

Rozsa Review

2025

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The Rozsa Foundation was founded in 1990 by Drs. Ted and Lola Rozsa to strengthen the arts community they loved and supported. The Rozsas combined their love of the arts with a focus on good business practice and sought to recognize and bolster arts managers' impact in the sector. Their daughter, Mary Rozsa de Coquet, guided the organization for many years and now serves as the foundation's Board Chair, working alongside the rest of the board, foundation members, and the staff team to achieve our goals.

This issue of the *Rozsa Review* is our annual report for 2025, the third year in a four-year strategic framework led by Executive Director Simon Mallett and developed by the staff and board with significant input from the arts community. The framework emphasized three integrated areas of focus, articulated in a new statement of purpose for the Rozsa Foundation:

The Rozsa Foundation is a philanthropic, learning-focused organization that advances equitable leadership and management practices in the arts in Alberta through an integrated use of training, funding, and storytelling supports. We focus on learning and advocate for the arts as we believe

that a knowledgeable, equitable, and thriving arts community can play a critical role in bringing about social change.

Over the last three years, this statement has given us focus and helped us to be specific about the work that we do and how we communicate about it to the arts community in Alberta and beyond. Our next Strategic Framework will take us to our 40th anniversary in 2030, and 2025 saw us take bold steps forward while scanning the horizon for a glimpse of what comes next for the arts sector. Our work in 2025 sought to not only meet the needs of arts leaders today, but also set the foundation from which future action can be taken.

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We Work On Treaty 7 Territory

ACKNOWLEDGING THE LAND

The Rozsa Foundation operates where the Bow River meets the Elbow River, a place traditionally known as Moh'kins'tsis to the Blackfoot, now also known as Calgary.

In the spirit of truth, respect, and reciprocity, we honour and acknowledge that this is the traditional territory of the signatories of Treaty 7; the Blackfoot Confederacy, comprising the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations, the Iyârhe Nakoda, which includes the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations, and the Tsuut'ina Nation.

This territory is also homeland to the historic Northwest Métis and to the Otipemisiwak Métis Government Alberta Districts 5 and 6.

As an organization grateful to be working in this territory, we thank the generations of people who have taken care of this land for thousands of years and understand that we must uphold our own responsibilities toward honouring Treaty 7.

Our work also extends beyond Treaty 7 territory to several places on Turtle Island, on the land also known as Canada. We acknowledge that Indigenous peoples are the traditional guardians of this land and recognize their long standing and ongoing relationship with this territory, which includes unceded and traditional land, and acknowledge our duty to walk with and alongside reconciliation and decolonization efforts.

We believe that we have a responsibility to continually engage along our journey to meaningfully enact allyship, to reassess and reconsider our positionality in the spaces we occupy, and to use our voice to speak out against systemic injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples.



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Through our training programs, we supported arts managers and leaders in building the skills, confidence, and networks needed to lead in a complex and shifting environment.”

Simon Mallett, Executive Director

The 2025 launch of our new Training program, **Rozsa Horizons of Arts Leadership**, is emblematic of how the Rozsa Foundation’s work has continued to evolve over the past several years. It reflects a deliberate shift in perspective, from a focus primarily on supporting individual arts managers and organizations to a broader, horizon-and sector-oriented view that considers how we can best support the context in which the arts as a whole can thrive. By lifting our eyes and adopting a higher line of sight, we are increasingly focused on investing upstream in ways that create meaningful downstream impact across Alberta’s arts ecosystem.

This horizon-focused approach was evident throughout our work in 2025. We shared our **Spotlight on Arts Audiences** research with arts leaders in both Edmonton and Calgary, equipping them with timely insights into audience behaviours, motivations, and expectations. More importantly, the research offered practical approaches for building more meaningful, resilient relationships with audiences at a time when many organizations continue to navigate changing patterns of engagement.

Professional development training remained a cornerstone of our work. Through our Training programs, we supported arts managers and leaders in building the skills, confidence, and networks needed to lead in a complex and shifting environment. The introduction of **Rozsa Horizons of Arts Leadership** marked a significant milestone in this work; offering a space for executive arts leaders to develop the

perspectives and skills required to navigate uncertainty and guide long term organizational change.

Our gatherings, **Retreat** and **Nourish**, provided much needed space for connection. These moments allowed arts leaders to step out of the grind of daily demands, reconnect with one another, and themselves, and return to their work better equipped to face what lies ahead.

Our **Future Focus Funding** program further reinforced this forward-looking orientation. By encouraging organizations to plan for their own horizons, the program supported leaders in identifying where adaptation and transformation were needed to ensure long term sustainability. Rather than responding only to immediate challenges, organizations were supported to think strategically about the future they want to build.

Beyond Training and Funding programs, we remained actively engaged in advocacy efforts, working with Creative Calgary at the municipal level and the Canadian Arts Coalition federally; creating the broader conditions for success for artists, arts leaders, and arts organizations; and ensuring that the arts remain visible, valued, and supported in public policy and government investment decisions.

Together, these efforts reflect our belief that when we support learning, leadership, and long term thinking, we help the entire arts community move toward a new, bold, and thriving horizon.



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I am grateful for all the skills and years of experience the board members bring, coupled with their passion for the arts: they are a great team."

Mary Rozsa de Coquet, Board Chair

In Alberta, we are used to wide-open spaces; able to see to the far horizon of mountain peaks, chinook arches, fields of grain and the morning sunrise. This perspective encourages big picture thinking and a willingness to try something new because there may be a better way. And in today's fractured world, more comprehensive points of view and meaningful adaptive change are essential.

This past year, the Foundation addressed this issue by introducing a new professional development course entitled, **Rozsa Horizons of Arts Leadership** which reflects the landscape in which seasoned art administrators work. In fact, our new Director of Training, Samantha MacDonald, launched a whole new suite of Training programs. The paths of study are woven together with many opportunities to focus on a particular subject or to network in unique ways, while pursuing the knowledge offered in each learning stream.

These new offerings have been well received by arts professionals as well as other funders who have joined the Foundation efforts to support the arts sector to increase resiliency and advance collective renewal. In addition, as the audience research project entered its final phase, the Board agreed that we should divert funds to help the sector address cybersecurity; a very real threat no longer confined to the horizon.



Members of the Board at The Da Vinci Code at Vertigo Theatre, directed by Rozsa Foundation Executive Director Simon Mallett.

As for the work of the Board, we started a review of all policies to ensure good governance and effective risk mitigation. I am grateful for all the skills and years of experience the board members bring, coupled with their passion for the arts: they are a great team. At times the Board is hard-pressed to keep up with Executive Director Simon Mallett, but together they exemplify the Foundation value of 'leading by example'.

Looking to the horizon, we are excited to see what the new year will bring.

Empowering Arts Leaders

Confident, curious, and capable leaders are necessary to build a strong and vibrant arts community. To help leaders continuously develop their knowledge and skills, the Rozsa Foundation provides professional development, training, and experience-based opportunities to arts managers and leaders.

Rozsa Essentials of Arts Administration (formerly RAFT) introduces early career arts professionals to the realities of founding and working within a not-for-profit arts organization.

Rozsa Foundations of Arts Leadership (formerly RAMP) provides arts professionals with 3+ years of experience an opportunity to explore and develop leadership capacities through topics like team building, community engagement, brand building, advocacy, governance, and more.

Rozsa Horizons of Arts Leadership is a cohort-based program for experienced arts leaders. Focused on cultivating a readiness for change, the program combines expert insights, peer learning, and practical tools to explore pathways to organizational innovation and leadership in a shifting arts landscape.



The **Arts Leadership Residency** Funding program supports mid-career arts professionals who are Indigenous, Black, or People of Colour and aspire to leadership roles in the arts to undertake an extended residency with a host arts organization.

Through our **Gatherings in Arts Leadership**—convenings for experienced arts leaders—**Nourish** brings together leaders to break bread and collectively break

down the challenges of the moment, guided by a group coach and **Retreat** provides an opportunity to convene, converse, and learn at an eight-day retreat that prioritizes space for reflection and rejuvenation. We also run a variety of half-day workshops on emerging topics. Through our Training Programs, we intersect with arts professionals at every stage of their careers.



RAFT Participants 2025

Rozsa Foundation's Reimagined Training Programs

BY SAMANTHA MACDONALD

2025 was a year of transformation for the Rozsa Foundation Training Programs. We took our existing programs, reenvisioned and revamped them, and released them back into the wild. RAFT became **Rozsa Essentials of Arts Administration**; RAMP became **Rozsa Foundations of Arts Leadership**; and we pulled the four skills-based sessions from **Foundations** and made them **Intersections**, opening them not only to training participants, but also to community members. We crafted a new branch of the training portfolio, **Gatherings**, to encapsulate our convenings for senior level leadership, **Retreat** and **Nourish**. Perhaps most exciting of all, we talked and listened, asked questions, debated, and dreamed, and launched **Rozsa Horizons of Arts Leadership**, a program centred around supporting arts leaders through change.

While I don't imagine the program as it stands is anywhere near finished in its design, I'm proud of where it landed and what we were able to accomplish in a very short period of time.

We came to **Horizons** with an understanding that arts leaders stand at a pivotal moment. While the terrain they navigate grows more complex - shaped by shifting cultural values, tightening financial realities, and the deep human impact of burnout - this moment also invites courage, innovation, and collective renewal.

