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News

Major reforms of grant programs for professional artists and arts organizations 2008-2009

Overview

In conjunction with its 2005-2008 strategic plan, the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec has undertaken a major review of the contents of its programs and evaluation processes in order to modernize its operations and better serve artists, writers and arts organizations.

Since 2006, the Conseil has set up focus groups in virtually all disciplines and its advisory committees have been asked to participate in this process. In the fall of 2007, the Board of Directors adopted several reforms that will come into force in the 2008-2009 fiscal year. Changes have been made in respect of:

- **the grant program for professional artists:**
 - over 500 individuals participated in consultations on the review of the grant program for professional artists conducted in all regions of Québec. Two new programs were implemented in the fall of 2007, i.e. a Québec-wide [program for upcoming artists](#), and [Vivacité Montréal](#), a program devoted to artists from the immigrant and visible minority communities. The full range of changes to the grant program will be announced by January 2009 at the latest.
- **the grant program for arts organizations:**
 - first through the reform of the operational support program for arts organizations, including eligibility requirements and evaluation criteria applicable to the March 2008 registration period; and
 - through the implementation of a policy to support arts organizations in difficulty.

The full range of changes to other grant programs for arts organizations devoted to dissemination and so on will be announced in 2008-2009.

This document explains the changes that apply to the operational support program for arts organizations.

A more accessible, fairer, simpler operational support program for arts organizations

Every four years, the Conseil conducts a comprehensive assessment of the performance of all arts organizations that receive operating grants. In 2008-2009, the Conseil will evaluate arts and literary organizations to select those organizations that are eligible for multi-year operating grants in fiscal years 2008-2009 to 2011-2012. This process also applies to professional artists' associations, province-wide groups and service organizations operating in the realms of the arts and literature.

Below is a summary of the key changes in operational support programs for arts organizations in different sectors.

1. Multi-year operational funding accessible to greater numbers of organizations

Multi-year operational support is playing an essential role in the development in Québec of the

arts and literature. This support provides basic funding for four years to deserving organizations.

In 2000-2001, 44% of the organizations that obtained operating grants were awarded multi-year support, compared with 56% that obtained annual support. In 2004-2005, this proportion rose to 69%. In 2008-2009, the Conseil is aiming to ensure that over 80% of the organizations that obtain operating grants benefit from multi-year support. However, contrary to preceding years, organizations that obtain annual operational support in 2008-2009 may only have access to multi-year funding at the time of the next comprehensive evaluation slated for 2012-2013. The selection of organizations that have access to multi-year funding is becoming fairer since it is based on a comprehensive comparative assessment of the applicant organizations.

New specific eligibility requirements in respect of multi-year operating grants

To allow greater numbers of organizations to obtain multi-year operating grants, the eligibility requirements for the programs in all disciplines have been simplified. In particular, the Conseil has eliminated the requirement to have obtained operational support for three years. In this way, the Conseil is reaffirming its desire to make access to this recurring support fairer and simpler. Moreover, the Conseil may ask certain organizations to once again submit to an evaluation by peer committees after two years before the maintenance of their funding is confirmed in the third and fourth years.

Organizations that submit applications for multi-year operating grants must satisfy the general eligibility requirements and specific conditions, which vary depending on the discipline and program.

The following table indicates the simplified specific conditions.

Theatre <i>(production organizations)</i>	Circus arts Multidisciplinary arts Dance <i>(production organizations)</i>	Music <i>(production organizations)</i> Visual arts Arts and crafts Architecture Media arts Literature	Specialized promoters Cultural periodicals Province-wide and international performing arts events Associations and groups *
Be incorporated for two years and have engaged in activities in the sector concerned; and	Be incorporated for two years and have engaged in activities in the sector concerned.	Be incorporated for three years and have engaged in activities in the sector concerned.	Be incorporated for three years and have engaged in activities in the sector concerned.
have obtained two (2) grants from the Conseil, i.e. an operating grant or a grant covering a production project.	n/a	n/a	n/a

* Service organizations must satisfy the same criteria as organizations in the discipline. However, in theatre, the second criterion that mentions that the organization has already obtained support does not apply to service organizations.

