

Organisations Fund 2026-2029 – Festivals stream Guidelines

The Organisations Fund 2026-2029 - Festivals stream (the Fund) recognises the critical role festivals play in fostering a vibrant arts and cultural scene across Queensland.

Festivals provide creative employment, grow new audiences and attract visitors, resulting in significant opportunities for Queensland artists and arts workers and economic benefits to Queensland. Investment in festivals will support the Queensland Government's development of a visionary 20-year tourism plan for Queensland.

1. Fund objective

The objective of the Fund is to strengthen not-for-profit Queensland arts and cultural festivals that present live music as a key component of their programming. It also supports their sustainability as arts businesses that help drive cultural tourism outcomes in Queensland.

The Fund acknowledges the unique business models, planning cycles and challenges these organisations face and provides funding towards core festival operational and programming costs.

Investment through the Fund will strengthen Queensland's vibrant arts and cultural sector to support the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, delivering legacy beyond the Games including advancing and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and empowering people with disability.

Applications from festivals that demonstrate they can support the key priorities of [Creative Together 2020-2030](#) and [Elevate 2042 Legacy Strategy](#) will be prioritised.

2. Who can apply?

The Fund is open for applications from Queensland-based not-for-profit organisations delivering significant arts and cultural festivals that present live music as a key component of their programming in either of the following categories:

1. organisations whose primary purpose is to deliver a festival
2. organisations that deliver a festival as a strategic, core part of a broader program of activities.

Note: By 'festival' we mean an organised series or program of public arts and cultural events, featuring live music, which is held over two or more consecutive days and supports significant employment opportunities for artists and arts workers.

To be considered 'significant' the festival must provide evidence that demonstrates its broad appeal including attracting visitors beyond the local community, and its ability to earn income and/or attract investment as a result of that appeal.

Which Organisations Fund stream to apply for

You can only apply to either the Organisations Fund General stream or the Festivals stream. You should choose the stream that has objectives and criteria that best match your organisation's business.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the Fund, including the Festivals stream, can be found on the Arts Queensland website at [the Organisations Fund page](#). These include a glossary that defines key terms used in these guidelines and a preview of the online application form. FAQs will be updated throughout the funding opening period. For more details and how you can ask questions, see section 7.4.

3. What can be funded?

The Fund supports core operations and program costs including:

- core staff wages
- festival program costs
- overheads, insurance, legal and governance costs.

If your organisation delivers a festival as a core part of a broader program of activities, you can only apply for funding to support core costs directly related to festival delivery.

These costs are defined further in the *Glossary and Definitions* section in the [FAQs](#).

The **minimum** funding amount you can request from the Fund is **\$100,000 per annum** (for four years).

The Fund has a limited budget and is highly competitive, as such:

- It is very unlikely festivals will be supported if they cannot demonstrate existing audience demand.
- Applicants are very unlikely to receive more than \$100,000 in annual funding if they have not previously received multi-year funding from Arts Queensland.
- Festivals that currently receive multi-year funding are highly unlikely to receive more than a 10% increase on existing base funding, or the minimum amount, whichever is more.
- Festivals that do not include live music will not be supported through the Festivals stream.

Organisations that have previously received funding through Arts Queensland should not assume they will be successful in their application.

Organisations should not enter any commitments based on an expectation of funding before being formally notified of the outcome of an application.

Arts Queensland will not fund the majority of a festival's cash expenditure. It is expected that an applicant organisation can maintain and grow a diversified revenue model to support employment and program delivery. In considering a funding request, it is unlikely a festival will receive more than 40 per cent of its total operating budget from Arts Queensland (core support and projected project funding).

4. How will my application be assessed?

Following an eligibility check by Arts Queensland, applications will be assessed by the independent Fund Assessment Panel comprised of arts, cultural, business and community experts. More information about the assessment process can be found on page 5 of these guidelines.

4.1 Evaluation Criteria

The Panel will assess your application against the following criteria to make their recommendations for funding.

