

BC Arts Council Granting Policy

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1. Preamble

I. Effective Date

The Granting Policy is effective as of February 23, 2024.

II. Purpose

The BC Arts Council's Granting Policy governs and supports the BC Arts Council's granting activities. The Granting Policy is part of a set of foundational policies and principles that guide Council's work and decision making, and inform policies, procedures, and operations.

III. Objective

The objectives of this policy are to outline and communicate the principles, values, instruments, administrative roles and processes underpinning granting activity at the BC Arts Council; and to support the accountability, oversight and transparency of granting activities.

IV. Authority and Administrative Responsibility

Authority for the Granting Policy resides with the Executive Director, BC Arts Council Secretariat, with endorsement from the BC Arts Council and with input and agreement provided by the Program, Policy and Process Advisory Circle.

V. Approval and Revision to the Granting Policy

Recommendations regarding the Granting Policy may be brought forward to the Executive Director by Secretariat staff or through the Council's Program, Policy and Process Advisory Circle. Revision to the Policy requires the endorsement of the BC Arts Council with input and agreement provided by the Program, Policy and Process Advisory Circle.

VI. BC Arts Council Relationship to Government

The BC Arts Council was created by an Act of Legislature, the *Arts Council Act*, in 1995. The BC Arts Council operates as an advisory body who are broadly representative of the regions and the artistic communities of British Columbia. The Council is appointed by and accountable to government.

The appointed members of the Council collectively set strategic direction and inform program development, while the operational work of the Council is led by staff at the Ministry responsible for the BC Arts Council. The budget appropriation for the BC Arts Council operations and grant programs is provided exclusively by the Province of British Columbia.

The Council has a legislated responsibility to award grants to persons or organizations from the money appropriated annually for the Council by the legislature. The Council is responsible for submitting a financial statement showing all money allocated by Council for the previous fiscal year. This responsibility is fulfilled in the publication of the annual report.

VII. Relationship to other BC Arts Council activities

All of the BC Arts Council's activities are guided by its purposes and rooted in the powers and duties as defined in the *Arts Council Act*.

The BC Arts Council's granting activities are a key component of the Council's activities, which as outlined in the *Act*, also include:

- Community Consultation and Engagement
- Research
- Advocacy
- Communications
- Public Education

While these activities may share many of the same objectives, values and administrative processes as the Council's granting activities, they are not governed by this policy.

2. BC Arts Council's Principles

Granting activities are guided by the overarching principles outlined below, which inform decisions and activities from program design to the peer review process, and extend beyond granting to all the activities of Council. Granting activities are also guided by the BC Arts Council's strategic planning, and values identified as part of that planning.

I. Truth and Reconciliation

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) published its final report detailing the experiences and impacts of the residential school system, creating a historical record of its legacy and consequences and detailing [94 calls to action](#) across a wide range of areas including child welfare, education, health, justice, language and culture.

The TRC calls to action address the ongoing impact of residential schools on survivors and their families and provide a path for government and Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in British Columbia to create a joint vision of reconciliation.

The legacy of that separation and suppression of culture has had a profoundly negative impact on Indigenous communities, families and cultural connections through the generations.

The [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act \(Declaration Act\)](#) establishes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) as the Province's framework for reconciliation, as called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's [Calls to Action](#).

As articulated in the TRC report and the Declaration Act, the BC Arts Council recognizes the historical and ongoing wrongs perpetrated against Indigenous peoples and the continuing impacts of colonialism in place today.

The BC Arts Council seeks to embed Indigenous truth telling and knowledge in its work, to situate itself as an ally to Indigenous peoples, to foreground healing, and to reduce the burden on Indigenous artists, cultural practitioners and organizations by holding and creating space for the work of reconciliation.

II. Self-determination

The provincial government passed the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act \(Declaration Act\)](#) into law in November 2019.

The *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Declaration Act) establishes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) as the Province's framework for reconciliation, as called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's [Calls to Action](#).

