



NINTI • **INNOVATION**
ONE • **FOR REMOTE**
AUSTRALIA

Ninti One Limited

**Submission –Draft Guidelines: The National Program for Excellence
in the Arts- July 2015**

Ninti One Limited

ABN: 28 106 610 833

PO Box 3971, Alice Springs, NT, 0871

Ninti One Limited Contact:

Rod Reeve, Managing Director: 0411 481 974; rod.reeve@nintione.com.au

Introduction

Ninti One welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the National Program for Excellence in the Arts (NPEA) draft guidelines. Our CRC-REP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Economies research project has informed this submission. Our response concentrates on issues relevant to remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and art organisations.

About Ninti One

Established in 2003, Ninti One is a not-for-profit, independent national company that builds opportunities for people in remote Australia through research, innovation and community development.

Ninti One manages:

- the current activities and partnerships of the Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation (CRC-REP)
- the commercialisation of the Intellectual Property from CRC-REP and the legacy projects from the former Desert Knowledge CRC (DKCRC)
- consultancy services related to the delivery and commercialisation of research for the benefit of Australians living in remote areas.

CRC-REP has three goals:

- To develop new ways to build resilience and strengthen regional communities and economies across remote Australia
- To build new enterprises and strengthen existing industries that provide jobs, livelihoods and incomes in remote areas
- To improve the education and training pathways in remote areas so that people have better opportunities to participate in the range of economies that exist.

Our CRC-REP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Economies research project is informing the development of the remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art sector. The project is investigating the production, sale and consumption of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and identifies opportunities for improving the livelihoods of artists, agents and other participants.

Our most recent publication examines the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art sector over the 20 years to 2013. The results give a detailed picture of the sector, enabling consideration on how it might develop in the future. Indeed, this value chain study aims to enable change by informing artists, art business and policy makers about the scope and scale of the sector. Available at <http://www.crc-rep.com.au/resource/EconomyOfPlace/index.html#>

More information on our activities can be found at www.nintione.com.au and www.crc-rep.com.

Comments on the draft guidelines

Funding levels and administration costs

We welcome the announcement of \$80 million available to the program over four years. However, \$104.7 million has been cut from the next four years of the Australia Council's budget. We hope the remaining \$24.7 million transferred from the Australian Council to the Ministry of Arts is not a reflection of the extra administration costs involved in managing the NPEA program.

Governance

The objectives of NPEA could conceivably be supported by the Australia Council. This suggests the potential for duplication of functions and raise questions about the respective roles of and relationships between the Australia Council and the Ministry for the Arts. The Australia Council's 'arms-length' funding model over the last four decades has proven effective. We recommend the NPEA process involves a genuine independent peer assessment.

International and Cultural Diplomacy stream

Historical evidence shows that for genuine and sustained engagement by international audiences in Australian art a coherent program that encompasses all points in the supply chain (commercial, institutional, educational etc.) is essential. This is the work of years, not one event or one program. This is especially relevant to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art sector. Therefore, we recommend that the International and Cultural Diplomacy initiatives be considered with a long term perspective. Considered strategies and supporting tactics are critical to successfully engage with international audiences.

Regional and remote outcomes

There is a lack of clarity in the draft guidelines in the focus on national outcomes and also regional and remote outcomes. Excellence exists at a local or regional level and there are places such as remote Aboriginal arts centres which create high quality art outcomes that will find it difficult to meet national criteria. We strongly recommend that regional and remote outcomes are weighed equally in the assessment of proposals.

Eligibility

The clause excluding *"projects or components of projects that are also funded by other programs administered by the Ministry for the Arts"* from accessing the NPEA fund is ambiguous and potentially redundant. Indeed, the program already excludes funding for operational funding for organisations, which prevents any risks of 'double dipping'. We are concerned that a narrow interpretation of this clause could prevent some Aboriginal arts centres from being eligible to apply under the NPEA. For example, could funding for operating an arts centre be regarded as a 'project' under this clause and therefore make an art centre ineligible to apply under the NPEA to undertake

an activity meeting the objectives of one of the NPEA streams? We recommend either a clearer wording of this clause or its removal.

Application process

Application forms should be simple and easily accessible so it does not exclude applications from smaller, more remote and less well-resourced agencies. Assistance should be available to remote agencies, which lack reliable telecommunications infrastructure to apply online, especially for providing support materials which may require the uploading of large data files. Indeed, current lack of reliable connectivity in some remote locations prevents the downloading and uploading of large size files.

Contact

Should the Ministry for the Arts require further information or would like to discuss the points raised above, please do not hesitate to contact Rod Reeve, Managing Director, Mob: 0411 481 974, rod.reeve@nintione.com.au