



Alberta
Foundation
for the **Arts**

EXPERT PANEL HANDBOOK

THANK YOU!

EXPERT PANELS ARE AT THE CORE OF THE WORK OF THE ALBERTA FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS (AFA).

It is important that grant applications from Alberta artists be assessed by knowledgeable peers. Expert panels provide the AFA with independent, informed perspectives and encourage excellence within the Alberta arts community.

Serving as an expert panel member requires a commitment to a time-consuming and sometimes challenging process. The AFA and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism appreciate the contribution you are making by agreeing to serve on an AFA expert panel.

HOW EXPERT PANELS ARE SELECTED



AFA project grant recipients are selected and prioritized by independent expert panels whose members are selected from the Canadian arts community. Expert panel members are drawn from a comprehensive list of approved individuals. Anyone may nominate a potential expert panel member; expert panel members may also nominate themselves by submitting a nomination form. AFA clients who are not in good standing with the AFA may not serve on expert panels.

An expert panelist may serve a maximum of three times over a period of two years, and then is ineligible to sit on an expert panel for twelve months. Panel member names may be listed in AFA publications, including the AFA website, with fiscal year-end reporting. However, no reference will be made to the specific expert panel composition and deadline.

The AFA strives to ensure that expert panels are representative of the culturally diverse make-up of Alberta, including Indigenous artists and communities.

While recognizing that no one expert panel can represent the varied demographic of Alberta, the AFA requires that, over time, balance is achieved, considering the diversity of:

- **Expertise in artistic practice:** Expertise in different artistic styles, philosophies, and/or disciplines.
- **Professional expertise:** Representation of different roles in the arts such as creators, interpreters, publishers, directors, administrators, writers, curators, arts educators, etc.
- **Educational background:** Representation of formal and informal education. Representation of different artistic generations from emerging to established artists and arts organizations.
- **Regional representation:** Representation of urban and rural areas. Representation of geographic regions of Alberta.
- **Other factors as outlined in the Alberta Human Rights Act**

AWARDING GRANTS BY EXPERT PANEL



An expert panel is composed of three or more individuals who typically meet at the Arts Branch offices in Edmonton to consider all eligible applications in a specific grant stream.

Expert panels may be required to meet from one to five days, depending on the number of eligible applications to be considered.

Expert panel members are compensated according to current Government of Alberta rates for this service.

Before the panel meets, each member is responsible for reviewing the guidelines for the grant stream, reviewing all eligible applications in contention for funding, making an initial assessment of the applications according to the tool provided, and understanding the procedures and duties outlined in this handbook.

The Foundation has two kinds of grant programs:

Operating Grants

Operating grants are awarded by equitable distribution of available funds to all eligible applicants based on the program guidelines as published on the AFA website. These grants are not awarded by expert panels.

Project Grants

Project grants for individuals or organizations are awarded on competitive basis, usually by an expert panel. Applications are assessed and grant recommendations are made to the AFA Board for approval. Funding streams with ongoing deadlines are reviewed by an internal panel.

EXPERT PANEL PROCESS



All expert panel members are sent information from the AFA prior to the start of their assessment meeting. This information is respective to the program the panel will be assessing and includes:

- A PDF of this handbook
- A letter of agreement to be signed by the expert panel member
- A link to the program guidelines published on the AFA website
- A listing of eligible applications and scoring rubric for project assessment
- Access to eligible applications through the GATE (Grant Administration Tracking and Evaluation system)
- A user guide for external reviewers for the GATE system

During the Expert Panel Assessment

Assessments made during the reading and review period serve as a starting point for ranking the applicants who may receive funding. The panel must decide together which projects should be funded, the order of priority for funding, and the amount of funding that should be provided.

Expert panels may recommend funding for all or part of a project or amounts for specific purposes. It may also establish conditions to be met before the grant can be paid. For example, a Training/Career Development grant may be subject to the applicant providing proof of registration at a specific institution mentioned in the application.

