Good Practice Framework for delivering Art Awards



NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this framework is to support good practice standards for the design and delivery of art awards across all art forms in the Northern Territory (NT). These recommended standards aim to ensure fairness, transparency, accessibility and inclusiveness, while meeting legal and ethical obligations. Clear and transparent program design helps ensure applicants understand the opportunity, supports equitable assessment, and maintains confidence in the integrity of the award.

This framework draws on guidance from National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA), Arts Law Centre of Australia, Creative Australia, Creative Workplaces Australia, APRA AMCOS and relevant Northern Territory legislation and government policies.

The framework is to support arts organisations, community organisations and anyone offering art awards to celebrate and recognise artists and artworkers in the NT.

As an overarching aspiration, the NT Government encourages art awards that contribute to:

- increased visibility and recognition of NT artists and arts workers
- stronger professional and career development outcomes
- expanded audience engagement with arts and culture
- increased participation from diverse communities and regions
- stronger pathways to employment, commissions, exhibitions, performances and publication opportunities
- a lasting record of artistic excellence and cultural achievement in the NT.

2. Award models and categories

The design of an art award should align with its intended purpose, whether recognising artistic excellence, supporting creative development, building collections, fostering emerging talent, encouraging innovation, or increasing recognition and professional development opportunities. Award organisers need to clearly define the award model, categories and intended outcome before applications open.

Awards may include categories assessed by expert panels, peer assessors, industry specialists, public voting or a combination of these approaches.

2.1. Award types

Art awards may adopt one or more of the following types:

- **Acquisitive awards:** The winning artwork, manuscript, digital work or other creative asset becomes part of the organiser's collection. In this case, prize money should reflect the value of the acquisition and any associated rights or ownership arrangements. This model is commonly used visual arts.
- **Non-acquisitive awards:** Recipients retain ownership of their work **A**wards may recognise artistic achievement through cash prizes, recognition, exhibition opportunities, publication, performance, screening or presentation opportunities.

- **Commission-based awards:** Artists, arts workers or creative practitioners receive funding or a commission to develop, produce or present new work. This type is common in music, literature, public art, performance and interdisciplinary practice.
- **Residencies and development awards:** Recipients are provided with access to time, space, mentorships professional development, research or creative development opportunities rather than, or in addition to, a cash prize.
- **Recognition and achievement awards:** Awards that recognise artistic achievement, community contribution, leadership, cultural impact or career accomplishment. These awards may not require the submission of a specific work and are common in music, performing arts, literature and community arts sectors.

2.2. Categories

Awards should reflect the objectives of the program and be clearly defined to avoid ambiguity. Categories may be based on:

- artform (e.g. music, visual arts, theatre, writing, dance)
- career stage (e.g. emerging, mid-career or established artists)
- community, cultural identity or demographics groups
- genre, theme or medium
- geographic location.

3. Governance and planning

3.1. Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference are a governance framework that establish how the art award will be managed, who is responsible for key decisions, and the processes that guide those decisions. Clear governance helps protect the reputation of the award, ensures fairness for artists and stakeholders, and provides transparency throughout the award lifecycle.

Award organisers should consider document governance arrangements, responsibilities and decision - making authority through a Terms of Reference or similar governance documents that clearly outline:

- purpose and objectives of the award
- roles and responsibilities
- governance and decision-making authority
- assessment and conflict of interest arrangements
- reporting and accountability requirements
- meeting and record keeping arrangements.

Award governance arrangements should support independent decision-making and maintain public confidence in the integrity of award outcomes. When designing an award, organisations should consider

both actual and perceived conflicts of interest and establish appropriate eligibility, assessment and governance arrangements to manage associated risks.

While some conflicts may be appropriately managed through disclosure and governance controls, others may require additional safeguards, independent assessment arrangements, restrictions on participation, or exclusion from the award process to maintain confidence in award outcomes.

