



# **Peer Assessment Handbook**

# ArtsNL

## Peer Assessment Handbook

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# **INTRODUCTION**

## **WHAT IS ArtsNL?**

ArtsNL is a non-profit Crown agency created in 1980 by *The Arts Council Act*. ArtsNL is governed by a volunteer board of 13 appointed by government, reflecting a regional representation of the province, and includes 10 professional artists who provide sectoral representation of the arts community; one community representative (with an interest in the arts); one business representative (with an interest in the arts); and one representative of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation (non-voting). ArtsNL receives an annual grant from the Province to support a variety of granting programs, office administration, and communications. It also seeks support from the public and private sector. It supports the following artistic disciplines: dance, film, multidiscipline, music, theatre, visual art, and writing.

## **WHAT IS THE MANDATE OF ArtsNL?**

The purpose of ArtsNL is to foster and promote the creation and production of works in the arts in the province, the study and enjoyment of these works and to encourage public awareness of the arts.

The objects of ArtsNL are to foster and promote the creation and production of works in the arts, the study and enjoyment of these works, and in particular, ArtsNL shall

- a. Foster and promote through grants and otherwise the arts of the province and the arts of groups indigenous to the province;
- b. Help through grants and otherwise in the development of provincial amateur and professional artists and arts organizations; and
- c. Advise the Minister with respect to the development of arts and arts policy in the province.

## **WHO CAN APPLY TO ArtsNL?**

Each ArtsNL program is targeted to serve an identified clientele and will only accept funding requests from applicants meeting the specific program eligibility criteria. Identified program applicants are:

- **Professional Project Grants Program (PPGP)**  
Professional individual artists and groups
- **Professional Artists' Travel Fund (PATF)**  
Professional individual artists and groups
- **Sustaining Program for Professional Arts Organization (SPPAO)**  
Professional not-for-profit arts organizations in existence for at least 2 years
- **Annual Operating Program for Professional Arts Organizations (AOPPAO)** Professional not-for-profit arts organizations

- **Community Arts Program (CAP)**  
Community based not-for-profit arts groups and organizations
- **ArtsSmarts**  
Schools in the K-12 provincial school system
- **School Touring Program**  
Professional individual artists, groups and not-for-profit arts organizations

## **WHAT IS PEER ASSESSMENT?**

In the context of ArtsNL peer assessment is the process of having practicing artists and/or other experts review and assess the merit and viability of applications for funding. Peer assessors recommend which projects should be funded and amounts to award successful applicants. ArtsNL uses peer assessment to determine funding for all of its programs.

## **WHY DOES ArtsNL USE PEER ASSESSMENT?**

ArtsNL uses peer assessment for three reasons:

1. To ensure applications in a specific artistic discipline or area are evaluated by qualified individuals with experience in that area and knowledge of the artistic community
2. To maintain an effective mechanism for ArtsNL to stay connected with the artistic community and its developing trends
3. To maintain the arms-length nature of ArtsNL and protect arts funding from political influences.

## **HOW ARE PEER ASSESSMENT COMMITTEES FORMED?**

The program manager/officer selects individuals to serve on peer assessment committees for each of the funding programs. He/she works from a list of artists who have received ArtsNL funding in the past, or have a significant artistic background. This list was compiled by past and present ArtsNL members and staff and is updated regularly. Peer assessors are selected to maintain a balance of male-female, urban-rural, in-out of province, and Indigenous/Francophone representation requirements. Members of the community are encouraged to recommend people. You may recommend yourself. Recommendations are accepted on an ongoing basis, an official recommendation form is available on the ArtsNL website.

An assessor may be used only once in a 12 month period on any peer assessment committee, and only once every two years for a specific program. Assessment committees usually include one ArtsNL Council member and between two and six members of the artistic community. Some programs, based on their nature, may require expertise from outside the arts community. The Professional Project Grants Program uses seven three-person committees to cover all artistic disciplines. Applications to the Professional Artists' Travel Fund are reviewed by two assessors due to the responsive nature of the program, and the required two week turn-around on applications. All other programs use a 5-7 person multidisciplinary committee.

