
EXPERT PANEL HANDBOOK



Alberta
Foundation
for the Arts



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 Government of Alberta appreciate the contribution you are making by agreeing to serve on an AFA expert panel.

HOW EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS 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.

Please note that 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 12 months.

The AFA strives to ensure that expert panels are representative of the culturally diverse make-up of Alberta, including First Nations.

WHILE RECOGNIZING THAT NO ONE EXPERT PANEL CAN REPRESENT THE VARIED DEMOGRAPHICS 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.**
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AWARDING GRANTS BY EXPERT PANEL

The Foundation has two kinds of grant programs:

OPERATING GRANTS

are awarded by equitable distribution of available funds to all eligible applicants based on published criteria. These grants are not awarded by expert panels.

PROJECT GRANT PROGRAMS

are awarded on a competitive basis, usually by an expert panel. Applications are assessed and grant recommendations are made to the AFA Board. Project Grant streams with ongoing deadlines are reviewed by an internal panel.

An expert panel is composed of three or more individuals who 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 EXPERT PANEL MEETS

ALL EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS RECEIVE A PACKAGE FROM THE AFA PRIOR TO THE START OF THEIR ASSESSMENT MEETING. THIS PACKAGE INCLUDES:

- A copy of this Handbook
- A contract to be signed by the expert panel member
- A copy of the grant stream guidelines and application form
- A copy of each eligible application for the current deadline, excluding digital support materials
- A Project Assessment Tool form for each application

Before the panel meets, each expert panel 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. Panel members are paid a reading fee for this work.

DURING THE EXPERT PANEL ASSESSMENT

THE EXPERT PANEL MEETS TO CONSIDER EACH APPLICATION.



The individual assessments made during the reading period and the review of digital support materials 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 in which projects will be funded, and the amount of funding that should be provided for each project.



Expert panels may recommend funding for only part of a project or amounts for specific purposes, or may establish conditions that must be met before the grant can be paid. For example, a Training/Career Development grant may be awarded on condition that the applicant provides proof of registration at a specific institution mentioned in the application.



Staff from the Arts Branch supports the expert panel process by organizing and presiding over the meeting, seeing to the presentation of digital support materials, and answering any general questions about grant stream purpose and procedure. 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 each applicant, and no specific comments about individual applications are recorded or made available to applicants. General comments about the applications are gathered by Arts Branch staff and made available to applicants.

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

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

For the purposes 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 s/he may have with respect to any application up for assessment. A member who has a conflict of interest cannot discuss or vote on that application.

CONFIDENTIALITY

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

AFTER THE EXPERT PANEL ASSESSMENT

NOTIFICATION OF APPLICANTS



ONCE THE EXPERT PANEL DECISIONS HAVE BEEN RATIFIED BY THE AFA BOARD, BOTH SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS ARE NOTIFIED OF THE OUTCOME OF THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS.

Applicants receive notification of application results within six months of the application deadline. A listing of general feedback from the expert panel is provided for all unsuccessful applicants. Artists are encouraged to contact staff for assistance if they wish to re-apply to the grant stream.

WHAT INFORMATION IS MADE PUBLIC AFTER THE EXPERT PANEL PROCESS?

Expert panel member names, their area of expertise and their community of residence may be listed in AFA publications, including the AFA website www.affta.ab.ca. However, no reference will be made to the specific expert panel composition and deadline.

THE AFA MAY PRODUCE NEWS RELEASES THAT LIST GRANT RECIPIENTS BY NAME AND THE AMOUNT AWARDED. THIS INFORMATION BECOMES PART OF THE PUBLIC RECORD.

UNASSIGNED FUNDS

If there are any unassigned funds remaining at the end of the fiscal year, the AFA Board may distribute these funds to the next-ranked applicants in each grant stream.



THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA STAFF

THE DIRECTOR OF ARTS DEVELOPMENT, 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 unsuccessful applicants with any questions they may have about the assessment process or how to improve their application for future deadlines. Arts Development Consultants preside over the expert panel meetings, providing grant stream information to the panelists as required, assisting the panelists to build consensus, and compiling general comments on applications.

Grant Administrators examine the applications for completeness and eligibility, and make preparations for the expert panel process. These administrators also provide technical support, administrative support, and grant stream information during the meetings. After the panel has selected and ranked the projects for funding, the Grant Administrators complete the data management and recommendation documents for the AFA Board. Grants Administrators also process the invoices and expense claims for expert panel members.

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 each grant stream until after the expert panel has concluded and, as a result, are unable to provide expert panelists with grant stream budget details.

REIMBURSEMENT AND EXPENSES

EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS ARE PAID IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA RATES FOR SERVICE ON COMMITTEES (SCHEDULE 1). THIS INCLUDES READING AND MEETING DAYS.

- A catered lunch is provided for each full meeting day.
- In-town panel members may claim taxi, parking and/or mileage from their residence to the meeting location in downtown Edmonton. Panel members receive the current government rate in cents/km for personal vehicle use.
- Out-of-town expert panel members may submit receipts for travel (air or bus), accommodation, taxis, and meals, excluding alcohol.

CLAIMS TAKE FROM FOUR TO SIX WEEKS TO PROCESS 

DOCUMENTATION

- Expert Panel Member Declaration Letter (for completion prior to serving as an expert panel member)
- Project Assessment Tool (for use during the reading period and on review of digital support material)
- Feedback Form (for completion when the expert panel is finished)

Expert panel members are provided with a feedback form and encouraged to comment on how grant streams serve the community or how the assessment process is being managed by the Arts Branch.

- Invoice (for completion when the expert panel is finished)

Expert panel members complete an invoice in order to be paid for their work on the panel according to the fees set out in the contract.

- Expense Claim for Non-Public Servants (for completion if related expenses have been incurred)

Expenses for travel, parking, mileage, or other expenses that can only be assessed at the end of the process are claimed through the Expense Claim for Non-Public Servants. Arts Branch staff can assist expert panel members with this documentation.

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
ON THE AFA EXPERT PANEL PROCESS CONTACT:



780-427-9968
(Toll free in Alberta through 310.0000)



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