

Regional Arts & Culture Council (RACC)

What's Next Survey Results for internal use: May 2021

This document summarizes the results from RACC's *What's Next* survey conducted in August 2020. These results are intended for RACC internal use and distribution only. Any questions, please contact Chari Smith, Evaluation into Action, chari@evaluationintoaction.com.

1. **We know this has been a hard time for artists and arts nonprofits. What do you need? What support would be the most meaningful to you or your organization right now?**

Arts organizations and individual artists who responded to these questions were aligned in agreement as to the type of support needed right now. These key items are described below and include representative respondent comments for each item.

Funding. The overwhelming response to this question was funding. More specifically, the greatest needs identified are funds for (1) general operations, (2) investment in technology (equipment, implementation, and training), and (3) diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Flexible, unrestricted grant funding would be the most helpful, allowing the organization to apply the funds to the area of greatest need instead of a restricted grant that can only be used for a specific purpose. Long-term, sustainable funding to offer secure futures for art organizations is also critical as the arts recover from pandemic losses.

For individual artists, both grants and opportunities to work were the most identified needs. Simple, straightforward, streamlined processes to find and apply for grants would be helpful as the current processes are complicated and time-consuming, which only add to the stress that artists are already experiencing.

“Operating capital is still a critical need with no earned income and decreased donations.”

“We need more unrestricted relief funding and the resources and information to find more of this vital funding.”

“Funds to invest in new technology or equipment for new streams of income.”

“Funding for DEI training for orgs as a collective group, a virtual town hall series to bring orgs and artists together in dialogue as a community.”

“Emerging artist grants supporting Black, POC, Indigenous, and women's perspectives.”

“Mini grants to support art practice with simple application guidelines. Awarding a few artists with a major amount is excellent for those few people, but thousands of us are in need of even a little help and overwhelmed with dozens of applications.”

“Funding! Opening the funding priorities and applications to be streamlined and simple to use.”

Space. Rising rents/real estate prices and public health shutdown requirements resulted in the loss of spaces for creating, performing, presenting, and exhibiting art. Support needs identified include free or affordable spaces, shared spaces, or rent relief for existing space; including studio space, performance venues, exhibition spaces, meeting rooms, outdoor areas, and storage space.

“A quiet place to write.”

“I need help paying my studio rent.”

“Access to a proper studio. I used to work on bigger projects out of a buddy's studio, but now with COVID I don't just to be safe. So medium to large size projects I've been delaying. I've also had to cancel I a handful of instruction workshops...because of my lack of access to a proper studio.”

Advocacy. Survey respondents identified the need for advocacy as an important component in receiving continued financial support and funding to sustain financial viability of the arts as well as to continue financial support for a sustainable future during the pandemic recovery period and beyond.

“Financial and advocacy support to keep artists and arts workers whose primary source of income is dependent on the survival of arts/performing arts venues.”

“Ongoing rigorous advocacy for increased funding.”

Connection. Restrictions on in-person gatherings resulted in a loss of collaboration and networking opportunities in the arts communities. Restoring connections and finding networking opportunities were important for artists to create and share their work, among themselves as well as with the larger community.

“We have all lost some connection, perhaps a forum from RACC or something to bring folks together online could be nice.”

“Shared time to connect with each other to emerge stronger.”

“Networking (online or highly distant/masks) in order to meet more local artists to collaborate with. It's so hard to do that right now!”

“I feel really disconnected from my community of artists/arts institutions right now. As the pandemic wears on, I long to connect in some way. ... Though artists require solitude, isolation is another beast.”

Marketing Support. Many respondents look to assistance from RACC to market, promote, and provide exposure for the work of all artists in the region. Artists are struggling to find audiences, patrons, and customers as traditional venues have been closed or modified to such an extent as the be economically unviable.

“Marketing promoting the unique qualities and talent of the Portland area artists.”

“Exposure on high visibility platforms! Since all the in-person shows have gone away I am having a hard time engaging new audiences.”