Rozsa Horizons of Arts Leadership is a chance to explore the current leadership terrain and uncover

strategies for sustainable, values-driven change in cohort with other arts leaders. Framed by training in cultural and contextual awareness, the program also examines people-centred HR, ethical approaches to AI, strategic and crisis communications, relational leadership through embodied practice, and processes to instigate meaningful organizational change. Leaders will leave with tools and practical resources to navigate complexity with confidence, supporting care, innovation, and mindful risk-taking within their organizations.

Horizons is a cohort-based training program that blends expert presentations, peer learning, and practical application, enabling leaders to explore pathways to organizational innovation and transformation, and equipping them to lead with vision, compassion, and adaptability in a shifting arts landscape. The program will culminate in a two-day session focused on adaptive change. Beyond the program, it is the intention of the Rozsa Foundation to make funding and coaching available to participants should they wish to explore a small change-based experiment that builds on program learnings with a practical application.

While we can't change the current tides within the arts sector on our own, we can support Alberta leaders in navigating those tides and help them build better boats. I'm excited to see how **Horizons** might uplift that goal now and in the future.

Gatherings in Arts Leadership: Retreat and Nourish

BY SAMANTHA MACDONALD

Early in my career as an arts administrator, I was running a theatre company in north central British Columbia. It was remote, and we were the only professional theatre for more than 500 kilometres. What made the daily professional isolation bearable were the sporadic opportunities to be in space with other arts leaders; occasions to share stories, break bread, and bolster each other were what kept me going. It's these kinds of convenings we seek to foster through our **Gatherings in Arts Leadership**, a new branch of the Rozsa Foundation's Training arm.

Arts leaders often feel as though their work happens in silos, with little connection or access to those in similar positions at other organizations. We crafted **Gatherings** to ensure opportunities for connection. Our current offerings include **Retreat** (formerly the Alberta Arts Leaders Retreat) and **Nourish**.

Arts leaders are facing immense and complex challenges.

Burnout is a constant reality, and leaders struggle to keep up with the ever-increasing demands of the job, never mind finding time to contemplate the bigger picture, plan for the future, or dream about what could be. **Retreat** is an attempt to begin addressing these challenges by bringing together a cohort of Alberta arts leaders of various disciplines and organization sizes at the Banff Centre for a week of convening and learning opportunities, as well as time and space to undertake personal reflection and rejuvenation. The formal agenda is light: two hours of daily moderated conversation around topics that are front-of-mind to the participants, the remainder of the time belongs to the participants to use as they see fit. There are no expected outcomes beyond what participants set for themselves. I was fortunate to take part in **Retreat** this past summer and can honestly say it was a balm for the soul. I was not the only one who felt that way. Deep listening, rigorous conversation, a canoe ride on the Bow River, and a magic show – it was a powerful, impactful week for all. We extend our thanks to the Flanagan Foundation for enabling the retreat to be available without cost to arts leaders.

While we can't retreat every month, we did want to carry forward the spirit of that convening, giving arts managers and leaders an opportunity to come together over a meal, develop new connections, and build support networks. We call it **Nourish** and it's a quarterly "supper club" – an informal evening with conversations moderated by our Organizational Strategy Advisor, Jennifer DeDomincis. Call it group coaching with a side of therapy – arts leaders breaking bread and breaking down the challenges of the moment. So far this "experiment" has been incredibly well received and we look forward to seeing where **Nourish** goes next.



*Leaders on Retreat:
an afternoon hike up
Sacred Buffalo Guardian
Mountain*

Developing Leadership Through Experience:

Dominic Fayenuwo's Arts Leadership Residency at Arts Commons

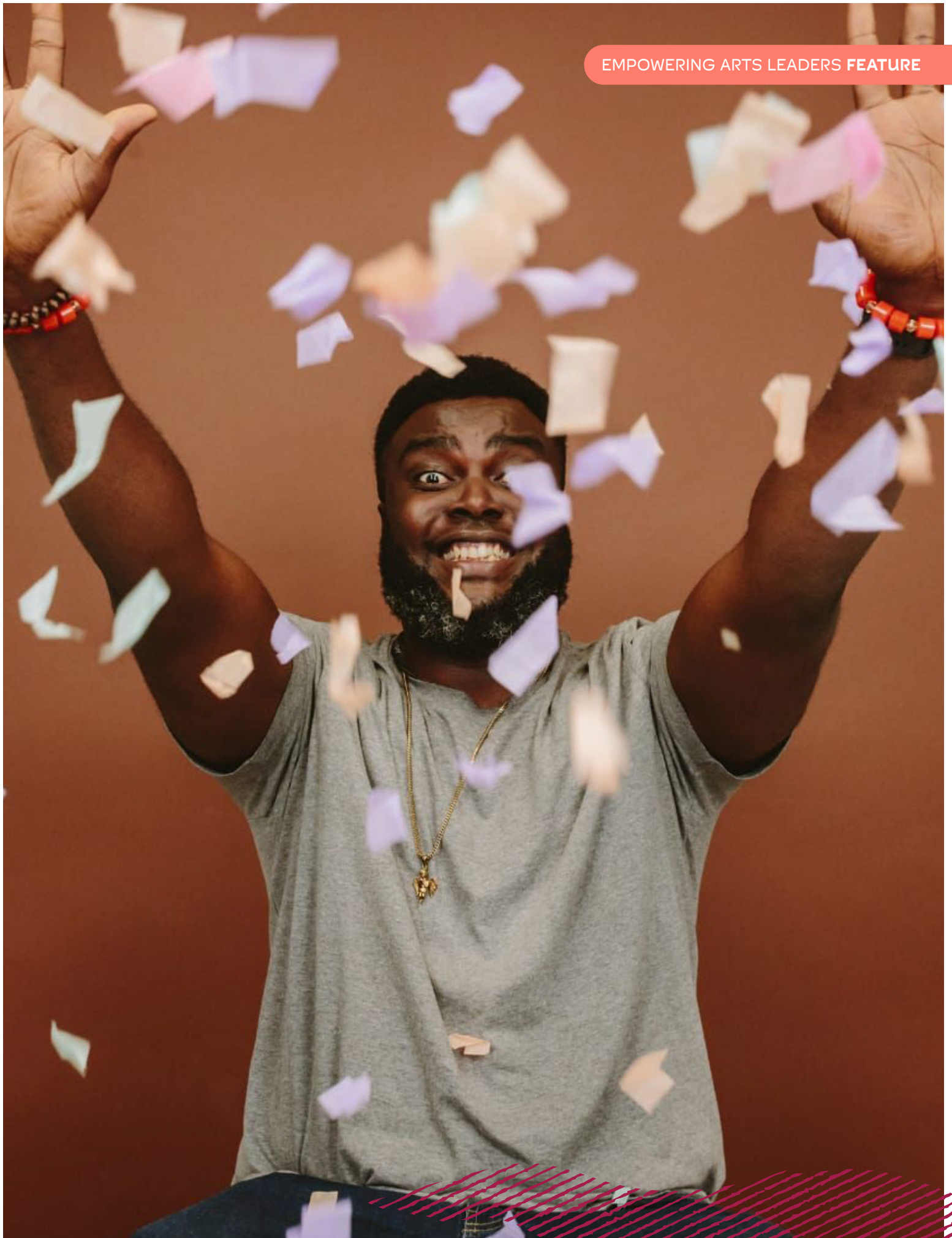
BY LISA MACKAY

When Dominic Fayenuwo began his *Arts Leadership Residency* at Arts Commons (now Werklund Centre) in October 2024, he entered one of Canada's most complex performing arts environments with a clear goal: to deepen his experience in programming and production while learning how large institutions shape artistic work.

Hosted by Arts Commons, the largest performing arts centre in Western Canada, and supported by the Rozsa Foundation, the residency offered a rare opportunity to learn from within the systems that sustain large-scale cultural activity.

Early on, Dominic discovered that the visible outcomes of programming, the performances, exhibitions, and public events, represent only a fraction of the work required to make them possible. Programming, he learned, is as much about planning, coordination, contracts, budgets, and communication as it is about artistic vision. Decisions are shaped not only by creative intent, but by organisational strategy, financial realities, and long-term mission.

*Opposite page:
Dominic Fayenuwo.
Photo by Mike Tan.*



This expanded understanding marked a significant shift in perspective. Rather than viewing arts administration as a support function, Dominic came to see it as an ecosystem, one in which artistic, structural, and relational considerations are deeply intertwined. Each decision carries implications for artists, staff, partners, and audiences alike.

Arts Commons provided a particularly rigorous context for this learning. With multiple departments, resident companies, and a full season of programming in motion, the pace required adaptability and precision. Dominic worked across *Arts Commons Presents*, *Connects*, *Galleries*, and *Education* programs, contributing to show running and event delivery while supporting planning for future seasons.

Over the course of the residency, he took on increasing responsibility. His portfolio included line-producing three *TD Amplify / Scratch* performances, supporting the *TD Incubator Summit*, and contributing to culturally significant events such as Día de Muertos. He was also involved in producing artist markets during the *High Performance Rodeo* and *Arts Commons Art Party*, and in developing a creative pre-show experience for *National Geographic Live*.

