Demystifying the Art of Grant-Writing
A talk by Naz Afsahi and Natalie Liconti
Nov 19, 2020

TRANSCRIPT

Naz: Welcome to our session on grant writing. Um, for those that are not familiar with zoom, I do want to mention that, um, this session is being recorded and live streamed, so we ask that you keep your microphone, um, muted and your camera turned off. We are going to be recording the chat um, as well. We ask that um, you type things in there as it comes up throughout the presentation and Natalie and I will read and respond to them. We'll go over that with a little bit more detail in a moment. Um, if you do have a screen reader, it might be beneficial if you turn it off for this session, because folks will be populating the chat. We also have machine generated captions supplied by the Rev-AI program. So at the bottom of your screen, uh, you can select to see, uh, those close captions. They're not perfect, but, um, it is a useful tool for us to have, we'll have a cleaned up transcript of the session available on the Nightwood website, um, in the coming days to go with this video, when it gets uploaded properly.

Naz: I want to mention that Nightwood has been working this year with Accessibility and Disability consultants, Jess Watkin and Shay Erlich to make our festival as accessible as possible for all. Uh, for blind folks, and anyone with low vision or for whom anyone this would be beneficial, we are going to now introduce ourselves with a description.

Natalie: So, hi, I'm Natalie. Um, I go by she/they, and I am female-presenting. I have short bleached hair. I'm sitting in my kitchen in front of a, um, chalk wardrobe. Um, thank you so much for I'll be here. I'm really excited.

Naz: And I'm Naz. I use she or they pronouns. Both are fine. I'm a settler immigrant female-presenting, um, with dark hair that has been bleached sits just past my shoulders. I'm wearing a grey sweater and to my left you might see a bookshelf and a keyboard that I don't really know how to play, but I'm pretending. Um, and a bed, I'm in a bedroom.

Naz: I also want to acknowledge that uh, we are meeting digitally today, which means that each of us are joining from a different region across Turtle Island and potentially beyond. It's important for us to acknowledge that the Indigenous peoples are the traditional stewards of the lands and waterways of wherever you are located. Natalie and I, um, as well as Nightwood are here on Treaty 13 land as part of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum agreements. Uh, this is traditional territory of many nations, uh, including the Anishinaabe, the Wendat, the Haudenosaunee, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, and many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. As an immigrant settler, I have a lot of mixed feelings about being on this land. Um, and in my, in regards to my role in nation to nation relations, I think it's really important to learn the history of the space that you occupy. And also stay engaged about what is currently happening. And, uh, demand from elected officials that they undertake actions that

don't just benefit the few. I know this past year working from home, it's been, um, a real privilege for me to be located in Southwest Toronto, where I have access to a lot of green spaces and water. And, um, I think we need to continue to champion the land and the waterways, demand nation to nation honoring of agreements and treaties, um, and learn from those that have taken thousands of years to take care of this space, this land. So welcome. Thank you for joining us. I'll throw it to Natalie.

Nat: Yeah. So we, throughout the session, we welcome you to ask any questions and just pop them in the chat box. Um, at the end of the session, we'll have the period for free questions. And, um, if anything, hasn't been answered, uh, throughout the session from your questions, we'll pay attention to those and address them. Um, again, as we go through this workshop, um, we encourage you to have an idea in mind of a project for which you're seeking funding for. Um, if you don't have something that's current, perhaps have a past project on file that you can refer to in your mind. Um, don't worry, you won't have to like, share these project pitches or anything. This is just for you, um, for some of the activities that will come up. So yeah, take a second and just. Find, find that one project. Okay. Let's get started.

[Switching to slideshow view: Slide 2]

Naz: Great. Amazing. So there are different forms of funding streams that creators can access, and most broadly, these can be divided up into public funding and private funding. Public funders are disseminated through the three levels of government in Canada, typically through arts bodies at the municipal, uh, provincial, and federal levels, but it can also appear and be available to access through culture, tourism, or heritage streams, depending on where you're located or the specific fund. Private funding can typically be accessed through corporations and corporate or family foundations. In either case you'll want to spend some time determining whether you fit the specific criteria and, um, about the specific application process. Here today, we're only going to be able to really focus on public funders. We're going to have a resource document that we'll share at the end of the workshop, it will be available on the Nightwood website. We hope you will find it useful. It's not comprehensive by any means. And because we are Ontario located, it is a little bit more focused on that. And, and we can only do what we can at this point.

Naz: Um, in terms of a cohesive database of accessing grants that are available, unfortunately, such a database doesn't really exist. My suggestion is to sign up for each funding bodies' newsletter so that you stay up to date with what they are providing. There is a subscription database called Grant Connect through Imagine Canada. Um, where you can search for private foundations and private funders. It has a subscription model and it can be pretty expensive. But I know for example, the Toronto Public Library has a subscription. So if you have a TPL library card, you can access Grant Connect. Um, so I urge you to look at your public library to see if there's a service that exists in your local region. So let's mosey on along. Um, and learn more about these public funders.

