Download from RAC Website](#))
- Most recent Form 990 submitted to IRS (IRS Form-990 of the non-arts organization or fiscal sponsor)
- Board of Directors List (list to include officers and affiliations) (board list of the non-arts organization or the fiscal sponsor)
- 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). (financial statements of the non-arts organization or the fiscal sponsor) *Please note that if appropriate financial statements are not uploaded, it will impact the application score.*
- Up to 3 Work Samples
- 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 (from the non-arts organization or the fiscal sponsor) (optional)

II. DECISION-MAKING

APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

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

- Attend/view an online 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.
- Provide feedback on the application review process for improvement purposes.

Note: Application reviewers will independently read and rate all applications within the online grantmaking portal. Staff will review the ratings and make final recommendations for funding based on reviewer ratings.

Eligible reviewers receive an honorarium of \$200. This is a demonstration of RAC's acknowledgement of and appreciation for the time and effort invested in our arts community. **Reviewers who do not meet the deadline can receive an extension but do not receive the honorarium.**

RATING SYSTEM

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.

- 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.

The points assigned to each question in the application are used to determine the final award amount. Points are combined to provide an overall application score. Reviewer 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.

Using the application rating key: Use your application overall score and find where it lies in the point range column (highlighted yellow). Use that column to find your application’s overall rating, the rating definition, and the percentage of your ask for which you are eligible.

Application Rating Key			
Rating	Rating Definition	Point Range	Percent Funding Eligible
Exemplary	Applicant provides overwhelming evidence of all three review criteria. Application is exemplary.	90-100	100% of ask
Strong	Applicant provides strong evidence of all three review criteria. Application is strong.	69-89	80% of ask
Good	Applicant provides sufficient evidence of all three review criteria. Application is good.	48-68	60% of ask
Fair	Applicant provides limited evidence of all three review criteria. Application needs work and is not eligible for funding.	20-47	10% of ask No Funding
Weak	Applicant provides little to no evidence of all three review criteria. Application is weak and not eligible for funding.	0-19	0% of ask No Funding

Please note: The available source of funding for RAC Program Support 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.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS AND RATING

Cultural and Artistic Essentials (40% weighting)

A project or program that produces or presents culturally and artistically significant work that supports a *full creative life for every St. Louisan*.

Application Question		Review Criteria	Rating	Rating Definition	Point Range
		Cultural and/or Artistic Essentials			
1	Essentials (300 word maximum): Provide an overview of the program(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describes the programmatic activities and the resources necessary to programs and the impact. Conveys all aspects of the program, including clear plans for execution (i.e.: location, dates, frequency, etc. -- who, what, when, where, and why). 	Exemplary	Applicant provides overwhelming evidence of essentials.	14-16 pts
			Strong	Applicant provides strong evidence of essentials.	11-13 pts
			Good	Applicant provides sufficient evidence of essentials.	8-10 pts
			Fair	Applicant provides limited evidence of essentials.	4-7 pts
			Weak	Applicant provides little to no evidence of essentials.	0-3 pts
2	Cultural and Artistic Significance (300 word maximum): Explain the program's artistic intention, including an accounting of who the artists/creatives involved in implementing your program/s are.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates cultural and artistic significance and how the activities are relevant to the arts & culture sector and artists. Indicates clear commitment to recruit, engage, and compensate artists with an emphasis on St. Louis artists. Programmatic activities embody excellence of artistic craft & skills. Programmatic activities contribute to innovation and new thinking in the artform and wider culture. 	Exemplary	Applicant provides overwhelming evidence of cultural and artistic significance.	11-12 pts
			Strong	Applicant provides strong evidence of cultural and artistic significance.	8-10 pts
			Good	Applicant provides sufficient evidence of cultural and artistic significance.	5-7 pts
			Fair	Applicant provides limited evidence of	3-4 pts

