

BACKROADS GUIDELINES

Revised February 2025

Backroads connects communities throughout regional and remote NSW to small scale, high quality performing arts events. The initiative aims to support the reach of professional productions to regional towns that do not have professional performing arts infrastructure, as well as support small hall activation and the work of independent producers and artists.

Backroads is best suited to compact, adaptable, low budget productions that would suit a community centre, old town hall, local cinema or café, or small, independent theatre. Tours need to be self-sufficient, able to produce, mount and market their work in regional and remote towns.

Funds Available

There is a total of **3 x \$7K grants available** to support a tour to **1-3 independent or community-run venues** in regional NSW. Applicants must apply for the full amount and demonstrate how they will allocate the funds for their project. It is expected that budgets include other sources of income, be that ticket sales, other grants, sponsorship, company contribution or in-kind.

Key Dates

- Info zoom session: Wednesday 16 July, 3pm AEST (recording will be available online [HERE](#))
- Application dates:
 - Applications open: Wednesday 23 July, 9am AEST
 - Applications close: Wednesday 17 September, 5pm AEST
- Notification: applicants will be informed about the success of their application in October 2025
- Project period: Projects must occur between 1 November 2025 and 31 December 2026

Who Can Apply?

Applicants should be an individual or organisation presenting a professional production or performance in an independent or community-run venue. The applicant should be the person overseeing financial management, contracting, marketing and technical provisions, and may be a regional arts organisation, community group, local council, professional performing arts presenter, self-presenting artist or producer, or theatre company.

We welcome applications from experienced makers that are relatively new to touring. If required, Arts on Tour can assist these applicants with their budget, finding a suitable venue/s, and any other queries they may have relating to their application.

Note: priority will be given to artists/organisations who do not receive multi-year grant funding. If you do, please call Mark to discuss your project before applying: (02) 8038 1886.

Assessment Criteria

- Quality and artistic merit of the production
- Impact of the grant on both the creative practice of key artists and the audiences in the proposed touring locations
- Viability of the project, including budget, planning, and marketing and engagement strategies
- Evidence of plans to create partnerships and meaningful engagement opportunities between the artists/producer and the communities on the tour
- Engagement with Create NSW strategic priority areas (see definitions [HERE](#))
 - First Nations stories and communities
 - Western Sydney and/or regional NSW
 - Next generation of creatives and audiences
 - Broad and inclusive communities and content
 - Accessibility and Equity

Eligibility

- Applicants can be experienced makers with touring experience or those relatively new to touring.
- The primary applicant and at least 50% of the touring company/creatives must be NSW-based.
- Applicants need to have an ABN or work with an administrator/auspicing organisation to manage the funds on their behalf.
- Applicants are required to contact Arts on Tour prior to submitting an application to discuss their project.
- Individual applicants must be Australian citizens or have permanent resident status in Australia.
- Tours should include 1-3 independent or community-run venues in regional NSW.
- Projects funded must be a professional NSW performing arts production (see Definitions below).
- Funds are not available for music gigs/album launches.
- Funds are not available for retrospective activities or activities outside the project period specified above.
- Funds are not available for performances in towns/cities that are serviced by professional performing arts centres (see list of ineligible locations in the FAQs overleaf).
- Priority will be given to artists/organisations who do not receive multi-year grant funding. If you do, please call Mark to discuss your project before applying: (02) 8038 1886.

Definitions

Independent or community-run venue

Backroads aims to support work in smaller venues such as community centres, town halls, and small, independent theatres. Backroads funds cannot go towards performances at major performing arts centres. If you are unsure about whether the venue you are touring to is eligible, check the list below in FAQs or contact Mark at Arts on Tour at mark@artsontour.com.au

Professional artists

Professional artists are those that have a career in their area of practice, and who are paid for their work in line with industry standards.

