

Notes from Tracy Farr: Securing awards, residencies and other opportunities

1. Awards, grants and fellowships, and why they're right (or not) for you

What we mean by awards, grants and fellowships (i.e. "opportunities")

- Award of (usually) money and/or time and/or support for creation of new work, publication of work, or development of career.
- Examples: [CreativeNZ Arts Grant](#); [NZSA-administered opportunities](#); mentorships.
- Usually quite specific (a particular project, a particular stage of project), and with a specific reportable outcome; some may be general (e.g. [Arts Foundation Award](#)).

Considerations: why an opportunity might (or might not) be for you

- Time and energy taken to apply, and to report on completion (or during) – i.e. cost/benefit.
- Stage of career and/or project you are at needs to be a good fit.
- May require you to take leave from other commitments (employment, family ...).
- May have impact on tax, other financial implications.
- Applying (successful or not) may lock you out of applying for same or other opportunities.
- Responsibility (aka guilt) vs doing your own thing, beholden to no one.

Other opportunities: residencies

- A particular type of award, grant or fellowship that includes residential component.
- May (or may not) include accommodation; may (or may not) be required to live in.
- May include office or studio separate from accommodation.
- May be of shorter (weeks) or longer (year or years) duration.
- Different residency models: unfettered time + place to write (think, read, create); OR responsibilities + duties (teaching, events, workshops, media); OR anything in between.
- May pay stipend (salary equivalent, or honorarium).
- May require contribution to costs; may require travel and other costs.
- Likely to require leave and/or rearrangement of work, family, etc.

Other opportunities: competitions, calls for submission

- Whole manuscript e.g. [Michael Gifkins Prize for an Unpublished Novel](#)
- Short story, essay, novella, poem competitions (e.g. [Commonwealth Short Story Prize](#))

Where and how to find out about opportunities: getting started

- NZSA [website](#) and e-newsletter.
- Social media (curate your feed, set up lists, follow writing organisations, etc).
- Sign up for mailing lists (or check website lists); these might be:
 - For specific opportunities (e.g. [Michael King Writers Centre](#); [CreativeNZ](#)).
 - More general catch-all (e.g. [IIML at VUW](#); [Aerogramme Studio](#) or [Commonwealth Writers](#) for international; creative hubs e.g. [The Big Idea](#) in NZ, [Arts Hub](#) in Aus).
- Don't limit yourself to New Zealand opportunities.
- Consult your peers (writing colleagues, writing teachers, publisher, etc); be connected.

2. Ten rules – a framework for assessing and applying

You might use these guidelines for any application, whether it's a piece of flash fiction submitted by email to a competition, or a 60-page arts grant application, or submitting to an agent.

Five rules to help determine *whether to apply* for an opportunity

1. GUIDELINES: Read the guidelines carefully (know what's involved, what they're asking for).
2. EARLY: Start early. Reduce stress on you, reduce pressure on those receiving applications.
3. ELIGIBILITY: Determine your eligibility (check T&C, FAQ, guidelines, etc; if in doubt, contact with a concise enquiry that clearly spells out your query and your particular circumstances).
4. TIMING: Determine your availability (e.g. if strict time requirement for residency; travel, work, etc); and consider whether the timing is right for you and your project (or better to wait?).
5. COST/BENEFIT: Things to consider include: time + energy to apply; costs incurred if successful; for residencies etc with duties (teaching etc), is the benefit adequate (enough writing time?); etc.

Once you've committed to applying, the following five rules should help with your application.

Five rules to use *when applying* for an opportunity

1. GUIDELINES: Read the guidelines; check the deadline (including time zone).
2. COMPILE + CUSTOMISE: When you are compiling material for your application:
 - Use the correct format (whether or not you think this is important!).
 - Customise, customise, customise! Don't just copy + paste.
 - Material you need to compile may include:
 - Letters of support (ask early and with consideration for these – it's not trivial)
 - Biography/CV
 - Sample of writing, or a complete piece of work
 - Synopsis
 - Cover letter (email)
 - Statement of artistic merit
 - Budget
 - Process, timeline, KPIs ...
3. READ + CHECK: Read the guidelines (again!), check that you're sending what's been asked for. Don't give them an excuse to reject your application. If in doubt, ask questions.
4. PHONE A FRIEND: Get someone to check your submission (esp. if you're not a details person).
5. CHECK + SUBMIT: Read the guidelines AGAIN. Check your material AGAIN. Hit SUBMIT!

Good luck with your writing!

Tracy Farr

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