3.1.1. Defined roles

- **Organisers** are responsible for the administration and delivery of the award, including developing guidelines, managing applications, coordinating communications, arranging exhibitions and award ceremonies, and maintaining records.
- **Judges** assess submissions against published criteria and make recommendations or final decisions regarding shortlisted works and award recipients.
- **Advisory groups or committees** may provide specialist expertise, cultural guidance, industry knowledge, or strategic advice, particularly for awards involving First Nations arts, community participation, or specialised art forms.

Written role descriptions are recommended for all participants to outline expectations, responsibilities, confidentiality requirements and decision-making authority. This matters as clearly defined roles help prevent confusion, duplication of effort and inappropriate influence over award outcomes.

3.1.2. Decision-making protocols

It is best practice to establish documented processes that explain how decisions are made when assessing nominations for an art award. This may include:

- approval of award guidelines and eligibility criteria
- procedures for assessing and scoring submissions
- steps for resolving disagreements between judges or complaints
- requirements for quorum and voting where committees are involved
- processes for documenting key decisions and maintaining records
- protocols for communicating outcomes to artists and stakeholders
- conflict of interest guidelines and procedures.

Decision-making processes must be applied consistently and can be explained if questioned by applicants, sponsors or the public.

3.1.3. Board or executive oversight

A governing board, executive leadership team, or authorised senior management are appropriate forms of governance to provide appropriate oversight of the award, as this will provide accountability and ensures the award is managed in accordance with organisational and legal obligations. This may include:

- approving the award's purpose, budget and strategic direction
- ensuring adequate resources are available to deliver the award

- monitoring key risks and compliance requirements
- reviewing complaints or significant issues that cannot be resolved operationally
- ensuring the award aligns with organisational values and policies.

The board or executive should not intervene with independent judging processes unless governance concerns arise.

3.1.4. Documented policies

Transparent governance supports accountability and trust by ensuring that award processes are fair, documented, and open to scrutiny. Artists, partners, sponsors and audiences are more likely to engage with an award when they can see that decisions are made independently, ethically and according to clearly established procedures.

Organisations must maintain appropriate records of:

- applications received
- assessment outcomes
- conflict of interest declarations
- complaints and resolutions
- award decisions and approvals.

It is recommended to develop and maintain the following policies that support transparent and ethical award administration. Additional policies may be required depending on the nature of the award, such as cultural protocols, privacy, child safety, accessibility, or intellectual property policies.

3.1.4.1 Conflict of Interest Policy

A Conflict-of-Interest Policy requires organisers, judges and advisors to disclose any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest, which can include professional, financial, family and personal relationships, that may influence decision-making. The policy must further outline how conflicts will be managed, including recusal from discussions or decisions where necessary.

A conflict of interest can be:

- actual - where personal interests interfere with decision making
- potential - where personal interests may interfere with decision making
- perceived - where another person could form a view that personal interests may influence the assessment.

Art awards often involve small professional networks where judges, curators, artists and organisations may know each other professionally. While this is often unavoidable, organisations should manage conflicts openly and consistently to maintain public trust and ensure decisions are based on merit. Organisers are responsible for maintaining appropriate records of decisions, assessments, conflict declarations, complaints and approvals

Conflict of Interest Policy for entries and judging should:

- require mandatory disclosure of interests (including non-disclosures) and any known conflicts of interest from judges prior assessment
- request recusal from conflicted decisions or mitigation strategies where appropriate
- document and register conflicts of interest processes in writing.

3.1.4.2. Complaints and Disputes Policy

A Complaints and Disputes Policy provides a clear process for participants to raise concerns. It needs to:

- identify who receives and investigates complaints
- specify response timeframes and escalation pathways
- ensure complaints are managed fairly and confidentially.

3.1.4.3. Risk Management Policy

A Risk Management Policy identifies operational, financial, legal, reputational and cultural risks, establishes mitigation strategies and responsibilities and includes contingencies for issues such as artwork damage, exhibition incidents, judging disputes, undisclosed conflicts of interest, data breaches, or sponsor withdrawal.

