IFACCA D'ART REPORT Nº 35

Grant assessment timeframes

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Disclaimer: This report has been prepared by Natasha Eves, IFACCA, and Amanda Macri, Australia Council for the Arts. Errors, omissions and opinions cannot be attributed to the respondents listed in Appendix B, the Australia Council, or the Board or members of IFACCA.

IFACCA is interested in hearing from anyone who cites this report.

Suggested reference: Eves, N., and Macri, A., 2008, 'Grant assessment timeframes', *D'Art Topics in Arts Policy*, No. 35, International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies, Sydney, http://www.ifacca.org/topic/grant-assessment-timeframes/

Grant assessment timeframes

INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the outcome of an 'Ask IFACCA' question which was initiated by Ben Strout, Executive Director, Arts Development, at the Australia Council for the Arts.

Mr Strout was interested in knowing the length of time it takes for arts funding agencies to complete a grants giving process, from application closing date (or receipt of applications) through to notifying applicants of results. The variables of peer assessment and grant types (project grants and annual/multi year) were noted in the question.

Data was sought on key stages of the grant administration process:
1)   Processing applications (from receipt to sending them out to the assessors)
2)   Assessment (time for the assessors to read support material and formalise their assessments)
3)   Meeting time (when final decisions are made in committee)
4)   Processing the results (from recording the decisions to public announcement, including documentation of the decisions, preparing briefings/media, public release of results).

Respondents were asked to provide contextual information on the grant processes, such as whether peer-assessment was used, and whether grants were project-based or multi-year.

The question (see Appendix A) was distributed to IFACCA members and key researchers in February 2008. The question was also translated into Spanish and distributed to countries in Latin America. Surveys were completed by 21 respondents from 15 countries. A list of respondents is provided in Appendix B. In the graphs provided on the following pages, agencies have been referred by a single letter to maintain confidentiality.

A summary and statistical analysis of the responses received is provided below.

We welcome comments and suggestions to www.ifacca.org.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Twenty-one agencies responded to the survey about grant assessment timeframes. Of these, 14 agencies were national arts funding agencies. The remaining responses were largely from regional or state-based arts funding agencies. One response was from the Scottish Museums Council, Scotland's national 'peak agency' for the museums sector

Eight respondent agencies received fewer than 100 grant applications on average per year; 12 received over 100 grant applications – of which two received more than 10,000 grant applications per year on average. One agency did not provide data on the number of applications it received.

Six respondent agencies had a mixture of peer-assessment and non-peer assessment systems. Ten agencies gave grants in only one category: ie. project grants *or* annual/multi-year.

Figure 1 shows the median number of weeks taken by agencies to process grants across two important factors: (i) whether peer assessment process was used or not and (ii) whether the grants were one-off project grants or annual/multi-year grants. As the data indicate, the overall (median) time taken for the administration of peer-assessed project grants (14 weeks) is almost double the time taken for non-peer-assessed project grants (eight weeks). For annual/multi year grants, however, processing times appear to be broadly similar.

Figure 1: Summary of responses, processing time: all stages

Assessment type	Grant type	Number of agencies	Time taken to process (weeks)		
			Minimum	Maximum	Median[1]
Peer-assessed	Project	16	4	46 (24)[2]	14
	Annual/multi year	9	8	26	13
Non peer-assessed	Project	9	4	14	8
	Annual/ multi year	3	9	24	12

Four key stages of the grant administration process were identified in the original question: processing; assessment; meeting; and notification. Due to the nature of the responses we received, however, we had to combine 'meeting time' and 'assessment time' into one category which we called 'review and assessment'. Figure 2 therefore presents data on three stages of grant administration: processing; review and assessment; and notification. Although caution should be exercised at this level of detail due to the small sample size, some patterns are able to be discerned from the data. For example, the difference between 'peer-assessed' and 'non-peer-assessed' grant assessment systems was most pronounced in the processing and notification stages, particularly for project grants.

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[1] Median: The processing time of half the responding agencies is above this figure (and half below).

[2] In these data, there is one 'out-lier' agency with a maximum grant processing time of 46 weeks. Excluding this agency, the maximum time would have been 24 weeks for the administration of peer-assessed project grants. This has not affected the median.

