

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

# National Lottery Project Funding Programme

## Application Guidance Notes

**Deadline for applications:** 12 noon, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2026

**Decisions:** July 2026

Applications must be submitted on-line at [www.artscouncil-ni.org/funding](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/funding)

**Please note:** this programme is for projects and programmes which will complete by: 31 July 2027



**THE  
NATIONAL  
LOTTERY®**

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## Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's National Lottery Project Funding Programme.

These notes give information on who is eligible to apply to the programme and how to apply. It also describes how your application will be assessed, how long it will take, how payments will be made and what you will be asked to do if you are awarded a grant.

These Guidance Notes are available on our website at [Arts Council of Northern Ireland National Lottery Project Programme \(opens in a new window\)](#). They may also be requested in large print or other accessible formats if required. Please contact the Arts Council if you need further assistance in this regard.

### Is your proposal timeframe suitable?

This programme only relates to those proposals that will take place between **1 August 2026 and 31 July 2027**. You should ensure that all eligible proposal expenditure is incurred within these dates. If this is not the case for your proposal, you should NOT apply to this scheme as the Arts Council will not meet any costs incurred outside this period.

### Aims of the National Lottery Project Funding Programme 2026/27

The Arts Council has designed this programme to assist organisations to deliver arts projects which contribute to the growth of arts in the community for new and existing audiences and which reflect the diversity of Northern Ireland's society and culture. We want to support activities which benefit the people of Northern Ireland or that help arts organisations in Northern Ireland carry out their work.

In addition, the Council wishes to support programmes which:

- Encourage the involvement of children and young people, older people, or people with disabilities with organisations and artists of the very highest professional standards across the disciplines;
- Encourage proposals which will deliver high quality programming in rural areas;
- Encourage the involvement of, and applications with a focus on, the following:
  - Minority Ethnic artists
  - D/deaf, neurodiverse and disabled artists
  - Emerging artists
  - Working-class artists
  - LGBTQIA artists
- Promote innovative, original work by Northern Ireland artists across all art forms

## How much funding is available?

Please keep in mind that the amount of money available is limited and demand for funds is likely to be extremely high. It is not usually possible to fund all applications that simply meet the criteria or to fund the entirety of any given request.

We will aim to distribute our funds as widely as possible and may take account in the assessment of your application of the level of support you have previously received or are currently receiving, as well as your organisation's management of any previous grants.

You should be realistic in your expectations and budgets. Please remember that there is no guarantee of funding for any applicant and that the Council may choose to fund specific elements of your proposal rather than the full proposal.

- The minimum grant available under this programme is normally **£10,001**.
- The maximum grant available will be **£75,000**. Your request must not exceed £75,000.
- You may apply for the gross costs of any salary directly related to the project and its duration, i.e. including recruitment costs, ENIC, pension and expenses.
- Organisations can request full cost recovery of overheads attributable to the funded project within the overall maximum request level of £75,000.
- Organisations currently in receipt of any other Arts Council revenue or National Lottery grant must demonstrate that the costs are additional to any programme already funded.
- Accessibility costs are additional costs associated with the delivery of a project for people with particular needs as defined under Section 75 of The Northern Ireland Act 1998, e.g. carer costs or costs for provision of sign language services. Any accessibility costs for your proposal should be included in your budget and may be requested as an element of your overall request from ACNI<sup>1</sup>.

## How much partnership funding do you need?

The minimum partnership funding you need to find from non- National Lottery, non-Arts Council sources is 10%

The minimum partnership funding requirement of 10% may be comprised of cash and/or in-kind funding. The assessment process considers the other funds you are able to bring to the proposal and this may influence the outcome of the assessment.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: if you are allocated funding for Accessibility Costs, that element of your grant will be paid retrospectively. You may have to demonstrate numbers of people involved in receiving those services

If your organisation is a statutory body the minimum partnership funding, you need to find is 50% of the costs.

## **Eligibility**

### **Who can apply?**

The Arts Council welcomes applications from the widest possible range of organisations and, in particular, from applicants whose projects benefit individuals categorised under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. You will be required to provide proof that you have a legal constitution.

