

## PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

### Introduction

Any member can put on a show through NUTS. In fact, NUTS relies upon members to propose projects which they would like to direct. Any prospective director must first prepare a proposal for submission to the NUTS Executive. The NUTS Executive periodically chooses the shows that will be produced by NUTS from amongst those proposals that have been received. Proposal deadlines are advertised via NUTS' e-mail list, on our website and in our forum throughout the year.

For information on the budgeting of typical NUTS shows see the document Budgeting for Your Production: Area by Area. Below are some general guidelines of what would be expected budgets. It is important to stress that these are guidelines only and the Executive will expect any budget to be well reasoned in the proposal. Furthermore, this is over and above rights and theatre hire but not publicity expenses. However, the Executive reserves the right to revise budgets contingent on the cost of the rights and venue hire for a particular show.

A one week run in Studio 1 will have a rough budget of \$200-400.

A one week run in lo Myers is difficult to budget for as there isn't much precedent and for this reason, as well as the sheer size of the show, the budget needs extra care and attention. A rough guide would be around \$1000-1200 but it should be remembered that the publicity expense for a major is going to be much higher.

Two week runs may receive marginally more. Producer's are recommended to do calculations based on their budget and ticket prices to ascertain what capacity would be required for the show to turn a profit. The NUTS Treasurer is happy to help with this if you would like it.

As their descriptions suggest, these funding categories are structured around the venues traditionally used by NUTS. Studio One, an intimate black box space with flexible seating for up to 60 people, is where most of NUTS plays are staged. The Fig Tree Theatre, an end stage theatre with fixed tiered seating for 166 people (and a small orchestra pit if you need it) is the other venue regularly used by NUTS. lo Myers, the excellent theatre and teaching space used by UNSW's Creative Practice and Research Unit, is usually made available to NUTS once a year.

Because other campus community groups as well as public hirers use both venues, the NUTS executive makes pencil bookings to ensure a venue's availability before advertising a proposal deadline. Each deadline notice states the venues that the Executive has booked and the weeks in which they have been booked. However, if you want to use a venue for an unconventional length of time or if you want to use an unconventional venue then you should submit your proposal well before you plan to stage your production so that, if your proposal is worthy, we can readjust our schedule of bookings to accommodate your production if this is possible.

What follows is a list of things you should include in your proposal (proposal content), a list of the criteria on which your proposal will be judged (proposal assessment criteria), and information on how to submit your proposal (submission information). Hopefully, after having read all this, you'll be well-equipped to write a convincing proposal. The NUTS Executive will usually only allocate a large budget to a director who has already directed another NUTS show, or who has significant other experience. However, where minor productions are concerned, NUTS actively encourages first time directors to try their hand. Follow the advice contained in these guidelines along with their companion, NUTS' budgeting guidelines, and you're in with a great chance at directing your show through NUTS.

Don't be intimidated by the length of these guidelines, they are intended to help you. The NUTS Executive assesses every proposal in a favourable light. We try to put on as many shows as possible and often help first time directors and crew through their first production.

## Proposal Content

### Names and Contact Details

These should appear on your proposal's title page. You should include your phone number(s), e-mail, postal address and residential address (if different from your postal address). The name and full contact details of your play/project's producer should also appear on the title page. Other crew contact details can be included here or with your crew list (see below).

### Outline

The name of your proposed play/project with a brief outline of the rest of your proposal.

This need only be a paragraph but, if your proposal is unconventional, you might like to do a bit of extra explaining here. You should also include the name of the author here.

### Preferred Venue and Performance Dates

Here you nominate the venue in which you would like your production to be staged and the week(s) in which you would like it to be performed. The NUTS Executive is sometimes unable to schedule a production in the week or venue requested. If this is the case we might give you an opportunity in another week or in a different venue on campus. If you have a specific reason why your production cannot be moved in time or space you should tell us why here. It is, however, in your interest to be flexible, particularly with respect to the week(s) in which you would like your production to take place.