“If RACC could provide platforms for artists to exhibit work (that was not necessarily judged or where artists were not chosen to participate). It would be great if RACC could sponsor group exhibitions, or publish booklets or something featuring local artists. This would help artists feel seen and give them something to work toward.”

2. How do you identify your role within the arts community?

N = 392

Role	Percent of Responses	Count of Responses
a) Individual artist or creative person	63%	248
b) Arts administrator or part of an arts organization	21%	84
c) Board member of an arts organization	7%	27
d) Staff on payroll	4%	14
e) Other	4%	17
f) Staff on contract	1%	2

3. How helpful are the following financial supports for you, personally?

N = 245

Response Choice	Most Helpful	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Very Helpful	Not At All Helpful	Missing
a) Funding for commissions; funding for creating specific work	111 (45%)	56 (23%)	48 (20%)	15 (6%)	9 (4%)	6 (2%)
b) Direct purchase of art	108 (44%)	42 (17%)	37 (15%)	22 (9%)	24 (10%)	12 (5%)
c) Funding to support your business development (marketing, administration, website development, etc.)	87 (36%)	58 (24%)	43 (17%)	34 (14%)	11 (4%)	12 (5%)
d) Funding for emergencies (personal bills such as rent, food, child care)	82 (34%)	49 (20%)	43 (17%)	31 (13%)	20 (8%)	20 (8%)
e) Paid residencies, fellowships or similar	81 (33%)	59 (24%)	49 (20%)	20 (8%)	20 (8%)	16 (7%)
f) Access to free exhibit space	55 (22%)	47 (19%)	48 (20%)	44 (18%)	36 (15%)	15 (6%)
g) Commissions of work around community issues (e.g. racial justice, protests)	50 (20%)	55 (22%)	67 (27%)	31 (13%)	26 (11%)	16 (7%)

4. When you think about professional development, technical support, or services for artists, what do you personally think is - or could be - the most helpful to support your creative work and professional growth over the next 6-18 months?

N = 242

Response Choice	Most Helpful	Very Helpful	Some-what Helpful	Not Very Helpful	Not at All Helpful	Missing
a) Social media and marketing support for your work	84 (35%)	72 (30%)	51 (21%)	22 (9%)	6 (2%)	7 (3%)
b) One-on-one coaching with RACC staff or other professionals	68 (28%)	68 (28%)	63 (26%)	26 (11%)	9 (4%)	8 (3%)
c) Skill development workshops (for example: marketing, grant writing, legal issues, bookkeeping, etc.)	60 (25%)	78 (32%)	61 (25%)	21 (9%)	13 (5%)	9 (4%)
d) Review and feedback of draft proposals	53 (22%)	81 (33%)	69 (29%)	21 (9%)	12 (5%)	6 (2%)
e) Feedback after decisions	53 (22%)	77 (32%)	75 (31%)	18 (7%)	11 (5%)	8 (3%)
f) Group info sessions for opportunities (such as grants or public art calls)	46 (19%)	74 (31%)	81 (33%)	26 (11%)	8 (3%)	7 (3%)
g) Training for how to administer your own fundraisers, mutual aid projects, or grants	40 (17%)	55 (23%)	76 (31%)	44 (18%)	18 (7%)	9 (4%)
h) Convening discussions around urgent topics	38 (16%)	45 (19%)	91 (37%)	45 (19%)	17 (7%)	6 (2%)
i) Access to computers; internet access for filling out proposals	15 (6%)	21 (9%)	37 (15%)	91 (37%)	67 (28%)	11 (5%)

5. What else would you like to share with us? (Artists)

Many expressed appreciation for RACC’s support and for asking about their thoughts and insight with this survey.

“Keep fighting the good fight, RACC. We need you.”

“Thank you for even asking these questions. It is helpful enough to feel listened to. The support you’ve shown over the years has helped so many careers bloom.”

Grants and funding are needed. All artists are struggling right now. The current grants to help with pandemic losses are certainly appreciated but, in most cases, not enough to keep many financially viable. The need is great.

“Any funding that would provide assistance now would be advantageous for the individuals and society.”

“As an artist who does not qualify for either the payroll small business loans, or unemployment... this is a very trying time. More grant opportunities, even with a smaller dollar amount, would be very helpful.”

