

# Arts Capacity Development Funding Scheme (ACDFS) – 10<sup>th</sup> Round Funding Exercise

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## Nature and Scope of the Funding Scheme

### 1. What kinds of activities will the ACDFS support?

The ACDFS will fund innovative and impactful arts and cultural activities as well as proposals aiming to develop the capacity of arts groups and nurture local artists. It seeks to promote a variety of art forms and practices, including performing arts, visual arts and multi-disciplinary arts.

The ACDFS welcomes proposals which:

- are of a large scale and/or with a long time frame with a view to creating a greater impact on the arts scene of Hong Kong;
- contribute to the applicants' capacity development of a wider scope, such as enhancing capacities in creativity, human resources and organisational capabilities;
- seek to develop the capacity of specific art form(s) and/or the arts sector as a whole in addition to building the applicants' capacity;
- support local artists on cultural exchange with the Mainland and/or abroad and taking them to both the regional and international stage;
- encompass documentation, research, criticism, publication and/or other elements conducive to the sustainable development of the arts;
- pioneer new frontiers in art practices and related critical reflection;
- promote the convergence of arts and technology, e.g. to manifest the applicants' artistic vision and aspiration through the use of technology in a creative manner; and/or
- strive for artistic excellence and innovation in respect of programme/content development.

While the target beneficiaries of the ACDFS are established arts practitioners/arts groups, proposals which encompass training opportunities/elements to nurture young artists and/or arts administrators are also welcome.

The ACDFS does not cover projects that fall under the scope of other dedicated Government funding schemes including the Cantonese Opera Development Fund, CreateSmart Initiative, Film Development Fund, Innovation and Technology Fund, and Intangible Cultural Heritage Funding Scheme. Proponents of proposals seeking to promote Cantonese opera/film/intangible cultural heritage or to develop creative sectors (covering advertising, architecture, design, digital entertainment, publishing, printing

and television), or innovation and technology projects not aiming at the promotion and furtherance of arts development should make applications under the respective funding schemes instead.

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## **2. Are proposals required to meet all four main objectives of the ACDFS?**

The ACDFS provides two types of grants: Springboard Grants and Project Grants. Proposals for Springboard Grants have to meet all four major objectives of the ACDFS viz. (1) capacity development of arts practitioners, arts groups, art forms and/or the arts sector; (2) programme/content development; (3) audience building; and (4) arts education. As to proposals for Project Grants, subject to the nature of the activities involved, they can be designed to meet only one or more of the objectives.

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## **3. What are the differences between Springboard Grants and Project Grants?**

In general, the two types of grants under the ACDFS bear the following differences:

First, Springboard Grants are matching grants while Project Grants are direct grants. An applicant applying for Springboard Grants for the first time must demonstrate that it has secured or will secure a cash income of not less than HK\$1 million, of which not less than HK\$250,000 is non-government sponsorships and/or donations for its proposal. Each successful applicant of Springboard Grants may apply for a second Springboard Grant and the amount of cash income required shall be of not less than HK\$1.5 million, of which not less than HK\$375,000 is non-government sponsorships and/or donations for its proposal. For Project Grants, there is no minimum amount set on cash income.

Second, Springboard Grants intend to support non-profit proposals which are designed to elevate applicants to a higher level of professional performance with enhanced deliverables capable of contributing to the four objectives of the ACDFS (viz. capacity development, programme/content development, audience building and arts education). Project Grants intend to support non-profit proposals of high artistic/professional merit that fulfil one or more of the objectives of capacity development, programme/content development, audience building and arts education.

Third, should a second Springboard Grant application be approved, the successful applicant is not eligible to apply for any further Springboard Grant. There is no limitation on the frequency of application for Project Grants.

Unless otherwise approved by the Government, the funding period of first Springboard Grants and Project Grants may last for a maximum period of two years and for second Springboard Grants, the maximum funding period is three years.

