

Department of Education
Arts Queensland

Handbook for Arts Queensland Peer Assessors

October 2026

Acknowledgement

The Queensland Government respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land.

We extend our respect to Elders, past and present, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
We acknowledge the continuation of diverse cultural practices and knowledge systems of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Contents

- 1. Introduction 4
- 2. Peer Assessor roles and responsibilities 5
- 3. Arts Queensland’s role and responsibilities 6
- 4. Arts Queensland’s expectations of Peer Assessors 7
- 5. Peer Assessor management and payments 9
- 6. Overview of the application assessment process 11
- 7. Attachment A: Conflicts of Interest..... 12
- 8. Attachment B: Peer Assessor agreement..... 13

1. Introduction

This handbook is a guide to Arts Queensland's approach to Peer Assessment. It outlines the important role Peer Assessors have in determining arts and cultural funding decisions that support delivery of [*Queensland's Time to Shine: a 10-year strategy for arts and culture*](#).

This strategy highlights the Queensland Government's commitment to growing the state's creative economy and deliver on its vision to achieve a thriving creative sector which supports a statewide vibrant arts scene.

Actions and initiatives will work to strengthen arts and creative businesses and careers, deliver statewide arts experiences, and celebrate the state's creative talent and stories with national and international audiences.

The strategy outlines Queensland's priorities to build a creative future that connects Queenslanders with one another and with global markets. It also delivers on the [Queensland Government Community objectives](#) and the priorities of the [2032 Delivery Plan](#) and [Destination 2045: Delivering Queensland's Tourism Future](#).

The priorities of *Queensland's Time to Shine* are:

- **Transformational arts and culture for Brisbane 2032 and beyond** – Deliver statewide creative activation and legacy outcomes driven by the opportunities of Brisbane 2032.
- **Uniquely Queensland arts experiences** – Shine the global spotlight on Queensland's unique arts and cultural experiences, attracting audiences, driving regional economic growth and enhancing the state's reputation as an arts destination.
- **Maximising opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creatives** – Enable the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts, cultural and creative sector to maximise economic, cultural and social benefits for individuals, communities and Queensland.
- **Future creative workforce for a creative economy** – Prepare Queensland's creative sector for the future by investing in skills, innovation and opportunities that support long-term careers and a growing creative economy.
- **Arts for all Queenslanders** – Strengthen Queenslanders' access to enriching arts and cultural experiences.
- **Sharing our stories and celebrating our storytellers** – Celebrate and invest in the development and sharing of stories by Queensland storytellers.

Queensland's Time to Shine is a whole-of-government strategy led by Arts Queensland within the Department of Education, in partnership with the arts, cultural and creative sectors, other industries, businesses, philanthropists and other levels of government

Why do we use Peer Assessment?

Assessment by an independent panel of peers allows for arts and other related sector representatives to support the achievement of policy objectives by providing an expert, open and accountable approach in recommending applications of merit for funding.

Arts Queensland's method of peer assessment enables strong and collaborative assessment that ensures both representation of the diversity of Queensland communities and the breadth of artforms and experiences of the state's arts sector.

2. Peer Assessor roles and responsibilities

Arts Queensland's pool of Peer Assessors are generally allocated to a specific fund panel (the Panel) for the duration of their appointment. Panel membership reflects the expertise and experience required to review applications against the objectives of the fund. Continuity of panel membership supports consistent decision making across funding rounds and helps deepen peers' expertise in a fund.

Peer Assessors review eligible applications allocated to them by Arts Queensland and make funding recommendations based on:

- the merit of the application
- whether the application provides value for money
- the ability of the applicant to successfully deliver activities
- the strength of the evidence base underpinning the proposed activity
- how the application compares to other eligible applications.

Peer Assessors provide their rationale for each recommendation through assessment comments and moderation discussions. If necessary, they may recommend additional grant conditions.

Peer Assessment ensures eligible applications undergo a robust evaluation and moderation process. This allows a panel to agree on a ranked list of applications to be recommended for funding within the available funding envelope, noting not all commendable applications are able to be funded.

To carry out their role in the assessment process effectively, Peer Assessors should ensure they:

- are familiar with their panel's funding program, its guidelines and application process
- understand their obligations under the Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct and other legislation (outlined within this document) including reporting and managing conflicts of interest, and maintaining confidentiality
- can provide independent, evidence-based reviews of applications in a fair, transparent and consistent manner and by the agreed deadlines
- are able to participate in panel meetings to discuss assessment and agree on funding recommendations
- can provide clear, concise, meaningful feedback on applications for Arts Queensland to provide to successful and unsuccessful applicants and other government stakeholders
- are able to participate in induction, moderation and other formal meetings as required.

