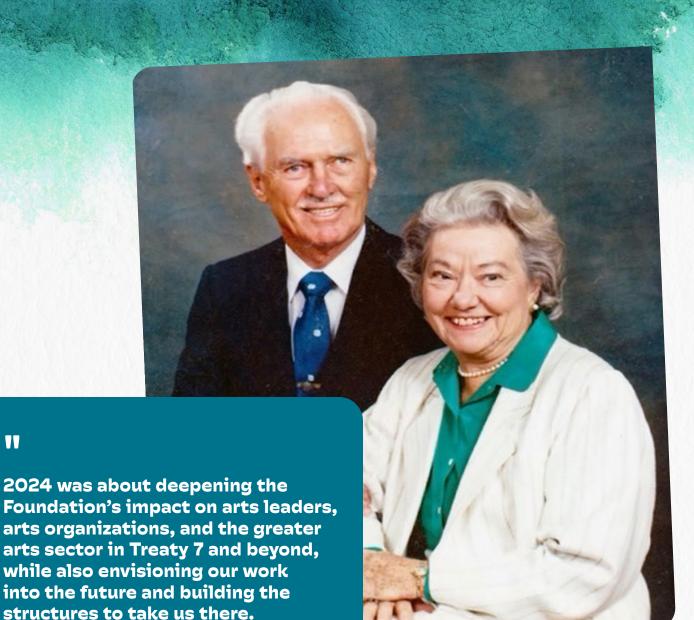
Rozsa Review

2024

EXPANDING OUR IMPACT

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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 develop 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.

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This issue of the Rozsa Review is our annual report for the year 2024. This year was the second in a three-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, learningfocused 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.

This statement gives us focus and helps us to be specific about the work that we do and how we communicate it to the arts community in Alberta and beyond. 2024 was about deepening the Foundation's impact on arts leaders, arts organizations, and the greater arts sector in Treaty 7 and beyond, while also envisioning our work into the future and building the structures to take us there.

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We Work On Treaty 7 Territory

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 Treaty 7 people; the Blackfoot Confederacy, comprising the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations, the Iyarhe 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, and we are based in Alberta District 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.



Still from the 2024 Land Acknowledgment video by Kevin Littlelight. In 2024, the Rozsa Foundation funded the creation of a new Land Acknowledgement video for the Calgary International Film Festival. The film is written and directed by Kevin Littlelight, and shot and edited by Emil Starlight.



The Rozsa Foundation has always taken pride in our ability to be both responsive and proactive in addressing the challenges of the moment facing the arts sector. To do that, a key part of our work is to always be listening and learning from arts leaders about the current realities and creating supports that meet those needs and fill the gaps.

Our 2023-2025 strategic framework was constructed to allow that hyper-flexibility, as while we could anticipate some of the challenges and opportunities that would emerge in a post-pandemic context, we also knew there would be others that we did not expect, but that we'd need to be agile enough to respond to.

Having laid the groundwork in 2023 to make use of our funding, training, and storytelling supports in more integrated ways, 2024 provided us ample opportunity to deepen that integration and put our flexibility to good use.

The slow return of audiences to live arts experiences led to our collaboration with Stone-Olafson on the Spotlight on Arts Audiences research project, which provided learning about arts audience behaviours. This research integrated with a funding program we developed to support ways to put the research results into practice through new avenues of audience engagement. As 2024 progressed, many arts organizations were able to redefine their relationship to community and undertake programmatic shifts that led to significantly stronger audiences, including large numbers of new attendees.

The complex and shifting context in which arts managers and leaders are finding themselves requires new approaches to training and learning to seed new ideas and ways of working.

Simon Mallett, Executive Director

Lagging corporate support for the arts meant that strong government funding would play a critical role in the pandemic-recovery environment, which led us to increase our capacity for advocacy activity at the provincial and federal orders of government. Despite fears to the contrary, government funding held strong, including a notable commitment to increased funding from the Government of Alberta, helping to provide a stable base of funds as the arts face rising costs of doing business.

The complex and shifting context in which arts managers and leaders are finding themselves requires new approaches to training and learning to seed new ideas and ways of working. We undertook extensive community engagement to hear about what the needs were for professional development training, increased access to our existing programs to meet demand, and brought experienced arts leader Samantha MacDonald on to our team as Director of Training to lead the development of our next wave of workshops and programs that will benefit the community.

These are three of the many ways in which we were able to harness our flexibility to meet emerging needs in 2024 to build capacity and resilience in arts leaders, arts organizations, and the arts sector. As we enter 2025, we are already thinking ahead to the final year of this framework and what might come next, as well as how we can take advantage of our nimbleness to bolster the arts community towards even stronger horizons.



The team has excelled this past year, particularly in provincial and national arts advocacy efforts.

Mary Rozsa de Coquet, Board Chair

In 2024, the Foundation positioned itself for meaningful community impact by welcoming new people into our work and supporting the sector to do the same.

We are fortunate that two highly skilled leaders agreed to join our Board: Mr. Will Tigley, communications expert; and Dr. Sabrina Sandhu who holds both an MD and JD. In addition, they both are arts champions! The Foundation also had the privilege to recommend Ms. Almas Kassam, Specialist in Strategic Engagement at Cenovus, to the Calgary Philharmonic Board.

On the operational side, after an extensive search, Ms. Samantha MacDonald is now heading up our training programs, relieving pressure on our very productive Executive Director. The team has excelled this past year, particularly in provincial and national arts advocacy efforts.

Finally, we trust that the arts sector was positively impacted by the deliberate connection we made between research and funding. We continued to support the relevant Stone-Olafson study of audience behavior in Alberta and budgeted for the development of two new funding opportunities focused on "understanding your audience" and "cultivating new audience members". We hope that organizational sustainability has been strengthened through this community engagement work.

In these various ways, the Foundation has taken the concept Jim Collins socialized in his book "From Good to Great" to heart, by aiming to get the right people on the bus.





Empowering Arts Leaders

A strong and vibrant arts community needs confident and capable leaders. To help arts leaders continuously develop their knowledge base and skill sets, the Rozsa Foundation provides training and experience-based opportunities to arts professionals based in Alberta.

Rozsa Admin Fundamentals Training (RAFT) gives participants an overview of the many facets of working in the arts, including non-profit and charitable designations, board governance, financial planning, and more.

The Rozsa Arts Management Program (RAMP) is offered in partnership with the University of Calgary's Haskayne School of Business and is an in-depth professional development course that investigates most aspects of arts management, culminating in a Capstone Project that applies new understanding to practical applications.

