

British Columbia Arts Council
Media Arts Program Review
January 2009
Summary Report

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This document is the final report on a review of 6 programs in the Media Arts sector that are designed and administered by the Arts Council of British Columbia. The programs are intended to serve artists, arts organizations and audiences in the province. The Media Arts Program Review began in March 2008 and was completed in November 2008. The Report provides a detailed assessment and analysis of 3 of the six programs and a summary analysis of 3 programs. Critical issues summaries and recommendations for changes and new initiatives are provided for each program.

Statistical information and a chart that compares similar funding programs at other arts councils are available on request. Summaries of Focus Group discussions were reviewed by the Media Arts Advisory Committee and staff, but are not included in the Final Report. A detailed narrative summary of an online survey has been provided. At the request of BCAC Council staff, the Recommendations in this Executive Summary have been consolidated from and regrouped from program specific recommendations into areas of action and responsibility for response and follow up.

The research and findings of this report took place and were developed during a period of rapid change when the BC Arts Council was in the midst of planning a Strategic Review, a new infusion of funding through the BC 150 Cultural Fund Endowment was announced and strategic priorities at Council were revised as

statements of mission and core values. Consequently, there were changes already underway to the programs under consideration in the review and across the BCAC. There were increases of 15% - 18% to all program budgets in 2008/2009. It was a year of transition for Council as well as for the programs under review. This period was also one of dramatic change at the federal level that included significant cuts in arts and culture funding, including some programs in the media arts sector.

The Arts Council of British Columbia (BC Arts Council) (BCAC) is an agency of the government of the Province of British Columbia. It is part of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts, an agency that, according to the mandate on its web site, is “committed to ensuring that all British Columbians are able to participate in a healthy arts and cultural community recognized by its excellence”. The Media Arts Program Review was mindful of the clearly expressed mandate, mission and core values of the BC Arts Council as presented on the BCAC website.

Overview (Scope of the Project)

The 2007/2008 BC Arts Council Service Plan calls for a general review of the media arts sector and the Council’s funded programs in that sector. This Program Review offers the BC Arts Council an opportunity to consider its fundamental values and to clarify its vision for funding media arts practice. An external consultant with experience and expertise in the field, Su Ditta (Wild Ideas Arts Consulting), was hired to conduct the review. David Poole assisted Su Ditta with analysis of the hard statistical data and development of the overview.

The British Columbia Arts Council initiated this review of its Media Arts programs in March 2008. After preliminary discussions with Su Ditta, the BCAC confirmed the following goals and objectives for the Media Arts Program Review:

Council required an overview of the not for profit/non-commercial/non-broadcast media arts sector in BC and an understanding of its Media Arts programs' effectiveness and their future in the evolving media arts sector. Council needed an assessment of its Media Arts programs relative to their respective objectives and an evaluation of those programs' alignment with Council's mandate, goals and values. Council also wanted an assessment of the program objectives, eligibility criteria, assessment criteria and application/adjudication process.

The program review should also develop and consider options and recommendations regarding revisions to the existing program structure and content, with the objective of serving the sector more effectively while achieving the Council's stated priorities.

Program Review Focus

In addition to an assessment of the media arts sector in BC, the program review will concentrate on an evaluation of the following programs:

Grants to Organizations

- [Operating Assistance: Media Arts Organizations](#)
- [Operating Assistance: Professional Arts Festivals](#)
- [Project Assistance for Media Arts Organizations](#)
- [Project Assistance for Professional Arts Festivals](#)

Grants to Individuals

- [Project Assistance for Media Artists](#)
- [Scholarship Awards Program](#)

Media Arts Program Review Timeline

Work on the review began in March 2008 with initial meetings and interviews with BC Arts Council staff and continued with background research and reporting, and organizing and planning for Advisory Committee Meetings and Focus Groups in Victoria, Vancouver and Kelowna in the spring and early summer of 2008.

Survey design and delivery, follow-up meetings and consultation with staff, along with interviews with individual artists and funders in Vancouver, were conducted in the late summer. Additional telephone interviews, research review, additional data gathering and analysis and report writing were undertaken in the fall of 2008. In total, approximately 100 people participated in the development of this report and its findings by contributing information, insights, analysis and opinion.