Alongside production work, Dominic became closely involved in the connective work that holds institutions together. He supported budgeting and

settlements, assisted with artist contracts, coordinated communications with artists, and worked across departments including Brand and Audience Development, Production, Development, Galleries, and Education. In many cases, his role involved ensuring clarity between teams, translating needs, and maintaining momentum across complex workflows.

Just as important as the technical skills Dominic developed was a shift in how he approached leadership. Early in the residency, he recognised that his instinctive working style was task-driven and execution-focused. Through mentorship with Associate Director Creative Joshua Dalledonne, and earlier guidance from Vice President of Programming Sarah Garton Stanley, he began to broaden his perspective.

Rather than focusing solely on completing tasks, Dominic learned to situate his work within a larger context. He practised active listening, paying attention not only to what was being said, but to what might remain unspoken. This approach reshaped how he worked with artists, technicians, and colleagues, and prompted a guiding question that increasingly defined his leadership practice: ***What does this person need in order to succeed?***

"I now understand that the feeling we leave with the people we work with is just as important as the successful completion of the project."



The Programming Team from left: Dominic Fayenuwo, Nash Chaparro, Joshua Dalledonne, Sanja Lukač, Shannon Ambrose MATZO, and SGS

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I now understand that the feeling we leave with the people we work with is just as important as the successful completion of the project."

— Dominic Fayenuwo

The part-time structure of the residency, at 20 hours per week, presented both opportunities and limitations. While it allowed for sustained engagement over the course of a year, it also meant Dominic could not participate in every strategic discussion or long-range planning process. Rather than diminishing the experience, this constraint reflected a common reality of arts leadership, working with partial visibility while remaining accountable for outcomes.

The residency coincided with a period of organizational transition at Arts Commons, including leadership changes and evolving internal processes. Navigating this environment required flexibility and patience, and offered Dominic real-time insight into how institutions adapt under changing conditions. It also reinforced the importance of clear communication and relationship-building during moments of uncertainty.

Through this experience, Dominic developed a heightened awareness of broader sectoral dynamics. He observed the increasing need for diverse voices in leadership and programming, particularly as audiences and artistic practices continue to evolve. He also became more attuned to the pressures facing arts organisations, including unpredictable public funding and the growing expectation to justify artistic work primarily through financial outcomes.

At the same time, Dominic witnessed the impact of programming that prioritises marginalised stories and artist care, seeing how such work fosters connection and belonging within communities. These observations strengthened his commitment to leadership practices that centre care, clarity, and long-term sustainability alongside artistic ambition.

While Dominic entered the residency with strong production experience, the opportunity fundamentally altered the scope of his ambitions. Access to institutional decision-making, sustained mentorship, and real

responsibility within Arts Commons expanded his understanding of what leadership in the arts can be. In doing so, it reshaped the direction of his career, opening pathways that would have been difficult to access, or even imagine, without this opportunity.

The residency functioned as a two-way exchange. Arts Commons benefited from Dominic's presence, curiosity, and capacity at a moment of significant organisational change. His work prompted reflection on communication practices, mentorship models, and how institutions evolve alongside new voices and ways of working.

As the residency concludes, Dominic's future direction is clear. He aspires to work as a producer and executive arts administrator focused on large-scale, multicultural productions and sustainable artistic ventures. He is interested in developing intellectual property, exploring cultural entrepreneurship, and contributing to an arts ecosystem that reflects the diversity and complexity of its communities.

The Rozsa Foundation's *Arts Leadership Residency* offered Dominic Fayenuwo more than professional development. It provided sustained, embedded exposure to how leadership operates within complex cultural systems, and how care, communication, and strategy intersect in practice. The experience has reshaped how he approaches his work and clarified the values and direction that will guide him as he continues to build his career in Canada's arts sector. For those considering applying to the program, Dominic offers simple advice: "You are more ready than you think. Be intentional about your networking choices and be willing to take the leap. Your perspective, however different, has value." We can't wait to see where he goes from here!

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Be intentional about your networking choices and be willing to take the leap. Your perspective, however different, has value."

— Dominic Fayenuwo

Rozsa Foundation Emerging Arts Manager Award: Cosmo Christoffersen

The *Rozsa Foundation Emerging Arts Manager Award* recognizes early-career leaders whose work is already making a meaningful impact on Calgary's arts community. In 2025, the award was presented to Cosmo Christoffersen, Managing Producer of the *Festival of Animated Objects (FAO)*, in recognition of leadership that has strengthened both the organization and the broader puppetry and mask arts ecosystem in Alberta.

Cosmo stepped into the role in 2023, assuming full producing and administrative responsibility following the sudden departure of the previous producer. With a background as a playwright and performer and an MFA in Theatre Studies, they led a successful festival season that exceeded attendance projections and established a strong foundation for growth.

Since then, Cosmo has increased *FAO's* organizational capacity and sustainability, including securing multi-year Canada Council Core funding of \$30,000 annually over four years. Under their leadership,



FAO's Incubator has developed into a two-year professional pathway for emerging artists, combining skills development with mentorship.

Accessibility has been a clear priority for Cosmo, with expanded inclusive practices, ASL interpretation and audio description at performances, and a fully accessible festival website. Cosmo also represents Western Canada through UNIMA, the International Puppetry Association, extending their impact nationally and internationally.

The award recognizes both Cosmo Christoffersen's achievements to date and the future impact of their leadership in strengthening organizations, supporting artists, and building a more sustainable arts sector.

Mayor Jyoti Gondek, Cosmo Christoffersen, and Simon Mallett at the Mayor's Celebration of the Arts. Photo by Motif Photography.

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Cosmo's leadership has fundamentally strengthened the *Festival of Animated Objects* and expanded what is possible for puppetry and mask arts in Calgary."

— Simon Mallett, Executive Director, Rozsa Foundation

Reinforcing Strong Organizations

Funding for arts organizations has been central to the work of the Rozsa Foundation since 1990. Our funding programs have been adapted over the years to address unique challenges and gaps in sector support, strengthening Arts and Culture companies both for today and for the future.

2025 funding programs included **Future Focus Funding**, which supports organizations to address long-term opportunities or challenges, **Audience Development Funding**, which asked

organizations to think differently about their relationships with patrons, guided by the *Spotlight on Arts Audiences* research project, and **RAMP Capstone Funding**, which helped arts leaders bring a project they designed to reality.

The Rozsa Foundation also provided resources to organizations far and wide, including contemporary research on Calgary's arts audiences, and an extensive resource page that supports organizations to address a wide array of challenges and opportunities.

Funding Programs in 2025: Strategic Support for the Sector

BY AYLA STEPHEN

Our 2025 Funding Programs supported organizational learning and capacity building. Many organizations leveraged our funding to explore new ways of working and to make informed decisions about their long-term sustainability. We offered four Funding Programs designed to meet sector-specific needs that also complimented Rozsa Foundation initiatives.

This was our second year offering the *Audience Development Funding* program, supporting arts organizations eager to change how they learn about and engage ticket buyers and patrons. The program was directly linked to the *Spotlight on Arts Audiences* project, led by our Storytelling team. Recipients

were encouraged to use audience data to inform their engagement strategies and Lisa Mackay, Director of Storytelling, participated in post-approval funding meetings with me.

Three residencies were supported through the *Arts Leadership Residency Funding* program. Introduced in 2020, the program provides \$20,000 to support mid-career arts professionals who are Indigenous, Black, or a Person of Colour who aspire to leadership roles in the arts, to undertake an extended residency with a host arts organization.

Future Focus Funding, our joint funding program with Calgary

Arts Development and Calgary Foundation, continued through 2025. This collaboration supported arts organizations as they investigate, plan, and implement strategic adaptations to enable significant transformation. The Canada Council for the Arts contributed additional funds to the program, and this pooled funding approach expanded our investment capacity and allowed us to support a broader range of organizations.

A new Investigation Phase was introduced to the program to better support small and mid-sized arts groups to initiate this work within their organizations. By offering early-stage support, our intention is to ensure more organizations can meaningfully engage with the program and develop



The Calgary Stetson Show Band undertook a focused planning and alignment initiative to strengthen governance, operational efficiency, and long-term sustainability in collaboration with the Calgary Round-Up Band. They remain distinct organizations but now share a common strategic framework, and coordinated scheduling and communication practices to enhance efficiency and improve the member experience. Photos by Jolesch Enterprises.

stronger explorations and better-aligned applications.

Jennifer DeDominicis from Distill Consulting continued her role as Organizational Strategy Advisor, offering arts organizations and leaders much needed foundational support to clarify their core challenges, explore potential strategies, and strengthen their

applications for the Future Focus program. Jennifer has also collaborated with Director of Training, Samantha MacDonald, to develop workshops that have been offered as a complement to our Training programs, with topics being identified from recurring themes in Future Focus applications and advisory conversations with arts leaders.

Capstone Project Funding remained a key mechanism for *Rozsa Arts Management Program (RAMP)* - now known as *Foundations of Arts Leadership* - graduates to apply their learning through real-world projects.



Building off of a previous Future Focus Exploration project, Springboard Performance received Future Focus Implementation Funding in 2025 to support the move of the containR Art Park from the long-term location in Sunnyside to newly secured locations in Crescent Heights and Inglewood. Funding ensured that they could move off the site in Sunnyside in advance of the lease expiring in December 2025. Photo by Katie Struck courtesy of Springboard Performance.

