



## STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

### PROGRAM GUIDELINES

2017/18

**Strategic Opportunities has replaced the Interim Special Project Assistance Program. The *Strategic Opportunities* program assists B.C. arts and cultural organizations undertake significant strategic projects to address artistic and organizational opportunities and challenges, including: support for the creation of new work (including commissioning and collaboration); innovation in or enhancement of programming activity; capacity building; organizational transition; and/or investment in small capital projects (facilities or specialized equipment).**

**Proposals made to this program should be able to demonstrate a high level of organizational self-assessment and self-representation; clearly articulate the conceptual and strategic rigour, risk and innovation in the project; and define the relationship between the proposed project and the organization’s history, mandate, ongoing activity and strategic trajectory.**

**Successful applications will address challenges and opportunities in one or more of the various aspects of the organization relating to artistic achievement, community engagement and organizational development. The proposed projects may be short-term adjustments or lay the groundwork for longer-term commitments. All applicants must be able to demonstrate a history of and commitment to success in the four areas of assessment: Innovation and Strategy, Artistic Achievement, Community Engagement, and Impact and Feasibility.**

**The maximum award available through this program is \$30,000.**

#### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

About the BC Arts Council.....	2
About the Strategic Opportunities Program.....	3
Eligibility for Strategic Opportunities.....	3
Application Requirements.....	4
Assessment Criteria.....	5
Application Deadline and Submission.....	6
Adjudication Process.....	6
Grant Amounts.....	7
Notification of Awards.....	7
Changes to Awards.....	7
Final Reports.....	7
Confidentiality of Information.....	8
Recognition of Awards.....	8
Contact Information.....	8

*BC Arts Council program guidelines and application forms are revised annually.*

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## About the BC Arts Council

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### MANDATE

The BC Arts Council is an agency of the provincial government established by the *Arts Council Act*, for the purposes of:

- Providing support for the arts and culture in British Columbia;
- Providing persons and organizations with the opportunity to participate in the arts and culture in British Columbia; and
- Providing an open, accountable and neutrally-administered process for managing funds for British Columbia arts and culture.

### MISSION AND CORE VALUES

The mission of the Council is to engage all British Columbians in a healthy arts and cultural community that is recognized for its excellence.

In pursuing this mission, the Council is guided by six core values as laid out in its [Strategic Plan 2014-2018](#)<sup>1</sup>:

- **Artistic Excellence:** Foster the development and support the achievements of individual artists and arts and cultural organizations, including those with diverse voices across diverse practices, throughout British Columbia.
- **Recognition:** Acknowledge and promote the work of British Columbia's artists.
- **Access:** Provide the opportunity for all British Columbians to actively engage and participate in the arts.
- **Aboriginal Engagement:** Embrace Aboriginal culture and heritage and celebrate its ongoing connection to the lives of all British Columbians.
- **Consultation:** Work collaboratively and creatively with artists and cultural communities throughout the province to develop new initiatives and improve existing programs.
- **Governance:** Use fair and transparent processes that adhere to principles of accountability, independence, merit and equity.

### GOALS

The mission and core values, in turn, inform the four current goals of the BC Arts Council:

- Foster artistic excellence in all art forms and practices
- Strengthen engagement in the arts
- Support the richness of Aboriginal artists and communities in British Columbia
- Enhance support for arts and culture in British Columbia

The core values and goals of Council will be referenced throughout the peer review process to set funding and program priorities. Accordingly, applicants and assessors are asked to consider the values and goals in preparing and evaluating applications for support.

### Accessibility and Protocols

BC Arts Council programs are accessible to Aboriginal artists or arts organizations and to artists or arts organizations from diverse cultural and regional communities of British Columbia. All applicants should address and include information about their approaches to cultural protocol where required.

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<sup>1</sup> Learn more about the BC Arts Council's strategic direction for 2014-2018 at [http://www.bcartscouncil.ca/documents/publicationforms/pdfs/strategic\\_plan\\_2014-2018\\_may2014.pdf](http://www.bcartscouncil.ca/documents/publicationforms/pdfs/strategic_plan_2014-2018_may2014.pdf)

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## About the Strategic Opportunities Program

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The Strategic Opportunities Program provides three broad categories of support. Please note you may only apply under one of these three components:

### **Category I: Artistic Innovation**

Supports extraordinary commissioning, research, creation, development, production, and/or public presentation or exhibition costs incurred for projects that demonstrate innovation, experimentation and risk taking in artistic and programming activity. Funding will support projects from organizations with a demonstrated track record in the creation, development and production or public presentation of new work that can demonstrate a clear relationship between the proposed project and the development or furthering of the organization's overall artistic capacity.

