Arts Council of Northern Ireland

National Lottery Arts & Older People Programme

Application Guidance Notes

Deadline for Applications: 12 noon, 16 October 2025

Decisions: December 2025

Applications must be submitted on-line at www.artscouncil-ni.org/funding

Please Note: The maximum award available is £10,000.

Please read these Guidance Notes carefully before completing the online application form.

General Introduction

Thank you for your interest in applying to the Arts & Older People Grants Programme. These Guidance Notes provide all the information you will need to apply for funding.

The Arts & Older People Programme is jointly funded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland National Lottery Funds, Public Health Agency and the Baring Foundation.

About the Arts & Older People Programme

We have developed the Arts & Older People Grants Programme within the context of our Arts & Older People Programme and to help us deliver our ambitions within our 10-year strategic framework available from our website at [Arts Council Ten-Year Plan (opens in a new window)](.).

Background

The Arts & Older People Programme was set up to increase opportunities for older people to engage with the arts. It achieved this by providing funding to arts-based projects that addressed related social issues such as poverty, isolation and loneliness, as well as promoting positive mental health. The design of the Programme was informed by the Arts & Older People Strategy which was undertaken by the Arts Council in July 2010.

The grants programme reached older participants across Northern Ireland and had particular emphasis on partnership development and legacy. The funding also supported artists training with a particular emphasis on dementia, carers' training, an independent evaluation, distinct evaluation areas such as isolation and loneliness. The Arts Council has also contributed to a number of national and international events focusing on age and creativity.

For more information on the Arts Council's Arts & Older People Strategy and Evaluation of the Arts & Older People Programme, please visit our website at [Arts Council (opens in a new window)](.).

Programme Aims

The Arts & Older People Programme aims to strengthen the voice of older people and promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing through encouraging greater participation in the arts. The proposed projects should reflect the partnership approach with the target groups they plan to engage with and have the support from them in the delivery.

To ensure a strong advocacy message there will be an opportunity to showcase the projects funded throughout the year. Applicants should endeavour to build this into their project programme and budget.

Strategic Themes of the Programme

Projects must meet one or more of the following strategic themes:

Isolation and Loneliness

- Providing opportunities for social interaction via arts-led activities
- Working with older people to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Projects should target participants from rural areas, participants that are living alone, or are carers.

Social Inclusion

- Combating the social exclusion of older people through arts interventions that promote inclusion, free movement and sharing
- Working to create a more peaceful, fair, and inclusive community that does not discriminate against age and ethnicity.

Poverty

- Providing opportunities for older people living in disadvantaged/marginalised rural and urban areas to access and participate in arts activities
- Working to improve the quality of life of older people living in disadvantaged, marginalized and deprived areas of Northern Ireland.

Projects should demonstrate how they will target participants from rural areas or Neighbourhood Renewal Areas/Areas at Risk/ Disadvantaged areas.

Health Issues/Dementia including Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

- Provide opportunities for older people to participate in arts led activities which may help improve physical, mental and social wellbeing
- Working to promote positive mental health and wellbeing and provide opportunities for active ageing through participation in arts activities.

Strengthening the Voice of Older People

- Provide opportunities for older people to develop skills which will strengthen their voice on issues that affect them. Providing artistic, professional and personal development skills
- Working to strengthen and develop the voice of older people particularly on issues that directly affect this section of society on a day-to-day basis.

Who Can Apply?

The programme is aimed at **constituted community and voluntary groups** who are working at a local level to support older people and can demonstrate strong partnership working with older people groups.

This programme is also open to **non-governmental organisations, Local Authorities and arts organisations** who can clearly demonstrate partnership working.

We are looking for partnership or consortia-based projects. Partnerships can be led by either age sector providers, arts organisations or Local Authorities; however, the consortium must be made up of appropriate representatives and demonstrate a commitment to working together. Other specialists who work with older people may also be included as named partners in the consortium.

