

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

Musical Instruments for Professional and Non-Professional Performing Groups

Application Guidance Notes

Deadline for Applications: 12 noon, Friday 1 August 2025

Decisions: September 2025

Please note that all instruments must be purchased and delivered by Tuesday 31 March 2026.

If you are unable to meet these conditions, you should NOT apply to this scheme as the Arts Council will not meet any costs incurred beyond this period.



**arts
council**
of Northern Ireland



Department for
Communities

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's **Musical Instruments for Professional and Non-professional Performing Groups** Programme.

These Guidance Notes give information on who is eligible to apply to the programme and how to submit an application. It also describes how your application will be assessed, how decisions are made and what you will be asked to do if you are awarded a grant.

These Guidance Notes and the relevant application form are available on our website at [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Musical Instruments for Professional and Non-professional Performing Groups \(MIP+NPG\) \(opens in a new window\)](#).

If you are looking for information on other Musical Instrument Schemes, guidance notes for all schemes are available on our [website \(opens in new window\)](#). **You should read the guidance notes for each scheme to find the most suitable for you / your organisation.**

A general summary of who each scheme is aimed at is given below.

Musical Instrument Scheme	Who is the scheme aimed at?
Musical Instruments for Bands	Bands based in Northern Ireland, which are formally constituted. Eligible band types: accordion orchestras/bands (part, melody or marching); brass bands; concert bands; flute bands (part, melody or marching); pipe bands; wind bands.
Musical Instruments for Professional & Non-professional Performing Groups	Professional and non-professional <u>performing</u> groups, involved in <u>regular performance</u> in any genre, who are based in and will make regular use of the instruments in Northern Ireland.
Musical Instruments for Individuals	Professional musicians who are from or currently reside in Northern Ireland (please note that you must be based in Northern Ireland and make regular use of the instrument in Northern Ireland) AND who are working as a high-level performer in a solo capacity or as part of a small group / chamber ensemble in any musical genre.

Getting Help With Your Application

These Guidance Notes and the relevant application form are available on our website at [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Musical Instruments for Professional and Non-professional Performing Groups \(MIP+NPG\) \(opens in a new window\)](#). The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is committed to offering clear and accessible application processes and programmes that are open to everyone. If you have any access needs and are thinking about making an application, we can help to make sure that you're supported during the application process.

We have a number of ways we can support you to make your application:

- Arts Officers can offer general guidance to applicants on making an application (in particular, see page 9 for details)
- Other accessibility support: 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 with your application including alternative language versions.

Further contact details for all our Artform staff can be found on the Arts Council Website [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Contact Us \(opens in a new window\)](#).

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland welcomes applications from the widest possible range of individuals, representing all categories under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Aims of the Musical Instruments for Professional and Non-professional Performing Groups Programme

The Arts Council has designed this programme to provide support for the purchase of musical instruments by groups involved in the professional and non-professional performance of music and to respond to a broad range of capital needs within the music sector in Northern Ireland.

Funding is intended to increase the quality of music-making in the community by helping eligible groups purchase new instruments.

Particular priority will be given to applications which can clearly demonstrate:

- a commitment to training / tuition / education and performance
- a commitment to artistic development
- an ability to increase access to music provision in rural areas.

Is your project timeframe suitable?

You should only apply to this programme if you will be able to complete the procurement, purchase and delivery of your requested instruments between notification of award (anticipated September 2025) and 31 March 2026. Eligible expenditure can only be incurred within these dates.

Should you wish to apply to this programme in respect of a bespoke musical instrument, you must ensure that the manufacture **and** delivery of the instrument will take place by 31 March 2026.

Arts Council will not be liable for any costs in respect of the procurement, purchase and delivery of musical instruments (including bespoke) which fall outside of date of notification of award and 31 March 2026.

If you are unable to meet these conditions, you should NOT apply to this scheme as the Arts Council will not meet any costs incurred outside this period.