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Natalie: All right. So, um, one way to kind of easily remember or introduce the key concepts of grant writing is what I like to call the three P's. Um, so that's person, project, and plan. Um, so throughout the workshop, we'll be speaking to each of these. Um, but briefly person is really who are you? Um, what is your standpoint? What are your achievements and awards? Um, what is your experience or specific training in the arts? Um, and then project is simply, what are you applying for funding to do? Um, plan is how are you going to execute your project? And this would include budget, timeline, partners, and we'll get into all of this in more detail, but, um, keep these three P's, uh, in the back of your mind.

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Naz: I love that. Um, basically once you sort of do your investigation and figure out a grant that you want to apply to, um, as I said, you want to spend a little bit of time researching it. Uh, you want to determine what the funder is looking for because they will have their own, uh, priority and our priority groups that they're hoping to address. And you want to review the rubric of how the application will be viewed and ranked. So think about your application from the jury's perspective. And, on that, on that front applications can be read just by a program officer, by a jury that the program officer has put together, or in the case of third party grant streams, it would be the partner organizations and the readers that they've put together. And so they might have their own priorities and mandates beyond what is the funding body's, so make sure that you are familiar with that organization that you're applying to. Um, go on their website, read up about who they are. The evaluation rubric for each funder gives you an idea of what is being kept in mind. Uh, and at the end of the day can sort of be distilled into three categories and that is artistic merit, impact, and feasibility. Each funder might have slightly different terms, but essentially this is what they break down to. Um, so as you're answering and stealing out the grant questions, you really want to make sure that you're answering the specific questions that are being posed to you, with, uh, the rubric that is outlined as to how your answers will be marked. So Natalie, why don't you, um, kick us off with artistic merit.

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Natalie: Yeah. So, um, there are many different ways that they basically ask for the same thing. So these words are pretty interchangeable. Um, but artistic merit is clear and compelling history and achievements, relevant community influences, um, distinctive and compelling intended activity with strong supports that demonstrates skill, highly relevant, artistic collaborators. So essentially what that saying is that, um, they're really just looking for the fact that your project is vital and relevant and timely and you have the experience and the collaborators um, and the background to pull it off. Um, but this is about, merit is really about, uh, how distinct and relevant your individual project is in its, um, cultural context.

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Natalie: Um, so moving on to impact. Impact is, um, you know, clear and relevant goals on implementing other artists' communities, audiences, participants. Unique and compelling contribution to your own objectives as an artist. Um, and service to a priority group with an appropriate plan by which to engage with that group. We're going to talk about this a little bit more later. Um, but, I just want to touch on the contribution to your own objectives as an artist part. Um, remember that impact is a category that generally needs to align pretty directly with, uh, the priorities or mandate of the funder. So Naz spoke about this a bit earlier, but, um, taking Nightwood as an example, if you're applying for an OAC recommenders grant from Nightwood, um, it's important to know that Nightwood focuses on, um, you know, feminist theatre and female or femme identifying creators. Um, and that's kind of like the political mandate for the organization. So if your project is aligned with that, um, the community impact, uh, will be aligned with the priorities of the funder. But if you're doing a project about, you know, like, environmentalism or, um, you know, yeah. Environmentalism, let's say. Perhaps that's not the most, um, appropriate funding body for that project.

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Natalie: Then, moving on to feasibility. Um, so feasibility is also often referred to as viability, um, coherent, realistic work plan. A mix of revenues. Um, and then budgeting is a major aspect of, uh, feasibility. So we're not actually going to be speaking about how to create a budget in today's workshop. Um, but do know that, um, most grants do have a budget component except for the OAC. Um, and budgeting is really essential, but there's just so much to talk about that we're, we're not going to be covering that today.

Naz: I'm gonna jump in and just clarify, it's the OACs recommender grants for theatre creators specifically that doesn't have a budget line, other OAC grants do you have a budget component. So. Keep that in mind.

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Natalie: Um, okay. So, um, we, uh, we want to move on to, um, this little activity that I want to do. Um, and if any of you have ever applied for a Canada Council for the Arts grant in the past, um, one of the very first questions that they ask you is to write a one sentence summary of your project in this specific format. Um, and that format is "To: activity + event + date." Um, and I find this really, really useful for all grants, um, because it's a really great framework for distilling your intention for the project in the most concise and direct way, because often we can talk about our project for two paragraphs, but if someone asks us in one sentence, what the project is, it's quite difficult to articulate. Um, so yeah, let's take a minute and give that a shot now. Um, think about, uh, the activity for which you're seeking funding. Um, and again, if you don't have something that's current, choose a past project or choose a show that, or performance that you were involved in um, and pretend that you were the creator of that--um, and you won't necessarily need to share this, so don't worry. It's just for you. Um, but yeah, take a second using that

example and write a little sentence.

Natalie: So I will invite, um, anyone who would like to share to drop, um, their activity in the chat. Um, and then Naz, maybe you can read anything that comes up out loud.