Figure 2: Summary of responses, median number of weeks for individual stages[3]

Assessment type	Grant type	Grant assessment stages (weeks)		
		Processing	Review and assessment	Notification
Peer-assessed	Project	5.75	5.4	3
	Annual/multi year	4	4.25	3
Non peer-assessed	Project	1.5	4.5	1.5
	Annual/ multi year	1.5	6	2

Other conclusions drawn from source data (detailed information has not been presented)

For those agencies from which we did receive specific data on meeting times, it was noted that meeting times were similar whether grants were project-based or multi-year. The data suggest that peer-assessment meetings tend to take one to two days longer than meetings in non peer-assessed grant streams.

Review and assessment took the greatest percentage of total time, across all grant assessment types. This ranged up to two-thirds of the average total time. Interestingly, review and assessment took a greater percentage of time in the non-peer-assessed grant structures, than in the peer-assessed grant structures.

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[3] For statistical reasons, the medians of each stage do not add up to the median for all stages in figure 1.

PEER-ASSESSED PROJECT GRANTS

Sixteen agencies provided time-line data for peer-assessed project grants. Figure 3 shows the average time taken from initial processing of applications to notification of results was 14 weeks. The minimum and maximum timeframes ranged between four weeks and 46 weeks across all sixteen agencies. Only one agency, however, reported a time period of longer than 24 weeks.

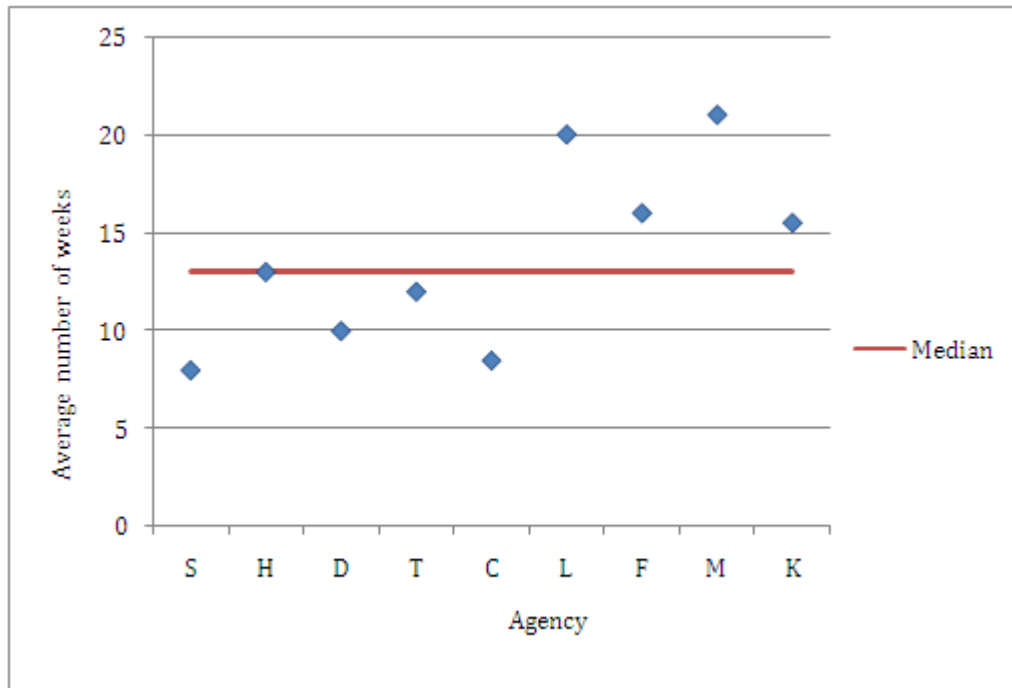**Figure 3: Average time taken, peer-assessed project grants, all stages**
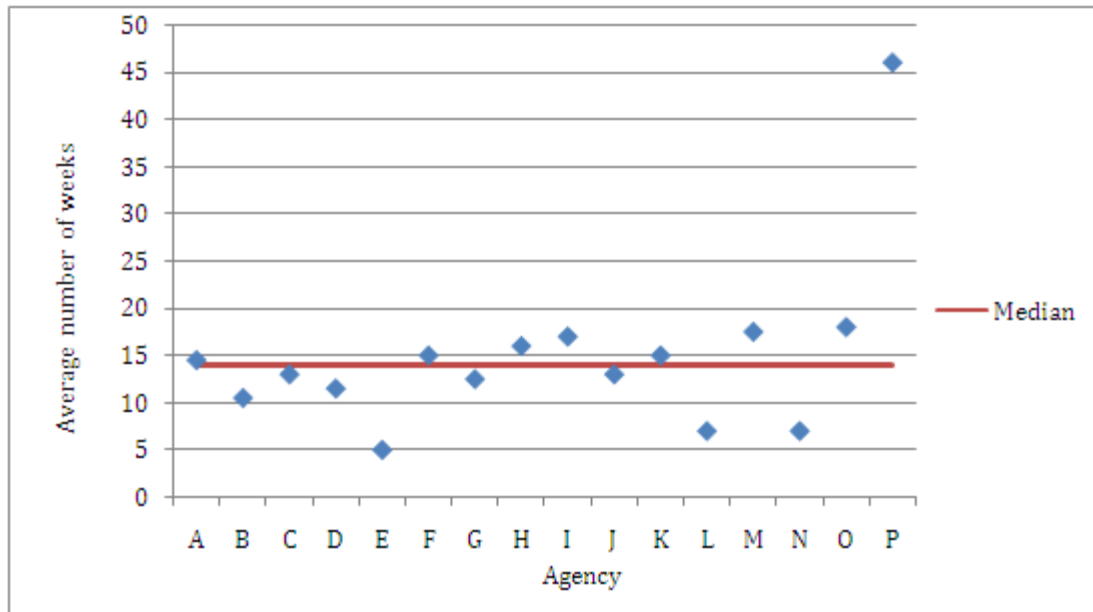
Looking at the three stages of grant administration:

- Processing of applications took between one week and 17 weeks, however only one agency reported a timeframe of longer than 12 weeks. The median was almost six weeks (5.75 weeks).
- Review and assessment took between one week and 22 weeks, with a median of 5.4 weeks.
- Processing the grant decisions took between one week and 17 weeks, with a median of three weeks.

PEER-ASSESSED ANNUAL/MULTI-YEAR GRANTS

Nine agencies reported on the administration of peer-assessed annual/multi year grants. The minimum and maximum grant processing timeframes ranged between eight weeks and 26 weeks, with a median time of 13 weeks. Figure 4 summarises the results.

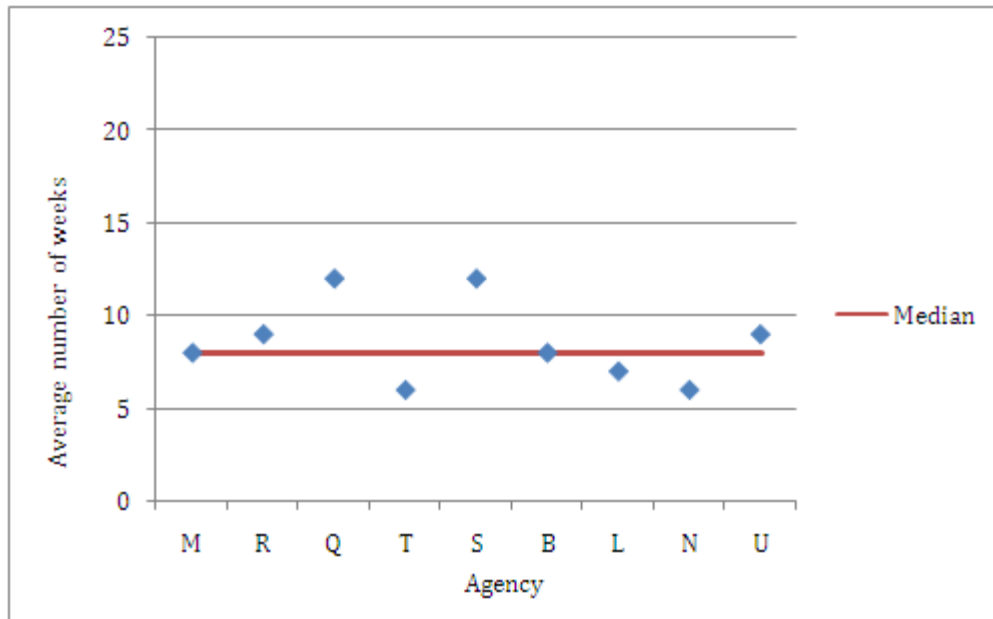**Figure 4: Average time taken, peer-assessed annual/multi-year grants, all stages**

Looking at the three stages of grant administration:

- Processing of applications took between two weeks and 10 weeks, with a median of 4 weeks.
- Review and assessment took between 1.25 weeks and 17 weeks, with a median of 4.25 weeks.
- Processing results and notification of applicants took between one week and eight weeks, with a median of three weeks.