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. This program was developed to address a need to create pathways for racialized leaders in all disciplines to advance their networks, experience, skills, and to diversify leadership in the arts sector.

The Foundation hosts a networked community of practice for arts professionals by providing spaces for conversation and resource sharing.

Training by the Numbers

65 graduates

Rozsa Admin **Fundamentals** Training (RAFT)

22 graduates

Management Program (RAMP)



Samantha MacDonald Joins the Team

BY SAMANTHA MACDONALD

The Rozsa Foundation continues to lead the charge with innovative training for arts managers and leaders. My arrival in October 2024 came at an exciting time, with the launch of a new case study for our Rozsa Admin Fundamentals Training (RAFT) and the kick-off of our 2024-2025 Rozsa Arts Management Program (RAMP).

The new RAFT case study written by facilitators Kodie Rollan and Toyin Oladele was intended to focus on the inner workings of a performing arts non-profit. Participants take part in the journey of forming a new theatre company focused on climate action. They have the opportunity to learn about organizational structure, financials, governance, project planning, and more. So far, the response to the new case study has been very strong, and the overall feedback about the program continues to be exceptional.

As a program, RAMP is always evolving. This cohort saw an

adjustment to the structure to more deeply reflect the connections between the relations-based sessions (leadership, community engagement, brand development and fund development). As well, we welcomed Dr. Terry Clark (Executive Director of The Conservatory at Mount Royal University) to lead our Capstone Projects. Beyond his PhD in Music and a unique expertise in performance psychology, Terry brings significant knowledge of experiential learning, making him an ideal replacement for our beloved Fred Jacques. We also invited Alexandra Hatcher of the Hatlie Group to our roster, to lead our session on Strategy and Governance, which got rave reviews from the participants.

Since my arrival I have engaged in comprehensive outreach to the arts community across the province, as well as to program alumni, and colleagues across the sector. The feedback continues to be overwhelmingly homogeneous the Rozsa Foundation is held in

very high regard; the training is invaluable, but also that the programs would benefit from curating specific (separate) training for mid-career managers and senior level leaders. I have had some wonderful, generative conversations, and been offered some inspirational insights.

2025 will see our programs revisioned, with more specificity around outcomes and a refined intention to meet leaders where they are. Topics we are particularly excited about exploring have to do with contemporary leadership in the arts - how do we support arts leaders today, in a world that is dramatically different than it was even five years ago? Adaptive change; strategic communications; human-centred HR; all areas in which leaders are looking to expand their practice, and where I feel the Rozsa Foundation can have significant impact. Keep your eyes on the horizon - there are good things coming.





A Cinematic Journey

Celina Vides' Rozsa Arts Leadership Residency at the Calgary International Film Festival

BY LISA MACKAY

The Calgary International Film Festival (CIFF) has long been a beacon of cinematic excellence, bringing world-class films to Calgary. But behind the glitz and glamour of the festival lies a team of dedicated professionals who work tirelessly to curate a program

that resonates with diverse audiences. Among them is Celina Vides, a Salvadoran-Canadian arts administrator whose passion for film and community engagement has found a perfect home in CIFF's Features Programmer-in-Residence role.



Previous page: Q&A during the Alberta premiere of Sunburnt Unicorn with director Nick Johnson. Photo by Michael Grondin.

Opposite: Celina at an event during Industry Week at CIFF. Photo by Michael Grondin.

A TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE IN FILM PROGRAMMING

Celina's journey to this residency is a testament to her determination and love for the arts. With over a decade of experience in the non-profit sector, she has worn many hats-volunteer manager, digital strategy consultant, and advocate for diversity and inclusion. She is also an alumnus of the Rozsa Arts Management Program (RAMP). Her dream has always been to transition into artistic programming and curation. The Rozsa Foundation's Arts Leadership Residency program was that critical opportunity, providing a 12-month, parttime paid residency that allowed Celina to immerse herself in the world of film programming under the guidance of CIFF's Artistic Director, Brian Owens, and Lead Programmer, Brenda Lieberman.

Celina reflects on the experience with enthusiasm. "My time at CIFF has allowed me to integrate my own interests, values, and existing professional and community

relationships into my work," she shares. "This integration has strengthened my contributions and provided a deeper sense of purpose and alignment with CIFF's mission."

LEARNING THE ART OF FILM **SELECTION**

The residency, which began in February 2024, has been full of learning and growth. Celina attended the Banff World Media Festival and the Seattle International Film Festival and took part in the online offerings of many other festivals such as Berlinale. These opportunities allowed her to view a wide variety of international films and connect with many industry professionals, gaining invaluable insights into film programming and strengthening her network for future projects.

Back at CIFF, Celina has become an integral part of the programming team, actively contributing to the selection of films for the International Narrative program. She initially focused on Latin

Experience unlocks experience, and having this residency under my belt sets me on a path to gaining more opportunities in the field.

American films but quickly expanded her scope to consider a holistic, diverse selection from around the world. One of the most surprising aspects of the role, she notes, is the challenge of making final selections. "There are so many great films submitted, and our programmers also seek out titles that fit the festival's vision. A major discussion point with Brenda has been what defines the curatorial voice of the festival, particularly for world films. We balance showcasing the best while ensuring diverse representation."

BALANCING DUAL ROLES AND INDUSTRY CHALLENGES

Celina's residency has been unique in that she has balanced two roles within CIFF, continuing her work as Industry Specialist while stepping into programming with her residency. "Having two roles during the festival was challenging but rewarding," she says. "It allowed me to see different sides of what the Artistic team does and helped integrate operations within our department."

One unexpected challenge has been the sheer volume of films to watch. "It's a dream to watch movies for a living, but programmers don't always get enough credit for the time and commitment it takes," Celina explains. "Beyond viewing films, we field feedback from our volunteer previewing team, conduct research, and ensure that each selection serves both artistic and audience interests."

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND IDEA INITIATIVES

Beyond film selection, Celina has been deeply involved in CIFF's IDEA (Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility) initiatives. She played a key role in

organizing a gathering for Black filmmakers, where industry creatives shared insights on how CIFF can foster more inclusive spaces. "The feedback and actionable insights from this event have been crucial for our ongoing efforts," she notes.

This work aligns with her broader impact at CIFF, where her perspective has contributed to programming choices that reflect Calgary's diversity. Through IDEA initiatives and community engagement efforts, Celina has helped strengthen connections between CIFF and underrepresented voices in the industry.