Naz: Definitely. And I want to say, um, a question popped up, um, requesting a clarification about what a recommender grant is. So we'll, we'll make a note of that to return to it. It's a very specific grant, actually, let's do it right now. It's a very specific grant that the Ontario Arts Council offers for creators that, um, is done through third-party recommender. So, uh, theatre companies applied to the OAC, awerere selected as partner companies, were allocated a certain amount of money to distribute to creators. It usually takes place sometime between September and top of January. Each theater company will have their own deadline. Um, because it's the Ontario council, you do have to be an artist who's located in the province of Ontario. I'm not sure um, off the top of my head, if there are comparable grants available to, uh, artists in other provinces and territories, apologies about that. Um, I hope that helps to answer, um, the question about recommender grants. There was also a question about projects that focus on intersectionality from Shannon. Um, I'm not sure if that is, uh, related to the comment that Natalie had about, um, maybe your specific project might not align, for example, with Nightwood's. I think certainly, um, that comes into the research portion. You want to look at the organization and see if there was a good fit there. Nightwood is a feminist theatre company. We, um, accept a variety of, of projects and intersectionality is a key component of our identity and what we do. So, um, for us as an organization, you can probably apply with a variety of, uh, projects. I'm not sure if I'm answering your question, Shannon, but hopefully I am. Please, please type in the chat if I didn't quite cover, or if I misunderstood that question, I apologize.

Naz: Um, we also have another question that asks, "what if it's a project that is only for research or creation, for example, applying for a grant that is not necessarily for an event." Yeah, definitely. I think the recommender grant is, is the perfect example of that because, um, it is a project, it's a grant for creation and development specifically. It's very unique compared to project grants. I think you would have to, um, think about your specific project and reach out to the granting body, like get in touch with the administrator or the officer of the particular grant that you were interested in. And, and, and for the most part in my experience, they're very lovely and open to chatting with people. So reach out to them and see, um, if it would be a good fit for a particular application.

Natalie: I also I'll add that like event is, um, uh, kind of a placeholder word. So I don't don't necessarily take it as like, this has to happen in a physical space with a physical amount of human beings. Um, an event can be completely research based. Um, so your event can be, you know, um, spending six months researching X, Y, and Z. Um, that's, that's still, that totally applies. Um, yep. Do we have any, um, examples?

Naz: We have more comments. So Erin sort of expanded, um, as an example, related to what Christine had asked, um, for example, "To create a community forum for BIPOC actor, actors

and artists creators to identify barriers and opportunities to act, direct, or produce." I think that follows the format that Natalie has proposed of an activity and event. Um, Lisa notes that the OAC has theatre project grants, and you can apply for the development of the project. Thank you, Lisa, for popping that in there. We have another comment "to research and devise an immersive theatre piece, focusing on the Persian Canadian experience, ready for workshopping by July 2021."

Natalie: Yeah, that's really great because it's specific. It identifies, um, a community, an audience base, and it has a specific date. So right off the bat, it's there's a plan in there. Um, which is awesome.

Naz: We have, we have one more, uh, "to create a theatre festival of new collective work by emerging artists at York University's devised theatre festival in March 2020." Um, I don't know if that one got to go ahead because of March. Um. [*Laughter*] It ended early. Probably for the best. Considering public health protocols. Um, Christine, "Great that clears it up and thank you to Erin for your example." Another "thank you for the example" from, uh, I apologize if I mispronounce your, your profile name, Yasamannouri? Yasamannouri? Um, if there are any other examples--Yasmin. Thank you. Please pop them into the chat and we'll, we'll come back to them.

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Natalie: Yeah. Let's um--

Naz: Yeah. So taking that idea of that distilled one sentence descriptor of, of your project, we can start talking about writing an artist statement. And this can be a sentence or it can be a paragraph. The purpose is to convey a few different things, the most basic of which is to tell us who you are, because, uh, you can't assume that the person reading your application is familiar with you and your work. Um, I've sat on a jury that was comprised of not just theatre artists. There was a visual artist, there was a person whose focus was on audience development, someone who was outside the GTA. So we all had a different framework that we were um, coming to the applications that we were ranking. Sometimes you'll get a question that is solely about this. And sometimes the question will be embedded in a larger one that asks you to speak to a few different things. But we have an example question here.

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Naz: And it reads, "Tell us about your or your group's overall artistic work history and achievement." Maximum 300 words. So when we start to think about grant writing, the question is, how do you answer this question? I think you do it by making it really clear to the reader who you are, what is your standpoint? How did your standpoint or your view in life um, influence the work that you have done in the past, and it will influence the work that you were proposing to do. What are your artistic interests? What disciplines do you work in any specific genres or you

multidisciplinary? What is your artistic training? Um, do you have any awards or high points in your career? Tell us about them. Were you part of the residency or a festival? Um, or a co-production that tells us a little bit more about that history. Um, so highlight your previous experiences. If you were part of a university festival, tell us about it. Essentially, what are your values, your ideologies, and your methodologies, and how are these significant to your work? Um, if you take, uh, if you are someone who undertakes collective creation or devised performance, or maybe you're someone who does research for a really, really long time, and then you sit in front of the computer and you, and you write a whole draft. Uh, so tell me, the reader, who you are as an artist and what your artistic practice is about. Because again, as I said, you can't assume that your reader is already familiar with your work.

Naz: And we have two examples.