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 which 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 will take account in the assessment of your application, 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 and bear in mind that the Council may choose to fund specific elements of your proposal rather than the full request.
- You may apply for a **maximum grant of £30,000**; You will need to provide at least 2 quotations for each requested item of equipment or 3 quotations if the value of the item is above £5,000 (see pages 15 and 16 below).
- If you are requesting more than one of any given items of equipment, only one set of quotations is necessary. For example, if you request 3 identical flutes which each cost £1,000 you only need to upload 2 quotations in relation to this; you do not have to upload 2 separate quotations for each of the 3 flutes.
- We will not pay VAT on any expenditure incurred by VAT registered organisations with the ability to reclaim VAT costs.
- Remember that the grant will be paid in 2 stages (see page 21 below).
- Once awarded, grants cannot be increased.

How much partnership funding do you need?

All applicants must provide partnership funding. The minimum partnership funding provided by you must be 10% in cash (as opposed to *in kind*) from non-Arts Council sources.

- Applicants must demonstrate how the remaining 10% will be funded.
- The 10% cannot be wholly or partly comprised of a discount from instrument suppliers.
- The Arts Council will only fund a maximum of 90% of the total costs of the instruments you are seeking to purchase.

For all applicants, the assessment process may take into account the other funds you are able to bring to the project and this may influence the outcome of the assessment.

Eligibility

Who can apply?

The Arts Council welcomes applications from the widest possible range of organisations and from applicants whose projects benefit individuals categorised under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. In addition:

This scheme is open to professional and non-professional performing groups, involved in regular performance in any genre, who are based in and will make regular use of the instruments in Northern Ireland.

- Community, youth, resource organisations and schools are regularly involved in music performance in the non-professional sector.
- All applicant groups must be formally constituted and must operate as not-for-profit, a voluntary organisation or a charitable body. Purchased instruments will then be owned by the constituted group (as opposed to any individual within the group). The organisation/group must have its own separate bank account i.e. a non-personal account. (Personal bank accounts will not be accepted in relation to payment of an award.)

The following types of groups are eligible for this scheme:

- Amateur / Youth Orchestras and Ensembles
- Choirs and Orchestras
- Classical Ensembles
- Community Music Groups
- Musical Societies
- Percussion / Samba Bands
- Pop / Rock Ensembles
- Traditional Ensembles

In addition, the following organisations, if they are regularly involved in music performance by groups in the non-professional sector, are eligible to apply:

- Community organisations
- Music schools
- Resource organisations
- Venues
- Youth groups
- Parent teacher associations
- Primary / post-primary schools*

Please Note:

Parent teacher associations are eligible to apply; however, Arts Council will only accept one application from either the parent teacher association **or** the associated school.

Please see important points below re applicant schools.

Primary / Post primary schools*

Please note the following if you are a school who is considering applying to this scheme:

- Applications from schools are only eligible in relation to **non-core curriculum activities**.
- We will give priority to eligible applications from schools which can clearly demonstrate:
 - A commitment to training / tuition / education and performance
 - A commitment to artistic development; and
 - Are based in a rural community.

Who cannot apply?

- Groups who have received an award from this scheme in the previous 5 years.
- The following types of groups cannot apply to *this* scheme and should instead apply to the Musical Instruments for Bands programme;
 - Accordion Orchestra/Band (part, melody or marching)
 - Brass Band
 - Concert Band
 - Flute Band (part, melody or marching)
 - Pipe Band
 - Wind Band
- Organisations who are in breach of the terms of any previous ACNI grant awards
- Individuals.

What you can apply for

In addition to musical instruments, the following items are eligible:

Bows	Instrument cases	PA Systems
Drum heads	Instrument leads	Reeds
Drum sticks / brushes	Instrument maintenance **	Shoulder rests
Effects pedals	Instrument stands	Specialist stools where necessary
Electro-acoustic equipment	Microphones	Straps
Instrument amplifiers	Mutes	Metronomes
iPads *	Recording equipment	
Tuners	Music stands	

PLEASE NOTE:

* Requests for laptops or iPads must clearly demonstrate that the items will be used in relation to musical practice / tuition. iPads must be used as the instrument, £500 cap.

** For the purpose of this award maintenance costs may include, for example: For Accordions: replacing reeds, blocks, plates, steel tongues, bellows, bellow gaskets, tuning, waxing , general servicing

If you have a specific query regarding maintenance costs, please contact the Traditional Arts Officer.

