



Grants & Fiscal Officers Peer Session
September 23, 2022

Notes

Lessons Learned from States Making Recent Operating Support Adjustments

Presenter: Todd Trebour, Rhode Island State Council on the Arts (RISCA)

Todd Trebour shared the experience RISCA recently underwent to reimagine its general operating support (GOS) program. After two and a half years of work with a community working group, the operating support program was reoriented to support more equitable grant making in the following ways:

- Goals around recruitment of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and/or people of color)-centered organizations + geography, with expedited eligibility
- Explicit connection between GOS program and Rhode Island Expansion Arts
- Three year-grant cycle and budget cohort model, but with tiered applications related to budget size
- Evaluation criteria: artistic vibrancy and relevancy, organizational capacity and ingenuity, and commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and access (DEIA)
- Budget based funding formula
- Additional funding consideration for organizations that represent historically and/or continuously marginalized communities in their mission programming, staff leadership and board
- Awards range from \$3,000 - \$40,000/year
- Fiscally sponsored orgs eligible
- Evaluation at five-year mark by BIPOC Majority Working Group

The rollout of the new program has been implemented successfully and didn't cause any agency crises. Important lessons learned during the process were to build relationships, be transparent and responsive to stakeholders, communicate strategically, and set realistic expectations for change. The success of the new operating support program led to other RISCA program directors following suit in restructuring their grant programs. RISCA developed a comic book to help applicants with the grant application process: [For Artists: A Guide to Grants from RI State Council on the Arts](#). Slides of his presentation can be found at [NASAA Grant Officers Presentation - GOS 9.23.22.pptx \(risca.online\)](#)

Strategies for Recruiting Applicants from Underserved Communities

Facilitator: Brazier Watts, Arkansas Arts Council

In a conversation facilitated by Brazier Watts, group learned about shared challenges and solutions for recruiting applicants from underserved communities.

Challenges

- IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity and access)/DEI/ALAANA (African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, Native American) definitions: how do we think about different types of diversity?
- Demographics vs. programming: how do these influence IDEA support?
- Some states are not allowed to ask about demographics.
- Self-reported/inaccurate data
- Race FDR (Final Descriptive Report) question going away FY2022
- Geolocation may be a way to understand community investments going forward.
- New issue. Other FDR question changes on demographics going away in FY2024
- What happens when American Rescue Plan Act/Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security funding is over and there is potentially less funding going forward?

Grant criteria

- BIPOC centered
- Majority run organizations shifting focus
 - Boilerplate vs. filling in a box vs. actual work
- Empowerment
- Impoverished and underserved

Outreach

- Multipurpose agencies in rural areas
- Pushback from grantees; makeup of state population

Artistic excellence

- Definition
- GOS and supporting organizations that do other services

Panelist training

- Panelists view final reports from previous years: did they meet goal?

Technology

- Access
- Broadband in communities
- Grant applicants doing apps on phone
- Solution: [Vouchfor](#) site – transcription
 - Audio-record application and reports

Panel Recruitment and Training with an Equity Lens

Facilitator: Thomas Tran, Oklahoma Arts Council

The Texas Commission on the Arts and the Utah Division of Arts and Museums shared their panel recruitment and training methods with the conferees.

Panel Recruitment: Texas

- State government not friendly to demographics questions and not friendly to paying panelists
- Comments not shared panelist to panelist, but grantee gets them (actual comments, not summary)
- Equity mandate
- Race, gender, age organizations in panel selection
 - Texas solely, no outside states
 - Leave slots open for panelists after submission to recruit.
- Entire orientation
 - Record videos
 - Training for in-person and online
 - Tell panelists upfront comments word for word but not attributed to specific person.
 - N/A regurgitate application question – give feedback
 - Qualifications
 - Nomination form
 - Air table app/database
 - Provide answers for some questions
- Video training of a panel meeting

Panel Recruitment: Utah

- Online panels only, no in-person
- “Yes and” discussions
- Flatten scores, used and “8, 5, 2” system
- Maryland bias training adaptation
- Capping number of applications reviewed
- Access questions
 - What does access mean?
 - Reworking for next round
- Target priorities
 - Ruralness
 - DEIA/IDEA
 - Economic contributions

Panel Examples: Other states

- “Bubble” scores (Colorado)
 - One-hour discussion of those applications
 - Cooling-off period, then reach out for feedback
- Provide examples of what’s not helpful in comments, ex. “good.”
- Comments on improving panel scoring...
 - Why did you give that score?
 - Does your score and comments match?
 - Scoring can be reevaluated or normalized

Open Discussion: What burning topics or issues are we facing that we are not talking about today?

Facilitator: Jennifer Dreibelbis, Nebraska Arts Council

Conferees were invited to name burning issues to talk about for the remainder of the session. These issues can also form the topics for future peer Zoom calls.

Panels

- Recruitment, structure, etc.
- How do you split up panels? Normalization of scores. Oregon and Utah examples.
- Use mode, have control with outlier scores.
- Rubrics.

NEA Audit

- Review of prior audits- all can be found here: <https://www.arts.gov/about/inspector-general/reports/audits>
- Review your state/federal match dollars.
- Compliance.
- Accessibility checklist.
- Document what's been done.
 - Who, what, when, where, why
 - Decade to a year from now – have records
 - Ensure multiple staff members are prepared and informed to respond
 - Document, document, document!
 - If your grantee cannot provide sufficient info, YOU as the grant recipient are responsible for the funds.
 - There will be findings, but learn from experience.
 - Just be honest with any shortcomings. An audit finding is not the end of the world.

Other Issues

- Which grants management system do people use? Preferred database software
- Problems with UEI, e.g., organizations not being able to get UEI issued for over six months
- Competitive operating support?
- We have difficulty with representation on panels and panelists withdrawing during the review period/not showing up/unexpected emergency (work, personal, etc.), so panels have a very homogenous makeup with no diverse perspectives by the panel meeting.
- Grantees indicating that the peer review process is inconsistent, e.g., a grantee is awarded a 97/100 one year, and more-or-less the same application scores an 83/100 the next, resulting in a significantly diminished award.
- How are states preparing for NEA audits?

Coordinators and Hosts

[Jennifer Dreibelbis](#), Grants and Database Administrator, Nebraska Arts Council

[Thomas Tran](#), Grants Director, Oklahoma Arts Council

[Brazier Watts](#), Grants Administrator, Arkansas Arts Council

[Keiko Ishida](#), Program Specialist, Missouri Arts Council (host)

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