

City of Design Project Fund

Information Session

Presented by: artsACT

Date: Thursday 6 November 2025



Corella & Crow, by Rechelle Turner and Megan Daley, 'Nguramban-Dhi (From Country)', Country to Couture, 2025. Photo by Dylan Buckee.

Welcome, and thank you for joining us for the City of Design Project Fund information session.

Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. I wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. I would also like to acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event.

Today's session provides a snapshot of key information drawn from the City of Design Project Fund Guidelines.

This presentation will cover:

- **A quick intro of the UNESCO City of Design**
- **A brief overview of the Project Fund and objectives**
- **Information on the two funding streams**
- **Who can apply and eligibility**
- **How to apply and,**
- **Key considerations for the application**

All resource links have been added to the chat for your convenience.

- [City of Design Project Fund - artsACT](#)
- [Home Page - SmartyGrants Portal – artsACT](#)
- 2026 Craft + Design Canberra Festival: <https://www.craftanddesigncanberrafestival.org/>

While today's presentation highlights important points about the funding round, it does not cover everything.

To fully understand the program objectives, we strongly encourage you to read the Guidelines from start to finish.

UNESCO City of Design



Smoking Ceremony at Kingston Arts Precinct. Richard Pulton Photography (2021)

Refer to the Project Fund Guidelines page 4

The ACT Government is committed to positioning Canberra as a UNESCO City of Design, showcasing our identity as a planned city rich in creativity, talent, and innovation.

Becoming a City of Design will strengthen Canberra's creative economy through knowledge-sharing, supporting local talent and businesses, and driving innovation across sectors.

It will celebrate Canberra's unique design identity, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander design, while fostering cultural exchange and collaboration with the UNESCO Creative Cities Network of more than 350 cities worldwide.

In preparation for Canberra's bid to become a UNESCO City of Design, the ACT Government will develop a four-year strategic plan, engage with local and national sectors, and enable participation in key cultural programs such as the Craft + Design Festival. The ACT Government plans to apply in the next round of UNESCO Creative Cities Network applications, expected in 2027.

To help realise this vision and support the strategic plan, **\$600,000 in funding will be available across 2025–26 and 2026–27 for projects by artists, designers, cultural organisations, and creative businesses that demonstrate:**

- excellence in design and support Canberra's bid to become a global City of Design, and
- To enable participation in the 2026 Craft + Design Canberra Festival.

Projects do not need to align with festival dates, as long as they contribute to our vision for Canberra as a City of Design.

About the Fund

The aims of the Fund are to:

- position Canberra as a globally recognised hub for design excellence and innovation
- foster a vibrant, inclusive, and culturally rich design culture
- highlight and elevate the work of Canberra's leading designers and artists
- support activities that celebrate the diversity of Canberra's communities
- strengthen Canberra's international design profile and readiness for UNESCO Creative Cities Network membership

Refer to the Project Fund Guidelines pages 4-5

So, what's the purpose of this Fund?

It's about positioning Canberra as a global hub for design excellence and innovation, showing leadership in creative and sustainable urban development.

We want to foster a vibrant design culture that reflects who we are: our unique heritage, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, and our contemporary identity.

It's also about shining a spotlight on Canberra's incredible designers and artists, promoting their work locally, nationally, and internationally.

We'll support activities that celebrate the diversity of our communities, making sure design is inclusive, accessible, and meaningful for everyone.

And finally, this Fund is a key step in strengthening Canberra's international design profile and preparing for UNESCO Creative Cities Network membership, through partnerships, knowledge exchange, and building a lasting legacy.

The Project Fund and the Craft + Design Canberra Festival



*2024 Craft + Design Canberra Festival Symposium Making and Remaking Canberra
NFA (5 Foot Photography). Photo provided by Craft + Design Canberra.*

Refer to the Project Fund Guidelines page 5

Now, let's look at how the City of Design Project Fund connects with the Craft + Design Canberra Festival.

Craft + Design Canberra is one of Australia's longest-running visual arts membership organisations, and every two years it delivers this Festival.

The Festival celebrates Canberra as a creative capital and a global city of design. It's an opportunity for the community to engage with makers, designers, and innovators, through exhibitions, talks, tours, workshops, open studios, markets, and more.

The 2026 theme is **'Dissent'**. This theme is about using creativity to question, challenge, and reshape the way we see the world. It invites alternative perspectives and sparks critical dialogue and collaboration.