Research Methodology

- Meeting with BCAC Media Arts Program Review Committee (overview and goals). Summary Report.
- Interviews with individual program officers and relevant BCAC staff to discuss program goals and objectives, organizational priorities, program delivery, adjudication etc.
- Interviews with key stakeholders, particularly other funders, as identified by the Program Review Committee.
- Focus Groups: 6 facilitated Focus Groups.
- Personal and telephone interviews with individual artists, educators and curators.
- Analysis of empirical data from BCAC databases on funding recipients to develop a description of the type of organizations receiving funding support, range of programming activities, etc., history of program budget allocations, success rates, etc.
- The development and delivery of a survey using Survey Monkey as an online survey tool.
- Preparation of preliminary Discussion Paper for review and discussion with the Media Arts Advisory Committee.
- Discussion with the Media Arts Advisory Committee and 2 additional members in Victoria, in June 2008.
- Review of BCAC Annual Reports and Media Arts application forms, program guidelines and criteria, web site, jury and advisory committee

reports, program coordinator's reports, adjudicators lists and other relevant reports and forms.

- Review of related programs provided by other funders, particularly federal funders, and municipal funders in BC and selected provincial funders. Some private sector funders, particularly foundations, and relevant educational and professional development programs.

History of Media Arts Funding at the British Columbia Arts Council

Provincial arts grants were awarded to media arts organizations such as the Pacific Cinematheque in 1978 (\$15,000) and to Vancouver Women in Focus in 1981 (\$1,500). Operating and Project grants were offered to organizations on a regular basis beginning in the early 1980's. Satellite Video Exchange Society (Video In/Out, VIVO) received \$5,000 in 1985, Cineworks was first awarded a grant in 1984 (\$2,500).

Current Funding Levels

In 2007/2008 the Pacific Cinematheque received a grant of \$41,000 and VIVO, \$30,000. All of the organizations supported in the program "Operating Assistance Media Arts Organizations" received the same level of funding in 2006/2007 and 2007/2008. There were no new organizations admitted to the program in those 2 years.

Media arts festivals are funded through the program of Assistance to Professional Arts Festivals and 4 festivals were supported in 2006/2007 and the same 4 in 2007/2008. Funding ranges widely, from \$88,000 for VIIF (Vancouver International Film Festival) to \$11,000 for DOXA-Documentary Film Festival.

In 2007/8 a total of \$478,250 was awarded in the Media Arts in the Operating, Projects, Festivals, Community Arts, Scholarships, Travel Grants, and Professional Development programs. This includes Creative Industries and Arts and Culture Project grants. Grants to individuals (Project Assistance to Media

Artists/Individual Artists Awards) for production totaled \$311,408. The highest organizational grant was awarded to the Vancouver International Film Festival (VIIF) (\$88,000) and the smallest grant, (\$1,000) was awarded to the Hornby Island Arts Council.

For more than 35 years the province of British Columbia has invested in this aspect of contemporary art practice and has supported a broad spectrum of its operations and activities from production and exhibition to training and critical discourse. BCAC budget statistics show \$693,408 being allocated in the media arts in 2007/2008. The budget was \$446, 549 in 1995, a growth of 55%, although there have been ups and downs in Council's funding since 1996. Please see the Appendix statistical files on request for more historical detail. In 2008, the Province of British Columbia announced a one-time allocation to the BCAC to establish an endowment that was initially expected to provide approximately \$8 million in annual funds.

Applications from individual artists are assessed by and the grants awarded by peer juries. Operating and Project Grants to organizations are assessed by an Advisory Committee of peers who make awards (for projects) and award recommendations to Council (for operating assistance).

While there are other sources of funding available for both media arts individuals and organizations, BC Arts Council funding remains crucial. In addition to cash revenue, this financial commitment from the province gives organizations and individuals credibility and status within the practice and the broader art world and may be used to "leverage" funding from other provincial funding sources, other levels of government, foundations, community partners and private donors. For individual media artists, a BC Arts Council grant may also have a positive impact on their acceptance into festivals, residency programs and the like.

Profile of Media Arts Funding at the BC Arts Council

The Media Arts programs at the BC Arts Council currently provide operating support to 7 “media arts organizations” (5 in Vancouver and 2 in Victoria). The total budget in 2007/08 was \$196,500.

These production centres offer a wide range of artistic, educational and professional/artistic or creative development, programming and services as noted. Subsidized equipment, facilities and expertise are provided, but they also provide funding for projects through commissioning programs, competitions, residencies and other special projects and incentives. These organizations are open to and work with both emerging and more senior artists who produce work in a wide variety of “genres”. New media artists and audio/sound artists will also access these centres. It is important to note that all of these organizations provide a wide range of programming and services from production and professional development to presentation, publication, distribution and archiving.