3.2. Financial planning

Budgets for awards should include costs for (where relevant):

- prize money
- artist, curator, and judging fees aligned with industry awards and standards
- venue, production, and technical costs
- marketing and administration
- licensing costs, (i.e. music for broadcasting or artwork for publication)

3.3. Sales and commissions

Where artworks are sold:

- Commission rates must be disclosed in the award Terms and Conditions.
- Artists should be informed of resale royalty rights. The Resale Royalty Scheme is the right for an artist to receive a 5% royalty of the sales price of the artwork when it is resold commercially. The royalty applies only from the second sale of the work that occurs.

3.4. Legal and regulatory compliance

Compliance with relevant legislation is a fundamental component of good practice standards. Award organisers are responsible for ensuring their processes, eligibility requirements, assessment practices and participant information management comply with applicable legal and regulatory requirements. This includes:

- **Anti-discrimination legislation** (e.g. NT Anti-Discrimination Act 1992) - Awards must comply with relevant anti-discrimination legislation and provide equitable access to participation, assessment and services.
- **Consumer law and fair-trading requirements** - Award organisers must ensure that all claims about the award are accurate and can be substantiated and not make misleading or deceptive statements. Organisers must publish clear and transparent Terms and Conditions and administer the award consistently with published rules. Entry conditions must clearly explain intellectual property rights.
- **Privacy and data protection laws -** Award organisers must ensure that personal information collected from entrants is managed lawfully, securely and transparently. Entrants must be informed about what information is collected, how it will be used, who it may be shared with, and any consent requirements relating to marketing or promotional communications.

Award organisers must identify and manage risks associated with delivery of the award, including governance, financial, legal, reputational, cultural and safety risks.

3.5. Aboriginal Cultural Protocols

Arts and cultural expression by Aboriginal artists is underpinned by cultural knowledge, traditions, stories and practices that may be collectively owned and governed by cultural protocols. Award organisers should ensure that the design, assessment, presentation and promotion of awards involving Aboriginal artists, including their cultural material and knowledge, are undertaken in a culturally respectful manner and recognise Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP). This helps protect cultural integrity, supports self-determination and contributes to culturally safe and inclusive award processes.

Organisers must:

- respect Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) rights regarding ownership, attribution, and cultural authority
- ensure culturally appropriate judging and presentation
- engage Aboriginal advisors or panels where relevant

3.6. Accessibility and inclusion

It is the responsibility of the award organisers to ensure that processes, website, social media, communications and any exhibition spaces are accessible. It is suggested to identify a support person to assist artists with a disability or language barrier to enter an award. Generally, it is the artist's responsibility to consider, communicate, plan and, where possible, ensure their work is accessible (e.g. video work has captions, audio descriptions available). Where a selected artwork is to be installed, accessibility requirements (particularly relevant for 3D and performance works) must be clearly communicated to artists prior to entry, as this can compromise artistic intentions.

Art awards should seek to:

- provide accessible entry and nomination processes (digital and physical)
- ensure exhibition, performance and event spaces are inclusive
- support artists with disability (e.g. captions, Auslan, audio description)

4. Terms & Conditions

Clear, comprehensive and publicly available application requirements and Terms & Conditions are essential to the integrity and credibility of an arts award program. They establish the rights and responsibilities of organisers, entrants, nominees and recipients, support fair and transparent decision-making, and help manage legal and operational risks.

4.1. Eligibility, entry and nomination requirements

Award guidelines and Terms & Conditions should be written in plain language and published before applications, nominations or entries open, and explain how each award category will be assessed, including any categories determined wholly or partly through public voting, audience choice or People's Choice mechanisms.

Terms & Conditions should clearly communicate:

- who is eligible to enter the award, including any residency, age or category restrictions
- whether staff, board members, assessors, volunteers or other individuals associated with the administration of the award are eligible to enter
- entry and nomination processes
- submission deadlines and key dates
- artform-specific requirements (e.g. format, medium, genre, duration, dimensions or word count)
- originality requirements
- file specifications (e.g. image, text, audio or video formats)
- supporting documentation requirements (e.g. artist statements, biographies or CVs)
- technical requirements for music, performance or screen-based submissions
- prizes, opportunities and benefits available to recipients
- how actual, perceived and potential conflicts of interest will be managed
- requirements relating to the use of artificial intelligence (AI), including whether AI-assisted or AI-generated content is permitted, any disclosure requirements, and how AI use will be considered during assessment.