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#### **4. What is the apportionment of the annual provisions between Springboard Grants and Project Grants?**

The ACDFS does not set a fixed apportionment of funds between Springboard Grants and Project Grants. All applications, no matter to which category of grants they belong, will be assessed and selected on merit.

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#### **5. Will regular activities be funded?**

Funding existing regular activities is not a priority of the ACDFS. However, if the funds sought by these activities can significantly enhance the scale and effectiveness of the activities and achieve the objectives of the ACDFS (capacity development, programme/content development, audience building and arts education) to promote arts development, such applications will also be considered.

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#### **6. Will applications be allowed to carry a component of cultural exchange?**

The ACDFS will consider proposals with cultural exchange components, for example, inviting Mainland and/or overseas artists to be resident artists of an organisation, or engaging in outbound arts and cultural exchange that take local artists to the regional and international stage. Nevertheless, applicants have to explain how such components can strengthen Hong Kong's cultural software and enhance the capacity of the local arts sector. Proponents of proposals solely aimed at conducting outbound exchange activities with the Mainland and/or abroad should consider applying for funding from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council's Cultural Exchange Grant which is dedicated to promoting cultural exchange.

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## **7. Will projects promoting literary arts be accepted for application?**

The ACDFS will accept proposals which promote literary arts. With the exceptions of Cantonese opera, film, intangible cultural heritage, creative industries, as well as innovation and technology projects not aiming at the promotion and furtherance of arts development (which are supported by the dedicated Cantonese Opera Development Fund, CreateSmart Initiative, Film Development Fund, Innovation and Technology Fund, and Intangible Cultural Heritage Funding Scheme respectively), all proposals related to arts and culture are eligible for application.

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## **8. Are there any restrictions on receiving sponsorships and/or donations?**

The Grantees should not accept sponsorships and/or donations from, nor be in association with any person in the tobacco or tobacco-related industry or in the smoking products (including electronic cigarettes and heat-not-burn products) industry or any industry-related thereto. For proposals/events specifically aimed at young people under 18, sponsorships and/or donations from the alcohol industry are also not acceptable.

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## **Matching Mechanism of Springboard Grants**

### **9. What kinds of income are eligible for the matching grant?**

Non-government cash sponsorships and donations secured for supporting the proposal are eligible for matching. Other cash income eligible for matching may include revenue generated from the approved proposal, such as box income, admission fees, enrolment fees, participation fees and sales of merchandise developed as an integral part of the proposal, etc. Cash support from any public funding sources and donations from members of the Grantee's Board of Directors is not eligible for matching.

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### **10. How does the matching grant work?**

An applicant is required to set out in the application any non-government sponsorships and/or donations that it has secured or will secure and to produce documentary proof to the satisfaction of Advisory Committee on Arts Development and the Government that the claimed amount of income is achievable.

Springboard Grantees must deposit all committed income in the designated account set up for the approved proposal before the Government disburses the last instalment of the Grant.

The Government will disburse the Grant by instalments, tying with appropriate milestones and deliverables, including proof of matching amount of income deposited and any other conditions attached when the Grant is approved. The instalment schedule will be stipulated in the Funding Agreement to be entered into between the successful applicant and the Government upon mutual agreement.

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## Eligibility and Application

### 11. Who are eligible to apply for the ACDFS?

Successful applicants for Springboard Grants must be either companies incorporated under the Companies Ordinance (Cap. 622) or the Old Companies Ordinance (Cap. 32) as limited by guarantee whose objects and powers do not include the distribution of profits to members, or charitable institutions or trusts of a public character which are exempt from tax under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112).

Successful applicants for Project Grants must be either companies incorporated under the Companies Ordinance (Cap. 622) or the Old Companies Ordinance (Cap. 32), or charitable institutions or trusts of a public character which are exempt from tax under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112).

The legal status required must have been acquired by the successful applicants prior to the signing of the Funding Agreement.

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### 12. Will joint applications made by two or more groups be accepted?

The ACDFS will accept joint applications made by two or more groups, but all the applicants must meet the eligibility requirements mentioned in Q11. Their respective responsibilities should be stated clearly in the application and a principal applicant should be designated for the administration of the approved proposal.