What you cannot apply for

The following items are **ineligible** for support as part of this programme:

- Second-hand instruments
- Tuition, conducting or coaching fees
- Uniforms
- Capital refurbishment
- Rehearsal space purchase / rental
- Travel/expenses (e.g. shipping) related to purchase of instruments
- Tuition CDs or DVD

Please note that this list is not exhaustive. If you have any queries about the eligibility of a proposal, you should contact and speak with the relevant art form officer before submitting an application [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Contact Us \(opens in a new window\)](#).

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 here: [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Musical Instruments for Professional and Non-professional Performing Groups \(MIP+NPG\) \(opens in a new window\)](#)

If you need any help or advice completing the application, please contact us on:

Head of Music

Ciaran Scullion

cscullion@artscouncil-ni.org

Arts Development Officer: Traditional Arts

Fióna Ní Mhearáin

fnimhearain@artscouncil-ni.org

Arts Development Officer: Music

Jamie Thompson

jthompson@artscouncil-ni.org

Assistant Arts Development Officer: Music incl. Bands

Shannon Downey

ShannonDougan@artscouncil-ni.org

NB: Officers' advice is restricted to general proposal eligibility and general advice on costs. Officers cannot give consideration to detailed budgets or comment on written proposals until a full application has been submitted. (Please note also, that it is only on submission of the full application that a final determination of eligibility can be made.)

Full staff details are available on our website - [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Contact Us \(opens in a new window\)](#).

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 Musical Instruments for Professional and Non-professional Groups Programme webpage here [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Musical Instruments for Professional and Non-professional Performing Groups \(MIP+NPG\) \(opens in a new window\)](#).

- 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 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 12noon precisely on the closing date, Friday 1 August 2025.** If your 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 uploaded to your online application via the attachments page; others must be uploaded to the Government Funding Database* (GFD - see notes below).

* Schools are not required to upload documents to the GFD. Details of documents which schools are required to upload **WITH** their online application are detailed on page 12.

Please keep in mind the following important points:

- You must upload **all** the necessary enclosures prior to submitting your online application. **If any enclosures are missing, your application will be ineligible. Please note, you will not be given additional time to submit any missing enclosures once the programme deadline has passed.**
- All mandatory documents must be in **Word, Excel or pdf formats**. We cannot accept documents in other formats.
- Do not compress files into one zip file. Files must be uploaded as individual documents.
- The total size of all your uploaded documents cannot exceed **25 Mb**.
- If you upload an enclosure in a format which we do not accept, or which is corrupted, or which we cannot open, or which is in a zip file, **the enclosure will be considered missing and your application will be ineligible.**
- **All data must be PC compatible.** If non-PC compatible data is supplied, **the enclosure will be considered missing and your application will be ineligible.** 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 quotations is **not** acceptable **and will result in your application being made ineligible. See page 16 for more detail.**
- The use of Dropbox or other similar hosting services for the submission of any enclosure documents is not acceptable and **will also result in your application being made ineligible.**
- The submission of enclosure documents which are password protected **will also result in your application being made ineligible.**

You must upload the following mandatory enclosures* to your Musical Instruments for Professional and Non-professional Groups Programme **application** before submission.

*excluding schools, please see below:

Mandatory Enclosures For Applicants who are not Schools

- One recent (within the last 3 years) sound or video recordings of your group performing
- Instrument Request List Pro Forma listing each item you wish to purchase detailing quotes from individual suppliers and prices. You must also indicate your VAT status on this form.
- The appropriate number of suppliers' quotations for all instruments to be purchased (see pages 15 and 16 below)
- A complete list of the performing group's activities in the last year – this must cover the period from 1 July 2024 onwards at the earliest.
- **A list of the performing group's plans/activities in the coming year** - This must cover the period from 1 July 2025 onwards and should contain dates and venues/locations where possible
- Income and expenditure budget for the applicant organisation for 2025/26 – this must cover the period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026
- **Most Recent set of Accounts : NOTE** : IF the accounts uploaded to the Government Funding Database are NOT for 2024/25 (i.e. they do not cover the period up to 31 March 2025) then you **MUST** upload your most recent set of accounts **AND** a set of management accounts for the period up to 31 March 2025 to your application.
- **IF APPLICABLE/RELEVANT**: Copies of any letters of offer from other funders.
- **IF APPLICABLE**: Details of all competition results in the last 2 years from 1 July 2023 onwards

