

Meeting held December 12, 2011 between the Independent Media Arts Alliance and the National Film Board as follow up to the letter sent November 23rd 2011.

Attending:

Cecilia Ramirez, Manager, Partnerships and Events Accessibility and Digital Enterprises, National Film Board

Joanne Leduc, Director, Institutional Partnerships and Events Accessibility and Digital Enterprises National Film Board

Jennifer Dorner, National Director, Independent Media Arts Alliance

Summary notes:

The National Film Board was required by the Treasury Board of Canada to conduct a strategic review of the Grants and Contributions program. The outcome of the review compelled the NFB to make several major changes to the program in order to have clearer objectives within specific parameters while maintaining the NFB mandate. The NFB was required to re-apply to the department of Canadian Heritage for the \$250,000 and did not receive notice until March of 2011 which was just prior to the Federal Elections which meant they could not move forward with the program until the Election results were known. This was explained in reference to the confusion with the program changes and how the NFB staff struggled to communicate given the short timeframe between the announcement of the changes to the program and the new fiscal year.

The Treasury Board evaluation was an exercise that cultural organizations across the board faced (the Canada Council for the Arts included). A lot of the required changes related to their ability to evaluate their programs, to establish performance indicators, and to introduce better reporting mechanisms. In addition, the NFB had to look at what kinds of programs it offered relative to similar institutions and had to refine the objectives of the program in order to not duplicate or overlap programs already existing elsewhere.

There was renewed focus on training, skills development and professional development and a distancing from production related activities which apparently caused confusion amongst applicants given the history of the program (and very little time to convey these changes to the applicants).

They agreed that the budget requirements are very challenging for smaller organizations. However, this is beyond their ability to change. This is a requirement by the Treasury Board and is not unique to the NFB. The requirement that a maximum of 66% of funding for a project comes from government sources is now a standard for many public funding institutions in all sectors. They understood the frustrations given that many artist run organizations struggle to find outside funding for their organizations. There was a suggestion that applicants that are already doing training activities shift their operating budgets to accommodate the Grants and Contributions program. Cecilia was very supportive and offered assistance to work with applicant organizations to find solutions together for this problem.

The other aspects of the development of the program include ensuring that the funds are distributed as equitably as possible. They pointed out that they discovered that some festivals were being run out of production organizations that were also applying to the program. They will assess each case separately while considering geographic location, amount of money going into the various regions to ensure that this fund is as effective as possible.

In conclusion, the changes to the program come from directives by the department of Canadian Heritage and by the Treasury board. The NFB staff members are eager to work with organizations to ensure that the new program is understood and accessible. The hope is that in time it will become much clearer and organizations will not have to dedicate as much time in trying to understand how to apply.

Link to the [National Film Board Grants and Contributions Program Evaluation](#).