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**13. Can applicants re-submit their applications that were rejected in previous rounds of application?**

Applicants cannot re-submit their applications that were rejected in previous rounds of funding exercises, unless significant and substantial changes and/or enhancements have been made to that proposal, or the applicant is able to produce new information and documents which show an in-depth review of the proposal. The applicant must indicate that it is a new application developed upon the rejected application and show changes that have been made to the original proposal.

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**14. The ACDFS does not accept applications from arts groups receiving recurrent subvention from the Government. What arts groups does this refer to? Will proposals involving such arts groups be considered?**

Arts groups receiving recurrent subvention include the nine major performing arts groups currently funded by the Home Affairs Bureau and the Hong Kong Arts Festival Society whose operational costs are partially funded by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. They are not eligible to apply for the ACDFS and should not be joint applicants. Nevertheless, for applicants who have engaged arts groups receiving recurrent subvention to provide services (e.g. accompaniment), their applications will still be considered.

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**15. Will the grantees of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council's Eminent Arts Group Scheme/Year Grant Scheme or venue partners of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department's performing arts venues be eligible to apply?**

The grantees of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) Eminent Arts Group Scheme/Year Grant Scheme and venue partners of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD)'s performing arts venues are eligible to apply. Projects currently seeking/receiving non-cash support from other public funding sources may apply for the ACDFS as well.

Double subsidy in the form of cash support must be avoided. If support

from other public funding sources<sup>1</sup> has been granted to (a) particular expenditure item(s) of the approved Proposal, the same item(s) will not be eligible for funding. Applicants should not include such expenditure items receiving other public financial support in the projected expenditure of the Proposal. However, a Springboard/Project Grant may be made to a Proposal receiving non-cash support from other public funding sources (e.g. venue support and ticketing services sponsored by the LCSD), subject to recommendation by Advisory Committee on Arts Development and approval by the Government at its absolute discretion. Consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis in light of the prevailing circumstances.

A successful applicant for the Springboard Grant which is receiving a grant of the HKADC's Eminent Arts Group Scheme or Year Grant Scheme must undertake to relinquish any such grants before signing of the Funding Agreement.

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## **16. Can proposals receiving funding support from the Government or other organisations be eligible for application?**

Proposals which are financially self-sufficient may be given a lower priority unless the applicants can demonstrate how the ACDFS Grant, if provided, will enable the proposals to better fulfil the objectives of the ACDFS. In line with the principle to avoid double subsidy, the ACDFS will not subsidise the expenditure items which have been granted cash support from other public funding sources. Applicants should not include such expenditure items in the projected expenditure of the proposal.

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<sup>1</sup> Public funding sources refer to funding provided by Government bureaux/departments or public organisations receiving recurrent funding from the Government (e.g. Home Affairs Bureau, Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Hong Kong Arts Development Council, West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, Education Bureau, Social Welfare Department, District Councils).

**17. Can past or existing ACDFS Grantees submit applications in a new round of funding exercise?**

Both past and existing ACDFS Grantees can submit applications again, except that a Springboard Grantee who has successfully been granted the Springboard Grant for two times is not allowed to apply the Springboard Grant for the third time. Springboard Grantees, after completing two rounds of Springboard Grant, can still apply for a Project Grant.

For applications from past/existing Grantees, the applicant's performance in implementing its approved proposal under previous funding exercise(s) will be taken into account in the assessment of its application. In case the applicant's approved proposal under previous funding exercise has not been completed at the time of assessment, the applicant's interim performance will be taken into account. Besides, any applications being granted approval-in-principle will be subject to the applicant's satisfactory completion of its approved proposals under the previous funding exercise(s).

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**18. Is it possible for an applicant to submit applications for both Springboard Grants and Project Grants at the same time? Can more than one application be submitted?**

In order to provide opportunities for various arts groups, only one application will be accepted from a single applicant in the same round of application.