The Declaration Act aims to create a path forward that respects the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, including self-determination, while introducing better transparency and predictability in the work we do together.

The BC Arts Council upholds the legal right to Indigenous self-determination as outlined in the [Declaration Act](#) and cultural self-determination through our policies, programs and priorities to support conditions where:

- Indigenous Peoples exercise and have full enjoyment of their rights to self-determination and self-government, including developing, maintaining and implementing their own institutions, laws, governing bodies, and political, economic and social structures related to Indigenous communities.
- Indigenous Peoples in B.C. fully enjoy and exercise their distinct rights to maintain, control, develop, protect and transmit their cultural heritage, knowledge, languages, food systems, sciences and technologies.

III. Equity Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility

In accordance with the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#), the [Canadian Human Rights Act](#), [Accessible Canada Act](#), [the BC Human Rights Code](#), and the [Accessible British Columbia Act](#), the BC Arts Council is committed to [equity, diversity, access and inclusion](#) in

all of its work. This commitment is informed by an intersectional approach that recognizes the historical and contemporary exclusion of groups and individuals in the context of human rights and social justice.

The BC Arts Council believes that all people should be able to find themselves in the arts. We are critically conscious of how power imbalances lead to discriminatory and unequal conditions and how, in turn, these conditions prevent many people from accessing opportunities and resources and fully participating in society. The BC Arts Council acknowledges that our evolution has been influenced and shaped by colonial history and that our funding practices have been inequitable and not fostered a true representation of the diversity of our communities. We seek to address these historic and current inequities, and to make programs, processes and language more inclusive and accessible.

The BC Arts Council's equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility strategies guide our awareness, approach, accountability, and actions.

3. Granting Instruments

I. Grant Programs

The BC Arts Council's principal granting instrument is its suite of provincial arts and culture grant programs. Grants for organizations, collectives, and individuals administered by the BC Arts Council provide support for arts and culture in British Columbia through both operational and project funding.

These programs encompass a comprehensive range of artistic and organizational activities, including the creation and presentation of new works, development of capacity among artists and arts organizations, and fostering public engagement in the arts. Through the programs and their components, the grant programs are intended to have inherent flexibility to accommodate a range of fields of practice and activities.

II. Partnerships

As outlined in the *Arts Council Act*, the BC Arts Council consults and collaborates with arts and culture organizations, artists and artists' organizations, ministries of the government, local governments and other communities in order to support arts and culture in the province. Partnerships offer a means to distribute funding to specific groups or sectors and are a way of expanding the reach of Council's activities.

Current key partnerships include:

- First Peoples' Cultural Council
- ArtStarts in Schools
- BC Touring Council
- Creative BC

III. Strategic Investments

In addition to the granting programs, the BC Arts Council also makes use of strategic investments for projects outside the regular programs and eligibility criteria. Strategic investments allow the BC Arts Council to support broader arts and culture sector needs and innovation.

A framework is used to support decision making around making strategic investments. The framework outlines a set of goals for strategic investments which are to:

- provide strategic funding to enhance British Columbia's arts and culture sector while supporting the BC Arts Council priorities
- ensure responsive and timely funding for successful BC Arts Council applicants
- support a more adaptive and flexible organization.

Strategic investments differ from the regular granting programs in that they may have different intended outcomes or broad outcomes that cut across more than one of the granting programs. Strategic investments are also used in situations that require processes that are different from those used in the regular granting programs.

Strategic investment funding is delivered through grants.

IV. Evolution of Granting Instruments

Granting instruments – namely the BC Arts Council's grant programs and strategic investments – may need to evolve over time. Modifications to such instruments may result from:

- trends and developments in artistic practice
- operational concerns
- opportunities to adopt best practices and find efficiencies
- opportunities to enhance Council's impact
- recommendations from stakeholders
- new priorities developed as part of strategic planning
- program evaluation results and recommendations

Significant shifts to specific granting programs' intentions or eligibility may require Council input; however, alterations that keep with the program's overall intentions are approved by the Executive Director as required.