As the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in creative practice continues to evolve, organisers should clearly state whether AI-generated or AI-assisted works are eligible for entry. Where AI tools have been used in the development of a work, organisers should consider requiring applicants to disclose the nature and extent of AI use. Any restrictions or assessment considerations relating to AI should be clearly explained in the Terms & Conditions and assessment criteria. For further information visit Creative Australia's Creative Australia Principles: Generative Artificial Intelligence and creative work.

When determining eligibility arrangements, organisations should consider whether participation by staff, board members, volunteers, assessors, advisory committee members, sponsors or other individuals associated could be perceived as compromising the fairness, independence or reputation of the award.

Where participation is permitted, organisations should declare this publicly in the Terms & Conditions and define how actual, perceived and potential conflicts of interest are managed through documented policies, conflict of interest declarations and appropriate assessment safeguards.

Award guidelines and Terms & Conditions should also explain how applications will be assessed and how fairness, independence and transparency will be maintained. This may include information about assessment criteria, assessment panels, conflict of interest management and decision-making processes.

4.2. Intellectual property (IP)

Artists' intellectual property rights should be respected throughout the award process. Participation in an award should not require artists to surrender copyright or moral rights unnecessarily.

Organisers need to clearly outline any proposed use of submitted works, including how works, images, recordings or excerpts may be reproduced, displayed, published or promoted. This includes clarifying that:

- artists retain copyright in their work unless an alternative arrangement has been agreed to in writing
- artists are appropriately acknowledged and attributed as the creator of their work
- any alterations, reproduction or adaptation of a work occurs only with the artist's approval
- the use of artworks, recordings, manuscripts for marketing and promotions is clearly communicated and authorised through appropriate licence arrangements

It is common practice for award organisers to seek a licence to reproduce images or excerpts of shortlisted or winning works for the promotion of the award. A non-exclusive licence is generally preferred, allowing artists to continue using and licensing their work independently. Where a license is required:

- the purpose, scope and duration of the licence should be clearly defined
- licensing arrangements must be proportionate to the needs of the award and documented in writing
- organisers should avoid seeking broad, perpetual or exclusive rights unless there is a clear justification and benefit to the artist.

It is advisable to employ non-exclusive, non-commercial licensing for the use of any images of artworks by selected artists only for a limited period. It is recommended to enter into a written licence agreement to ensure that all the important aspects of the licence are covered

Where music, film or other copyrighted material is performed, screened, broadcast or made available online, organisers need to ensure that all required permissions and licences are obtained, including any relevant music licensing arrangements.

4.3. Insurance and logistics

Award organisers should clearly allocate responsibilities to ensure artworks, artists, performers and audiences are adequately protected. This includes:

- clear responsibilities for transport and installation must be outlined in the Terms & Conditions
- organisers must insure artworks while in their custody
- organisers must ensure that performers, contractors and service providers hold appropriate insurance where required

- organisers of government funded events must hold adequate public liability insurance (minimum $20M)

4.4. Fees and payments

Entry fees can create barriers for emerging, regional, remote and lower-income artists and should therefore be carefully considered. Where fees are charged, they should be transparent, proportionate and clearly linked to the costs or benefits associated with the award. Where entry fees are charged, organisers may consider concessions or fee waivers for eligible applicants. Good practice is to also ensure that:

- artist fees for performances are consistent with relevant industrial awards and standards
- prize payments and artist fee payments are clearly stated in Terms & Conditions and artist contracts
- exhibition or presentation fees for shortlisted artists and their artworks are considered

4.5. Complaint handling

A well-designed complaint handling process promotes transparency, procedural fairness, accountability, and public confidence in award outcomes. Awards are often subject to high scrutiny, making it important that organisers have clear mechanisms for receiving, assessing and resolving complaints.