### Blurb

Promote your play/project in 300 words or less. Should your proposed production be approved, NUTS will want to start promoting it as soon as possible. This blurb will be the basis for your show's advance publicity, as well as for advertising auditions and crew positions. It is also an opportunity to sell your show to the NUTS Executive and get your show approved.

### Synopsis

A synopsis of the play you are proposing. If your proposed production does not have a script, such as in the case of a workshop-devised piece, you should write an extended "Concept" section in place of a synopsis.

#### Cast List

The list of characters in your chosen play. You should include the sex of the actor who will be playing each character, the potential for doubling of roles and whether you intend to do this. If there are no specific 'characters' to be cast you should still say how many performers you plan on using.

#### Concept

Describe the performance you plan on creating. You should discuss your creative vision for the play/project you have chosen, preliminary design ideas, working methods you plan on using, etc. This section should demonstrate to the NUTS Executive the thought you have put into your proposed production. This is particularly important if your project is unconventional or does not have a script. NUTS is receptive to new experiments in the theatre but not poorly planned ones.

#### Rationale

Explain why you would like to see your show realised, and why you have chosen this time and space to do so. Also tell us what it will offer NUTS' actors, crew and audiences.

#### Budget

How much money you would like to stage your play/project and how you plan to spend it.

Your budget should demonstrate a basic practical understanding of what your crew will need to stage your show. Each expense you put down should have a justification. Don't just assign large amounts of money to vague categories. Budgeting is an area with which almost everyone needs help when writing their proposal. For this reason, among others, budgeting has its own set of guidelines. Please refer to the document Budgeting for Your Production: Area by Area for more information, and if in doubt you can ask the NUTS Treasurer for help before submitting.

#### Crew List

A list of people you have recruited to work on your production and their contact details. If your proposal is for a minor production, particularly if you are a first time director, it is OK to have some of your crew places unfilled. The NUTS Executive will help you find a crew once your show has been approved. However, if your proposal is for a Fig Tree Theatre production it is expected that you will have enlisted the help of someone competent in all, or nearly all, key crew areas (producer, stage manager, publicist, costumier, set designer, set constructor, lighting designer, sound designer, musical director [if needed]) when you submit your proposal. NUTS is more than willing to help you put together a crew. This is, by and large, the job of NUTS' Technical Officer, but you must seek out their help rather than assume they will do it for you. If you are having trouble finding crew members you should contact the NUTS Executive before submitting your proposal. Except in special circumstances, NUTS will not approve a proposal that does not have both a director and producer on board. They should be different people. This means that if you want to direct your first show, you'll need to find someone to produce it for you.

Producing a Studio One show is a great way to learn a little about every aspect of theatrical production simultaneously and is not that hard a job (though it may take up a fair bit of your time). Producing a major

production is both a large and challenging job, and requires some experience. However, if you produce the Big One, you'll be rewarded with a lot of new knowledge, with satisfaction and with respect. For each crew member you should include contact details and a list of any relevant previous experience. We do not want an exhaustive CV from you and each of your crew - be concise. It is also unnecessary for all your crew to be veterans. In fact, we like to see new people on crew lists, and experienced crew in new roles.

#### Other Issues

Your proposal should canvas any other issue that you feel will be (or should be) a factor in the NUTS Executive's decision on your proposal. When writing your proposal, you do not need to worry about fancy formatting or putting huge graphics in it. NUTS is more than happy to receive simple word documents. If you feel that you need to write your proposal using a certain font or use some graphics to show an example of your set or costume design you are welcome to do so, but do not feel that it is expected or necessary.