“I have several projects unable to move forward due to the additional costs/challenges presented by Covid19. Funding and resources aimed at bridging that gap would be uber amazing!”

Training, professional development, collaboration, and mentorship opportunities are needed, especially during the pandemic restrictions which limit travel and in-person gatherings.

“An opportunity to network with other creative writers and painters (as a mentor for me).”

“During the Covid period, it might be worth re-imagining the professional development grants as travel is so limited. It would be helpful to find ways to support distant networking opportunities.”

“Marketing, fellowships, and mentorships one on one would be very helpful, space allocation, grants, commissions, also the admin side taxes and managing professional artistry as a business.”

Community-building is essential in the arts and many find it lacking here in Portland.

“Isolation is a major obstacle to success as an artist right now. So ways of changing that would be helpful.”

“I think my takeaway from the reality we live in today is that we all need to be there for each other.”

“I would like to see us “democratize” the arts. Could we fund artists to engage in local community-based projects that engage those communities? Helps artists, brings art to more people, helps provide a shared sense of “place” and cooperation.”

More support is needed for inclusion of local artists from underrepresented groups and those who work in unconventional art genres. In particular, a significant number of comments referred to the need for support for older artists; they feel they are being left out and marginalized.

“Support artists who are 60 and older.”

“It seems that age is a handicap. If you are not already well connected in the art world, most of the emphasis is directed at younger or emerging artists.”

“The city needs to figure out how to stop gentrifying the younger arts community and BIPOC communities out of existence.”

Assistance is needed with advertising, marketing, and promotion in order to help recover from losses resulting from the pandemic.

“RACC could be more instrumental in helping advertise and support individual arts educators' cultural programming; e.g., assisting with community outreach + connecting artists with audience/participants.”

6. We know this has been a hard time for many arts organizations. What has been your greatest challenge during this period? What are your organization's top three needs?

The survey responses to these questions were overwhelmingly in agreement as to the challenges presented during this period as well as their needs going forward. Funding was identified as the top challenge and the greatest need for nearly every organization.

Challenges

Financial/funding. The near complete shutdown of art venues during the pandemic has created an unprecedented financial crisis for the arts.

Uncertainty and adaptation. Rapidly changing public health guidelines as the pandemic evolves have led to an ongoing need to continually adapt to these changes and reinvent participation in the arts. Planning has been extremely difficult, especially in the face of great uncertainty for the future.

“The most challenging thing has been trying to adapt to a moment that keeps demanding new adaptation and not being able to plan with clarity.”

“The greatest challenge is navigating the timing of so much uncertainty. We continue to try and plan programming, but are constantly adjusting our timelines and expectations.”

Not being able to have in-person functions, including performances, rehearsals, events, outreach.

“All our in-person events and free workshops have had to be canceled for the season.”

“We are unable to have live concerts, which is our primary service.”

“Not being able to host in person events and do in person community events and outreach.”

Connection. This challenge encompasses all aspects of arts organizations, including staff, board, funders, patrons, and community members. The need to remain connected internally as an organization while socially distancing/working from home has been difficult. Also, there is a great need to reach others outside the organization and connect/communicate changes in programming and gain audience support and engagement in a virtual environment.

“The greatest challenge has been finding a way to reach out audiences and entering into a new artistic medium that none of us are too confident about.”

“Our greatest challenge right now is staying relevant and connected to our patrons.

DEI initiatives: keeping the momentum. Challenging to do this when the primary focus is on economic survival of the organization.

“We need financial resources for the hiring of more BIPOC staff and equity consulting.”

Top 3 Needs

Funding. Immediate critical needs include funds to cover operating expenses and rent. Operating expenses have remained the same but revenue streams have been depleted. Ongoing sustained funding to provide support through the recovery period is essential for arts organizations to remain viable.

“NEEDS: Funding, funding, funding.”

Technical Assistance. This need includes funding for equipment upgrades as well as training and technical consultations to support changes to online/remote programming and digital platforms.

“We need help with making a pivot to a digital platform.”

