What is the purpose of the RAC Open Dialogue Sessions?

The purpose of the RAC Open Dialogue Sessions is to provide an opportunity for RAC grantees to discuss emerging trends and issues affecting artists and arts organizations here and around the country. We want our grantees to be informed and knowledgeable about these trends as it will affect the future of their organizations.

What are these trends and issues and how will they affect arts organizations, artists, and perhaps the community?

Change is all around us. In our neighborhoods, in our government, where we work, where we worship and where we play. Local and global economic woes, civic unrest, societal inequities, and emerging artistic practice are all impacting how we in the arts remain relevant and connected to the audiences and communities we serve.

Will there be changes to the current way RAC awards grants?

We at RAC realize that to respond to these shifting conditions and help the organizations we fund remain relevant, we too must evolve. As part of our process of review, we have placed the Innovation Fund and Community Social Impact Fund on hold until further notice. The Opportunity Grants will also be placed on hold after the completion of the Round 3 cycle for 2015, which will open July 31, 2015. Grantees who were awarded grants under these categories in 2014 have already received funding.

Will organizations or artists who are currently receiving RAC funding be de-funded?

No. We are not de-funding any of our grantees under this cycle of grants.

But what about in the future? Will we see fewer organizations being funded or fewer funds being awarded?

It is our goal during this evaluation period of our grant making program, to develop a process and system that provides an equitable distribution of funding that supports the needs of all the communities we are entrusted to serve.

Agencies like the Missouri Arts Council and others have made changes to their funding methods. Will we see the same from RAC?

RAC, like many other funding organizations throughout the country, is reviewing its grant making program to ensure we are distributing funds in a way that optimally contributes to the vibrancy of arts and culture in St. Louis. Our process for this change begins with listening to our grantees and understanding their unique perspectives.
If and when these changes occur, will we receive advance notice of these changes?

RAC believes in a fair and transparent funding process. While no changes have currently been made to our grant making program, we promise to keep our grantees educated and informed throughout this review process.

Will there be resources available to help organizations who are impacted by a change in funding?

Over the years, RAC has provided workshops and training programs that have assisted grantees with operational and programmatic support. Should there be any changes to our funding model, RAC will provide the necessary resources to assist our grantees with this change.

What happens next following the RAC Open Dialogue Sessions?

Following the Open Dialogue Sessions, RAC will assess feedback from its funded organizations and artists. That information will be helpful as we evaluate our current grant making program. Please know that we will continue to keep our grantees apprised of our work throughout this evaluation process.

Are there any internal changes going on at RAC?

RAC has been around for 30 years. Like any organization or business, taking time to evaluate our systems to ensure we are providing the best funding opportunities for our grantees and the communities they serve is sound business practice. This means we are reviewing staff responsibilities, our operations, and how we engage with our grantees and other community stakeholders.

Does the Board of Commissioners endorse this process of change?

RAC’s Board of Commissioners was appointed to provide oversight and guidance to the staff of the Regional Arts Commission. The Board is in full support of ensuring RAC upholds its mandate to support the arts in the region while being a steward of the public trust.