

SaskFestivals

Program Review 2018

PROPOSED CHANGES



cultivating
the arts



FUNDING
PROVIDED BY



BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Saskatchewan Arts Board recognizes, encourages and supports the arts to enrich community well-being, creativity, diversity and artistic prosperity. The Arts Board provides grants, programs, services and loans to individuals and groups whose activities have an impact on the arts in Saskatchewan and ensures that opportunities exist for Saskatchewan residents to engage in all art forms.

Currently, support to professional festival organizations, presentation series, and festival project events is directed through the SaskFestivals program. This program contributes to festivals and groups in the province that make a positive impact on the arts and celebrate community spirit in Saskatchewan by providing either multi-year (three-year), annual or project support. This program receives significant funding through the Arts Board's partnership with SaskCulture through the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation.

A program review of the SaskFestivals program was initiated by the Arts Board in early 2018, with the general objective to ensure that public support to festivals and series contributes to the overall sustainability of the provincial arts ecology and maximizes the benefit to the residents of Saskatchewan. Anticipated outcomes include:

- responding to changes in the arts ecology in a holistic manner;
- assisting festivals that wish to evolve and grow in their organizational capacity;
- addressing current Arts Board and SaskCulture strategic directions;
- making financial room for new entrants to the ecology; and
- supporting the work and mandates of festivals and groups in high alignment with the SaskFestivals program purpose as demonstrated through a competitive assessment process.

This draft outlines the anticipated program revisions. We are open to feedback regarding its content and language. Currently funded organizations are welcome to respond and to ask questions.

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WHAT WE HEARD

Community consultations were held in Saskatoon on March 6, 2018, and in Regina on March 8, 2018, which included participants from all current streams of the program from across the province. An online survey was distributed as a follow-up to those consultations, open to all current and previously funded organizations and applicants from as early as 2016.

In the feedback we received during our consultations, the overall response in all streams of this program was that the SaskFestivals program plays a vital role in providing financial resources. It was clear from all participants that current program demand far exceeds available funds.

Festivals and series are actively seeking other revenues and sponsorships, but this has proven difficult in the current economy. The multi-year funding provided through this program provides the opportunity to plan further ahead in festival scheduling and booking. It was also felt that current processes are familiar and functional for recipients.

“Our event is quite small in scale, and so the funding from SaskFestivals makes up the bulk of our funding. It would be quite difficult to run it otherwise, however, because the small scale of our event makes us ineligible for most other funding.”

Funding and Application Process

- For many smaller organizations, the Arts Board funding is a significant percentage of their revenues, making this program critical to their operations.
- CADAC received both positive and negative reviews. Those comfortable with the system find that it makes financial reporting to multiple funders easier; while others found it unintuitive and difficult.
- Moving to an online platform for applications and reporting would be preferable to the current paper-based system.
- The current deadline dates appear to work for most respondents.
- Personal interactions and application support from Arts Board staff is valued.
- The application and reporting processes pose difficulties for those organizations that have no paid staff and are operated by volunteer committees.

“The SaskFestivals program application is one of the easier applications to fill out – by which I mean that it is straight-forward and doesn’t take an advanced law degree to understand what is expected of the applicant.”

Criteria

- The application criteria were considered appropriate, but some organizations felt that support for accessibility and year-round programming should also be acknowledged.
- Survey respondents were asked to rank a number of criteria in order of priority, and they were ranked as follows:
 1. supporting Saskatchewan artists
 2. community engagement
 3. paying industry wages

Economic impact was consistently rated as the lowest priority.

- A number of other possible priorities that could be considered among the criteria were also mentioned, including:
 - opportunities for underserved communities;
 - representation in rural and urban areas;
 - knowledge sharing and partnership development;
 - producing “greener” festivals that lessen environmental impact; and
 - risk-taking and artistic innovation.
- There were varying responses to the definition of community impact. It was considered important that organizations have the opportunity to self-identify the community they serve, but that definition must foster inclusivity as opposed to being a closed circle.

Multi-Year Funding and Grant Disbursement

- 41% of responses said that a four-year funding cycle for the multi-year stream would be extremely useful, followed by 16% very useful, and 33% somewhat useful.
- 33% responded that a split grant disbursement would be difficult, and another 33% said it would be neither easy nor difficult.
- Further feedback on split grant disbursement told us that a 50/50 split would severely impact organizations. A 70/30 or 90/10 split was preferred.

“Having half of the funding we rely on sitting in hold until after event is not really a good model for us. If there must be a split/clawback amount, it should be as minimal as possible.”

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The SaskFestivals program provides support to professional festivals, series and community groups to achieve outcomes that:

- encourage community engagement, tourism and economic activity;
- enhance the positive impact of festivals in the community and province;
- contribute to the professional practise and heighten the awareness and appreciation of Saskatchewan arts and artists;
- build strong, flexible leadership organizations within the festival community;
- reflect the diversity of the local community and the arts sector through inclusion of Indigenous/Métis peoples and culturally diverse groups; and
- align with the mandate and strategic priorities of the Saskatchewan Arts Board and SaskCulture.

