Feedback from the Peer Jury

Since October 2023, after artsnb releases the results of its program competitions, general constructive comments and recommendations from the peer jury evaluation are available.

Please note that these comments are summarized from the discussions in the peer jury meetings, and do not necessarily relate to every application submitted to that deadline. The goal of sharing this feedback is to provide some insight into the jurying process, and to strengthen future applications.

Summary of the Peer Jury Feedback from the April 1st, 2024 Deadline – Creation and Documentation Programs

Creation Program

General Information and data

- 161 applications submitted to the Creation program were evaluated by 7 peer juries, divided by artistic discipline.
- Applications submitted in Multidisciplinary Arts were juried alongside the discipline closest aligned with each respective project, as determined by artsnb staff.
- Applications submitted in Architecture were evaluated by the Visual Arts jury.
- An additional 12 applications were disqualified, and 4 applications were withdrawn by the applicant prior to the peer jury evaluation due to ineligibility for this program. Many of these applicants were directed to reapply for a different, more appropriate grant for their project.
- The 161 applications juried in this competition received the following results:
  - 87 applications received a status of "Recommended," and received funding.
  - 18 additional applications received a status of "Merit." This status indicates that the jury recommended these applications for funding, but that the program budget was insufficient to fund all meriting applications.
  - 56 applications received a status of "Not Recommended." This status indicates that the jury did not recommend these applications for funding. It does not necessarily mean that the work lacks merit, rather, that the applications themselves were less competitive in the application pool received for this deadline.
- Grant assessment is a competitive process and budgets are limited. Remember that each deadline receives a different set of applications and is evaluated by different groups of peer jurors.
- Of the 87 grants awarded, 21 were awarded to applicants receiving their first grant from artsnb.

- For more detailed information including success rates by Category and by artistic discipline, please visit the official press release on the [Deadline Results page](#) on our website.

General Feedback (all disciplines and juries)

Categories A, B and C:
- All 7 peer juries expressed that the applications submitted for this deadline were very strong. They repeatedly expressed their excitement to see the completed works that were proposed in the applications.
- The juries generally found that artists are underpaying themselves, even within the limits of the currently available grant amounts. They encourage applicants to value their own work as much as that of their collaborators and peers.
- For new applicants, emerging artists, and artists whose main experience has been in the commercial arts sector, the juries recommended that these applicants seek out mentorship and peer support to develop their grant-writing skills. Many juries commented that these applicants only need to develop how they articulate the conceptual and creative drives already present in their work to better represent their practice in grant applications.
- For applicants who are resubmitting unsuccessful applications from previous deadlines, the juries recommended ensuring that the information in the current application is up to date.

Recommendations on application components

Project description:
- The juries appreciated project descriptions that clearly and concisely laid out the following elements:
    - A description of the proposed work or works (e.g.: type, number, and scale or length of pieces to be created or performed; etc.) ;
    - A feasible work plan (e.g.: estimated timeline of steps toward creating the final work; the roles to be carried out by the applicant and their collaborators; etc.) ;
    - A brief statement on the applicant's approach to relevant themes (e.g.: why this project, and why now? How do the proposed choices of form or technique relate to the topic of the work? Who is the desired audience for the work? What is the message or desired impact?) ;
    - A brief explanation of how the proposed project will progress the applicant's artistic practice. (e.g.: how will this project challenge your skills? Will this project allow you to make connections with new publics or collaborators? What are your ambitions for the completed artwork?) .
- The juries also encouraged applicants to be specific about their approaches to the themes or topics of their work. For example: if you are working on a piece about the environment, what aspect of which specific environment? What statement do you want your work to add to existing environmental discourse? How does the form or style of your work correspond with your angle on this topic?

Samples of work:
- The juries wished to remind applicants that their samples of work should be relevant to the proposed project, demonstrating skills, techniques, or approaches that show the peer jury the applicant's capability to undertake the proposed project.
- The juries also recommended against using samples of work links that are hosted on paywalled websites (e.g. Spotify, academic journals, etc.) or websites that require user login (e.g. social media sites), as this makes it impossible for some jurors to view and evaluate the material.

Budget:
- The juries recommended including detailed budget breakdowns whenever an application includes multiple types of expenses, e.g., multiple types of materials, many different services required, collaborator fees, and explanation for any travel requested.
- The juries reminded applicants to consult the program guidelines to ensure they are not requesting funding for ineligible expenses.
- The juries recommended that the priority and majority of an application budget should be dedicated to paying artist fees for the applicant and any collaborating artists. Juries were less favourable to budgets that allocated larger amounts to expenses like space rental and travel than to artists.

Collaborative projects:
- For applications that involve multiple co-creators, juries recommended that the primary applicant clearly indicate which roles they and their collaborators will take in the proposed project. The juries would also appreciate information about what makes the chosen collaborators important for the project at hand (e.g. they have previous experience working with the primary applicant, or they bring a new skill to the collaboration, etc.). This information could be included in the project description or in the collaborator agreement letters.
- The juries also appreciated collaborative applications that allocated clear and fair payment for all artistic collaborators. For applicants who are newer to collaborative work, the juries suggested seeking industry standards for artist fees via arts organizations for reference (e.g. CARFAC, Canadian League of Composers, etc.).

Cultural Relationships & Arts Ethics:
- The juries raised the following ethical concerns across many projects, especially when the applicant did not include a response to the Cultural Relationships question:
  - For projects that reference culturally specific spiritual or religious practices, the jury notes that the applicant should explain their relationship to and/or protocols for respectful engagement with the relevant cultural practice.
  - For projects that reference or involve interaction with vulnerable populations (e.g. children, people living in poverty, victims of a specific tragedy, etc.), the jury notes that the applicant should explain how they plan to approach these populations to ensure clear consent and to avoid reductive representations.
  - For projects that utilize AI, the jury notes that the applicant should take careful stock of the proposed technology they wish to use, especially as many generative AI models are widely known to utilize the work of artists without consent and remuneration.