2. Annual operational funding that is more extensively available in respect of emerging organizations and initiatives

One new feature in 2008-2009 is that an organization may, when it registers for the program, request operational support for one year according to the new eligibility requirements. The revised annual operational support now provides organizational support in particular for deserving emerging or upcoming organizations and organizations that propose developmental initiatives such as collective services, the pooling of resources, mergers, and so on, or an additional contribution to the development of the discipline, the region or audiences.

This support provides the organization with a one-time annual basic grant. To obtain new funding, the organization must submit a new application in conjunction with the annual registration periods announced by the Conseil.

New eligibility requirements respecting one-year operating grants in 2008-2009

The eligibility requirements for annual operational support have also been harmonized and simplified. With the exception of theatre production organizations, the Conseil no longer requires organizations to have already obtained operating grants or grants in respect of a production project to be eligible for funding.

The organization must satisfy the general eligibility requirements and specific conditions, which vary depending on the discipline and program.

The following table indicates the specific conditions.

Theatre <i>(production organizations)</i>	Circus arts Multidisciplinary arts Dance <i>(production organizations)</i>	Music <i>(production organizations)</i> Visual arts Arts and crafts Architecture Media arts Literature	Specialized promoters Cultural periodicals Province-wide and international performing arts events Associations and groups *
Be incorporated for one year and have engaged in activities in the sector concerned; and	Be incorporated for one year and have engaged in activities in the sector concerned.	Be incorporated for one year and have engaged in activities in the sector concerned.	Be incorporated for one year and have engaged in activities in the sector concerned.
have already obtained from the Conseil an operating grant or a grant covering a production project.	n/a	n/a	n/a

* Service organizations must satisfy the same criteria as organizations in the discipline. However, in theatre, the second criterion that mentions that the organization has already obtained support does not apply to service organizations.

3. Enhancement of evaluation criteria governing operating grants

The evaluation criteria governing applications will remain essentially the same:

1. artistic activities and fulfilment of the mandate (40%);
2. management and governance (20%);
3. impact on the public of the activities (20%);
4. the fourth criterion (20%) now allows organizations to choose to be evaluated according to one of two options, i.e. the contribution to the development of the discipline and the contribution to the artistic community or impact of the activities on the territory or in the community. This addition will enable the Conseil to better take into account the contribution made by certain organizations that are especially active in a territory or a community.

At the conclusion of the evaluation process, to be eligible for an operating grant, an organization must obtain:

- a minimum of 26 out of 40 points in respect of criterion 1 (artistic activities and fulfilment of the mandate) and a minimum of 13 out of 20 points in respect of criterion 2 (management and governance); and
- a good, very good or excellent overall evaluation.

4. Greater consistency between operational support and support for production projects in the dance and music sectors

The Board of Directors has also modified the production project section in the realms of dance and music in order to redefine the boundary between support for projects and operational support. At present, many organizations obtain support under this section although their activities are in fact comparable to those of organizations that obtain operating grants since the activities in question are recurrent. Current eligibility requirements allow for support for recurring activities without ensuring the recurrence of such support. The organizations supported in conjunction with this section may thus apply for an operating grant. As for support for production projects, the eligibility requirements have been modified so that support is offered in respect of the production of a single show.

In 2008-2009 only, there will be two registration periods for these sections, in the spring and fall, to facilitate the transition by organizations that submit applications for production projects. However, starting in 2009-2010, there will be only one annual registration period in the fall.

5. Media arts and visual arts: take into account the overall activities of organizations and establish two separate programs

Starting in 2008-2009, the media arts will no longer be grouped with the visual arts, the arts and crafts and architecture, as has been the case until now, and will be covered by a separate program.