Terms & Conditions should clearly state that:

- what types of complaints may be considered
- how complaints can be lodged
- how complaints will be assessed and managed

Complaints may relate to administrative processes, conflicts of interest, procedural errors, eligibility issues, or alleged misconduct. It is recommended that organisers have a clear, published process for disputes, appeals, and feedback in place to support transparent escalation pathways for complaints.

5. Assessment and selection

A transparent, equitable and well-documented assessment and selection process is fundamental to the credibility of an art awards program. Assessment processes should be based on published criteria, undertaken by appropriately qualified assessors and supported by clear governance arrangements, including the management of conflicts of interest.

5.1. Judging and assessment

The assessment process needs to be designed to ensure decisions are fair, transparent and based on merit. Assessment arrangements should align with the objectives of the award and provide confidence that all applications have been considered consistently and without bias. In addition, assessment processes should be accessible and accommodate applicants and assessors with disability where required.

5.1.1. Panel composition

Assessment panels should comprise suitably qualified individuals who collectively possess the skills, knowledge, cultural expertise and experience required to assess applications fairly and effectively. Panel composition should consider diversity of perspectives, regional representation and, where relevant, Aboriginal representation.

To support fair, independent and unbiased decision-making, organisers should use multiple assessors where appropriate, appoint replacement assessors when required, separate administrative and assessment functions, and ensure any actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest are appropriately managed.

Judges, assessors and advisory panel members must maintain the confidentiality of application materials, deliberations and assessment outcomes unless authorised to disclose information.

It is best practice that judges and assessors are remunerated in accordance with relevant industry standards and fee guides.

5.1.2. Assessment approach

Assessment criteria should be published before applications open, written in plain language, relevant to the award objectives and applied consistently across all applicants.

Assessment criteria may include:

- artistic merit
- originality and innovation
- technical excellence
- cultural significance
- community impact
- contribution to artistic practice
- alignment with the purpose or theme of the award.

Some awards may include public voting, audience choice or People's Choice categories. Where public voting forms part of the assessment process, organisers should clearly explain how votes will be collected, verified and weighted, and whether public voting determines the outcome or contributes alongside panel assessment. Public voting processes should be transparent, fair and designed to minimise the risk of manipulation or undue influence. Organisers may also consider measures such as blind assessment, moderation of assessment outcomes or staged assessment processes to reduce bias and strengthen confidence in decision-making.

Before assessment, assessors should receive an induction covering the award objectives, assessment criteria, conflicts of interest, confidentiality requirements and any applicable cultural protocols.

5.1.3. Managing conflict of interest

Assessment guidelines should include a Conflict of Interest Policy outlining disclosure requirements, management arrangements and consequences of non-disclosure.

Before assessment, judges and assessors should declare any actual, perceived or potential conflicts including personal, family, financial, employment or professional relationship. This also includes current or

recent professional collaborations as well as any other interests that may create actual, perceived or potential bias. Judges should also declare non-disclosures.

Failure to disclose an actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest may result in removal from the assessment activities and a review of any affected assessment outcomes.

Best practice is for organisations to maintain a conflict register and assess whether declared conflicts require monitoring, restricted participation or recusal from assessment and decision-making. The conflict register should record the nature of the conflict, date declared, assessment of the conflict, management actions implemented and any recusal decisions

Where a significant conflict exists, assessors must leave the room during discussion, not score or rank the application and not participate in any recommendation regarding the application.

Not all conflicts require the same response. The governing board or executive leadership team should determine whether the declared interest:

- creates a high risk of bias
- creates a perception issue
- can be managed through limited participation
- requires complete removal from assessment activities.

6. Delivery and presentation

The presentation of an award is often the public expression of the award's values and reputation. Whether through an exhibition, performance, publication, screening, reading, showcase or awards ceremony, organisers should ensure that artists and their work are presented professionally, respectfully and in a manner consistent with the intentions of the award. Good delivery practices contribute to a positive experience for artists and audiences, support public engagement, and help maintain confidence in the quality and integrity of the award program.