LOOKING AHEAD: FESTIVAL **HIGHLIGHTS AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS**

At the 2024 Festival, Celina was truly excited to experience the impact of her work firsthand. "One of my most rewarding moments was moderating the Q&A for Sunburnt Unicorn, an animated feature in our Alberta Spotlight section," she shares. "It reminded me why we do what we dobringing people together through film."

Beyond the festival, Celina sees this residency as a launching point for future leadership opportunities in the arts. "This experience has been an important step in my career. Experience unlocks experience, and having this residency under my belt sets me on a path to gaining more opportunities in the field."

She has also started exploring the possibility of launching her own film festival in Calgary. "We're lucky to have so many strong festivals here, like CIFF, CUFF, and Fairy Tales Queer Film Festival. But I think there's room for more focused programming, and that's something I want to explore."



CIFF Staff during the 2024 Opening Night Gala at the Jack Singer Concert Hall. Photo by Michael Grondin.

THE IMPACT OF THE ARTS LEADERSHIP RESIDENCY PROGRAM

The Arts Leadership Residency program is designed to empower emerging arts leaders like Celina, providing them with mentorship, hands-on experience, and professional networks essential for longterm success. For CIFF, the program has strengthened its capacity by bringing in a passionate individual who has contributed to key projects and initiatives.

By investing in emerging leaders from the Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour communities, the program contributes to the sustainability of the arts sector. Residents like Celina gain the skills and networks needed to take on leadership roles, ensuring a pipeline of talent that will drive the industry forward.

As Celina prepares for the next phase of her career, she offers advice to aspiring film programmers: "Be open to learning from those around you, and don't be afraid to share your perspective. Programming is about more than just picking great filmsit's about shaping a conversation with your audience."

At the 2024 festival, audiences took in a lineup that reflected passion, creativity, and diversity of its curators—a testament to the work being done by Celina Vides and the entire CIFF team. The residency is a model of how strategic support fosters leadership, innovation, and community engagement in the arts, shaping a more vibrant cultural landscape for all.

Reinforcing Strong Organizations

Funding to arts organizations has been at the centre of the Rozsa Foundation's work since its inception in 1990. The Foundation's funding programs have been continuously adapted over the years to address current challenges facing organizations, and they support work intended to strengthen companies both for today and for the future.

2024 funding programs included Future Focus Funding and Arts Management Systems Funding, both with an eye on addressing long-term gaps, pursuing opportunity, and bolstering capacity, but each taking a very different approach. Guided by the Spotlight on Arts Audiences research project, Audience Development Funding required organizations to think differently about their relationships with patrons. Our Arts Leadership Residency Funding and RAMP Capstone Funding programs allowed emerging arts leaders to embrace professional development and see projects they designed become reality.

The Rozsa Foundation also provided resources to organizations far and wide, including the Alberta Grants Calendar, and an extensive resource page that addresses a wide array of challenges and opportunities.

2024 Funding

BY AYLA STEPHEN

Our 2024 funding programs continued to address critical gaps in the funding ecosystem. Our focus remained on supporting organizational learning, informed decision-making, and strategic development to help arts organizations build capacity, strengthen their business models, and experiment with new approaches. Many organizations leveraged our funding to create new partnerships, secure additional funding, and make informed decisions about their long-term sustainability.

INCREASED DEMAND

We saw a significant rise in funding requests as arts organizations explored new ways of working and engaging with audiences. The number of requests we had was close to what we received at the introduction of our COVID-19 funding programs in 2020. This 44% surge in applications resulted in increased competition for funding, leading to a drop in our overall success rate from 56% in 2023 to 44% in 2024.

PROGRAM EVOLUTION AND STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

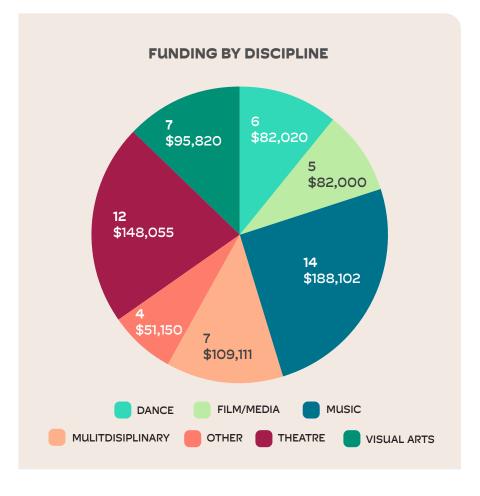
2024 saw the introduction of new or refined funding initiatives designed to meet sector-specific needs that are more integrated with other Rozsa Foundation initiatives. Audience **Development Funding and Arts Management Systems Funding**

were introduced with a focus on audience engagement and the technology systems required for effective arts administration.

Audience Development Funding

is directly linked to the Spotlight on Arts Audiences project, led by our Storytelling team. Organizations are encouraged to use audience data to inform their engagement strategies and Director of Storytelling Lisa Mackay is participating in postapproval funding meetings with me.

The Future Focus Funding program, a collaboration with Calgary Arts Development (CADA) and the Calgary Foundation, continued for a third year. With additional funds provided by the Canada Council for the Arts, this pooled funding approach expands our investment capacity and allows us to support a broader range across Treaty 7 territory. Working with our Organizational Strategy Advisor, Jennifer DeDominicis, we offered a free half-day learning workshop on Succession Planning +



Transitions in November, Additional workshops will be offered in 2025, with topics identified from recurring themes in funding applications and conversations with arts leaders. These workshops compliment our Training programs and foster collaboration amongst our internal teams.

Arts Leadership Residency Funding continued to support the professional growth of arts leaders who are Indigenous, Black, or People of Colour in Alberta and **RAMP Capstone Project Funding** remained a key mechanism for RAMP graduates to apply their learning through real-world projects. RAMP

Capstone Funding remains closely tied to our Training programs, and several Arts Leadership Residency participants have completed at least one of our training offerings.

Funding Trends in 2024

BY AYLA STEPHEN

Some clear trends stood out in our conversations with arts managers and leaders this year. These needs were expressed in funding applications, advisory conversations, learning events, workshops, and gatherings—and surfaced naturally, even when funding wasn't the main topic.

Several founding leaders were exploring how to step away from their organizations without seeing them shut down. This was understandably complex, as their careers, relationships, identities, and artistic practices are deeply tied to the organizations they have built and nurtured, often for decades. Planning for a future without them—whether due to retirement, burnout, or, in some cases, proactively preparing for the inevitable—was emotional and challenging. Many took steps forward, then back, as they wrestled with the reality of letting go.