Additional discipline-specific jury feedback

Craft:
- The jury noted that several applications were written with a focus on the artist's business practice, with little or no detail on their artistic practice and vision. While they appreciated seeing artists consider this side of their discipline, the jurors counselled applicants to consider that applications for artistic grants and business grants require different approaches and kinds of information.
- The jury would have liked to see more applications include letters of recommendation, as this adds a valuable external perspective on the applicants' work and their impact on their peers.

Dance:
- The jury was excited about the number of cross-discipline collaborations presented by dance applications.
- The jury was less favourable about applications that proposed the creation of choreography to be performed by non-professional dancers. While the jury recognized the importance of these opportunities for student dancers, they questioned whether these projects were entirely eligible for the Creation program.

Literary Arts:
- The jury recommended that applicants use the project description to explain the literary and technical choices they will make in the proposed new work, rather than only offering a synopsis of the narrative and/or themes to be explored.
- The jury appreciated the range of projects proposed in children's literature, as this field has been widely underrepresented in New Brunswick.
- The jury also appreciated the quality of the visual storytelling in various graphic novel projects.

Media Arts:
- The jury was excited by the number of film projects presenting fresh approaches to genres like science fiction, horror, and children's storytelling.
- The jury advised applicants proposing collaborative projects such as filmmaking to include information about all collaborators and participants involved in the project (e.g. directors, writers, sound designers, crew, cast, etc.) to demonstrate the roles of every person involved and the feasibility of the project.
- The jury especially recommended the inclusion of a detailed budget breakdown for applicants proposing larger-scale film projects with multiple collaborators and types of expenses, e.g.: collaborator fees, cast and crew fees, equipment rentals, etc.

Music:
- The jury was excited about the range of genres and styles of music represented in this application pool, and wished to encourage applicants working in styles that tend to be underrepresented in artist grants to keep applying.
- Many applications had incomplete or missing information about project collaborators, such as band or ensemble members. The jury recommended including a detailed collaboration letter for active participants in the proposed project, which explains the roles and remuneration for each collaborator.

Theatre:
- The jury appreciated the number of applications by emerging directors taking on more challenging work.
- The jury was impressed by the way many of the proposed projects disrupt conventional narratives and narrative forms that are common in theatre across the province, and wished to encourage this trend of artists expanding the kinds of independent theatre available in New Brunswick.

Visual Arts:
- The jury was excited about the representation of experimental and performance art forms in this application pool.
- The jury recommended that applicants include conceptual sketches, prototypes, or proof of concept images in their Samples of Work to help the jury better visualize the proposed project.

Documentation Program

General Information and data

- 20 applications to the Documentation program were evaluated by a multidisciplinary jury of peers.
- 1 additional application was withdrawn by the applicant prior to peer jury evaluation, due to the project being rescheduled.
- The 20 applications juried for this deadline received the following results. Grant assessment is a competitive process and budgets are limited. Remember that each deadline receives a different set of applications and is evaluated by a different group of peer jurors.
- 9 applications received a status of "Recommended," and received funding.
- 11 applications received a status of "Not Recommended." This status indicates that the jury did not recommend these applications for funding. This does not necessarily mean that the work lacks merit, rather, that the applications themselves were less competitive in the application pool received for this deadline.
- Of 20 grants awarded, 1 was awarded to an applicant receiving their first grant from artsnb.
- For more detailed information including success rates by artistic discipline, please visit the official press release on the [Deadline Results page](#) on our website.

General Feedback
- The Documentation program is intended to foster theoretical and critical discourse in the arts, as per the [program guidelines](#). The jury was excited by a variety of innovative approaches to creating this discourse, such as documentation through music and song or through community-based storytelling.
- While the jury appreciated the ambition of many large-scale projects, they cautioned that applicants should consider the scale of the works proposed in relation to the budget available to avoid overextending themselves and affecting the feasibility of the project.

This could mean bringing collaborators or mentors into the project to provide support, or breaking a large project into smaller phases across multiple grants.

Recommendations on application components

Project Description:
- The jury appreciated applications that offered a detailed explanation of the project's goals, workplans, and that clearly defined all technical or theoretical terms for a multidisciplinary jury of peers. The jury cautioned against making grandiose claims that cannot be backed up by fact-checking or the application documents (e.g. claiming that the project is the "first" or "best" instance of a type of work).

Samples of Work:
- For applications with a wide variety of collaborators and project participants, the jury recommended that the primary applicant limit the samples of work to demonstrate their own work and that of a small number of their collaborators. Since jurors have limited time to view samples of work, applicants should focus on work that demonstrates the capabilities of the principal creators or co-authors of the proposed project.

Budget:
- The jury felt that budgets should prioritize paying the artists involved (both the applicant and collaborators), and were less favourable to budgets that allocated the majority of funds to paying large corporations for a service (e.g. accommodation costs). The jury also recommended including a detailed budget breakdown explaining the rationale for all requested expenses, including which materials or services are required, collaborator fees, and explanation for any travel expenses requested.

Cultural Relationships:
- The jury advised applicants to use this section of the application to explain their ethical approaches to subject matter dealing with cultures or communities outside their own. They advised that this section could be useful to spell out the applicant's personal relationships to those communities, rather than simply "ticking a box".
- For projects that utilize AI, the jury recommended also including notes on the ethics of the proposed technology, as many generative AI models are known to utilize the work of artists without consent and remuneration.