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicates plans for artistic growth or expanding artistic aspirations and/or artistic risk. Work samples indicate alignment with programmatic activities. 		cultural and artistic significance.	
			Weak	Applicant provides little to no evidence of cultural and artistic significance.	0-2 pts
• Upload: up to 3 Work Samples					
3	Program Goals: What does success look like? (300 word maximum) Identify and explain the program's <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals Objectives Outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals, objectives, and outcomes are realistic and relative to programmatic activities and planned execution. Goals, objectives, and outcomes are outlined using the SMART Framework – Specific / Measurable / Achievable / Relevant / Time-Bound. Assessment/evaluation efforts align with the outcomes; systems are in place to track the results/impact of the work. 	Exemplary	Applicant provides overwhelming evidence of program goals, objectives and outcomes.	11-12 pts
			Strong	Applicant provides strong evidence of program goals, objectives and outcomes.	8-10 pts
			Good	Applicant provides sufficient evidence of program goals, objectives and outcomes.	5-7 pts
			Fair	Applicant provides limited evidence of program goals, objectives and outcomes.	3-4 pts
			Weak	Applicant provides little to no evidence of program goals, objectives and outcomes.	0-2 pts
Community Benefit (30% weighting) Program that demonstrates broad community benefit and contributes to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the community.					
Application Question		Review Criteria	Rating	Rating Definition	Point Range
		Community Benefit			
4	Audience: Provide an overview of the program's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance, participation, or other measures indicate that 	Exemplary	Applicant provides overwhelming	9-10 pts

	intended audience. (300 word maximum)	<p>the community or a constituency values the programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program conveys community impact through qualitative and quantitative data (examples include number of locations, zip codes, neighborhoods, and/or participants served.) • Demonstrates a link between artistic intention and audience experience. • Some level of audience assessment is indicated. 		evidence of a clear intended audience.	
			Strong	Applicant provides strong evidence of a clear intended audience.	7-8 pts
			Good	Applicant provides sufficient evidence of a clear intended audience.	5-6 pts
			Fair	Applicant provides limited evidence of a clear intended audience.	3-4 pts
			Weak	Applicant provides little to no evidence of a clear intended audience.	0-2 pts
5	<p>DEIA (300 word maximum): Describe the program’s commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, including intentional efforts made by the program to attract and/or retain diverse audiences and increase access to the arts for underrepresented individuals and/or under-resourced neighborhoods.</p> <p>Provide two specific action steps your organization or the program has taken in the past twelve months that demonstrate your commitment to creating an inclusive environment and/or recruiting diverse collaborators and/or providing equitable opportunities to create and participate and/or provide</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intentionally and strategically recruits diverse collaborators (volunteers, staff, board, donors, participants, etc.) and creatives. • Develops meaningful collaborations with diverse neighborhoods and communities to provide equitable opportunities for creation and participation. • Offerings and information about locations where programs are provided are intentionally accessible to all people and available to the public. • Program is making progress in reaching new audiences/community or strengthening relationships with existing audience. • Demonstrates consideration of affordability in offerings (free and/or reduced-price admission, scholarship, etc.) 	Exemplary	Applicant provides overwhelming evidence of commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.	9-10 pts
			Strong	Applicant provides strong evidence of commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.	7-8 pts
			Good	Applicant provides sufficient evidence of commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.	5-6 pts
			Fair	Applicant provides limited evidence of commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.	3-4 pts

	<p>intentionally accessible programs.</p> <p>If the organization has a board-approved DEI statement, policy, or plan, please upload a PDF of it below.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If organization has an uploaded board-approved DEI statement, policy, or plan, it informs programmatic activities. 	Weak	Applicant provides little to no evidence of commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.	0-2 pts
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***Upload: DEI Statement/Policy/Plan (optional)**

6	<p>Community Engagement (300 word maximum): How is the work connected to the community, location, or context, including official or unofficial partners, with an explanation of how those partnerships inform or support the program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicates the program contributes to the vibrancy, diversity, safety, and economic vitality of neighborhoods, communities, or the broader St. Louis region. Demonstrates healthy and/or consistent level of participation/community connection. Educational, interpretive, and/or other public activities broaden public involvement. Evidence of the degree to which the program is grounded in the community by media acknowledgement, partnerships and alliances, and relationships with broad cross-section of the community. 	Exemplary	Applicant provides overwhelming evidence of community engagement.	9-10 pts
			Strong	Applicant provides strong evidence of community engagement.	7-8 pts
			Good	Applicant provides sufficient evidence of community engagement.	5-6 pts
			Fair	Applicant provides limited evidence of community engagement.	3-4 pts
			Weak	Applicant provides little to no evidence of community engagement.	0-2 pts