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Natalie: We have two lovely artists, um, have, uh, provided some bios. So we're going to just go through them and, um, afterwards, we'll chat about, um, some similarities and some uh, some things that they have in common, but, um, example, one. "I am a professional opera singer (11 years of experience of lead roles on stages in Canada, US, and Europe) and an actor, creator and producer (two years of professional experience). I am also a taiko player (Japanese traditional drumming) and have been an apprentice with Raging Asian Women (RAW) Taiko Drummers since 2017. As a queer Japanese, German, Canadian gender-bending soprano, my artistic practice includes creating projects and space for equity-seeking artists, especially with an opera, which is still a largely heteronormative, homogeneous, and patriarchal industry. I strive to do this by re-imagining what opera could be, taking opera and replanting it into multidisciplinary theatre, where it can grow beyond the industry's systematic limits. My first work entitled "The Queen In Me" (see support material video) was an opera inspired theatre piece, which was first conceived at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre's emerging creators unit, and has since been performed in expanded versions at Tapestry Opera summer works and the ROM Friday Night Live. Director and dramaturge Andrea Donaldson worked with me since the beginning of this project and will continue to over the course of its development, with the help of Theatre Gargantua's SideStream Cycle and Amplified Opera, where I act as co-artistic director. This work is scheduled to, to for at the Queer Arts Festival in Vancouver in 2019 and to premiere in full during the 2020 and 2021 season in Toronto. I was grateful to receive previous recommender grants to create and develop this work in the past from the OAC and since have secured a large grant from the Canada Council Concept to Realization and a small grant from the Toronto Arts Council to further develop its trajectory.

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Natalie: Okay. So keep that in mind while we go on to the second bio.

Naz: So second bio. "I am a nonbinary queer playwright and interdisciplinary artist. My work

explores the ritualization of grief, gender performativity, queer identity, and the psychological effects of sexual objectification. My work questions what is deemed socially moral and good, and how we form identity-driven narratives around our actions in order to cast ourselves in positions of moral superiority. My first play "Miranda and Dave Begin Again" won the Playwrights Guild of Canada RBC emerging playwrights award, 2016, as well as the Segal Centre Award for outstanding English theater company. For the past three years, I have been on commission from Nightswimming for my show, "Wasp," as part of their 5x25 program. I recently completed a residency at the Banff Centre as a part of the 2018 playwrights lab, working on my solo show, "The Kissing Game," which is in development with YouTheatre and Young People's Theatre as part of the leaps and bounds program. "The Kissing Game" will premiere in November 2018, as part of the YouTheatre's 50th anniversary. I've been artist in residence with Cabal Theatre for the past two years. With them, I wrote "Tragic Queen", which garnered seven Montreal English theater Award nominations (including a nomination, outstanding emerging artists playwriting). "Tragic Queens" was remounted at the Centaur Theatre as part of the 2018 Wild Side festival." [*Clears throat*] Excuse me. I'm going to mispronounce this. I apologize in advance. "Somnambule," my second creation with Cabal co-written with Joseph Shragge, is an immersive adaptation of, Djuna Barnes' 1930s cult classic, "Nightwood", opened in Montreal this October. I was part of the 2018 Buddies in Bad Times emerging creator's unit and a workshop production of my show "There Are No Rats in Alberta" premiered at the Rhubarb Festival. Most recently, I was asked to be a guest artist at the LungA Festival in Iceland."

Natalie: Okay. Um, so, yeah, some, some basic similarities between those two bios. Um, if anyone wants to, uh, identify anything, you can throw it to the chat. Um, but yeah, as Naz said, there's, there's definitely a formula to, what's checked off in introducing who you are and what kind of work you make. Um, standpoint is identified, um, key identity, identity categories are identified. Um, themes that you explore through your work are identified. Um, awards, residencies.

Naz: Natalie, we have a comment in the chat. "In the first example, I noticed that the artist mentioned what they strive to do in their work and how they have done it. For emerging artists who don't have little to no, who have little to no experience, what do you recommend to write?" This is a really great question.

Natalie: This also, I think that I've gotten this question before in terms of support material as well. If you haven't necessarily produced anything that you have material for, what do you include? And I think that we can kind of answer this question similarly, um. But, yeah. Naz, why don't you, why don't you answer that question?

Naz: Definitely. The two examples that we were really lucky to be able to access for this workshop definitely comes from artists that have some experience. And I think uh, one thing you can do is, um, if you have any training, speak to your training, if you went to school, um, if you've created anything with your friends, if you have been inspired by other works and, um, do you feel that um, that speaks to who you are as an artist? Those are things that you can include.

Um, let me just--

Natalie: Yeah, and training doesn't need to mean it doesn't need to mean theatre school or, you know, film school, um, any workshops that you've taken, anything that you've specialized in. Um, any artists that you've shadowed or festivals that you've volunteered at, that's all really valuable experience and training. Um, so you know, it doesn't have to say NTS on, on your bio.

Naz: Definitely. And I want to bring us back to what the question was, which was, um, tell us about your or your group's overall artistic work, history, and achievement. We have a comment in the chat, "A great question. As a BIPOC performer that can be limits to gaining experience." I think it's really important, um, to also acknowledge lived experiences, both of the examples that we included um, situate themselves within the broader world, they speak to their intersectional identities and how they have formed who they are as an artist in the broader world. And I personally think that's extremely important because lived experience um, can be very different than educational, institutional, uh, experiences, but they contributed vastly to this art form that we call theatre. Liza notes "If writing from the point of the collective, would you speak to the various members' training?" I think definitely you can highlight um, the different things that, um, you feel are the strongest points for each of your, uh, collective's members. There's usually, if it's a bigger project grant, there's usually a section that you can upload a CV and you can go into a little bit more detailed there perhaps. Um, but if you have key artists as part of your collective, the same principle applies. Where we want to know who they are and why is it that they are going to be doing the works that you were proposing? Because it should be that there is a reason that you were collaborating with that individual or individuals and I think that's really important for the reader to understand why that has been chosen to be the case. Any other thoughts, Natalie?