### **Category II: Organizational Development and Transition**

Supports organizations to undertake significant strategic and time-limited projects to address organizational capacity needs and manage transition, including human resources, governance, community engagement and outreach, revenue diversification, and/or development projects. Funding will support projects from organizations that are able to demonstrate a clear strategic and mission-driven approach to the overall development of the proposed activity and that propose specific enhancements or shifts in the organization's overall capacity and position as a result of the project.

### **Category III: Capital Projects**

Supports organizations' small capital investments, including specialized equipment purchases or facility upgrades. Funding will support projects that can demonstrate a direct relationship to the deepening of the organization's artistic, engagement, and/or organizational capacity.

The maximum amount that can be requested through this program is \$30,000. Assistance levels for the Strategic Opportunities Program may form up to 100% of the total project budget (not including in-kind); however, proposals demonstrating appropriately diversified revenue streams may receive priority.

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## Eligibility for the Strategic Opportunities Program

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### General Eligibility Criteria

An eligible applicant must:

- Not currently receive Operating Assistance from the BC Arts Council (with the exception of Arts Periodicals, Arts Training Organization and Community Arts Councils).

AND,

- Be an arts organization, museum, book publisher or Aboriginal cultural centre that has received at least one grant from the BC Arts Council since April 1, 2015 through BC Arts Council discipline-specific programs;

OR,

- Be an incorporated non-profit arts and cultural organization that has received a grant through the BC Arts Council's Shared Cost Arrangement programs at BC Touring Council or First Peoples' Cultural Council (Aboriginal Arts Development Awards) since April 1, 2016.

Applicants may only apply once per deadline.

## Exclusions

Awards are not available for:

- Project phases that have begun prior to the application deadline.
- The creation or preparation of performances/exhibitions for competitions.
- Projects that are secondary to other purposes (e.g. fundraising events, conventions, or family, religious or community celebrations).

## Application Requirements

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**All applicants, especially new applicants to the program, are urged to discuss their request with the program officer *prior* to submission.**

Applicants must provide a signed, completed Strategic Opportunities Program application form, all requested information, and clearly identified materials.

The application must be printed on single-sided, standard letter-sized white paper and submitted unbound and without staples.

**It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure applications are complete and all application requirements are included. The BC Arts Council will not contact applicants to address errors in applications or missing application requirements, including support material, other than that required to determine eligibility. Eligible applications and any supporting material will be assessed as they have been submitted.**

All applications must be submitted by the deadline and include the following:

- A signed, completed *Strategic Opportunities Program* application form.
- A Letter of Intent of no more than three pages, font size 11 or larger on single-sided white paper without staples. See page 4 of the application form for more information.
- A project budget form, using the template provided, indicating whether revenues are confirmed or pending. Include notes to the budget, either within the form or on a separate page, as needed.
- A list of the organization's current board of directors **including their start dates and occupations.**
- A list of administrative and artistic/curatorial staff or significant contractors, giving name and title or responsibility (indicate if permanent/seasonal and full-time/part-time).
- An operating budget for the fiscal year in which the project takes place.
- One copy of the organization's most recent financial statements.

In addition to the above:

### **Category I: Artistic Innovation**

- Bios of commissioned or significant collaborating artists, including a listing of major works (max 250 words). Please do not submit CVs.

### **Category II: Organizational Development and Transition**

- A separate job description for each position(s), if the project includes hiring new personnel.
- Bios of contracted project leads or advisors, including consultants.

### **Category III: Capital Projects**

- Two competitive quotes for the proposed capital improvement(s) or purchase(s).

Select support material will be circulated to the jury only at the time of the adjudication meeting. Support material will not be returned.

## Financial Statements

Financial statements must include:

- a balance sheet, income statement and notes;
- **an itemized list of grants identified by funder, either in the income statement or in an attached schedule; and,**
- **a breakdown of operating net assets, distinguishing between unrestricted net assets and capital assets.**

The type of financial statements required is based on the recipient's last BC Arts Council award (excluding special projects); in the case of new applicants, internally prepared financial statements are acceptable. Internally prepared financial statements must be signed by two board members of the organization. Council staff reserves the right to request audited Financial Statements if deemed appropriate, regardless of the amount of the applicant's last award.