Who cannot apply?

- Individuals or sole traders
- Broadcasters (excluding community service broadcasters)
- Central Government Departments
- Organisations with statutory obligations to providing services for Older People
- Organisations in breach of any previously issued Arts Council award grant conditions.
- Organisations who received an Arts & Older People award in 2023/24 or earlier, that is not yet complete. An award is not complete until we have received your End of Project Report, and any outstanding grant administrative matters are closed. You will not be eligible to apply for another Arts & Older People award where a previous award from 2023/24 or earlier has not been completed.

How much can I apply for?

Grants from £1,000 to £10,000 are available.

NB: If you submit a project proposal requesting an amount less than £1,000 or greater than £10,000 your application will be ineligible.) **Remember:** If your project is successful, you may be offered only a contribution towards your total request amount.

How to apply

These Guidance Notes and Scoring Criteria are available on our website - here (opens in a new window).. They may also be requested in large print or other accessible formats if required. Please contact us at artgrants@artscouncil-ni.org if you need further assistance in this regard.

Online application

Applications may only be submitted online. When you submit online, you **MUST** submit **ALL** mandatory enclosures associated with the application at the same time, i.e. at the point at which you submit your online application. Online applications may be edited, saved and returned to up to the closing date.

All enclosure documents must be in Word, Excel or pdf format. We cannot accept documents in other formats. Total size of documents should not exceed 25 Mb.

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 on Thursday 16 October 2025**. If your complete application is not uploaded when the system closes, your application will not be accepted.

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.

Details of enclosure documents are outlined at FAQ 14 (pages 12 and 13).

NOTE: Applications submitted in hard copy, by fax, disk or e-mail will not be accepted.

Remember to keep a copy of the completed form and enclosures for your records.

Partnership Funding

The Arts & Older People Programme requires match funding. The **minimum** partnership funding you need to demonstrate from non-National Lottery, non-Arts Council sources is 10%, half of which (i.e. half of the partnership element) **must** be in cash. The assessment process considers the other funds you are able to bring to the project and will influence the outcome of the assessment. If you are unable to evidence the minimum partnership funding, your application will be deemed ineligible.

What we are looking for in projects

We are interested in projects that are:

- Developed in **partnership** with older peoples group
- Developed through **consultation** with older people
- Based upon a **partnership** approach
- Support **best practice** in working with older people though creative activities
- Consider **legacy** and **sustainability** and
- Consider **scale of impact** with a strong advocacy element at the end of the project which could be in the form of a showcase event, exhibition, performance, publication, etc.

What you can apply for (These are examples only)

- Venue hire for workshops
- Projects and events
- Volunteer travel expenses
- Materials / equipment
- Artists' fees up to £35 per hour or a maximum of £150 per day
- Artists' travel expenses of 25.7p per mile
- Equipment hire
- Publicity and marketing costs
- Community Consultation costs
- Co-ordination costs
- Essential travel costs within Northern Ireland
- Food or refreshments (maximum request £250) and
- Accessibility costs – any additional costs you are likely to incur through the involvement of Section 75 groups, e.g. carers costs, language translation, visual aids (e.g. Braille), sign language and hearing assistance.

What you cannot apply for

- Retrospective events
- Party political and religious activities
- Travel outside Northern Ireland
- Excursions
- Overhead Costs (exceptional circumstances may be considered in a small number of cases)
- Activities that are not arts related
- Fees for non-arts-based courses
- Fees for further or higher education courses at third level
- On-going building maintenance costs
- Web site design and upkeep
- Fundraising events
- Activities or events which duplicate what already exists

After you submit your application

- The Arts Council will acknowledge receipt of the application form.
- The Arts Council will undertake an eligibility check on your application. In the event of missing information, your application will be deemed ineligible and will not proceed to assessment. If ineligible, the Arts Council will issue an email advising reasons for ineligibility.
- 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.
- If eligible, an Arts Development Officer will assess your application.