- You do not have to be primarily an arts organisation, although the focus of the project must be on arts activities.
- Registered charities and other organisations which cannot distribute profits may apply for funds.
- Local Authorities are eligible to apply but they are a low priority.
- Commercial organisations can only apply for support if the project is primarily for the benefit of the public rather than their own commercial interests.
- If your organisation has a limited membership, or is a school, college or university, you must show that the project will benefit the wider public.
- Public sector agencies can apply for projects which are outside their statutory remit.
- Groups of organisations (consortia) working together to deliver specific projects are eligible to apply.
- In most cases we expect the activity to take place in Northern Ireland. However, organisations based outside Northern Ireland can apply where they can demonstrate significant benefit to the people of Northern Ireland.
- Applicants must be able to present at least one full year's accounts.

### **Who cannot apply?**

- Organisations that have received a 2026/27 Annual Funding Programme award
- Individuals
- Broadcasters (excluding community service broadcasters)
- Central Government Departments
- Umbrella organisations not previously funded by the Arts Council
- Organisations who are in breach of any previously issued ACNI award grant conditions.

### **How many applications can you make?**

You may make only one application in each funding round. However, you can include several projects within the one application form; you will be required to provide full project

details and budgets for each individual project included in your application if so. The Council may choose to fund all, some, or no elements of your application.

You may apply for an award under this programme even if you currently have another live award which is not yet complete.

### **What you can apply for**

You can apply for arts activities that last **up to one year and which help to address the aims of the programme above.** and may include the following:

- Projects, events and programmes of activity together with related overhead costs associated with the delivery of the project/event or programme.
- Projects which contribute to the growth of the workforce and/or artistic development through mentoring programmes or opportunities.
- Projects which promote mental Health and well-being for all participants
- Projects which have sustainable development at their core, or which address environmental issues.
- Accessibility costs<sup>2</sup> : these are costs associated with the delivery of a project for people with particular needs as defined under Section 75 of The Northern Ireland Act 1998, e.g. sign language interpretation, Braille paperwork, transport costs, carer costs.
- Continuation of salaries of existing administrative and/or arts posts.
- New work commissions and Productions in all art forms\*
- Research and Development.
- Audience Development – to meet the needs of audiences and to help arts organisations develop ongoing relationships with diverse audiences.
- Touring (in more than one local authority area).
- Presentations or exhibitions (in more than one local authority area) of work by artists and arts organisations, which develop opportunities for audiences to attend international events in NI which they might not otherwise see.
- Projects which are planned to reach significant audiences through ‘live’, ‘as live’ or recorded digital performance, publication, broadcast, reading, recording, and/or other audience channels.
- Modest requests for capital equipment, website design and upkeep costs and digital platform development will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and these must be integral to project design and/or delivery and/or specific project costs.

\*In Music and Drama, you can apply for the costs of commissioning and production within the same application. However, you will be required to submit the script/score for approval

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<sup>2</sup> Please note: if you are allocated funding for Accessibility Costs, that element of your grant will be paid retrospectively. You may have to demonstrate numbers of people involved in receiving those services.

by the Arts Council before you enter into any production contracts or before you advertise the production in any way. When planning your project timescale, you should allow two months between the submission of the script to the Arts Council and entering into production contract. If the Arts Council is not content with the quality of the script it will withhold permission to enter into production. If you enter into production contracts before the Arts Council gives permission to proceed, the production element of the grant will be withheld.

### **What you cannot apply for**

- New administrative or new salaried arts posts
- Activities that are not arts related
- Film or video production that is likely to lie within the remit of NI Screen
- Activities where contracts have been entered into before we issue a letter of commencement. We do recognise that certain preliminary work needs to take place, e.g. discussions with key personnel; an initial feasibility study or market research; but advertising of projects in advance of a Council decision is undertaken at the organisation's own risk
- Fees for non-arts based courses
- Fees for further or higher education courses at third level
- Ongoing building maintenance costs
- Building design
- Translations by publishers of literary works by Northern Irish artists into other languages
- Fundraising events
- Activities or events which duplicate what already exists
- Costs already covered by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland or other funders.

