

# ARTISTS TOOLKIT WORKSHOP 1 – Grant Application Writing.

Monday 17 February, 5:30pm, Ralph Wilson Theatre

## Introduction

*This workshop on Grant Writing was delivered by Adelaide Rief, Program Manager, Rochelle Whyte, Creative Producer and Joseph Falsone, Director, followed by group discussion and peer exchange/feedback.*

This workshop is part of an ongoing program called Artists Toolkit – where we provide workshops, individual advice sessions and resources to ACT-based artists to help artists pursue meaningful and sustainable careers. We offer one-on-one advice sessions for artists to seek specific advice or information about your goals, opportunities etc.

The focus for this workshop is on peer support, learning together and sharing skills, experience, perspectives to strengthen our grant applications and gain some confidence in writing them.

We'll begin with some basic grant writing tips, especially things that artsACT look for in the Arts Activities funding applications and common mistakes, but that can also be more broadly applied to most funding applications.

## What does artsACT's Arts Activities funding involve?

- There are two types of grant – up to \$5000 and between \$5001 and \$50,000.
- The \$5000 grants are open all year round, but you must apply a minimum of 6 weeks before your project starts. **TIP:** Start applying at least 10 weeks before your project starts, as they usually take 6 weeks to notify you of the outcome.
- A \$5001-\$50,000 grant has two funding rounds per year. At the beginning and middle of the calendar year. The next funding round opens 1 June and is due 31 July.
- You can apply as an individual or a group
- You can apply for most arts disciplines – HOWEVER screen-based projects like TV, film, gaming are separate – always CHECK the guidelines
- You can apply for most types of projects but CHECK the guidelines
- The application process involves giving some general information about you – personal details – answering 3 major questions, providing financial information including a budget, and providing support materials.

## TIPS

Be a detective, sometimes you need to look for clues and sleuth out the answers.

### ***What are they really looking for?***

artsACT are a government agency that are distributing public money in the form of arts grants. As with all agencies spending money, they need to be able to demonstrate that they give the money to quality projects, by artists with potential, that are backed up by solid evidence and have a very good chance of positive outcomes.

READ all the information you can about the grant – website, guidelines, general feedback. Do this before you apply, write down your questions and ASK artsACT or get in touch with A+G's creative producers.

artsACT are looking for projects that are really going to make a big difference to your arts practice with skills development or experience. There's not much money around, and it's public money so artsACT need to show it's being spent on the most worthy projects that have the most impact. So make it count.

- Apply for the project that is going to have the greatest impact, or is the most important to you. **Show** why the investment in you is going to have strong positive outcomes. Don't overstate it – don't use words like cutting edge, ground-breaking. artsACT don't need it to be earthshattering, they just need to show a return on their investment in you.
- You need to very clearly **demonstrate** why your project meets one of the grant funding aims – these are explained in the grant guidelines, and you need to show that your project will have outcomes that help meet those aims. For example: if you're applying to make an album of music, you might choose "arts development" as your funding aim. You need to clearly show that a) you will develop skills as part of making that album, b) what those skills will be, and c) why they're important to develop in the first place.
- ArtsACT usually looks for projects that develop NEW work – so remounting an exhibition or presenting a production of an old play rarely gets support.

### **Understanding grant questions**

Often people find it quite hard to identify what grant assessors want to know from the applications. Here are a few tips on deciphering and clearly answering the grant's questions:

- Use the good old thesaurus to help you – define the key words they ask for eg. 'special', 'valuable', 'innovative'.
- ASK! What do the grant makers want to know and why? What do they want to fund and why? You can ASK artsACT directly, this is normal and encouraged.
- Look at the aims of the funding program and selection criteria – you can see these aims and criteria as "clues" to what the questions are asking. The questions are often structured to help you meet the selection criteria, so often question will be paired with a part of the criteria. For example: when the application question asks 'What is the activity? Why is it special, valuable or innovative?' you look to the criteria. It wants to know about the QUALITY of the project. They measure this by knowing "how is the activity interesting, different or important" – so use the question to tell them what the activity

is, demonstrate both the QUALITY of your arts practice and the QUALITY of activity you're going to undertake.