Mandatory Enclosures For Schools

- One recent (within the last 3 years) sound or video recordings of your group performing

- Instrument Request List Pro Forma listing each item you wish to purchase detailing quotes from individual suppliers and prices. You must also indicate your VAT status on this form.
- The appropriate number of suppliers' quotations for all instruments to be purchased (see pages 15 and 16 below)
- A complete list of the school's music activities in the last year – this must cover the period from 1 July 2024 onwards at the earliest
- **A list of the school's plans/activities in the coming year** - This must cover the period from 1 July 2025 onwards and should contain dates and venues/locations where possible
- School's Annual income and expenditure budget for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026
- **IF APPLICABLE:** Details of all competition results in the last 2 years from 1 July 2023 onwards
- **IF APPLICABLE / RELEVANT:** Copies of any letters of offer from partnership funders.

Government Funding Database* (*this is not relevant for schools*)

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.

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 Audited/Certified/adopted accounts
- Organisation Chart
- List of office bearers
- Rental Agreement/Lease/Evidence of ownership

If you are not currently on the Database you will be required to register at [Government Funding Database \(opens in new window\)](#). **Please note that if you are registering on the GFD 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 GFD documents to the site. If your organisation is not registered on the GFD**

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. Please note that the GFD is not an Arts Council of Northern Ireland website. If you have any difficulties with the site (e.g. you cannot remember the password or login ID for your account), you must contact the website's administrator via the link provided by the website.

Detailed guidance on mandatory enclosures

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

Please Note: It is your responsibility to ensure that you upload all the requested mandatory enclosures to your application prior to submission. If any enclosures are missing, your application will be made ineligible.

Mandatory Enclosure	Upload to	Guidance on Enclosure
<p>One Audio / Video recordings</p>	<p>Online Application</p>	<p>You must upload one recent (within the last 3 years) audio or video recording of the group performing. This should be of no more than 8 minutes and should be of suitable recording quality. If you are providing video recordings, the applicant group <u>must be clearly identifiable</u>.</p> <p><u>Acceptable File Formats</u> Sound files : (MP3, WMA) Video files : (QuickTime – AVI, MOV, MP4, WMV)</p> <p>Weblinks Instead of uploading audio or video files, you may provide weblinks to audio or visual recordings of your group performing. This should be of no more than 8 minutes and should be of suitable recording quality. If you are providing video recordings, your group <u>must be clearly identifiable</u>.</p> <p>These should be provided in a separate enclosure document entitled “Weblinks”.</p> <p>Please note: Weblinks are provided at your own risk. If the weblinks provided are not working during the assessment period, the enclosures will be considered missing and your application will be ineligible for assessment. NB: You must not provide links to any subscription service that requires a login to access. If you provide any such links, the enclosures will be</p>

Mandatory Enclosure	Upload to	Guidance on Enclosure
		deemed missing, and your application will be made ineligible.
Instrument Request List Pro Forma	Online Application	<p>Available for download on the programme webpage, you must complete this listing each item you wish to purchase, detailing individual prices.</p> <p>You must use and complete the excel proforma provided. Do not amend the format of the sheet or add new columns – though you may add new rows. If you do not provide the pro forma or if you provide the information in another format, your enclosure will not be accepted, and your application will be ineligible.</p> <p>Important Note: VAT</p> <p>You must state on the pro forma whether your organization is registered for VAT and if it has the ability to reclaim VAT costs.</p> <p>Please note - If this is not completed the list will not be accepted</p>
Quotations for each Instrument	Online Application	<p>The number of quotations you must provide depends on the cost of the instrument, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) 2 quotations for instruments up to £5,000 in value (excluding VAT); (ii) 3 quotations for instruments over the value of £5,000 (excluding VAT). <p>Please note: If you are requesting a highly specialized instrument for which there is only one supplier, you must upload a statement with the quotation explaining why this is the case.</p> <p>Quotes do not require delivery dates. However, in the event that you receive an award, all instruments (and any other equipment purchased using the award) must be purchased and delivered by 31 March 2026 in order to be an eligible grant cost. Should you receive an award, the Arts Council will not cover any costs incurred either before the date of a letter of offer or after 31 March 2026.</p>

