

Deadly Fringe x Fed Square Public Art Commission 2026

Presented by Melbourne Fringe & Fed Square

FAQs

What can I expect if I am successful?

- A scoping budget of \$5,000 to engage in the third stage of the application process.
- A creative development budget of \$15,000 to continue working on the project this year.
- A delivery budget of \$130,000 (paid in 2026) to present your event in the 2026 Festival.
- A collaborator. We are here to co-create the vision and plans for this work with you. This isn't like a grant where you get the money and see us at the other end. We are here to help and support you every step along the way.
- A whip-smart team of artistic and organisational arts managers and producers with a wealth of experience in delivering works of scale, who can provide support and advice as you navigate the process of creating a large-scale public project.
- A contract that gives you the ongoing intellectual property and moral rights over the work, with a world premiere as part of the Melbourne Fringe Curated Program.
- A publicist and marketing campaign to ensure the work has a high-profile outcome.
- Opportunities to promote the commission during its development and for its final presentation.

What do Melbourne Fringe and Fed Square expect?

We ask that you be willing and excited to:

- Professionally envisage, plan, produce and deliver a participatory public artwork of scale and of the highest calibre for presentation during the 2026 Melbourne Fringe Festival.
- Enjoy collaborating with Fed Square and Melbourne Fringe and be ready to undertake a creative process that will be exciting, fun, and supported – but, yes, also sometimes stressful (like all big projects are).
- Work within the available budget and time. We can help you fundraise for additional money; however, we expect that you can conceive a version of your project that will be ready for final presentation using the available budget.
- Ensure the work is safe and that it complies with all relevant laws, insurances and permits.
- Create a work that places accessibility and inclusivity at its heart, working with the Melbourne Fringe access team to ensure best practice accessibility is included in all aspects of the work.
- Ensure that best practice cultural protocols are followed, and – importantly – if you have any First Nations creative collaborators: to read, understand and commit to the [Creative Australia protocols](#) for using First Nations cultural and intellectual property in the arts.
- Participate in regular meetings and status reports about the development of the work.
- Share documentation of your creative developments as they unfold that we can share with our audiences and partners.
- Help us promote the commission and undertake media appearances
- Acknowledge Melbourne Fringe, Fed Square, and any additional future partners that may contribute as the commissioning and presenting partners of the work.
- Participate in our debriefs and formal evaluation processes throughout the creative process and at the end of the project.

What does the commission money need to be used for?

The budget for the commission is \$150,000 per project (excluding GST). These funds are to enable the creation of a unique project of scale, and as such –

This fee will need to consider:

- All work required during the initial scoping and creative development phase in 2025
- Artist fees – please be considerate of how much time you will be spending on delivering this project and adjust your fee accordingly.
- Production or fabrication costs – these will vary according to the nature and context of the project, but might include production materials, labour costs, costumes and props, staging, engineer assessments or other structural reports, prototype testing, etc.
- Presentation costs – this will vary according to the nature and context of the project, but might include site-related costs (including public space reinstatement costs), permit applications, front of house, overnight security, power provisions, equipment hire (including lighting, sound and AV), first aid, bump in crew, freight, and administration costs such as auspicing, vehicle hire, etc.
- Payment for a producer and a production manager (one of whom could be you!) who will project manage the development and eventual presentation of the work.
- Access costs to ensure best practice inclusivity.
- Artist's own insurance (including public liability insurance).

In addition to the fee, Melbourne Fringe and Fed Square will also contribute:

- Project management and producing support from the perspective of the Festival and the Site – we will work closely with your own producer and production manager to co-manage all elements relating to the work's delivery.
- Risk management.
- Assistance with applying for permits in the form of: advice on what will be required, collaboration in writing the applications, and facilitation of the application process itself (including auspicing the submissions if needed).
- Publicity and marketing support.
- Photographic documentation of the project by our photographer(s).
- Dramaturgy in collaboration with our artistic staff members.

Melbourne Fringe and Fed Square will support applications from the artist to other funding bodies to supplement this budget and scale the work to be larger. However, the commissioned project that is pitched must be able to be realised within a budget of \$150,000 so it may proceed regardless of whether other funding applications are successful. We do understand scalability though, and are happy to support projects with ambitious visions.

Who is this opportunity for?

This opportunity is for established Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander artists.

I'm excited! How do I apply?