High quality

- Proven track record of delivering a significant high-quality arts and cultural festival that features live music as a key component and enhances Queensland's reputation as a vibrant cultural destination.
- Makes a distinctive contribution to the cultural life of the community and state, with strong support from key stakeholders.
- A strategic plan with a clear vision for the funding term that responds to community need and aligns with government priorities including *Creative Together* and *Elevate 2042*.

Strong impact

- Evidence that the festival program provides significant employment and showcasing opportunities for Queensland artists and arts workers.

- Maximises economic and cultural benefits by growing Queensland communities' cultural tourism capacity and visitation.
- Applies the principles of accessibility and inclusion and the [Cultural Engagement Framework](#) through business operations and festival programming.

Sustainable value

- Experienced management and governance team/s representing a diversity of skills and expertise.
- Evidence of accountability and oversight by board/management committee (or alternative governance structure) including frameworks to ensure financial control, best practice human resources and industrial relations management, cultural protocols, risk and asset management.
- Evidence of business performance and processes that demonstrate sustainable financial management and organisational capacity to deliver on the strategic plan.

Other considerations

In making their recommendations, the Panel may also consider:

- the financial return on investment to the Queensland economy through festival activity and attendance, relative to the funding requested
- the level of employment and/or capacity building opportunities for Queensland artists and arts workers created by the organisation, relative to the funding requested
- the distribution of funding across the state
- representation of Queensland's diverse arts sector and audiences, and
- the proportion of the Fund's investment in the overall cash turnover of individual applicants.

5. Eligibility Criteria

Applicants and applications that don't meet the mandatory criteria below will be considered an ineligible application and may not be assessed.

Only one application to this stream will be accepted for per ABN and/or Festival.

5.1 Applicants

Your organisation must meet the following criteria to be eligible:

- deliver an annual arts and cultural festival in Queensland that includes live music as a key component of programming
- have a registered Queensland business address and staff permanently based in Queensland
- be an incorporated legal business entity with an active Australian Business Number (ABN) in the exact name of the applicant
- have a bank account in the same exact name as the applicant
- have completed any Arts Queensland reporting that is due
- not owe Arts Queensland any money
- have at least three years of:
 - festival activity and attendance data
 - audited or certified financial statements for the organisation
 - historic budgets relating to the festival
 - economic impact reporting.

You **cannot** apply if you are:

- an individual or sole trader, a family trust or an individual applying on behalf of a trust
- any entity owned or controlled by Local, State or Federal Governments
- an educational institution
- an Arts Statutory Body or Arts Owned Company
- a festival receiving multi-year funding from Arts Queensland's Backing Indigenous Arts initiative

- an organisation that operates on a for-profit basis
- applying for a festival that is primarily focused on comedy, film, television or games
- under notice that you are to be placed under external administration, petitioning for bankruptcy or winding up/deregistering an organisation/business.

5.1.1 Probity

For the Application to be eligible, the applicant (including its employees and board or management committee, etc) must comply with the obligations set out in these guidelines. To ensure fairness in the application and assessment process, applicants must only contact AQ regarding the Organisation Fund via the nominated email address: organisationsfund@arts.qld.gov.au. Applicants or their associated personnel that attempt to contact other members of Arts Queensland or elected officials in relation their application may be excluded from the process.

5.2 Applications

To be eligible your **application** must:

- be complete and include all compulsory support material
- be for activity that starts after the published 'activity start date' for this Fund
- be submitted by the published closing time and date of the Fund
- be submitted via SmartyGrants, unless given written permission by Arts Queensland to submit the application in another way
- **not** be auspiced.

If you already receive or are offered multi-year core operational funding from Arts Queensland through a different program that overlaps with the funding period of this Fund, you will need to choose which program to receive funding from as you will not be eligible to receive both.

6. What is the assessment process?

Assessment of applications will follow the process below:

1. Your application will be checked against the Eligibility Criteria at sections 5.1 and 5.2.
2. Eligible applications are assessed against the Evaluation Criteria at section 4.1. Arts Queensland reserves the right to shortlist applications based on any or all the Evaluation Criteria.
3. Arts Queensland reserves the right to undertake due diligence checks on any or all applicants to identify any adverse findings. Information sourced by Arts Queensland in relation to the applicants may be taken into consideration during the assessment process. Arts Queensland may also check the accuracy of any information you provide in the application with other government departments/agencies, as required.
4. Financial information provided by eligible applicants will be reviewed by an Arts Queensland expert financial assessor and their analysis will be shared with external industry Peer Assessors to inform their assessment.
5. A panel of independent, expert, industry Peer Assessors (the Panel) will assess and score all eligible applications based on the Evaluation Criteria.