Natalie: I think you, I think you covered it.

Naz: Yeah. And if anybody has thoughts, drop them in the chat. Sorry, I cut you off.

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Natalie: All good. Um, yeah, we can, we can return to--we'll have more examples towards the end, but speaking about support material. We kind of, we just covered that.

Naz: I would like to say, um, one thing about support material or materials. Um, most grants will have a section for you to upload support materials. I think, um, something to be considered of easing really thoughtful in selecting the materials. If you do have them. Um, follow the specific grant that you were applying to follow their instructions. If you have audio or visual material that you're able to upload, make sure you identify which sections of the video or audio recording people should be paying attention to you because usually there's a limit. So you don't want to be left in a case where as soon as it starts is where your three minute or five minute max is kicking in. As well in terms of written material, uh, think about what it is that you're trying to convey.

What is the purpose of your support material, select pages that are of impact. Maybe you want to select different sections. It doesn't necessarily have to be chronological from where the first page of your story um, or your narrative begins. So, um, make sure you look at the specific things that are, um, going to help speak to your projects and your, uh, identity as an artist, wanting to proceed with the project that you're proposing.

Natalie: And also if it's a research project or if it's a project that it's kind of first stage of development, um, it's fine to submit support material that is not directly related to that project. Especially if you identify in the notes or, um, elsewhere in the application that, um, it's connected to the project in some way, whether it be, you know, this is another devised project that I'm proposing. Here's my support material from my last devised project. I think what what needs to be demonstrated is that you can effectively execute a project of a certain, um, you know, level, and there's proof that you've done that, that's really what support material is. It's just speaking to the efficacy of, of what you're doing. Um, so if you don't have, you know, a full hour, long video of a show that you did at a festival, that's totally fine. Um, and I encourage you to, to not stress so much about, um, getting everything videotaped, if you can do that, that's awesome. Um, if you can get a photographer to come to your festival shows, that's great. But yeah, that's definitely not totally necessary.

Naz: I think support materials or another way for the reader to get to know your artistic practice and your artistic voice. Um, so echoing what Natalie was saying, it might not be that specific project, but it could speak to your practice as, um, someone who does collective creation. Uh, it lets folks that are reading your application get to know you a little bit better. And we had a question in the chat, "If you are submitting scenes from a play, would you recommend the new full scenes or is a small excerpt of the scene fine?" I think you have to look at what the grant is asking for. Sometimes there are limits. Sometimes you only have 10 pages or you have, um, a certain maximum that you were able to upload. For me and, um, my experience, I I've, I read, um, support materials where it's been a full scene and I read support materials where it's been, um, portions of it, but it was the portion that the artists felt was really impactful, whether it was like going towards, um, the rise of the play or where the conflict was happening. I've read applications where, you know, in the first page, there's a small paragraph and it says, this is what's happened, previously. This is where you're entering into the project. So here's the context of why you're going to read this section. So I hope that answers your question.

Natalie: Yeah. And sometimes it can be really tricky to decide as an applicant, um, what the most, you know, relevant or impactful part of a script is. And so if you're in that place where you're like, I just don't know what, you know, what five pages out of these 20 pages I should submit, get a pal or someone that you trust or a mentor to be like, this is what is the most important. Because often I think like as a writer or a creator, you struggle to kind of identify what needs to be passed along and what can be, what can speak for itself. And so it's great to have someone to kind of help you with that. Um, so that's, uh, a nice, a nice little nugget of uh, advice there as well. Um, okay.

Natalie: So, um, now we're onto the plan part of the three P's, um, which relates most directly to the feasibility criteria and that we discussed earlier. Um, and in order to create a feasible and specific work plan, um, you really do need to be an expert in, on your own project. Um, so if someone were to stop you in an elevator and start chatting to you about what you're intending to do, you would need to be able to discuss it in one minute, three minutes, or five minutes. Um, and what I mean, when I say be an expert is really being able to be specific and being able to paint a very clear and full picture of your project and all of the steps entailed. Um, so think about your artistic vision or your research plan, and what you want to accomplish, um, with the work. And I think something that's important is I don't make up steps that you don't know. Um, don't be like specific for the sake of providing detail and being specific. Um, if there are pockets and kind of your work plan or steps that you're kind of unclear about, you don't need to like, make anything up or commit to a rehearsal process that you're not actually gonna do. Um, so write in as much detail about what you do know, um, and what your plan is. And also talk about the project, um, with other people and articulate you know, its importance and its artistic merit, and, um, yeah, I can't stress this enough, but have a very clear plan, clearly outline all of the steps that will be taken to ensure an effective execution of your project. And again, we're not discussing budgeting in this session, um, but your, your plan, your budget is essential to kind of illustrating how much research and how much planning has been put into your, um, overall kind of feasibility of your project. Um, so, ensuring that your plan is detailed and aligns with your budget, um, and all of your objectives is, is critical to a successful work plan. Um, and. Yeah. If you take away anything from this, there's the three P's. It's um, really why this and why now? Um, there are a lot of project grants that are clear and they're concise and they're specific, but they might not necessarily get funding. Um, because A, they're unrelated to the priorities of the funding body for which they're applying to. Or B, they're just really irrelevant to the social and artistic context in which you're applying. Um, so I think clarity is important. Being concise is important, but also being aware and in touch with the kind of cultural shifts that are going on and where our cultural ecosystem is asking for research and asking for a platform for discussion to happen in, um, yeah.