Funding Trends in 2025

BY AYLA STEPHEN

Several sectoral trends were identified throughout our funded projects, as well as through conversations and interactions with arts leaders at events, workshops, and gatherings.

Venues and spaces remained an issue in the sector as several organizations searched for alternative spaces that met their needs, or explored leasing or acquiring venues requiring significant adaptation to their operations and governance. Leaders were also trying to determine whether new spaces could provide additional revenue or meet community needs in a new way. In our conversations, we encouraged them to investigate the impacts and realities of owning or operating a venue and whether they truly had the capacity, financial and otherwise, to take that on.

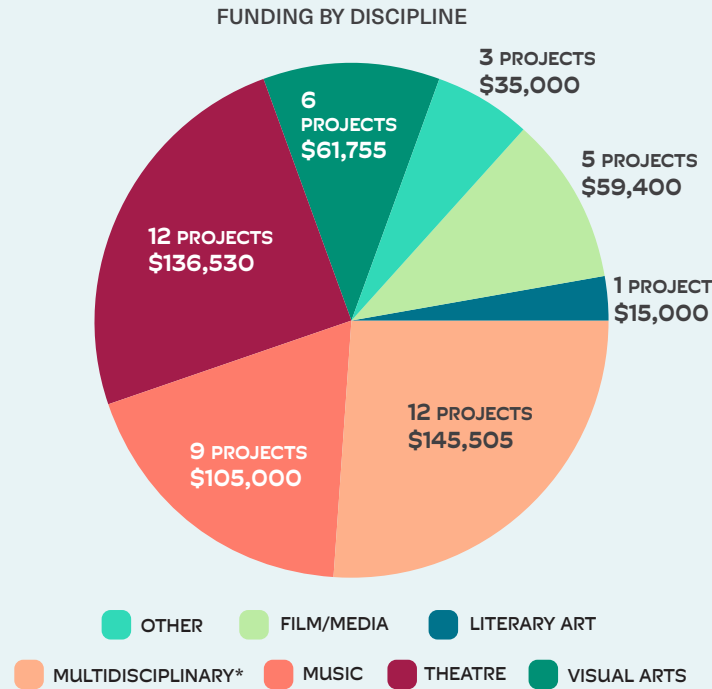
Succession at founder-led organizations continued to be a sensitive and important area of exploration. Boards and founders wanted to strike a balance

between honouring legacy, while preparing for change and new direction. In some case, organizations considered dissolution as part of the change cycle.

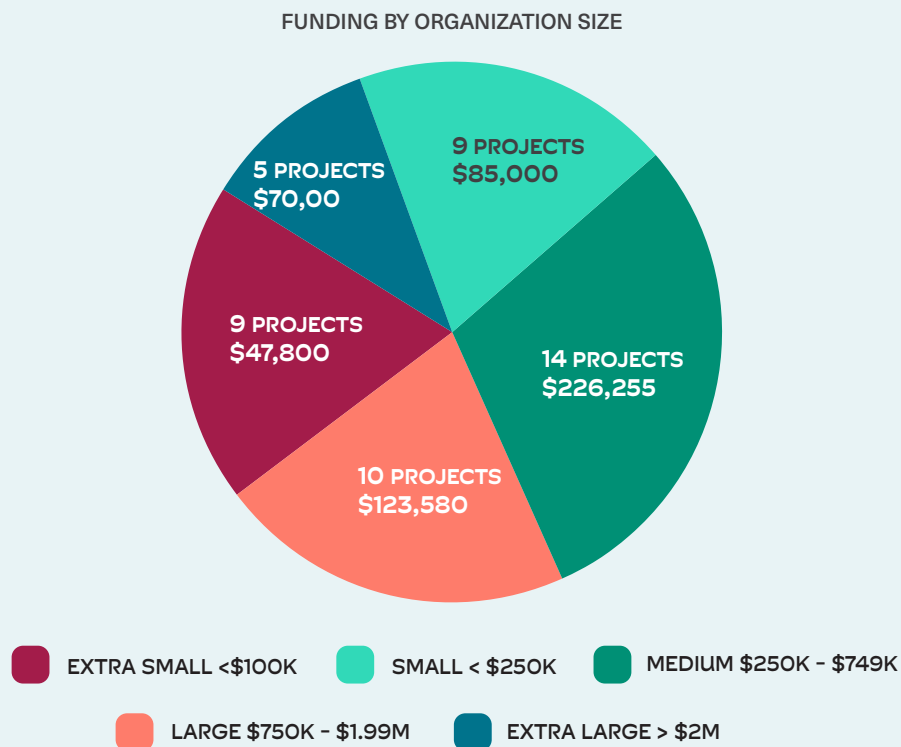
Smaller organizations sought growth and examined their purpose and how and if they could serve community in new and different ways. Several of these organizations served specific cultural groups or equity-seeking communities, and many were operating as registered non-profits.

Alternative revenue generation was also a key consideration for organizations. They ideated new ways to engage audiences and donors and considered small and large initiatives – of varying levels of risk and innovation – that could support their quest for sustainability.

Funding At-A-Glance



* This represents a stronger than usual showing by Multidisciplinary arts organizations. Culturally specific organizations such as Calgary Arab Arts and Culture, Salingpusa Creatives, and Woezo Africa Music and Dance are included in that category. Although no dance exclusive organizations were supported, dance is well represented within multidisciplinary organizations such as Springboard Performance, Woezo Africa Music and Dance, and Cirque Nuit.



The GRAND Theatre Society:

From Considering Dissolution to Finding Sustainability

BY LISA MACKAY

In recent years, The GRAND Theatre has experienced financial strain and organizational transition that prompted serious questions about its long-term sustainability. For a venue that has stood in downtown Calgary since 1912, those questions carried significant weight for the theatre itself and for the city's broader arts and grassroots communities.

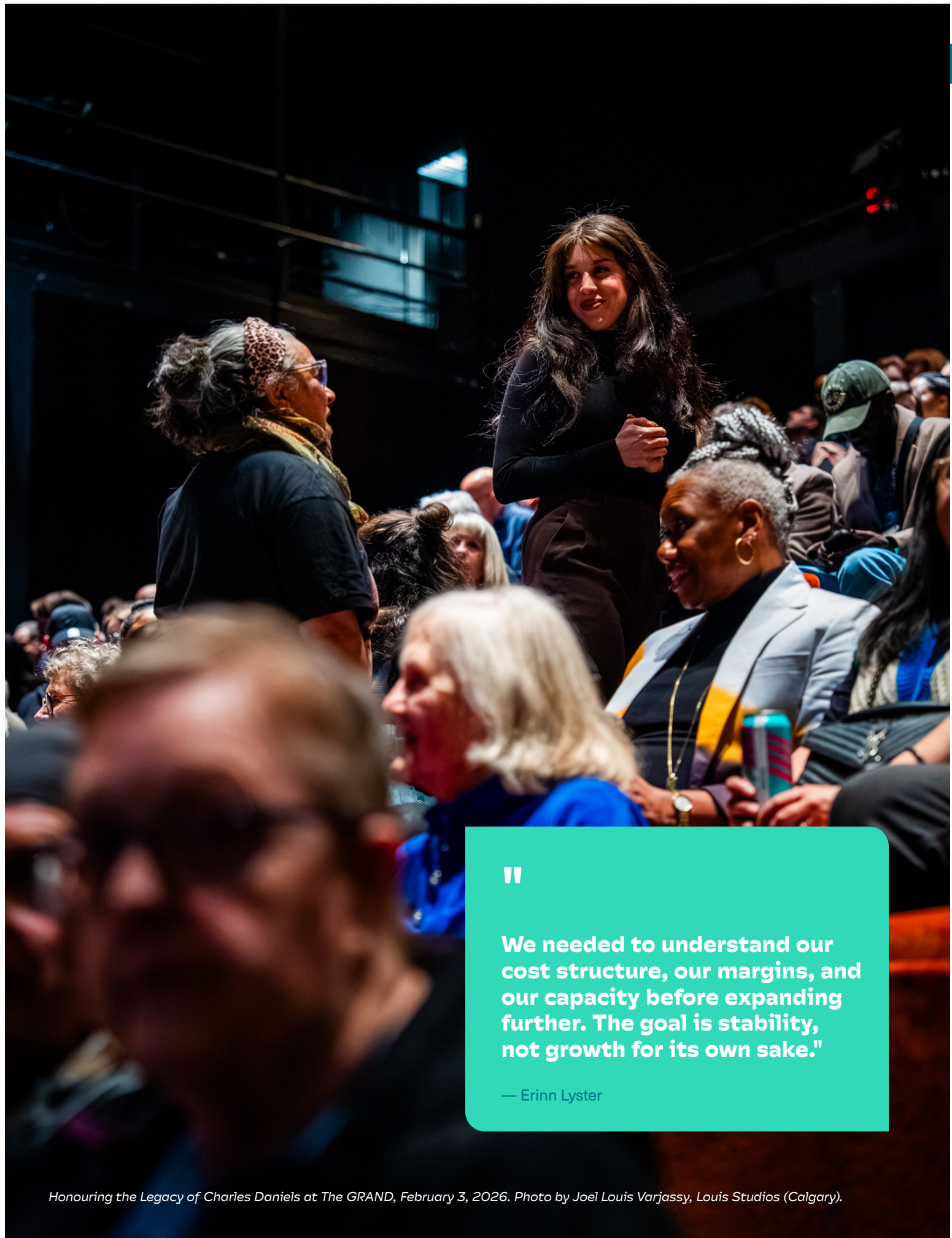
When The GRAND first applied to the *Future Focus Funding* program, dissolution was under serious consideration, with a plan to transfer assets to ensure the venue remained a theatre under new stewardship. It was a realistic and carefully considered response to the financial realities facing the organization at the time.

