



ACT
Government

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts Program

Guidelines

Chief Minister, Treasury and
Economic Development Directorate

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Acknowledgement of Country

The ACT Government acknowledges the Country of the Canberra region where we conduct our business. The ACT Government recognises the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and surrounding region. The Government acknowledges that other people and families also have a traditional connection to the lands of the ACT and region and we respect this connection to country.

We pay our deepest respects to Ngunnawal Elders, past, present, and emerging. In honour of the invitation, Ngunna yerrabi yanggu, we will work and walk with lightness on the lands of the Ngunnawal in all we do.

The ACT Government is committed to learning from and walking alongside the Traditional Custodians who have looked across and looked after the lands and waterways since time began. We will listen closely and honour their stories, traditions and languages that have been – and continue to be – shared, enjoyed, and celebrated for millennia.

The ACT Government values the generosity of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who call Ngunnawal Country home and who are invited to share their diverse cultural and artistic expressions on these lands and with our community.

Introduction

Ngunnawal Country has long been a meeting place for people to share culture, song, dance and creative practices. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists that call Canberra home today, this country continues to nourish our individual and collective wellbeing as well as connect our ideas, stories with own cultural heritage through cultural arts practices.

The ACT Government is committed to building stronger partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. It will do this by elevating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural and artistic practices using the strategies Create, Develop and Promote outlined in *Canberra: Australia's Arts Capital – Arts, Culture and Creative Policy 2022–2026*.

This commitment comes with funding for self-determined activities led by and for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of the capital region. The funding is provided through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts Program (the Cultural Arts Program) and these guidelines set out the arrangements for grants from the fund.

Accessibility

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like to receive this publication in an **alternative format**, such as large print or audio, please phone the Access Canberra Contact Centre on 13 22 81.

If you are deaf or hearing impaired and require the **National Relay Service**, please phone 131 677 and then ask for 133 427.

Cultural Arts Program Objective

The objective of the Cultural Arts Program is to enhance outcomes that reflect Canberra's unique culture and identity, by funding self-determined programs that support and enhance arts and cultural outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and build cultural leadership.

Self-determined programs that are initiated and led by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individual, group or organisation can include:

- > creating arts and cultural works,
- > presenting or performing arts and cultural works,
- > professional or skills development, arts mentoring and artists residencies,
- > community arts and cultural development, and
- > marketing and promotion of arts activities.

These programs can be across a range of artforms and cultural practice including dance, music, theatre, visual arts and crafts, literature, digital games and new media, screen and arts-based festivals.

Activities will reflect one or more of the three strategies in Canberra: Australia's Arts Capital – a statement of ambition for the Arts 2021-2026:

- > **Create** amazing art and culture – everywhere, at any time and for everyone
- > **Develop** arts, cultural and creative industry, practice and facilities – supporting creation and culture at all levels, via any path
- > **Promote** our arts and culture – to attract artists, arts workers, visitors and investment.

Program Principles

In close consultation with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Network, program principles have been developed to guide the design of initiatives that reflect the varied pathways of ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.

While each of these principles are important, it is recognised that each activity supported through the Cultural Arts Program will have its own unique characteristics and the relative focus on these principles will vary.

- > **Ngunnawal Country:** Reflect what is unique about place and site and those living on it, both traditional custodians with their unique role and those living off country.
- > **Cultural practice is at the heart:** Artforms come to the story and not the other way around as a way of promoting cultural reconnection.
- > **Engaging children and young people in culture:** Connect young and old for cultural exchange at the right moments in their trajectories (9-13 years).
- > **Success takes time:** Cultural arts upskills and grows local communities and arts content sustainably through deep engagement and cohesion.
- > **Developing Audiences:** Promote the responsibility of listening and support non-Indigenous audiences to observe and participate in cultural practice.
- > **National Voices:** Leverage the broad range of national and local arts organisations for the benefit of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- > **Professional Pathways:** Promote professional practice/business development opportunities arising from arts practices.

Assessment Criteria

Each application will be assessed against the following criteria.

1. **Eligibility:** Is the activity self-determined and led by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person or organisation who resides in the ACT or has a traditional connection with the ACT?
2. **Purpose and Policy Alignment:** How strongly the application meets one or more of the three strategies – Create, Develop or Promote – in delivering the proposed cultural arts activity?
3. **Planning:** Can the proposed activity be delivered within the budget and timeframe; is the budget reasonable; and do the key personnel have the necessary skills and experience to deliver the cultural arts practice?

Applications that are not eligible may not be considered against the remaining two criteria.