If you're applying for activities that will be part of the Festival, they need to reflect this theme. Successful applicants who wish to be included in the Festival must agree to have their project details shared with Craft + Design Canberra for review and possible inclusion and promotion.

Final decisions about Festival programming rest with Craft + Design Canberra.

City of Design Project Fund Funding Streams

Smaller
Projects – up
to \$5,000

Major
Projects -
\$5,000 up to
\$50,000

Refer to the Project Fund Guidelines pages 5-6

The City of Design Project Fund has two funding streams, first we have:

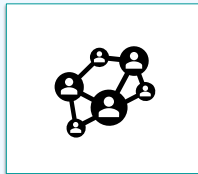
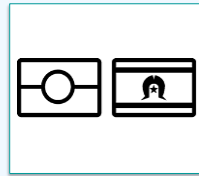
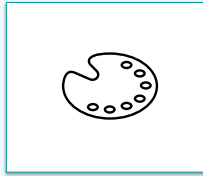
Smaller Projects - up to \$5,000

- This funding stream is for smaller projects that contribute to the Festival program or can strongly demonstrate a contribution to Canberra as a global city of design.
- Approximately \$100,000 will be available for the Smaller Projects stream.
- Applicants can receive funding in the Smaller Projects stream once and can apply a maximum of two times.

The second Funding stream is: Major Projects – from \$5,000 up to \$50,000

- This funding stream will prioritise the development and implementation of new, high quality or ambitious activities that demonstrate excellence in design and can be presented as part of the Festival program from 5 to 15 November 2026 for activations and all of November 2026 for exhibitions.
- Activities presented outside of the Festival are also eligible if the activity strongly demonstrates against the aims of the Fund.
- Approximately \$500,000 will be available for the Major Projects stream.
- Applicants can only submit one application in the Major Projects funding round.

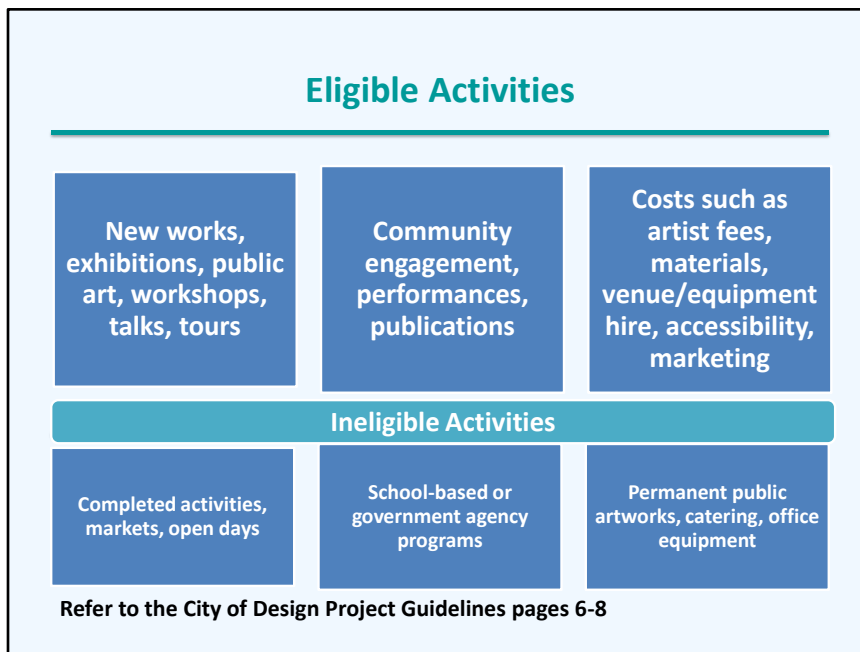
Who Can Apply?



Refer to the Project Fund Guidelines pages 6-9

Who Can Apply?

- The Fund is open to artists, designers, innovators, arts and cultural organisations and creative businesses based in Canberra.
- However, there are a few important eligibility considerations to keep in mind:
 - Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people do not need to reside in the ACT.
 - Applicants outside Canberra may also apply if their activity meets the aims of the Fund. However, **priority will be given to projects that involve collaboration or active engagement with the ACT arts and design sector.**
 - If applying as a group or unincorporated organisation you must nominate one person to take legal and financial responsibility for any funding or be auspiced by an incorporated organisation.
- Arts organisations already receiving ACT Government Arts Organisation Investment funding can only apply for City of Design project funding for a **new activity** that will be presented as part of the Festival.
- Organisations can apply to Craft + Design Canberra for an existing project that fits the Festival theme and doesn't require additional funding.
- This means they can apply to both if applicable, one for the existing project to Craft + Design Canberra and one for a new activity through the City of Design Project Fund.



