

BC Arts Council Operating Assistance 2022-2024 FAQs

General

1) What does the Operating Assistance program support?

The Operating Assistance program provides multi-year funding to support the operating expenses of arts and culture organizations across the province that sustain an annual program encompassing creation, development, production, services, training, and/or public presentation.

Operating expenses may include programming and program development, organizational and artistic development, communications, outreach, human resources, artistic and professional fees, etc.

Multi-year operating funding provides organizations with a level of certainty to plan, partner in the community, and engage proactively with artists, audiences, and their communities.

2) What changes have been made to the Operating Assistance program?

In alignment with [Extending Foundations](#), changes to the Operating Assistance program intakes for professional arts and culture organizations include:

- Reduced barriers to eligibility in terms of previous funding and organizational/programming history (see Eligibility section below).
- Alignment and streamlining of program guidelines across fields of practice (see below).
- Implementation of [Designated Priority Groups](#) policy.
- Re-introduction of multi-year intake cycles (two years for 2022/23 intake) for all applicants.
- Single deadline for all fields of practice.
- Expanded intake period from 6 weeks to 3 months.
- Revised assessment criteria and weighting.
- Availability of [Application Assistance](#).
- Opportunities for oral and/or video responses within application.
- Simplified program guidelines (see below).
- Standardized submission and support materials.
- Revised peer assessment process and responsibilities.

The Operating Assistance program intake for Community Arts Organizations will open in summer 2022 (see below).

3) Why were these changes made?

We made these changes in alignment with the commitments made in [Extending Foundations](#), with the intention of implementing:

- Less prescriptive, more flexible definitions to remove barriers.
- Assessment criteria and processes to improve access for historically under-served and equity-deserving applicants.
- Streamlined, simplified documentation and processes to improve transparency and clarity.
- Immediate change responding to equity, as heard through consultation with the sector, with opportunities to inform the next round of strategic visioning for 2024 and beyond.
- Support for continued stability within the sector throughout the period of Extending Foundations (2022-2024), including ongoing COVID-19 recovery.

4) Why does the application still ask for both the impact of COVID-19 and the calls to address racism and systemic inequities?

The data we collect will allow us to better understand what the impacts of the pandemic continue to be and help us better plan for future changes to our policies or programs. Our goal is to develop policies and programs that will help the arts and culture sector recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and simultaneously work towards dismantling systemic inequities.

5) You said this application would be streamlined, but the form seems just as long as it used to be.

We updated the application with shorter questions that more closely align with guideline assessment criteria. We have also provided opportunity for audio-visual rather than written responses. To aid in the application process, we are also providing more information online through resources and videos.

6) You said this application would be simplified, but it seems like there are several overlapping questions about diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In [Extending Foundations: Action Plan for 2022-2024](#), the BC Arts Council reaffirms its commitment to principles of reconciliation, equity, diversity, inclusion, and access in all of its programs and processes. In your submission, you are asked to discuss how your organization is integrating equity into multiple aspects of your organization and its activities.

7) When will information about Operating Assistance for Community Arts Organizations be available?

The BC Arts Council is currently refining the Community Arts Operating Assistance program guidelines. The program will be available by early August. Follow us on social media to be notified when the program opens for intake.

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BCArtsCouncil>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BritishColumbiaArtsCouncil>

8) There is some new language and terminology being introduced in this year's guidelines. Are there resources that can help ensure we are understanding what's being asked?

Yes. We have put together a Glossary to help provide definitions and create shared understanding of some of the terms and principles being introduced. It is available on our [website](#).

We recognize that language and understanding is always evolving, and so will our Glossary! We welcome feedback on the Glossary and the terms provided. Please feel free to reach out to bcartscouncil@gov.bc.ca with suggested content.

Intake Periods and Deadlines

9) Why was the intake end date changed to September 15?

As part of the streamlining of processes, we aligned all Operating Assistance program intakes for professional arts and culture organizations to one intake cycle, rather than separate spring and fall intakes.

The intake end date was changed from September 30 so it didn't land on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

This year we've doubled the intake period for Operating Assistance for professional arts and culture organizations from six weeks to three months. Moving the deadline up to September 15 still allows us enough time to move through the assessment process to support Extending Foundations and notify applicants in early 2023.

10) My organization previously applied for Operating Assistance in the Spring for funding for our next fiscal year; the move to a Fall deadline delays timelines by six months and impacts our cash flow. How can we address this?

Applicants who formerly applied for Operating Assistance in the Spring may be eligible for a 50% cash advance on their previous year's Operating Assistance grant to help address

cash flow issues. Please contact a [Program Advisor](#) via email to make the request. You do not need to request a specific amount; approved advances will automatically be issued at 50% of the previous year's grant.

11) My organization previously applied for Operating Assistance in the Spring for funding for our next fiscal year; with the move to a Fall deadline, this shifts the fiscal year we will be applying for. How should we address this to avoid 'missing' a year of funding?

The BC Arts Council recognizes that the shift in deadline may impact cash flow and accounting processes for some organizations, and that some temporary measures may be required to support organizations through the transition in timelines. Please reach out to one of our [Program Advisors](#) to discuss your situation and possible responses.