Applicants will be informed if their application is assessed as ineligible for funding. The remaining criteria (Purpose and Policy Alignment and Planning) are weighted equally.

Funding Parameters

\$120,000 is available for the 2026-27 Cultural Arts Program.

Funding Amounts

Applicants can apply for an amount appropriate for their proposed activity (all amounts applied for are exclusive of GST).

Generally, funding amounts will be between \$3,000 and \$15,000 per project. However, consideration will be given for funding amounts above this for activities that strongly address all criteria and will have a demonstrated ongoing benefit to the community.

Activity Timing and Location

The activity must take place within 12 months of announcement of the grant. For the 2026-27 round, activities will be expected to commence from 1 July 2027.

The Cultural Arts Program does not fund activities that have already happened or have started. The activities should not start until after funding is secured.

Eligibility Requirements

Applicants who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander artists and who reside in Canberra can apply. Groups based in Canberra can apply if most of groups members are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who reside in Canberra.

Organisations can apply if they are incorporated associations or companies limited by guarantee, are led by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and are registered in Canberra.

If you are an Aboriginal person who has a traditional connection with the ACT, you are eligible to apply regardless of your residential address.

Non-ACT-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents and organisations may apply to the Program, however in line with the overarching objectives they must demonstrate the following:

- > Engagement of local Canberran artists and performers and/or
- > Highlighting of people, places, groups or facilities in Canberra and/or
- > Connections to existing local groups, organisations or institutions in Canberra.

What is a good use of funds

Funds will be used to support costs associated with the development and/or delivery of activities that share and build cultural arts practices in the ACT and Region, led by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the ACT.

The following may be considered for funding under the Cultural Arts Program:

- > Event or Activity Delivery: encompasses support for delivery costs for an event or program of activity, including artist or staff fees and wages, production costs, venue or facility costs, materials, support for access and inclusion, hire of certain temporary infrastructure or equipment to support overall visitor experience and safety.
- > Community Participation: includes initiatives that enhance community participation in an activity or program. Can include participatory projects, community forums and targeted engagement, and support for access and inclusion.

Please contact artsACT for clarification if required.

What will NOT be considered for funding

You cannot apply for activities that are:

- > associated with a course, study at an educational or training institution
- > part of any assessment at an education or training institution, including a degree, certificate, or PhD course
- > awards, prizes or competitions, or fundraising for any cause or charity
- > programs or activities for or by any government agency including the ACT Government
- > undertaken by a school, involving school children during school hours and/or activities that are a part of the school curriculum, or a part of a before or after school-based care programs
- > retrospective activities where funding is sought for an activity that has already occurred
- > any building works, including minor repairs, maintenance, relocation, or refurbishment activities
- > purchase of any vehicles, office furniture or office equipment
- > purchase of computer hardware or software for general administration, promotional or communication purposes
- > the development, making or installation of permanent public artwork including murals or street art.

The purchase of vehicles, furniture and equipment will not be supported unless it is an essential part of creating the artwork. You must consider if the equipment is available to borrow or hire, particularly for any short-term usage. You should also include in the application whether the equipment will be shared with other artists, and if not, why not. The purchase of computer hardware or software will only be considered for highly specialised digital applications that are an essential part of creating artwork or content.

Groups or unincorporated organisations

Groups or unincorporated organisations must nominate one person to take legal and financial responsibility for any funding or be auspiced by an incorporated organisation. To find out more about auspicing arrangements contact artsACT.

Organisations that receive funding through the Arts Organisation Investment program cannot apply, except as an auspicing body for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artist, group or organisation.

ABN registered

Individuals, groups and organisations will be asked for your ABN in the Smartygrants application form. This information is used to assist in identifying you and making payments.

If you do not have a current ABN registration you will be required to complete an ATO Statement by a Supplier before you can be paid (see: <https://www.ato.gov.au/>).

Application Process

Two-stage application process

Stage 1: Expression of Interest (EOI) submitted through SmartyGrants

Applications will be assessed. Then shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit an application in the second stage.

Stage 2: Final application including detailed budget submitted through SmartyGrants

Applications will be assessed, and recommendations made for the award of funding.

Important dates to remember

Expressions of Interest (EOI) opens	Friday 2 October 2026
EOI submissions close	Wednesday 2 December 2026, midday
Shortlisted applicants invited to submit full	Friday 22 January 2027

applications	
Shortlisted applicants submit full application	Friday 5 March 2027, midday
Successful applicants notified	May 2027

How to submit your application

Expressions of Interest and full applications will be submitted via SmartyGrants (<https://artsact.smartygrants.com.au/>). You will need to create a Smartygrants login. At any point, you can discuss your idea and application directly with artsACT staff.