That's great! You can review the application form or submit an Expression of Interest [here](#) before 11.59pm on Sunday 20 July.

What are you looking for exactly? Is this for a public sculpture?

Good question! We are looking for ideas across all artforms, inclusive of visual and public art, performance, experimental participatory work – whatever you can conceive of as art, we're interested in hearing about it! The important thing we're seeking is ideas that properly engage with the site of Fed Square as a public space, and we're really open to ideas for how this can be achieved. But the work can take any form; it might be an interactive sculpture that is visible for the full 20 days of the Festival, a one-off performance of enormous scale, or anything in-between. So long as it engages the people of Melbourne and draws them into this public space, we want to hear about it!

Where in Fed Square can my outcome be?

Conceivably anywhere! You can look at the [Fed Square map](#) or visit in person to explore options. But this is a high-profile major work, so think about that idea of “impact” – if your work is tucked away in a corner and nobody knows it’s happening, would it be considered of high impact? An obvious way to draw profile is to do it in a big visible way in the centre of the square – but there are other ideas for how to be an unmissable event in public space, and we’re keen to hear about them all.

And of course, alongside impact, make sure you’re continuing to think about how your idea can best respond to Fed Square as a site. If you need any guidance on where Fed Square starts and ends, please get in touch!

And last but definitely not least, please consider best practice audience accessibility when considering the space your work will be situated in.

What is the application process?

It’s a three-stage process, and we’re keen to help and guide you every step of the way:

First, there is the [EOI form](#). This aims to be streamlined and artist-friendly and to encourage applications from diverse artists and creatives. The focus here is your creative idea.

A handful of applicants will then be invited to have a conversation with Fed Square and Melbourne Fringe and will be asked to provide some more details about their projects, such as a detailed budget. The focus on this stage is split between diving deeper into your creative idea while also considering whether it’s possible within the budget and whether you have the expertise on your team to deliver all the tricky bits and pieces.

One or two applicants will then be chosen to receive a small amount of funding to carry out a detailed scoping of their proposal and develop it into a full project pitch. We’ll support you through this process, at the conclusion of which we will offer one project the \$150k commission to develop and present their work as part of the 2026 Melbourne Fringe Festival.

Are there any criteria for the project?

The selected commission will respond to the three provocations of site, impact and interaction.

We will also be considering the viability of the work to be delivered within a \$150k budget, the inclusivity and environmental sustainability of the work, and the project’s ability to reflect the Melbourne Fringe ethos of cultural democracy.

Some additional ideas to consider in relation to the three provocations include:

1. Site

How is the work responsive to the site of Fed Square? Where and how will the work be situated?

Why could this work only be presented at Fed Square?

What is special about the specific place in Fed Square this work relates to?

Does the work respond to specific people, histories, cultures, or institutions that are relevant to Fed Square as a public space?

Is there an engagement with Fed Square’s past, present or future?

2. Impact

Does the project entail artistic excellence and bold creative risk-taking?

Does the project represent an exciting opportunity for an artist to create an ambitious artwork that wouldn’t otherwise be experienced by the people of Melbourne? Is it innovative and exciting?

Will it be easily accessible to a diverse public in Melbourne?

How will this idea have a lasting impression on audiences? Does it have scale and visibility?

3. Interaction

Who are the audiences, and how do they interact or participate in the artwork and/or actively contribute to core creative elements within it?

In what ways will the artwork draw in passersby and encourage them to get involved with the work?

How will this idea realise Melbourne Fringe's commitment to cultural democracy, increase access to culture, and support diversity and inclusivity?

I have just become an artist – do you think this could be my first project?

Hey, congratulations! That's exciting news and good for you. Unfortunately, however, no – this would not be a good first (or even third) project. We imagine that this commission will be awarded to an artist with a few runs under their belt (sorry for the sports metaphor). This commission is suited to established artists to make a work of scale.

I'm First Nations, but I often work with non-Indigenous artists, is that okay?

Absolutely – we wouldn't prevent you working with the right people to support the delivery of your art. However, your idea must be clearly and unambiguously led by Australian First Nations people and must centre Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander creative expression.

Do I have to be from Victoria?

No, this opportunity is open to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander artists nationwide. However, it is strongly favourable to have at least one artistic lead based in Victoria. You can collaborate with people from other places. And, no, you cannot just grab a random Victorian to stick in your application – we will totally see through that ploy.

