



SMALL EXPERIMENTS FUNDING 2026 GUIDELINES

This funding program is exclusively for Rozsa Foundation Training participants who have completed [Rozsa Horizons of Arts Leadership](#) to design and test bold exploratory ideas intended to address a complex management or operational challenge in their organization.

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ABOUT THE FUNDING PROGRAM

Rozsa Foundation Small Experiments Funding supports alumni of the **Rozsa Horizons of Arts Leadership** program (Horizons) to design and test bold, exploratory ideas intended to address a complex management or operational challenge in their organization.

Building on the frameworks and tools introduced in the program, including the *Shaping the Shift* module, this program provides modest funding of up to **\$5,000** to help arts organizations across Alberta take structured, evidence-informed risks to change how they manage, govern, resource, and sustain themselves.

What We're Looking For

We are seeking to fund experiments that:

- Address a **genuine management or operational complex challenge**, related to areas such as governance structures, financial models, audience relationship management, staff culture, decision-making processes, producing models, or community accountability mechanisms
- Are grounded in a **complex, open question** that your organization is truly curious about, and not one with an obvious answer
- Represent a **meaningful departure from how your organization currently operates**, not a refinement of existing practice, but a genuine divergence from it
- Are designed to **surface learning**, whether the experiment “works” or not
- Are Safe-Fail, not Fail-Safe, meaning the experiment is bounded enough that a negative outcome won’t destabilize the organization, but ambitious enough to generate meaningful insight
- Could be **scaled up** or implemented in a bolder way should the experiment provide sufficient learning

We are not looking for pilot programs that are expected to succeed. We want to support genuine experiments: structured inquiries into complex questions your organization does not yet know the answer to.

Building On Your Horizons Experience

You may choose to:

- Further develop an experiment that you began in the *Shaping the Shift* module, expanding on the design work you undertook during the program and bringing it to life within your organization; or
- Apply the approaches you learned to a new complex question, using the experimental design frameworks from Horizons to explore a different challenge your organization is currently facing

Either pathway is welcome. What matters is that the experiment reflects genuine organizational inquiry and draws on the adaptive thinking skills developed through your Horizons experience.

The Experimental Approach

This funding program is grounded in the idea that in conditions of complexity and uncertainty, small, intentional experiments are a more honest and productive strategy than large-scale planning.

Organizations operating in complex environments cannot reliably predict outcomes. What they *can* do is design thoughtful tests, pay careful attention to what happens, and use that learning to inform the next step.

A good experiment in this framework:

- Is **small enough to be safe** if it fails
- Is **specific enough to be legible** so you can observe what happens
- Is **radical enough to matter** in that it challenges an assumption, not just a procedure

Safe-Fail, not Fail-Safe

A *fail-safe* approach is designed to prevent failure, it hedges and minimizes risk, and defaults to the known. It is the logic behind most organizational planning, and it is entirely appropriate for managing complicated, well-understood problems.

A *safe-fail* approach accepts that failure is possible, even likely, and designs for it deliberately. The goal is not to prevent a bad outcome but to ensure that if the experiment doesn't go as expected, the consequences are contained, the learning is preserved, and the organization emerges with greater insight than it had before. Safe-fail experiments are how organizations develop the capacity to navigate genuinely complex, unpredictable terrain.

Divergence From Previous Practice

A funded experiment must represent a genuine departure from how your organization currently does things. This is not a program for incremental improvement or optimization of existing approaches. It is a program designed to help you test something that your organization has not tried before that, if it works, would meaningfully shift how you operate; and if it doesn't, would still tell you something important about why your current approach persists.

In your application, you will be asked to describe clearly how the proposed experiment diverges from your organization's existing practice, and what assumption or habitual pattern it is designed to challenge. Experiments that are extensions of current activity, or that describe doing more of what already works, are not strong fits for this program.

FUNDING AMOUNTS

You can apply for up to \$5,000.

2026 DEADLINES

Friday, July 31, 2026

Friday, October 9, 2026

Applications are due by 11:59pm on the date of the deadline.

Horizons alumni have up to two years post-program to apply for Small Experiments Funding.

WHO CAN APPLY?