NON PEER-ASSESSED PROJECT GRANTS

Nine agencies reported on the administration of non-peer-assessed project grants. The minimum and maximum timeframes ranged from four weeks to 14 weeks, with a median time of eight weeks. Figure 5 summaries the results:

**Figure 5: Average time taken, non peer-assessed project grants, all stages**

Looking at the three stages of grant administration:

- Processing applications took between one week and six weeks, with a median of 1.5 weeks.
- Review and assessment took between two weeks and seven weeks, with a median of 4.5 weeks.
- Processing the results took between one week and seven weeks, with only one agency reporting a period of longer than two weeks. The median period was 1.5 weeks.

NON PEER-ASSESSED ANNUAL/MULTI-YEAR GRANTS

Three agencies reported on the administration of non-peer-assessed annual/multi
year grants. The minimum and maximum timeframes ranged from nine to 24 weeks. Figure 6 summaries
the results.

Figure 6: Average time taken, non peer-assessed annual/multi-year grants, all stages
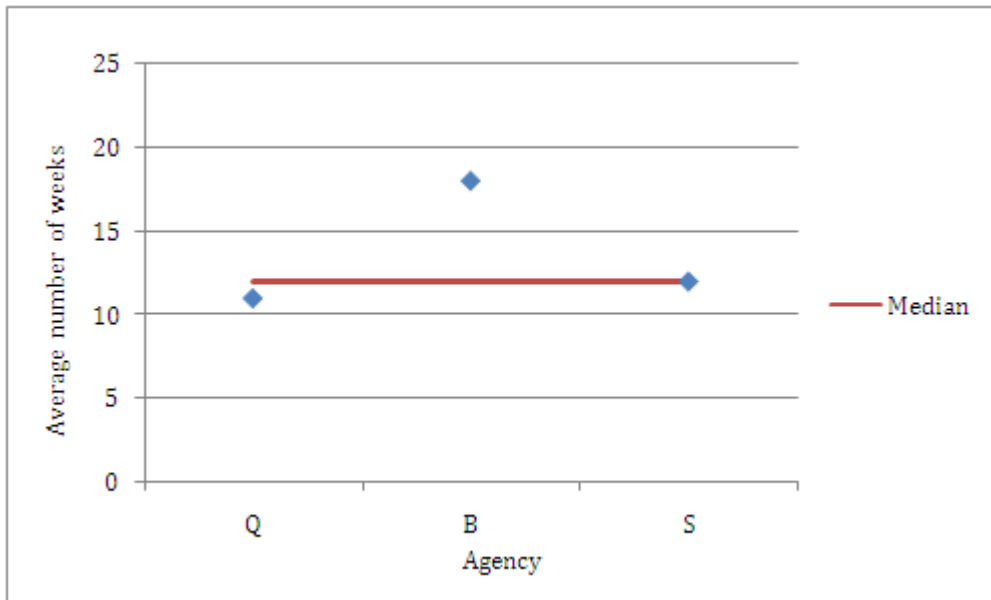
Due to the small number of responses no further analysis of the data for this grant type has been
undertaken.

CONCLUSIONS

This report has presented data from government arts support agencies on grant processing timelines. Data have been presented for both peer-assessed and non-peer-assessed grantmaking systems, and for both project and annual/multi year grants. The report has also provided figures for three stages of the grant administration process:
- processing applications
- review and assessment (includes assessment time and meeting time)
- processing the results/notification

The data suggest that the administration of multi-year grants, be they peer-assessed or non-peer assessed, takes longer than the administration of project grants. This is most apparent in non-peer-assessed grants, where the difference in median time is four weeks.

It cannot be generalised from these data that peer-assessment is more time-intensive than the administration of non-peer assessed grants. For example, while in peer-assessment systems (in both project grants and annual/multi year grants) there are differences in the overall median time taken, the overall minimum time is almost the same (a difference of a week or less) – suggesting that while some agencies do take longer for peer-assessment, it is *possible* to administer them in the same amount of time.

While very little research has been done in this area in the past, the Centre for Effective Philanthropy (USA) produced a report in 2002, *Indicators of Effectiveness: Understanding and Improving Foundation Performance*. One of the issues discussed in this report is Foundation-Grantee relations. The report suggests that '[t]he average length of time between the submission of a grant request and the receipt of a clear commitment of funding is just less than four months. The range of individual averages for the 23 foundations was from 2.2 to 8.5 months…The length of time grantees report that it takes for foundations to process a grant is not related to the size of the final grant'. This average is a little higher than that reported by the respondent arts agencies cited in this report.