For some funds, Arts Queensland may seek additional advice from industry experts to support Peer Assessors in making their assessments and recommendations.

It is very important that Peer Assessors let Arts Queensland staff know as soon as possible if they are not able to complete assessment of all applications by the due date. That way applications can be reassigned if necessary to allow the moderation meeting to go ahead on the planned date. This avoids delays to the approval process and advertised notification date.

Peer Assessors are also encouraged to provide feedback to Arts Queensland at any time by emailing peers@arts.qld.gov.au.

Panel moderation meetings

Panel moderation meetings will most likely occur online but may be held in person. Peers will be notified well in advance if meetings are in person. They will also be advised about reimbursement of travel costs.

Meetings require a minimum 66% of panel members attending to proceed and will generally occur in business hours. They may, however, be scheduled outside of business hours to suit the panel's needs. Arts Queensland may arrange additional meetings as required.

3. Arts Queensland's role and responsibilities

Sourcing and Inducting peers

Once a Peer Assessor has been selected, they are provided with a comprehensive induction to ensure awareness of their responsibilities as an assessor. They are given detailed information about the relevant funding programs, including guidance on how to assess the funds to which they are assigned.

Arts Queensland will review and update this handbook as required, and provide Peer Assessors with updated versions.

Availability planning

For recurring funding programs, Arts Queensland will contact Peer Assessors prior to the fund's closing date with details of assessment periods and relevant proposed moderation/meeting dates. This will help them schedule time to assess applications and attend panel meetings.

For one-off funding programs, Arts Queensland will advise Peers on the assessment periods and proposed moderation/meeting dates at the time they are invited to join the panel.

Managing Conflicts of Interest and supporting assessment

Prior to moderation, Arts Queensland staff will:

- support peers with the identification of Conflicts of Interest and manage them accordingly
- check applications for eligibility and assign applications to Peer Assessors
- answer questions and provide further information where required, such as clarifying any issues in relation to guidelines, policies, and priorities
- administer SmartyGrants, the online system used to manage grant applications.

Moderation

A senior Arts Queensland staff member will chair moderation meetings to support Panel discussion and ranking of applications.

Arts Queensland staff will also document key discussion points and decision making for internal reporting and record keeping and to support the provision of feedback to applicants. Arts Queensland also captures general feedback from peers on the round to share with the sector, and support improvement to grant processes.

Section 6 has an overview of the assessment and moderation process.

Post moderation

Once the moderation process is completed, Arts Queensland will provide Peers with a summary of any payments they are entitled to and instructions on how to invoice.

4. Arts Queensland's expectations of Peer Assessors

Demonstrating high standards of conduct

Peer Assessors must demonstrate high standards of conduct at all times and not engage in conduct which may directly or indirectly bring the Queensland Government or the Peer Assessor Panel into disrepute. This means any conduct that does, or has the potential to, adversely impact the reputation of, or community confidence in, the Queensland Government, the Peer Assessor Panel, or its investment processes and decision making.

The Queensland Government has made a commitment to enhance community safety through the introduction of a suite of changes focused on terrorist symbols and phrases including through the *Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Act 2026*.

Accordingly, in its administration of public monies, as an agency of the Queensland Government Arts Queensland will not support applicants or activities that do not represent an appropriate use of public money. This could include promoting behaviour or speech that is hateful, insulting or that promotes racism or religious intolerance, or that is contrary to Anti-Discrimination or hate speech laws. Community expectations also apply to peer assessors who make recommendations on the use of public money.

Declaring and managing conflicts of interest

Prior to assessment of applications, Peer Assessors are provided with a list of eligible applicants and their project names to check for any Conflicts of Interest (COI). COIs can be:

- **Actual** – there is a conflict between official duties and personal or other official interests that is likely to influence decision making
- **Perceived** – other people see a conflict of interest between official duties and personal or other official interests
- **Potential** – there is a personal interest that does not conflict with duties but could become an actual or perceived conflict in the future.

A COI can also present itself when a Peer Assessor has commenced reviewing an application. Peer Assessors should notify Arts Queensland as soon as they become aware of any COIs so that Arts Queensland can establish the level of the COI and determine the appropriate management action, if any, to be taken. For example, where a significant COI exists, Arts Queensland will remove access to the relevant applications for the conflicted Peer Assessor. They will not be able to participate in panel discussions and recommendations regarding those applications. See **Attachment A** for further details.