<b>BC Arts Council Grant for last fiscal year</b>	<b>Minimum Required Documentation</b>
Up to \$10,000	Internally prepared financial statements signed by two board members
\$10,001 - \$25,000	Independently prepared financial statements
\$25,001 - \$100,000	"Review Engagement" financial statements
Greater than \$100,000	Audited financial statements

## Assessment Criteria

Throughout the application and assessment, applicants and the jury should:

- Consider and discuss how the project addresses the applicant's mandate, mission and values through the pursuit of excellence in each of the four areas of assessment.
- Respond to the core values and goals of Council in considering and discussing each of the four areas of assessment as they relate to the project.

In evaluating each application, the jury is asked to consider a number of possible criteria under each area of assessment. It is important to note that not all of the criteria will apply to each application; rather, they are examples of aspects that might be considered and should be addressed in the application if relevant to the applicant, the applicant's history and/or the proposed project.

The following elements are essential to applications to this program:

- 1) A high level of organizational self-assessment and self-representation.
- 2) A clear articulation of the conceptual rigour, risk and innovation in the project.
- 3) The clarity of the relationship between the proposed project and the organization's history, annual program and/or regular activity.

The jury will consider each application according to the stated objectives and anticipated impact of the proposed project, and the applicant's mandate and history, as well as against four areas of assessment: Innovation, Artistic Achievement, Community Engagement and Capacity.

Please note the following weighting that will apply in the jury's assessment of your application and **address the assessment criteria below** when crafting your Letter of Intent.

### **Innovation and Strategy 10%**

This criterion considers whether the project proposes innovative and strategic approaches to the challenges or opportunities identified, within the context of the organization's own history and practice and/or broader disciplinary or sectoral practices.

Jurors may consider the following points:

- *The level of risk or challenges or opportunities inherent in, or tackled by, the proposed project.*
- *Clarity, focus and originality demonstrated in the proposal.*

### **Artistic/Curatorial Achievement 30%**

This criterion considers the applicant's record of and commitment to artistic / curatorial and programming achievement, as well as how the project will further the artistic and curatorial objectives of the organization, create enhanced opportunities for the development of artists and practitioners, and/or advance the art form(s) or practice(s) that is central to its work.

Jurors may consider the following points:

- *Potential benefit to the professional arts community.*
- *The opportunities provided for professional B.C. artists, including Aboriginal and culturally-diverse artists.*
- *Clear statements about compensation to every professional artist, curator or professional practitioner participating in the project including levels of professional fees.*
- *The quality of working conditions for artists, volunteers and employees of the project, including safety considerations and culturally-appropriate support.*
- *Contribution to the province's body of creative work.*

### **Community Engagement 30%**

This criterion considers the applicant's existing engagement with its community and how the project will enhance the organization's engagement with audiences and communities.

Jurors may consider the following points:

- *Commitment to stimulating and varied forms of public performance or exhibition, audience and artistic development, participation, discourse and education, or other opportunities*
- *Knowledge of the organization's core audience plus insights and strategies that will lead to further audience development.*
- *Commitment to work created by B.C. and Canadian artists, and new collaborations, including emerging or under-recognized artists, artistic practices, and forms.*
- *Accessibility of the project to artists and audiences.*
- *The project's level of engagement in the context of B.C.'s geographic, Aboriginal and cultural diversity.*
- *The inclusion of and engagement with appropriate protocols and practices, particularly in regard to Aboriginal artists and communities.*
- *Risk taking with regard to public engagement and artist development.*

### **Impact and Feasibility 30%**

This criterion considers the applicant's capacity to realize the project successfully and how the project will contribute to or enhance the organization's capacity in one or more areas (artistic, engagement, financial, management, etc.)

