

11 Funding: a checklist

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This chapter is concerned with funding of the arts in Australia, especially as it relates to the artists of non-English speaking background. It is very important for these artists to understand how the system works in Australia. Otherwise they face the prospects of either remaining ignorant of the opportunities Australia presents, having their applications for funding repeatedly rejected or even possibly becoming completely paranoid and imagining that the whole system is working against them personally.

To begin with it is important to note that very few artists make a living from art in Australia; the whole of the arts industry is facing difficulties and funding opportunities are limited for all Australians. Nevertheless, funding is available, so it is important to know how to apply for it and how to use the grants obtained effectively. In what follows we provide a checklist of some of the issues to consider.

Dealing with the bureaucracy

A bureaucracy is a bureaucracy the world over. The similarities may be resounding, but it is often the differences that count the most. Unlike many other countries, Australian arts and culture bureaucracies do not generally offer direct employment opportunities for artists. There is no point in approaching the bureaucrats or the minister for a job—the system doesn't work that way.

If you want to use the system at all, it certainly helps to know how it operates, its strengths and its weaknesses. This chapter

therefore provides a glossary of commonly used terms as well as some tactics that will enable understanding and use of the Australian system.

Funding can come from different sources at different times of the year. Each source has different policies, demands, prerequisites and conditions. However, essentially, funding programs are offered by various bodies within the three levels of government—federal, state and local. Funding can also come from government indirectly through national, state and local agencies such as the Folk Trust and the Crafts Council. Non-government funding can come from private or corporate sponsorship or from philanthropic trusts or foundations.

Sponsorships

You can often negotiate sponsorship for your activities through private business. The nature and extent of the sponsorship you seek will depend on what you are selling—your project, the community or communities involved, where your project will take place, the amount and quality of exposure your project will offer, the price you attach to it. Getting corporate sponsorship is about having business relationships. It is a financial transaction that needs to be agreed to by all parties in writing, with terms and conditions attached.

Here are some things to think about when you are preparing to negotiate sponsorship. What sort of acknowledgement and exposure does the sponsor want? Where will that exposure be? What will its size be? How much will the sponsorship cost in lost revenue (for example, free tickets)? Is there extra expenditure (for example, full colour printing)? Can you afford this expenditure? Does the sponsor want naming rights? Are you at liberty to offer naming rights? Is there a conflict between the politics of the potential sponsor and your event? What is the community profile of the potential sponsor?

To replace tobacco company sponsorship of arts, cultural and sporting activities, governments in several states and territories in Australia have applied a tobacco levy. These funds are channelled through a health promotion foundation or equivalent to support a variety of projects. The foundations run an assortment of cultural and arts grants programs and should be contacted individually for complete details of what they offer and what they expect. There are also a number of philanthropic trusts and foundations in Australia which offer support for particular arts and community programs.

Not all agencies offering funding do so by soliciting applications from the community for program areas they have designated. Some seek out people and projects that suit their objectives and then

support them. Make sure you look into all the options that are available to you.

Sometimes services, facilities or products are provided as a form of sponsorship. We call this form of sponsorship in-kind services. For example, rather than pay for catering, you might invite a food manufacturer to supply food for the opening of your exhibition and offer them advertising on your posters and invitations in exchange.

Structures

Funding bodies need to account for the funds they distribute. Legal structures exist to ensure that recipients of funds are accountable in certain ways. One of the most commonly used structures in community-based organisations is the incorporated association. Rules for setting up and operating an incorporated association are available from your state government corporate affairs department or the equivalent. For example, all incorporated associations are expected to lodge an annual activity report and audited accounts.

The boards and/or committees of management of incorporated associations are elected annually from the association's membership. This can mean that lists of board members and their contact phone numbers or addresses can be out of date almost before they can be circulated through the system.

Board membership is an honorary position that does not receive remuneration. Active committee members give much time and energy, and often support the association financially as well. Committee meetings are usually held monthly, so if you need to approach an organisation to get a reply to a proposal, bear in mind the time the organisation might need to give you an answer.

The availability of funding to individuals varies. Some funding bodies will not give at all to individuals, others will only give a specified amount of money and then with specific conditions attached. If the funding body to which you wish to apply does not make grants to individuals, you can consider making a joint application with an incorporated association, or having your project auspiced.

Auspicing is an arrangement between an individual or a group and a legally recognised structure such as an incorporated association. There are different ways of having a project auspiced. These should be considered carefully depending on the project in question. Take as an example the production of a play. The role of the auspice body may be simply to receive the grant monies and pay them out again. On the other hand, the auspice body might produce the play—select the director and hire the actors, for instance. Between

these two extremes there may be any number of variations. The artist should negotiate the arrangements very carefully with the auspice body and have a written contract clarifying the separate responsibilities of all the parties involved.