As part of assessment, Arts Queensland may also draw on, and share with Peer Assessors, a summary of any reporting information (including financial) that you have submitted as part of other Arts Queensland funding programs, as well as any information in the public domain.

6. The Panel will meet for moderation and make recommendations for funding for approval by the Delegate, including the funding amount and any special conditions.

Don't forget to complete all outstanding reporting for all Arts Queensland's funding programs by the application closing date, otherwise you will be ineligible and your application will not be assessed.

7. How to apply

7.1 Submission process and due date

You must view a recorded fund briefing on the Fund to access the application form. This will be provided to you along with a link to the application on or after **17 January 2025**. Please request a link to the briefing by emailing organisationsfund@arts.qld.gov.au.

To prepare for your application, you are encouraged to:

- View the [PDF of the Application Form](#), which will be available prior to release of the recorded briefing and application link
- Review the **Organisations Fund 2026-2029 - Festivals stream Guidelines** and the supporting [FAQs](#), which include questions about the Festivals stream
- Review [Creative Together](#) and [Elevate 2042](#)
- Submit any questions to organisationsfund@arts.qld.gov.au.

If Smartygrants doesn't meet your access needs, please contact an Arts Queensland Grants Officer on telephone (07) 3034 4016 or toll-free 1800 175 531 or email organisationsfund@arts.qld.gov.au.

Applications to the Festivals stream must be submitted by **2pm, 10 March 2025**.

Open	Close	Notification	Activity start date
Organisations Fund (General) Monday 30 September 2024	2pm, 20 January 2025	By 30 June 2025	From 1 January 2026
Festivals stream Monday 13 January 2025	2pm, 10 March 2025	By 30 June 2025	From 1 January 2026

7.2 Completing your application

Applicants must address all Eligibility Criteria and Evaluation Criteria in their response. You must answer all the compulsory questions in the application form and attach all the compulsory support material otherwise your application will be ineligible.

We strongly recommend that you initiate a SmartyGrants application to preview the application form and read the FAQs to understand the time and information required to complete the application including:

- strategic plan
- current and historic financial information and budget forecasts, certified as true and accurate and aligned to relevant legislation*. If you deliver a festival as part of a wider program of activities, you will be asked to provide both organisation-wide and festival-specific historic information and forecasts
- three years of program information and outcomes of previous activity
- three years of attendance data broken down by local, out of region, interstate, and international visitation
- three years of employment figures for Queensland artists and arts workers
- business operations information including governance and management details
- historic economic impact assessment information that shows the economic benefit both within a region and Queensland
- have written, confirmed endorsement from the relevant Regional Tourism Organisation and Local Council.

*If you are required under legislation to audit/review/verify your financial statements, you must upload financial statements that comply with your regulator's obligations. If not, you must upload financials that have been signed by your Chair/CEO as being true and correct. If you are successful, Arts Queensland will confirm the assurance level required as part of the financial reporting requirements under your Funding Deed. This will be based on an assessment of your legislative reporting requirements, the amount of funding received, your organisation's stated financial controls and your risk profile (as determined by AQ). This may mean you are required to provide audited financial statements as

part of your reporting requirements, regardless of whether you are required to provide audited reports to your regulator, and you should make sure you factor this cost into your budget forecasts.

7.3 Technical support

For support with technical issues related to the online application, please contact an Arts Queensland Grants Officer on telephone (07) 3034 4016 or toll-free 1800 175 531 or email organisationsfund@arts.qld.gov.au.

7.4 Resources and asking questions

In addition to the FAQs, you can find additional resources to support you in making an application at www.arts.qld.gov.au/artsacumen.

