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REPORT TO THE ARTS COMMITTEE
MEETING OF JULY 13, 2011

Issue

Policy review of the criteria for eligibility

Subject

Arts Advisory Council report on their actions related to the Strategic Priority "Alignment of program criteria with objectives".

Background

The third strategic priority in the Arts Committee's action plan, adopted May 12, 2010, was to "conduct a policy review, specifically of the criteria for eligibility." The objective of this priority was the "alignment of program criteria with objectives".

An Arts Advisory Council working group supported by staff was struck in January 2011. The group met eight times between February and June. Their report was then brought forward to the entire Arts Advisory Council for consideration.

The working group:

1. Reviewed the statement of purpose for Operating Grants
2. Based on item 1, drafted a similar statement for Project Grants.
3. Reviewed the statement of purpose for IDEA Grants
4. Examined the guidelines and eligibility criteria for each grant program
5. Identified the eligibility criteria shared by all programs
6. Differentiated between criteria whose measures were qualitative versus quantitative
7. Established a Likert scale with which to rank the various criteria
8. Mapped the links between program criteria and program objectives
9. Developed assessment forms for each program using a six-point Likert scale
10. Tested assessment forms on a trial basis during the January and May Project Grant and March and June IDEA Grant adjudications this year to assess their effectiveness

Comments

It is the responsibility of the Arts Committee to set program goals and objectives. The scope of the Arts Advisory Council's review was therefore confined to an examination of the adjudication process in order to ensure that organizations are evaluated for characteristics that fulfil and support the adopted objectives of each program.

The working group felt that adopting Statements of Purpose for each program would have a dual purpose:

1. it would clearly state the goals and objectives of each program and its role within the program structure of the Arts Development Service
2. it would assist in identifying gaps in programming

The working group noted that a number of eligibility criteria are shared by all programs. The fulfillment of these criteria e.g. not-for-profit status, being based in the CRD, were identified as "gateway" criteria. Other criteria were either quantitative i.e. answerable by yes/no, or were statistical in nature, or qualitative in nature i.e. requiring a subjective assessment.

A six-point scale was established for the assessment forms. A six-point scale eliminated the possibility of having a "neutral" or "not sure" position which was seen as not useful in an adjudicative process.

A mapping exercise drew concordances between the adopted objectives of the programs and the published criteria upon which organizations are assessed. This led to acknowledgement that various levels of scrutiny were desirable depending on the program. As a result, program-specific assessment forms were developed for each funding program: a high-level of analysis for operating grants; a mid-level of analysis for project grant applicants; and, a comparatively low-level of analysis for IDEA grant applicants.

Applied use of the assessment forms in both Project Grant and IDEA Grant intakes showed their utility as:

- an outline for the adjudication process
- a reference point for discussion, underlining occasions when the discussion (pro or con) did not align with the overall ranking
- a comparison of the relative merits of applicant organizations
- a record of the assessment

Conclusions

As a result of examining the third strategic priority the evaluation criteria and the objectives of each program have been mapped to establish direct correlations between the two. Existing program goals and objectives have not changed therefore revised guidelines are not necessary at the present time. It was noted however that some redundancies exist in the wording of the current guidelines (see Recommendation 3).

The addition of the assessment form to the adjudication process is a significant addition to ensuring accountability within the current grant adjudication processes. It will provide back-up to the existing process which relies on analysis of the applications, staff reporting and the application of a standardized guideline for adjudication. It will apply varying levels of scrutiny for the various funding programs and form a part of the interview and plenary discussions for Operating Grants where a higher level of accountability is expected.

The proposed recommendations will help to ensure the objectives of each program are met through the fulfillment of published criteria. The following statement taken from the Arts Development document "Arts Advisory Council: Suggestions for Reviewing an Application" summarizes this objective

An application should present an excellent case for funding the organization, clearly indicating that all three areas of Artistic Merit, Administrative Competence, and Community Impact and Involvement are well addressed; that the organization is financially sound; and that the organization has the capability to implement the

proposed program. The application should also convey a strong sense of the organization's plans, expertise and track record, and confidence that the organization will have a successful year.

Recommendations

1. Adopt the Statement of Purpose for Project Grants (replaces the introductory paragraph in the current Project Grant Guidelines) as follows:

CRD project funding provides support for emerging or established arts organizations that produce or present on a project-to-project basis i.e. are not seeking support for ongoing annual operating and/or programming expenses. Project Grants support recurring, one time, or developmental projects and are not available to organizations receiving annual CRD operating assistance.

Project assistance acknowledges that, in order for the arts to remain accessible to the region's audiences and participants, they require an investment of public sector funds. Through an investment in our arts organizations and institutions, the CRD is contributing to the development of a healthy, diverse and vibrant community.

2. Adopt the initial paragraph of the current IDEA Grant Guidelines as the Statement of Purpose for IDEA Grants, as follows:

IDEA Grants (Innovate, Develop, Experiment, Access) is a pilot program of the CRD Arts Development Service. It is a flexible, small-awards program designed to respond to one-time opportunities and to encourage new, innovative or developmental arts projects and events. IDEA Grants are intended to widen arts participation by organizations that are not served by other CRD Arts Development programs.

3. If and when the objectives of the programs change revise the Operating Grant and Project Grant Guidelines to eliminate redundant language.



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Attachments:

Statements of Purpose: Operating, Project, IDEA Grants

Assessment forms: Operating, Project, IDEA Grants