The main objectives of the ACDFS are to enhance capacity development of arts groups and help deliver impactful projects of a large scale and/or with a long time frame, which require the commitment of the Grantees. A promising arts group/ensemble should make a long-term plan to enhance its capacity for sustainable development in the future. With the above in mind, arts groups should strive for excellence and submit only their best proposals. They should prudently consider whether to apply for Springboard Grants or Project Grants that best suit their development stages.

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**19. Can the key player(s) of a proposal be involved in more than one proposal at the same time?**

In principle, the ACDFS does not forbid the key player(s) of a proposal to participate in other proposals at the same time but would consider whether the player is capable of doing so and whether there may be potential conflicts in work schedule and workload. It is recommended that the applicant seeks

each of the key players' prior consent regarding their participation in the applicant's proposal, and as far as practicable provide supporting documents (e.g. a letter of intent) of the artistic personnel's consent to participate in the project.

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**20. What expenditure items can be included in the budget?**

Generally speaking, the cost for additional manpower engaged for implementation of the approved proposal, production costs (including production material costs and remuneration of creative and artistic personnel), equipment rental, venue rental not owned/leased by the applicant for creation/production/rehearsal use, and other non-recurrent direct costs (such as expenses for consumables and marketing) which are directly incurred for the implementation of the approved proposal would be eligible for funding support. Operation or administrative costs incurred by the applicant's organisation (e.g. the costs for establishing and/or maintaining the operation or administration of the applicant, rental, utility charges, renovation, maintenance and repair expenses and other costs not directly related to the activities) will not be funded.

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**21. There are three major expenditure categories: manpower, production costs and other project costs. Is there any recommendation guiding the allocation of grant budget?**

There is no pre-determined apportionment of funds on different expenditure categories. The Grantees will be given the freedom and flexibility in the deployment of funds to fulfil their artistic pursuit and meet with the genuine operational needs. When submitting the applications, applicants should be mindful that the proposed budget including income and expenditure is accurate, reasonable and realistic as well as showing prudent exercise of financial management and control. Sufficient funds should be allocated on essential areas including but not limited to programming, administration, marketing and financial management with a view to enhancing capacities in various aspects such as creativity, human resources and organisational capabilities.

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**22. If the staff working on the approved project are already on the payroll of the applicant, can the applicant set aside part of their salaries and label them as administrative expenses to be reimbursed by the Grants?**

Unless otherwise approved by the Government, Grants under the ACDFS must not be used to pay any emolument to a person who is already on the payroll of the Grantee's organisation. If the applicant has justifiable circumstances for such a request, such circumstances should be clearly stated in the proposal at the time of application.

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## Assessment

**23. How will the applications be assessed?**

Applications which meet all the requirements set out in the Guide to Application of the ACDFS will be assessed in accordance with the approved criteria and guidelines. The assessment criteria include (1) artistic/professional merit, (2) creativity and originality, (3) impact on the arts sector and the community, (4) technical feasibility, (5) capacity in financial planning and management and (6) management ability of the applicant and the project team. Assessment panels comprising Advisory Committee on Arts Development members and Expert Advisers including professionals, experienced arts practitioners and academics to help assess the artistic merit and related requirements.

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**24. Will all applicants be invited to attend interviews?**

The assessment panels will decide whether the applicant and its project team be required to attend interviews.

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**25. What are the ways to ensure the vetting process is free from conflict of interest?**

A system of declaration of interests has been established for members of the assessment panels to comply with. Members will be refrained from the discussion and decision-making process should there be a conflict of interest.

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**26. Can an applicant make revisions or provide supplementary information to its submitted paper application?**

Before 6 pm on the Closing Date for application, an applicant can provide a complete replacement application in paper form to supersede the previous one. To ensure fairness in assessment, no revisions or supplementary information will be accepted after application is closed unless otherwise requested by the Government.

For enquiries about online application, please refer to the relevant [“Points to Note”](#) or [“Common Enquiries on Online Application”](#).