Confidentiality

As per the Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct, Peer Assessors are required to keep all application details, assessment and moderation discussions confidential.

Peer Assessors **must not** discuss applications with applicants and should refer applicants to Arts Queensland.

Cultural Protocols

Arts Queensland will seek feedback from appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peer Assessors on applications that involve Indigenous cultural content and/or communities, acknowledging the expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peer Assessors in advising on cultural content.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peer Assessors will consider and advise Panels on:

- whether appropriate consultation and permissions has been evidenced for the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural content and materials advice
- if there has been appropriate consideration of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property.

Where appropriate, Arts Queensland will provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander assessors with the opportunity to discuss cultural matters privately.

Key documents

In addition to this Handbook, Peer Assessors are required to be familiar with:

- [Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct](#)
- [Fund specific guidelines.](#)

Working within Legislation

All Peer Assessment activity is subject to various legislative requirements, including documentation associated with assessment processes (e.g. recommendations), written advice from Peer Assessors and assessment notes. Legislation includes:

- [Judicial Review Act 1991](#)
- [Public Records Act 2002](#)
- [Right to Information Act 2009](#)
- [Information Privacy Act 2009](#)
- [Anti-Discrimination Act 1991.](#)

To ensure Arts Queensland meets its obligations under the above legislation, Peer Assessors are required to ensure:

- their assessment and scoring decisions are unbiased and clear, and based on evidence, published criteria and procedural fairness
- they provide independent and objective advice when making recommendations for funding and program improvement, with clear concise feedback comments supporting their recommendations
- when making funding recommendations, they consider how the applicant will use funding to benefit the people of Queensland
- they return to Arts Queensland or destroy any documents provided during the assessment process and any notes created to support their assessment process
- they do not share or discuss any information that is not publicly available, including not making public or media comments related to Arts Queensland funding programs, unless approved beforehand by Arts Queensland.

Arts Queensland will work with Peer Assessors to ensure they understand their responsibilities and meet the standards of conduct expected of Peer Assessors.

5. Peer Assessor management and payments

Appointment

Peer Assessors appointed to recurring funds are selected following an independent assessment process and allocated to panels approved by Arts Queensland's Deputy Director-General. The Deputy Director-General may also appoint peers to one-off funding panels from within or outside this pool.

Peers Assessors are appointed for a period of 12-months to two years and may be eligible for re-appointment after their initial term expires. Peers may resign during that period by writing to Arts Queensland via email. This letter can include reasons for the resignation and any feedback on the program or peer assessment process. Should panels require additional members, the Deputy Director-General may appoint another person temporarily or for the rest of the panel's term.

Peer Assessors **must** have acquitted any outstanding Arts Queensland funding before joining a panel.

Before being appointed, Peer Assessors will need to sign the Peer Assessor Agreement submitted via Arts Queensland's online grants portal, SmartyGrants. A copy of the Agreement can be found at **Attachment B**.

Peers will also be asked to sign a Deed of Confidentiality and Privacy.

Induction

All Peer Assessors are required to participate in an online induction session (or review a pre-recorded induction) prior to the first meeting of their panel. The induction will cover:

- An overview of Arts Queensland's policy framework
- The roles and obligations of Peer Assessors, Arts Queensland, and others
- Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct
- Objectives and criteria for Arts Queensland funding
- Applications assessment process
- Best practice approaches to consistency in assessment
- Administration processes including invoicing and payment
- Using SmartyGrants as a Peer Assessor
- General and fund specific guidance on how to assess.

Communications

Arts Queensland publishes a list of current Peer Assessors for recurring funds on our website, but does not publish the details of the individual panels they serve on. In addition, names may also be published on Open Data. Open Data provides free and accessible data to the public via a wide range of datasets provided by the Queensland Government.

Peer Assessment Honorariums and Expenses

Peer Assessors may be eligible for payment by way of an honorarium. Honorarium amounts consider the number and complexity of applications assessed and the number and length of induction, moderation and other meetings Peer Assessors attend.

Peer Assessors who identify with any of the following **are not** eligible to receive honorariums:

- employees of Federal or State governments
- full-time employees of semi-government organisations and statutory authorities (Federal or State)
- full-time employees of state government owned corporations and colleges.

Employees of local government and/or local government-owned corporations and colleges and part-time or casual employees of categories 2 and 3 above may be eligible to claim an honorarium if their appointment as a Peer Assessor is not connected to their employment and their participation in the assessment is undertaken outside of work hours.