Assessment and Decision-Making Process

- A decision will be made by Arts Council Officers through 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.
- Depending on the level of funds available, it may not be possible for us to support all applications which simply meet the relevant criteria. Under such circumstances applications which, in the opinion of the Arts Council, best meet the criteria will be successful.
- We aim to inform you of our final decision within 3 months of the closing date. **You must plan for your project to commence after 1 January 2026. Projects must be completed by 31 December 2026.**
- If you are unsuccessful, you will receive a letter clearly outlining the reasons for the decision.

Criteria for Decision Making

We will assess your project against the following criteria:

Criterion 1:   Strategic Impact

Criterion 2:   Partnership Working

Criterion 3:   Quality of Arts Activity

Criterion 4:   Organisational and Project Viability

Priority Areas: Poverty **and** isolation and loneliness.

Your project must address ALL the criteria. It is very important that you think carefully about how your project satisfies each of these criteria and use the application form to demonstrate this to us. The applications addressing the priority areas will be scored accordingly.

Criterion 1 – Strategic Impact:

Your project should demonstrate a clear vision underpinned by in-depth understanding of the current issues effecting older people. You should indicate how your project links to one or more of the identified themes of this programme combating isolation and loneliness, promoting social inclusion, combating poverty, addressing health issues including dementia and strengthening the voice of older people. You should demonstrate how the activity builds on and does not duplicate existing provision and has a strong strategic fit with other activity at a local and regional level. You should demonstrate how the activity strives to be sustainable in the long-term and demonstrate a lasting legacy.

Criterion 2 – Partnership Working:

Your project should have the widest possible support of your local community and the maximum possible impact. You should provide any evidence you have that there is a need for your project, e.g. letters of support, market research, evaluation of previous projects, feasibility studies, and demonstrates a high level of partnership working.

You need to show that you are committed to working in partnership with relevant organisations in order to meet the strategic themes of this programme.

Your application should demonstrate that match funding has been agreed. Applications demonstrating strong match will be allocated additional marks during the assessment.

Criterion 3 - Quality of Arts Activity:

You will need to demonstrate how your project will focus on supporting older people to engage with the arts as audiences or participants. You will need to demonstrate how the project has been or will be developed through consultation with older people and is respectful of and empowering for older people. You must show how the project will prioritise excellence – in both the art and the approach to engaging older people; including working with artists or arts organisations with a proven track record in this area.

The application should include the names, skills and experience of artists and the other main people who will be involved in the project. If you have not identified artists, then you must demonstrate how you intend to identify and recruit the artist and at what level you will be targeting.

Criterion 4 - Organisational and Project Viability:

You need to tell us about any plans you have already made and how you will manage and carry out the activity to achieve its aims. You need to show how you will manage the main stages of your project and what each stage contains. You have to demonstrate that your project represents good value for money. You should tell us what financial control systems you have in place to make sure that money is spent wisely.

Priorities

Applications which specifically address these priorities will receive additional marks in the scoring.

- **Isolation and Loneliness** - The application must sufficiently demonstrate that the project will be addressing isolation and loneliness.
- **Poverty** – The project must be targeted at areas of need within the Neighbourhood Renewal Areas and Areas at Risk as stated in the Table below.