“Our organization has needed financial resources for the technology upgrades and changes necessary to continue our service. “

Space. Physical space: indoor and outdoor is needed for artists to create and to engage audiences. Also, many referred to needing psychological/mental space in terms of creating space for connection and collaboration, whether with other artists, with audiences, among arts organizations, or with the community.

“Top three needs = space (virtual, or socially distanced actual space), also, -- mental space for creativity to flow and grow. Finally, we need training for reaching audiences in an online atmosphere.”

Outreach. There is a critical need for marketing, advertising, promotion and other means to connect with audiences and to create revenue.

7. What should be RACC’s priorities for supporting arts organizations financially over the next 6-18 months?

N = 106

Response Choice	Most Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Least Important	Missing
a) Annual funding for general operating support	76 (72%)	24 (22%)	3 (3%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	2 (2%)
b) Funding for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Access activities	43 (40%)	43 (40%)	16 (16%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	2 (2%)
c) Funding for artistic projects	29 (27%)	45 (42%)	21 (20%)	3 (3%)	4 (4%)	4 (4%)
d) Funding to support the building of organizational capacity	24 (22%)	35 (33%)	36 (34%)	9 (9%)	0 (0%)	2 (2%)
e) Funding for professional or organizational development opportunities	11 (10%)	29 (27%)	41 (39%)	11 (10%)	10 (10%)	4 (4%)
f) Funding for capital projects	7 (7%)	19 (18%)	40 (37%)	21 (20%)	14 (13%)	5 (5%)

8. When you think about professional development, technical support, or services, what do you think is or could be the most helpful to support your organizational work and professional growth over the next 6-18 months?

N = 105

Response Choice	Most Helpful	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Very Helpful	Not at All Helpful	Missing
a) Skill development workshops (for example: board development, fundraising, marketing, grant writing, legal issues, bookkeeping, etc.)	36 (34%)	30 (29%)	28 (26%)	7 (7%)	3 (3%)	1 (1%)
b) Coordinated political advocacy	31 (29%)	31 (29%)	25 (24%)	10 (10%)	3 (3%)	5 (5%)
c) One-on-one or group coaching for staff, board and/or other professionals	29 (27%)	42 (40%)	22 (21%)	5 (5%)	5 (5%)	2 (2%)
d) Group info sessions for opportunities (such as grants or public art calls)	22 (21%)	36 (34%)	33 (31%)	10 (10%)	2 (2%)	2 (2%)
e) Convening discussions around urgent topics	21 (20%)	42 (40%)	32 (30%)	6 (6%)	1 (1%)	3 (3%)
f) Review and feedback of draft proposals	19 (18%)	42 (40%)	33 (31%)	7 (7%)	3 (3%)	1 (1%)
g) Data collection and reports on regional benchmarks and/or other information	14 (14%)	44 (42%)	28 (26%)	15 (14%)	2 (2%)	2 (2%)
h) Feedback after opportunities have been awarded	13 (12%)	49 (46%)	31 (30%)	6 (6%)	2 (2%)	4 (4%)
i) Access to computers; internet access for filling out proposals; etc.	9 (9%)	13 (12%)	33 (31%)	30 (29%)	16 (15%)	4 (4%)

9. What else would you like to share with us? (Arts Organizations)

There is a strong interest in training, coaching, and skill development workshops/events, both live and recorded for later viewing.

“Coaching and skill development has been crucial to us as an organization and I hope to be able to participate again soon!”

Collaboration opportunities and resource sharing among arts organizations are needed and welcomed, especially as organizations recover post-covid. Resource-sharing needs fall into two categories: physical and financial.

“Now more than ever artists have to get creative and collaborate.”

Shared physical spaces/facilities are needed; many have lost their own spaces as a result of both the pandemic and rising real-estate prices/rents. These spaces are necessary to resume their work.

“Rising rents and redevelopment have displaced many artists from their studios. We cannot create or teach others to create without space in which to do so.”

There is a need for sharing of financial resources – ways to tap into larger funds/grants and share equitably across organizations—so that all organizations can survive and thrive, whether large or small, including those that fit into RACC’s criteria and those who do not.