REVISION PRINCIPLES

The following principles result from what we heard during the consultation process. The Arts Board has used these principles to guide its approach to program revisions:

- Demonstrate that the Arts Board trusts and values Saskatchewan festival organizations and groups.
- Let arts organizations and groups speak to their mandates and how they measure success.
- Recognize that organizations need different types and levels of support at different stages of the organizational lifecycle.
- Be fair and transparent with processes while holding organizations and groups accountable to the competitive assessment process.
- Encourage organizations and groups to innovate, take risks, and change.
- Only ask for what is needed for application, reporting and accountability purposes.
- Only make necessary changes to the program.
- Do not destabilize currently funded organizations.
- Encourage “right sizing” as opposed to pushing for unrealistic growth.

From consultation and survey feedback, we heard that these aspects of the current program should be maintained:

- support for Saskatchewan artists
- arms-length principle
- multi-year funding
- emphasis on community engagement

REVIEW GOALS

During our review process, we heard about the **internal realities**, **external factors** and **program issues** faced by festivals and series in Saskatchewan. Considering these factors and keeping in mind the principles articulated on page 5, we have focused the review and recommendation process around six key goals:

1. Increase program clarity regarding eligibility, criteria and funding expectations.
2. Simplify and reduce reporting requirements and application processes.
3. Provide support for organizational growth and development, recognizing that organizations need different types of support at different times in their lifecycles.
4. Continue to promote learning, sharing and partnerships.
5. Recognize and encourage diversity.
6. Support the competitive nature of the program while working towards achieving stream minimums and making room for new applicants.

1. Increase program clarity regarding purpose, eligibility, criteria and funding expectations.

The Arts Board is committing to the following as part of the changes to the SaskFestivals program that result from this review process:

- Program outcomes are being revised (see page 5) and will be clearly articulated in all application materials.
- We are setting new eligibility criteria for each of the new program streams. Please refer to the articulation of these criteria in the appendix beginning on page 9. As part of those eligibility criteria, the Development stream funding will only be available to festivals or presentation series with an arts focus, and the Established stream funding will only be available to festivals or presentation series with a primary mandate in the arts.
- The criteria under which applications are assessed will be clearly articulated in application materials. By including final reports as part of the material reviewed by juries, applicants will have the opportunity to define their own criteria for success and their community (which may be reflective of geography, demographic, or common interest). Applicants will also be encouraged to “right size” their festival organizations.
- The Development and Established funding streams will have minimum funding levels, although it may take more than one application round to meet those minimums with all funded organizations.

2. Simplify and reduce reporting requirements and application processes.

Project funding will remain a simpler application available to organizations, collectives or individuals. It is meant as an entry point for those wishing to develop a festival or series, to celebrate a one-time event, or to support professional arts activities in festivals or series with a wider mandate.

For applications in the Development and Established funding streams, emphasis will shift from long-term projections to a combination of past performance and organizational goals as supported by year-end reports and strategic plans.

For the next application deadline (spring 2019), here are the major anticipated changes:

- The Arts Board will be implementing online application and reporting for all funding streams. This should reduce the administrative work of assembling a hard-copy application package.
- Applications will allow for adequate word count (not character-based) and may be directly connected to the question being answered.
- Year-end reports will form part of subsequent applications for organizations in the Development and Established funding streams; strategic plans will also form part of applications for organizations in Established stream.
- Organizational effectiveness will be assessed by Arts Board staff as part of the annual reporting process.
- Organizations funded under the Development and Established funding streams will no longer be required to complete a Release of Funds Request.
- Annual funding will be released in two stages:
 1. 75% of funding will be released automatically in the month prior to the start of their fiscal year for organizations in good standing, and not before April 1st of the Arts Board's fiscal year in which funding is allocated.
 2. Remaining funds will be released upon receipt and approval of the year-end report of the previous fiscal year (120 days after the fiscal year end).

3. Provide support for organizational growth and development, recognizing that organizations need different types of support at different times in their lifecycles.

The program will offer Project, Development, and Established streams. Full descriptions of these three funding streams, including an overview and a listing of the eligibility criteria for each stream, are found in the appendix to this document beginning on page 9.

4. Continue to promote learning, sharing and partnerships.

The Arts Board and SaskCulture have facilitated a regular gathering of organizations supported by this program in order to share learning and foster cooperation and partnerships. We heard that these gatherings are valued by our grant recipients, and we will continue to organize them.

Over the coming four years, the Arts Board will investigate ways of incorporating learning, sharing best practices and building partnerships into the assessment criteria.

5. Recognize and encourage diversity.

Festivals and series supported under this program will be expected to reflect, to an extent appropriate to their programming and artistic vision, the diversity of the local community and the arts sector through the inclusion of First Nations and Métis peoples and culturally diverse groups.

6. Support the competitive nature of the program while working towards achieving stream minimums and making room for new applicants.

To begin to address inadequate funding levels, minimum grant levels for organizations meeting and exceeding expectations have been established in the following funding streams.

