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**Appraisal process for Grants for the Arts**

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# 1 Grants for the Arts

Grants for the Arts (GFTA) is our Lottery-funded grant programme for individuals, arts organisations and other people who use the arts in their work. Grants are available for activities carried out over a set period and which engage people in England in arts activities and help artists and arts organisations in England carry out their work.

Activities we support must be clearly related to the arts and must be project-based, up to a maximum of three years in length. Grants normally range from £1,000 to £100,000 and we can fund up to 90 per cent of the cost of an activity.

All applicants must also read the ‘[How to apply guidance](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/grants-arts/2016/how-to-apply)’. Download it from our website or contact us for a copy.

# 2 Appraisal process for Grants for the Arts

We designed Grants for the Arts to allow us to make fair decisions. We are also committed to being open and honest with you about how we appraise your application.

This information sheet explains the key stages of the GFTA appraisal process:

* Eligibility
* Risk
* Appraisal against criteria - over £15,000
* Decision making - £15,000 and under
* Decision making - over £15,000

# 3 Eligibility

We will complete our eligibility check within 10 working days of receiving your application. Full details of the eligibility criteria for Grants for the Arts are explained in the How to apply guidance. Download it from our website or contact us for a copy.

If your application is eligible, we will carry out a risk check (detailed in [section four](#_4_Risk) of this information sheet).

If your application is not eligible, this means that we cannot process it any further and it will not be considered for funding. If your application is not eligible we will email you to let you know, and will explain our decision. Full details of the main reasons an application will be made ineligibility are explained on the ‘[unsuccessful - ineligible](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/grants-arts/2016/unsuccessful-applicants/ineligible)’ feedback page on our website.

# 4 Risk

If your application is eligible, we will carry out a risk check. This check looks at how realistic and achievable your management plans and budget are.

As part of the risk check we may consider:

* **timeline**For example: Is the timeline achievable and detailed enough?
* **partnerships**For example: Are appropriate partnerships in place to support the activity, and are they confirmed?
* **planning**For example: Is the activity sufficiently well planned?
* **tour schedule**For example: Is any tour schedule at an appropriate stage of confirmation?
* **evaluation**For example: Are plans to evaluate the activity appropriate?
* **budget**For example: Is the budget reasonable and appropriate for the activity you’ve proposed?
* **partnership funding**For example: Is there an appropriate level of partnership funding, and is any expected funding likely to be secured?
* **financial management**For example: Are there appropriate measures in place to manage the budget?
* **asset purchase**   
  For example: Are any asset purchases justified clearly, and are the costings based on quotes?
* **previous grants from us**For example: How has any previous funding you have had from us been managed?

## 4.1 Risk rating

If we find a risk, we will give a rating of minor, moderate or major.

**Minor Risk** means that although we have noted a particular issue we do not think it represents risk to the successful delivery of the activity. We will take no action, but want to register that a risk has been identified (important for audit purposes).

**Moderate Risk** means we have noted some risk to the successful delivery of the activity, but this risk can be mitigated using payment conditions. If you are awarded funding, we will ask you to send us additional information before we will release your first payment. We call these additional pieces of information ‘payment conditions’. For example, we might ask for a confirmed tour schedule or confirmation that the other income for the activity is in place.

**Major Risk** means that a particular issue gives us concern that the activity is not likely to be managed successfully and/or there are serious concerns about your budget.

## 4.2 High risk – in applications for £15,000 or under

If you have applied for £15,000 or under and we think any parts of your activity’s management or finances are a major risk, we cannot process it any further. If this happens, we’ll write to you, explaining our decision.

## 4.3 High risk – in applications for over £15,000

If you have applied over £15,000 and we think any parts of your activity’s management or finances are a major risk, we will note the concerns/issues and consider them in more detail at the appraisal against criteria stage.

More information on the Grants for the Arts risk check can be found in the ‘[How to apply guidance](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/grants-arts/2016/how-to-apply)’ and on the ‘[unsuccessful applicants – major risk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/grants-arts/2016/unsuccessful-applicants/major-risk)’ feedback pages on our website.

# 5 Appraisal against criteria – over £15,000

This section explains how we appraise applications against our stated criteria. It lists the prompts that we consider when reaching a recommendation on an application.

## 5.1 The four appraisal criteria

We will appraise your application by taking account of the following:

**Artistic quality** – the quality of the activity and the quality of effect the activity will have on the people experiencing it, or its ongoing effect on artistic practice (or all of these)

**Public engagement** – how the public will engage with the activity, immediately or in the long term

**Management** – how the activity will be managed and its ongoing effect

**Finance** – how realistic the activity is financially and its future effect

To determine how well an application meets these criteria, we ask ourselves a series of questions or prompts for each of the four appraisal criteria. It is very important to note that not all the prompts will apply to every application, but they are the type of things we may look at. We will use our judgement to decide which prompts are relevant in each case, depending on the type of activity and how much money you are applying for.