Audiences will include members and users, specific community groups, university and college students and faculty, other artists, critics and curators, museum, public art gallery and artist run centre professionals, contemporary art lovers, dealers, other distributors, journalists, cineastes, people interested in the issues taken up by contemporary media arts practice and members of the general public.

The Operating Assistance: Media Arts Organizations program also supports one organization dedicated exclusively to the *distribution* of work by media artists and one cinematheque that is engaged in programming and presenting film, fostering media literacy and some archival activities. The cinematheque provides an independent, non-commercial, public screening theatre for its own programs and for partnership projects with other organizations in the community.

Operating support is currently provided to 4 festivals (3 in Vancouver and 1 in Victoria) through the Operating Assistance: Professional Arts Festivals program.

The total budget is \$142,500. Project support is currently provided to 3 festivals (\$23,000 in 2007/08) through the Professional Project Assistance - Arts Festivals Program and two festivals are currently supported through the Media Arts Organizations: Project Assistance Program (\$10,000).

The following programs are administered directly by the Media and Visual Arts Coordinator or the Arts Awards Program and Training Resources Coordinator and dedicated Media Arts juries or assessment/advisory committees evaluate/adjudicate these grant applications:

- [Media Arts Organizations: Operating](#)
- [Media Arts Organizations: Projects \(Development and Special Projects\)](#)
- [Project Assistance for Media Artists: Arts Awards for Individuals.](#)

Operating and project assistance is provided to media arts festivals through multi-disciplinary programs. Multidisciplinary juries assess the following grant applications:

- [Professional Arts Festivals: Operating](#)
- [Professional Arts Festivals: Projects.](#)

Touring assistance is offered for national and international tours in the media arts through a multidisciplinary program and these grant applications are assessed by a Management Committee (essentially a staff review).

- [Touring Initiatives \(Assistance\)](#)

Touring assistance may also be provided for in-BC touring through the Media Arts Organizations Project Assistance program. All Project Assistance applications (including touring), from Media Arts organizations are adjudicated once a year, by the Media Arts Advisory Committee, that acts as a jury. Festivals could, in principle, apply for funding to support touring through the Festivals Project Assistance Program.

Funding may also flow to the Media Arts through other programs with multidisciplinary juries including:

Organizations:

- Community Arts Festivals
- Arts and Culture Service Organizations
- Training Resources: Project Assistance
- Special Projects Assistance: Unique Opportunities
- Arts-POD (Sustainability).

Individuals:

- Professional Development Assistance (study, project, travel)
- Scholarships (Scholarship Awards)
- Funding to independent media arts critics and curators is available through the Project Assistance to Visual Artists program (critics and curators).

Individuals and Organizations:

- Aboriginal Arts Development Awards (administered by the First People's Heritage Language and Culture Council).

If we imagine the “ecology” of the media arts as a practice, this means that research, creation and production may be supported by a number of different programs, exhibition and presentation by a number of different programs, etc. It is therefore difficult to determine the financial resources invested in each of the different aspects of the practice. Please see statistical charts available on request for further details.

The “dissemination” end of the ecology is somewhat obscured by the overarching program titles and the emphasis on festivals as a distinct aspect of exhibition and presentation. Support programs must be flexible enough and broad enough to work for well for a diversity of organizational models.

Other Funding Sources in the Media Arts

Federal

The Canada Council for the Arts remains the most significant other funder for the media arts. All of the organizations receiving operating funding from the BC Arts Council also receive funding from the Canada Council. Funding is also available from the Canada Council for festivals, exhibitions, travel and equipment. Individual artists can receive funding for research, scriptwriting, creation and production and residencies.

Recent changes at the Department of Canadian Heritage have brought about the probable demise of the Canadian Independent Film and Video Fund as well as various funds in the new media sector. The Canadian Arts Heritage Stabilization Program (CAHSP) and the Cultural Spaces program are also in limbo, due to shut down in 2010. Please see Appendix for further details. Individual artists may receive funding from Telefilm or the NFB, although the questions of creative control and broadcast license requirements may pose significant barriers. These funders and their programs may experience rapid and dramatic changes depending on the political climate of the times and the policy priorities of the government of the day. The relative stability of BC Arts Council funding is fundamental to the sustainability of the practice.

Provincial Funding

Additional provincial funding comes for programming and small capital costs from the Direct Access Program of BC Gaming, and special funds related to the Olympics including: 2010 Legacies Now, Spirit of BC and Arts Partners in Creative Development are providing project funding to organizations. All of these programs may present challenges for the media arts sector in terms of assessment criteria, consistency of funding levels and long-term stability and availability.