- You can also ask yourself, "what evidence do I need to prove this? If I am saying my activity is special, how can I **demonstrate** that?" But be careful here – don't use over the top language, don't make assertions you can't prove like "no-one else is doing this" unless you're completely sure your project has never been done.

### **Call, call again!**

artsACT are there to help. Call them, ask your questions. Go away and think about what they said. If you still don't understand or have more subsequent questions ASK AGAIN. We are also available to assist with grant applications, we can't write them for you but we can answer questions, give examples, and advice. Check that you are getting your ideas across, get someone who doesn't know the project to read it and ask questions of you. You will learn a lot from their understanding of the project and the parts where you can be clearer.

### **Start early and be planned and prepared. Take your time.**

These grants require quite a lot of information and if you're not familiar with the process it will take longer. You are going to have lots of questions and will need to spend more time understanding what to do, and how to do it well. Filling out the form is only one part and often the last step. So how do you begin?

- Start a to do list, and a check list to make sure you've covered everything asked of you.
- Getting a quote and budgets together takes time – make sure you request quotes/costs early and be 100% across why it costs what it does.
- Get someone to read your application – it takes time to proofread so factor that into your timeline.

### **Take your time part 2**

Stage your project – think about all the steps you need to take to run this project – write them all out and consider how much time is required in each step. If your project runs for more than 12 months, you will only be able to apply for the activities that happen in the first 12 months. Be really, really reasonable here – consider your own ability to commit lots of time to your practice around work, family, friends – realistically assess your ability to DO all the work.

### **Preview, save your progress and be clear as crystal.**

Best practice is to preview the application form – see what all the questions are, copy those out, and complete your application in a word document first. When you log in you can copy/paste your answers or you can also save your progress within the application, but it helps to have a separate copy in case something goes wrong.

Formatting is key – use headings and dot points (indicate with a \* ) to make it super clear and succinct.

The language you use should be clear, and explain any concepts you mention.

**DO NOT** assume assessors know you or your practice, or your discipline. Make sure you introduce yourself and your practice in the first question, to give assessors some context.

### **Get it on video**

Use the video option to give context to your practice – this is in addition to your written application and can help your application. Some people use it to give a tour of their studio, or show them making work, or include a brief Q+A.

### **Budget, budget, budget!**

The budget is the main tool that helps tell the story of your project.

Make sure that what is in your budget is clear, makes sense, adds up, and aligns with the information in both your application and the support material. If your application is saying one thing and your budget another, it is unlikely that you will be supported.

Most importantly, the income and expenditure must balance: ie be the same amount. If your budget shows a greater amount in income than expenditure, you do not have a good case for funding. If your expenditure is greater, then you are missing some key income and will need to work out where that is coming from or if you can afford to engage in the project in the first place.

*It is useful to get advice if you find it hard to create or understand budgets, and how they work.*

### **Support material**

The key function of support material is to enhance and improve your application.

**DO NOT** include excess images or videos of your work, your entire back catalogue or other random material.

Support material should have a very **clear** reason why it's there and should speak directly to the application that you are making.

**DO** include things like:

- Letters of confirmation from collaborators, mentors, or venues
- Quotes for any purchases or hires of equipment that you will need to engage in your project
- Images or videos that help to **demonstrate** the quality of your work, or examples/ documentation of the work you have already done on the project you are applying for
- Press, critical reviews, awards received – **only if relevant**
- Bios of relevant personnel to demonstrate capacity to do what you say you are going to do

### **General tips/ more information**

For more general helpful information about grants see our video with Yolande Norris - <https://vimeo.com/315575912>

Access artsACT's video on the requirements of the grants program - <https://youtu.be/y3G0-N9x1FE>

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