Venue accessibility remained a major challenge in the sector. Many organizations were dealing with venue instability, searching for spaces that fit their programming needs while figuring out their next steps for sustainability.

Alternative revenue generation was another key concern. But rather than being driven by strategic long-term planning, conversations often felt fueled by a growing sense of urgency. Organizations were brainstorming new ways to engage audiences and donors, testing ideas both big and small—some riskier and more innovative than others—to find sustainable solutions. Despite the clear need to adapt, leadership remained highly risk-averse, constrained by limited time and funding. The requests we received reflected a strong interest in testing and implementing these new approaches, recognizing our unique ability to provide the kind of support needed for this work.







Art & Music Friends

A Heartfelt Collaboration Between the Instrumental Society of Calgary and the Alberta Children's Hospital

BY SCOTT CAREY, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, INSTRUMENTAL SOCIETY OF CALGARY

When the Instrumental Society of Calgary (ISC) conceptualized the Art & Music Friends program, the vision was as simple as it was profound: bring the power of art and music into the lives of children and youth facing mental health challenges. What began as a mindfulness-based arts initiative has grown into a transformative and flexible program, shaped by unforeseen challenges and the resilience of those who believed in its mission.

The Arts & Music Friends program was seeded by funding from the Rozsa Foundation, and we supported many shifts in program design and timetime between the funding approval in 2019 and its ultimate success in 2024. Initially designed as an in-person program for children and youth at the Alberta Children's Hospital's (ACH) Mental Health Unit, Art & Music Friends aimed to create moments of connection and expression through art. Each session brought together a visual artist and a musician to deliver interactive and fun experiences for patients. The program's premise was rooted in mindfulness, offering children opportunities for focus, expression, and emotional regulation.

However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 necessitated a dramatic shift in the program's trajectory. Hospital safety protocols restricted external visitors, forcing the ISC to reimagine how they could deliver meaningful programming to children and their families.

In October of 2020, the ISC launched a digital version of Art & Music Friends. This pilot involved prerecorded videos featuring two artists leading activities, with

...the program worked to prioritize predictability, familiarity, and consistency, all key factors in building trust with children experiencing complex mental health challenges.

children following along using arts kits previously delivered to the hospital. Despite the best intentions, the virtual format fell short. Hospital staff feedback highlighted the difficulty children faced engaging with the program via video. What's more, the essence of the program—personal connection and interactivity—was difficult to replicate digitally. Their feedback underscored the need for in-person engagement, shaping future iterations of the program.

Amid pandemic restrictions and growing burnout among hospital staff, Art & Music Friends took an innovative detour in the summer of 2021. ISC organized three outdoor concerts, known as "Afternoon Interludes," providing live music for staff, patients, and their families. These socially distanced events offered a moment of respite and joy during challenging times, reinforcing the program's adaptability and its commitment to fostering connection through music.

By January 2023, Art & Music Friends was able to return to its originally intended setting in the ACH Mental Health Unit. This marked a new beginning, and the program worked to prioritize predictability, familiarity, and consistency, all key factors in building trust with children experiencing complex mental health challenges.

To build in the necessary continuity, the ISC introduced a "Lead Instructor" model. Eileen Kosasih, an experienced music educator and professional artist, became the cornerstone of this new approach. Eileen's multidisciplinary expertise allowed her to create a nurturing and adaptive environment, helping children to feel safe and engaged. Each session featured Eileen alongside a guest musician from the ISC's main concert series, blending consistency with variety.

One particularly touching moment illustrated the impact of this model. A young boy, initially reluctant to participate, began to trust Eileen over several weeks. When she discovered his love for dinosaurs, Eileen and the accompanying musician performed the Jurassic Park theme song and paired it with a dinosaur-themed craft. The boy's joy was palpable, and his mother later shared that he went to bed "feeling emotionally regulated" for the first time she could remember.

In response to staffing shortages in the Mental Health Unit, Art & Music Friends extended its reach to the Medical Inpatient Unit. This move held new opportunities. as the space was equipped with a dedicated arts studio and the patients had fewer behavioral challenges. The new environment allowed for the performance of longer pieces and deeper discussions with participants and demonstrated the program's potential to work in different hospital settings

TAKEAWAYS AND IMPACT

Each session of Art & Music Friends included a handson activity, allowing children to create and take home a piece of art or craft. While some creations were tangible, others, like those made with Buddha Boards, emphasized mindfulness and the beauty of impermanence. Feedback from parents and children indicated that these creations often became cherished memories or sources of pride.

Parents frequently attended sessions alongside their children, fostering moments of shared joy and connection. Many parents, moved by the program's positive impact, took the time to learn more about the artists' work and upcoming performances. These interactions underscored the ripple effect of Art & Music Friends, extending its benefits beyond the children to their families.

The journey of Art & Music Friends was not without its challenges. From navigating pandemic restrictions to managing the complexities of working in a hospital setting, the program required constant adaptability and learning. The ISC learned that the diverse needs and abilities of participants necessitated a balance between structured activities and open-ended exploration and that simplicity and adaptability were crucial to the program's success. Establishing trust with children and families took time and consistency, highlighting the importance of the Lead Instructor role to build relationships. Finally, being open to and soliciting feedback from hospital staff played a critical role in shaping the program. Their insights into the childrens' needs and the hospital's unique environment informed every aspect of the program's evolution.

LOOKING AHEAD

The ISC is committed to securing the future of Art & Music Friends through strategic partnerships and funding initiatives. They are working closely with Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation staff to secure funding through programs supporting therapeutic arts and music programs. They also plan to apply for a Community Grant with the Calgary Foundation and are exploring options such as allocating a portion of their concert ticket sales to Art & Music Friends and engaging individual donors.

Thanks to the project's growing reputation, Art & Music Friends has already found some new funders, enabling the ISC to sustain its outreach programming and maintain its relevance in the community and expanded significantly. The ISC has successfully doubled the number of programs offered at the Alberta Children's Hospital, ensuring that even more children and families can benefit from these transformative experiences.

The program's adaptability also opens the door for expansion. Its success in the Medical Inpatient Unit demonstrates its potential to serve other units within the hospital. Additionally, the outdoor concert series provides a model for future community-based initiatives.

