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Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des arts
du Canada

February 12, 2018

Ms. Lisa Theriault
Interim National Director
Independent Media Arts Alliance
Alliance des arts médiatiques indépendants
4067 Boul. Saint-Laurent, suite 200A
Montréal, Québec H2W 1Y7

Dear Ms. Theriault,

Thank you for reaching out to us. We very much value feedback from members of the arts community and welcome the opportunity to address your concerns.

Please allow me to assure you that peer assessment continues to be at the centre of the Canada Council's funding decisions. We believe that peer assessment provides an appropriate means of identifying outstanding ability and artistic merit in the arts, protects freedom of thought and expression, and also ensures that the decision-making process encompasses a wide range of perspectives and professional artistic expertise. Program Officers recommend funding amounts based on the categorization and ranking by diverse groups of peers, leading to fair and informed decision making. Other considerations include the available budget, eligible expenses, the amounts requested by the applicant (which cannot be exceeded), and alignment with the Council's strategic priorities.

While we previously presented peer assessment committees with fixed budgets allocated for the competition and assessors were asked to recommend specific amounts, their funding recommendations have always been that – recommendations. It has always been up to the Council to make final funding decisions. As the national public arts funder, the Council is accountable and responsible for dispensing public funds. This is not a responsibility that can be delegated, and it's not the Council's intention to return to asking peer assessment committees to review program budgets and recommend specific amounts for funding. We have adequate policies and take all the necessary measures to avoid conflict of interest at all levels of the organization and within our peer committees.

Lastly, the Canada Council is highly committed to transparency. Funding decisions and lists of the members of each peer committee are proactively disclosed on our website. We also publish all of our granting data in an open data format, share stories of our funding recipients, and provide a national picture of funding distribution.

Best regards,

Simon Brault, O.C., O.Q.
Director and CEO

cc: Pierre Lassonde, Chair, Canada Council for the Arts
Youssef El Jai, Director, Supporting Artistic Practice