**Artistic quality prompts**

* are the activity’s artistic aims clearly expressed?
* how strong is the artistic idea?
* is the plan to carry out the activity likely to achieve the artistic ambition?
* how strongly does the activity develop the work/skills of artists/organisations involved?
* does the artistic/organisational CV paragraph and any supporting information demonstrate a good track record?
* are the artists/organisations involved of high quality?
* is the wider artform/sector impact of the activity likely to be strong?

**Public Engagement prompts**

* does the application make a strong case for public engagement with the activity?
* are the target audiences for the activity clearly identified?
* does the activity specifically increase opportunities for people who don’t currently engage in the arts or are engaged a little in arts activity?
* does the activity increase opportunities for people already engaged in arts activity?
* are plans to market the activity to audiences/participants well defined, and are they likely to achieve audience projections?
* if there is no immediate opportunity to engage people (e.g. R&D) does the application show that the applicant has considered how the public will be engaged in the future?
* have access and diversity been considered effectively?

**Management prompts**

* is the activity realistic and well planned (including having a realistic tour schedule, where appropriate)?
* does the application show the applicant's ability to manage the activity successfully?
* does the applicant have a track record of managing a similar activity?
* is the activity supported by appropriate partnerships? Is their commitment confirmed?
* are plans to evaluate the activity appropriate?
* has risk been appropriately considered, with reasonable mitigating actions identified?

**Finance prompts**

* is the budget appropriate for the activity that is planned? [Is the amount of money the applicant is asking for suitable for the scale and type of activity? How appropriate are the areas of income and spending?]
* are all items in the budget relevant and reasonable? [Are fees or wages appropriate to the context? Have quotes for assets been appropriately researched for any asset purchases (minimum of three quotes)?]
* does the application demonstrate that the activity is attracting income from other sources? Is any other income confirmed? If not, do potential income sources seem realistic?
* has the cash flow been adequately taken into account?
* how appropriate are the financial controls that are in place?
* do current audited accounts confirm the financial assumptions the activity is based on?

## 5.2 How we score applications against the appraisal criteria

We will use the evidence in your application and our expertise and judgement to come to a ‘word score’ for each appraisal criteria:

**met – outstanding**: the application meets the criteria and shows outstanding qualities. Score = 4

**met – strong**: the application meets the criteria and shows strong qualities. Score = 3

**met**: the application meets the criteria. Score = 2

**potential:**  the application does not meet the criteria but shows potential to do so. Score = 1

**not met**: the application does not meet the criteria. Score = 0

Any application that is judged as met, met – strong, or met – outstanding against all the appraisal criteria is considered to be potentially fundable and will go to a decision meeting.

If your application scores potential or not met against any of the four appraisal criteria, we will not recommend it for a grant. If we decide not to fund your activity, we will write to you to let you know. We will explain our decision and outline your next steps.

# 6 Decision making - £15,000 and under

Our Area offices make weekly decisions on which applications to fund.

We will consider the artistic quality and public engagement statements from the application form and make a preference on whether or not to fund based on these. (Remember, we considered the strength of the management and finance outcomes as part of the risk check).

We will consider:

**Artistic quality**

* are the activity’s artistic aims clearly expressed?
* how strong is the artistic idea?
* is the plan to carry out the activity likely to achieve the artistic ambition? how strongly does the activity develop the work/skills of artists/organisations involved?
* does the artistic/organisational CV paragraph and any supporting information demonstrate a good track record?
* are the artists/organisations involved of high quality?

**Public engagement**

* does the application make a good case for public engagement with the activity?
  + are the target audiences for the activity clearly identified?
  + does the activity specifically increase opportunities for people who don’t currently engage in the arts or are engaged a little in arts activity?
  + does the activity increase opportunities for people already engaged in arts activity?
* are plans to market the activity to audiences/participants well defined, and are they likely to achieve audience projections?
* if there is no immediate opportunity to engage people (e.g. R&D) does the application show that the applicant has considered how the public will be engaged in the future?

## 6.1 Applications that meet our criteria

Applications for £15,000 and under that meet our criteria for artistic quality and public engagement are potentially fundable. We then decide which of the potentially fundable applications we prefer to fund.

Our decisions are based on the budget available, and we will seek to fund a broad spread of applications across artforms, types of activity and the geographic area.

Grants for the Arts is a competitive programme and we cannot fund all of the good applications we receive. With limited funds available, we have to make difficult decisions.