Areas at Risk	Neighbourhood Renewal Areas
Hillhall/Old Warren	Andersonstown NRA PDF (1.8MB) (opens in a new window)
	Colin NRA PDF (5.1MB) (opens in a new window)
Carnmoney, Monkstown and Mossley	Crumlin/Ardoyne NRA PDF (1.6MB) (opens in a new window)
	Greater Falls NRA PDF (9.8MB) (opens in a new window)
	Greater Shankill NRA PDF (2.6MB) (opens in a new window)
	Inner East NRA PDF (3.3MB) (opens in a new window)
Annadale	Inner North NRA PDF (1.4MB) (opens in a new window)
	Inner South NRA PDF (4.1MB) (opens in a new window)
Ballybeen	Lenadoon NRA PDF (1.5 MB) (opens in a new window)
	Ligoniel NRA PDF (1.1MB) (opens in a new window)
Glenbank/Tyndale – Whitewell	Rathcoole NRA PDF (1MB) (opens in a new window)
	South West NRA PDF (1.2MB) (opens in a new window)
	Tulllycarnet NRA PDF (1.7MB) (opens in a new window)
Harpurs Hill, Coleraine	Upper Ardoyne/Ballysillan NRA PDF (2.4MB) (opens in a new window)
	Upper Springfield/Whiterock NRA PDF (2.4MB) (opens in a new window)
Northlands, Carrickfergus	Derry/Londonderry Outer North NRA PDF (7.7MB) (opens in a new window)
	Derry/Londonderry Outer West NRA PDF (3.7MB) (opens in a new window)
	Derry/Londonderry Triax Cityside NRA PDF (3MB) (opens in a new window)
Crossmaglen	Derry/Londonderry Waterside NRA PDF (5MB) (opens in a new window)
	Limavady NRA PDF (5MB) (opens in a new window)
Bessbrook	Strabane NRA PDF (3.8MB) (opens in a new window)
	Armagh NRA PDF (2.2MB) (opens in a new window)
Scrabo (Newtownards)	Ballyclare NRA PDF (965KB) (opens in a new window)
	Ballymena NRA PDF (1.6MB) (opens in a new window)
Beechfield (Donaghadee)	Bangor NRA PDF (1.5MB) (opens in a new window)
	Brownlow NRA PDF (2.4MB) (opens in a new window)
	Coalisland-Dungannon NRA PDF (1.5MB) (opens in a new window)
Gilford	Coleraine NRA PDF (1.1MB) (opens in a new window)
	Downpatrick NRA PDF (1.8MB) (opens in a new window)
Ferris Park (Larne)	Enniskillen NRA PDF (3.5MB) (opens in a new window)
	Lurgan NRA PDF (2.3MB) (opens in a new window)
Doury Road (Ballymena)	Newry NRA PDF (3.4MB) (opens in a new window)
	Omagh NRA PDF (3.9MB) (opens in a new window)
	Portadown North West NRA PDF (3.4MB) (opens in a new window)

Is the decision final?

The Arts Council operates a review procedure. If you are of the view that a funding decision is flawed on the basis that the Arts Council failed to follow its own procedures or that its procedures were deficient, you can formally request a review of the funding decision.

Evaluation of the Programme

There is a requirement for an evaluation to be held on the Arts & Older People Programme.

All successful projects will be required to play a role in helping to collate the relevant information. This will enable the Arts Council to evaluate the programme, highlighting gaps in provisions as well as what worked and what didn't work. This information will enable the Arts Council to demonstrate the success of the programme.

All grant recipients will be required to complete and submit evaluation forms which will capture the required data. Project case studies will also be required which will provide the narrative around the benefits and impact of the project.

An information session on the evaluation will be held. All successful applicants are required to attend.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who can apply to this scheme?
The programme is aimed at constituted community and voluntary groups who are working at a local level to support older people and can demonstrate partnership working with older people groups.

This programme is also open to non-governmental organisations, Local Authorities and arts organisation who can clearly demonstrate partnership working.

We are looking for partnership or consortia-based projects. Partnerships can be led by either age sector providers, arts organisations or Local Authorities; however, the consortium must be made up of appropriate representatives and demonstrate a commitment to working together. 0

2. How much money is available?
Grants from £1,000 to £10,000 are available.
NB: If you submit a project proposal requesting an amount less than £1,000 or greater than £10,000 your application will be ineligible.) **Remember:** If your project is successful, you may be offered only a contribution towards your total request amount.

