Artist payment standards

Background

This resource was prepared by the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) for the City of Sydney as part of the Creative Impact webinar series, July 2025. It provides artists, creative workers and organisations with a summary guide to good practice standards for the topic – a starting point on the creative leadership journey.

NAVA is a membership organisation which brings together the many voices of the contemporary arts sector to improve fundamental conditions of work and practice. It does this through advocacy, education and a code of practice.

The Code of Practice for Visual Arts, Craft and Design sets out equitable, ethical and self-reflective standards for the professional Australian contemporary arts sector. The payment standards section outlines recommended fees and wages, superannuation and taxation obligations, and related costs to consider for inclusion in your budget.

Please note, the fees and wages included under payment standards are indexed yearly on 1 July.

Many of the recommended fees vary according to the experience and skill level of the artists involved in your project and/or the size and capacity of your organisation. Apply the creative career stages and organisation categories to find recommended fees.

NAVA maintains the code of practice as a living resource, which will continue to adapt and evolve in response to developments in the sector.

Career stage

Refer to creative career stages to help determine the career stage (early, mid-career or established) of the artists involved. Apply the career stage to find recommended fees relative to experience and skill level.

Size of organisation

Refer to organisation categories to find the scale of your organisation for the application of recommended fees and wages. Use the arts organisation table to determine the category (large, medium, small or micro) that aligns most closely with your size, budget and sources of funding. Apply the organisation category to find recommended fees to artists and arts workers relative to your capacity.

- How many full-time equivalent (FTE) employees does your organisation employ?
- What is your organisation's total annual operating budget?
- What is your organisation's total annual operating expenses (government or private funding)?
- What is your organisation's total annual projects/programs income (government or private funding)?

Artist fees (new work)

Artist fees are paid to artists when commissioned to create a new work for a non-selling exhibition or exhibitions where the focus is not on sale of work. A production fee should separately cover materials and other costs for the presentation of the work.

All artist fees should include general administration, preparation, presentation and a set number of meetings or site visits.

– Will your project commission artists for an exhibition or show?

– Will you require meetings and site visits with the artists involved during the project's development?

Other fees

Refer to fees to factor in payment to artists and arts workers for any related events or activities: Welcome to Country, loans, touring, performance, public art, licensing of copyrighted material, research and development, speaking and presenting, workshops, judging and assessing and freelance rates for community and cultural advice, writing, editing and proofreading, illustrations, photography, and photo and video journalism.

If you're making visual and/or audio recordings of workshops and presentations available online, consider the additional appearance fee to artists and arts workers.

– Does your project include artist talks, panels, workshops or performances? Will these be recorded and made available online?

– Does your project require a Welcome to Country or cultural consultation?

Allowances

Refer to allowances for related costs to consider for inclusion in your budget including accommodation, incidentals, laundry, meals, travel and vehicle use.

– Are you providing or arranging travel, accommodation and meals or will you reimburse employees?

Superannuation

Superannuation obligations are dependent on whether an artist or arts worker is hired as an employee or a contractor, see contractors vs. employees. To find out if you should be paying super as required under legislation, refer to superannuation and the Australian Tax Office's employee/contractor decision tool and superannuation guarantee eligibility decision tool.

– Are the artists or arts workers involved employees or contractors?

Taxation

Refer to taxation to factor in additional GST payments. You're required to pay GST if the artists or arts workers involved are registered for GST.

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Insurance

Consider budgeting for insurance costs required to engage in a wide range of professional activities. For example, exhibiting, creating works in public spaces, presenting workshops, renting a studio, and presenting/selling work at market stalls. Refer to insurance for key considerations when researching and comparing policies.

Industry resources

– NAVA Code of Practice: Payment Standards
– NAVA Code of Practice: Superannuation

NAVA guides (members only)

– Superannuation Contribution Obligations for Employers
– Completing a Super Choice Form Guide
– NAVA article: Superannuation Grey Areas

Australian Tax Office

– Employee/Contractor Decision Tool
– Superannuation Guarantee Eligibility Decision Tool