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Seminars for Arts Professionals

## HOW TO WIN GRANTS AND INFLUENCE COMMITTEES

**Chair:** **Bronwyn Edinger**, General Manager City Recital Hall Angel Place, member of the Performing Arts Touring Committee at Arts NSW and previous Chair of Arts NSW's Theatre Committee.

**Panel:** **Sarah Miller**, Professor and Head for School of Music & Drama, Faculty of Creative Arts University of Wollongong and an out-going member of the Australia Council for the Arts Theatre Board.

**Michael Rolfe**, Centre Manager and Gallery Director of the Hazelhurst Regional Gallery & Arts Centre and previously a member for 3 years of the Visual Arts & Craft Committee at Arts NSW.

**Jacqueline Greedy**, Program Manager of Theatre and Dance at Arts NSW and formerly Senior Policy Officer with DCITA

**Fiona Higgins**, Executive Director of The Caledonia Foundation and Major Grants Consultant to The Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation.

Asking people for money is never easy. I learnt this lesson very, very early, when I asked my mother for an advance on my pocket money to buy a Kewpie doll. At six, I realised that asking for a handout comes with a deluge of other questions. What's the money for? When will you pay it back? Have you asked anyone else? Why should I give it to you?

Lodging an application for arts funding – well, that's slightly trickier than scrounging for change for a doll.

Herewith, the SAMAG Guide to Winning Grants and Influencing Committees.

*How do foundations decide how to prioritise their funding?*

Essentially, the foundation's trust deed will dictate how funding is to be spent. There are also less rigid guidelines, which are updated regularly.

*How do philanthropic grant bodies differ from government grant bodies?*

Generally, philanthropic bodies are less bureaucratic and therefore, can be more responsive and personal than government bodies. In a nutshell, philanthropic organisations are "creatively arbitrary" and their decision-making can be inconsistent.

*What do I need to know?*

- Most grant applications take time to process – there's rarely a quick turnaround period.
- Program managers are your best friends. If you have any questions, however small, you should direct them to the project manager.
- Most grants aren't open to individuals, only to legally constituted bodies. As an individual, you could adjoin to an auspicing body to get around this problem. This can cost, though – sometimes it's a flat fee, sometimes it's a percentage of your project's profits.
- You don't have to have your entire project outlined when you apply for a grant. Board members understand that you won't have every outcome articulated at this stage, so don't let this intimidate you.
- Don't be discouraged if you've never received funding before. This matters less than you think it might.

*If I don't receive funding, should I lodge an appeal?*

- If you've lodged an application with a philanthropic organisation, and you'd like to make an appeal, start by talking to a staff member.
- Don't be defensive – if you didn't win funding this time, ask staff members what you can do to improve your chances in the next round. And remember, the last thing you want to do is get people offside.

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- Sometimes, appeals can be successful. You must clearly articulate why and how you feel you've been mistreated.
- For government body appeals, go to staff members first, not the Minister.

### *What are the common errors made by applicants?*

- Submitting an application outside the budget limits. Don't do it – you'll look unprofessional.
- Forgetting to request a specific amount of money. "Everyone fills in the amounts of income and expenditure, but you'd be surprised at how many people forget to write the amount of money they're actually asking for!" says Jacqueline.
- Using small font. Believe it or not, this matters. "When you're reading hundreds of applications, you're already tired and cranky. You don't want to go blind, too!" says Sarah.
- Using colour photographs. Applications are photocopied – so those beautiful colour images will become blocks of black when they're Xeroxed.
- Not using proper documentation. "This is particularly important if you're a visual artist," says Fiona. "If you're making beautiful art, we want to see it displayed properly, so put some effort into this."
- Being too verbose – this makes your application difficult to penetrate and off-putting. "Keep it short and sweet," advises Michael.

### *What can I do to make my application successful?*

- Have a great idea, and articulate it well.
- Talk to the project manager.
- Get your application in on time.
- Be mindful of the body you're applying to, and tailor the application accordingly.
- Follow the criteria carefully.
- Be succinct, and keep your language as plain and simple as possible.
- Build a good rapport with the project manager.
- Show how your project will sustain itself with the funding.
- Show how the project will be collaborative.
- Follow the order of the application form.
- Provide all supporting documentation.
- Articulate your artistic rationale very, very well.

By: Lauren Smelcher