

Guidelines for the Administration of the Peer Selection Committees and Assessment Panels

Rationale ~ Government is committed to involving the community in decision making through consultation and arm's length mechanisms. The culture division's investment programs use facilitated group decision making processes that involve either peer selection committees or assessment panels. These processes are transparent, standardized and fair. The peer selection committees and assessment panels are representative of the expertise and diversity found in Nova Scotia. Developed with the Nova Scotia Arts and Culture Partnership Council (NSACPC), the processes are guided by Nova Scotia's Cultural Policy and the best practices of other arts and culture bodies.

Cultural Assessors Pool ~ A pool of qualified individuals is maintained by the culture division. Assessors must have the appropriate arts and cultural experience for the peer selection committee or assessment panel on which they sit. Therefore, registering in the pool does not guarantee that an individual will be selected to serve as an assessor. Preference will be given to individuals active in the arts community with previous involvement and experience in matters relating to the committee or panel being assembled.

Diversity ~ The Government of Nova Scotia is committed to creating an environment where differences are valued and respected and representative of the people we serve. We encourage registrations from Aboriginal persons, African Nova Scotians, Acadians, other racially visible persons, and persons with disabilities.

Number of Assessors ~ A maximum of 100 people are needed each year to conduct committee and assessment processes for all programs. A minimum of 200 potential assessors is maintained in the Cultural Assessors Pool at any one time to ensure diversity and expertise is well represented and available.

Registration ~ The culture division invites interested individuals to register at any time as potential assessors to serve on peer selection committees or assessment panels. A registration form (Appendix A) is used to gather details on a potential assessor's qualifications as well as their demographic information.

Registration Process ~ People interested in participating as assessors must complete an online or hard copy registration form. Registrations will be received electronically, by mail, fax or hand delivery.

Organizations that have received an investment through the Culture Division's programs may be called upon to submit contact information of potential registrants who may be called upon to serve as assessors.

Applicants who have received an investment through the Culture Division's programs are potential assessors who may be called upon to register.

To facilitate the maintenance of diversity in the Cultural Assessors Pool, registrants are invited to identify their cultural background such as race, disability etc.

Assessors normally can serve only once per fiscal year.

Assessor Selection Process ~ For each program deadline a peer selection committee or assessment panel is convened by the culture division program officer who selects individuals from within and outside of the Cultural Assessors Pool. Assessors are chosen based on a match between their qualifications and the requirements of the specific program. Demographic information is also considered to ensure juries and external assessment panels are representative of the diversity of Nova Scotian society.

Peer Selection Committee ~ A peer selection committee is composed of qualified cultural assessors who evaluate applications and make final investment or award decisions. The primary function of a peer selection committee is to award funds based on artistic merit (exhibiting superior aesthetic and creative quality) as well as an applicant's ability to meet specified criteria. A cultural division program officer participates as the co-ordinator, advisor and moderator. The program officer does not have input on the decisions being made. The following culture division programs use peer selection committees: Grants to Individuals, Grants to Organizations and Small Groups, and the Nova Scotia Art Bank Purchase Program.

Assessment Panels ~ An assessment panel is composed of qualified cultural assessors, in partnership with staff from the department, who evaluate applications and provide investment recommendations for final approval by the Minister. The primary function of an assessment panel is to make recommendations based on an applicant's ability to meet specified criteria. A culture division program officer participates as the co-ordinator, advisor, moderator and as a voting member when recommendations are being made. The following culture division programs use an assessment panel: Cultural Opportunities for Youth, Cultural Activities, Emerging Music Business Program, Industries Program, and Operating Assistance to Cultural Organizations.

Conflict of Interest ~ A conflict of interest occurs when an assessor, (either for himself/herself, family or organization(s)), attempts to promote a private or personal interest which results or appears to result in an improper personal material gain or advantage, or interferes with his/her duties as a peer or panelists. Conflict of interest may exist whether or not an individual has received personal or material gain. It includes both actual and perceived conflicts. If an assessor or program officer is associated with an application in any way he/she shall disclose his/her interest, refrain from attempting to influence the decision, and not participate in the discussion or scoring.

Confidentiality ~ Confidentiality regarding discussions and decisions/recommendations, is required to protect applicants, peers or panelists and the integrity of the decision-making process. Confidentiality protects the private information of the applicants, protects the peers or panelists from reprisals, and protects the granting system from allegations of favoritism and the abuse of private information. The names of assessors can be provided upon request three months after the public announcement of investments or awards. The names of all committee and panel members are posted on the department's web site each June for the previous year.

Remuneration ~ Panelists and peers will be paid a standard fee and any related travel expenses for their participation on a peer selection committee or assessment panel.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting ~ The Cultural Assessors Pool will be monitored for the total number of registrants. As well, the diversity and range of expertise represented within the pool will be compared to the diversity and range of expertise of those assessors selected to serve.

The Director of Programs, will oversee the monitoring and evaluation of the Assessor Selection Process and report annually to the Executive Director and the NSACPC. This will enable the Culture Division to address diversity deficiencies within the Cultural Assessors Pool and maintain the number of registrants at approximately 200 people within any given year.

Peer Selection Committee and Assessment Panels Roles & Responsibilities

	Role	Responsibility
Peer Selection Committee	- select applications or nominations of highest artistic merit in the current competition for awards	- read & consider in advance all material received to arrive at the meeting prepared - declare any conflicts of interest to the program officer & indicate any concerns about the integrity of the proceedings - evaluate applications, articulate opinions & discuss in a group decision-making environment - expected to be open, articulate & committed to process - review applications & score according to program criteria
Assessment Panel	-review & recommend applications for levels of funding based on applicant's ability to meet specified criteria	- read & consider in advance all material received to arrive at the meeting prepared to fully consider each application - declare any conflicts of interest to the program officer & indicate any concerns about the integrity of the proceedings - evaluate applications, articulate opinions & discuss in a group decision-making environment - expected to be open, articulate & committed to group decision-making process - review applications & score according to program criteria
Peer Selection Committee - Program Officer	- serves as a resource person for peer selection committee - co-ordinator, advisor and moderator - make decisions on any conflicts of interest at the time they arise	- respond to Selection Pool registrants' inquiries - circulate information & support materials to committee members before the adjudication meeting - respond to any disclosures of conflict of interest by removing an committee member from decisions

		<p>where conflict exists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - facilitate peer selection committee process - the program officer will abstain from expressing personal opinions which might influence their decisions
Assessment Panel – Program Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - serves as a resource person for assessment panel - co-ordinator, advisor and moderator - make decisions on any conflicts of interest at the time they arise - serves as a member of assessment panel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - respond to Selection Pool registrants’ inquiries - circulate information & support materials to assessors before the adjudication meeting - respond to any disclosures of conflict of interest by removing an assessor from decisions where conflict exists - facilitate assessment panel processes
Minister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provides final approval for recommendations made by assessment panels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensure processes that guide the administration of peer selection committees & assessment panels are applied consistently