

Guide for Advisors, Jurors, and Assessors

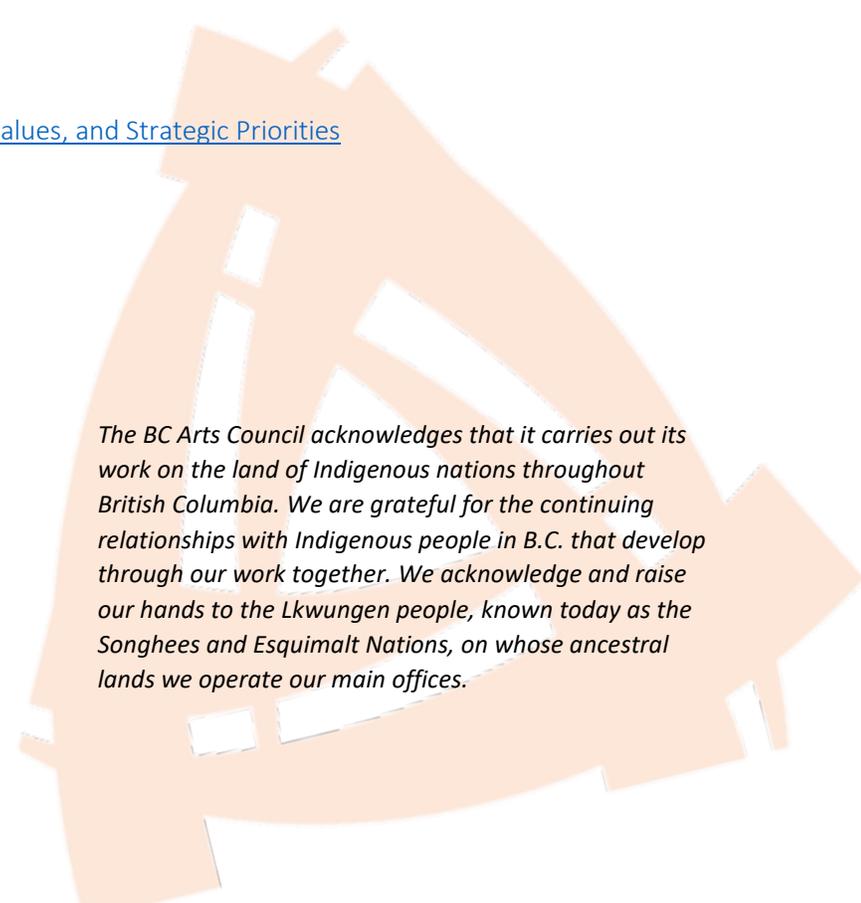
The BC Arts Council nurtures and supports arts and cultural activity in communities across the province, enriching the lives of British Columbians. BC Arts Council funding supports professional artists and arts organizations, community initiatives, training, and scholarships.

Peer assessment is at the core of how the BC Arts Council delivers its grant programs. We thank you for your commitment of time and energy to this invaluable process.

This document has been designed to guide you through the entire process. We hope you'll find it helpful.

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The BC Arts Council acknowledges that it carries out its work on the land of Indigenous nations throughout British Columbia. We are grateful for the continuing relationships with Indigenous people in B.C. that develop through our work together. We acknowledge and raise our hands to the Lkwungen people, known today as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, on whose ancestral lands we operate our main offices.

Online Grant Management System

The BC Arts Council has moved to an online grant management system, which supports and streamlines the adjudication process. It is expected that assessors, using their own computer or electronic device, will access all adjudication materials, including contracts, digitally through the new system.

Prior to starting the adjudication process, assessors will need to be registered with the online system. If you haven't [registered](#), please do so as soon as possible. It is recommended that assessors register as an individual rather than through an organizational account.

BC Arts Council does not want access to the new system to be a barrier to any potential assessor. If you have any concerns, please contact your program officer to see about possible alternative arrangements.

Approaches to Decision Making

Decisions about how BC Arts Council funds are distributed are made using the following approaches:

Advisory Committee

Advisory committees are responsible for adjudicating *Operating Assistance* programs. These programs support the ongoing, core funding for organizations. Advisory committees decide which organizations, along with levels of funding, are to be recommended to Council for support. They also provide input into the development of policies and program criteria.

Advisory committees are created annually for each discipline and usually—to provide continuity from year to year—include members who have previously served. Meetings typically last from one to five days.

