

GRANT REVIEW PROCESS

For organizational grants awarded on an annual basis, grant review panels provide a system of impartial peer review in the evaluation of grant applications. The decision to use private citizens on grant review panels reflects the importance of having diverse public and expert participation in the grant-making process.

Grant panelist selection

- People who work or live in Delaware are eligible to serve on panels. Additional out-of-state panelists may be used: 1) to incorporate regional or national perspective; 2) to provide additional expertise and diversity; or 3) to mitigate the potential for conflicts of interest.
- Division staff members strive to construct panels that reflect Delaware's demographic and geographic diversity.
- Panels are composed of artists, arts educators, arts and nonprofit organization administrators, corporate and fundraising managers, knowledgeable arts specialists, and interested community members.
- Panelists are chosen for their professional experience, expertise in an artistic discipline, knowledge of the community, and ability to objectively review grant materials.
- Panelists are screened for conflicts of interest, and where they exist, panelists are recused from discussion of the grant application or assigned to an alternate panel where a conflict does not exist.
- Panelist nominations are accepted and processed by the Division of the Arts year round.

Grant review panel meetings

- Panel meetings are public, posted and held in accordance with State of Delaware public meeting requirements.
- Panel meetings are chaired by a member of the State Arts Council or Division of the Arts staff.

Grant review process

- Panelists evaluate applications according to criteria developed by Division staff and published with the grant guidelines.
- Panel comments are recorded and incorporated into the funding recommendation process.
- Panel comments are made available to applicants upon notification of the funding decision.
- The function of the grant review panel is advisory only. Panels evaluate the merits of the applications, based upon published criteria. They do not make funding decisions.

Interim Reporting

- Some grant categories allow for a multi-year application process, eliminating the need to submit a full application for panel review on an *annual* basis.
- In such cases, an Interim Application is required in the "off-year" application cycle in order to be approved for funding in the subsequent fiscal year. Interim Applications may be reviewed internally by Division staff and/or Council members, using the published criteria.

Funding decisions

- The State Arts Council conducts a public review of multiple funding options developed by Division staff to reflect panel or staff comments and rankings, as well as available funds.
- At the conclusion of the public review, the State Arts Council makes its funding recommendations to the Division Director, who is responsible for all final funding decisions.
- The Division announces grant awards after the approval of the State's fiscal year budget.

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Small Requests

- Some applications requesting less than a predetermined threshold amount may be reviewed internally by Division staff and/or Council members, using the published criteria.
- These applications may include small requests for General Operating Support, Project Support, Education Resource, Arts Access, Artist Opportunity, Special Project, and TranspARTation Grants.

Appeals Process

Applicants may appeal funding decisions only on the basis of procedural error or impropriety. Dissatisfaction with the amount of an award, or a decision not to fund a project, is not sufficient reason for appeal. To be considered, appeals must provide evidence that:

1. The application was reviewed on the basis of criteria other than those appearing in the published guidelines for that grant category, **or**
2. Panelists or Council members were influenced willfully or unwillfully by members who failed to disclose conflicts of interest, **or**
3. Erroneous information was provided by staff, panelists, or Council members at the time of the application's review.

Steps in the appeal process

1. Prior to submitting an appeal, applicants should first consult with the staff member assigned to the application to review the panel comments and considerations.
2. If the applicant wishes to pursue an appeal, the appeal must be sent in writing to the Division Director within 30 days of the date notifying the applicant of the funding decision. The letter should contain evidence to support one or more of the above grounds for appeal.
3. The Director will notify the Chair of the State Arts Council of the appeal.
4. The Director and Chair will review the appeal and, at their discretion, will make a ruling or submit the appeal to the full Council for review and recommendation.
5. The Director will notify the applicant in writing of the ruling on the appeal.
6. If the applicant is not satisfied with the ruling, a public hearing with the Council may be arranged.
7. The Division will arrange for a public hearing to be held, according to State of Delaware guidelines.
8. At the conclusion of the public hearing, the Council will reconsider the appeal and make a final ruling. A simple majority vote is needed in the case of an appeal.