#### Proposal Assessment Criteria

This section consists of, in no particular order, a list of criteria on which your proposal may be judged. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but rather a guide to help you in the preparation of your proposal. These criteria may help you avoid a few pitfalls when preparing your proposal but don't obsess over them. The Proposal Content section of this document is your best guide as to what should go into your proposal. The importance assigned to any given criterion will be different depending on the decision at hand and may be different for each member of the NUTS Executive. In some instances, an unforeseen consideration may have a greater bearing on the outcome of a decision than any of the criteria below. Likewise, at other times the NUTS Executive may decide on a specific criterion for a particular production, in which case this will generally be advertised in advance of the proposal deadline such as with the joint show with Studio 4. Possible proposal assessment criteria are as follows:

- A director's likely commitment to a show and their suitability for the job.

This can be ascertained from what a director tells us and from what they have done before in the theatre, particularly with NUTS (not necessarily as a director). We like directors to have experience in other areas of the theatre so that they can better communicate and work with their cast and crew (not because we want directors to control every crew position!).

- The competence of the director and their crew.

As stated above, it is not necessary that each member of your crew is a veteran. We like to see new people involved or old people involved in new capacities. Being too exclusive in the selection of your crew may in fact count against your proposal. Having said this, you and your crew must be equal to the technical demands of your show.

We will look very unfavourably on your plan to build a two storey set if your chief set constructor is a rank beginner. Because of the greater technical requirements involved, a major production will require a higher proportion of experienced crew than most minor productions where a couple of experienced people should be able to carry an otherwise inexperienced crew.

- Your choice of play.

NUTS likes to put on a varied repertoire. Your choice of play will often have some influence over the performance dates you are given. It will not usually be a factor in rejecting your proposal; however, it can be.

- Your creative vision.

If the Executive is excited by the plans for your production, then the cast, crew and audience are more likely to be excited. Hence, the Executive is more likely to approve your production. The Executive will also assess how well you've developed and justified your ideas. The more thought you've devoted to your production, and the more evidence of this thought in your proposal, the better.

- The detail, accuracy and appropriateness of your budget.

The importance of the budget to your proposal will depend on the size of your production. If we are to entrust you with a large amount of money you will need to demonstrate more financial cognisance than might be necessary for a smaller production. The Executive will want to see that you are aware of the financial realities of putting on a show.

You should, at the very least, have a basic understanding of what your crew will need. The size of your budget should be appropriate for your plans. Your proposal's budget will not only be a factor in the success or failure of your proposal, it will determine the size of the budget we allocate to your production when it is approved. A detailed, accurate and well-justified budget proposal will always attract more funding relative to other, less rigorous, proposals. Proposals will sometimes be accepted on the proviso that certain budget amendments are made. It is important that the Director and Producer take note of any such budget changes.

Keep in mind, however, that you can apply to have your budget increased once your show has been approved, as long as you give the Executive more than one week's notice to approve it.

- The opportunities your show will provide to members.

All NUTS productions offer a great chance for NUTS' members to build their skills. However, some projects offer particularly good opportunities. The 2002 production *Stone Soup*, for example, presented a great chance for members to gain puppet-making and puppeteering skills. An ambitious set design offers a chance for those involved to gain stage carpentry skills, provided suitably experienced crew members are prepared to take on a mentoring role.

- The size of your cast and its gender composition.

The influx of fresh blood at the start of each session usually makes casting easy but, when auditioning at other times, men can be hard to come by. Too many plays with big casts (of any gender) can leave too few cast and crew to go around. Another consideration related to your cast size is the appropriateness of your play to the space you have chosen. Your choice of venue in relation to the play you are proposing should be outlined comprehensively in your rationale.

- A new director.

The Executive is usually somewhat lenient when considering the proposal of an inexperienced or first-time director. We like to ensure that at least some productions each year are directed by new directors. NUTS likes to see at least some new or inexperienced people in other production roles as well.

## Submission Information

Proposals should be submitted as a Microsoft Word document (.doc), rich text format file (.rtf), Portable Document format (.pdf) or plain text file (.txt) to [committee@nuts.org.au](mailto:committee@nuts.org.au). Any graphics should be incorporated into your proposal document or, where this is impractical, attached to the same e-mail as a jpeg file or files. If you would like to submit your proposal in another format and/or by other means you are welcome to do so provided you first contact NUTS' Secretary. Postal submissions should be sent to "NUTS, PO Box 6417 UNSW 1466" Email submission is preferred because a digital file can be easily distributed to all Executive members before they meet to make a decision on the proposals received.