**Please note that this list is not exhaustive.**

# How to apply

## Help with your application

These Guidance Notes are available on request in large print format and disk, and also on the Arts Council's website at [Arts Council of Northern Ireland National Lottery Project Programme \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Please read these guidance notes carefully. If you need further clarification on any aspect of the programme, Arts Council staff can be contacted by email. Contact details are available on the Arts Council website at [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Contact Us \(opens in a new window\)](#). Please note that staff cannot comment in detail on your proposal or its budget, and no project can be confirmed as eligible until a full application is officially submitted via the online portal.

## Making an online application

You must apply using our online system. We will not accept applications in hard copy or by email. You will find a link to the National Lottery Project Funding Programme webpage at [Arts Council of Northern Ireland National Lottery Project Programme \(opens in a new window\)](#).

- Online applications may be edited, saved and returned up to the closing date.
- You must submit all mandatory enclosures associated with the application at the same time as your application, i.e. they must be uploaded to your online application prior to its submission. These enclosures are listed on the Attachments page within the online application and are detailed below. **Please note, you will not be given additional time to submit any missing enclosures once the programme deadline has passed.**
- **Please ensure that you leave sufficient time to upload all documents to the system as there can be long delays as the closing deadline approaches and the system will shut down at 12 noon precisely on the closing date, Monday 1 June 2026.** If your complete application is not **fully** uploaded when the system closes, your application will not be accepted.
- If you submit your application by the closing deadline, you will receive an automated email advising that your application has been successfully submitted to the system. **If you do not receive this email, your application has not been submitted.**

Please remember that it is your responsibility to ensure that we receive the application form and uploaded enclosures by the closing time and date.

## Mandatory Enclosures

These are the documents which you must provide in conjunction with your application. Some of these must be submitted with your application; others must be uploaded to the Government Funding Database (GFD - see notes below). **If you do not provide all required mandatory enclosures in conjunction with your application by the given deadline, your application will be ineligible and will not be assessed. Remember: once the programme deadline has passed, you will not be given additional time to submit any missing enclosures.**

Please keep in mind the following important points:

- All mandatory enclosures must be in **Word, Excel, or pdf format**. We cannot accept documents in other formats.
- **The total size of all your uploaded documents should not exceed 25 Mb.**
- **You must submit all necessary enclosures by the programme deadline. If any enclosures are missing, your application will be ineligible.**
- If you submit an enclosure in a format which we do not accept or which is corrupted or which we cannot open, the enclosure will be considered missing, and your application will be ineligible.
- Do not compress files into one zip file. Files must be uploaded as individual documents.
- **All data must be PC compatible.** If non-PC compatible data is supplied, your application will not be assessed. For example, if using a MAC, it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that any enclosures uploaded to the online application are PC compatible.
- The submission of weblinks or website addresses in lieu of enclosure documents is not acceptable and will result in your application being made ineligible.

You **must** submit the following with your National Lottery Project Funding Programme application before submission (**read on** for information on the additional documents that you must upload to the **GFD**):

- Detailed proposal description
- Detailed description of how your proposal meets the programme criteria
- Detailed I&E budget for your proposal
- Detailed I&E budget for your whole organisation for the year in which your proposal will happen
- Management accounts for the period up to 31 March 2026 (**if** the accounts uploaded to the Government Funding Database are not for 2025/26– see additional notes below)
- List of your organisation's current board members

- **If** applying for audience development activity – provide evidence that you have consulted with Thrive.
- **If** applying to bring international work to NI – provide a venue schedule
- **If** applying to tour a production – provide a proposed tour itinerary **and** letters from proposed venues indicating interest
- **If** applying for the production of a new work – provide script, score, design details or equivalent
- **If** applying for modest capital equipment - the appropriate number of quotations with delivery dates.

**If available** and relevant to your proposal, you should also upload the following:

- Details of Accessibility Costs request
- Copies of letters of offer from partnership funders or sponsors
- CVs of proposed artists to be involved in your proposal

### **Government Funding Database**

As part of Government’s Reducing Bureaucracy programme, you are required to upload a number of master documents to the Government Funding Database (GFD). Many organisations in receipt of ACNI funds are already registered with this database; others will be required to register prior to the application being assessed. Once uploaded, these documents will exist for all applications you make to any Government department and you will not be required to submit them with individual applications, including future applications to the Arts Council.