Peer Assessors should confirm with Arts Queensland if they have any questions about their eligibility to claim payments for participating in the process.

Honorarium schedule

For the majority of funding programs, honorariums for participating as a Peer Assessor are outlined in the below table.

Application Assessment	
Activity	Less than 4 hours
Application Assessment – one-off funding application	\$30 each
Application Assessment – multi-year funding application	\$50 each
Review of revised/varied application previously assessed	\$30 each

Induction Training and Meeting Attendance		
Activity	Less than 4 hours	More than 4 hours
Induction and training	\$141	\$282
Moderation Meeting	\$141	\$282
Other Meetings as Required	\$141	\$282

Some funding programs may have greater complexity and/or longer assessment or moderation processes. Arts Queensland will notify potential peers of honorarium rates for assessments and meetings when developing bespoke panels for these funding programs.

Expenses

If an in-person meeting is required, Arts Queensland will advise panel members in advance, outlining the location, the travel and accommodation expenses to be reimbursed, and the approval process required prior to Peer Assessors incurring any travel related expenses.

Claiming honorariums and expenses

To claim approved honorariums and expenses, Peer Assessors need to submit a Vendor Maintenance Form along with an invoice outlining the following information:

- name of the fund the Peer Assessor is working with
- number of application assessments and panel meetings the invoice covers
- bank details so that payment can be made through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)
- GST added if registered for GST
- ABN, if the Peer Assessor has one
- Peer Assessors without an ABN must submit a completed Statement by a Supplier form which can be found at: <https://www.ato.gov.au/Forms/Statement-by-a-supplier-not-quoting-an-ABN/>.

Arts Queensland will upload a form for the invoice and Vendor Maintenance Form to be submitted in SmartyGrants.

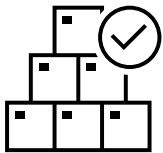
Please note: Arts Queensland cannot give advice regarding taxation or legal obligations. Further information is available from the [ATO website](#).

6. Overview of the application assessment process



Eligibility

- Applications are received by Arts Queensland via SmartyGrants.
- Eligibility is checked by Arts Queensland.
- Applications that do not meet eligibility criteria, or those that do not have an approved waiver, are not progressed to Peer Assessors for assessment.



Assessment

- Peer Assessors advise Arts Queensland of Conflicts of Interest as soon as they are identified.
- Peer Assessors review and score eligible applications in SmartyGrants using assessment criteria and providing detailed feedback regarding their scores and recommendations.
- If relevant to the fund, the Panel may seek additional advice from industry experts to support moderation and recommendations.



Moderation

- A senior Arts Queensland staff member chairs moderation, where assessed applications are discussed and ranked by the Panel.
- The Panel might consider published Fund priorities as well as the balance and diversity across the recommended pool of:
 - artforms
 - applicant types and groups benefitting from the activity
 - geographic location of applicants or activities.
- Final ranking and recommendations are agreed by the Panel, with consideration of any conditions of funding or adjustment to the funding amount requested.
- Arts Queensland staff are available to answer questions and provide further information where required, such as clarifying any issues in relation to guidelines, policies and priorities.
- Arts Queensland staff record the recommendations of the Panel and report internally on the assessment process.



Due Diligence

- Arts Queensland may contact funders or partners named in the application, including those writing letters of support and relevant government agencies, to check the information supplied is accurate and/or there is no duplication of funding.
- Arts Queensland may apply a risk identification framework to recommended applications as part of a final assessment process.



Approval and Notification

- Arts Queensland seeks approval of the final funding recommendations, as per Departmental procedures.
- Upon approval, Arts Queensland notifies all applicants of assessment outcomes.
- A list of successful applications is published on the Arts Queensland website.
- Feedback is provided by Arts Queensland to unsuccessful and successful applicants based on a de-identified summary of assessor comments.

7. Attachment A: Conflicts of Interest

Managing Conflicts of Interest (COI) ensures the decision-making process is transparent. COIs can be:

- **Actual** – a conflict between a peer assessors' official duties and a personal or other official interest that is likely to influence a decision
- **Perceived** – other people may see a peer assessor as having a conflict of interest between official duties and their personal or other official interests
- **Potential** – a personal interest that does not conflict with peer assessment duties, but which could become an actual or perceived conflict in the future.

To ensure the integrity of the panel process, Peer Assessors are required to declare any COIs that exist or are likely to arise in the performance of duties as soon as they become aware of them.