Jurors may consider the following points:

- *Abilities in project management, including planning, audience development, marketing, communications and financial management.*
- *Demonstrated capacity to realize and finance this project, based on previous achievements, presentation of realistic budget assumptions and projections, and support material.*
- *Skills available to take advantage of future possibilities presented by the innovation.*

- *An analysis of the impact of the current environment on the applicant organization's programming, marketing and development plans.*
- *An outline of gaps in the applicant organization's knowledge and the training and technical assistance required for staff and members of the board of directors.*
- *Presentation of realistic budget assumptions and projections.*
- *The diversity and appropriateness of the project's proposed budget, including funding from sources other than the BC Arts Council such as earned revenues, federal and local government support, private funding, applicant contribution, and in-kind support, as applicable.*

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## Application Deadline and Submission

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The deadline for the Strategic Opportunities Program is **July 4, 2017**.

Applications are accepted by mail and must be postmarked **by Canada Post or a courier company no later than July 4, 2017**. Applications may be hand delivered or delivered by courier to 800 Johnson Street, Victoria, BC, up to 4:00 p.m. on the deadline day.

Applications by email or fax will not be accepted.

Note: if the deadline falls on a weekend or statutory holiday, the deadline becomes the next business day.

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## Adjudication Process

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Merit-based, independent assessment is the primary method of evaluation.

Applications to this program are evaluated by a multidisciplinary jury. Juries are comprised of individuals with expertise in particular artistic discipline(s) or genre(s). When selecting jury and committee members, Council considers broad professional knowledge, expertise, geographical representation and diverse aesthetic, institutional, and cultural viewpoints, including those from Aboriginal perspectives.

The following process is used to evaluate every application:

- The British Columbia Arts Council receives applications and acknowledges receipt by email within two weeks of the deadline.
- Council staff reviews applications to assess eligibility, completeness and whether they meet the program objectives.
- A multidisciplinary projects jury then evaluates the proposals using the assessment criteria below, and determines the level of funding and conditions on the payment of awards.
- Council informs each applicant of the decision in writing.
- Applicants are urged to contact their program officer for feedback on their application.

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## Grant Amounts

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[The maximum assistance level for all components of the Strategic Opportunities Program is \\$30,000.](#)

Assistance levels for the Strategic Opportunities Program may form up to 100% of the total project budget, not including in-kind; however, proposals demonstrating appropriately diversified revenue streams may receive priority.

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## Notification of Awards

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Decisions will be made within 16 weeks of the application deadline. All applicants will be notified by letter. Results will not be released by telephone or email.

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## Changes to Awards

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All payments of grant monies to the grant recipient are subject to an authorizing appropriation under the Financial Administration Act.

The British Columbia Arts Council reserves the right to redistribute, delay or suspend payments if the organization:

- Does not carry out its planned program of activities.
- Undergoes major changes in artistic or administrative direction.
- Does not meet its obligations as a grant recipient, including submission of any outstanding final reports to the Council.

If a project is dependent on funding from other sources, approved awards may not be paid out until funding from other sources is confirmed.

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## Final Reports

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All recipients must submit a final report and requested documentation of the completed project to the BC Arts Council within 30 days of its completion. Final Report forms are available at: <http://www.bcartsCouncil.ca/forms.htm>. Future applications to project assistance programs will be ineligible if all reporting requirements are not met.

Final Reports may be scanned and submitted electronically to [BCArtsCouncil@gov.bc.ca](mailto:BCArtsCouncil@gov.bc.ca) or by mail or courier.

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## Confidentiality of Information

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The collection, use, and disclosure of personal information are subject to the privacy provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Your organization's information will be shared in confidence with members of the adjudication jury. The names and locations of successful award recipients may be published along with the amount of the award in the Annual Report of the BC Arts Council as well as in various communications and promotional vehicles of the BC Arts Council and Government of British Columbia.

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## Recognition of Assistance

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In recognition of funding and support from the Government of British Columbia and the BC Arts Council, acknowledgement must be included in all promotional materials, both in print and online. If you are awarded a grant, you will receive instructions regarding logo usage and recognition of assistance.

## Contact Information

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All applicants are urged to discuss their request with their program officer *prior* to submission.

A full list of program officers is available at [www.bcartscouncil.ca/about/coordinators.htm](http://www.bcartscouncil.ca/about/coordinators.htm).

For general information or further assistance, please contact:

Telephone: 250 356-1718

Email: [bcartscouncil@gov.bc.ca](mailto:bcartscouncil@gov.bc.ca)

Program guidelines are reviewed annually.  
Please ensure you are working with the most current  
program guidelines for each intake.