There are two main reasons that we will choose not to fund some applications that meet our basic criteria:

**Comparatively weaker**

We decided that the artistic and/or public engagement outcomes of the activity were less strong than other applications we received

**Other applications preferred**

We identified no key weaknesses with the application; however on balance we preferred other applications on this occasion. Our decision making takes many factors into account. We consider the activity alongside other applications and look at the range of projects we support. We want the projects we fund to cover a broad range of activity types, artforms and geographical areas

## 6.2 Applications that do not meet our criteria

If an application for £15,000 and under does not meet the basic criteria for artistic quality and/or public engagement, we will not be able to fund it.

There are two main reasons that we will be unable to fund applications that do not meet our basic criteria:

**Artistic outcomes**

The application showed weaknesses in relation to the activity’s artistic outcomes.

**Public Engagement outcomes**

The application showed weaknesses in relation to the activity’s public engagement outcomes.

Further information to help applicants understand our decisions can be found in section 8 of this document and on the ‘[unsuccessful applicants – not recommended for funding](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/grants-arts/2016/unsuccessful-applicants/not-recommended-funding)’ feedback pages on our website.

# 7 Decision making - over £15,000

Our Area offices will make fortnightly decisions on applications for over £15,000.

We will consider the ‘appraisal against criteria’ for those applications that we judged as met, met – strong, or met – outstanding against all four criteria. (Remember, applications that scored potential or not met against any of the four appraisal criteria cannot be recommend for funding).

We will consider the appraisal scores and review each activity alongside other applications. We want to fund a range of activities that are of high quality and engage people strongly. We also need to fund a broad range of activity types, artforms and geographical areas.

We will also review our investment in activities in areas of least engagement with the arts. These are the areas that have been identified as being in the bottom 33 per cent of areas in England for engagement with the arts by the Active People Survey. For more information visit our website: [www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/research-and-data/arts-audiences/active-people-survey/](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/research-and-data/arts-audiences/active-people-survey/)

We will review a range of reports on our spending so far and future demand. This also influences the choice we make.

Grants for the Arts is a competitive programme and we cannot fund all of the good applications we receive. With limited funds available, we have to make difficult decisions.

There are three main reasons that an application may be unsuccessful at this stage:

**Did not meet criteria**

The application did not fully meet the criteria in one or more of the areas we consider when appraising; artistic quality, public engagement, management and finance

**Comparatively weaker**

Although the applicationmet the criteria we consider when appraising (artistic quality, public engagement, management and finance), we decided that the outcomes for one or more of these areas of the activity were less strong than other applications we received

**Competition for funds**

Although the application met the criteria, we consider when appraising (artistic quality, public engagement, management and finance), we decided not to fund your activity. Our decision making takes many factors into account, and we consider your activity alongside other applications and look at the range of projects we support. We had to make difficult choices about which applications to support as our funds are limited

Further information to help applicants understand our decisions can be found in section 8 of this document and on the ‘[unsuccessful applicants – not recommended for funding](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/grants-arts/2016/unsuccessful-applicants/not-recommended-funding)’ feedback pages on our website.

# 8 Understanding our decision

We want to help applicants understand our decisions.

Your decision letter will clearly state the main reason(s) we did not award funding and this guidance intends to help you understand our decision. The ‘[feedback for unsuccessful applicants](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/grants-arts/2016/unsuccessful-applicants)’ pages on our website explain the main reasons that an application to Grants for the Arts may be considered ineligible, major risk or not recommended for funding.

You can apply again to Grants for the Arts at any time; however we will not be able to appraise repeat applications that have not dealt with the reasons why they were not successful the first time.

## 8.1 Reapplying

Applicants, who have been unsuccessful, can reapply to the programme, but any new application for the same activity must address the reasons that the original application was not successful. We will not be able to consider any reapplications that have not addressed this.

**Applications for £15,000 and under**

Remember, we do not appraise the artistic quality and public engagement outcomes of applications for £15,000 or under that have been unsuccessful due to a major risk. It is always worth thinking about ways you could strengthen all sections of your application form before you resubmit.

Addressing feedback provided will not guarantee that a future application will be successful.

## 8.2 Complaints procedure

If you are not happy with the way we dealt with your application, please contact us and we will discuss this with you. If you are still unhappy, you can ask us for a copy of our [complaints procedure](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/who-we-are/contact-us/making-a-complaint/). Please note that you can only complain if you believe we have not followed our published procedures when processing your application. You cannot appeal against the decision.

# 9 Contact us

**Phone:** 0845 300 6200, 0161 934 4317

**Textphone:** 0161 934 4428

**Email:** [enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

**Post:**  Arts Council England - Grants for the Arts,

The Hive, 49 Lever Street, Manchester, M1 1FN

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