6.1 Presentation standards

Presentation standards should be appropriate to the scale, purpose, budget and available resources a of the award.

Organisers should provide:

- professional display, staging, publication or presentation of selected works
- appropriate technical support (lighting, sound, digital formats)
- clear artist attribution through exhibition labels and captions, catalogues, websites, programs, promotional material to clearly identify and credit the creator of an artwork.

6.2 Artist care

Artists should be treated fairly, respectfully and professionally throughout the delivery of the award. Organisers should recognise that participation in an award often requires artists to invest significant time, resources and creative effort. Therefore, organisers should maintain:

- clear and timely communication throughout the award process
- safe handling of artworks, storage and presentation
- consideration of artistic intent when installing, exhibiting, performing or presenting works
- respectful engagement with artists, including consultation on practical matters affecting the presentation of their work.

6.3 Audience engagement

Audience engagement can help increase the visibility, accessibility and impact of an awards program. Engagement activities should be appropriate to the scale, purpose and artform of the award and may not be suitable or necessary in all circumstances.

Organisers may consider:

- public programs such as artist talks, performances, readings, workshops, exhibition tours
- accessible interpretation materials such as published documents produced in accessible easy read format, audio descriptions, translated materials
- Education and outreach initiatives such as education kits for schools or curriculum-linked activities
- Online engagement opportunities, including virtual exhibitions, recorded artist interviews, livestreamed events.

7 Post award evaluation

Feedback and evaluation provide valuable opportunities to improve future award programs and enhance the experience of applicants, finalists, judges and audiences. While the level of feedback provided may vary depending on the scale and resources of the award, clear communication about feedback arrangements helps manage participant expectations.

7.1 Providing feedback

Good practice is to provide feedback to applicants where possible, clearly communicated in the Terms & Conditions if feedback will be provided and in what format. This may include:

- written assessment comments
- verbal feedback sessions
- individual applicant discussions
- general feedback provided to all applicants on common strengths and areas for improvement.

7.2 Evaluating awards

Evaluation helps organisers determine whether the award achieved its objectives, identify opportunities for improvement, demonstrate accountability and communicate value to artists, audiences, funders and sponsors.

Evaluation may consider:

- number and quality of entries received
- participation from priority groups or target communities
- geographic representation
- diversity and inclusion outcomes
- audience attendance and engagement
- media and promotional reach
- artist development and career outcomes
- participant satisfaction

Organisers can invite feedback from applicants, judges, audiences, sponsors and partners following the award process via surveys, focus groups or one-on one consultations to look for areas for improvement and to determine if award objectives were achieved, for example:

- Did the award attract high-quality entries and recognise artistic excellence?
- Did the engagement with the award support artists' careers?
- Did the award lift the recognition of arts in the community?
- Did the award strengthen the organisation's reputation?

7.3 Documentation

Transparent communication about award outcomes and decision-making processes helps build public confidence and demonstrates the integrity of the award. Organisers should consider:

- publishing award outcomes through appropriate channels such as media releases, websites, newsletters and social media
- publishing a summary of the judging rationale or judges' comments where appropriate
- publishing a transparency statement outlining how assessment and governance processes supported fair and independent decision-making
- retaining Terms & Conditions and supporting documentation for audit, governance and record-keeping purposes.

7.4 Legacy and impact

Art awards can provide benefits that extend beyond the presentation of a prize. Organisers should consider opportunities to support artists and maximise the ongoing impact of the award. This can include:

- promoting winners and finalists through media, marketing and communication activities
- facilitating networking and professional development opportunities

- supporting ongoing opportunities for future exhibitions, performances, publications, commissions or presentations
- maintaining an archive of award recipients and works through websites, catalogues, publications or digital collections.

Examples of legacy initiatives may include:

- artist talks and public appearances
- touring exhibitions or performances
- publication opportunities
- mentoring programs and residency opportunities
- promotional campaigns highlighting recipient achievements

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