Staff supports the process by organizing and presiding over the meeting, seeing to the presentation of materials, and answering any general questions about funding purposes and procedures. Arts Branch staff do not provide opinion about the applicants or the work under consideration.

The expert panel is not expected to provide an individual adjudication of applicants, and no comments about individual applications are recorded or are made available. General comments about the applications are gathered by staff and provided to applicants on the AFA website.

EXPERT PANEL PROCESS



Conflict of Interest

For the purpose of AFA expert panels, conflict of interest exists under the following conditions:

- If the panel member stands to benefit financially from a successful application
- If the panel member is uncomfortable discussing a particular applicant for any reason

At the start of the expert panel meeting, each panel member will be asked to declare any conflict of interest that may exist with respect to any application up for assessment. A member who has a conflict of interest cannot discuss or vote on that application and is recused during discussion.

Confidentiality

Expert panel members are expected to respect confidentiality of the process and may not disclose any application details or panel proceedings at any time.

Funding Approval

All decisions made by expert panels must be ratified by the AFA Board of Directors. The AFA is held accountable for the transparency of the granting process and the disbursement of grant funds.

Notification of Applicants

As soon as the expert panel decisions have been ratified by the AFA Board, both successful and unsuccessful applicants are notified of the outcome of the expert panel process. Applicants receive notification within four to six months of the application deadline.

Applicants that are recommended as successful but do not receive funding due to limited budget allocations per program – and their position on the expert panel ranking – will be identified as highly recommended. If there are unassigned funds from any program at the end of the fiscal year, the AFA Board may distribute these funds to highly recommended projects.

A list of the most common reasons for unsuccessful applications is published on the AFA website. Artists are encouraged to contact staff for assistance if they wish to apply in the future.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA STAFF



The Director of Arts Development, AFA/Arts Branch, makes the final decisions on expert panel composition and applicant eligibility for all AFA grants.

Arts Development Consultants with experience and understanding of artistic practice and education are available to help applicants prepare applications. These consultants are also available to assist applicants with any questions they may have about the assessment process or how to improve applications for future deadlines.

After a program deadline, Arts Development Consultants examine applications for completeness and eligibility and make preparations for the expert panel process. Consultants also preside over expert panel meetings, provide grant stream information to the panelists as required, assist panelists in building consensus, and compile general comments on applications.

Staff Involvement

Arts Branch staff may not provide their personal opinion to the expert panel on any applicant or application at any time. Arts Development Consultants and Grants Administrators do not have access to funding allotments for specific grant streams until after the expert panel has concluded and are unable to provide panelists with grant stream budget details.

After the panel ranks the projects for funding, Arts Development Consultants and Grant Administrators work together to complete the data management and recommendation documents for the AFA Board and process invoices and expenses claims for panel members.

REMUNERATION AND EXPENSES



Expert panel members are paid in accordance with established AFA rates for service. Panel members are paid a reading fee for each application reviewed and a daily rate for participation during the expert panel sessions.

The Arts Branch will pay in advance for transportation to and from Edmonton for out-of-town panel members travelling by bus or by air. Panelists may choose to use their personal vehicle and will be reimbursed for mileage, as part of their expense claims, after the panel sessions have concluded. The Arts Branch will also pay directly for accommodation – at its hotel of choice – for out-of-town panelists.

Expert panel remuneration and expense claims are generated after the expert panel sessions and may take four to six weeks to process.

Allowable Expenses:

- A catered lunch is provided for each full meeting day, and no further expense can be claimed for lunchtime meals.
- In-town panel members may claim taxi, parking, and/or mileage from their residence to the meeting location in downtown Edmonton.
- Out-of-town panel members may submit receipts for travel, including taxis to and from hotels, parking, and/or mileage if they travel by personal vehicle.
- Reimbursement for mileage is determined by the standard, flat-rate allowance as approved for Culture and Tourism staff.
- Out-of-town panel members may also claim the standard, flat-rate meal allowances for breakfast and dinner (excluding alcohol) as approved for Culture and Tourism staff.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS



For additional information on the AFA Expert Panel process contact
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