



**Lower
Manhattan
Cultural
Council**

EMPOWERING ARTISTS,
INVESTED IN COMMUNITY

FUNDRAISING FUNDAMENTALS

WORKSAMPLE DOS AND DON'TS

TECHNNICAL TIPS FOR PREPARING WORK SAMPLES

The quality of a work sample is not synonymous with the quality of a piece of artwork. Besides selecting the most suitable work to be reviewed by a selection panel, one of the important tasks for applicants is how to present their samples correctly and professionally. Below are a number of technical tips for applicants to use as a reference when preparing work samples.

General guidance:

- **Always follow the funder's guidelines!** Pay close attention to file size requirements, cue point instructions, maximum number of samples accepted, and formatting instructions. *Consistency in format allows the panel or reviewers to focus on content.*
- **If you're not sure, ask early!** If you have carefully studied the guidelines and still need clarification or guidance, contact the program staff as early as possible. Waiting until days before the deadline may result in unanswered questions from overwhelmed staff or not enough time to prepare for new instructions.

Preparing to upload samples for an online application:

- When an application requires you to submit a video or audio link to an online application, be sure to use a trusted third party site such as Vimeo, YouTube, or SoundCloud.
- Upload quality video/audio documentation of your work TODAY. Don't wait until a deadline is approaching.
- Make sure you upload files in the format, resolution, duration, and file size required by the reviewer.
- If samples need to be compressed to fit format requirements, be mindful of image and sound quality after compression. Test the compressed samples before uploading to make sure image & audio quality are not lost in process (e.g. image doesn't become grainy when maximized to full screen projection). Test the sample after uploading, if possible.

- Unless otherwise instructed, title each file as *ApplicantName#* (e.g. AndyWarhol1, AndyWarhol2, AndyWarhol3...) to help others navigate your samples in order and with clarity.

Preparing CDs or DVDs:

- Find out what kind of equipment platform your samples will be played on (Mac, PC, DVD player, etc.). Format and test your samples accordingly.
- No stickers on CDs or DVDs as this can jam equipment. Use a marker to write on the disk.
- Label your samples appropriately and provide notes on navigating disks, menus, etc.
- Always test work samples prior to submission. Many funders do not have the time or resources to prescreen samples.

Sample description:

- Use your sample description to provide an inventory of samples provided and a short description. This will provide context for the panel on various aspects of the samples and prepare them for what they are about to see, hear, or read. Be prepared to provide the following for your samples:
 - Title of piece
 - Year of piece (completion or presentation, as applicable)
 - Venue, City of documentation (if presented publicly)
 - Key artistic personnel
 - Medium
 - Dimensions: height x width x depth for visual samples
 - Duration of video and audio samples (e.g. 90-minute work)
 - Total number of pages for manuscripts
 - Cue point for video and audio samples (e.g. 37 min. 12 sec.)
- Include a succinct (20-40 word) description, providing context for the sample, if guidelines allow. Long sample descriptions may not be closely read.

TECHNICAL TIPS FOR TIME-BASED SAMPLES (VIDEO & AUDIO):

Recording Quality:

- Use high quality microphones to record sound and protect audio quality. Do not rely on built-in microphones in video cameras.
- Consider shooting from more than one camera angle rather than one camera stationed in a fixed location.
- Use a tripod to stabilize the camera.
- Maintain a clear line of sight for the camera (i.e. the camera not blocked by objects or audience).

- Be judicious in use of zoom as it can block out important aspects of work and be disorienting.
- When hiring a videographer, speak with him/her in advance about which aspects of the work are important to capture and how best to capture them.
- Sometimes grainy or otherwise low production quality video is still more desirable than still images. When making your selection, consider what video will allow a panel to see that images, music or text alone would not (e.g. quality of acting and directing).

Duration of sample & Cueing:

- Unless otherwise stated, include the full duration of the work in your sample (beginning to end. Including the full work gives reviewers the ability to scroll forward in time to see how the work progresses, if possible.
- Cue your work to a segment that you find most compelling. If you do not provide a cue point, the reviewer will usually play from the beginning of the piece.
- Avoid cueing your work to moments when opening credits are rolling or other introductory information is being shown as it wastes valuable time. Even if these moments have promotional value, reviewers always want to see the actual work.

Editing:

- Collaged video clips of different sections of a work with non-project related music or narration layered over it (format often used in promotional videos) are generally not appropriate for a panel review process as it may take away from understanding the piece in its original form.
- For durational works (e.g. recording of a 6-hour piece), edited footage might be appropriate. Contact the program staff for guidance.
- For curators of group shows or festivals where numerous artists will be showcased, an edited video reel may be appropriate. Contact the program staff for guidance.

TECHINICAL TIPS FOR VISUAL SAMPLES: STILL IMAGES

Image quality:

- Fill the frame without cropping out the edges of the piece itself.
- Apply even and consistent lighting.
- Protect color subtleties of the piece by learning to use camera settings (e.g. white scale, color contrast, etc.).
- If a background is shown, it should be neutral (white, black, grey).

- Remove all extraneous objects/people from frame, unless they are necessary to demonstrate scale, setting and other contextual detail.

View & shot options:

- Consider whether more than one view would be beneficial to understanding a work.
- Use a close up when you need to show important details of a work. In this case, also provide a shot of the entire piece.
- Installation shots can be useful to show work within the context of an exhibition space, highlighting multiple components.
- Consider including a person in the camera shot to illustrate any interactive or performance elements of a work. A video recording is another option for this situation.
- For public art projects or when applying to funders who emphasize access to audiences, consider providing images that include both the work and the audience.

TECHNICAL TIPS FOR TEXT-BASED SAMPLES: MANUSCRIPTS

Paper:

- Use white, unlined and 8.5 x 11 inches paper.
- Use only one side of the paper; do not print double-sided unless otherwise instructed.

Fonts & formatting:

- Limit font choices to standard, readable font (e.g. Times Roman, Courier, Arial).
- Avoid script-style or decorative fonts (e.g. Lucida), which can make text less readable and feels unprofessional.
- Use a minimum font size of 12 points, unless otherwise instructed; don't sacrifice readability to include more text.
- Use a running header that appears at the top of every page (except the first) that includes the following information:
 - Author's name
 - Applicant name (if different from author)
 - Title of piece
 - Page number

Margins & Spacing:

- Leave a 1-inch margin on all sides of your manuscript.
- Double-space the text lines.