**If you are based in Northern Ireland**, the following documents **MUST** be uploaded to the Government Funding Database at [Government Funding Database \(opens in new window\)](#)

- Constitution and/or Memorandum and Articles of Association
- Most recent set of accounts
- Organisation Chart
- List of office bearers
- Rental Agreement/Lease/Evidence of ownership

You will only be required to upload the documents where changes have been made.

**If you are based outside Northern Ireland**, you **MUST** upload the 5 documents listed above **AND** all the mandatory enclosures listed on pages 9 and 10 at the time of submitting your online application.

If you are not currently on the Database you will be required to register on the Government Funding Database at [Government Funding Database \(opens in new window\)](#).

**Please note** that if you are registering on the Government Funding Database site for the first time, it may take a number of days for your account to be activated. It is **your responsibility** to ensure that you initiate the registration process in sufficient time prior to the programme submission deadline to ensure that you are able to upload the necessary Government Funding Database documents to the site. If your organisation is not registered on the Government Funding Database or **all** the necessary documents are not uploaded to the site by the programme deadline, your application will be ineligible.

Full instructions for uploading documents to the Government Funding Database are available for download from the Arts Council’s website.

### Detailed guidance on mandatory enclosures

Further information on all mandatory enclosures is detailed below. If you have any queries about any of the documents, please contact us. Staff contact details are available on the Arts Council website at [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Contact Us \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Mandatory Enclosure	Submit with	Guidance on Enclosure
Detailed proposal description	Online application form	<p><b>Your proposal description should be no more than 2,500 words.</b></p> <p>You should describe in detail the proposal you wish to deliver, describing the overall aims and objectives of the proposal and all the activities within the proposal. You should also include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locations and dates of all events within the proposal</li> <li>• Names of artists, tutors, facilitators (if known) for each event or proposal; OR details of the process you intend to use to select the artists.</li> <li>• Projected participation in each event or proposal – numbers and age ranges – whether they will actively participate or will be an audience for a final presentation.</li> <li>• For organisations whose programme includes the production of artistic material (journals, magazines, books, film, CD, or other media) a list of titles with print run and projected sales. Such organisations should also document promotional events associated with these materials (launches, readings, viewings, etc.)</li> <li>• Name of Project Manager for each major element, along with experience statement</li> </ul>

Mandatory Enclosure	Submit with	Guidance on Enclosure
Detailed proposal description (cont.)		<b>Remember:</b> For some activities (audience development, bringing international work to NI or touring, new work) we need additional information. Details below.
Detailed description of how your proposal meets the programme criteria	Online application form	<p>The programme criteria are listed below. You must address each sub-criterion directly in no fewer than 200 and no more than 500 words. <b>You must address each sub-criterion separately; identify and number</b> your response to each so that the assessing officer can clearly see which sub-criterion you are addressing. If you do not separately address, identify and number each sub-criterion response, your enclosure will be ineligible.</p> <p><b>Criterion 1: Public Benefit</b> (200 – 500 words per sub-criteria)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Describe how your proposal contributes to the Arts Council’s strategy <i>Championing the Arts</i><sup>3</sup>.</li> <li>2) Describe how your proposal contributes to the growth of the arts in the community for new and existing audiences, and how it reflects the diversity of Northern Ireland society and culture.</li> <li>3) Describe your proposal’s marketing strategy.</li> </ol> <p><b>Criterion 2: Quality of Arts Activity</b> (200 – 500 words per sub-criteria)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4) Describe how your proposal offers creative vision and imaginative programming.</li> <li>5) Describe your proposal’s production/performance/presentation/facilitation and process.</li> <li>6) Give details of the artists and facilitators who will be involved with your proposal.</li> </ol> <p><b>Criterion 3: Organisational/Proposal Viability and Quality of Management</b> (200 – 500 words per sub-criteria)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7) Describe how you have planned your proposal.</li> <li>8) Describe how your organisation is governed, including details of how often your board meets, reporting mechanisms, sub-committees and training.</li> <li>9) Describe how your organisation manages its finances.</li> </ol>
Detailed Income & Expenditure budget for your proposal	Online application form	This must be a detailed income and expenditure budget for the proposal, <b>which should indicate the requested ACNI contribution to each budget line</b> . You must include a breakdown of any budget line over £1,000 and itemize expenditure wherever possible (example: “Annual rent £12,000” is acceptable but “Salaries £100,000” must be broken down to give specific details). You should also include details