Art & Music Friends by the Numbers

32 Artists hired

15 Hospital arts experiences

8 Mental health units

3 Medical inpatient units

3 Outdoor concerts

1 Digital pilot

325 Participants reached

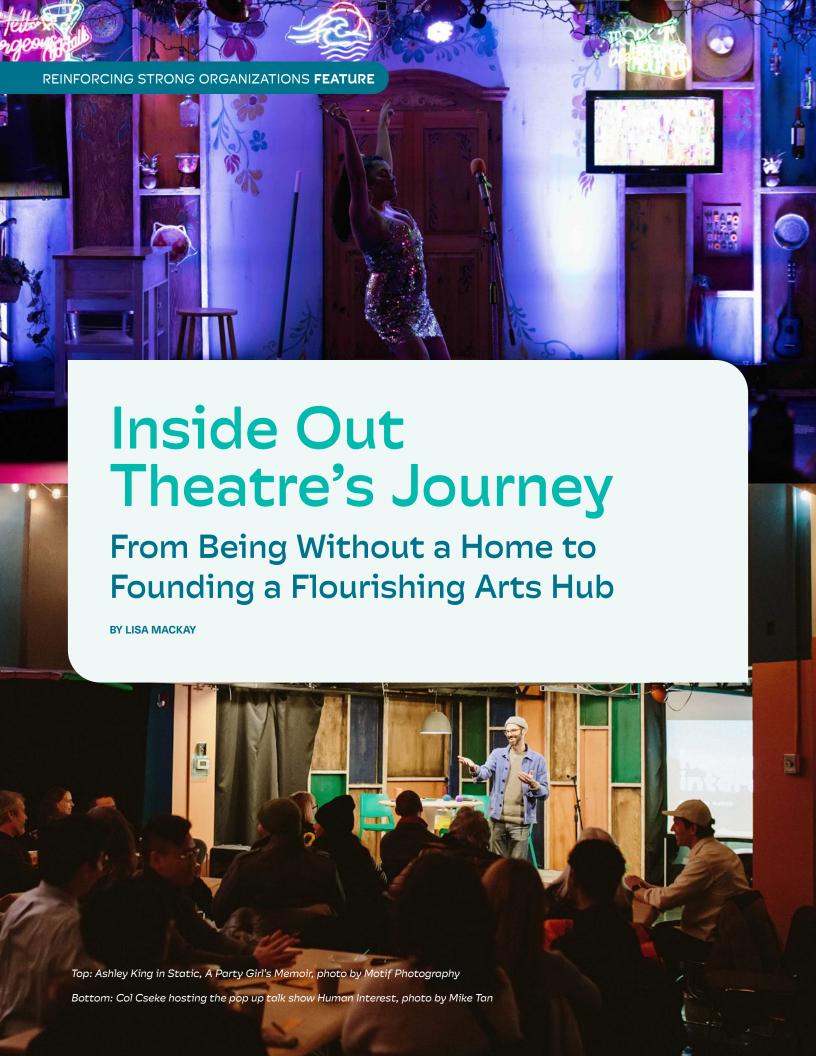
150 Children

75 Parents

100 Hospital staff and volunteers

The ISC met with many challenges and surprises during the pandemic. Partnering with the Alberta Children's Hospital revealed the complexities of working within a large healthcare institution, but also illuminated the profound impact that art and music can have on children, families, and staff alike.

As Art & Music Friends continues to evolve, its success serves as a testament to the power of collaboration, creativity, and resilience. The ISC remains dedicated to nurturing this program and ensuring its long-term sustainability, bringing the joy of art and music to those who need it most.



Inside Out Theatre isn't just adapting to change they're shaping the future of Calgary's arts scene.

For Inside Out Theatre (IOT), their journey to secure a long-term home has been more than just practical - it's been transformational. When they learned that their home at Eau Claire Market would be demolished, they knew they had to find somewhere to go, and quickly. But rather than rushing into a temporary solution, they saw an opportunity to build a lasting future that would serve both their organization and Calgary's broader arts community.

Inside Out Theatre received Future Focus funding to create a venue strategy informed by the needs of their community above all else. They knew any venue plans would need to protect the agency and sense of belonging of the artists and the organizations they support as a Deaf, Disability, and Mad theatre company. Engaging a consultant, they explored all possible venue scenarios, including leasing, purchasing, or building a new space, and held extensive community consultations, interviews with experts, and strategic planning to identify the most sustainable path forward.

This holistic and strategic approach led them to their new space in Calgary's Beltline district, the Erratics Indie Arts Club - a flexible and accessible location that could support their own programming and serve as a shared administrative, rehearsal, and performance space for other arts organizations. Since moving into their new venue last spring, the space has been a hive of artistic

activity, hosting full-scale productions, rehearsals, community gatherings, playwright workshops, and even wedding receptions.

Securing the space was just the beginning. As they settle in, IOT is tackling questions about governance, rental policies, and financial sustainability. Demand for the venue has already outstripped availability, highlighting its importance and necessitating a clear, equitable rental strategy. With guidance from the experts at Integral Org, they are exploring models that balance accessibility with financial viability.

IOT is also setting its sights on the next big step: a fullscale renovation. They are in the process of securing funding that would allow them to transform the venue into a fully equipped theatre. If all goes as planned, major upgrades will begin in the spring of 2025, with a grand reopening slated for the fall.

IOT's journey from losing their home venue to running a thriving Beltline arts hub is a testament to the power of strategic planning and community-centered decisionmaking. They've gone beyond simply finding a new home; they've built a foundation for long-term artistic growth, collaboration, and accessibility. Their work ensures that the artists they work with from Deaf, Disabled, and Mad communities have a secure and welcoming space tailored to their needs.

As they move forward with renovations and governance planning, one thing is clear: Inside Out Theatre isn't just adapting to change—they're shaping the future of Calgary's arts scene. And with their new space firmly established, they're poised to keep creativity at the heart of everything they do for years to come.

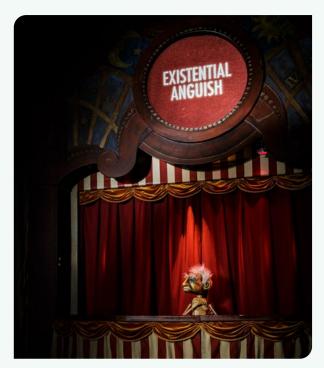


Photo courtesy Old Trout Puppet Workshop.

THE OLD TROUT PUPPET WORKSHOP Financial Management Processes

The Old Trout Puppet Workshop received funding to modernize their financial management processes and upgrade both their hardware and software. They moved their bookkeeping and accounting processes online and the Executive Director acquired a new computer and printer that could support the new systems.