As conversations progressed with partners and advisors, leadership reassessed whether closure was the only viable path forward and instead examined whether a sustainable operating model could be rebuilt from within. That shift reframed the work from managing decline to testing viability.

Future Focus Funding, delivered in partnership with Calgary Arts Development and the Calgary Foundation, is intended to support organizations grappling with significant structural questions, and in this case it provided the space to move beyond crisis response toward a disciplined examination of long-term sustainability.

As Rozsa Foundation Funding Manager Ayla Stephen explains, “When we developed the *Future Focus Funding* program, we wanted to respond to a reality many arts organizations are facing: traditional revenue streams are under pressure. The GRAND used this opportunity to rethink how their building works as a business, while staying true to their role as a cultural space.”

The work that followed focused on clarifying the underlying business model rather than expanding programming in isolation. Leadership developed and tested an integrated approach built around three interconnected areas: cinema; bar and hospitality; and music, each assessed for artistic value, operational feasibility, and contribution to margin.



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We needed to understand our cost structure, our margins, and our capacity before expanding further. The goal is stability, not growth for its own sake.”

— Erinn Lyster

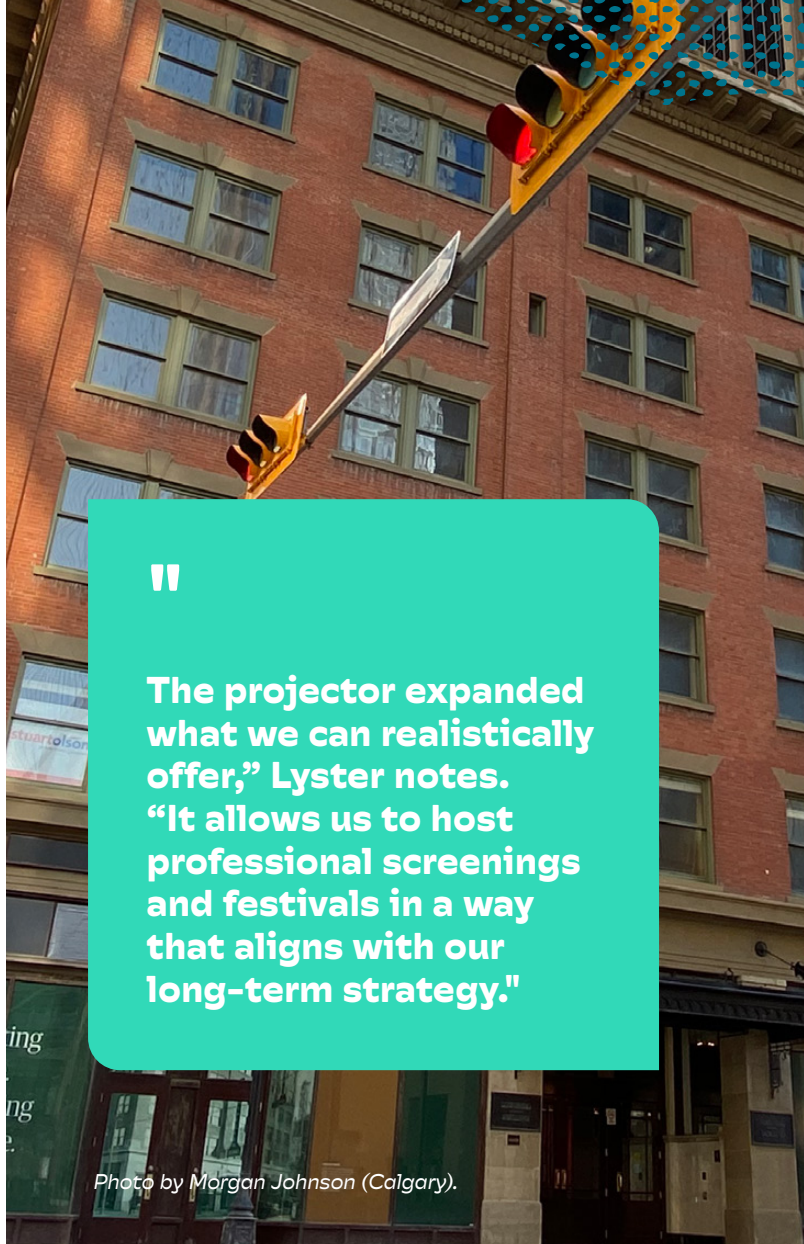
It is important to note that The GRAND remained an active multidisciplinary venue throughout 2025, hosting touring concerts, orchestral rock productions, music-infused theatre, cabaret performances, and community series in addition to rentals and festivals. Cinema did not replace that programming; rather, it introduced a reliable internal revenue stream within an already active calendar.

Between February and August 2025, The GRAND screened nine films and welcomed 1,960 attendees, averaging 217 per screening, and generated \$32,356.69 in net profit, including \$24,510.96 in bar sales. On a typical movie night, ticket revenue averaged \$3,890.57 while bar revenue averaged \$2,723, confirming that the financial strength of the model relied on integrating hospitality into the experience rather than depending on ticket sales alone.

“Our history as a movie theatre is part of our DNA,” says Executive Director Erinn Lyster. “We leaned into that intentionally. The results showed that cinema can be both culturally meaningful and financially sound when it is programmed and marketed with discipline.”

Nostalgic titles such as *The Princess Bride*, *Grease*, and *Casablanca* generated consistent attendance, while themed cocktails, popcorn, and vendor collaborations increased per-capita spending and reinforced the social dimension of the evenings. The series also activated nights that had previously generated limited revenue, turning Sundays and Tuesdays into dependable income-generating evenings and contributing to steadier use of the building across the week.

Marketing was incorporated into the operating structure rather than treated as a separate function. Paid social boosts averaged \$376 per event and were tracked against attendance and engagement metrics. E-news subscribers increased from 4,300 to 5,300, Instagram grew from 6,500 to 8,212 followers, and Google Business Profile interactions rose by more than 50 percent to exceed 10,000 per month. Many attendees identified as first-time visitors, indicating that the pilot expanded the theatre’s audience base beyond its existing community.



“
The projector expanded what we can realistically offer,” Lyster notes. “It allows us to host professional screenings and festivals in a way that aligns with our long-term strategy.”

Photo by Morgan Johnson (Calgary).

During the pilot period, a partnership with the Calgary International Film Festival resulted in the installation of a professional film-grade projector, expanding the venue’s technical capacity and positioning The GRAND to host official festival screenings as part of CIFF’s fall 2025 programming. The theatre participated in the city-wide festival lineup that September, reinforcing its role within Calgary’s cinema landscape and demonstrating its readiness to support professional presentations. A memorandum of understanding is in development to formalize shared use and operational responsibilities moving forward.

“The projector expanded what we can realistically offer,” Lyster notes. “It allows us to host professional screenings and festivals in a way that aligns with our long-term strategy.”



REINFORCING STRONG ORGANIZATIONS FEATURE

Music programming remains central to the venue's identity, with concerts, touring productions, and community performance series continuing throughout the year. However, the *Future Focus* work distinguished between presenting external bookings and building a financially sustainable internally produced music series. Leadership has determined that any expansion of self-produced music programming will proceed only when sponsorship or dedicated funding is secured to support artist fees and production costs responsibly.

The broader framework now integrates programming, hospitality, partnerships, and operational systems in a way that allows for measured growth without overextension. Revenue projections outline base, goal, and stretch scenarios that increase event volume while maintaining defined margins and efficiency benchmarks. Sponsorship pathways for individual film nights and series underwriting are in development to diversify revenue streams while aligning with the venue's community focus.

