

County Arts - Peer Assessment Process

Policies and Procedures

Whenever possible, County Arts aims to directly involve the arts community in our assessment processes by forming and engaging Peer Assessment Committees to evaluate applications. This document provides information about policies and procedures relating to our peer assessment committees.

I. Composition of Peer Assessment Committees

County Arts aims to compose assessment committees that reflect the range of applications, including professional artists and arts professionals representing a diversity of perspectives and expertise. We aim to recruit Assessors who:

- Represent a diversity of artistic and cultural practices and expertise, and/or have specific expertise in the artistic practice featured in the program/project in question
- Represent the diversity of our community (e.g. race, age, language, gender, ability)
- Reside in the PEC/Quinte area
- Are arts professionals or professional artists according to the OAC definition found [here](#) and/or have other relevant expertise
- Bring vision, open-mindedness and generosity of spirit to their deliberations
- Provide fair and objective analysis, based on assessment criteria
- Treat applications equitably, without prejudice, in accordance with our values (outlined [here](#)), [Inclusivity, Diversity & Equity Policy](#), and [Indigenous Land Acknowledgement](#), and the principles of the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- Are able to work collaboratively
- Are willing to express their views while respecting and listening to the views of others

II. Recruitment of Peer Assessors

Peer assessors are chosen after considerable thought and research by County Arts staff. Our primary source for assessors is our Artist Advisory Committee, the members of which reflect and include both the diversity of our community and a diversity of artistic practices. We also gather information about potential assessors through ongoing, regular contact with local artists and arts organizations.

Accommodation for Deaf persons and persons with disabilities - An assessor who is Deaf or a person with a disability may request accommodation in any stage of the assessment process by contacting County Arts staff as soon as possible to discuss options.

III. Roles and responsibilities

Once their participation is confirmed, assessors will:

- Become familiar with the specific grant program/Call for Submissions
- Abide by these Peer Assessment Process Policies and Procedures, including the sections on conflicts of interest and confidentiality
- Read and review all application materials, and be prepared to discuss each application based on the assessment criteria
- Score each application using the Evaluation Sheet provided by the deadline
- If applicable, attend a meeting with other assessors to discuss and confirm results

County Arts staff will:

- Share, and ensure that assessors understand, the project context and assessment materials including the scoring sheet, and address any questions that arise
- Schedule and facilitate meetings (if applicable) and ensure that each applicant is treated equitably, without prejudice in accordance with the principles of the Ontario Human Rights Code, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and County Arts policies
- Ensure that there are no direct conflicts of interest, that indirect conflicts of interest are declared, and appropriate procedures are followed
- Oversee the rating/ranking process, tabulate and share scores, etc.
- Apply the Equity Priority Policy and any other applicable priorities/calculations
- Share feedback and results with applicants

IV. Assessment Process

Our assessment process generally consists of two phases.

1. Individual Assessment Phase

During this phase, assessors review all of the materials submitted in each application. Using the Evaluation Rubric/Criteria/Guidance for the particular grant/project, they will score each application from 1-5 in each assessment category (e.g. Artistic Merit, Feasibility, etc.), recording the scores on the Individual Evaluation Sheet (provided). They will also provide a sentence or two summarizing their impressions of/feedback on each application.

Artistic Merit will be assessed by reviewing application items such as written submissions, artistic examples, proposed sketches, Artist Bio/CV, and support documents; feasibility scores may be based on these same documents, plus the project budget, etc.

Scores will be tallied by County Arts staff and the results shared with Assessors prior to the Assessment Committee Meeting if applicable.

Assessors must declare any direct or indirect/perceived conflicts of interest to County Arts staff prior to beginning the assessment process in order to determine an appropriate course of action, which may involve recusal from assessing the application in question.

2. Peer Assessment Committee Meeting

If determined necessary for a particular program, Peer Assessors will meet to discuss applications and the rankings that emerged from the individual scoring process, and confirm results.

3. Apply other calculations (if applicable)

Some programs have an additional step following the peer assessment phase. Application forms for County Arts' Artist Fund grant and Artist Residency programs include voluntary self-identification questions. If applicable, staff will apply our Equity Priority Policy to determine final results. See our [Voluntary Self-Identification Framework & Equity Priority Policy document](#) for more information. For the Drake Residency application, Drake staff makes the final selection using the top applications from our peer assessment process.

V. Assessor Guidelines

Peer Assessors must abide by the following guidelines, with some adaptations made for each assessment process.

1. Conflict of Interest

To ensure a fair and impartial assessment process, Peer Assessors must declare any direct or indirect/perceived conflicts upon seeing the list of applicants. We distinguish between and manage these conflict types as follows:

- A **direct conflict of interest** occurs when an assessor or an immediate family member (spouse or partner, parent, child, sibling, or member of the immediate household) will benefit financially from the success of an application.
 - Individuals who are in direct conflict of interest with any of the applications being assessed cannot serve as assessors. If a direct conflict of interest becomes apparent at any time before or during the assessment process, the assessor will be immediately released from their duties.
- An **indirect/perceived conflict** occurs when some factor may make it difficult for an assessor to evaluate an application objectively, or when it might appear that an assessor could not evaluate an application objectively.

- Individuals with an indirect/perceived conflict must recuse themselves from evaluating that particular application. If they have an indirect/perceived conflict relating to more than one application, they cannot serve as assessors.

Assessors and County Arts staff may refer to [OAC guidelines](#) to help determine the presence of a conflict of interest.

2. Confidentiality

All discussions and decisions in which assessors are involved, and any information, application materials or audiovisual, digital or other documentation that assessors receive or to which they have access in their role as an assessor are confidential. Assessors have no rights whatsoever with respect to this information; all intellectual property rights in the materials provided by the applicant for the purposes of assessment are held by the applicant.

Assessors agree to maintain the confidentiality of this information and:

- will not disseminate, distribute, copy or otherwise reproduce this information in any manner or by any means
- will use this information solely for the purpose of serving in their role as an assessor, and not for any other purpose
- securely maintain this information to protect it against loss, theft, unauthorized access, modification or destruction

Upon completion of their role as an assessor and the assessment panel, assessors agree to:

- securely destroy this information and any and all of the personal notes they recorded for use as an assessor
- delete any and all information on their personal device(s) that they have downloaded from the Google drive folders

Assessors understand that their identity as assessors may be publicly divulged.

3. Other Requirements and Considerations:

County Arts Peer Assessors must:

- Bring vision, open-mindedness and generosity of spirit to their deliberations
- Provide fair and objective analysis, based on assessment criteria
- Treat applications equitably, without prejudice, in accordance with our values (displayed [here](#)), [Inclusivity, Diversity & Equity Policy](#), and [Indigenous Land Acknowledgement](#), and the principles of the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- Work collaboratively

- Be willing to express their views while respecting and listening to the views of others

We also invite assessors to consider:

- Who is telling whose story and who has the right to develop and share cultural expressions and knowledge from any community, particularly marginalized groups or individuals.
- The applicant's social, economic and physical barriers, whether historic or continuing, in accessing opportunities to producing and participating in the arts.

Policy on assessor dismissal

An assessor is dismissed from their responsibilities, and (if applicable) will not receive payment if they:

- Fail to comply with the Peer Assessor Guidelines
- Have a direct conflict of interest that precludes participation
- Do not review and score all applications and materials within the given timeframe and/or do not attend the meeting
- Obstruct or disrupt the assessment process or are disrespectful of other assessors, County Arts staff, or particular applicants or groups of applicants
- discriminate against applicants, other assessors or County Arts staff