Municipal Funding and Foundations

Additional funding is available for organizations (and sometimes for individuals) in some but not all municipalities and through private foundations including the

Vancouver Foundation, which supports a number of activities throughout the province, including sustainability initiatives through the Arts POD partnership program, which is administered by the Centre for Sustainability. It should be noted that the City of Vancouver does not support media arts distribution centres, they are not eligible for municipal funding.

Please see Appendix for further information on other funding.

Summary of Program Review Findings

1. Operating Assistance Media Arts Organizations

This program currently supports 7 organizations that receive a total of \$196,000. The highest grant awarded in 2007/2008 was \$41,000 to the Pacific Cinematheque, the “oldest” client in the program. Media Net and Cinevic, the two newest organizations in the program, each received \$10,000. The organizations supported through this program indicated that they were generally satisfied with the nature of the program and its delivery.

Operating Assistance: Media Arts Organizations

Critical Issues

- ✚ Review guidelines and application forms for greater consistency and overall clarity
- ✚ Ensure that Program Goals and Objectives are clearly and consistently stated on all Program Guideline Documents
- ✚ Make all application forms freely accessible
- ✚ Clearly reflect creation and production as a valued area of service and activity
- ✚ Provide a way to acknowledge, assess and value the role of developing and creating a “creative centre/incubator” (a social space, networking matrix, sustaining artistic community, supporting “peer to peer contact” etc.) as a prime function of a production centre
- ✚ Move to multi-year funding
- ✚ Make program flexible and allow strategic funding allocations/this is a competitive program

- ✚ Revise statistics section and review this as assessment criteria
- ✚ Clarify any weighting policy in evaluation/assessment process
- ✚ Clarify various policies and terminologies around audits, copyright etc.
- ✚ Clarify “Project Funding” as start up/development program for new organizations
- ✚ Provide clear support for dissemination: define assessment criteria and priorities for distribution support in the broader landscape
- ✚ Allow production organizations, and particularly distributors, to submit strategic marketing material as support material
- ✚ Make “welcoming” statement stronger and more visible
- ✚ Develop long term communications and outreach program (plan and schedule) for Media Arts
- ✚ Work with Aboriginal Arts Development Awards Program staff on organizational development and transition initiatives plan.

2. Project Assistance for Media Artists: Individual Arts Awards

This program is intended to provide financial support to independent media artists for the production of work in film, video, and new media. The program is open to artists working in a wide variety of “genres” including documentary, animation, drama (shorts/features) video art, installation and a wide range of computer-based, digital new media practices including web-based art, interactive digital media, gaming, robotics, etc. Sound sculpture, soundscapes and installations may also be eligible. Program Guidelines indicate that support is directed towards “specific, innovative and experimental works”. A peer jury assesses application forms, budgets and support material. Juries make final recommendations on individual arts awards

The program offers grants at 2 different levels of funding (\$10,000 and \$25,000). The larger grants are available to “senior media artists” and the lower grants for “professional media artists”. There are a variety of eligibility exclusions intended to keep the program focused on independent artists who maintain creative

control over their projects. Funds awarded are for up to 50% of the total cost of a project.

This program was seen to be invaluable, as one artist put it, as an “investment in the capital of imagination” and the “deep and abiding cultural and social value of artistic expression”. The program “takes risks all over the place - emerging artists, controversial content” and “that kind of freedom and “pure” research is essential to a vibrant culture and a healthy art practice”.

Project Assistance for Media Artists: Individual Artists Grants Critical Issues

- ✚ Update language and clarify Program Description including goals and objectives.
- ✚ Make language more open and welcoming to audio/sound and new media artists (including the kinds of work supported) and in the explanation of what is “excluded” that is used to reinforce the use of these mediums as a form of artistic expression by artists and reinforces the importance of artists maintaining creative control over their projects.
- ✚ Revise the language in the descriptions of Level 1 and Level 2 categories to speak about (re-title them) ***Emerging*** and ***Senior and Mid-career*** artists. This will send a signal to emerging artists that is in line with Council’s strategic priorities and help to eliminate confusion about the levels.
- ✚ Review (working with the Advisory Committee) and clarify exactly what the entry standards are in each of the categories, and make more of this information, that the coordinator currently provides over the phone, clear in the guidelines.
- ✚ Explore ways that collaborations might be funded through the program, as these are very important to new media practice.
- ✚ Eliminate the 50% funding restriction.
- ✚ Make sample application forms available on-line.

