

WORK SAMPLE SELECTION

Work samples are an essential part of any application for arts project funding, artist fellowships, residencies, and related professional opportunities. Given the volume of applications received, your work samples are likely to be reviewed within a set, relatively short timeframe. The following tips are designed to help you make decisions regarding which samples will support your proposal and best represent your work under these conditions.

Remember each review process may involve a different set of individuals who may respond differently to your samples. **Selecting your work samples is not a perfect science.** The most important thing is to submit samples that convey a clear artistic vision and tailor the submission to the opportunity. Select your best most current work.

Questions to consider:

Remember that your work samples should be relevant to your written proposal. If you are applying for support for a specific project, think about how your work samples relate to the project you are proposing and make choices accordingly. Questions to consider:

1. Do my work sample selections demonstrate a coherent & current artistic vision, as articulated in the written proposal?
2. Is there a specific or unique element in my proposal that could be illustrated or contextualized by the work sample (i.e. participatory element, educational component, public art component, improvisation)?
3. Am I proposing something I am doing for the first time (i.e. incorporating text into my performance; working site specifically; designing a set)? If so, is there a sketch or work-in-progress sample that would represent the project well? ¹
4. Do the samples of my past work support the feasibility of what I am currently proposing in terms of discipline, scope, scale, subject, approach, etc.?

If you are applying for a fellowship or another opportunity that is based on your artistic practice as a whole as opposed to a specific project, do not attempt to represent every stage in your career and practice. Unless otherwise instructed, provide samples that represent your current artistic practice and vision.

Tips for selection:

¹ Only submit work-in-progress samples if you feel they are at a compelling & professional level. Also, make sure to round the submission out with a sample of finished work.

- Avoid showing work that is more than 5 years old. Remember that people are most interested in the artist you are today.
- In cases when you believe it is necessary to submit an older work (e.g. when the work has a direct relationship with the proposed project or if there has been a recent break from artistic creation), provide a clear & succinct reason for choosing the older sample in your materials, if possible.
- Share your work samples with someone who will give you an honest opinion about your selection before you submit the application.
- In cases when you cannot submit work samples in the required, consult program staff to see if you can submit another format of documentation instead.
- Favor artistic coherence over variety, but make the most of the number of samples you are permitted to submit.

Remember, our tips and suggestions **cannot take the place of the actual work sample requirements of a specific organization or program.**

Ultimately, you know your own work best. Use your best judgment to determine what constitutes the most effective representation.

Content Reviewed June 2020
Created as part of LMCC's Fundraising Fundamentals Series