Before, financial tasks consumed 30-40% of the Executive Director's time, limiting capacity for strategic work. With the upgrades, general bookkeeping now takes only two hours per week and month-end reporting is less than an hour, a dramatic reduction that enhances efficiency. The shift to cloudbased software has simplified audits and reporting, ensuring smoother financial oversight and greater organizational agility.

ARTSPLACE CANMORE

DEI Audit

With funding from Rozsa Foundation, artsPlace conducted a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) audit that engaged internal stakeholders and the broader community. The audit has had a transformational impact on the organization, its strategic direction, and its internal culture. Donations Coordinator Becky Lipton-Fournier shared that, "The results of the DEI audit continue to play an important role in our decision-making and in determining how we move forward. The process itself has changed our organization overall, helping us become more aware of the importance of this work and how DEI can shape an organization."

Since completing the audit in 2024, artsPlace continues to reflect on what meaningful and concrete DEI progress looks like. The organization is balancing immediate steps with a commitment to evolving practices that embed DEI holistically across all levels. In 2025, artsPlace is launching a new Ambassador Program to enhance representation and rethink audience engagement through a DEI lens.



Photo courtesy artsPlace Canmore.

Strengthening the Sector

In 2024, the Rozsa Foundation undertook several projects in research, advocacy, information sharing, and resource development in support of the arts sector as a whole. Although all of the work done by the Foundation aims to strengthen the sector, these activities were more specifically sector-wide in their approach, carrying a potential impact beyond the arts community in Treaty 7.

To reach members of the broader Albertan and Canadian arts community, the Rozsa Foundation partnered with other funders and organizations across many of these initiatives. Partners in the funding of Spotlight on Arts Audiences included Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Calgary Arts Development, Calgary Foundation, Edmonton Arts Council, and Edmonton Community Foundation. Advocacy work with the Canadian Arts Coalition involved joining several committees whose membership reached across the country. Identifying opportunities and collaborating with others has helped deepen and widen the impact of the Foundation's work.

Spotlight on Arts **Audiences: Understanding Engagement in Alberta**

BY LISA MACKAY



Spotlight on Arts Audiences Wave 1 presentation, Calgary, January 2024. Photo by Motif Photography.

In a rapidly evolving cultural landscape, understanding how Albertans engage with the arts is more critical than ever. Since the first days of the pandemic, the Rozsa Foundation has supported efforts to gather relevant information about audiences in Alberta. In the fall of 2023, we approached research firm Stone-Olafson about an arts-focused research program to gather current insights into how Albertans want to connect with arts experiences again. With additional support from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Calgary Arts Development, the Calgary Foundation, the Edmonton Arts Council, and the Edmonton Community Foundation, the concept

was to produce fresh research over two years about what Albertans are thinking, how they want to connect with the arts, and to provide arts leaders with data to inform programming, engagement, and development strategies. Spotlight on Arts Audiences, as the project came to be known, completed the first three of its six waves of research in 2024, providing vital insights into audience behaviors, motivations, and barriers to engagement.

Over the first three waves, the research found that while Albertans remain interested in the arts, engagement was flagging. Albertans still valued live experiences, with 83% of respondents seeing them

as a special outing, yet attendance patterns had changed. Many Albertans were now consuming arts-related content online, raising concerns that digital experiences may replace some previous inperson engagement. However, the findings suggested that online content could act as a gateway rather than a competitor, introducing new audiences to live performances and in-person exhibitions.

Economic factors continued to influence participation through each wave, with affordability cited as a barrier, though not the primary one. Many Albertans were willing to spend on arts and culture if they could identify the value for them of the experience. The research suggested that arts organizations must do more than just offer lower-cost options they need to highlight the emotional benefits of attending and emphasize what makes live experiences unique and worth prioritizing in busy lives. It also found that audience decisionmaking often involved consulting with family and friends, which reinforced the importance of shared experiences and the social aspect of event attendance as key benefits to highlight.



Emerging Arts Manager Award

The Rozsa Foundation Emerging Arts Manager Award recognizes an individual in the early stages of their arts management career who has shown that their work significantly impacts the arts community.

The recipient is recognized for their achievements to date and their potential future impact. The 2024 recipient was Sue-Shane Tsomondo. We first learned of Sue-Shane through Sue's Stokvel, a literary platform she founded to uplift Black & Indigenous authors.

She then joined Mountain Standard Time (M:ST) as Executive Director just as the organization decided to move on from their signature biennial festival, leaving the company at an identity crossroads. Sue-Shane managed to forge new pathways forward and shape a new artistic identity by building partnerships and developing artist residencies in printmaking and music, among many other initiatives. We look forward to watching Sue-Shane's impact in the arts community grow!

One key opportunity identified in the third wave was arts education. While four out of five children participate in arts learning, fewer than half of adults have engaged in arts education recently. For those who do, the primary motivator is fun rather than skill development, suggesting that marketing should focus on enjoyment and accessibility rather than mastery. Furthermore, 53% of Albertans express interest in the arts but do not see themselves as creative, indicating a need for arts organizations to make participation more welcoming and inclusive.

The research also explored arts funding and donor support, revealing challenges in philanthropic giving. While Albertans are generous donors, the arts often rank lower on the priority list than causes like healthcare or social services. Messaging that highlights the

community impact of the arts, and the importance of having cultural experiences available to community members may be key to shifting this perception.

Overall, the takeaways from the research in 2024 were that organizations should think in terms of widening reach to passive or infrequent attenders, alongside increasing frequency of attendance for their more faithful patrons. Passive audiences will need to be inspired emotionally to engage more often. It is critical to show value in uncertain markets, using emotional and experiential language, and prioritizing emotional connection in programming. Growing relevance is personal, and organizations need to prove the benefits of their remarkable experiences, citing the emotional return patrons will receive on their investment of money and time.

Finally, it is more essential than ever to eliminate the inconveniences that will dissuade engagement. Flexibility is necessary to attract new audiences, and making it as easy as possible for patrons to choose, commit, attend, and share your offerings is critical.

As the Spotlight on Arts Audiences project continues in 2025, the findings will continue to serve as a roadmap for arts organizations looking to navigate Alberta's evolving cultural environment. By leveraging these data-driven insights, the sector can adapt programming, outreach, and engagement strategies to ensure that arts experiences remain relevant, accessible, and valued by audiences across the province.

Results and findings from Spotlight on Arts Audiences are available on our website rozsafoundation.com.





Em Ironstar, David Leinster, and Lisa Mackay with Calgary MP Greg McLean in his Ottawa office.

