



An update from the RWAF Board to the Region of Waterloo

We are sharing this letter to maintain transparency and accountability with changes taking place within the RWAF Board.

In this current moment of grief and uncertainty in the world, we recognize that this update might not bring the desired information that many Artists were anticipating or eager to hear from the RWAF Board at this time.

We recognize that funding from the Arts Fund has sustained some Artists within the Region in the past and with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony filing for bankruptcy, this doesn't feel like a hopeful time for the arts in the Region.

We continue to be committed to becoming a more equitable funder and we are mindful of how our timelines impact the greater community.

As we have made a full transition to new Board Members, we have decided to keep working with Jenn Chan from the Department of Imaginary Affairs to guide and document this process. The [Imagining Equitable Futures](#) process will continue to be shared on the Region of Waterloo Arts Fund website.

Following the announcement to pause the Fall round of funding, a new report was shared with the RWAF Board Members to capture where their reactions to previous equity recommendations and where they see the next phase of work moving towards.

Our upcoming phase of work is centered around developing funding pilots that will increase accessibility for all Artists, especially those who are equity-seeking within the Region. Our aim is to use funding previously used for the Fall grant cycle to fund Artists directly to participate in consultations and to engage in the implementation of pilots.

Beyond direct funding, our aim is to develop a continuum of support for Artists within the Region to access additional funding from other sources, mentorship, capacity building and opportunities.

We aim to have new funding streams launched in Spring 2024 including new eligibility guidelines, intake processes and review criteria. We see this as an opportunity to improve access to the fund and to diversify recipients.

As a Board rooted in community, we are thankful and appreciative to everyone who has continued to share their questions, concerns and ideas with us for how to become a more equitable funder and we encourage you to keep doing so.

RWAF Board Members include Board Chair Raechele Lovell, Ian Mark Kimanje, Lily Gyamfi-Kumanini, Claudia Aguirre, Viktorija Kovac, Sam Varteniuk, Councillor Kari Williams, and Regional Chair Karen Redman.

We are committed to communicating updates about ongoing changes by February 1, 2023.

We appreciate your patience as we move through this transition.

We can be reached directly at info@artsfund.ca

SHARED IN AUGUST 2023

A Letter from the RWAF Board to the Region of Waterloo

We are writing this letter to update you about changes happening within the Region of Waterloo Arts Fund (RWAf).

The changes being shared now are ones that have been made over several years of work and the result of many conversations internally and externally within Waterloo Region.

The changes are intended to move RWAF towards being a more equitable funder to all Artists within the region.

The Arts Fund was started 20 years ago and in that time has facilitated over \$4,000,000 in grants to Artists within the region.

Towards the end of 2021, the RWAF Board of Directors put out a Request for Proposals to initiate an equity, diversity and inclusion needs assessment. This resulted in the launch of a process called [Imagining Equitable Futures](#) facilitated by Jenn Chan of the Department of Imaginary Affairs.

The *Imagining Equitable Futures* process is designed to move towards living in the equitable futures we imagine.

This process was rooted in understanding the existing impact of the Arts Fund, the changing demographics of the region, the Board of Directors knowledge of equity-based funding models and alignment with existing equity initiatives within the region.

As a result of this process, two milestone changes will be happening - changes to the Board of Directors and a pause for the Fall 2023 round of funding.

As of August 1, 2023, we have implemented a new Board of Directors stepping into the roles of leading the Arts Fund towards being a more equitable funder.

The Board of Directors will be led by Raechele Lovell, Founder and Executive Artistic Director of DiverseWorks Dance Co. Raechele will be the first Black Woman to Chair the Arts Fund.

Joining Raechele as new members will be Ian Mark Kimanje, Lily Gyamfi-Kumanini, Claudia Aguirre and Sam Varteniuk. The incoming Board of Directors are artistic visionaries who are active in the community at a local and national scale with experience in anti-oppression, anti-racism and decolonial practices. Additionally, Regional Chair Karen Redman and Councillor Kari Williams will remain as members appointed by the Region of Waterloo.

Lindsay Golds, one of the outgoing Co-Chairs, has been working with the incoming Board of Directors through the transition and will address questions regarding the Spring Round 2023 of funding. Lindsay is currently holding the position of Vice-Chair, with a term ending on October 1, 2023.

Through this transition, we will continue to work in consultation with the Department of Imaginary Affairs and Jenn Chan.

As the new Board of Directors transitions into leading the Arts Fund towards being more equitable, we will be pausing the Fall 2023 round of funding to audit the existing funding process and to connect with Artists within the region.

From a recommendation from the *Imagining Equitable Futures* process, RWAf added equity-seeking data questions to grant applications in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023. Equity-seeking data allows the Arts Fund to identify gaps and opportunities based on Artists self-identified data.

Based on the previous two rounds of equity-seeking data, we are in a position to create stronger guidelines to ensure that moving forward funds are distributed equitably.

While this change might feel new within the work of the Arts Fund, it is built on rigorous research conducted throughout the arts and philanthropic sector.

We recognize that this announcement will have a direct impact on Artists and organizations within the region and we are open to feedback and comments. As a board led by and mostly composed primarily of artistic leaders from within our region, we deeply understand the measures that we are taking and that some of these changes may come as a surprise to our community.

Despite these changes, we are anticipating the continued support of our community at large, as the health of our regional arts sector directly impacts the wellbeing of all communities across our Region. As volunteer board members, we are highly invested in the success of the Arts Fund and how meaningful this tool is to our artistic community.

We are committed to communicating updates about ongoing changes by November 1, 2023.

We acknowledge that while the next few months at the Arts Fund are unclear, we are confident we will emerge with a strong action plan grounded in relationships within the region.

We see this as an opportunity to move towards becoming a funder that truly represents the growing diversity within the Region of Waterloo.

As in years passed, our aim continues to be supporting individual Artists to live and thrive within Waterloo Region.

We can be reached directly at info@artsfund.ca