Can I apply with an arts organisation, collective or auspice body?

Yes, you certainly can! We encourage independent artists and small teams to consider reaching out to other arts organisations to partner on their project. We recognise that pulling off a commission of this scale can seem daunting and having an organisational partner or collaborator can help with securing venue space, finding experienced producers/production managers, and creating a strong artistic vision for the project. It's not compulsory by any means and artists can also work on their own if they have the skills and experience (and an appropriately skilled producer). We do not expect artists to have all these details confirmed at this stage either, don't worry!

When does my project take place?

Your project must take place in the 2026 Melbourne Fringe Festival, the dates of which are 29 September – 18 October. It doesn't have to run for the whole time. Depending on the nature of the work, Melbourne Fringe might be able to help develop further presentation opportunities in other places after the premiere at Melbourne Fringe.

Can I plonk a sculpture down and walk away?

No, the project is designed to be interactive in various ways to inspire the participation of a large crowd. It's possible, but unlikely, that plonking a sculpture and walking away would do that... so we want to hear about some more ambitious ideas to truly engage the public!

Can I take the money and just do my thing?

No, this commission is designed to be made in collaboration with Fed Square and Melbourne Fringe. We are not an arm's length funding body; we are commissioning partners who will be in constant dialogue with you as you make the work. Think of us as a part of your core team!

What does inclusion and access mean?

Inclusion means enabling equal access to opportunities and experience for diverse participants, especially those that are easily excluded or marginalised from arts experiences. Access means enabling Disabled and Deaf people to participate. Examples include Auslan interpreting, Relaxed Performances, Audio Description, captioning, and Tactile Tours. We encourage artists to think about 'embedded access' in your applications. This means artistic practices that include accessibility provisions within them, such as an Auslan interpreter as a character, captions projected onto the work, or audio description as part of the soundscape.

Check out the [Accessibility Zone](#) in the Melbourne Fringe Resource Hub for more information.

How do you support cultural safety?

Organisations like Melbourne Fringe and Fed Square that present artworks involving bold, artistic risk-taking need to tread a difficult line between freedom of artistic expression and managing cultural sensitivities and safety. The [Melbourne Fringe Content & Conduct Policies](#) help guide artists in what is expected of them, and all projects must adhere to them.

Ensuring cultural safety is also an ongoing project and one we take seriously. If any artists have questions or concerns and would prefer to speak directly to someone with a shared cultural experience, the senior staff and Board of both organisations have broad community representation. In the spirit of continuous learning, we are also open to your suggestions around how to better manage cultural safety for you.

You can email peta@melbournefringe.com.au or info@melbournefringe.com.au to be put in touch with the right person to support your enquiry or feedback.

Does the project have to be a brand-new idea?

Yes – the commission seeks to support a bold new undertaking by an artist, but it's fine if the work has had previous creative developments and is undertaking substantial redevelopment.

Who owns the work?

The artist owns the work. Melbourne Fringe and Fed Square own the right to premiere the work at Fed Square and as part of the 2026 Melbourne Fringe Festival, and to capture images and/or video of the work for documentation, acquittal and marketing purposes; but the artistic work belongs to the artist.

Can I charge an entry fee?

No, the project must be free for audience to attend.

If I'm invited to the second stage, then I reckon I can bet on being successful?

This is a competitive process for a large amount of money. If you are shortlisted, it means we are excited by the potential in your idea – but we will be excited by a bunch of other ideas too. It will be a hard decision, but only one project can be commissioned. We may also reach out while EOIs are open if there is anything in your submission we'd like to discuss in more detail.

Ready to apply?

Start to fill out your EOI today [by clicking here](#)

Melbourne Fringe and Fed Square believe in access and inclusion. If any part of this EOI process is not accessible to you or if you have feedback on how we can better meet your access needs, please email milly@melbournefringe.com.au or call 03 9660 9600.

Deadly Fringe is proudly supported by the Sue Beeton Fund, Craig Semple and our partners:



Australian Government
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Melbourne Fringe respectfully acknowledges the Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri people of the Eastern Kulin nation. We recognise that our interactive venues, performance spaces, theatres and offices are firmly enrooted into the soil of Australia's First Nations peoples, and with that we pay our respect to the custodians of this city; the Elders, past, present and future.