

31 July 2015

Australian Dance Council
Ausdance Inc

National Program for Excellence in the Arts

Ministry for the Arts

Via email: nationalexcellenceprogram@arts.gov.au

Draft Guidelines for the Program

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The Australian Dance Council – Ausdance National is Australia's peak body for dance: educating, inspiring and supporting the dance community in reaching its potential as a dynamic force within local, national and international communities. As part of a network of Ausdance organisations working across Australia, we design and deliver accessible services and integrated programs to support dance in Australia. Ausdance is a member of ArtsPeak and the National Advocates for Arts Education, and facilitates the Tertiary Dance Council of Australia.

We welcome the opportunity to review the guidelines in draft format, noting this new funding process exists under the Commonwealth *Grants Rules and Guidelines* and will need to be approved by the Finance Minister before commencing.

Ausdance supports the feedback provided by ArtsPeak relating to the Guidelines and adds these further comments.

Ongoing Assessment

Greater clarity is required on how and when applicants will be made aware if their application is unsuccessful. With ongoing assessment it may be unclear to applicants when they have been deemed unsuccessful, or are able to re-submit.

An application could be made in February, considered by assessors and rejected and the applicants not informed until mid June. This would limit the time available prior to the next proposed 'cut-off' for submissions for the applicant to consider feedback and review the project. Timely feedback is essential for projects to consider their status and viability, especially if other external funding partners are involved.

If a project does not meet the guidelines or criteria, immediate feedback could be given at that point. And clear timelines for expected feedback on the success or not of an application should be provided on receipt.

With ongoing assessment of applications it is also unclear how the NPEA will ensure there is an 'appropriate mix across arts forms and types of activity, between regional, urban and international projects and across a range of communities'.

Reporting Requirements

There is a need for greater clarity on the reporting requirements and contract conditions associated with the grants. The Productivity Commission stated:

the current regulatory framework for Not-for-Profits [estimated to be half of all arts organisations] is characterised by uncoordinated regimes at the Commonwealth and state/territory levels. Disparate reporting and other requirements add complexity and cost, especially for organisations operating in more than one jurisdiction.¹



There is potential a single arts project could be supported by the NPEA, the Australia Council, as well as state and local governments and external supporters at different stages in development and production. Organisations already concerned about reduced structural sustainability may find themselves faced with increased reporting requirements on reduced funding to continue creating and producing Australian art.

The guidelines point to a 'standard Commonwealth Funding Agreement' and that 'reporting requirements will be proportional to the scale of the project' however, as this is a new program, applicants may wish to see draft contracts and reporting frameworks before applying. This will allow administration costs to ensure reporting and contractual obligations to be met in the development of applications.

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Multiple applications – auspicing organisations

Of particular concern is the capacity for service organisations to support individuals and unincorporated collectives of artists through auspicing. Auspicing allows individuals and collectives who may be unfamiliar with, or concerned about their capacity to meet, financial requirements to still undertake artistic practice, supported in the administration by a known, financial competent entity. Working with an auspicing agency can be an important step for emerging collectives and artists, who may wish to develop a shared practice before establishing themselves as a unique entity. While we understand the limitation on the number of successful grants an organisation can hold will ensure great capacity to share the resources, we suggest that the guidelines be expanded to include auspicing opportunities - allowing a single organisation to hold a number of grants if they are clearly channeling those funds to other artists through auspice arrangements.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, if you require further information on the issues raised please don't hesitate to contact Ausdance via email <ceo@ausdance.org.au>.

Kind regards,



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ⁱ Productivity Commission – Research Report *Contribution of the Not-for-Profit Sector*, January 2010