You may be eligible to apply if:

- You are a Horizons graduate that completed the program in the last two years.
- You are applying on behalf of the organization you represented during Horizons.
- Your organization is in support of your application to the funding program.
- Your organization is Alberta-based.
- Your organization is arts-focused or is an organization engaging the arts to fulfill its mission.
- Your organization is a registered charity and/or registered non-profit.

Applications must be made by the Horizons graduate. If the graduate exits the organization after they have completed the program, the organization cannot apply to this funding program to further their Small Experiment. Other funding opportunities may be available - please contact us to discuss potential avenues for support.

Completion of Horizons does not guarantee project funding.

Not sure about your eligibility? Contact Ayla Stephen at ayla@rozsafoundation.com.

HOW TO APPLY

Please read through these program guidelines to get an initial understanding of the Small Experiments Funding program, the types of projects it supports, deadlines, and how applications are assessed. Capture your questions and ideas about the experiment you are interested in to begin shaping your proposal.

If you are interested in applying, we recommend booking a conversation with us at least four weeks prior to the deadline you plan to apply for.

Submit your application in Reviewr by midnight of the application deadline.

Application Portal

All written applications will be accepted through Reviewr, the Rozsa Foundation's online application portal. You can access the portal here: https://my.reviewr.com/s2/site/rozsa_foundation

Application Templates

You can write and edit your application in the [Word template found on our website](#) and then copy and paste your responses into the portal.

You must use the Rozsa Foundation Budget Template [available on our website](#). Complete the “Budget” column for your application.

Extension Requests

Requests for extension must be submitted at least two weeks before the deadline.

Additional Support

The Rozsa Foundation acknowledges that for some equity-deserving organizations and individuals, systemic barriers to equity exist when it comes to the funding application process. We invite you to contact us to discuss your application and needs, so that we may seek ways to provide additional supports to you.

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

The Foundation does not fund:

- ongoing administrative salaries or operating costs
- the development or presentation of artistic works
- undesignated expenses
- debt repayment of deficit financing
- capital campaigns
- retroactive project costs (expenses incurred before the application deadline)

Special Note: For organizations without salaried administrative staff, project-related human resource costs may be included in the budget.

APPLICATION ASSESSMENT

What Makes a Strong Application?

The strongest applications will demonstrate intellectual honesty and organizational courage. We are not looking for applicants who already know the answer. We are looking for organizations willing to sit with uncertainty, design a real test, and share what they find - even when the results are unexpected or uncomfortable.

We are especially interested in experiments that:

- Challenge a long-held internal assumption
- Represent a clear and meaningful divergence from existing organizational practice
- Are deliberately designed to be safe-fail, with explicit attention to how learning will be captured either way
- Have the potential to generate insight useful to other organizations across the Alberta arts sector

A Note on ‘Failure’

We mean it when we say these experiments are designed to be safe-fail. A funded experiment that produces a clear “this did not work, and here’s what we learned” is as valuable to us, and to you, as one that succeeds. Applications that claim certainty of positive outcomes, or that are structured primarily to avoid a bad result, are not the goal here.

At the end of your experiment, what we are most interested in is **not** *did it work?* It is *what did you learn, and what will you do with that?*

Assessment Criteria

Small Experiment Funding requests are reviewed by Rozsa Foundation staff and assessed based on the following criteria:

1. The application articulates a genuine, complex management or operational challenge that is meaningful to the organization and relevant to its context.
2. The experiment is grounded in a specific inquiry-driven question and experimental hypothesis, and is designed as a structured, observable test to generate meaningful learning.
3. The experiment represents a meaningful departure from your organization’s current practices, challenging existing assumptions, habit or way of operating, and can be reasonably executed by the organization, taking budget and staff capacity into account.
4. The experiment is appropriately scoped to be safe-fail and demonstrates intentional planning for how insights will be captured and used regardless of outcome.
5. The proposed experiment has the potential to generate valuable learning for the organization and insights that may be useful or transferable to others in the arts sector.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

TELL US WHO YOU ARE

- Organization name
- Organization contact information
- Organization mandate or statement of purpose
- Organization structure (Registered Charity or Non-Profit)
- Charitable Number or Registered NFP Number

What year was your organization founded?