Naz: I think one thing I will add, um, and I see it sort of reflected in a comment in the chat, which is "what advice would you give for this section for research and creation proposals, where the project doesn't exist fully yet? Only conceptually, how can you make the assessor's trust your vision?" And this was the comment I wanted to make as Natalie was speaking. Um, you know, mentioned that you don't have to create extra steps and it may be that where you are in your, in your, uh, vision for the project and your conceptualization. Um, there are more questions than there are answers. And I think that's okay. I think posing the questions that you intend to investigate um, is a way to outline what it is that you plan to do. If you need to do research into a historical event, if you need to do, um, a deep rooted community work, you might not know the answers, uh, until that work is done, but you have identified that that is a next step in achieving what it is that you wish to accomplish with your projects. So that I think still speaks to the why this and the why now in a way that, um, doesn't mean that your project has to be like fully

formed and ready to, to be put on the stages. Uh, because every project sort of reveals itself in different ways.

[Slide 15]

Naz: So the notion of why this one, why now? Um, we have a question, uh, from a funder that I think sort of outlines this. And, um, as I read it, like, I urge you to listen to the very specific questions that are posed within this one question, that they have, um, because what you want to do in your answer is actually address all of these mini questions. So the project description question from a funder is: "What are you planning to do and what do you want to achieve with this project? Why are you doing it? Why is it artistically compelling? Why did you choose this project and why is this project timely? You should describe the creation process you will be using." And the maximum word count is included there.

[Slide 16]

Naz: So we have an example response from, from one of our applicants who shared their project with us, and I will read it now. "I am applying for funding from Young People's Theatre to write a new play for ages 8-13 that deals with themes of mental health and addiction. Many children are directly impacted by familial substance abuse (and the ensuing mental health issues) at a young age, but do not have the tools to process their experiences. I am looking to write a play that makes space for children to talk about these complicated and stigmatized issues; through the power of story I want to give them (and their teachers) age-appropriate ways to explore healthy emotional boundaries. When Cassandra (12) and Oliver (9) meet Rachelle (11), they immediately don't trust her. She's awkward, and impolite. She steals their snacks, stays up late and doesn't understand that Oliver is non-binary. She also happens to be their troubled father's daughter (and their newfound sibling). They, and their father, are spending the summer at their Grandma's house, Midnight - it's the only house around for miles in the middle of a birch-tree valley. A garden sprawls around it, and Cassie and Oliver are convinced the house is haunted. Their Dad and Grandma fight near constantly, and the kids don't get along. But when their Dad mysteriously disappears, Cassie, Oliver and Rachelle must band together to look for him - even if it means overcoming their differences. Hint : There is Magic Involved!!! The funding received from Young People's Theatre would go towards research and the creation of a first draft. Areas of interest include: childhood mental health and wellness, the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) ex. parental addiction, divorce and blended families, and intergenerational trauma. This project explores the following questions: How do kids who are raised gender neutral integrate into the school system? How do other kids react to this (especially when they've been forced into a gender binary)? How do we talk about addiction / mental health problems with children who are directly impacted by their parent's illnesses, but often unable to understand what is going on / offered no explanation? How does expecting children to be neurotypical (ie. not Mad) create unrealistic and unhealthy coping mechanisms from an early stage?" Early age, apologies. "What is the "magic" of the Midnight House? How does it exist in relationship to settler-colonialism? Are the children aware that they live on stolen

land, and is that part of the reason that things are strange? How does addiction connect to childhood trauma? What kind of interpersonal learning / skill development can we explore through these three characters when they're put in dire circumstances? How do we learn to take responsibility for ourselves and our actions?"

Naz: So looking at this example, we can identify how the applicant here has attempted to address the questions and applied evidence in support of those answers. So the question was, what are you planning to do? What do you want to achieve with this project? Why are you doing it? Why is it artistically compelling? Why did you choose this project? And why is the project timely? You should describe the creation method you will be using. So I'd love to throw it to the chat, um, and see if looking at this response, you folks feel that they've addressed those questions.

Naz: I'm going to take a sip of water because that was a lot to read.

Natalie: Okay. Sorry, my microphone. Um, cut out there for a second. Um, Can you hear me, Naz?

Naz: Yeah, I can hear you.

Natalie: Cool.

Naz: I don't know if you heard me, I was, uh, proposing to the chat that, um, we examine this response.