3. Can I apply for more than £10,000?

No, the maximum award under this programme is £10,000. If you apply for more than £10,000, your application will be ineligible.

4. Am I required to find partnership funding?

The Arts & Older People Programme requires match funding. The **minimum** partnership funding you need to demonstrate from non-National Lottery, non-Arts Council sources is 10%, half of which (i.e. half of the partnership element), **must** be in cash. The assessment process considers the other funds you are able to bring to the project and will influence the outcome of the assessment.

5. When will I get a decision on my application?

We aim to give you a decision within 3 months of receiving a completed application.

6. Who can help me with queries concerning completion of the application form?

A dedicated Community Development Officer will be available to answer queries concerning completion of the application form and guidance on contacting artists.

7. Do artists have to be involved in my project?

Yes. Artists and/or arts organisations must be involved in all projects. Arts Council can provide advice on how to access artists.

8. How do I procure services?

You shall obtain best value for money in the purchase of all goods, services or works connected with this project. In this regard, your organisation shall seek 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 for supplies and services up to £5,000 in value (excluding VAT). Price check and/or quotations should be documented and provided if available. In any case the documentation should be retained on file for verification purposes.

9. What is an Accessibility Cost?

As part of your overall project budget, you can request costs associated with the delivery of your project for people with particular needs as defined under Section 75 of The Northern Ireland Act 1998 (e.g. childcare costs or carer-related costs). We refer to these costs as "accessibility costs". The maximum allocation we will make towards accessibility costs will normally be £3,000, however, we may use our discretion to award more than this where an applicant has sufficiently demonstrated need. **NB**: Any request for accessibility costs must still be within the overall maximum request level of £10k.

10. Do I have to evaluate my project?

Yes, all projects receiving funding under this scheme will be required to report on their activity. Evaluation forms have to be completed and returned to the Arts Council. These will be provided at the start of the project.

11. What if I don't have an Equality Statement / Policy?

We can supply you with a sample Equal Opportunities Statement, but it must be formally adopted by your organisation, and you must provide us with evidence of this. ALL organisations must ensure that they sign the Equality Statement within the application form.

12. How do I source artists?

Artists can be sourced from organisations such as Community Arts Partnership or Arts Care.

13. Do I have to meet all of the themes of this programme?

Your application should meet at least one or more of the stated themes.

14. How can I submit my application?

Arts Council of Northern Ireland requires **ALL** applications to be submitted online via the Arts council's website www.artscouncil-ni.org. The application together with all necessary enclosures must be submitted by **12 noon on Thursday 16 October 2025.**

You will need to upload all the necessary enclosures as attachments. Details of enclosures are detailed below:

- Copy of your constitution or set of rules. If your organisation is registered on the Government Funding Database, further detail is provided below. **NB** – statutory bodies are not required to provide a copy of their constitution.
- Detailed project description (see Guidance Notes FAQ 15 for what this should include).
- Detailed Income and Expenditure budget for this project. A detailed breakdown of Income and Expenditure that you expect to incur MUST be attached. Provide as detailed a budget as possible, including a breakdown of any budget line over £1,000.
- Arts organisations and Local Authorities must provide details of previous experience of working with older people.

In addition, all applicants must upload the following:

- Copy of your most recent set of approved annual accounts. If these accounts are NOT for 2024/25 then you must provide a copy of your approved 2023/24 accounts and MUST also attach approved Management Accounts as of 31 March 2025.

- **OR**

  For newly established groups - An estimate of your income and expenditure for the first year

- **OR**

  For Statutory Bodies - a link to your 2023/24 accounts/financial statements.

In addition, for newly established groups only:

- Three months' worth of original, consecutive bank statements (the most recent of which is not more than 3 months old)

  OR photocopies of the pages of your Building Society Passbook that show the Account Name and Number, as well as the last three months' transactions (each photocopied page to be stamped and signed by the Building Society as "true copies of the original")

  OR the last three months' transactions of your Internet Account (dated and signed by your Treasurer)

  OR for new groups which do not have three months' worth of bank statements, all the statements that you have.