Multiple applications

Applicants seeking funding for more than one project must complete a separate online application form for each. Keep in mind these applications will be competing for funding.

Confidentiality

All material submitted to as part of an application is provided in confidence. However, the ACT Government may promote successful applicants for the mutual benefit of the ACT community and the applicant.

Details of applications will not be made available to third parties. Applicants should be aware that the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 2016* apply to documents in the ACT Government's possession.

Assessment process

All applications will be assessed on their relative merit against the funding criteria. Applicants should not anticipate that grant funding will be automatic or is assured until the outcomes from the process are announced.

An assessment panel consisting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander assessors drawn from ACT Government staff and external arts peers will assess the EOIs and full applications. The assessment panel may be provided with a summary of any relevant additional information, including (where applicable) an applicant's previous grant history with artsACT.

The assessment panel will make funding recommendations to artsACT. As part of these recommendations the panel will take into consideration the representative balance of art forms and activity types. artsACT will seek agreement from the Minister for Arts, Creative Industries and the Night-Time Economy to the successful funding recipients.

Applicants will be notified by artsACT on the outcomes of the EOI and full application process. Feedback will be offered to unsuccessful applicants after the successful grants have been announced.

Role of artsACT

- > Assess applications for eligibility (ineligible applications will not be assessed by the panel).
- > Select the assessment panels, oversee panel discussions, ensuring correct procedures are followed, and recommendations are made that meet the funding strategies, provide background information about applicants as required and take notes on panel discussions.
- > Provide recommendations to the Minister for Arts, Creative Industries and the Night-Time Economy based on the panel's advice, available funding, balance across artforms, and government priorities.
- > Provide feedback to applicants.

Role of the peers

- > Read and assess the applications against the funding strategies and the assessment questions.
- > Provide comments on each application and reasons for comparative rankings.
- > Attend moderation meetings to discuss and rank applications comparatively against other applications.

Accepting a Grant

Successful applicants will be required to sign a Deed of Grant with the ACT Government setting out the terms and conditions for which funding will be provided.

Conditions of funding

Payments can take up to 30 days to process following the execution of the Deed of Grant and upon receipt of a valid tax invoice.

Action may be taken for repayment of any grant made where information contained in the application is subsequently found to be false or the grant is not used for the approved purpose.

Successful applicants will need to seek written approval from artsACT to make any variation to the funded activity detailed in the application form and subsequently agreed to through a Deed of Grant.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Funding requests are to be exclusive of GST. GST will be paid to recipients who are registered for GST and who submit a valid tax invoice that includes the grant and GST amount.

Superannuation

Project budgets should account for any superannuation payable to artists and other personnel. Any superannuation costs sought through the grant must be included within the total amount requested and be included in supporting materials. Applicants should refer to the [ATO website](#) for information on superannuation eligibility, obligations and current rates.

Publication

The names of successful applicant entities, a brief description of their activity and the funded amount may be published on the artsACT website.

Acknowledgement of funding

The ACT Government requires appropriate acknowledgment of its funding. Successful applicants will be required to acknowledge artsACT funding and include the ACT Government logo in written material, including in advertising, signage, websites and promotional material. Similarly, verbal acknowledgement is required in formal speeches, launches and events associated with a funded activity.

Successful applicants are asked to inform artsACT of significant outcomes in their funded work, so that the ACT Government can assist in promoting the work and achievements of Canberra artists.

Acquittal of Funding

Applicants will be asked to submit an acquittal report three (3) months after the completion of the project. This will include:

- > Key outcomes and lessons learnt.
- > A copy of the final budget, including how the grant was spent.
- > Supporting documentation (e.g., photos, samples of works, etc) that show the achievement or engagement of the activity.

Further Information

For more information on these funding guidelines, eligibility requirements or to lodge a complaint, please contact the Assistant Director for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts Engagement, artsACT.

Phone: (02) 6207 2384

Email: artsact@act.gov.au

Complaints

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction in relation to the application process and/or an unsuccessful application for a grant. You or your representatives have the right to raise your concerns. This information supports us to improve services and supports your right to ask questions about the grant application process as well as decisions made in relation to an unsuccessful application.

You can expect to:

- > be treated respectfully, fairly and in confidence.
- > have your concerns dealt with as soon as possible.
- > be informed of progress.
- > be told of the outcome.



artsACT
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
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