Guidelines and terms and conditions of grants

Guidelines are statements of policy which funding bodies produce to inform the public about, for example, their programs, priorities, conditions, types of funding and eligibility.

Each funding body will have its own guidelines. Some will be general and apply to all applications, some will be specific to particular project and/or artform areas. It is important that you read guidelines carefully and understand them thoroughly. You should arrange to talk to the officer running the program, either on the telephone or in person, if you have any questions. It is a waste of everyone's time to submit an application that does not fit the guidelines. They need to know:

- whether or not a potential applicant is eligible to receive government funds
- residency or citizenship status
- whether the organisation applying for a grant is incorporated
- whether any previous grants have been accounted for.

Other guidelines relate to the timing of the project. Funding is rarely available retrospectively, and so you should not actually begin a project until you have been advised formally of the success of your application.

Once you have accepted money towards a project, you cannot change the project without the prior agreement of the funding body. The money you have been given is for the specific project to be carried out as described in your application.

Closing dates must be respected. Most funding bodies accept applications postmarked on the closing date but make sure you check this detail. If you want to send a faxed application enquire in plenty of time whether or not that is acceptable.

Acquittals

An acquittal is a release from the obligations you agree to when accepting a grant. The content and format of the acquittal will be specified in the terms and conditions of the grant. Generally, it

involves providing activity and financial reports to the funding body within a specified time.

The art of obtaining grants is a combination of skills in reading, comprehension and clear thinking so you should:

- know your subject matter
- know your program area
- be brief and concise
- make your answers fit the questions and, preferably, the space allocated.

Applications

Usually, applications need to be submitted on specially designed forms, available from the funding body. Make sure you answer the questions that are asked and that the information you supply about your project is accurate. This includes the financial details.

If you think a question is not relevant to your project then say so, don't just leave a blank space.

Don't be afraid to adapt some sections to your project but if everything seems to need changing, perhaps this funding program is not the appropriate one for you.

Supporting material

It is important to include supporting material (a video, photographs, CD, tapes or cassettes, curriculum vitae, press clippings, for example) about the artist, the community or communities and the organisation with your application, as this can help the application 'speak'. If the only relevant press clippings you have are in a language other than English, attach them anyway, along with a synopsis in English.

However, it is a waste of time to simply put together a series of attachments that accompanies a virtually empty application form.

Project development

Before you set out to enquire who offers what, try to look at your project objectively. Ask yourself a few questions:

- What is it all about?
- For whom is it to be developed?
- Who is involved?
- Why is it to be developed?

- What is special about it?
- Is it accessible to the audience?

Then find out which government departments and/or services offer relevant funding programs. This research is best done at a library or over the telephone.

When making your enquiries, be concise and clear. Ask for the grant program guidelines and application forms so you can see whether you think it is still appropriate and worthwhile to make an application. As you read through this material, you will probably have some questions. When you feel you understand the funding program, ring the officer responsible and ask your questions. Remember, you don't have to ask all your questions in this first conversation. You can ring back again if you need to. Best of all, make an appointment with the officer and discuss the project in person.

Don't leave things to the last minute. You will not have enough time to rework or alter your application and the funding officer will more than likely be inundated as the closing date approaches.

Don't be intimidated when it comes to talking to funding officers! Remember, they have many clients and a substantial workload, and probably cannot recall all their clients individually. Some officers are more straightforward in their approach than others, and may tell you that your project does not fit the guidelines of their program. They may make alternative suggestions. You may find you need to clarify aspects of the application that seem obvious to you:

- no, this is not a folkloric project
- no, the artist is professionally trained even though he/she is earning a living as a bricklayer
- no, the ethnic blabla festival is not the most appropriate for this artist who has had several solo shows in the major contemporary art space in Zagreb.

Budgets and accounting

You must give serious thought to the real costs of carrying out your project, whether it is for a funding application or not. Do not guess what the costs might be, find out! Get several quotes for all the services and equipment you might need, making sure each of the suppliers quotes for the same job and materials. Try to think of every single thing that you might need. For example, if you are doing a performance, you might need to buy props; if you are putting on an exhibition, you might have particular framing requirements.

