



NEW Program Application Tips

Sarah Williams, Arts Program Officer, spoke with Evren Odcikin, a past [New & Experimental Works \(NEW\) Program](#) panelist and grantee. The NEW Program provides unrestricted and artist fee support grants of \$5,000-\$30,000 to small and mid-size dance, theater and multidisciplinary arts organizations that enable Bay Area artists to produce visionary projects relevant to the communities they serve. Evren is a director, writer and theater leader who served as a NEW Program panelist in 2024 and 2025. He has also received NEW Program funding for his work with Golden Thread Productions. Explore some of Evren’s tips for how to submit a strong application. The following conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

Writing To Fellow Artists

Sarah Williams: What advice would you give to applicants?

Evren Odcikin: Usually I'm the outlier on a lot of panel experiences, where I'm the one with the weird, experimental taste that's having to fight everybody to get that one project funded. Sarah and the team really do a good job of having artists and artist leaders on the NEW Program review panel. The people you're writing for are people who are exactly in your shoes and have applied to this grant.

Directness and clarity are really important. Corporate fundraising language tends to work less well for this specific grant. We're much more interested as panelists in the artistic voice and the thing that's being experimented with. Make the case that the thing you're experimenting with is a special thing for your community. I'm always looking for that intersection of community impact with experimental that's in the NEW Program criteria.

I would say both in describing the really beautiful, creative 'why' of the piece and the more intellectual 'what,' use layperson terms and try to get it as clear as possible. I'm on this panel usually as the theater expert. I can do some translation for our dance and other partners on the panel, but I sometimes am not able to because there's so much insider conversation happening. I find that the 'what' can be missing. What is the funding going to and who's going to see it? Like a simple, "it's a duet for two performers that are going to be performed in a site-specific way." Or "my style of work is based on contact improv, and I am Latino, and that's

culturally a big part of the way I do my work.” Some of those logistical and simpler ways of talking about the ‘what’ can really jumpstart your application for the reader.

Demonstrate Your Values & Capacity

Sarah: What questions come up for you as you’re reading applications?

Evren: Capacity comes up a lot. Budget notes are your friend. Those notes are where you can make a case for how your budget aligns with your values. This is a grant where significant artist pay is highly valued. Really highlight how well you're paying your artists. Or if you are not able to pay your artists very well, then help us understand how you're prioritizing them in other ways or how in this phase, this is the best you can do. There are many community-based organizations that don't function at professional pay levels so there's a range that we look at. We really listen to you and how you articulate your work and your values.

Experimental work with ambition is really exciting, but if you've only been doing one show a year where you've hired three people, and this time, you're asking for funding for a project that has 30 collaborators over a two year process, you're going to have to tell us how you're going to step up to this and how this specific grant can be part of that.

Strong Work Samples & Budget Notes Are Key

Sarah: What patterns have you seen across the strongest and the most aligned applications?

Evren: Good budget, good work sample. The description of your work sample and the notes within your budget tell us the story of your money and the story of your work. Break the budget down so we can understand how the artists are being paid, don't just give a lump sum.

I would say the strongest applications are where the message feels aligned. Your mission statement should align with the project description and the community the project is serving, and show up in the budget and work sample. Think of your narrative as the full application. It's okay to repeat things if they're central to your project; it helps us not forget your point. I just love it when I read a sentence and I'm like, 'Oh, that was really clear.' I cannot overstate how exciting that is when you're in the thick of reading these amazing applications.

A simple work in progress sample that really speaks to the project can be much more powerful than a glossy sample of a project that has nothing to do with what you're doing. And I would give this example — the project I worked on that received NEW funding was for a play I wrote, I'm still writing, called “Oriental for Golden Thread.” It was a workshop presentation. We have many very glossy, highly produced production videos. But we ended up choosing one of our workshop in process presentations of a different show for our work sample, because we

wanted people to know this is what we're shooting for with this. We could have included a more impressive work sample, but it would not have supported what we were actually asking for the money for.

Parting Advice

Sarah: Is there anything else, any other burning bits of wisdom, you would like to share with the group?

Evren: Remember that the people you're talking to are not automatons — they're really looking at your application from the artistic and experimental community side. Everyone on that panel has that experience in depth. You can think about it like you're writing to colleagues; you're not writing to a corporate entity. We want clarity and professionalism and all those good things but it can look very different for this application.

Sarah: Thank you. Thank you so much for joining us, Evren. Thank you also for being on our panel for the past two years and sharing your expertise and wisdom with this community. I really appreciate you taking the time.

Evren: It's an absolute joy, and I've learned about so many amazing organizations through this that I now attend. So thank you all, and best of luck with all the applications.