There are some conflicts Peer Assessors will already be aware of when they start in the role, such as their employer, the organisations they volunteer for, or family members in the arts and cultural sector. Other times COIs might be identified during the assessment of the application, or at the moderation meeting. COIs should be declared as soon as a Peer identifies the conflict.

Examples

Common examples of actual or perceived COIs include, but are not limited to:

- where a Peer Assessor or their employer is likely to gain financial benefit directly or indirectly from a grant
- where a Peer Assessor or member of their immediate family or a close associate has applied for funds or is named in the application
- where a Peer Assessor or member of their immediate family or a close associate is a Chair, board member, or a member of an organisation which has applied for funds
- where a Peer Assessor or member of their immediate family or a close associate is a contractor or advisor to the applicant
- personal relationships that go beyond the level of a professional working relationship
- personal beliefs or attitudes that influence the impartiality of advice given
- situations where a Peer Assessor or member of their immediate family or a close associate is in dispute with the applicant, or someone mentioned in the application.

What happens if there is a COI?

If there is any possibility of a COI, or a perception of a COI, Peer Assessors must bring this to the attention of Arts Queensland as soon as possible. Arts Queensland will establish the level of conflict and determine the appropriate management action, if any, to be taken.

Potential COIs may be dealt with in several ways, depending on their significance. These include:

- recording the details of the disclosure and taking no further action because the potential for conflict is minimal and is eliminated by the disclosure
- the Peer Assessor withdrawing from any decision-making process for the application in question
- the Peer Assessor withdrawing from any involvement in the assessment round.

8. Attachment B: Peer Assessor agreement

I _____ (name) agree to abide at all times by the Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct as described in the 'Arts Queensland's expectations of Peer Assessors' section of the Arts Queensland Peer Assessor Handbook in my performance of the tasks associated with membership of the Peer Assessment Panel.

I will:

- ensure I am familiar with my Panel's funding program guidelines and criteria
- apply my expertise and professional skills in making and recording transparent, evidence-based judgements about each application, with reference to the funding relevant guidelines and criteria
- conduct my assessments fairly and without bias
- be respectful and constructive in my participation in Panel meetings and submit assessments by the agreed deadlines
- declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest to Arts Queensland as soon as I am aware of them
- attend induction, moderation and training meetings as required by Arts Queensland
- avoid situations in which my private interests, whether pecuniary or otherwise, might reasonably be thought to conflict with my public duty
- always maintain confidentiality, and not use or share information obtained from applications nor the content of any assessment or moderations
- not discuss applications with applicants nor make public or media comments related to Arts Queensland funding programs, unless approved beforehand by Arts Queensland
- comply with parts 1 and 3 of Chapter 2 of the *Information Privacy Act* as if I were Arts Queensland
- keep confidential any information provided to me by Arts Queensland in connection with funding applications
- enter into a deed with Arts Queensland upon Arts Queensland's request about privacy and confidentiality and compliance with the Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct
- declare any conduct I am currently engaged in that may directly or indirectly bring the Queensland Government, or the Peer Assessor Panel, into disrepute
- notify Arts Queensland in writing of any future conduct I engage in which may directly or indirectly bring the Queensland Government, or the Peer Assessor Panel, into disrepute for the duration of this agreement.

I understand that:

- Arts Queensland funding applicants and others may have legal rights to access documents and written comments prepared by me in carrying out my duties as a peer assessor under the *Right to Information Act 2009*
- my de-identified written and moderation feedback on applications may be provided to applicants and government stakeholders
- my appointment is valid for up to two years from the date of this agreement
- Without limiting any other rights Arts Queensland may have, Arts Queensland may terminate, in its absolute discretion, this agreement for continued failure to complete my duties or for breaches of the Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct
- Arts Queensland may, upon receipt of written notice of any conduct that brings, or may bring, the Queensland Government, or the Peer Assessor Panel, into disrepute, and without limiting any other rights Arts Queensland may have, terminate in its absolute discretion this agreement by written notice.

I am (check box):

- ☐ eligible to receive an honorarium
- ☐ not eligible to receive an honorarium

for my actions as a peer assessor as outlined in the Peer Assessor Handbook.

I consent to:

- the publication of my name as part of the Peer Assessors Register published on the Arts Queensland and Open Data website
- disclosure of my personal information within Arts Queensland for administrative purposes.

I, the undersigned, declare that:

- I acknowledge that I have read and understood the terms of my engagement as an Arts Queensland Peer Assessor as outlined in the Peer Assessor Handbook and this agreement
- I agree to the terms of the above Agreement.

Signed _____
Date _____