The data underlying this report were provided by the respondents listed in Appendix B. This summary of responses will be distributed to all respondents, and will be made available on the IFACCA website (www.ifacca.org).

Grant assessment timeframes – question for IFACCA members

From: The International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies on behalf of Ben Strout, Executive Director, Arts Development, Australia Council for the Arts
Date: 5 February 2008
Email: Return replies to Natasha Eves, IFACCA   n.eves@ifacca.org

Ben is interested in knowing the length of time it takes for other arts funding agencies to complete a grants giving process, from application closing date (or receipt of applications) through to notifying applicants of results. As some agencies have peer assessment and some do not, Ben is also interested in knowing whether that's part of the process. Similarly, he recognises that dealing with operational or multiyear funding for organisations can be quite a different process compared to once-off project applications from individuals or groups.

Ben is interested in this in relation to standard grant programs (rather than special initiatives). As he notes, 'While certain initiatives can be turned around in a matter of two or three weeks, our standard processes take a minimum of 10 weeks... receiving the applications, registering and processing, sending to our external peer assessors, holding a meeting and confirming the results. But the process can (in some areas) take as long as 20 weeks (which is what I'd like to review!).'

Ben has identified the following four key stages:
1) Processing applications (from receipt to sending them out to the assessors)
2) Assessment (time for the assessors to read support material and formalise their assessments)
3) Meeting time (when final decisions are made in committee)
4) Processing the results (from recording the decisions to public announcement, including documentation of the decisions, preparing briefings/media, public release of results).

The next stages, that of payment of the grant, signing of contracts and reporting back on projects, etc is not included in this question.

IFACCA believes that many of its members will be interested in this question and would be grateful for any assistance you can provide. Using the table provided over, could you please indicate the number of weeks it takes for each process, then email or fax the information back to Natasha Eves by **Friday 15ᵗʰ February.** Ben has completed the reply form to help 'get the ball rolling' – see sample provided below.

Any information provided will be published only as aggregated data. In order to encourage responses, IFACCA will only provide the individual data and the analysis to those organisations that respond to this question. If you do *not* wish to have your data to be released to other organisations, please just let us know.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sarah Gardner
Executive Director

Grant assessment timeframes – question for IFACCA members

PLEASE RETURN your reply to: n.eves@ifacca.org or by fax to +61 2 9215 9111 by Friday 15th February 2008

FROM:
Name: _____

Position title: _____

Organisation: _____

Country: _____

Email: _____   Date: _____

Do you agree for your data to be released to other organisations that respond to this question (please circle):   YES   /   NO

Time taken in weeks (indicate a range of time periods if appropriate)	Peer Assessed		Non-Peer Assessed	
	Project Grants	**Annual/Multiyear**	**Project Grants**	**Annual/Multiyear**
Processing applications				
Assessment				
Meeting Time				
Processing the results				
Total weeks (indicate a range of time periods if appropriate)				
Average number of applications received/year				
Average number of grants given/year				

APPENDIX B

List of respondents
Mr Ben Strout, Australia Council for the Arts
Ms Jenny Galligan, Arts Queensland, Australia
Mr Steve Kyne, Arts Tasmania, Australia
Mrs Nelly Stoeva, National Culture Fund, Bulgaria
Ms Marianne Heggtveit, Canada Council for the Arts
Mr Jeffrey Anderson, Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Canada
Ms Billyann Balay, Ontario Arts Council, Canada
Mr Claude Bédard and Ms Brigitte Malenfant, Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, Canada
Ms Josephine Wai, Hong Kong Arts Development Council, Hong Kong SAR, China
Mr Poul Bache, Kunststyrelsen – Danish Arts Agency, Denmark
Ms Audrey Roy, Arts Council England
Ms Sue Lim, Arts Council Korea
Ms Ichinkhorloo S., Arts Council of Mongolia
Ms Dianna Snethlage, Creative New Zealand
Ms Diane Forsythe, Arts Council of Northern Ireland
Ms Joan Macdonald, Scottish Arts Council
Ms Heather Doherty, Scottish Museums Council (now Museums Galleries Scotland)
Ms Elaine Ng, National Arts Council, Singapore
Ms Rose S. Sayore, Tanzania Culture Trust Fund
Ms Sunil Iyengar, National Endowment for the Arts, USA
Ms Tracy Shellard, Arts Council of Wales

We thank all respondents for their contribution.