Eligibility

12) What changes have been made to eligibility for Operating Assistance?

The following expansions have been made to eligibility within the Operating Assistance program for professional arts and culture organizations for this intake:

- Previously, organizations were required to be registered / incorporated as a non-profit and offering arts and culture programming for two years. This has been reduced to one year.
- Previously, new applicants had to have received two past project assistance grants. This has been decreased to one.
- The programs providing a pathway to Operating Assistance for professional arts and culture organizations has expanded to include Arts-Based Community Development and Arts Impact Grant programs.
- Previously, new applicants had to have received BC Arts Council funding from specific program within the last five years. This has been expanded to seven.

13) In addition to basic eligibility, are there other criteria that might indicate that my organization is a good fit for the Operating Assistance program?

As described in the program guidelines, in addition to the basic eligibility criteria, organizations moving into Operating Assistance are generally expected to have relative administrative and financial stability in current operations. Stability can be demonstrated by things like:

- Having at least one staff person (part-time or full-time) that maintains consistency in operations and programming;

- Ongoing and diverse sources of revenues outside of BC Arts Council programs, such as earned revenue, donations, corporate sponsors, or other grants from foundations, governments, or arts and culture funders;
- Ability to plan programming and activities up to two years into the future; and
- The capacity to compile annual financial and statistical information.

Rebalancing

14) What is the likelihood of getting an increase?

As the BC Arts Council budget remains stable for 2022/23, any funding increases to organizations already receiving Operating Assistance will be extremely limited and prioritized based on assessment and the Designated Priority Groups policy.

15) What further change might be expected for 2024?

This year's Operating Assistance intake will provide valuable information about where the sector is at, and where it is headed as we look toward the future. This year will provide us with data for benchmarking and a better understanding of what is happening in the sector. While there will be rebalancing achieved this year, we remain committed to supporting stability in the sector as it continues to navigate the impacts of the pandemic and looks toward the future.

As articulated in Extending Foundations, over the next two years the BC Arts Council will be advancing opportunities for further renewal with a new strategic vision expected for 2024. This will be informed by what we learn through this year's Operating Assistance intake and ongoing consultation and engagement with the sector over the next 12-18 months.

Any future changes will be informed by engagement and that next strategic vision.

Fair Notice

16) What is the "Fair Notice Policy"?

The BC Arts Council's Fair Notice Policy provides organizations who are underperforming with notice that they are being placed on Concerned Status, based on a set of clear criteria.

Organizations who are placed on Concerned Status are required to submit an annual application for Operating Assistance and will be assessed annually.

17) Are there changes to the Fair Notice Policy?

The Fair Notice Policy is being revised to include new equity-related considerations and edited for plain language. The revised policy will be available in July.

18) If my organization is placed on Fair Notice, will our funding be reduced?

Not necessarily, however the policy will continue to include a provision allowing for a reduction in funding.

19) What are the criteria for being placed on Fair Notice?

The Fair Notice policy is being revised. While the intention of the criteria within the policy will remain largely unchanged, there are new equity-related criteria being added and the policy is being reviewed for clarity, transparency and plain language. The revised policy and criteria will be available in July.

20) My organization has experienced significant setbacks during the pandemic, and we are not currently operating at the level we were pre-March 2020. Will we automatically be placed on Fair Notice?

No. Temporary conditions related to COVID-19 and recovery will not be automatic cause for Fair Notice. The BC Arts Council recognizes organizations are in the midst of recovery and transition. [Extending Foundations: Action Plan 2022-2024](#) sets the intention of providing stability and support over the next two years as organizations and the sector regain traction and re-establish appropriate levels of capacity based on current and future needs.

21) What happens to organizations who were on “Concerned Status” under the Fair Notice Policy prior to the pandemic?

Given the interruption in funding and assessment cycles because of the COVID-19 pandemic, any organization who was on Concerned Status prior to March 2020 will have that designation removed as they re-enter the Operating Assistance program for this year.

Assessment

22) Will there be changes made to the peer assessment processes for Operating Assistance this year?

[Extending Foundations](#) commits to modernizing peer assessment. As such, there will be internal changes to the peer assessment process this year in keeping with the description provided in the program guidelines.

The BC Arts Council remains committed to peer assessment as the primary means of assessing applications, as per its responsibilities under the [Arts Council Act](#), to provide an open, accountable, and neutrally administered process for managing funds for British Columbia arts and culture.

Peer assessment panels will continue to assess applications based on the criteria in the guidelines. Additional input and review may be provided through an equity advisory

structure. Recommendations for funding will be provided by the peer assessment panels, with final approval to be based on a wholistic approach to the grants budget and appropriate distribution of funds across assessment groupings, applicant pools, and fields of practice.

23) Are organizations expected to be achieving equally well across the areas of assessment?

No. The BC Arts Council recognizes that organizations play a variety of roles and contribute in many ways to their communities and to artistic and cultural development across the province. We developed the areas of assessment to allow organizations to be recognized for what they offer and supported within the context of their specific mandate, purpose, and community while upholding the priorities and public policy objectives of the BC Arts Council. The intention is to support a diversity of cultural offerings that speak to the breadth of arts and culture in B.C.