<sup>3</sup> <https://artscouncil-ni.org/what-we-do/our-strategy>

Mandatory Enclosure	Submit with	Guidance on Enclosure
<p><b>Detailed Income &amp; Expenditure budget for your proposal (cont.)</b></p>		<p>of how you have calculated any fees you are paying, e.g. hourly/daily/weekly rates. Where box office or programme/book sales are shown you should include details of pricing and numbers of tickets/publications to be sold.</p> <p>The Arts Council recognises non-monetary forms of assistance to a proposal, such as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• members of the public wishing to contribute time, experience and expertise to arts groups or organisations</li> <li>• young people wishing to contribute time but who also wish to gain work experience and or accreditation and training</li> <li>• professionals and or consultants wishing to donate their time, professional experience and expertise to organisations who would benefit from this resource</li> <li>• employers who encourage and support employees in volunteering to bring their time, knowledge and expertise to groups and organisations requiring assistance</li> <li>• free use of premises and/or equipment</li> <li>• free access to other services</li> </ul> <p>“In-kind” funding does <b>not</b> include the time given by your committee or board members to carry out their regular duties.</p> <p>If you are including “in-kind” support to your proposal, you <b>MUST</b> demonstrate how you have calculated this. The Arts Council accepts the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the equivalent of the hourly minimum wage for members of the public and young people contributing time as described above</li> <li>• a limit of £120 a day for professionals and/or consultants and employees volunteering their time</li> <li>• the costing by the supplier for the use of premises, equipment and other services</li> </ul> <p><b>You cannot include</b> the costs of employing committee/board members or directors of the organisation to work on the proposal as research shows that the public regard this as inappropriate use of National Lottery funds which are to be used for wider public benefit rather than private gain.</p> <p><b>You cannot include</b> the costs of gratuitous hospitality or alcoholic beverages. The only hospitality costs we will pay for are where they are integral to the proposal, for example, an arts conference where lunch is provided to delegates.</p>

<b>Mandatory Enclosure</b>	<b>Submit with</b>	<b>Guidance on Enclosure</b>
<b>Detailed budget for your whole organisation</b>	Online Application Form	This is a budget for your entire organisation for the year in which the proposal will take place i.e. 1 August 2026 – 31 July 2027 as per the NLPF programme dates. In some cases, this may be the same as the income and expenditure budget for the proposal where this is the only activity of the organisation, but in most cases, this will be a much larger budget detailing all of the organisation’s activity.
<b>Management Accounts up to the period 31 March 2026</b>	Online Application Form	Applicants are required to upload a copy of their organisation’s most recent accounts to the Government Funding Database. If the accounts uploaded to the GFD are not for the year 2025/26 (i.e. if your most recent accounts are for the 2024/25 financial year), we require a set of management accounts covering the intervening period up to March 2026. We require these accounts to assess the overall financial wellbeing of your organisation and to judge whether there is a need for Arts Council funding.
<b>List of Board Members</b>	Online Application Form	A list of your organisation’s current board members, which details any relevant specialism each brings to the role.
<b>Evidence that you have consulted with Thrive</b>	Online Application Form	<b>If you are applying for audience development activity</b> we need to see evidence that you have consulted with Thrive (formerly Audiences NI) and that you have developed a coherent plan.
<b>Venue Schedule</b>	Online Application Form	<b>If you are applying to bring international work to NI</b> – provide a venue schedule.
<b>Tour Itinerary and Letters from Proposed Venues</b>	Online Application Form	<b>If you are applying to tour a production</b> , we need to see a proposed tour itinerary and letters from the proposed venues indicating that they would be interested in the production.
<b>Script/Score/ Design details or equivalent</b>	Online Application Form	<b>If you are applying for the production of a new work</b> , you must provide a copy of the proposed script/score/design details or equivalent.  <b>Important Note:</b> In Music and Drama, you can apply for the costs of commissioning and production within the same application. However, you will be required to submit the script/score for approval by the Arts Council before you enter into any production contracts or before you advertise the production in any way. When planning your proposal timescale, you should allow two months between the submission of

