

# **Handbook for Arts Queensland Peer Assessors**

**Updated October 2022**

## **Acknowledgement**

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

We extend our respect to Elders, past and present, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as First Peoples of this country.

We acknowledge the continuation of diverse cultural practices and knowledge systems of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination is a human right as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Queensland Human Rights Act 2019 also recognises the particular significance of the right to self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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# 1. Introduction

This handbook is a guide to Arts Queensland's Peer Assessment program. It outlines the important role of Peer Assessors in supporting sound decision-making regarding arts and cultural funding.

Queensland Government funding through Arts Queensland, demonstrates a commitment to Queensland arts and culture on behalf of the public of Queensland. Our decision-making, fund management and communication approaches are driven by the principles of integrity, accountability, and consultation and help us deliver on our responsibilities.

Funding is invested across the arts, cultural and creative sector, from independent artists to large arts organisations, supporting opportunities for Queenslanders to access arts and cultural activity, deliver economic outcomes through cultural tourism, provide creative employment, and realise arts-led health and wellbeing outcomes in communities.

## **Why do we use peer assessment?**

Independent peer assessment provides an expert, open and accountable approach to determining the merit of applications for funding. This is known as an 'arm's length' approach, where independent Peer Assessors make funding recommendations to the Director-General or delegate.

In collaboration with the [First Nations Arts and Cultures Panel](#), Arts Queensland has adopted and new model for peer assessment, transitioning to 50% First Nations representation on each fund panel, along with 100% First Nations representation on panels assessing First Nations-specific funds.

Arts Queensland Peer Assessors work on a specific fund panel for the duration of their appointment. Panel membership reflects the expertise and experience required to review applications against the objectives of the fund.

Budget limitations mean that not all commendable applications can be funded. Peer Assessment ensures that all eligible applications undergo a robust evaluation and moderation process, so that panels agree upon the most meritorious applications to be recommended for funding within the available budget envelope.

From time to time to support the growth of *Creative Together* outcomes against key priorities, such as Elevating First Nation arts, panels may recommend meritorious applications that cannot be supported within a fund budget, for consideration in another funding program by another panel.

## 2. Peer Assessor roles and responsibilities

Peer Assessors' responsibilities include:

- being familiar with their panel's funding program, its guidelines and application process
- being familiar with obligations under the Queensland Government's Code of Conduct and other legislation (outlined within this document) including reporting and managing conflicts of interest
- providing independent, evidence-based reviews of applications in a fair, transparent and consistent manner and by the agreed deadlines
- participating in panel meetings to discuss assessment, and agree upon funding recommendations
- providing meaningful feedback on applications for Arts Queensland to provide to both successful and unsuccessful applicants and government stakeholders
- providing Arts Queensland with sector insights and advice on funding guidelines, criteria, programs, and policy
- participating in induction, moderation and other formal meetings as required.

Each panel will have a Chairperson whose responsibilities include:

- chairing panel moderation meetings and ensuring panel members have reasonable opportunity to express their views
- clarifying or interpreting issues that may be uncertain
- when required, leading (or making provision for) private First Nations-only discussion
- confirming the list of applications recommended for approval and their ranking
- meeting with Arts Queensland or the Minister when required
- providing information and advice to Arts Queensland related to the panel's consideration of applications to a fund

A Deputy Chairperson will also be selected for each panel and will act on behalf of the Chairperson in their absence or where they are unable to participate due to a conflict of interest. If neither the Chairperson or Deputy Chair can attend the meeting or identify a conflict of interest with the same applicant, Arts Queensland will delegate the role of Chairperson to another panel member.

The Panel may seek additional advice from industry experts to support moderation and recommendations.

### Key documents

In addition to this Handbook, other key documents that Peer Assessors are required to be familiar with include:

- [Cultural Engagement Framework – Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures in Queensland](#)
- [Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct](#)
- Fund-specific Panel information

This handbook will be reviewed and updated as needed, and Peer Assessors will be provided with updated versions of the handbook when any changes are made.

Peer Assessors can provide feedback about Arts Queensland's peer assessment processes and funding programs at any time by emailing: [consultation@arts.qld.gov.au](mailto:consultation@arts.qld.gov.au).