Capacity (30% weighting)
 A program that **intentionally plans for program capacity.**

	Application Question	Review Criteria	Rating	Rating Definition	Point Range
		Capacity & Sustainability			
7	<p>Budget & Budget Narrative (300 word maximum): Upload your program budget and provide a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a realistic and balanced budget and clearly articulated budget narrative. 	Exemplary	Applicant provides overwhelming evidence of a clear budget.	9-10 pts

	budget narrative describing the program’s ability to carry out the program goals based on factors such as people and financial resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget indicates diverse revenue streams. Contingency plan in place to support programmatic activities. 	Strong	Applicant provides strong evidence of a clear budget.	7-8 pts
			Good	Applicant provides sufficient evidence of a clear budget.	5-6 pts
			Fair	Applicant provides limited evidence of a clear budget.	3-4 pts
			Weak	Applicant provides little to no evidence of a clear budget.	0-2 pts

***Upload: Program Budget**

8	Organizational Health: Upload the provided organizational health worksheet. (This worksheet to be completed with information about the non-arts organization or the fiscal sponsor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conveys ability to maintain operations and programs throughout the funding period, while advancing your mission. Indicates an active and engaged Board of Directors 	Exemplary	Applicant provides overwhelming evidence of overall organizational health.	9-10 pts
			Strong.	Applicant provides strong evidence of overall organizational health.	7-8 pts
			Good	Applicant provides sufficient evidence of overall organizational health.	5-6 pts
			Fair	Applicant provides limited evidence of overall organizational health.	3-4 pts
			Weak	Applicant provides little to no evidence of overall organizational health.	0-2 pts

***Upload: Organizational Health Worksheet**

9	Sustainability (500 word maximum): Please provide a marketing & development statement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statement complements what is known about the program and the information provided in the budget. 	Exemplary	Applicant provides overwhelming evidence of sustainability.	9-10 pts
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning, including goal setting, marketing, budgeting, and evaluation, are appropriate to scope of the program. • Program demonstrates sufficient human, financial, and organizational capacity to respond to changing environmental conditions. • Evidence of the organization’s and/or program’s ability to plan its business and communications to the public, and implement its plans, track performance against its plan, and make appropriate corrections as circumstances change. 	Strong	Applicant provides strong evidence of sustainability.	7-8 pts
	Good	Applicant provides sufficient evidence of sustainability.	5-6 pts
	Fair	Applicant provides limited evidence of sustainability.	3-4 pts
	Weak	Applicant provides little to no evidence of sustainability.	0-2 pts

NOTIFICATION

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

TERMS AND CONDITIONS AGREEMENT

Once awarded, the grantee will sign a terms and conditions agreement before receiving the grant award in full via direct deposit. Direct deposit must be set up prior to the payment date. Grantees will receive instructions on how to do this through the online grantmaking portal and in email communications.

I. GRANT MANAGEMENT

PAYMENT PROCESSING

Each Program Support Grant recipient will be asked to sign the terms and conditions agreement before collecting the payment. Grant awards are disbursed in a single payment through automatic deposit to the grantee’s designated bank account through RAC’s Bill.com electronic payments platform. Instructions will be emailed to grantees and will also be available on the RAC website to help guide grantees through this process.

The Program Support Grant payment is made in one lump sum disbursement equaling the total award amount.

II. ANALYSIS

REPORTING

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.

WHO TO CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS ABOUT GRANT APPLICATION OR REVIEW PROCESS

Ann Haubrich

Grants & Programs Senior Manager

ann@racstl.org

QUESTIONS ABOUT BLACKBAUD GRANTS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Leigh or Charlie

grants@racstl.org

TECHNICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT BLACKBAUD GRANTS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Blackbaud Technical Support

MS_RACSTL_Grantmaking@blackbaud.com