Let’s take a quick look at what’s eligible under this Fund:

- You can apply for things like new works, exhibitions, public art, workshops, talks, and tours.
- Community engagement activities are also eligible, think performances, publication launches, and cultural events.
- Funding can cover costs such as artist fees, materials, venue or equipment hire, accessibility, and marketing.

The full list of eligible activities is in the Guidelines, so make sure to check those.

Alternatively, here are some examples of what’s *not* eligible:

- activities that have already taken place
- open studios and arts organisation open days
- markets
- Anything linked to a course or study at an educational or training institution
- Permanent public artworks, catering, office equipment and contingency costs.

These are just a few - we strongly encourage you to read the City of Design Project Guidelines, which has further detail on eligible and ineligible activities.

Be sure to check this list carefully as applications for ineligible activities won’t be assessed.

- If you’re unsure about your eligibility, reach out to artsACT for clarification.

One last item to note regarding eligibility. You cannot apply for funding if you have an outstanding unacquitted grant from the ACT Government. However, you can apply if you have funding that is not yet due to be acquitted, including those that have been provided with revised due dates.

Assessment Criteria

Each of the assessment criteria are weighted equally



Refer to the Project Fund Guidelines pages 9-10

It is important to note that an application must be assessed as eligible before it will be assessed against the specified assessment criteria.

Applicants will be informed if their application is assessed as ineligible for funding.

For eligible applications, each of the assessment criteria are weighted equally.

When you're preparing your application, consider what assessors will be looking for:

- Firstly, a clear activity description and how your activity contributes to Canberra as a global city of design.
Make sure your description is concise and explain how your activity highlights the work of Canberra's best designers and artists. If your activity could be part of the 2026 Craft + Design Canberra Festival, show how it connects to the theme of '*Dissent*'.
- Second, your capability to deliver a high-quality activity.
Assessors will want to see that your project can be delivered on time and within budget, and that the people involved have the right experience and skills. It's also important to include Work, Health and Safety plans and note any permits, or approvals you will need.
- Finally, think about accessibility and inclusion.
Assessors want to see that your activity takes an inclusive approach to audience engagement and makes participation accessible. It should also celebrate the diversity of Canberra and its people.

Timelines

Key Dates for 2025 and 2026

Major Projects

Applications Open	8 October 2025
Applications Close	3 December 2025
Outcomes Notified	1 April 2026

Smaller Projects

Applications Open	8 October 2025
Applications Close	1 April 2027 (or available budget is exhausted)
Outcomes Notified	Within 6 weeks of the application submission date
Craft + Design Canberra Festival	5-15 November 2026

Refer to the Project Fund Guidelines pages 6

Applications for both funding streams are currently open.

The Major Projects funding stream will close for applications on 3 December 2025.

Funding outcomes will be communicated to applicants once the assessment process is complete and approved by the Minister. Outcomes are expected by 1 April 2026, approximately seven months ahead of the Festival.

The Smaller Projects funding stream will close on 1 April 2027 (or when the available budget is exhausted).

Outcomes for these projects will be within 6 weeks of the application submission date, at which point artsACT will notify applicants directly.

How to Apply

2025-26 City of Design Major Projects \$5-\$50K

Start a submission | Preview the form | Download preview form

Submissions are now being accepted. Submissions close at 5:00PM 3 December 2025 (AEDT).

2025-26 City of Design Major Projects \$5-\$50K

Fill Out Now | This is a preview of the Application - City of Design Project fund form. When you're ready to apply, click Fill Out Now to begin.

Close | Next Page

Form Navigation

1. Applicant details
2. Auspice Arrangement(Not Applicable)
3. Assessment Criteria(Not Applicable)
4. Craft + Design

Applicant details

* indicates a required field.

Before completing this form:

- Read the [City of Design Project Fund Guidelines](#).
- We encourage all applicants to speak with artsACT staff before making an application.
- Please contact us to discuss any accessibility requirements you may have.
- You can phone artsACT on 02 6207 2384 or email artsACT@act.gov.au.