## **ARE PEER ASSESSORS PAID A FEE?**

Peer assessors for the Professional Project Grants Program, Annual Operating Program for Professional Arts Organizations, Community Arts, School Touring, and ArtsSmarts Programs are paid a \$6 per application reading and review of support materials fee, plus a \$40 per hour fee for the assessment meeting. Assessment meetings are typically planned so all applications can be assessed in one work day (7 hours). However, if the program manager/officer feels there are too many applications to assess in one day, additional time may be scheduled for the assessment meeting. Typically a rate of about 5 applications processed per meeting hour is used to set the meeting length. The program manager/officer will inform committee members of the expected time required for the meeting(s) when he/she invites them to sit on the committee. Assessors for the Sustaining Program for Professional Arts Organizations are paid a \$12 per application reading and review of support materials fee, \$40 per hour for the assessment meeting, and \$100 for each presentation review they write on an applicant's artistic work. Assessors are issued cheques within two weeks after they have submitted their completed Assessment Forms to the program manager/officer.

Assessors for the Professional Artists' Travel Fund are paid \$6 per application. These assessors are paid once annually.

A full one hour lunch break will be taken for assessment meetings over 4 hours. Peer assessors are **not** paid for the lunch break. ArtsNL will provide food for those attending the meeting in person. A menu of lunch options will be emailed to you before the meeting. Out of town assessors joining the meeting via video conference may spend up to \$14 for a local lunch. Original receipts and a claim form must be mailed to ArtsNL for reimbursement.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **PROGRAM MANAGER/OFFICER:**

A program manager/officer oversees the administration of each granting program operated by ArtsNL. His/her responsibilities include:

- Reviewing applications for funding to ensure they conform to Council's policies and eligibility requirements
- Contacting applicants with questions regarding their application
- Notifying ineligible applicants that their application will not be assessed, and returning the application
- Selecting and contacting people to sit on the peer assessment committee(s)
- Creating a summary sheet listing the applicants, their funding requests, and the total available to award for each artistic discipline
- Packaging, and sending the applications and support material to the peer assessors
- Scheduling the time and place of the assessment committee meeting
- Contacting peer assessors a week before the meeting to confirm all support materials work and there are no questions on any of the applications.

- Reviewing the responsibilities of the assessment committee at the beginning of the meeting, serving as a resource to the assessment committee on Council policy, precedents and procedures, and reviewing the committee’s decisions at the end of the meeting.
- Reviewing the comments of the assessment committee, and preparing grant notification letters to all applicants
- Delivering feedback from the assessment committee to applicants, as requested

**PEER ASSESSOR:**

The peer assessor is a representative of the arts community who has expertise and experience in the artistic discipline or area for which the applicants are seeking funding. The assessor’s responsibilities are:

- To fully understand his/her role and responsibilities before agreeing to serve on the assessment committee
- To review and evaluate the applications before the scheduled assessment committee meeting
- To contact the program manager/officer **before** the assessment meeting with any questions regarding the applications or any potential conflicts
- To attend the scheduled assessment committee meeting and actively participate in the discussion and assessment of each application
- To complete a Project Assessment Form on each application with clear and concise comments on the assessment and reasons why the committee reached its decision
- To recommend which applications to fund and suggest funding amounts for those applications
- To notify the program manager/officer, before the committee meets, of any potential conflicts of interest regarding an application

**COUNCIL ASSESSOR:**

The Council assessor is a current member of ArtsNL’s board who sits on an assessment committee. The responsibilities of the Council assessor are the same as the peer assessor, plus the following:

- To chair the assessment committee meeting
- To report on the committee’s funding recommendations to Council

**OTHER STAFF:**

The ArtsNL office assistant will attend each assessment meeting to record notes on the assessment discussion of each application. The communications officer will attend the start of each meeting to manage the technical aspects for those joining the meeting via video conference.

**COUNCIL:**

Council establishes ArtsNL policies and ensures its programs operate within its policies and mandate. Council reviews the funding recommendations of the peer assessment committees and makes them official and final through a ratification vote.

## **ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

### **WHAT PROCESS IS USED TO ASSESS APPLICATIONS?**

Peer assessors should review the applications as soon as possible after receiving them and should contact the program manager/officer with any questions. At the assessment meeting, each committee may develop its own particular process for reviewing and categorizing the applications, however ArtsNL suggests the following method: Each application is reviewed in order, based on its file number. The committee discusses the merits and concerns with each application and tags each as either; F (Fund), PF (Possibly Fund), or DNF (Do Not Fund). In the second round of assessment, only applications tagged PF are reviewed and tagged either F or DNF. Finally, the applications tagged F are discussed to decide the amount they are to be funded.

Throughout this process the committee will attempt to gain consensus, but when this cannot be achieved, a vote in which majority rules decides tagging and funding.

### **WHAT CRITERIA DO ASSESSORS USE TO EVALUATE AN APPLICATION?**

Applications are reviewed according to the policies, procedures, and criteria established by ArtsNL for each granting program. This is outlined in detail on the assessment forms for each program.