Natalie: Yeah. Um, I mean. Some things just to like kick it off. Um, some things that come out immediately are, um, what I actually really like about this project description is there's a little synopsis. So obviously this is, um, the intention here is to create a first draft, which means that it's an, uh, very early-phase project. Um, so like Naz was saying earlier, um, having this list of questions is a really great way to kind of identify, um, areas of interest and, um, a direction for the research when there might not actually be that much substantial, um, content to be submitting in a project description, but having the synopsis provides context, having questions indicates a direction for the research. Um, so this is a really great example of a description for something that has not yet been created.

Naz: So we have a comment in the chat. "I guess the one thing I would ask is how they plan on researching the topics they listed. Are they talking to people? Are they reading things?" I think that's an excellent point and, um, something that is not included in this project that I, as a reader would want to know a little bit more of that. Another comment that we have in terms of how this, how, I'm so sorry, "in terms of the, how question for this particular example, do they need to clarify how they are conducting research regarding the questions they want to investigate? Example, I will speak to this organization that works with mental health of children." Yes. I think, um, one thing that this answer those really well, it identifies who this project is for right off the

top. It says it's a, TYA, it's a theater for young audiences. This is the age group that I'm going to target. These are the themes that I'd like to investigate. Here's a synopsis. And then it goes on to say, we're going to create a first draft. To your questions, I have, I would have loved to have seen a little bit more, um, planning and research done in terms of how those questions are going to be answered, whether it's, my first step is I'm going to read a lot of articles on this, and then I'm identified these two or three organizations that I'm going to reach out to you and ask for their expert advice, or I'm going to undertake step X. I think it would have been really great if a little bit more detail was provided with that regards. But I also think there's a lot of really good things in this answer. No worries about reiterating questions that are posed.

Naz: I also really want to know what the magic is. Timeline. Yeah. "Should the artist specified their positionality to the piece?" That's a great question. And we're only seeing the second question here and so this, uh, this example would have been part of a larger application. So, um, perhaps that would have been spoken to in an earlier answer. But it doesn't hurt to include it again, even if it's just a sentence.

Natalie: I think maybe we should move on 'cause we have four minutes left. And also if just as a, a precursor. If anyone needs to leave right at four, please do. Thank you so much. But yeah, if you have time to stick around and we'll finish everything up. Um, time flies.

[Slide 17]

Natalie Okay. um, okay. So yeah, if we return to the one sentence summary that we did at the beginning of the workshop, Um, I'd like you to take another minute and write down the themes, keywords, or identifiers of this project. So in the last example we had, there was mental health or addiction. There was a young people's theatre. Um, so, yeah, immigration, um, environmentalism, uh, queerness. Um, those are just some themes that I'm throwing out there. Um, so yeah, take a second. Brainstorm some themes. And I'll just keep talking while you do that. Um, but uh, the reason that this activity can be really useful, um, is because it encourages you, it encourages you to think about, um, community partners or organizations that are working around the same themes that your project or your research is as well. Um, so this can really help with different aspects of the impact component of grants, um, in terms of what audience you're trying to engage or, um, what the community engagement would look like. Um, and how you might go about engaging them. So as a starting point, it's really useful to sift through funding bodies are recommenders by seeing which organizations share. You know, priorities in these different, um, identity groups or theme. But then past that, um, thinking outside of government or funding bodies and looking at, um, community organizations, what are the organizations in your community that share these priorities that you could reach, reach out to? Um, and going back to the earlier bio or the project description um, that would have been a really great inclusion to have there of, uh, you know, I'm going to go speak to folks at CAMH for this. Um, so the more specific those, um, those links can be, the clearer, your impact and your community impact will be. Um, research is really, really crucial to grant writing and so if you have even just a list of these themes that you've written down, um, you can really easily just

research, um, organizations that come to mind in your community and figure out how to align your project with, um, with those groups, um.

Naz: I think, um, something to keep in mind is that um, you can do all of that work, but there's also, uh, the reality that you need to stay, uh, organic, and that these are reciprocal relationships. So as you develop your work or your proposed project, um, stay rooted in, in, in the reality that, um, is this a part of a lived experience that you have? What, what does it mean to work with certain communities? So investigate those, those notions as well. Um, why don't we go onto the next slide?

[Slide 18]

Naz: Um, so we're returning again to your one sentence summary, and, um, we'd like to identify your path forward. Can you speak to your research trajectory? Does this include these organizations that may be potential partners, that can be aligned with your project? Who's this project for? Who is your audience? How do you intend on reaching them? What is your community engagement and partnership plan that will speak to the impact portion of your application? And what's your planning getting this project off the ground? I think these are all questions to contemplate as you write your answers. Um, I will leave those there for you uh, to, to consider, um, as we were running a little bit more out of time, but things to, to really, um, investigate about your, your proposal.