## 3. Arts Queensland's expectations of Peer Assessors

### Cultural Protocols

In line with Arts Queensland's Cultural Engagement Framework, the following protocols will guide peer assessors as they assess all applications and will support culturally relevant conduct within peer assessment meetings:

- **Respect** - for Country and Culture in assessment processes including the right to question appropriate consultation and permissions in the use of First Nations cultural content and materials
- **Space** - meetings (online and offline) provide safe, and sometimes First Nations-only spaces for First Nations assessors to discuss cultural matters privately
- **Authenticity** - acknowledging that First Nations peer assessors and arts practitioners are experts in cultural content and quality for their specific country
- **Growth** – seeking and applying feedback from First Nations Peers on the structure and format of grant programs to encourage greater participation from First Nations arts practitioners and organisations
- **Self Determination** – First Nations assessors' advice and decision making is prioritised in relation to considerations of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property
- **Reciprocity** – recognition that there may be a cultural obligation for First Nations peoples to undertake activities in a way that ensures a two-way benefit for parties involved. The time and energy expended by an unsuccessful applicant should still result in a reciprocally positive outcome through the provision of feedback and assistance to improve subsequent applications

### Declaring and managing conflicts of interest

Prior to assessment of applications, Peer Assessors are provided with a complete list of eligible applicants and project names to check for any actual, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest (COI). A COI can also present itself when a peer assessor has commenced review of 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 conflict of interest 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 and 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 for advice and/or feedback.

## Working within Legislation

All peer assessment activity is subject to various legislative requirements, including documentation associated with assessment processes, such as recommendations, written advice from Peer Assessors and assessment notes. Legislation includes:

[Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct](#)

[Judicial Review Act 1991](#)

[Public Records Act 2002](#)

[Right to Information Act 2009](#)

[Information Privacy Act 2009](#)

[Anti-Discrimination Act 1991](#)

To meet our obligations under the above legislation, Peer Assessors are required to ensure:

- their assessment and scoring decisions are unbiased, clear, and based on evidence, published criteria and procedural fairness
- they provide independent and objective advice when making recommendations for funding and program improvement
- they return to Arts Queensland 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
- when making funding recommendations they consider how funding will be used by the applicant to benefit the people of Queensland.

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

**Note:** Peer Assessors who are repeatedly unable to fulfil their duties or who breach the Code of Conduct may be asked to step down.

## 4. Peer Assessor Management and Fees

### Appointment

All Arts Queensland Peer Assessors are recommended by an independent Selection Panel and are appointed to a panel by Arts Queensland's Deputy Director-General. Peer Assessors must have acquitted any outstanding Arts Queensland funding before joining a panel.

Peers Assessors are appointed for a period of 12-months to two years and may be eligible for re-appointment after the initial term expires. Peers may resign during that period by writing to the Deputy Director-General. Where a casual vacancy occurs on a peer panel, the Deputy Director-General may appoint another person to fill that vacancy temporarily or for the rest of their predecessor's term.

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 in **Attachment B**.

## Induction

All Peer Assessors are required to participate in an online induction session prior to the first meeting of their panel. Induction will cover:

- Overview of Arts Queensland policy frameworks
- The roles and obligations of Peer Assessors, Arts Queensland, and others
- The Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct
- Objectives and Criteria for Arts Queensland funding
- Applications assessment process
- Best practice approaches to comment writing and consistency in assessment
- Administration processes including invoicing and payment
- Using Smartygrants as a Peer Assessor

## Communications

Arts Queensland publishes a list of current Peer Assessors on our website but without details about the individual panels they serve on.

## Peer Assessment Fees and Expenses

Peer Assessors who are eligible for payment will be paid per application assessed and for induction and meetings attendance.

Peer Assessors who are **not eligible** to claim fees are:

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

Local Government employees and employees of Local Government owned corporations and colleges are eligible to claim fees if their appointment as a Peer Assessor is not connected to their employment and assessment is undertaken out of work hours.

Peer Assessors should check with Arts Queensland if in any doubt about eligibility to claim fees.