- ✚ Revise budget and other aspects of application forms to reflect needs of new media and audio and reflect some subsistence funding for artists.
- ✚ Include a welcoming statement for Aboriginal artists and artists from culturally diverse backgrounds earlier and more visibly in the Guidelines.
- ✚ Make increasing the value of the grant in Level 2 a priority.
- ✚ Make sure the guidelines and application forms reflect that \$ can be applied to research and creative development stages.
- ✚ Provide definition of innovation and how it is linked to assessment criteria
- ✚ Do something to discourage applications for “calling card films”.
- ✚ Make it clear what jury feedback, if any, is available and how it may be received.
- ✚ Expand juries when necessary to support expertise needed in a particular competition.
- ✚ Develop a plan and schedule over a three-year period for outreach and communications, including workshops and publications that systematically target schools, communities and regions.

3. Scholarship Awards Program

This review did not include a detailed examination of the Scholarship Awards Program. In 2007/08 there were 2 applications to Level 1 of the program and neither were successful. There were 15 applications to Level 2 of the program and 5 were successful (\$13,500). The 2006/2007 results were similar.

All Focus Groups were asked to comment on this program and those who had received grants were appreciative of this source of funding. However, with the exception of those artists, all other respondents found that offering scholarships for college and university studies was inconsistent with Council’s commitment to prioritizing the funding of professional artists and that training and professional development were effectively supported through other programs. Consideration

should be given to ending this program and redirecting funds to other programs that support individual artists.

4. Operating Assistance Professional Arts Festivals (Media Arts)

Operating support is currently provided to 4 festivals (3 in Vancouver and 1 in Victoria) through this program. The total budget is \$142,500. Project support is currently provided to 3 festivals (\$23,000 in 2007/08) through the Professional Project Assistance - Arts Festivals Program and two festivals are currently supported through the Media Arts Organizations: Project Assistance Program (\$10,000). One of the challenges of providing a meaningful review of this “program” is that it exists within the context of a large multidisciplinary program. The Program Guidelines, Goals and Objectives are necessarily very broad and general. The commitment to professional, non-profit festivals that present the work of professional artists is very relevant to the media arts sector, as is the focus on stable artistic and administrative leadership. The focus on the artistic development of the festival is also relevant, although as some artists suggested, the role the festival plays in the development of the practice is equally important. Making connections between artists, works, other exhibitors, distributors buyers and curators and collectors is crucial as is the development of critical knowledge and thinking.

Operating Assistance Professional Arts Festivals (Media Arts)

Critical Issues

- ✚ Relationship between festivals and other forms of exhibition and touring needs to be explored and untangled
- ✚ Transition from Project Grants to Operating Grants needs to be rationalized
- ✚ Assessment and Adjudication in a multidisciplinary context must be reviewed for fairness
- ✚ Relationship between touring and festivals needs to be clarified for the community
- ✚ What does major arts festival mean? How does it apply in Media Arts?

- ✚ What is meant by “coherent theme or vision”?
- ✚ Payment of artists’ fees is an eligibility criteria. How is it applied and assessed?
- ✚ Representation of the Media Arts on the Arts Festivals Advisory Committee should be reviewed
- ✚ Particular challenges of New Media Festivals and exhibitions
- ✚ Lack of media specific program criteria and assessment criteria

5. Professional Project Assistance: Media Arts Organizations

This program provides short-term, project-based support for initiatives organized by “professional media arts organizations” that “increase services to the community or facilitate new forms of media art expression”. Funding is intended to support distribution initiatives, screenings and exhibitions of work by independent media artists, “development” of media artists, “critical documentation”, “exploration of diverse new media forms”, “dissemination” or “organizational development”. The program guidelines do not specify any grant values or limits, but grants may be requested only up to 50% of the total costs of the project. There are 2 types of projects eligible: **Development Projects and Special Projects**. Funding for **Development Projects** is intended to assist organizations currently not receiving Operating Assistance and can be for “special projects” or “public programming” activities. **Special Projects** funding is intended for “organizations currently receiving operating assistance and must be for a unique project that would not happen otherwise, is distinct from normal activities and operations and will happen once only, as it is not intended for repeating activities”.

In 2008, the BC Arts Council received 9 applications to the Project Assistance to Media Arts Organizations program and awarded a total of 5 grants totaling \$20,0000. Three grants were awarded to organizations in Vancouver and 1 in Victoria. One grant was awarded to the Ullus Collective in the Penticton region. Most grants were for exhibition projects and 2 were first grants to festivals, the Vancouver Asian Film Festival and the Vancouver Latin American Film Festival.

This program did not receive the same degree of detailed technical review as the Operating Programs received, but focus groups and individual artists interviewed made some very useful and insightful observations.