If you have questions that are not answered by the existing FAQs, please contact Arts Queensland on telephone (07) 3034 4016 or toll-free 1800 175 531 or email organisationsfund@arts.qld.gov.au. FAQs will be updated weekly with any new questions and answers, shared with all registered applicants and published on our website to ensure everyone has access to the same information.

7.5 Access and Translation Services

If you require interpreter services, you can:

- telephone the Translating and Interpreting Service ([TIS National](https://www.tisnational.com.au)) on 13 14 50 during business hours
- contact Arts Queensland about speaking with an interpreter.

If you are d/Deaf, have a hearing impairment and/or a speech impairment and need to communicate with someone at Arts Queensland you may wish to use the National Relay Service (NRS). For more information on how to access this service, please visit the NRS webpage <https://www.accesshub.gov.au>

8. Notification date

Arts Queensland aims to notify all applicants of the outcome of their application by **30 June 2025**.

9. If you receive funding

If your application to the Fund is successful, you will be allocated an Arts Queensland Partnership and Investment Manager who will work with your organisation throughout the life of your funding.

Following notification, your Partnership and Investment Manager will meet with you to discuss:

- the offer of funding including the amount offered and conditions of funding, which will include Key Performance Indicators and reporting requirements
- opportunities for further support to enhance your organisation's business development, including partnerships and collaborations that deliver efficiencies and sustainability.

Reporting requirements have been streamlined but will include annual financial and operational reports, festival-specific budgets, participation in surveys and sharing highlights of your past and future programs. You will be required to provide economic impact reports and you should factor this into your budget.

You may be asked to provide copies of organisational policies at the commencement of your contract.

10. Unsuccessful applications

If your application is unsuccessful, you can request a feedback call.

If you are an organisation that received Organisations Fund 2022-2025 or First Nations Pathways funding and are unsuccessful in your application to the Fund, you may be offered up to six months' funding to transition to new income sources. This option will not be available to organisations that have received transition funding at any time over the 2022-2025 period.

All funding decisions can be reviewed under the *Judicial Review Act 1991*. If an applicant is dissatisfied with the funding decision, a written statement of reasons in relation to the decision can be requested. The request must be made in writing and within 28 days of receiving notification of the decision to investment@arts.qld.gov.au.

Applicants may also apply to the Supreme Court for a review of the decision made on their application. Under the *Judicial Review Act 1991*, the Supreme Court can only review the decision-making process and not the merits of the application.

11. Arts Queensland's discretions

11.1 Requesting permission to submit a late application

Arts Queensland does not have to accept applications or any additional information after the closing time.

Arts Queensland will only consider requests to submit a late application in exceptional circumstances, and we will assess a request on its merits and in accordance with probity principles.

You must request permission to make a late application no later than 24 hours prior to the closing date and time. The request should include a detailed explanation of the circumstances that prevented you submitting your application on time. Where appropriate, you should provide supporting evidence to justify your claim of exceptional circumstances.

All late application requests must be in writing and submitted to organisationsfund@arts.qld.gov.au.

11.2 Requesting permission for a waiver to other eligibility criteria

Waivers describe when an applicant to a funding program asks us to agree that they do not have to meet one or more of the published eligibility requirements.

You must seek a waiver in writing no later than 5pm Monday, 17 February 2025, clearly indicating which eligibility criteria you do not meet and providing a brief description of your organisation and planned activities, and any other questions that may be determined by Arts Queensland.

Arts Queensland will consider how closely the request for a waiver aligns with the objectives of the Fund, and how strongly potential outcomes of the proposal support *Creative Together*, *Elevate 2042* and Government priorities.

11.3 Decisions

The decision to either accept or decline a waiver or late application request is final and is not subject to a review or appeal process. Arts Queensland will advise you of the outcome of your request within 10 business days of receiving the appropriate information and/or support material to support consideration of the request.

11.4 Changes to the Guidelines, grants process and application form

Arts Queensland reserves the right to modify the Fund Guidelines, FAQs or application form at any time.

You will be notified of any changes via the user email you provided in SmartyGrants when you commenced your application. Updated guidelines will also be published on Arts Queensland website.

11.5 Other rights

Arts Queensland reserves the right to consider and accept ineligible applications and request additional information from applicants after submission.