As a private foundation dedicated to strengthening the arts sector, the Rozsa Foundation has long understood that financial support alone is not enough—policy, funding frameworks, and government engagement play a crucial role in ensuring a thriving cultural ecosystem. That's why we also joined the Canadian Arts Coalition (CAC), a national advocacy group that brings together arts organizations and individuals to push for stronger federal support for arts and culture.

Since its founding in 2005, the CAC has made meaningful strides in securing increased government investment in the arts. One of its most notable achievements came in 2016, when years of advocacy resulted in the Government of Canada's historic \$1.87 billion investment in arts and culture, including a long-sought doubling of the Canada Council for the Arts' budget. This funding boost has since allowed for greater inclusion of emerging and equity-deserving artists and organizations, strengthening the entire sector.

Recognizing the Coalition's impact, we knew this was the right space for the Rozsa Foundation to amplify our advocacy efforts. Alongside our CAC colleagues, we submitted a pre-budget recommendation to the federal government, calling for a permanent allocation of 1% of total government spending to arts and culture. This ask would increase the current investment from 0.94% to a full 1%, ensuring long-term stability for arts funding. In the 2025 budget alone, this adjustment would translate into an additional \$270 million for Canada's arts, culture, and heritage sector.

STRENGTHENING THE SECTOR FEATURE

To ensure this recommendation remained top of mind in Ottawa, we took our advocacy to the next level by participating in Arts Day on the Hill 2024. I had the privilege of traveling to Ottawa with David Leinster, CEO of Contemporary Calgary, to represent Alberta's perspective within the national arts advocacy effort. On November 19, we met with policymakers, Members of Parliament including Calgary's Greg McLean—parliamentary staff, and civil servants to emphasize the importance of sustainable arts funding. Our goal was to gather crossparty support for our 1% allocation proposal and highlight the role of arts and culture in fostering economic growth, community well-being, and national identity.

While face-to-face meetings in Ottawa were invaluable, Arts Day on the Hill was not limited to those in the capital. Across the country, arts advocates, organizations, and supporters participated by engaging their local MPs,

sharing advocacy materials, and amplifying our message through social media. The more voices we could mobilize, the clearer the message to government: arts and culture matter in every constituency.

Our 2024 advocacy efforts involved lots of activity beyond Arts Day. Throughout the summer, fall and holiday season, we engaged with policymakers and community leaders, encouraging them to attend cultural events and witness firsthand the impact of a vibrant arts sector. We also invited members of the public to join the movement whether by contacting their MPs, sharing CAC materials, or getting involved in future advocacy initiatives.

We are encouraged by the momentum we have seen so far. The Standing Committee on Finance recognized the importance of our request and formally recommended it in their December 12, 2024, report on pre-budget

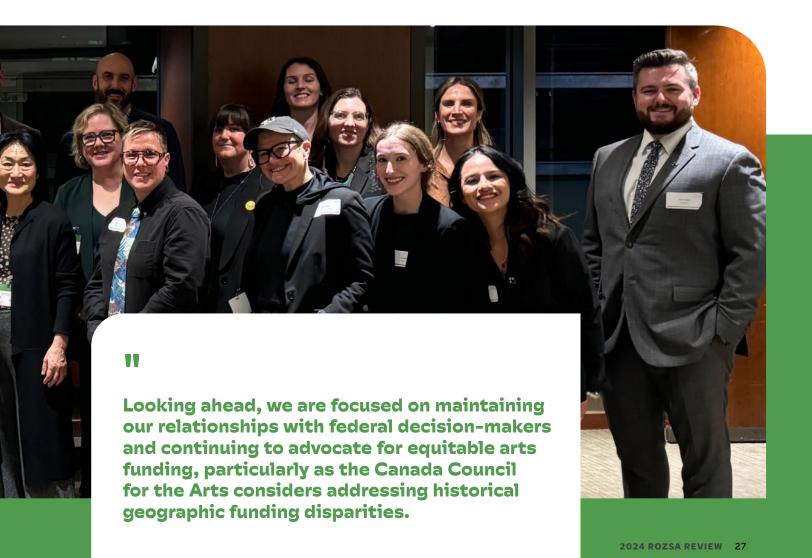


consultations. This is a significant step forward, and we remain committed to working with our partners in the CAC to ensure that arts and culture funding remains a national priority.

Looking ahead, we are focused on maintaining our relationships with federal decision-makers and continuing to advocate for equitable arts funding, particularly as the Canada Council for the Arts considers addressing historical geographic funding disparities. We encourage Alberta arts organizations to explore the benefits of joining the Canadian Arts Coalition, adding their voices to this important national conversation.

Our work in arts advocacy is ongoing, but we are energized by the progress we've made and the passionate community of artists, administrators, and supporters who continue to push for meaningful change. As we move into 2025 and beyond, we will keep fighting for the policies and investments that will ensure a strong, sustainable, and inclusive arts sector for all Canadians.

For anyone interested in getting involved, we invite you to explore the Canadian Arts Coalition's website <u>canadianartscoalition.com</u>, consider joining the Coalition, and participate in advocacy efforts throughout the year. In 2024, the CAC developed a new more inclusive membership fee structure, in order for more arts organizations of every budget size to become involved, as well as individual artists and supporters. The arts are not just an economic driver—they are essential to the fabric of our communities. With collective effort, we can ensure that they receive the recognition and support they deserve.



Jennifer DeDominicis and Future Focus in 2024

BY LISA MACKAY



The past few years have brought significant challenges and shifts for the arts sector. Leaders have faced fundamental questions about their futures—how to adapt business models, attract new audiences, and create programming that resonates with evolving communities. Underneath these considerations lay deeper concerns about organizational stability and the role of the arts in contemporary society.

Recognizing these pressing needs in 2022, the Rozsa Foundation launched the Future Focus Funding Program in partnership with Calgary Arts Development and the Calgary Foundation. Over the past two years, this initiative provided key financial supports for organizations grappling with fundamentals changes. However in 2024, the funding partners realized that in addition to funding, arts organizations would benefit from a collaborative thought partner, someone who could help them identify core challenges and develop practical solutions while balancing the day-today realities of running an arts organization.

In response, they introduced an Organizational Strategy Advisor role, and Jennifer DeDominicis of Distill Consulting came on board as a dedicated advisor, offering strategic guidance to organizations at no cost. Over the past year, Jennifer has engaged with leaders in the arts sector in conversations designed to explore organizational challenges and pathways forward.