One important budget item in a funding application is the applicant's contribution. You are being asked to place a dollar value

on the contribution you will make to the project. It does not necessarily have to be an additional out-of-pocket expense. For example, most rehearsals will take place in the applicant's home; work out a rental charge to include the space, services and utilities provided. After all, if the space were not available, you would have to hire one. Enter this under the 'Applicant's Contribution' line of the 'Income' column. If the contribution is made up of several elements, itemise them.

It is also important to itemise and place a dollar value on the in-kind support you receive. Include such support in your budget, as it is income you have generated yourself toward the project.

Accounting

As grants involve financial transactions, you need to set up a straightforward and simple way of recording those transactions. The system you use should be able to show, at any time, the true state of the finances for the project. You do not want to spend more money than you have and, as part of your acquittal to the funding body or bodies, you will need to provide an accurate statement of income and expenditure for the project. In setting up your system, have a close look at the financial pages of the grant application.

It will be easier for you to operate with just one system, so make sure the way you itemise your anticipated income and expenditure in the application form is appropriate to the project—if it isn't, alter the form to represent your needs. For example, if you are doing a visual arts project, you may not have box office income but you may have expenses associated with the sales of posters or postcards.

Remember to keep all the receipts for the money you spend and be sure these receipts can be allocated to specific items associated with the project. Be sure too that you have invoices for any money you pay out. Sometimes, you will be required, as a condition of your grant, to have the accounts reviewed by an independent accountant. This is called auditing. Normally, you will be advised of this condition before you start the project.

Service organisations

Multicultural arts workers, sometimes called ethnic arts officers, and the organisations in which they are based are able to offer helpful information and advice. Other services and resource organisations include Migrant Resource Centres, Ethnic Communities Councils, Community Arts Networks and Community Arts Officers.

Most service and resource organisations are incorporated associations whose staff can assist you in various aspects of your work. The nature and extent of the support and services they are able to offer will vary from organisation to organisation. Local government arts or recreation officers and state government arts authorities should be able to help you find the most appropriate organisations.

Languages other than English

Do not cut corners, make sure you get the best translation possible. Use qualified and recommended services, and have someone reliable available to check the translation for you. Different aspects of the arts have specialist terminology and vocabulary and this needs to be respected.

Working successfully with interpreters is a skill. Effective communication with your clients and/or artists will enhance your relationship with them, and the work you do together. If you are working with an artist who does not feel comfortable using English, remember you can call the telephone interpreter service.

Recognition of qualifications and experience

There are formal channels through which qualifications gained outside Australia can be recognised or equated with Australian qualifications. Remember, however, this procedure does not in any way guarantee work.

The issue of professional qualifications and experience is a particularly sensitive one in the arts where, for example, many performing artists of professional standard who have migrated to Australia do not have formal qualifications in their artform or discipline. Therefore, it is at least as important to uncover an artist's performance or exhibition history as it is to list their qualifications. If necessary, and where possible, call on an expert in the particular field to assist you in evaluating the artist's competence.

Ask an artist to show you his or her work, press clippings about that work, recordings, photographs or any other tangible evidence of work that has been produced or can be produced. Remember, though, that if the artist has fled his or her country of origin, they may not have been able to bring such supporting documentation with them. This evidence may have also been lost in transit. In such instances, it is important to be sensitive to both the human and the professional needs of the artist, and help them to try to re-establish

their identity, and to resume production. Then they too will have some evidence to offer as an indication of their work.

The best way to start is to try to work with the artist to draw up a curriculum vitae or professional history. This can be done in different ways but, essentially, the final product should provide the reader (or prospective employer, agent or funding body) with an overview of the person's career and professional development. Wherever possible, this should be supported by samples of the person's work, or some form of documentation of that work.

Venues

Whether you want to put on a concert, hold an exhibition or run a workshop, you need to have somewhere to do it. Here are some questions to ask before selecting your venue:

- How many people can it hold?
- What facilities and/or staff does it offer and what will you have to supply?
- How much will that cost?
- How accessible is it to public transport or for wheelchairs?
- How easy is loading?
- How much are the hiring charges?
- Are there any associated costs such as insurance, security guards, overtime charges?
- Is it secure for people and equipment after hours?
- Is its profile sympathetic to what you want to achieve?

Before you receive funding, it is a good idea to confirm in writing prospective arrangements and charges. This means you know clearly what the commitments are, but will not be obliged to pursue the project if the money does not come through.

Public liability insurance

This is an insurance policy which protects organisations if there is an accident involving a member of the public attending an event they have organised. Make sure you have public liability insurance.

Legal questions

Rather than getting into trouble over copyright, contracts or public

liability, seek the advice of the Arts Law Referral Service. Based in Sydney, the service provides telephone advice and local referrals.