If your proposal is for a production of an original script we would like to read it, or at least part thereof. For this reason, any such script must be received at least five working days prior to the deadline for your proposal. Submissions should be made as described above.

There are no set limits as to how long or short your proposal can be. A typical length for a minor proposal production is 2 to 4 pages. Larger productions usually warrant a proposal of 4 to 8 pages in length. These figures do not include any supplementary diagrams or designs which you might wish but do not have to include with your proposal.

We will, within reason, read everything that you give us and, in some exceptional cases, 'going over the limit' might be warranted. But, for a typical NUTS production, writing more than the above is unnecessary. Be concise; verbosity will not help your cause. If you want to get feedback from the committee about your proposal before it is officially submitted for evaluation, you need to hand your proposal in two weeks before the deadline. It will then be handed back to you, with feedback, a week before the deadline so that you may alter your proposal before submitting it for evaluation. We will send you confirmation via e-mail when your proposal is received (usually within a few days of you having sent it, and certainly before the formal deadline). The NUTS President will call you within a week of a decision having been made to advise you of the decision and let you know of the reasons for it. Following each proposal deadline, the NUTS Executive decides which proposals will be staged from amongst those received by the deadline. Proposals will usually only be approved for those performance times advertised with a deadline. However, if a proposed production requires an unconventional venue or a longer than usual preparation time, it may be approved for a performance season further into the future. In this way, unconventional productions are not constrained by the decision-making time frame imposed by NUTS. If you want to put on such a production, submit your proposal early to give yourself the best chance of getting the performance dates you want! Rather than approving or rejecting a proposal, the Executive may ask for it to be revised and resubmitted for the next round of decision making.

Alternatively, the Executive may reconsider a proposal without alteration in the next round of decision making. This will be done to ensure that all those wanting to submit a proposal get a chance to do so. A reconsideration of this nature should not be construed as a reflection on the quality of your proposal. NUTS approves many productions the second time round.

The Executive meeting to consider proposals is usually held several days after the advertised deadline. This gives Executive members a chance to read and consider the proposals received. Late submissions

received after deadline but before a decision is made will only be considered in the absence of another suitable proposal or in exceptional circumstances. Do not hesitate to contact any member of the Executive for help in preparing your proposal. We encourage you to write and submit your proposal when you have the time before a deadline comes up. This way fate can't intervene at the last minute and, if you have a question when preparing your proposal, you can e-mail NUTS and have the time to wait for a reply.

#### How Much Money Should I Ask For?

For all information on how to prepare a budget for your production, read the document Budgeting for Your Production: Area by Area. This is a very important part of the proposal process which is why there is a separate document of guidelines. It is strongly suggested that you read this before proposing as budgeting is one of the hardest but most integral parts of a proposal.

#### NUTS Committee Contact Details

President - Evelyn Douek: 0413 445 177, [evelyn@nuts.org.au](mailto:evelyn@nuts.org.au)

Technical officer - Nick Moore: 0409 394 405, [nick@nuts.org.au](mailto:nick@nuts.org.au)

Vice President - Jacqui Lucey: 0409 452 875, [jacqui@nuts.org.au](mailto:jacqui@nuts.org.au)

Secretary - Hamish Sinclair: 0402 797 985, [hamish@nuts.org.au](mailto:hamish@nuts.org.au)

Treasurer - Scarlett Ha: 0421 027 021, [scarlett@nuts.org.au](mailto:scarlett@nuts.org.au)

Publicity Officer - Edmund Iffland: 0413 581 096, [edmund@nuts.org.au](mailto:edmund@nuts.org.au)

Costume and Props Manager - Julia Dray: 0416 242 911, [juliad@nuts.org.au](mailto:juliad@nuts.org.au)