Artistic Discipline

Requested for internal statistical reporting.

Annual operating budget
Requested for internal statistical reporting.

Applicant Contact Information
Secondary Contact Information
Board Chair/President Contact Information

FUNDING REQUEST

How much funding are you requesting:
Up to \$5,000 for Small Experiments

In one sentence, tell us your complex question.

State the driving question your experiment is designed to explore. A strong question:

- Does not have an obvious answer
- Reflects genuine organizational tension or uncertainty
- Is answerable (at least partially) through a time-limited experiment
- Is *specific*: not “how do we engage our community better?” but “what happens to volunteer retention if we shift our meeting structure from staff-led to peer-facilitated?”

In one sentence, tell us your hypothesis.

State what you *think* might happen, and why. Use the structure, “We suspect that if _____, then _____. Your hypothesis does not need to be correct, just honest. Describe the assumption or belief your organization is currently operating under, and what you expect the experiment to reveal or challenge. Describe also how the proposed experiment diverges from your current practice, and what makes that divergence meaningful.

PROJECT PLAN

Project start date: MONTH + YEAR
Project end date: MONTH + YEAR

When planning the start date of your project please remember that it can take up to 8 weeks to learn whether your funding request has been approved.

EXPERIMENT DESIGN

Please share your project plan for this work. Tell us what you will actually do to explore this question and test your hypotheses. A strong response will include:

- Information about the present situation that has led you to explore this complex question
- Details about any previous work you have done to explore this complex question
- A clear description of the intervention or change you will introduce
- How this approach differs from what your organization has done before
- The timeline of the experiment, including a projected completion date that is within one year of the application
- Who will be involved (staff, board, community members, partners)
- What conditions or constraints define the boundaries of the experiment
- What resources you need (funding and otherwise) to complete the experiment and their costs (you also need to upload a project budget in the final section)

EVALUATION PLAN

Describe how you will assess the experiments outcomes relative to your hypothesis. Please include:

- What data or evidence you will collect (qualitative, quantitative, or both)
- How you will know if your hypothesis was supported, challenged, or complicated
- Who will be responsible for observation and documentation
- How you will share and use your findings within your organization and, ideally, with the broader Alberta arts community

Additional Comments (optional)

Is there anything else you would like to share with the Rozsa Foundation about any part of your project or application?

SUPPORT MATERIAL

Mandatory Support Material

Project Budget – you must use the Rozsa Foundation budget template found on our website.

Financial Statements (for organizations only)

Additional Support Material

Project specific support material will be determined during/after your conversation with the funder, but *might* include:

- Quotes and work plans from proposed consultants.
- Project budget support (e.g. quotes, invoices, calculations, projections).
- Confirmation of board or supervisor support.
- Infographics.
- Letters of support from project collaborators.
- Strategic plan
- Information about contributors (e.g. biographies, collaborator mandates).
- Other (e.g. feasibility studies, proof of concept, prior project reports).

NOTIFICATION OF RESULTS

Applications are reviewed by Rozsa Foundation staff.

We will reach out to you if the committee has additional questions, or if they require additional information or clarification to make a funding decision.

All applicants, regardless of funding outcome, will be notified about the committee's funding decision by email.

We aim to send notification of results within 6-8 weeks of the application deadline.

SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

What to expect if your funding request is approved.

1. You will book a post-approval meeting with us to discuss next steps, goals and aspired outcomes for final reporting, project timelines, and the payment schedule.
2. A funding agreement will be issued to your organization, which must be signed and returned to the Rozsa Foundation.
3. Final reporting documents will be shared with you after the approved funding meeting, so that you can reference them throughout the project. The Rozsa Foundation logos and recognition guidelines will also be shared with you.
4. The first payment will be issued after we receive the signed funding agreement. The first payment will represent the bulk of the approved funding.
5. Complete your project!
6. Share your reporting with the Rozsa Foundation.
7. Once we have reviewed and approved your reporting, we will issue the final payment.
8. Six to nine months after your project has been completed, we will reach out to ask for an update on the longer-term impact the project has had on you, your organization, initiative, and/or individual practice.

CONTACT US

If you have any questions, please contact Funding Manager, Ayla Stephen, at ayla@rozsafoundation.com.