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**27. When will the application result be announced and can a project start before the announcement date?**

Applicants will generally be notified of the result of application in writing within 5 months of the date when the funding exercise closed. Successful applicants should start their projects within July to December of the same year when the result is announced.

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**28. Is there a review mechanism under the ACDFS?**

There is no review mechanism. After considering the recommendations of Advisory Committee on Arts Development in respect of the assessment results, the Government may either approve or reject the application. The Government’s decision shall be **final**. The Secretariat of the ACDFS is responsible for the administrative work of the ACDFS. If applicants have any enquiries or feedback, please contact the Secretariat.

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## Implementation and Monitoring

**29. What will the Government do when a Springboard Grantee’s actual cash income falls short of or exceeds the amount pledged during application?**

If a Springboard Grantee’s income falls short of the pledged amount, the Government will match the actual amount it has secured. On the other hand, if a Springboard Grantee’s cash income exceeds the pledged amount, it

will only receive the amount of matching grant stipulated in the Funding Agreement. In this scenario, the project may generate an operating surplus. The Grantee shall return the surplus to the Government unless approval is granted by the Government at the recommendation of Advisory Committee on Arts Development on the use of the surplus for a purpose contributing to local arts development in which the use is related to the scope and objectives of the approved proposal.

In the event the Grantee fails to secure cash income that meets the minimum requirement stipulated in the Funding Agreement, in terms of the total amount or the amount for non-government sponsorships and/or donations, the Government reserves the right to suspend or terminate the Grant and require the Grantee to reimburse part or the entire grant received.

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### **30. How will the Grants be disbursed?**

Successful applicants will receive up to 30% of the approved grant as the first instalment to start up the project. The rest of the grant will be disbursed by instalments on the successful applicant accomplishing appropriate milestones/deliverables. In addition, instalments of Springboard Grants will be disbursed only when the sponsorships or donations and other income for matching are actually in place in accordance with the instalment schedule agreed between the Grantee and the Government, and stipulated in the Funding Agreement.

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### **31. What are the terms and conditions for the Grants?**

The successful applicant will be required to sign an agreement with the Government which stipulates the terms and conditions of the Grant, including all the financial control measures and other requirements to be observed by the Grantee.

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### **32. Will the monitoring system of the ACDFS impose significant administrative workload on the Grantees?**

It is necessary to put in place a monitoring system of the Grantees' financial management and project implementation progress to ensure the proper use of



public funds. The Grantees are expected to cooperate and communicate fully with the Secretariat of the ACDFS and to fulfil their obligations as stipulated in the Funding Agreement.

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**33. Will additional grant be provided if the actual expenditure for implementing the proposal exceeds the estimated budget?**

Under no circumstances will any additional grants be provided once the Funding Agreement is signed. In the event that the actual expenditure exceeds the estimated budget, the Grantee is required to cover the shortfall in order to implement the approved proposal. The Grantee will be required in the Agreement to give an undertaking to accept liabilities for all deficits arising from implementing the approved proposal. In addition, the Grantee should notify the Secretariat of the ACDFS immediately regardless of the estimated amount of overspending.

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**34. Can equipment be procured for the purpose of implementing the proposal? How should such equipment be handled afterwards?**

A Grantee may follow prescribed procurement procedures to procure goods and equipment necessary for the implementation of the proposal as approved by Advisory Committee on Arts Development. Nevertheless, the Grantee is required to properly maintain the equipment at its own costs and keep a register of such equipment. The equipment or goods must not be transferred, sold or disposed of without obtaining prior written approval from the Government. Upon the completion of the approved proposal, the Grantee should dispose of the goods and equipment of more than HK\$5,000 at the prevailing market price by way of public sale. The sale proceeds should be counted as revenue of the implemented proposal and reflected as such in the financial report and audited account report.