Jennifer's approach is rooted in collaboration. Rather than prescribing one-size-fits-all solutions, she worked alongside

The work of 2024 underscored the value of strategic conversations, and we are excited to continue exploring new ways to provide guidance, resources, and funding that align with the sector's evolving needs.

organizations to codevelop strategies tailored to their unique needs. Her expertise in strategic planning, leadership, and non-profit operations has provided arts leaders with valuable tools to navigate change. Through these conversations, organizations were empowered to articulate their challenges, refine their decision-making, and develop resilient strategies for the future.

Jennifer reflected on her work at the end of 2024 and noted the weight of conversations around resilience. While resilience is often positioned as a solution to challenges, she highlighted the need to shift focus from merely enduring hardship to actively developing the capacity to encounter and adapt to challenges. Many of the struggles faced by arts organizations are not temporary hurdles to

overcome, but ongoing realities that require long-term, collaborative approaches.

Another year of Future Focus funding and working with Jennifer has brought many lessons that can be applied sector wide. Among them are that the need for strategic guidance is universal, regardless of an organization's size or focus. Conversations about long-term sustainability cannot be separated from day-to-day realities, as successful planning must integrate both. Connection and collaboration remain critical, as engaging with peers, sharing challenges, and identifying common ground opens doors to new opportunities. Embracing authenticity over perfection fosters honest conversations and stronger support networks. And finally, providing barrier-free access to strategic support

continues to play a crucial role in strengthening the arts sector as a whole.

As we look ahead, the Rozsa Foundation remains committed to supporting arts organizations as they navigate an everchanging landscape. The work of 2024 underscored the value of strategic conversations, and we are excited to continue exploring new ways to provide guidance, resources, and funding that align with the sector's evolving needs.

SUCCESSION & TRANSITION PLANNING **WORKSHOP**

Recognizing the recurring need for leadership succession planningboth at the staff and board levels—Jennifer and Ayla co-hosted a Succession & Transition Planning Workshop on November 13. This half-day session

helped participants tailor key succession considerations to their organization's context, map out critical competencies and knowledge transfer processes, and draft a preliminary transition plan for testing within their organization. The workshop included a panel discussion with leaders who had navigated succession planning with the support of Future Focus funding, hands-on activities to guide planning and decision-making, and dedicated time for peer reflection and discussion.

This workshop exemplifies our ability to respond quickly and meaningfully to emerging needs, complementing the Rozsa Foundation's formal training programs while building directly on insights gained from our funding initiatives to support the sector.

Many people assume that the arts thrive only in big cities and that the Rozsa Foundation's programs primarily serve Calgary's arts community. However, the arts are an integral part of every community—large and small—and we recognize that arts managers outside major urban centers often lack the same access to funding and professional development.

This was one of the rationales behind the development of Storytelling in our strategic framework as a key pillar that enables us to connect and support arts leaders throughout Treaty 7 territory in central and southern Alberta. Through research, the newsletter, advocacy, and our website, Storytelling ensuring that resources, training, and opportunities reach organizations regardless of their location.

One of the most significant benefits of adapting our training programs to an online format during the COVID-19 pandemic is the ability to welcome arts managers from outside of the city. In 2024, 12 of our program graduates participated virtually from communities such as Claresholm, Cochrane, Lethbridge, Coaldale, Okotoks, Red Deer, and Edmonton. By breaking down geographic barriers, we continue to foster a stronger, more connected arts sector across the region.

Our funding also reflects this commitment to regional arts development. In 2024, nearly a quarter of our grants supported organizations outside of Calgary, helping them strengthen governance, refine leadership structures, and plan for long-term sustainability. The Red Deer Museum + Art Gallery focused on governance and strategic planning, engaging community members to help shape its future direction. The Rocky Mountain Symphony Society addressed administrative challenges and restructured leadership to improve collaboration and operational stability. The High River Gift of Music Society navigated a leadership transition by developing a succession plan and refining governance tools to ensure continuity.

By investing in these and other initiatives, the Rozsa Foundation is helping arts organizations throughout Treaty 7 territory build resilience, engage their communities, and grow. Our impact continues to expand, demonstrating that vibrant and thriving arts communities exist across the entire region. We remain committed to supporting the arts wherever they flourish—because creativity knows no borders.

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In 2024, 12 of our program graduates participated virtually from communities such as Claresholm, Cochrane, Lethbridge. Coaldale, Okotoks, Red Deer, and Edmonton.



Rozsa Foundation Executive Director speaks as part of a panel discussion at the 2024 Canadian Arts Summit in Banff

As we reflect on 2024 and look ahead to 2025, there is a lot of uncertainty across Canada and beyond, and how that uncertainty will impact the arts community is a primary focus of ours as we look at our work in the year ahead. But we do know a few things...

We know that the political winds will be blowing, as both municipal and federal elections will take place at some point in 2025. The Rozsa Foundation will work as key contributors to advocacy coalitions at both these orders of government, through Creative Calgary municipally and the Canadian Arts Coalition federally, to ensure that the arts are key considerations, both in platform development for candidates, and as election issues for voters.

We know that artists, arts organizations, and arts leaders will need timely information and critical skill-development training to navigate the complex contexts of their work. Our Spotlight on Arts Audiences research will continue to evolve over the remaining three waves of work, seeking key insights on how arts audiences are responding in their own ways to global uncertainty, as well as offering strategies for how artists and arts organizations can best position their work to offer much-needed meaningful experiences.

We'll also begin to roll out our planned expanded training offerings to better support the challenging and often isolated work of arts leaders through enhanced convening, opportunities to learn from one another, and specialized programs to equip them with the necessary skills to face the challenges and opportunities of this moment.

We know that mental and physical health will continue to be impacted by the tensions we're all experiencing. The Rozsa Foundation will deepen our emerging work at the intersection of arts and health, exploring how we can help support the full realization of the mental and physical benefits that arts participation can have on society alongside experts who share that common goal.

We know that strategic and unique funding supports will be necessary to bolster the capacity of arts organizations amidst continually increasing costs of doing business. We'll continue to modify and improve our funding programs and processes, responding to feedback and emerging trends to position our funding supports as relevant opportunities to seek new pathways and build organizational resilience.

And amidst all of that, we know that we don't know everything, and so we will be turning to our community as we reflect on our own work over the past few years, seeking insight into where we're having success and how we can serve our community even more impactfully in the years ahead as we chart the course for a new strategic framework to carry us into 2026 and beyond.

There's a lot of uncertainty awaiting us in the year ahead, but we will meet it steadfast in our belief that a knowledgeable, equitable, and thriving arts community can play a critical role in bringing about social change, and a better world for us all.

Our Partners











































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