Moreover, in conjunction with registration for multi-year operating grants organizations in these disciplines may specify on the application form their needs in respect of each of their regular activities such as production, dissemination, the hosting of artists in residence, circulation and the development of networks, publications, and so on, over the next four years. The advisory committee will thus be in a better position to assess an organization's overall activities and ensure that a number of the organizations achieve the consolidation necessary for their development. The organizations will thus no longer have to repeatedly submit applications in the sections reserved for projects.

6. Adapted policy directions to guide the Board of Directors' decisions

The Board of Directors adopts policy directions to guide its decision-making in respect of each evaluation cycle for organizations that are seeking multi-year operating grants.

In 2000-2001, the Board of Directors adopted a policy of **consolidation in respect of organizations that obtained operating grants**.

This consolidation centred on the enhancement of the financial assistance granted to organizations in light of their expressed needs, the outcomes of merit ratings, the Conseil's policy directions, and the funds available. The Conseil's funding was frozen for six years. In light of the catching up it has had to do, the Conseil sought to consolidate all of the organizations supported in 2000-2001 in such a way that each organization might aspire to adequate basic funding in relation to its mission.

In 2004-2005, the Conseil decided to **support promising organizations**.

The Conseil raised three key issues in conjunction with its 2003-2006 strategic planning. First, it noted the remarkable growth of production and dissemination networks, reflected, in particular, by the 20% increase in the number of organizations that the Conseil has supported over the past five years. Second, it observed the risk of witnessing the erosion of the past achievements of a number of deserving organizations that were unable to rely on sufficient, steadily increasing revenue sources. Third, the Conseil noted extensive changes in the arts and literature sector in which abundant, diversified, innovative and highly competitive cultural products called for strong, dynamic, well-equipped organizations.

Thus, in light of these major issues combined with the relative scarcity of funding available to many applicants, the Board of Directors deemed it important that the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec bolster its support for deserving arts organizations that make a strong, significant artistic contribution. New funding was thus earmarked to consolidate promising organizations.

The comprehensive **2008-2009** evaluation focuses on **targeted consolidation and the attainment of more balanced use of resources**.

Over the past 18 months, in conjunction with numerous assessments, the Board of Directors has expressed the clear desire that the Conseil evaluate and support organizations according to criteria that define merit but also bearing in mind the overall ecology of the development of the arts and literature in order to achieve better balance in the distribution of resources. To achieve better balance, the Conseil must focus on better:

- regional distribution;
- balance between creation, production and dissemination;
- support for upcoming artists.

Priority will be given in the evaluation to the targeted consolidation of deserving organizations by means of funding adapted to their needs. Two factors, in particular, will be considered to determine which organizations to consolidate:

- the organization has in recent years experienced significant development and growth without an increase in the Conseil's grant;
- the organization did not obtain when it applied for an operating grant funding that enabled it to adequately fulfill its mandate.

These key policy directions, which all of the organizations consulted advocate, will guide the Conseil in the possible injection of additional funding.

7. Implementation of a policy to support arts organizations in difficulty

The Conseil has adopted a new policy to support arts organizations that obtain multi-year operational support and that encounter artistic, financial or organizational difficulties. The policy is intended to pursue multi-year financial support for organizations in difficulty provided that the organizations satisfy the expectations agreed upon with the Conseil according to a precise timetable.

These organizations will no longer have to submit new operational funding evaluation requests each year, which represents a significant streamlining of the procedure. An organization in difficulty will be notified of the conditions to be met in a written agreement and, if the organization's situation improves at the conclusion of the agreement, the Conseil may re-establish, maintain or enhance its support and stipulate new conditions, if need be. Should the organization fail to respond satisfactorily to the conditions demanded at the conclusion of the agreement, the Conseil may totally withdraw its financial support from the organization at the end of the second year or according to the timetable set.

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