Naz: Um, some, some final thoughts that I have, um, that are more, uh, just things that I've, I've gained by experience. Um, write your grant, um, in a Google doc or another platform, uh, don't type it into the portal itself, 'cause it could glitch and you might lose all of your answers. Um, so type it somewhere else and copy and paste, this will also allow you to like run a spell check. And as Natalie suggested earlier, have a friend or a mentor, like review your documents. Um, and, and see if there's something that you've missed that you thought was clear, um, or a spelling error, and see how you can make your, your grant a little bit stronger. Um, make sure you double check the word count or character count, 'cause sometimes uh, the guide that is uploaded and then what is in the portal might not necessarily match. Um, so just double check that you're writing to the right count, whether it's character or word count. And, um, uh, all of the grants will have a deadline, a time that they will be available till, and like just really budget a little bit of extra time for yourself because maybe your internet will be a little bit spotty that day. Maybe your uh, PDF and or your, uh, audio video support materials might take a little bit longer to upload. So just give yourself a little bit more time to make sure everything is uploaded, um, Yeah, those are just some, some from my experience uh, things to keep in mind as you, as you go about your grant writing journey. We have a comment in the chat. Natalie, is that okay if I read that first?

Natalie: Yeah yeah yeah, go for it.

Naz: So "could you define partnerships or provide some examples? My brain is going to

corporate sponsors as partners." Uh, yes.

Natalie: I mean, I can answer this briefly, but, um, like for example, um, I did a show last year and, um, we were partners with a Workman Arts. Um, and so my performance was presented as a part of their festival, so they were kind of, um, like sponsoring us or providing a platform for us. Um, but my collective still had all of the, um, artistic kind of independence. Um, so we were partnered with Workman Arts, but, um, and because our project kind of aligned with mental health and addiction and queerness and um, so they were our partner, but, um, it was more like a co-producer, um, but partners can mean different things. You might have a, a community partner that is just, I mean, in the age of like social media, um, you might have like someone doing, or just promoting your show via Instagram. Um, and they're completely disconnected from the actual content of your project or its artistic, um, its artistic life. Naz?

Naz: Yeah, I think, um, when it comes to partnerships, it's about this specific project and, um, one thing you can consider is that question of who is the show for what is, what is the, the life that you wish for this project to have? Are there, uh, communities that would benefit directly? Are there communities that your work speaks to directly? Um, are there organizations out there that already service those communities? Is there, um, a theatre organization whose mandate aligns with yours that might want to come up, come on, whether it's a producing partner or like Natalie said, like, uh, uh a social media collaborator. Um, there are different ways of like thinking of, um, making connections. I think that's the best way to think about partnerships. Connections um, that are going out into the world, um, that will enrich your project's life. I hope that answers the question. Um, and I hope that we have, um, addressed everything in the chat. I apologize if we missed any, um, if you feel that we didn't answer your question, please, please pop it back in there so it comes down to the bottom for us. Um, and if you have any questions or comments right now, like, please, this is the time for us to chat. Um, maybe we will take away our slideshow, um, and just leave more room for you to sit here.

[Switching back to webcam view]

Natalie: Ooh I can see the chat now. This is so exciting!

Naz: Um, maybe while you're contemplating about some thoughts you have to share with us in the chat, I just want to take a moment and, um, thank you for joining us, and think Natalie, for all of your work, in sharing your knowledge and partnering up with, um, with, with Nightwood on this. And, um, as I mentioned, there is a resource document that, that Natalie has done the bulk of the work um, of putting together that we will upload on the website. Um, and we'll have, um, the transcript of this chat and anything else that we hope you find a new school available.

Natalie: Yeah, I think that, I think the hope is that the slides will be up as well. And then there will be a recording of this. Um, and yes, the um, the little cheat sheet of resources, the resource cheat sheet will also be available. And thank you so much, Naz, and thank you uh, Nightwood and thank you all for coming and participating in this. Um, and also feel free, I, we put our

emails at the bottom of the resource sheet. So if you, if anything comes up, always feel free to email us and we will, we'd be more than happy to give you a time and answer any questions.

Naz: Um, yeah. And if, if you have, um, tips to share, um, drop them into the chat as you're exiting. Um, we are not experts by any means, but, yeah. We're sharing what we know.

Natalie: Aw, thank you!

Naz: Um, maybe I won't read all of them out for, for folks watching the video, but it's, it's a lot of, um, lovely thank yous and, um, wishing others luck on their grant writing. Um, there is a comment here.

Natalie: Okay.

Naz: Yeah. Why don't you go ahead. Why don't you read this one?

Natalie: And so Shannon asks, um, "I'm dyslexic and I'm comfortable with fulfilling grants, but finding them and navigating the websites and different criteria that is often very similar words, but different expectations. So thank you for the note on where to find grants." Yeah. So going to the grant websites and often, I don't know, um, I think it's called Pat the Dog, am I making that up?

Naz: That's definitely an organization, yep.

Natalie: Yeah. So they have a, an e-blast that goes out that gives a pretty, um, concise list of grants that are currently rolling. Um, so I would look into signing up for their, um, e-blast as well, um, cause it has a list of funding opportunities and I think they also have like residency opportunities that are rolling. Pat the Dog. Yeah. Thank you.

Naz: I definitely heard that. I'm not sure what you said. Oh, there we go.

Natalie: Yeah yeah, it totally is, I was like, I think that's it. And if it's not, it's gonna be really embarrassing, but we got it.

Naz: Um, collaboration.

Natalie: Okay.

Naz: Um, yeah. Thank you so much, everyone. And, um, we'll see you somewhere out in the world or in the digital landscape.

Natalie: Yeah, stay safe, everyone. Bye!