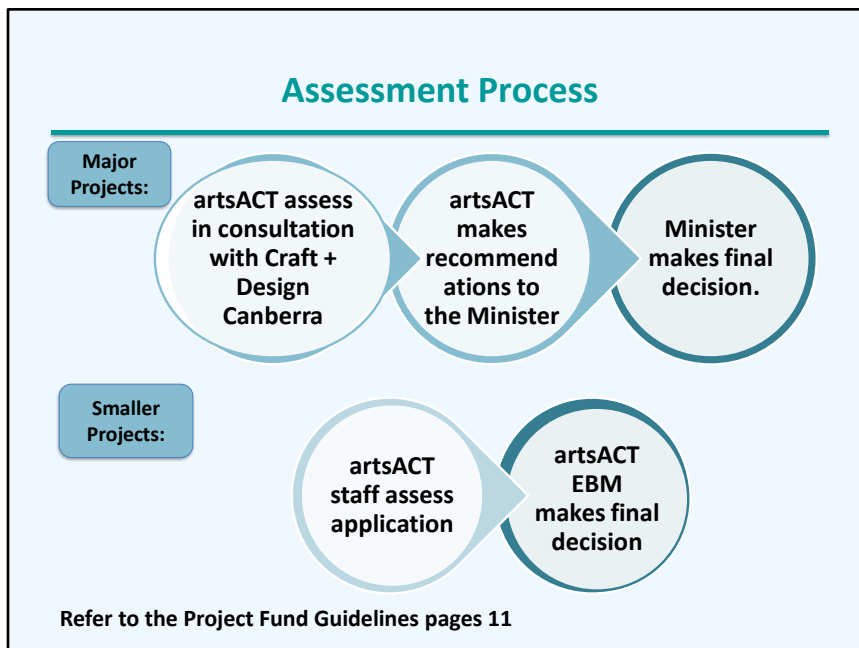
To apply, head to the artsACT website and follow the link to the online grants portal. You'll also find that link in the comments of this presentation.

Once you've logged into the portal, select either the Major Projects or Smaller Projects application form and click Preview the form to view the application.

From there, you can download the City of Design Project Fund Guidelines – this should be your go-to resource.

When you're ready to begin your application, click Fill Out Now.

Assessment Process



For the Major Projects funding stream submitted applications will undergo a thorough assessment process:

- Applications are assessed against the assessment criteria by artsACT staff in consultation with Craft + Design Canberra, and industry peers where appropriate.
- The assessment considers the information provided in the application and any supporting documentation.
- Following the assessment, artsACT prepares funding recommendations for the Minister for Business, Arts and Creative Industries, who is responsible for making the final funding decisions.

For the Smaller Projects funding round:

- Applications are assessed against the assessment criteria by artsACT staff.
- Assessors will consider the information provided in the application and any supporting documentation.
- artsACT's Executive Branch Manager is responsible for making the final funding decisions.

Reporting Requirements

Deed of Grant

Acquittals

Statistical Data

Variation of Activity or Budget

Acknowledgment of Funding

Refer to the Project Fund Guidelines pages 11-12

If you are successful in securing funding, you will be required to:

- Sign a Deed of Grant with the ACT Government. The deed will include payment, reporting, acquittal and acknowledgement requirements.
- An acquittal will be required to be submitted one month after the conclusion of your activity.
- If your activity is part of the Festival program, applicants will also be required to submit statistical data relating to their activity to Craft + Design Canberra by 4 December 2026 so that this information can be included in the Festival Report.

If there are any changes or variations to your activity or budget, this will need to be approved by artsACT.

As a requirement of the Deed of Grant, successful applicants must acknowledge ACT Government funding and support on all material including hardcopy and electronic.

Common Questions

Do I need to apply separately to Craft + Design Canberra if I would like my activity to be included in the Craft + Design 2026 Festival program?

Can I apply for both a Major and a Smaller Project stream?

What kinds of design disciplines are eligible?

Q: Do I need to apply separately to Craft + Design Canberra if I would like my activity to be included in the 2026 Festival program?

A: No. If you apply through the City of Design funding program and are successful, your project details will be shared with Craft + Design Canberra for potential inclusion in the 2026 Festival program. You do not need to submit a separate application.

Alternatively, if you have already applied directly to Craft + Design Canberra for inclusion in their 2026 Festival program, the City of Design application has been designed for you to note this, and then allows you to skip the Festival section.

Q: Can I apply for both a Major and a Smaller Project stream?

A: Applicants may apply to either the Major Projects or Smaller Projects stream, but not for the same activity. You can submit one application to the Major Projects stream, and you may apply up to two times to the Smaller Projects stream - though you can only receive funding once. If applying to both streams, each proposal must be for a distinct and separate activity.