<b>Mandatory Enclosure</b>	<b>Submit with</b>	<b>Guidance on Enclosure</b>
<b>Script/Score/ Design details or equivalent (cont.)</b>		the script to the Arts Council and entering into production contract. If the Arts Council is not content with the quality of the script, it will withhold permission to enter into production. If you enter into production contracts before the Arts Council gives permission to proceed, the production element of the grant will be withheld.
<b>Details of Accessibility Costs</b>	Online Application Form	If your proposal is being delivered to a Section 75 group as detailed in The Northern Ireland Act 1998, and you are seeking additional funds for this purpose, you must detail exactly what you want these funds for.  There may be additional costs such as translations, sign language interpretation, Braille paperwork, transport costs, provision of crèche facilities. You will not receive these funds in advance and, to claim the funds, you will have to demonstrate numbers of people involved in receiving these services.
<b>Copies of Letters of Offers from Other Funders</b>	Online Application Form	If you have any letters from sponsors or other funders you should include them with your application as demonstration of support.
<b>Artists CVs</b>	Online Application Form	If you know which artists will be involved in your proposal, provide us with copies of their CVs. This will help us assess the quality of your proposal.
<b>Quotations for each Item of Equipment</b>	Online Application Form	<p><b>If you are applying for capital equipment</b>, the number of quotations you must provide depends on the cost of the item, as follows:</p> <p>The number of quotations you must provide depends on the cost of the equipment as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) up to £5,000 in value (excluding VAT)<sup>4</sup>: A minimum of two quotations or evidence of a price check with at least two contractors/suppliers to ensure value for money has been achieved. Price checks and/or quotations should be documented and retained on file for verification purposes.</li> <li>(ii) between £5,000 and £30,000 in value (excluding VAT): The organisation must seek a minimum of two tenders for supplies and services between £5,000 and £30,000 in value (excluding VAT).</li> </ul> <p><b>Acceptable Quotations:</b> Scans of original documents; email quotes; screen captures from online retailer sites.</p>

<sup>4</sup> If you are requesting a highly specialised item of equipment for which there is only one supplier, you must upload a statement explaining why this is the case.

<b>Mandatory Enclosure</b>	<b>Submit with</b>	<b>Guidance on Enclosure</b>
<b>Quotations for each Item of Equipment</b> (cont.)		<b>Quotations must include stated delivery dates:</b> if no delivery date is included, the quotation will not be accepted as eligible. <b>Remember:</b> Weblinks or website addresses in lieu of quotations are <b>not acceptable</b> and will result in your application being made ineligible. All quotes must clearly indicate whether the stated cost includes VAT.
<b>Constitution and/or Memorandum and Articles of Association</b>	Government Funding Database	Please note: <b>The name of your organisation as given in your constitution document should be the same name as that given in the application, and on your organisation's bank account</b> , details of which we will request if you receive an award.
<b>Most recent set of Accounts</b>	Government Funding Database	Please note: if these accounts are not for 2025/26, i.e. up to the period 31 March 2026, you must upload a set of management accounts with your application.
<b>Organisation Chart</b>	Government Funding Database	This is a diagram showing us the structure of your organisation, in terms of staff, board and committees.
<b>List of Office Bearers</b>	Government Funding Database	A list of <u>all</u> the office bearers (to include names) on your board and sub-committees (if relevant), e.g. Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Chair of the Finance Committee etc.
<b>Rental Agreement / Lease / Evidence of Ownership</b>	Government Funding Database	These documents are in relation to the premises from which your organisation operates.  If your organisation does not have a rental agreement or lease in place, please provide a statement confirming this.