## Fee schedule

<b>Application Assessment</b>	
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Less than 4 hours</b>
Application Assessment – one off funding application	\$30 each
Application Assessment – multi-year funding application	\$50 each

<b>Induction Training and Meeting Attendance</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Less than 4 hours</b>	<b>More than 4 hours</b>
Induction and training	\$141	\$282
Moderation Meeting (Panel)	\$141	\$282
Moderation Meeting (Chair)	\$195	\$390
Other Meetings as Required	\$141	\$282



## Expenses

If an in-person meeting is required, Arts Queensland will let panel members know in advance the location, what travel and accommodation expenses will be reimbursed, and any related approval processes required ahead of peer assessors incurring expenses.

## Claiming fees and expenses

To claim approved fees and expenses Peer Assessors need to submit a Vendor Maintenance Form and an invoice including:

- the name of the fund the Peer Assessor is working with
- the 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 also 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/>

The invoice and Vendor Maintenance Form can be uploaded in Smartygrants.

Please note: Arts Queensland cannot give specialist advice about taxation or legal issues. Further information about tax issues is available from the [ATO's website](#) at personal tax enquiries line 13 28 61.

## 5. Availability planning

### Pre-moderation meeting assessment

Peer Assessors will be provided with a calendar of assessment periods for relevant funds and panels, as well as the proposed moderation dates to help schedule time to assess applications and attend panel meetings.

Peer Assessors are expected to complete the assessment of applications within the designated timeframe to allow the moderation meeting to go ahead on the planned date, and to avoid delaying the approval process and notification date.

### Panel moderation meetings

Panel moderation meetings will generally be held online but may be held in person and outside of Brisbane at the discretion of Arts Queensland.

Meetings require a minimum of 75% panel member attendance to go ahead and will generally be held in business hours. They may, however, be scheduled outside of business hours to suit the panel's needs.

Arts Queensland may convene special meetings as required.

## 6. Overview of the application assessment process

### Applications

- Applications are received by Arts Queensland via Smarty Grants (SG).



### Eligibility Assessment

- 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 for assessment.



### Applications Assessment

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



### Moderation Meeting

- Assessed applications are discussed and ranked by the Panel.
- Final ranking and recommendations agreed by Panel with consideration of any conditions of funding or adjustment to the funding amount requested by the applicant.  
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.



### Approval and Notification

- Arts Queensland seeks approval of the Panel's funding recommendations, as per Departmental procedures.
- Upon approval, Arts Queensland notifies all applicants of assessment outcomes.
- Arts Queensland publishes a list of successful applications on the departmental website and provides feedback to unsuccessful and successful applicants based on a summary of assessor comments.

## Attachment A: Conflicts of Interest

Managing conflicts of interest ensures the decision-making process is transparent. Conflicts of interest can be:

- **Actual** – we currently have a conflict between our official duties and our personal or other official interests that is likely to influence our decision
- **Perceived** – other people see us as having a conflict of interest between our official duties and our personal or other official interests
- **Potential** – we have a personal interest that does not conflict with our duties, 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 conflicts of interest that exist or are likely to arise in the performance of duties as soon as they become aware of them.

### Examples of conflicts of interest

Common examples of actual or perceived conflicts of Interest 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 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
- where a Peer Assessor or member of their immediate family or a close associate is in dispute with someone mentioned in the application

### What happens if there is a conflict of interest

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

Potential conflicts of interest 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 member withdrawing from any decision-making process for the application in question; or
- the Peer Assessor withdrawing from any involvement in the assessment round.

Peer Assessors can find further information and examples in [Managing Conflicts of Interest in the Public Sector](#).

## Attachment B: Peer Assessor agreement

I \_\_\_\_\_ (name) agree to abide at all times by the Code of Conduct as described in the 'Peer Assessor Role and Responsibilities' and 'Expectations of Peer Assessors' sections 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

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
- Arts Queensland may revoke this agreement for continued failure to complete my duties or for breaches of the Code of Conduct
- I am (check box):
  - eligible for remuneration
  - not eligible for remunerationfor my services 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 and
- 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 \_\_\_\_\_