If available, you should also provide the following:

- CVs of artists, arts organisations and facilitators who will be involved in the project.

- Quotations or notes used to work out the costs.

Government Funding Database

Some organisations in receipt of Arts Council or Government funds will be registered on this database and will have uploaded a number of documents, including their constitution or Articles and Memorandum of Association and most recent audited accounts, to the site.

If your organisation is registered with the Government Funding Database and your constitution or Articles and Memorandum of Association and most recent audited accounts have been uploaded to that site, you do not have to provide copies with this application. (Please note: if the accounts uploaded to the Government Funding Database are 2023/24 and NOT 2024/25 then you **MUST** submit approved management accounts as of 31 March 2025 with your application).

15. How should I describe my project?

On the application form you should describe your project in no less than 100 and no more than 400 words. **For all projects you must attach a full description which must contain:**

- The aim of the project and the outputs and outcomes of the project;

- Start and finish dates of the project (maximum 12 months starting 1 January 2026 and ending by 31 December 2026); NB If you provide dates outside of these parameters, your application will be ineligible;

- Locations of all events within the project;

- Management of the project e.g. outline if there is to be a project Steering Group;

- CVs of artists, tutors, facilitators (if known) for each event or project OR details of the process you intend to use to select the artists;

- Projected participation including numbers and age ranges and whether they will actively participate or will be an audience for a final presentation;

- For organisations whose programme includes the production of artistic material (journals, magazines, or 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.). Please note any income generated through this project must be off set against project costs;

- Name of Project Co-Ordinator for each major element, along with experience statement;

- Details of any preparatory work you have already done, e.g. pilot programme;

- Discussions with possible participants and level of community support;

- Details of any accessibility cost services you intend to deliver (for Section 75 groups), including a rationale for providing the service, types and costs of services and numbers of people involved;

- Detailed budget, including a breakdown for any single budget line over £1,000.

Other Information

If you have any queries about the programme or need any help or advice completing the application, please contact the dedicated Community Development Officer. Arts Officers can offer general guidance to applicants on making an application.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland can make information available in other formats tailored to individual requests for the application in other formats e.g. large print, braille, audio, Easy Read and British Sign Language. Please contact us at artgrants@artscouncil-ni.org if you need further assistance in this regard. .

Publicity

It is so important to acknowledge how public funding has helped you deliver your project. Please remember to include Arts Council of Northern Ireland and National Lottery funding in all your publicity, for example, acknowledge this funding in your press release, in interviews with local media, in picture captions, in video, in promotional items and signage and please tag us in any social media. Full listings of all the grants we award are published in our Annual Report and on our website. Failure to credit the Arts Council of Northern Ireland will affect payment of your grant.

Openness and accountability

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 any information held by us (which includes your application) is potentially accessible by the public.

Information supplied by you will be held in manual files and on a computer-based grants management system. Reports from the information you supply and from comments made on your application by staff members and external assessors, where relevant, are also on both manual and computer-based systems. The information you supply will be made available to those assessing any grant applications you make.

By submitting your application, you waive any right to raise any type of proceedings against the Arts Council of Northern Ireland because of, or in contemplation of, any disclosure of the contents of your application in response to an information request made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Data protection

Data held on our grants management system is used for the following purposes: statistical reporting, application assessment, accounting purposes and for contacting you.

The details of your grant will be public information (see Openness and Accountability). However, any personal details are held within our grants management system and our electronic files, and accessed only by our staff, appointed auditors and individuals or organisations that may help us assess or monitor grants. You have a right under the Data Protection Act 2018 to access the data held on you by Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

Email Notifications

Applications to the Arts & Older People 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 – btinernet, 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 **and** mailuk@grantapplication.com **will not be blocked by your email or firewall programmes.**

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

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