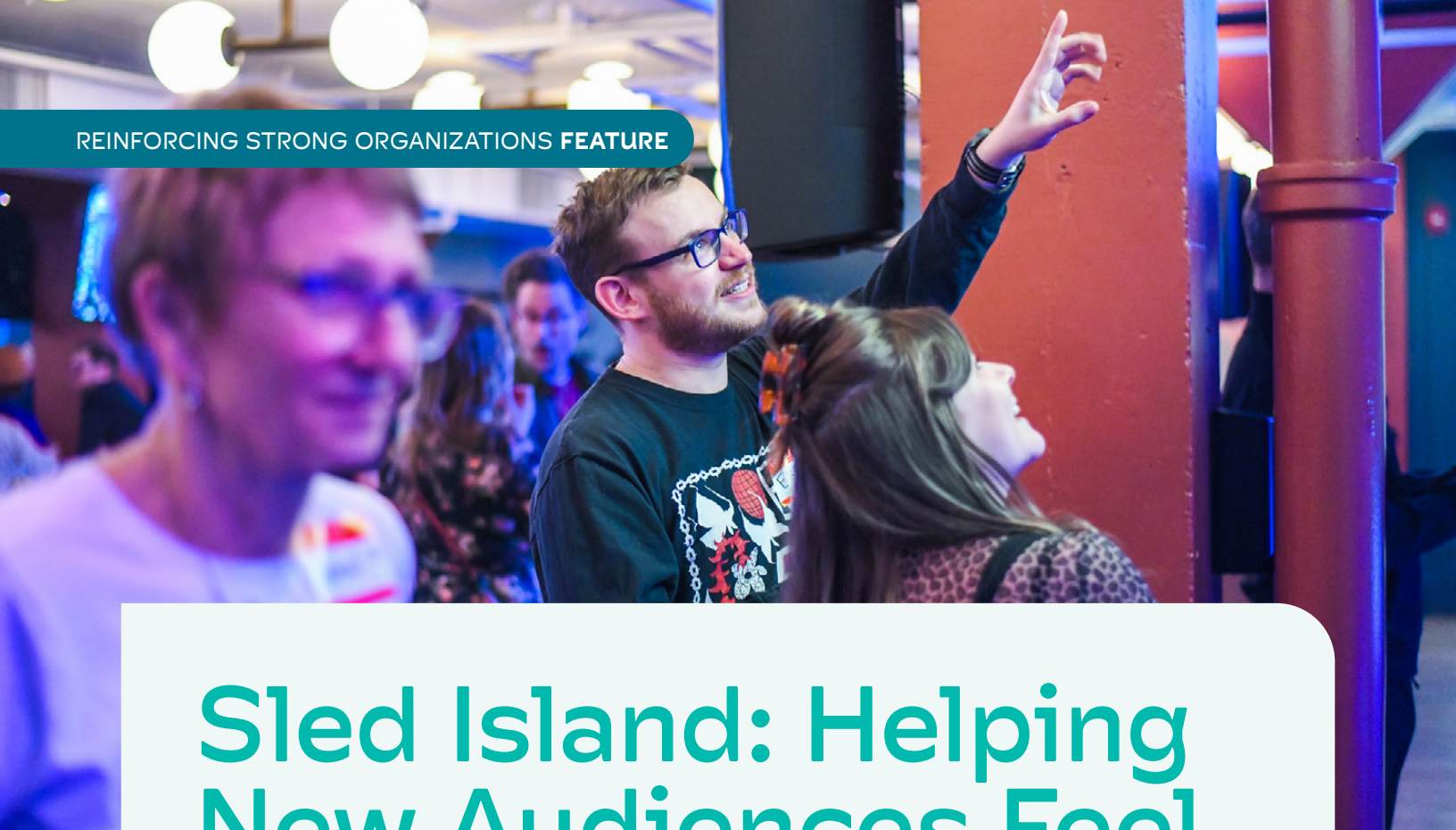
The intent of the *Future Focus Funding* is to support organizations confronting structural challenges and to enable decisions grounded in evidence rather than optimism. In this case, the process allowed The GRAND to test assumptions, redirect when necessary, and build a model that reflects both market realities and community value.

While cinema proved scalable, the hospitality model required recalibration after an initial external partnership approach did not proceed due to regulatory and operational constraints. Leadership determined that long-term sustainability depended on internal control of bar operations supported by targeted consultant expertise. The revised strategy emphasizes a focused menu of high-margin products, streamlined service workflows, defined staffing models, and measurable performance indicators, including maintaining bar cost of goods at or below 25 percent, achieving a bar-to-ticket revenue ratio of 1.0 or greater as the program scales, and keeping average service times under three minutes per order.

"This process required us to be precise," Lyster explains. "We needed to understand our cost structure, our margins, and our capacity before expanding further. The goal is stability, not growth for its own sake."

While meaningful structural progress has been made and key elements of the model have been tested successfully, leadership is clear that long-term financial gaps remain to be closed. The work has not eliminated every pressure point, nor has it resolved every vulnerability. What it has provided is a disciplined operating framework, realistic revenue projections, and a clearer understanding of where growth is viable and where caution is required.

The GRAND is no longer focused on managing an ending but on the steadier work of operating sustainably within its means, building on tested demand, and strengthening its role within Calgary's cultural landscape, with a defined path toward sustainability rather than an assumption that it has already been achieved.



REINFORCING STRONG ORGANIZATIONS FEATURE

Sled Island: Helping New Audiences Feel Ready to Attend

BY LISA MACKAY



Top: Sled Social. Photo by Michael Grondin.

Bottom: Sled Island Student Mixer @ The BLOX Arts Centre. Photo by Michael Grondin.

For some people, the hardest part of attending a festival is not choosing which shows to see, but finding someone to go with, especially if you have never been to the festival before. And if you decide to attend on your own, the hardest part might be walking into a room where you don't know anyone, and trusting you will find your way once you are there.

With support from the Rozsa Foundation's *Audience Development Funding*, Sled Island Festival focused on that first threshold: making sure people felt more comfortable attending for the first time, especially if they came alone. Well before tickets even went on sale, the team created welcoming, low-anxiety ways for people to connect with the festival and with each other.

They did this through two pre-festival socials designed to reach first-time and solo attendees. They then reinforced that momentum with a public gathering at the start of the festival itself.

The two pre-festival socials were built as entry points for people who were curious but not yet committed. Sled Island created space for conversation, a bit of music, and a sense of familiarity, so that attending later shows would feel less like stepping into the unknown. The first mixer, *Sled Social*, drew strong interest, and a meaningful portion of the people who came were new to the festival.

The second, a student-focused mixer, aimed at a group Sled Island has historically had difficulty reaching and retaining, and it became the clearest example of what audience development often looks like in practice:

They did this through two pre-festival socials designed to reach first-time and solo attendees. They then reinforced that momentum with a public gathering at the start of the festival itself.

iterative, responsive, and sometimes messy. The original plan was to focus on students from a single university and make the event easier to access by offering a shuttle from campus to the venue. But the mixer landed on a Saturday, and because most students don't live on campus, a shuttle did not make practical sense. More significantly, the team learned how difficult it can be to reach students through institutional channels, even with a free event that included live bands and food. After repeated attempts to connect with the university's partnership department and the students' union, they received little support for promotion, so Sled Island widened outreach to include multiple post-secondary institutions and also promoted through some high school networks, shifting their strategy to meet students where access was actually possible. That pivot worked. The student mixer brought in the youngest crowd the festival team had seen through this kind of event, and many of the attendees had never been to Sled Island and, in many cases, were not yet familiar with the festival at all.

Across both pre-festival socials, Sled Island also tested a simple operational choice that strengthened the experience for newcomers. They introduced coloured name tags to identify first-time attendees, which helped staff and ambassadors recognize who might need a warmer welcome and a bit more context. It also made it easier to connect new participants with returning audience members, shifting the events from casual pre-parties into intentional spaces of welcome.

Reflecting on the project, Kurtis Gregor, Sled Island's Marketing and Communications Manager, noted that "our attendees are hungry for opportunities to gather in the months leading up to the festival, and we should create avenues to generate excitement among our audience to support our promotional efforts."

The festival-opening gathering played a different role. Rather than functioning as an invitation to consider attending, it acted as a bridge into the first days of programming, bringing together committed festival-goers and people who were still deciding how fully they wanted to participate. Because the opening party was open to the public and did not require an RSVP, Sled Island could not track it the same way they tracked the pre-festival socials. Still, their post-festival survey points to its value, with respondents identifying the opening party as one of the experiences that encouraged them to attend other festival events. Survey feedback also showed very high satisfaction with the opening party, suggesting it did what it needed to do: create an energizing, welcoming start that helped people feel oriented and included.

Sled Island's tracking and survey work suggests that the overall approach contributed to festival attendance, even as the team stayed clear-eyed about what they could and could not measure. Because some festival events are free, some tickets are purchased at the door, and some passes are bought for someone else, the pathway from RSVP to attendance is not fully visible. Still, comparing RSVP lists with ticket and pass buyers showed post-event purchases connected to both pre-festival socials, along with an increase in new volunteer sign-ups, and the survey results suggest that the opening gathering also helped move people from interest to participation.

In the end, Sled Island reported a strong 2025 festival, including a significant increase in box office revenue and many sold-out shows. They also saw encouraging movement in the audience segments the project was designed to support, including growth in student attendance, an increase in the share of attendees under 24, and a sharp rise in all-ages pass sales. At the same time, more than a quarter of attendees were first-timers, continuing a pattern from the year before and underscoring that audience development is not a one-time conversion project, but ongoing work that benefits from consistent touchpoints and thoughtful design.

When Sled Island staff reflected on what they learned, they came away with clarity that will shape their next steps. They saw that student outreach

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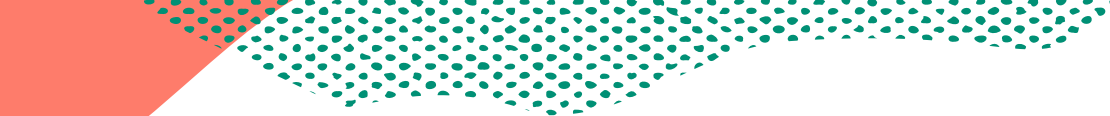
Reflecting on the project, Kurtis Gregor, Sled Island's Marketing and Communications Manager, noted that "our attendees are hungry for opportunities to gather in the months leading up to the festival, and we should create avenues to generate excitement among our audience to support our promotional efforts."