### **After you submit your application**

- During the eligibility checking process, the Arts Council will publish a monitoring form to your application account and issue an email notification advising of same. Completion of the monitoring form is not mandatory and will not affect the eligibility and/or assessment of your application. **However**, we would strongly encourage all applicants to complete and submit the monitoring form as monitoring can assist us to deliver better public services and continuous improvements.
- The Arts Council will undertake an eligibility check on your application. In the event of missing information, your application will be deemed as ineligible and will not proceed to assessment. If ineligible, the Arts Council will issue an email advising reasons for ineligibility.

- If eligible, the Arts Council will acknowledge receipt of the application form.
- If eligible, an Arts Development Officer will assess your application.
- Officer assessments will be subject to a moderation process.
- The Arts Council will contact you with the final decision by letter which is likely to be via email. If rejected, the Arts Council will provide you with detailed reasons for the rejection.

## How we will make our decision

### Assessment Criteria

We will assess your proposal against the following criteria. A full list of the sub-criteria for each of these is available on page 12 of these guidance notes.

**Criterion 1:** Public benefit

**Criterion 2:** Quality of arts activities

**Criterion 3:** Organisational/project viability and quality of management

It is very important that you think carefully about how your proposal satisfies these criteria and use the application to demonstrate this to us. Your proposal must meet all the criteria.

### The Decision Process

All applications will be assessed by an Arts Development Officer against the criteria as listed above, taking into account the programme's aims and priorities.

Assessing Officers will consider applications using their professional judgement, based on the information provided within the application, knowledge of your organisation's track record (in relation to both arts delivery and its previous management of ACNI funding), knowledge of the wider arts landscape, and the competitive context in which all applications are evaluated within a limited budget.

Officer recommendations are then subject to a moderation process, which involves a number of discussion stages.

### Moderation One

Each application is assessed against the three main criteria receiving a ranking of High, Medium or Low using a set of descriptors relevant to each artform/practice. These descriptors are available upon request. All applications must receive at least three overall *Medium* ratings against the three main criteria to proceed to the next stage. Applications which do not achieve the minimum rating for any criterion will be rejected at Stage 1.

### Moderation Two

Moderation Two will take into account the following:

- A. Range of artforms:** we want to support a range of artforms and a diversity of artistic practices. Artists and arts organisations often work across and between different artforms. However, we group the organisations we fund into a number of artform areas in order to help us consider how we are investing in different parts of the sector.
- B. Geographical spread:** we will take into account the need to support work by a range of funded organisations across the whole of Northern Ireland. We will consider how some organisations work intensively within their own local authority area and how

some have a reach and impact far beyond that. Others may tour widely. We will take into account the potential reach of the National Lottery Project Funding Programme as a whole and we will be particularly interested in how organisations plan to reach places of current low arts engagement.

- C. **Size and type:** we want to invest in an appropriate mix of sizes and types of organisation. This includes, for example, considering an appropriate balance of arts venues, umbrella organisations, touring companies, and other types of organisations. We will not continue to fund organisations where there is a clear duplication of service. We will consider the potential of organisations to merge with similar bodies to achieve efficiencies.
- D. **Risk:** A risk assessment will also be carried out on the application, which will be rated **Minor, Moderate or Major**. The assessment will consider the applicant's ability to deliver the programme of work as set out in the application and the associated risk to ACNI's funding investment, both in terms of capacity/governance and the organisation's financial resilience and also the level of financial risk to our investment across the National Lottery Project Funding programme.

At the end of this process, the meeting will make financial recommendations and/or decisions (depending on the level of grant), based on the detail of the submitted budgets and in light of resources available.

The final decision will be communicated to you by letter which is likely to be via email.

### **Is the Arts Council Decision Final?**

There is a review procedure, which is available on the website and will be issued to any unsuccessful applicants upon request.

## If you receive an award

### Letter of Offer

Following the decision, Arts Council will issue successful applicants with a contract outlining the conditions attached to the award and the specific purposes for which the award can be used.

- You will not be able to incur expenditure until you have met certain conditions of grant and received your letter of offer from the Arts Council. You should take this into account when planning your proposal.
- It is important that you read the letter of offer and enclosed conditions carefully before signing and returning it. The letter of offer will set out what you may spend the grant on and by what date the proposal must be completed.
- **If there are any changes to your agreed project from the original application, you must inform the Arts Council immediately in writing before incurring any proposal expenditure.** If you don't tell us about changes you may have to repay the award, and this will affect decisions on any future applications you might make.