While organizations are expected to be able to speak to all areas of assessment, we expect that organizations will be stronger in some areas than others, based on their mandate, purposes, and community. That is okay.

24) My organization is not a Designated Priority Group and does not directly serve or represent an equity-deserving or regional community. Will we automatically be assessed poorly or see a reduction in our funding?

No. Organizations will not automatically be assessed poorly because they are not a Designated Priority Group or directly serve or represent an equity-deserving or regional community. Throughout their submission, applicants should speak to and identify their own community and cultural context and speak to the relevance they have within their community.

Applicants should also respond to all questions within the application about how equity is being implemented or addressed within their organization and its context.

Equity criteria are being used this year primarily to provide a benchmark for where organizations are at. Other than those organizations who have been advised of a redistribution of 10% of their funding to support rebalancing, it is expected that organizations will not see a reduction in funding this year unless they are placed on Concerned Status. The BC Arts Council recognizes the need for stability within the sector as it continues to navigate the impacts of the pandemic.

25) My organization has not made the progress it would like to in integrating reconciliation, equity, diversity, inclusion, and access into its operations. Will we automatically be assessed poorly or see a reduction in our funding?

No. Organizations will not automatically be assessed poorly due to lack of progress on reconciliation, equity, diversity, inclusion, and access.

Applicants should respond to all questions within the application about how these factors are being implemented or addressed within their organization and its context.

Equity criteria are being used this year primarily to provide a benchmark for where organizations are at. Other than those organizations who have been advised of a redistribution of 10% of their funding to support rebalancing, it is expected that organizations will not see a reduction in funding this year unless they are placed on Concerned Status. The BC Arts Council recognizes the need for stability within the sector as it continues to navigate the impacts of the pandemic.

26) Do the peer assessment panels use the same assessment criteria in their evaluations as are published in the guidelines?

Yes. When reviewing applications, the peer assessment panels use the same assessment criteria as are published in the guidelines.

27) How are organizations expected to define the community they serve as mentioned in the assessment criteria?

The BC Arts Council recognizes that the ways organizations engage with, serve, and think about community can take many different forms, depending on their discipline, practice, and mandate or purposes, along with a host of other considerations.

To give some examples, for some organizations, community may be a specific neighbourhood, cultural, or demographic group; for others, it may be a balance between the artists and artistic communities they work with and a network of international audiences engaged through touring; others might define their community based on their geographic region. Quite likely, it will be a combination of any number of these factors.

As such, all organizations are asked to describe, to the best of their ability, the community or communities they serve in order to define their own context for assessment.

Establish Diversity, Equity and Access Program Supports

28) What additional opportunities will be provided for equity-deserving organizations with the Operating Assistance program?

All applicants will be assessed against the assessment criteria as published in the guidelines, including equity considerations.

After the peer assessment process is complete, applications from organizations rooted in communities listed as designated priority groups will be given priority for funding.

Through [Extending Foundations](#), the BC Arts Council has also committed to creating a multi-year capacity building program for underserved and equity deserving organizations. Information about this program will be available this summer.

29) How will equity considerations be integrated into assessment?

All applicants will be assessed against the assessment criteria as published in the guidelines, which include a separate area of assessment for Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Access, weighted at 30%, alongside equity considerations in both other areas of assessment.

This recognizes that equity is not a standalone initiative but must be integrated across an organization's activities, including staffing, leadership, governance, programming, and engagement.

Assessment of equity considerations throughout the program will be supported by equity advisory structures to enhance the voices of Indigenous and equity-deserving communities in policy, program, and processes. Consultation with equity-deserving applicants and individuals has informed changes to the programs and policy thus far.

30) How will the Designated Priority Groups policy be integrated into the Operating Assistance program?

All applicants will be assessed against the assessment criteria as published in the guidelines, including equity considerations.

After the peer assessment process is complete, applications from organizations rooted in communities listed as designated priority groups will be given priority for funding.

31) Do Indigenous organizations need to respond to application questions related to reconciliation?

The BC Arts Council recognizes reconciliation as work that needs to be undertaken by non-Indigenous organizations. We also recognize that some Indigenous organizations are at

the forefront of reconciliation and that many Indigenous organizations have engaged in the reconciliation activities of non-Indigenous partners. In some instances, this engagement is placing increased demands on Indigenous organizations.

We hope that Indigenous organizations will answer the questions related to reconciliation in order to describe how reconciliation priorities are affecting your own work. If these questions are not relevant to your organization, please feel free to provide that in your answer.

32) Do Indigenous and equity-deserving organizations need to respond to application questions about equity, diversity, inclusion, and access?

We understand that for many Indigenous and equity-deserving organizations, equity, diversity, inclusion, and access are embedded in organizational mandates and purposes and every aspect of their activities. Nonetheless, these are multi-faceted considerations, and providing details about how these priorities are manifested in your work or programs will help assessors to understand the full scope of your organization. Equity, diversity, inclusion, and access can be priorities for everyone.