Customs and excise

The importing of certain goods into Australia is prohibited. Other goods attract various forms of duty or are subject to quarantine. Check these regulations before ordering goods or arranging dispatch to Australia. Remember, too, that storage, pending customs clearance, can be very expensive and the procedures to clear goods very time-consuming.

Industrial relations

Neglecting industrial issues can cause many headaches. You need to be informed of any relevant awards (current rates of pay, conditions of employment, contractual obligations) for the people you want to employ. You need to be sure the person has the right to work in Australia and that they have a tax file number. You also need to check with the federal Department of Immigration and with the relevant union if you wish to bring artists, performers or artswomen to Australia. There may be strict guidelines about balancing Australian and overseas content.

Media

The media can be a tool to change community perceptions. Do not underestimate its power! Invite the media to your event and try to inform them of the issues. Give them interesting background information that will help them find an angle to do justice to your story. An article or an interview offer much more substantial and quality publicity than a paid advertisement.

There are particular ways of working with both English language media and what is referred to as the 'ethnic media'. Ask someone who knows and has done it before.

Artists want an audience, and media coverage can be a good way to reach many different people at once. Do not wait until you get a grant—plan and budget for this when developing your project. And remember, interests, deadlines, timeliness, requirements and advertising rates vary between the various media outlets.

Freebies

Always keep your eyes and ears open for all sorts of freebies—advertising, listings, spaces such as public libraries, shopping centre foyers, shop windows, cafe walls. Do not underestimate their potential!

Professionalism

When you present cultural activities you are competing for your audience. You want to build or maintain a good reputation and to see your audience return again and again! As it is important to understand the expectations of the audience ask the following questions:

- Do things happen on time?
- Was the occasion a pleasure to be associated with or did the audience feel they would have liked the earth to swallow them up?
- Will they come the next time you organise an event?

Bad press is worse than no press at all and a bad reputation is very hard to shake off.

Artspeak

This is a language unique to the arts. The ability to manipulate and manoeuvre just the right amount of artspeak is a skill worth mastering! (When in Rome . . .)

Arm's length principle is used to describe the relationship between government and the agent it has nominated to act on its behalf. For example, the Australia Council is a statutory authority set up by government to develop policy, make recommendations and run funding programs on its behalf. It does this instead of the minister doing it directly through her or his department. The idea is that government and, by extension, political influence are distanced from the funding process.

Peer group assessment

Applications for funding are generally assessed by a panel of people with special expertise and experience. (Funding bodies can tell you who the panel members are in each of their program areas.) This system has both advantages and disadvantages. Panel members can

be well informed and provide information that might back up an application, strengthen arguments in its favour or generally endorse both participants and project. On the other hand, personal and professional rivalries, ignorance of and insensitivity to a particular issue can diminish objectivity. Sometimes panels call upon external advice or information; sometimes they are able to debate issues most productively.

Some panels have designated members who are supposed to represent or advocate the policy of multiculturalism, know all about all artists, all artforms, all practices, all issues. While this is a good first step, if panels are to make decisions as a group, then the responsibility to be informed must be shared.

Institutionalised prejudice

When you work with a bureaucracy and its agents, there are different levels of protocol to take into consideration. Depending on the structure and its officers, it can be more or less difficult to find out what is really going on in the minds of those making the decisions. At times it can seem (almost) impossible to penetrate structures and bend attitudes. Given the discrepancies between the spoken and the written rhetoric, there are some questions that one cannot avoid asking:

- How committed is this bureaucracy to its own stated objectives?
- Why are these people apparently afraid of the very outcomes they are supposed to be working toward?
- Why is it acceptable for some groups in the community to apply political pressure to achieve their objectives yet it is considered inappropriate for others?

The 'wog fob' is how some of us in the industry have coined the responses of those service and resource organisations that systematically refer their NESB clients to ethno-specific or designated multicultural service agencies. While on one hand it is important that specialist services exist to respond to particular needs, when does the mainstream community service agency start to take responsibility for meeting those needs?

The 'wog whinge' is a very different phenomenon which concerns the inability of some to accept a rejection on artistic grounds, prompting them to cry 'prejudice'! Anything that is the subject of affirmative action programs can, unfortunately, elicit this response.

The 'level playing field' is invoked in many circumstances, but in the arts it comprises the bureaucrats' denial that there is a problem at all in trying to reflect multiculturalism in our general arts scene.

So, in the end, the question remains: is the label 'multicultural' more friend or foe, more help or hindrance in the quest for a multicultural Australia for all Australians?