## **PROGRAM FUNDING**

### **HOW DOES ArtsNL DECIDE THE OVERALL FUNDING AMOUNT FOR EACH PROGRAM?**

The amount to fund in each program is decided by Council based on the annual budget allocation from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry, and Innovation, and other program funders.

All programs, except the PPGP, award funds across all arts disciplines with a multidiscipline peer assessment committee assessing applications. The PPGP alone conducts arts discipline based funding with discipline specific peer assessment committees.

### **WHAT FORMULA DOES ArtsNL USE TO DECIDE HOW MUCH TO FUND EACH ARTS DISCIPLINE IN THE PPGP?**

In the PPGP ONLY, whatever percentage of the total request the applications in a specific arts discipline make, that same percentage of the overall funding available will be available to be awarded in that arts discipline. This simple formula is adjusted slightly, as required for each application deadline, to allow applicants in all arts disciplines to request up the maximum grant allowable in the PPGP (\$4,000 for New and \$10,000 for Established applicants), or the full grant requested by the applicant if under the maximum.

## **ETHICS**

### **CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Confidentiality is taken very seriously at ArtsNL. Assessors must not reveal that they are part of an assessment committee before the committee meets. Assessors are not to discuss any aspect of an application with anyone other than ArtsNL staff and other assessment committee members.

Once applications are accepted for consideration by the program manager/officer, they become official files of ArtsNL, and are subject to the same confidentiality rules as any government file. Unrestricted access to the files can only be gained through the provincial Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

ArtsNL defines a conflict of interest as any situation in which an individual could potentially be viewed as promoting a private or personal interest for him/herself or a related party.

ArtsNL tries to ensure no assessor will be in a conflict of interest with any application he/she will be assessing. If an assessor does find he/she has a potential conflict of interest with an application, then he/she must contact the program manager/officer immediately to discuss the situation. In most cases, it can be arranged for an assessor to leave the room for the discussion of the particular application. However, if an assessor has a conflict with several applications, or the conflict of interest could undermine the fairness of the assessment process, an assessor could be replaced. This decision is made at the discretion of the program manager/officer in consultation with ArtsNL executive director.

Relationships and positions that would lead an assessor to be in a potential conflict of interest include:

- Having any direct family relationship to an applicant
- Being the spouse, life partner, or currently dating an applicant
- Being a current staff or board member of an organization seeking funding
- Being a collaborator, or employee for a project seeking funding
- Any situation in which an assessor feels he/she cannot make a fair and impartial review of an application. ArtsNL members and staff are subject to the same conflict of interest guidelines as assessors.

**Details of who can apply and other eligibility requirements are contained in the application form for each grant program.**

Note: Individual applicants studying or working temporarily outside the province at the time of application are eligible for funding if it can be shown that their permanent place of residence is Newfoundland and Labrador.

## **RELEASE OF GRANT INFORMATION**

### **HOW ARE APPLICANTS INFORMED OF THEIR RESULT?**

The program manager/officer informs all applicants of their result in writing, usually within two months of the application deadline. Applicants may call the ArtsNL office for their result after the result letters have been sent.

### **DOES ArtsNL RELEASE THE NAMES OF ASSESSORS?**

ArtsNL does not include the names of assessors in media releases or grant notification letters. However, applicants can request the names of the assessors who reviewed their application.

### **IS THE LIST OF GRANT RECIPIENTS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC?**

Yes, ArtsNL issues a media release for each funding program listing the grant recipients for each granting session. The release is sent to media, the ArtsNL e-mail list, and is posted on the ArtsNL website. It lists the names of the successful applicants, the amounts they received, and may also include the applicant's location and a brief project description. Media releases are typically issued four weeks after the grant notification date for the PPGP, twice annually for the PATF and two weeks after the grant notification date for all other programs.

### **CAN APPLICANTS GET FEEDBACK ON THEIR APPLICATION?**

Applicants can get feedback on their application from the program manager/officer only. Assessors provide written comments on the Assessment Form. The program manager/officer uses this information to provide feedback to applicants. Assessors should **not** provide feedback directly to applicants. If approached, they should refer applicants to the program manager/officer.

### **CAN DECISIONS BE APPEALED?**

No, once the assessment committee's recommendations have been ratified by Council they are final. An applicant can reapply at the next application deadline. It is recommended that applicants get feedback on their project from the program manager/officer before reapplying.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have questions regarding an application please contact the program manager/officer at the ArtsNL office.

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