Q: What kinds of design disciplines are eligible?

A: Projects can span any design discipline, including but not limited to architecture, landscape design, graphic design, industrial design, fashion and more.

Common Questions

Can I apply if my project involves collaboration with non-design disciplines (e.g. science, technology, community development)?

Can I apply as a student or emerging designer/artist?

Can the Fund support research or concept development?

Q: Can I apply if my project involves collaboration with non-design disciplines (e.g. science, technology, community development)?

A: Yes. Inter-disciplinary projects are welcome where design thinking or design practice is a central component of the project's intent, process and outcomes.

Q: Can I apply as a student or emerging designer/artist?

A: Yes. Emerging designers and artists are encouraged to apply if their proposed activity demonstrates design excellence, is achievable within the available timeframe and budget, and shows that the key creative personnel involved have the necessary skills and experience to deliver the project.

Q: Can the Fund support research or concept development?

A: Yes, however projects focused solely on research or concept development are unlikely to be competitive against the criteria. Research may be supported where it forms part of a broader design process and clearly demonstrates design excellence, feasibility, and a well-defined contribution to Canberra as a City of Design.

Common Questions

Is co-funding required?

How should accessibility be considered in applications?

Are temporary public artworks eligible for funding?

Why are open studios, arts organisation open days and markets ineligible for funding?

Q: Is co-funding required?

A: Co-funding is not mandatory but is viewed favourably. Contributions may be financial or in-kind - e.g. venue, materials, technical expertise, or partner support.

Q: How should accessibility be considered in applications?

A: Applicants should plan for accessibility, both in terms of participation - e.g. accessible venues, captioning, inclusive design - and audience engagement. Accessibility is part of the assessment considerations.

Q: Are temporary public artworks eligible for funding?

A: Yes, the development, making or installation of temporary public artworks, including murals or street art are eligible for funding under this program. Applicants should ensure they have appropriate permissions for public space use, consider safety and site suitability, and plan for maintenance and de-installation.

Q: Why are open studios, arts organisation open days and markets ineligible for funding?

A: These activities are ineligible because they are already planned for delivery as part of the Festival program. The City of Design funding is intended to support additional projects that contribute to Canberra's broader design vision, rather than duplicate existing festival programming.

Common Questions

What happens if there is a change to the project after approval?

What happens if my project generates income?

Will I receive feedback if my application is unsuccessful?

Q: What happens if there is a change to the project after approval?

A: If activities, budget or timeline change significantly, approved applicants should contact artsACT to seek approval of any variation. Failure to do so may affect acquittal.

Q: What happens if my project generates income?

A: Any anticipated income must be included in your project budget. The final acquittal should explain how revenue was used to support project delivery.

Q: Will I receive feedback if my application is unsuccessful?

A: Yes. Applicants may request verbal feedback from artsACT. This is particularly encouraged, if you are looking to reapply through the smaller projects funding stream.

Questions + Thank you



artsACT contact details:

(02) 6207 2384

artsACT@act.gov.au

Questions asked during the information session:

Q: Do you accept joint applications from two separate organisations, or should we submit independent applications for a collaborative project?

A: Yes, joint applications are accepted. You can submit a collaborative proposal from two separate organisations, as long as one organisation takes legal and financial responsibility for the funding. There's no need to submit separate applications.

Q: The project funding guidelines make mention of performances - what sort would work? Would a circus performance interacting with a sculpture or design work? Or a project working with textile design for interesting costumes? And does the Craft and Design festival showcase performances?

A: Yes, the Festival showcases performances if they address the theme and meet the guidelines.

Q: Is this funding additional to the regular artsACT funding programs? If so, can an artist apply to both for the same proposed project? (or discuss the difference with artsACT staff?)

A: Yes, this funding is in addition to regular artsACT programs. Artists may apply to both, provided applicants are not seeking funding for the same components across multiple funding programs. It's important to note that each funding stream-such as City of Design funding, artsACT grants, or other arts/event programs-has its own eligibility criteria and assessment processes. Applicants must ensure they meet the specific requirements of each program they apply to. If you're applying to multiple programs for different stages the same overarching project, consider whether the project remains viable if one application is unsuccessful. We encourage applicants to contact artsACT staff to discuss which funding stream best suits their project and to clarify any questions about eligibility or alignment.

As you prepare your application, remember that support is available. Our contact details are on the screen now.