Juries

Non-*Operating Assistance* programs—including *Individual Arts Awards*, *Professional Projects*, and *Scholarship Awards*—are assessed by juries. A jury makes the final decision as to which requests will be funded and what specific amounts will be allocated.

A jury is convened once for a specific competition for meetings that last from one to five days.

Individual Assessor

Occasionally an individual assessor is needed to provide specialized expertise to support an advisory committee or jury, for example, to assist with an application in a language other than English.

Management Committee

When funding decisions are based upon formula or non-subjective criteria, a management committee is formed. Management committees may also be used as a result of other extenuating circumstances.

Management committees are often made up of members of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture staff that support the BC Arts Council.

How Advisory Committees & Juries are Formed

Assembling peer assessment panels is the responsibility of the Ministry staff that support the BC Arts Council. To support this work, staff maintain a database of potential advisors and jurors. Individuals can

express their interest to be considered as a potential assessor through the new online grant management system.

In assembling panels, staff look for individuals with professional experience and knowledge of the respective disciplines and/or artistic activities. Selections are based on a variety of criteria, including:

- Diversity of artistic practice (representation of different artistic styles and philosophies);
- Diversity of professional specialization (representation of different professional roles within the arts, such as creators, interpreters, administrators, directors, etc.);
- Professional recognition (possessing a range of knowledge in their specific fields and arts and culture generally, being recognized for their expertise, and an active member of the arts and culture community);
- Ability to work in a group environment providing critical content to the discussion while contributing to fair-minded comparative evaluation and respecting other points of view;
- Ability to articulate an opinion, and to comment upon an organization's or artist's role in its artistic, geographic or cultural community;
- Reflect contemporary British Columbia, by ensuring a balance of representation, including:
 - Regions across the province;
 - Gender identity;
 - Age (representation of different artistic "generations");
 - Indigenous communities; and
 - Cultural diversity (representation of artists and arts professionals from diverse ethnic and cultural communities);
- Absence of conflict of interest with a significant number of applicants.

The BC Arts Council recognizes that no single group of three to five people can represent the above characteristics, but, over time, it works to achieve diversity with respect to the needs of each field.

Contract Process & Payment

After assessors are identified and have agreed to serve, a service contract is issued. The contract outlines the terms of tenure, fees, and eligible expenses. It also includes the following:

- Confidentiality statement;
- Permission to release name;
- Liability statement; and
- Conflict of interest statement.

Individuals are requested to list any personal affiliations that could place them in conflict with potential applicants to the program (see below for more information on conflict of interest).

Remuneration, at present, is paid at a daily rate of \$225 and, as applicable, a reading fee per file. Please also see "After the Meeting" for more information.

Meeting Materials

To ensure an application meets basic eligibility criteria, all funding applications are reviewed by staff.

Once vetted, the applications are made available through the online system so that assessors can review and assess the materials in advance of the adjudication meeting (see below for more information). Assessors are also provided with program guidelines and any additional materials required for assessment.

In special circumstances, assessors may request paper copies if they are unable to utilize the BC Arts Council's online system.

Conflict of Interest

Before the adjudication meeting, assessors are asked to declare any conflicts of interest they may have with respect to any applications they have before them.

Conflict of interest may arise in any situation where an assessor, assessor's family member, or assessor's organization could obtain material or personal gain from an application or applicants under review.

Instances of direct conflict of interest may include, but are not limited to, membership on boards of organizations, ownership of assets, receipt of gifts, employment, and/or other financial or professional affiliation.

Indirect or perceived conflict of interest is where an assessor could be seen to lack impartiality about an applicant or application, even though no direct conflict of interest exists.

Prior to the Meeting / Initial Assessment

Once they are given access to the meeting materials, assessors are required to read:

- The relevant program guidelines, which include the purpose of the program, eligibility requirements, and application requirements;
- Staff write ups providing analysis of financial position and capacity of the applications, if applicable;
- Each application/file.

Assessors should consider the applicant's responses to application questions in relation to the assessment criteria and write notes for each file, including questions, thoughts or highlights about each application and/or observations where applicants are exceeding criteria or are failing to meet them. These notes will be helpful during discussions at the adjudication meeting.

When scoring each application, assessors are encouraged to use the full range of scores available based on the assessment criteria for the program, using whole numbers rather than fractions.