### How Payments Will Be Made

Payments are normally made in stages which will have specific conditions attached to each stage; your letter of offer will set out these specific conditions and you must comply with them prior to the drawdown of each tranche of funding. Arts Council will make payments using BACS transfer only. You will need to complete and return the BACS form issued with your letter of offer.

### Post-project Outcome Monitoring

At the conclusion of your project, you will have to submit a final income and expenditure account for the project, in addition to an End of Project Report – we will provide a template for this report. You will also be required to evidence appropriate use of Arts Council and National Lottery branding throughout the course of your project delivery.

The End of Project Report may include:

- Details of beneficiary numbers (audiences, participants, etc.)
- Indicators of the impact of the project

We may seek to work with you to support your organisation in reporting the impacts of your project, for example with templates and additional guidance on data collection.

## **Post-project Monitoring – Verification Visits**

Your project may also be subject to a Verification Visit by an Assistant Arts Development Officer. This will ensure that the project grant has been spent in accordance with your letter of offer and that all processes (eg. procurement, recruitment, processing of payments within your organisation) related to project delivery comply with LOO conditions and your own stated financial procedures. It is therefore important that you retain all the project documentation to evidence this.

## **Children / Young People / Adults at Risk**

You must complete the Access NI section of the online application form. If you do not complete the Access NI section, your application form will be deemed ineligible.

Organisations that work with children, young people and adults at risk need to ensure that their safeguarding systems and procedures adhere to best practice. Please see the information below to consider in relation to your own organisation's procedures and note that you must agree a protection policy statement as part of your application form.

It is a requirement of our funding that any organisation which comes into contact with children, young people and adults at risk, either directly through its programmes or indirectly through its services, must commit to a Safeguarding Policy which must have been formally agreed by your organisation.

If your Safeguarding Policy and Procedures are older than 3 years, please review and update them to ensure your policy and procedures are in line with best practice and legislation relating to protection issues. If you are successful in obtaining a grant, the Arts Council may, as part of its monitoring processes, ask to see these documents during the incoming year.

## **Equality of Opportunity**

It is a requirement of our funding that your organisation commits to equality of opportunity and good relations duty.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland has a statutory duty under the Northern Ireland Act 1998, in carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between all Section 75 groups and you will note that you must agree an Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations policy statement as part of your application form.

## Other Information

If you have any queries about the programme or need any help or advice completing the application, please contact the relevant art form officer.

These Guidance Notes are available on request in large print format.

### Email Notifications

Applications to the National Lottery Project Funding Programme will only be accepted online.

The online application system has been tested and is sending out relevant notifications. We are, however, aware that some applicants to online grants programmes may experience issues such as the account holder not receiving links to reset passwords, not receiving notifications of when applications are edited and saved, nor when applications have been submitted. These issues relate to those account holders with email addresses from the following email providers – bt internet, yahoo, and virgin – and customised email addresses. The potential issues lie with those email providers and are beyond the control of the Arts Council. If encountered, they need to be addressed by the relevant email provider.

Should you be affected by a problem which cannot be resolved with an email provider, we would strongly recommend that accounts are set up using Gmail or Outlook email addresses. Where applicants may have previous accounts with other email addresses, we will be able to transfer historical information to new accounts if required.

**In addition, to avoid the blocking of any application-related emails or information, you should ensure that the addresses [mail@grantapplication.com](mailto:mail@grantapplication.com) and [mailuk@grantapplication.com](mailto:mailuk@grantapplication.com) will not be blocked by your email or firewall programmes.**

## **Arts Council of Northern Ireland**

The MAC

10 Exchange Street West

Belfast

BT1 2NJ

ArtsCouncil-ni.org

T: +44 (28) 9262 3555

E: [info@artscouncil-ni.org](mailto:info@artscouncil-ni.org)

Alternative formats of this publication may be available upon request.

For further information, email: [info@artscouncil-ni.org](mailto:info@artscouncil-ni.org)