Professional Project Assistance: Media Arts Organizations Critical Issues

- ✚ How can the program maximize its potential as a development tool for emerging artists and art practices?
- ✚ How can the program effectively support the administrative and infrastructure development of new organizations or activities in culturally diverse, aboriginal and geographically diverse regions?
- ✚ To what extent is this an “organizational development program” for established groups and organizations?
- ✚ What constitutes special projects in relationship to established organizations?
- ✚ How can the program be more effective in supporting dissemination, particularly critical discourse, publications, conferences and symposia etc.?
- ✚ If this program is a critical development tool/vehicle for development strategies how can it send that signal to potential applicants?

6. Professional Project Assistance – Arts Festivals

This program is a multidisciplinary one, like the Operating Assistance – Professional Arts Festivals program and therefore, Media Arts Festivals Project grant requests are assessed in a multidisciplinary context. Organizations may apply once in each fiscal year for these grants. They are intended to “encourage specific art forms, build the organizational infrastructure of festivals and increase the availability of professional arts to the public”. Grant requests may cover up to 50% of the costs of the project.

In 2007, the program received 4 applications from the media arts and awarded 3 grants, ranging from \$2,500 to \$10,000, for a total of \$19,500. In 2008, 4 applications were received and 3 grants were awarded ranging from \$12,000 to \$4,000 and totaling \$23,000. The same 3 festivals received support each year.

This program did not receive the same degree of detailed technical review as the Festivals Operating Assistance Program received, but focus groups and individual artists interviewed made some very useful and insightful observations.

Professional Project Assistance – Arts Festivals

Critical Issues

- ✚ How/will these organizations make the transition to operating funding?
- ✚ Does a multidisciplinary jury disadvantage media arts festivals?
- ✚ Should there be a subset of disciplinary specific assessment criteria?
- ✚ Does the program description and eligibility criteria discourage “fabulous” one-off events?
- ✚ How does this program relate to the Project Assistance Media Arts Organizations program?
- ✚ What constitutes a “festival”?

Planning for the Future

Throughout the consultations in this review, people were asked to identify trends and larger issues that impact the media arts. Some of these things are discussed in the BC Media Arts Profile and Landscape. Respondents repeatedly identified rapidly changing technology, globalization, the graying of audiences in public venues, the dominance of a media-focused younger generation and the seemingly limitless potential of new media as critical issues. A lack of exhibition venues and opportunities were identified as challenges.

Regional disparities were identified as a continuing problem, particularly for those artists who live in remote or rural areas. BC artists, many said, need support and the opportunity to place themselves and be placed in international contexts and

to have longer and more focused periods of time to devote to making their work. The struggle to survive financially in the practice remains acute.

Suggestions for new programs included commissioning programs, residency and touring programs, 1st projects and development programs and specialized marketing programs. Of these, commissioning programs and marketing initiatives were supported by more artists.

The community looks to the BC Arts Council to gather information and statistics on the practice, to be an advocate for arts funding and media arts funding in particular and to be proactive in building partnerships with other agencies and organizations.

Organized, long-term out reach strategies and better communications tools were high also a high priority.

Recommendation

Give a higher priority to the development of commissioning programs and marketing and distribution initiatives in the introduction and creation of new programs.

Recommendation

Make it a priority to increase funding to individual artists through a variety of programs.

Summary Recommendations from Media Arts Landscape Program

Overview

- ✚ Make things transparent. Move as much “understood” program knowledge and protocol as possible forward and into the program guidelines.
- ✚ Strengthen support to individual artists and make funding available for creative research and subsistence.

- ✚ Develop and deliver a clear program of outreach and communications that meshes with the Council's strategic priorities.
- ✚ Ensure that programs welcome new and diverse practices through the program titles and program guidelines. Send strong signals by the language used in program descriptions.
- ✚ If programs are understood to be vehicles to develop infrastructure and expertise, make that clear.
- ✚ Organize annual meetings with other media arts funders in the province for planning and assessment purposes.
- ✚ Pay special attention to marketing and distribution and strengthen the role of festivals and individual artists, as well as distribution organizations, in this area.
- ✚ Ensure that existing programs of support for individual artists are designed in ways that can support new media and audio/sound as well as film and video.
- ✚ Acknowledge the importance of and reward the role of production organizations in developing and maintaining a "creative commons/incubators" to support media artists and audiences, critics and curators.
- ✚ Work with the Aboriginal Arts Development Awards program to enable transition of AAD award recipients to BC Arts Council programs.
- ✚ Explore new programs including Marketing, Commissioning programs and Residency programs that support new research and production by artists and enhance public knowledge of and appreciation of the practice.