Assessors should also consider the BC Arts Council's **vision, core values, and strategic priorities** as context for providing recommendations and feedback for applicants. Please see relevant section at the end of this document.

Travel to Meeting & Accommodation

Travel and accommodation expenses, supported by receipts, will be reimbursed according to government rates, after the meeting and once expense claims are submitted, as laid out in the contract.

Travel to the meeting should be through the most economical means possible.

BC Arts Council staff may reserve hotel accommodation on behalf of out-of-town assessors. Staff will confirm the dates in advance of the meeting, but assessors are required to pay for accommodation on checkout and will be reimbursed.

Private accommodation arrangements may be made at a flat rate of \$30/day.

Necessary expenses should not be a barrier to being an assessor, please contact the program officer with any concerns you might have. Also be in touch with the program officer if paying expenses directly is not possible for you, so alternative arrangements can be made.

At the Meeting

Assessors are asked to bring a laptop in order to review electronic materials. Laptops can be provided upon request; please contact the program officer in advance of the meeting to arrange.

The meeting convenes at the appointed time. The assessors are formally briefed (the 'charge') on responsibilities and the meeting process. BC Arts Council's priorities, program objectives, and assessment criteria are reviewed and there is an opportunity for questions about the process.

Assessors then proceed to discuss each application against the program guidelines, assessment criteria, and BC Arts Council priorities. Assessors may also view, read, or listen to additional support material provided by the applicants (e.g. images from visual artists, audio recordings from musicians). Where relevant, they consider written assessments prepared by independent assessors.

Each application is discussed in turn and given scores by assessors which are converted to a ranking. At the end of the meeting, the assessors will have collectively ranked the applications in priority order for funding and will use this ranking as a tool to make recommendations or decisions about funding.

The meetings are staffed by a chair and program officer(s) (sometimes in combined roles) who manage the assessment process. They ensure that each application is examined with respect to program guidelines and assessment criteria, that the weighting of the criteria (as applicable) is respected, and that all applicants are treated equitably. Staff manage conflict of interest and oversee compliance with BC Arts Council policies while encouraging assessor participation and helping the group to reach final agreement.

Staff do not comment on artistic merit but are able to provide factual or background information on issues such as organizational management and financial position, if requested by the assessors.

Staff record discussion and proceedings of the meeting by taking notes on each file. Notes are available to applicants via their officers. Comments are aggregated and not attributed to individual assessors.

Conclusion of Meeting

After deliberations, assessors are asked to comment on the assessment process and the program guidelines. Often other consultations or policy questions are also raised with assessors. Additional staff may join the meeting for this consultation and debrief.

To protect confidentiality, all meeting materials and assessors' notes (both written and electronic), are collected by BC Arts Council staff as transitory records and are disposed of in an appropriate manner.

Results are processed and applicants are notified of results.

Submission of Expense Claim

Expense claims should be submitted as soon as possible after returning home—reimbursement is generally within two weeks of receiving the claim.

Confidentiality

Assessors are required to maintain the confidentiality of the information submitted, the discussions during the adjudication process and the identity of fellow assessors (until announced, see next section).

Public Acknowledgement

The BC Arts Council does not disclose the names of assessors during the fiscal year that their appointment falls in. All assessors are, however, listed as a supplement to the Annual Report and as a companion piece to the list of successful funding applicants.

BC Arts Council Vision, Core Values, and Strategic Priorities

When making their recommendations and providing feedback, assessors should refer to the BC Arts Council's vision, core values, and strategic priorities to provide a wider context.

Vision

The BCAC will strive to ensure that artists and cultural organizations in British Columbia are well-supported, thriving and able to reach their full potential under principles of equity, diversity, accessibility, and reconciliation. Arts and culture are seen as fundamental to developing vibrant and resilient communities, where the people of British Columbia are highly engaged in the province's unique arts and culture sector and are recognized for their innovation and leadership in Canada and abroad.

Core Values

- Artistic Development and Achievement
- Indigenous Engagement and Cultural Vitality
- Equity, Access and Diversity
- Collaboration and Partnerships
- Engagement and Participation
- Recognition and Promotion
- Fair and Transparent Governance

Strategic Priorities

The BC Arts Council strategic plan, [New Foundations: 2018-2022](#), identifies four strategic priorities:

- Sustainability & Creative Development
- Indigenous Arts & Culture
- Equity, Diversity & Access
- Regional Arts & Community Arts