Babe Corner @ Commonwealth. Sled Island 2025. Photo by Michael Grondin.

requires persistence and more adaptable partnership pathways than they expected, and they confirmed that audiences want and appreciate chances to gather and connect in the months leading up to the festival. Looking ahead, Sled Island plans to continue hosting one or two pre-festival socials next year, even if budget realities mean the hospitality elements have to scale back. They also plan to build on relationships that proved effective, including their partnership with OK Social and their connection with The Blox, a venue that is actively nurturing a local all-ages scene. The work is practical and ongoing, but the intention is clear: to make it easier for new people to say yes, and to ensure that when they do, they feel like they belong.

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Strengthening the Sector

In 2025, the Rozsa Foundation continued to undertake sector-wide work in research, advocacy, and information-sharing to strengthen Alberta's arts ecosystem. While all of the Foundation's programs are designed to support leaders and organizations, this work was specifically focused on advancing shared evidence, coordinating civic engagement, and developing a clear public case for the arts.

Through the conclusion of the two-year *Spotlight on Arts Audiences* research project; leadership of the Creative Calgary municipal advocacy campaign; participation in the national *Arts Vote* initiative; and sustained communications across our platforms, we worked to position the arts within broader civic and policy conversations. These efforts were grounded in collaboration, including research, partnerships with fellow funders the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Calgary Arts Development, Calgary Foundation, Edmonton Arts Council, and Edmonton Community Foundation, as well as national advocacy partnerships through the Canadian Arts Coalition.

By connecting data, dialogue, and decision-making, the Rozsa Foundation sought to ensure that Alberta's arts sector is not only strong internally, but also visible, informed, and involved in the public sphere.

STRENGTHENING THE SECTOR

The Rozsa Foundation's arts advocacy work connects us with municipal, provincial, and federal politicians and decision-makers, all of whom can impact the health of the sector.



Simon Mallett, MP Corey Hogan, and Lisa Mackay at Contemporary Calgary's Pancake Breakfast.



Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women Tanya Fir, Lisa Mackay, Simon Mallett, and Samantha MacDonald.



Lisa Mackay and Simon Mallett meet with Mayor Elect Jeromy Farkas.



CAC Steering Committee members Karla Etienne and Simon Mallett with the Honorable Steven Guilbeault.

Storytelling in 2025: Building Evidence, Expanding Influence

BY LISA MACKAY

Much of the year was shaped by Calgary's municipal election. Early in 2025, the Rozsa Foundation helped convene and lead the steering committee of Creative Calgary, a non-partisan coalition of artists, arts organizations, and arts workers committed to advancing the role of the arts within the city's economic and social framework.

Creative Calgary co-hosted a mayoral debate in October, ensuring that arts and culture were directly addressed by the leading candidates. Following the election, we began meeting with newly elected officials, including Mayor Jeromy Farkas, to discuss how municipal leadership can best support Calgary's arts community in the coming term. These early conversations set a constructive tone for ongoing engagement as the City moves toward its next four-year budget cycle.

Nationally, we continued our work with the Canadian Arts Coalition in advance of the federal election to bolster support for the arts federally.

The *Arts Vote* campaign mobilized supporters across the country, with more than 10,500 Canadians sending over 50,000 letters encouraging the federal

In 2025, the Rozsa Foundation's Storytelling work strengthened the connection between the arts, public life, and civic decision-making at the municipal, provincial, and national levels. Through advocacy, research, and strategic communications, we worked to ensure that arts and culture were treated not as peripheral concerns, but as essential components of a vibrant and resilient society.



Alex Sarian, Lisa Mackay, and Brianne Harmon in Ottawa for Arts Day on the Hill, December 2025

government to protect and strengthen investment in arts and culture. Almost every riding in Canada was represented. In December, Lisa Mackay was selected as one of 15 national delegates for *Arts Day on the Hill* in Ottawa. Delegates met with officials from the Prime Minister's Office, the Department of Finance, and the Canada Council for the Arts, as well as Members of Parliament. The Rozsa Foundation also co-sponsored the *Arts Day* reception alongside the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres and the Canadian Art Museum Directors Organization.

Research remained central to our sector-wide storytelling. The two-year *Spotlight on Arts Audiences* project concluded in 2025, deepening our understanding of Albertans' behaviours, motivations, and expectations around arts participation. The findings informed not only organizational practice across the province, but also the language and positioning used in advocacy and communications throughout the year.

In partnership with medical students from the Cumming School of Medicine at the University of Calgary, we also continued exploring the potential of social prescribing in the arts. Students researched models across Canada and identified Healthy Aging Alberta (HAA) as a promising provincial partner. Meetings with the Calgary branch of HAA revealed strong interest in expanding definitions of health and wellness to include arts-based interventions which

we will pursue in 2026. In April, Lisa Mackay was invited to serve as a panelist at the *Arts Health 2025* symposium at the Mount Royal Conservatory, contributing to a broader conversation about the intersection of arts, health, and community wellbeing.

Throughout the year, the Rozsa Foundation newsletter remained a central storytelling vehicle. Subscriber numbers grew, open rates remained consistently high, and guest contributors added depth and perspective. The newsletter has become not only a channel for updates, but a space for reflection and shared learning within Alberta's arts community. If you are not already a subscriber, please sign up at rozsafoundation.com.



Lisa Mackay and Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture Marc Miller at Arts Day on the Hill Reception.

In 2025, Storytelling at the Rozsa Foundation functioned as more than communication. It was a strategy for engagement, evidence-building, and civic participation. By pairing research with advocacy and dialogue, we worked to ensure that the arts remain visible, valued, and supported in the public sphere.



Creative Calgary: Strengthening Municipal Support for the Arts

BY LISA MACKAY

In 2025, the Rozsa Foundation helped lead the Creative Calgary steering committee in advance of Calgary's municipal election. The intent was to ensure that arts and culture were not treated as a secondary issue, but part of the city's long-term growth and civic success, and to help voters elect an art-friendly council.

Creative Calgary is a non-partisan coalition of artists, arts organizations, and arts workers committed to advancing the role of the arts within Calgary's economic and social framework. Through its leadership on the steering committee, the Rozsa Foundation supported an approach grounded in dialogue, education, and transparency. Both Lisa Mackay and Simon Mallett from Rozsa Foundation were on the steering committee, joined by Sue Elliott, General Director & CEO of Calgary Opera; Sara Leishman, Executive Director of the Calgary Folk Festival; Tasha Komery, Vice President, Strategic Projects at the Werkbund Centre; and Janet Bwititi, Director of Marketing and

Strategic Communications at the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra.

As part of the strategy of dialogue and education, members of the steering committee met directly with each of the mayoral candidates. The discussions often began with the economic impact of the sector in jobs and GDP, and moved to the role arts and culture play in tourism, small business growth, downtown revitalization, and quality of life for Calgarians. By the end of those meetings, it was hoped that each candidate understood that arts policy intersects with many of the City's core priorities, and that funding arts appropriately was essential to building a thriving and vibrant city for the future.

Creative Calgary also circulated a structured survey to every municipal candidate. The survey invited reflection on their personal engagement with the arts; how candidates would champion the sector beyond budget deliberations; their perspective on public investment; and the role of arts and culture in Calgary's future. Responses were published verbatim and organized by ward, creating a transparent public record for voters.

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Compared to previous elections, more candidates responded to the survey, and their responses tended to be more detailed and positive about supporting the arts."

Opposite page: Candidates Sonia Sharp, Jeromy Farkas, Jyoti Gondek, Jeff Davison, and Brian Thiessen. Mayoral Candidate Debate, October 8, 2025. Photo by Aryn Toombs.

Right: Sonia Sharp, Jeromy Farkas, Jyoti Gondek. Photo by Darren Makowichuk.





Mayoral Candidate Debate included equal time for discussion of Vibrancy and the Arts in the City of Calgary, alongside Economy, Infrastructure, and Safety. Photo by Lisa Mackay.