Media Arts Program Review Recommendations Summary Organized by Action and Responsibility Areas

Staff Action

Recommendation 1: Operating Assistance Program

That the program description, goals, objectives and priorities be clarified and revised to reflect concerns outlined, particularly in the areas of production, and the overall creative development and research role played by the organizations.

Recommendation 2: Operating Assistance Program

Communications. Many people noted that emerging arts organizations, groups from culturally diverse communities, aboriginal artists and new art forms may know very little about the Media Arts programs at the BC Arts Council. Many reserves do not have the internet and as one person said “you almost have to know its there to “google” it. Council should consider developing “hard copy” communications tools that could be distributed to schools and community centres, heritage and cultural centres across the province. Even those already in the program suggested a calendar of deadlines that can be “posted on the wall”. Council should develop and implement a strategic outreach program over a 3-year period to encourage the development of media arts organizations and individual artists in targeted communities and regions. This could include a program of visits and workshops by program coordinators.

Recommendation 3: Operating Assistance Program

Program titles and program guidelines (particularly project programs) should indicate clearly that they have a development role or are intended to support emerging artists or media arts organizations. All program guidelines should include a more visible “welcoming statement” that indicates they are open and accessible to Aboriginal artists or arts organizations and artists or arts organizations from diverse cultural and regional communities.

Recommendation 4: Operating Assistance Program

Change eligibility criteria statements to clarify copyright policy and shorten the advance notice period for new applicants to 2 months. Clarify the relationship between Aboriginal Arts Awards Project grants and Media Arts Project Assistance to Media Artists. Clarify “fundraising” expectations. The application

form for the Media Arts Organizations: Operating Assistance should be reviewed and revised to have a closer relationship to the program guidelines and the statistical section of the form should be reviewed and revised to reflect the concerns outlined.

Recommendation 5: Operating Assistance Program

Clarify Assessment Criteria with regard to weighting and evaluation standards; consider reframing the critical self-assessment portion of the application.

Recommendation 6: Individual Arts Awards Program-Project Assistance for Media Artists

Revise and review the Program Guidelines to update the language and make it more welcoming and inclusive of all of the art forms the program is intended to support.

Recommendation 7: Individual Arts Awards Program-Project Assistance for Media Artists

Council, working with its Media Arts Advisory Committee, should determine if software design leading to the production of original artwork and the creation of prototypes for use in/as an original artwork are eligible and welcome. Council, working with its Media Arts Advisory Committee, should determine if other technology-based artwork including biotechnologies is eligible and welcome in this program. Council, working with its Media Arts Advisory Committee, should determine if audio/sound art including: radio phonic art, sound installations and performances, sound sculptures and soundscapes, innovative/experimental radio documentary and VJ “visual music” are eligible and welcome.

Recommendation 8: Individual Arts Awards Program-Project Assistance for Media Artists

Make sample application forms available on-line. Revise the budget and other aspects of the Project Assistance for Media Artists application form to reflect the needs of new media and audio/sound artists and reflect some subsistence funding for artists.

Recommendation 9: Individual Arts Awards Program-Project Assistance for Media Artists

Clarify Assessment Criteria with regard to artistic merit and artistic excellence, provide some definition of “innovative” and revise requirements for critical self-assessment. Expand juries when necessary to support a well-rounded framework of expertise. Make it clear in the program guidelines what jury feedback is available and how it may be received. Create a space on the BC Arts Council web site that provides more details on the jury and advisory committee adjudication process and how it works (expand the “Nominating Jurors” section) and be proactive in soliciting potential jurors.

Recommendation 10: Operating Assistance for Professional Arts Festivals: Media Arts Festivals

Program Guidelines should provide a clear explanation of how festivals may transition from project to operating funding and provide a range of grant levels typically available in the program. Program coordinators should continue to work closely with developing organizations.

Recommendation 11: Operating Assistance for Professional Arts Festivals: Media Arts Festivals

Assessment criteria (or a sub-set of criteria) in this program should be adopted to reflect impacts and expectations of media arts festivals. Ensure that there is adequate representation and media arts expertise on the Advisory Committee for this program.

Recommendation 12: Professional Project Assistance: Media Arts Organizations

Send a signal to emerging artists and underserved communities. Change the title of the program to distinctly reflect the “developmental” and “special projects” nature of the program. Expand and clarify the program description, program guidelines, goals and objectives to articulate role of the program/grant in supporting organizational development in both new and established organizations. Ensure that it is clear how funding in this program may assist emerging organizations to develop what they need to be eligible in and potentially successful in, the operating programs. Working with the Advisory Committee, review the role this program should play in supporting exhibition initiatives and particular “dissemination” activities particularly publications and other forms of critical discourse including conferences and symposia. Clarify program guidelines. Investigate and determine if it is possible/desirable to provide project funding for groups that are not registered non-profit societies.