4. Administration

I. Administration of Grants

The administration of grant funding instruments is guided by the principles identified in this policy and administered by the BC Arts Council's operational policies and procedures.

II. Funding Decisions

The BC Arts Council has three options for managing and distributing funds for British Columbia arts and culture in an open, accountable, and neutrally administered process as required by the *Arts Council Act*.

A. Peer Assessment

Peer assessment is used for the majority of the BC Arts Council's funding decisions.

A peer assessor framework outlines the criteria for selecting assessors and assembling the assessment panels. Peer assessment ensures:

- a broad and experienced perspective in the evaluation process by using members from the sector.
- the decision process is respected, understood and meets the expectations of the sector.
- the fair assessment of subjective matters in relation to program criteria by those with related expertise.

Peer assessment panels are put together with the goal of ensuring representation from a range of regions, fields of practice, and diverse identities, with additional consideration around equity and GBA+ participation.

The procurement process used to select and contract assessors adheres to the Province's procurement policies.

B. Internal or formula-based assessment

Internal assessment or formulas are used for programs where funding is distributed based on non-subjective factors. This option is used for program with small grants and clear and easy factors to assess based on eligibility.

C. Strategic Investment decisions

Funding may be requested outside the normal suite of grant funding programs that falls within the scope of a framework for strategic investments. Requests for funding that fall under Strategic Investments are reviewed by the Executive Director, who provides recommendations, and by Council as a whole, who may provide input. Decisions for funding are the responsibility of the Leadership Circle.

III. Conflict of Interest

In all its assessment processes, the BC Arts Council relies on clear procedures to manage conflicts of interest in an ethical manner. A conflict of interest can be direct and/or indirect (perceived) as it relates to assessment of grant applications or applicants.

- Direct conflict of interest may include, but are not limited to, board membership, ownership of assets, receipt of gifts, employment, or other financial or professional affiliation.
- Indirect conflict of interest arises when an assessor's professional or private interests may appear, to a reasonable person, to affect their ability to provide impartial decision making.

Where a conflict of interest has been identified, the individual with the conflict is excluded from any discussion or decision making for that grant applicant or application.

IV. Appeals Policy

Funding decisions of the BC Arts Council are final. Decisions cannot be appealed unless there is evidence that the BC Arts Council's published program guidelines, policies or procedures were not followed during the assessment process, impacting recommendation and subsequent decision.

The Appeals Policy is intended to support accountability for administrative fairness and transparency in BC Arts Council's funding decisions.

V. Transparency and Confidentiality

The BC Arts Council is committed to transparency and accountability. One of the Council's purposes, as outlined in the *Arts Council Act*, is to provide an open, accountable and neutrally administered process for managing funds for British Columbia arts and culture.

The BC Arts Council's policy is to publish information on all grants recipients on its website. The Council also publishes the names of peer assessors who serve on committees on an annual basis. The Council does not make public the names of unsuccessful individual applicants and guidelines on confidentiality are enforced throughout and following the peer assessment process.

All information collected by the BC Arts Council is subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. The BC Arts Council adheres to all requirements under these laws and may only use personal information for the purposes for which it was originally collected or for uses consistent with that purpose.

The BC Arts Council is also subject to the *Financial Administration Act*.

VI. Evaluation and Review

The BC Arts Council takes a continuous improvement approach to evaluating and reviewing policies, programs, and procedures. The Granting Policy and operational policies may be subject to evaluation and review at the determination of the Ministry responsible or the BC Arts Council. Changes to related policies, legislation or strategic plans may also result in a review of the Granting Policy.

Evaluation and review of policies and programs, including this Granting Policy, should take into consideration:

- Principles of Fairness
- BC Arts Council Principles
 - Truth and reconciliation
 - Self-determination
 - Equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility
- BC Arts Council Strategic Plan and values
- Alignment with the *Arts Council Act*
- Ministerial mandate commitments