- Development stream: \$10,000 minimum
- Established stream: \$20,000 minimum

It is anticipated that it may take two application rounds to achieve those minimum levels with all funded organizations or groups.

The Development stream is intended as a transitional stream to help those festivals and series who have reached maturity through the Project stream as they move toward the Established stream. **Without new funding resources for the program, however, priority for the first two deadlines will be to achieve minimum funding levels with currently supported organizations.**

The intent of the Project stream is to support new or one-time activities, not for organizations to draw from on an annual, long-term basis. A change has been proposed that would allow applicants a maximum of four consecutive years of funding in the Project stream. After four years, that applicant would need to move to the Development stream or wait for one Project deadline to pass before applying again. This proposed change will encourage organizations who have been consistently successful in the Project stream to consider other revenue options and create opportunities for new applicants in the program.

CONCERNED STATUS

At any time during the funding cycle for Development and Established streams, the Arts Board may flag an organization or group for Concerned Status due to one or more of the following indicators:

- not meeting program eligibility requirements
- instability in governance and administration or operational management
- marked decline in nature and scope of the work and mandate
- marked decline in audience or participation numbers
- marked decline in financial viability, including increased deficit, decreased financial support, or inability to build capacity

If an organization is put on Concerned Status, Arts Board staff will work with them to define a recovery plan with measurable outcomes. The reasons for Concerned Status and the organization's response to and results of their recovery plan will be considered by the jury as part of their next assessment.

APPENDIX
SaskFestivals Program: PROJECT STREAM

Overview

- entry point for new applicants to program
- supports arts programming in both arts and non-arts festivals and events
- **maximum grant amount of \$8,000 per year**
- peer adjudicated
- competitive grant – funding not guaranteed with each application
- must apply annually
- incorporation NOT required
- CADAC NOT required
- distinct programming and administration positions NOT required
- audited financial statements NOT required
- **Applicants may only receive four consecutive years of Project funding**, then must either move to Development funding or wait one project application round before re-applying. Organizations and groups who have aged out of the Project Stream on a year with no Development deadline may be permitted to apply for one additional year of project funding.

Eligibility Requirements

- work and mandate align with SaskFestivals program purpose
- proposed programming is for a single festival or event series
- provides appropriate support for professional arts activities (ie. pays professional artist fees)
- centre of operation and primary programming in Saskatchewan
- Arts Board budget template must be used in application, and financial receipts must be provided with final report
- final report must be submitted within 60 days of end of project
- must be in good standing with the Arts Board, with no overdue reports on prior grants

It is recommended that new applicants to this funding stream consult with Arts Board staff prior to submitting their application.

APPENDIX
SaskFestivals Program: DEVELOPMENT STREAM

Overview

- two-year funding cycle – intended as transitional stream from Project to Established
- **minimum grant amount of \$10,000 per year**
- peer adjudicated
- competitive grant
- organizational effectiveness monitored by Arts Board staff
- subject to Concerned Status (see page 8)
- incorporation NOT required but will be required prior to moving to Established stream
- CADAC NOT required, but must complete Arts Board-developed budget templates in preparation for the CADAC requirement of the Established stream
- engage the advice and expertise of arts professionals in the area of programming and administration

Eligibility Requirements

- work and mandate align with SaskFestivals program purpose
- festival or presentation series supported must be arts-focused
- have a funding history with the Arts Board
- minimum of **three years** of operation (with appropriate history of public presentation) prior to first application
- engages the advice and expertise of arts professionals in its programming and administration
- financial and decision-making processes controlled by Saskatchewan residents
- centre of operation and primary programming in Saskatchewan
- management structure is articulated
- financial accounting systems in place
- bank account in the name of organization or group
- annual financial statements reviewed and signed by independent third party are required
- yearly reporting required – second installment of annual payment not released until final reporting on prior year received and approved
- must be in good standing with the Arts Board with no overdue reports on prior grants

It is recommended that new applicants to this funding stream consult with Arts Board staff prior to submitting their application.

APPENDIX
SaskFestivals Program: ESTABLISHED STREAM

Overview

- four-year funding cycle
- **minimum grant amount of \$20,000 per year**
- peer adjudicated
- competitive grant
- organizational effectiveness monitored by Arts Board staff
- subject to Concerned Status (see page 8)

Eligibility Requirements

- work and mandate align with SaskFestivals program purpose
- core mandate of the organization is to present an arts festival or series
- minimum of **five years** of operation (with appropriate history of public presentation) prior to first application
- new applicants to this stream must have been previously funded through the Development stream AND be deficit-free at the time of application
- engages paid expertise of professionals in its programming and administration
- mandate and work supported by strategic plan, artistic vision and ongoing evaluation processes
- financial and decision-making processes controlled by Saskatchewan residents
- centre of operation and primary programming in Saskatchewan
- incorporated
- registered with and reporting in CADAC
- review engagement or audit required annually
- yearly reporting required – second installment of annual payment not released until final reporting on prior year received and approved
- must be in good standing with the Arts Board with no overdue reports on prior grants