“RACC should encourage and ideally fund collaboration and sharing of resources between organizations given that everyone is working under gravely curtailed operations and funding.”

Organizations are looking to RACC for leadership and advocacy as well as transparency. More than ever, arts organizations need support as they emerge from the pandemic. The pandemic has uncovered a need for re-imagining the arts and ways of participation, as well as a need to continue to attract and maintain new audiences (especially younger and more diverse audiences).

“These are tough times, but we are so proud to be a part of this cultural community and look forward to co-creating a new vision for what the arts can do in Portland as we emerge from the current moment.”

“The need for advocacy is paramount to providing access to funding.”

Many expressed appreciation for RACC and their commitment to arts and culture in the community:

“Thanks for all you do to support artists and the arts!”

“We know that RACC has our backs during the pandemic and that is very comforting.”

10. How familiar are you with RACC and the programs we offer?

N = 392

Scaled Rating	Percent of Responses	Count of Responses
1 (Not very familiar)	5%	21
2	5%	20
3	17%	67
4	27%	105
5 (Very familiar)	34%	133
Missing	12%	46

11. Have you participated in a RACC program (such as a networking event or workshop) in the past 18 months?

N = 392

Response Choice	Percent of Responses	Count of Responses
Yes	39%	151
No	45%	175
Don't know	4%	23
Missing	12%	45

12. How do you learn about the programs that are offered by RACC? (please check all that apply)

N = 392

Response Choice	Percent of Responses*	Count of Responses
a) RACC website	57%	224
b) RACC Art Notes or other eNews	49%	194
c) RACC social media (Instagram and Facebook)	30%	116
d) Other (please specify)	18%	71
e) Other social media	10%	39
f) Other websites or eNews (indicate which under "other")	6%	23
g) Academic institutions (indicate which under "other")	2%	8
h) Missing	11%	45

*Totals exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one response

13. What best describes how you identify, racially?

N = 392

Response Choice	Percent of Responses*	Count of Responses
a) White	64%	250
b) Other (please specify)**	10%	41
c) Multiracial	8%	30
d) African American or Black	5%	19
e) Latina/Latino (Latinx)	5%	19
f) Native American or Alaskan Native	4%	16
g) Asian	3%	12
h) Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1%	1
i) Missing	13%	52

* totals exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one response

** 41 respondents selected “Other” when asked to identify their race. Of those, nearly 30% questioned the need to ask people to identify their racial identity, as expressed by the following responses:

“Aren't we done with labels yet?”

“Race is over-emphasized in society today. It's divisive and puts assumptions on people based on race that are often inaccurate.”

“It really shouldn't matter. Everyone is struggling right now!”

“Human.”

The other responses encompassed more detailed racial classifications than presented in the response choices, such as Italian, Semitic, Jewish, tribe name, or multiracial specifications.

14. How do you describe your artistic discipline?

N = 392

Response Choice	Percent of Responses	Count of Responses
a) Visual Arts	33%	129
b) Multi-Discipline	13%	52
c) Music	11%	45
d) Theatre	9%	35
e) Other (please specify)	6%	25
f) Media Arts	5%	20
g) Dance/Movement	4%	16
h) Literature	2%	8
i) Social Practice	2%	7
j) Folk Arts	1%	2
k) Missing	14%	53

15. Please describe your gender

N = 392

Response Choice	Percent of Responses	Count of Responses
Woman	57%	223
Man	21%	84
Transgender and/or non-binary	5%	21
Other	3%	10
Missing	14%	54

16. What is your age?

N = 392

Response Choice	Percent of Responses	Count of Responses
18-25	1%	5
26-35	16%	64
36-45	21%	83
46-55	19%	75
56-65	16%	64
66+	13%	48
Missing	14%	53

17. In which county do you currently live? Or do you live within the city of Portland?

N = 392

Response Choice	Percent of Responses	Count of Responses
Multnomah	55%	215
Portland	11%	42
Washington	8%	30
Clackamas	7%	28
Other (please specify)	6%	25
Missing	13%	52