

## **Tips on Improving AFA Grant Applications - Music Projects**

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts supports individual artists through “Project Grants”. Alberta musicians can apply to the “Projects – Music” program for funding in the areas of Art Production, Training/Career Development, Travel/Marketing, and Research. This is a juried program, which means that all the applications received at any one deadline are evaluated by an independent panel of music industry experts.

There are many reasons why a grant application is successful or unsuccessful. Juries change for each grant deadline, and funds are often limited, so it is impossible to tell if the jury will find your application has merit, or if they will have the available funds to award a grant. The part of the process that you have control over is the content and look of your application. These tips can help you maximize your application’s potential.

### **Contact the Consultant.**

The consultant can assist you in the grant process by: assessing your project eligibility; informing you about the grant process; assisting with creating a budget; and in some cases, helping edit your application. Consultants DO NOT comment on the merit of the project. Juries make merit and funding decisions, not grant consultants.

### **Presentation matters.**

The "look" of the application becomes very important, especially if a jury is torn between two applications they want to fund. Your application must be clean, concise, and easy to read. It should be submitted on white, 8 1/2 x 11 paper, printed single-sided in a simple 12 pt font. Fancy presentation will not boost your chances – keep it simple and use a staple.

### **Balance your budget**

Your budget and its presentation may be the most important page in your package. A clear, balanced, reasonable budget gives you credibility. Ask yourself if the budget line items that you are including are adequately explained by the project description. Be concise, include quotes when appropriate, and do not include any miscellaneous or contingency amounts.

**Tell the jury what they need to know.**

Your grant information should be well organized and easy to understand. Juries have large amounts of reading, so make it easy on them. Consciously or unconsciously, juries ask three questions: Who is the applicant? What is their project? Why should we fund them? Make sure you answer these questions somewhere in your application. *Don't assume the jury knows anything about you or your project.* What instrument do you play? In what city/town are you based? What kind of music do you play? Who have you performed with? Why is this project important to you? How will this project advance your career? How will it impact the community? Give the jury good reasons that this project is worthy of funding.

**Choose your support materials carefully.**

If your grant application requires recordings, and/or other support material, pick ones that best reflect your application. Which of these demos has the fastest/best/greatest impact? Which track shows off your abilities? Which track best reflects the project? If you are supplying references, make sure they are from recognized people that can vouch for both your artistic merit and your ability to carry out the project. Remember to include any press clippings, reviews and photos. A jury may only have a few minutes to discuss your work, so impact is vital.

**Expect nothing.**

No one piece of advice will guarantee the success of a grant application.

Competition and standards are high, and success rates vary from deadline to deadline. It often takes people years to finally get the right combination of

a) exciting project, b) well-constructed application, c) good samples, and d) sympathetic jury.

Remember that many juries simply don't have enough funds to grant all the projects they like. Be hopeful, but never "count on" a grant. If you are successful, great! If you are unsuccessful, phone the grant consultant for more feedback and try again.