Recommendation 13: Professional Project Assistance – Arts Festivals

Review the organizations receiving funding in this program to determine which groups if any are “in development” and can be expected to proceed to the operating grant program for festivals. Work with the organizations to identify barriers and needs. Develop a subset of assessment criteria for media arts festivals and ensure adequate representation of the breadth of the media arts on the jury. Working with the Advisory Committee, clarify the goals and objectives in the program guidelines to reflect some of the assessment criteria and clarify both the developmental and special initiatives aspects of the program. Provide a description of what constitutes a festival.

Program Committee Action**Recommendation 14: Operating Assistance Program**

Consider the establishment of a multi-year funding program and address inequities that appear to favour organizations that have a long history of funding. Funding levels should reflect a strategic approach and program guidelines should make it clear that the program involves a competitive process and that funding levels are subject to change.

Recommendation 15: Operating Assistance Program

Seek additional funding for this program so that funding levels more adequately meet the needs of the organizations and reflect the significance and value of the media arts in the larger cultural milieu.

Recommendation 16: Operating Assistance Program

Revise program description, priorities and assessment criteria to put a stronger emphasis on strengthening the stability and sustainability of professional staff. This must be done in a way that supports and encourages organizations to focus on their core priorities and rewards them for doing so. Revise and review the Program Guidelines to update the language and make it more welcoming and inclusive of all of the art forms the program is intended to support.

Recommendation 7: Individual Arts Awards Program-Project Assistance For Media Artists

Council, working with its Media Arts Advisory Committee should determine if software design leading to the production of original artwork and the creation of prototypes for use in/as an original artwork are eligible and welcome.

Council, working with its Media Arts Advisory Committee, should determine if other technology-based artwork including biotechnologies is eligible and welcome in this program. Council, working with its Media Arts Advisory Committee should determine if audio/sound art including: radio phonic art, sound installations and performances, sound sculptures and soundscapes, innovative/experimental radio documentary and VJ “visual music” are eligible and welcome.

Recommendation 17: Individual Arts Awards Program-Project Assistance For Media Artists

Rename the Level 1 and Level 2 categories to be Emerging Artists and Senior and Mid-career Artists. Make increasing the value of the Level 2 grant a priority. Determine if collaborative projects should be funded and if so, how.

Recommendation 18: Individual Arts Awards Program-Project Assistance For Media Artists

Working with the Media Arts Advisory Committee, review and clarify what the entrance standards are in each of the categories and provide more detailed information on levels of eligibility in the Program Guidelines.

Recommendation 19: Operating Assistance for Professional Arts Festivals: Media Arts Festivals

Develop certain program guidelines specific to media arts festivals (as outlined above) and link them to program priorities and assessment by the Advisory Committee.

Recommendation 20: Operating Assistance for Professional Arts: Media Arts Festivals

Open up discussions with the Vancouver International Film Festival and Ministry colleagues about on-going funding arrangements. Ensure that all applicants meet eligibility criteria.

Council Action**Recommendation 21: Operating Assistance Program**

The BC Arts Council should convene a round table and a special advisory group to explore the state of “dissemination” in the media arts including distribution, marketing, exhibition/presentation, publications, critical discourse and special

projects including conferences and symposia. This endeavor should bring together artists, distributors, curators and programmers, educators, journalists, museums and art galleries. Expected outcomes would include analysis, strategic projects and recommendations for new programs and partnerships. A similar approach, even a joint task force, should be initiated to deal with the critical question of conservation and preservation of work by BC media artists.

Recommendation 22: Individual Arts Awards Program-Project Assistance For Media Artists

The BC Arts Council should organize a Special Media Arts Advisory Committee to guide the development and delivery of special initiatives to support aboriginal media artists including outreach and communications programs, internships, and strategies to make the transition from one program to another, build administrative skills and establish a stronger program staff presence for aboriginal peoples at the BC Arts Council.

Recommendation 23: Scholarship Program

Consider eliminating this program and redirecting the funds to other programs of support for individual artists.

Recommendation 24: Operating Assistance for Professional Arts: Media Arts Festivals

Open up discussions with the Vancouver International Film Festival and Ministry colleagues about on-going funding arrangements. Ensure that all applicants meet eligibility criteria.