Performing arts productions

Performing arts productions including plays, musicals, musical theatre, cabaret, contemporary classical and classical music concerts, dance, physical theatre, performance, puppetry, comedy, theatre for young people and circus are eligible for Backroads funding. Due to the limited funds available for this initiative, music gigs such as album launches are not eligible. If you are not sure of the eligibility of your work, please contact Mark before applying.

Assessment Process

You will receive an email acknowledgement from Arts on Tour when we receive your application. Eligible applications are assessed by Arts on Tour. Please allow six weeks from the closing date before making enquiries.

Successful Applicant Requirements - Acquittals

Grants must be expended as outlined in the application unless prior written permission to make a variation has been asked for and given by Arts on Tour. Successful applicants must submit an acquittal report as outlined in the application.

Frequently Asked Questions

Overleaf.

More Questions

Contact Mark Salvestro at Arts on Tour on 02 8038 1886 or email mark@artsontour.com.au.

BACKROADS FAQs

Which towns/cities and venues are ineligible for funding?

You cannot apply for funds to support performances in Sydney, or in the following towns/cities because they are serviced by a professional performing arts centre:

Town/City:	Ineligible because it is serviced by:
Albury	Albury Entertainment Centre
Bathurst	Bathurst Memorial Entertainment Centre
Cessnock	Cessnock Community Performing Arts Centre
Coffs Harbour	Jetty Memorial Theatre
Cowra	Cowra Civic Centre
Dubbo	Dubbo Regional Theatre and Convention Centre
Goulburn	Goulburn Performing Arts Centre
Griffith	Griffith Regional Theatre
Newcastle	Civic Theatre
North Gosford	Laycock Street Theatre
Nowra	Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre
Orange	Orange Civic Theatre
Port Macquarie	Glasshouse Port Macquarie
Queanbeyan	The Q Performing Arts Centre
Springwood	Blue Mountains Theatre
Tamworth	Entertainment Venues Tamworth
Taree	Manning Entertainment Centre
Wagga Wagga	Civic Theatre Wagga Wagga
Wollongong	Merrigong Theatre Company
Wyong	The Art House

Does the tour need to be fully booked?

Your tour does not need to be fully booked, but locked in tours may be more competitive. At a minimum you need to include correspondence/letters of support from venues that demonstrate that you are in contact and that the venue is available and viable for the project.

What costs can the funds be used for?

Backroads aims to support the presentation of professional productions in regional communities that are otherwise financially out of reach. Backroads funds can be used for any touring costs, including wages, travel, marketing, tech hires and so on, but it is expected that some costs are covered by box office income or other grants/financial support. Funds cannot be used for company costs unrelated to the tour such as purchasing equipment or salaries.

Can I apply to present more than one performance of the production in the same venue?

Applications for more than one performance will be considered if the capacity for the production is small and therefore box office income is limited, and/or if there is evidence of significant demand and impact.

Does the production have to be new, and if not, can it have toured before?

There is no requirement for the production to be new or any restrictions on its touring history. However, if the production has toured to the same venue before it may be less competitive. You can speak to Arts on Tour prior to applying for advice.

What if my production hasn't premiered yet and is still in development?

Works in development are eligible, but applications that include archival footage from a professional presentation are more competitive, because Arts on Tour can assess the quality of the production. If it is in development, please talk to Mark before you apply and provide video support material that demonstrates the quality of the project.

Are there any limits to how many times I can apply for Backroads?

No. However, due to the limited funds available, Arts on Tour will take into account if the applicant has received funding before.

Do I have to be a not-for-profit organisation to apply, and what happens if the presentation exceeds expectations and makes a profit?

No, you do not have to be a registered not for profit organisation to apply. The priority of Backroads is to support projects that are otherwise not financially viable which will be evidenced in your application. If your project turns a profit, you will need to be able to report on how that profit was spent.

I've still got a question!

No problem, we are available to discuss your project and the initiative and help in any way we can. Contact Mark Salvestro at Arts on Tour on (02) 8038 1886 or email mark@artsontour.com.au.