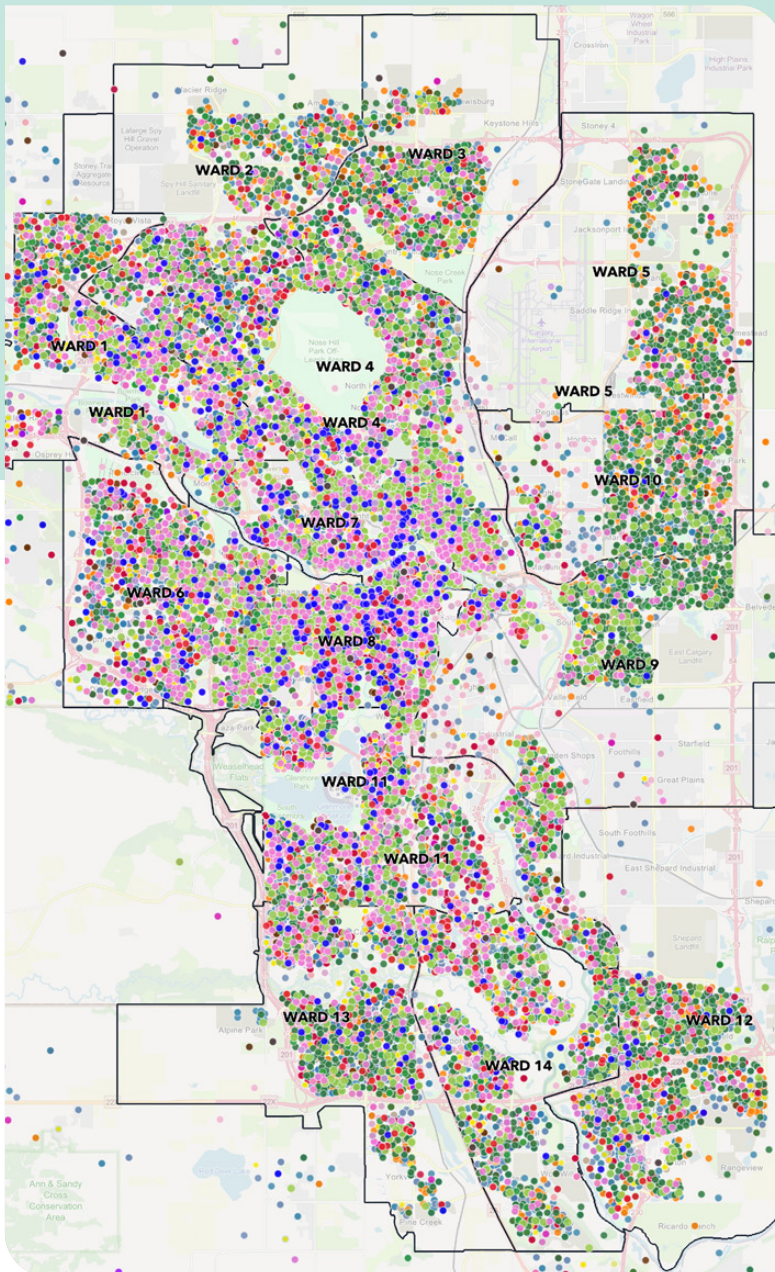
Compared to previous elections, more candidates responded to the survey, and their responses tended to be more detailed and positive about supporting the arts. A greater proportion expressed clear support for sustained civic investment in arts and culture, and many acknowledged the arts as contributors to employment, economic diversification, neighbourhood vitality, and civic identity.

To illustrate the geographic reach of Calgary's arts audiences, Creative Calgary partnered with Calgary Arts Development and several arts organizations across the city and surrounding area to map audience postal codes. The resulting visualization, available on the Creative Calgary website, creativecalgary.org, shows a strong concentration of arts supporters and attenders in every ward. The pattern is consistent across the city. Arts engagement is not concentrated in one area; it is woven throughout Calgary's neighbourhoods. For candidates, the message was straightforward. Every ward includes residents who attend and support the arts, and who are attentive to municipal decisions that affect the sector.

A visible anchor of this work was the Mayoral Debate held at Werklund Centre in the Jack Singer Concert Hall. The debate was co-presented with the Calgary Downtown Association, the Calgary Chamber of Commerce, and the Calgary Construction Association, with the Rozsa Foundation serving as a sponsor. The Foundation opened the evening with remarks emphasizing the role of arts and culture in Calgary's economic resilience and municipal health.

Holding a large public debate in a major cultural venue, with arts policy embedded in a broader civic conversation, marked an important moment for the sector.

Leading mayoral candidates addressed questions about growth, competitiveness, and infrastructure, with arts and culture positioned as part of that discussion rather than apart from it. Thirty minutes of the debate were broadcast on Global News, and the arts-focused segment was carried live. That coverage provided visible confirmation that arts and culture belong in Calgary's civic agenda.



Map showing arts supporters and attendees across the city.
Taken from creativecalgary.org/a-case-for-the-arts

Overall, the 2025 election engagement suggests that municipal understanding of the arts is continuing to evolve and improve. Candidate participation increased, public support for civic investment was more clearly articulated, and the impact of the arts was recognized as being connected to broader municipal priorities.

For the Rozsa Foundation, helping lead the Creative Calgary steering committee reflects our sustained commitment to informed, non-partisan arts advocacy. Municipal decisions shape the conditions in which Calgary's arts organizations operate, and informing these decisions is a part of our mandate to strengthen the arts sector. The relationships and credibility developed during this campaign will provide a strong foundation for continued engagement with the new Mayor and City Council.

From Insight to Implementation: Concluding *Spotlight on Arts Audiences*

BY LISA MACKAY

In 2025, the *Spotlight on Arts Audiences* research project entered its final phase, bringing two years of research into focused conversation with Alberta's arts sector.

Waves four, five, and six deepened the work through qualitative exploration of different audience segments, building on earlier quantitative findings to better understand not only who attends arts events, but why, how, and under what conditions. These later waves illuminated themes around loyalty, trust, perceived value, and the increasing importance of experiences that feel meaningful and worth the time commitment in a competitive cultural environment.

In November 2025, the Rozsa Foundation hosted a concluding research symposium in Calgary to present the final wave, synthesize key findings across all six waves of the project, and equip the sector with tools to continue the work individually. Mathew Stone and Kim Griffin of Stone-Olafson presented the culminating insights, identifying patterns that had emerged over the two-year arc of the research and outlining practical implications for organizations across the province, and Robin Sokoloski of Mass Culture presented national approaches to audience research. Despite a significant snowstorm on the day of the event, attendance was

strong, with participants travelling from across the region. The level of engagement reflected both the relevance of the findings and the sector's hunger for the proper data to make strategic decisions.

A second symposium was held in Edmonton in January 2026, extending the conversation to northern Alberta organizations and ensuring broader provincial access to the final findings. Like the Calgary event, the Edmonton gathering emphasized synthesis, practical application, and a panel discussion, reinforcing that the research was intended not as a static report, but as a catalyst for ongoing inquiry and adaptation.

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Over two years, the *Spotlight on Arts Audiences* project built for Alberta's arts sector a shared, data-supported look at the 2025 attitudes and motivations of current and potential audiences."

The research also informed practice directly through our Audience Development Funding program. Organizations were encouraged to rethink their relationships with patrons in light of *Spotlight*'s findings, experimenting with new approaches to loyalty, retention, and communication. By offering a funding program to implement emerging research themes, the Foundation helped translate sector-wide insights into organizational action.

Over two years, the *Spotlight on Arts Audiences* project built for Alberta's arts sector a shared, data-supported look at the 2025 attitudes and motivations of current and potential audiences. The final symposia and subsequent presentations shifted the focus from findings to implementation, equipping organizations with insights and frameworks they can continue to apply in their own research, programming, and audience development strategies.



Left: Sandra Johnson of Stone-Olafson and Megan Dart of Edmonton Fringe Festival discuss audience development. Photo by Lisa Mackay. Right: Stone-Olafson's presentation of Wave 5 in Calgary. Photo by Simon Mallett



Ainsley Soutière and Simon Mallett at the Wood Buffalo Excellence in Arts Awards, nicknamed the Buffys, presented by the Arts Council Wood Buffalo. They are photographed with host Zenon Campbell and District Captain Kelly Myers of the McMurray Métis (Local 1935), recipient of the Arts Administration Award.

Looking Forward

BY SIMON MALLET

Arts leaders and organizations continue to operate in an environment shaped by change, complexity, and ongoing uncertainty. Within this context, thriving requires the ability to learn, adapt, and evolve. At the Rozsa Foundation, our focus in 2026 is to support arts organizations and leaders as they build the internal capacity, skills, and confidence needed to navigate their challenges and position themselves for long-term sustainability.

The future remains unpredictable, and so several priorities will guide our work in the year ahead.

Public policy and government investment directly shape the health and operating conditions of artists and organizations, and so the Rozsa Foundation will continue to work as part of the Canadian Arts Coalition to advocate for a significant increased investment of federal government funding to the arts and

lead Creative Calgary in municipal funding efforts. Strong public investment is essential to enabling organizations to plan ahead, strengthen their operations, and undertake the meaningful change required to remain viable and impactful.

Organizational resilience is grounded in learning, and so we will continue to support the development of critical skills needed for today's arts landscape through our Training programs. This includes **Rozsa Horizons of Arts Leadership**, which equips arts leaders with practical tools, new perspectives, and peer connections to lead through complexity and guide organizational transformation.

Leading change within organizations can be demanding and, at times, isolating work, and so we will continue to create opportunities for connection and shared learning, bringing arts leaders together to exchange experiences, build collective knowledge, and strengthen their organizations from within.

The arts can play an increasingly important role in community well-being, and so, building on our work at the intersection of arts and health, we will deepen our focus on social prescribing, exploring how arts organizations can engage meaningfully with health and social systems to support mental health, reduce social isolation, and contribute to more holistic approaches to care.

Rising costs and financial pressures are prompting many organizations to rethink how they operate, and so our flexible and strategic funding supports remain critical to enabling organizations to invest in learning, test new approaches, and build long term resilience. We will continue to adapt our funding programs and processes to better support organizational capacity and change.

Meaningful transformation is strongest when shaped alongside the community it serves, and so in 2026, we will undertake a broad community consultation and strategic planning process to guide our work through to 2030, the 40th anniversary of the Rozsa Foundation. This work will help us clarify how we can most effectively support arts organizations and leaders in the years ahead.

There is no single blueprint for success in today's arts landscape. But in 2026, we remain grounded in our belief that when arts leaders and organizations are supported to learn, adapt, and transform, they are better positioned to sustain their work, serve their communities, and contribute to a vibrant and resilient cultural life.



Simon Mallett moderating a panel at the Canadian Arts Summit in Ottawa, April, 2025. Left to right: Simon Mallett, Zita Cobb, Sean Dennie, Xavier Roy. Photo by Lisa Mackay.



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