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**35. What are the requirements on the procurement of goods and services for the project?**

A Grantee with a Board of Directors which comprises 5 or more members may follow the policies and procedures on procurement established by its Board. When establishing such policies and procedures, the Board shall



draw reference from the guidebook entitled *Best Practice Checklist: Strengthening Integrity and Accountability – Government Funding Schemes Grantee’s Guidebook* issued by the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Other Grantees shall follow the prescribed procedures stipulated in the Guide to Application for different aggregate values of procurements. The Grantees must ensure that all procurements will be conducted on a fair, unbiased and competitive bidding basis.

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**36. What happens if the proposal cannot be completed?**

In case of any problem or unsatisfactory performance of the Grantee in implementing the approved proposal resulting in a failure to achieve the expected deliverables/targets, the Government reserves the right to withhold funding, request return of part or all of the grant already disbursed to the Grantee and recover any loss or damages incurred. The Government may terminate the Funding Agreement by serving one-month notice in writing upon the Grantee.

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**37. If the proposal has to be delayed due to venue constraints or other factors beyond the control of the Grantee, will the funding be withdrawn?**

It depends on how long the implementation of the approved proposal will be delayed and the feasibility of the proposal after the postponement. If the project is delayed, the Grantee must obtain the Government’s written approval for the extension in advance. In principle, the approved proposal should commence within July to December of the same year when the result is announced, and complete in two years at maximum for a Project Grant and a Springboard Grant and three years at maximum for a second Springboard Grant.

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## Arts Technology

**38. What does it take for a proposal be defined as “Arts Technology” in nature?**

As the term suggests, Arts Technology arises from the convergence of arts and technology in some aspect or to a certain extent or degree, of which the definition is not restricted to any absolute standard. On the contrary, it encompasses endless possibilities requiring artists to explore and realise. Therefore, the ACDFS does not impose any restriction on a proposal in terms of its arts discipline and the technologies applied.

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**39. Does a proposal fall under the “Arts Technology” category if elements such as live streaming and interactive QR code (or other technological elements) are to be applied?**

While there is no lacking of artistic creations with technological elements around us, creations under the “Arts Technology” category should fully demonstrate the convergence of arts and technology. Applicants are encouraged to manifest their artistic vision and aspiration through the use of technology in a creative manner, and bring new opportunities to arts development by providing more room for creativity through application of technology. As given in Q38, the ACDFS does not impose restrictions on the technologies applied in a proposal.

Please note that if a proposed innovation and technology project is not aimed to promote and further arts development, it is not an art-oriented proposal for which an application should be made under other relevant funding schemes (e.g. Innovation and Technology Fund).

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**40. In case the nature of proposal fits in with more than one category, which category should be selected?**

An applicant should select a category that best describes the nature of his proposal taking into consideration its objective and content. For example, if music accounts for a predominant portion in terms of the arts disciplines involved, the music category may be selected; if a proposal involves different arts elements, the applicant may go for the multi-disciplinary arts

category. The Secretariat will proceed to arrange for the most suitable assessment panel to assess an application according to the category chosen by the applicant.

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**41. What are the definitions of “Arts Technology” and “Multi-disciplinary Arts” / “Media Arts”?**

As given in Q39 and Q40, an applicant should select the category that best describes the nature of his proposal. The Secretariat will proceed to arrange for the most suitable assessment panel to assess an application according to the category chosen by the applicant.

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**42. Should technology or arts be the main focus of “Arts Technology”?**

The ACDFS aims to strengthen Hong Kong’s cultural software and enhance the capacity of the local arts sector. Therefore, proposals made under the “Arts Technology” category must be with arts as the main focus and capable of contributing to all/one or more than one of the four objectives of the ACDFS (depending on whether the application seeks funds under the Springboard Grants or Project Grants).

The four objectives of the ACDFS are (1) capacity development of arts practitioners, arts groups, art forms and/or the arts sector; (2) programme/content development; (3) audience building; and (4) arts education.

“Arts Technology” proposals should highlight the convergence of arts and technology instead of merely showcasing high-end technology. If a proposed innovation and technology project is not aimed to promote and further arts development, it is not an art-oriented proposal for which an application should be made under other relevant funding schemes (e.g. Innovation and Technology Fund) instead.

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