Mandatory Enclosure	Upload to	Guidance on Enclosure
		<p>Acceptable Quotations: Scans of original documents; email quotations; screen captures from online retailer sites.</p> <p>Unacceptable Quotations: Weblinks or website addresses in lieu of quotations <u>are not acceptable</u> and will result in your application being deemed ineligible. Please note that illegible quotations will not be accepted.</p> <p>IMPORTANT NOTE: If any submitted quotation is found to be fraudulent in any regard, your application will be made ineligible. It is the responsibility of all applicants to source reputable suppliers.</p>
<p>A complete list of the performing group's activities in the last year</p>	<p>Online Application</p>	<p>This must cover the period from 1 July 2024 onwards at the earliest. If it does not cover this period, the enclosure will not be accepted, and your application will be ineligible.</p> <p>The list should also contain dates and venues/locations.</p>
<p>A list of the performing group's plans/activities in the coming year</p>	<p>Online Application</p>	<p>This must cover from the period from 1 July 2025 onwards and should contain dates and venues/locations where appropriate.</p>
<p>Income and expenditure budget for the applicant organisation for 2025/26</p>	<p>Online Application</p>	<p>This is your organisation's budget for the current financial year and should show all your incoming funding streams/grants and all your expenditure. This must cover the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. (Please note: you will also have to upload your audited/certified accounts to the GFD, and depending on the date of those accounts, you may have to upload Management Accounts to the online application form. Read on for further information.)</p>

Mandatory Enclosure	Upload to	Guidance on Enclosure
		*Schools supply School's Annual income and expenditure account for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026
A list of competition results in the last 2 years	Online Application	IF APPLICABLE: This must cover the period from 1 July 2023 onwards. The list should contain dates and identify the competition in which you took part.
Management Accounts up to the period 31 March 2025	Online Application	Applicants are required to upload a copy of their organisation's most recent Audited/Certified Accounts to the Government Funding Database. IF the accounts uploaded to the GFD are not for the year 2024/25 (i.e. if your most recent audited accounts are for the 2023/24 financial year), we require a set of management accounts covering the intervening period, up to 31 March 2025. 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. *Not applicable to schools
Copies of LOOs from Other Funders	Online Application	IF you have any letters from sponsors or other funders which will contribute costs towards your proposed purchases, you should include them with your application as demonstration of support.
Constitution and/or Memorandum and Articles of Association	GFD	Please note: 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, details of which we will request if you receive an award. *Not applicable to schools
Most recent set of Audited /Certified Accounts	GFD	Please note: if these accounts are not for 2024/25, i.e. up to the period 31 March 2025, you must upload management accounts for the period up to 31 March 2025 with your application *Not applicable to schools
Organisation Chart	GFD	This is a diagram showing us the structure of your organisation, in terms of staff, board and committees. *Not applicable to schools

Mandatory Enclosure	Upload to	Guidance on Enclosure
List of Office Bearers	GFD	A list of <u>all</u> the office bearers on your board and sub-committees (if relevant), e.g. Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Chair of the Finance Committee etc. *Not applicable to schools
Rental Agreement / Lease / Evidence of Ownership	GFD	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. *Not applicable to schools

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 as 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.
- Eligible applications will be assessed by an Arts Development Officer or Head of Artform Team.
- Assessments will be subject to a moderation process.
- The Arts Council will contact you with the final decision by letter by 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 project against the following criteria:

Criterion 1: Quality and development of the arts activity

Criterion 2: Public Benefit

Criterion 3: Organisational and financial viability, including quality of management

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

Criterion 1: You need to demonstrate the quality of the music you perform and the standard of performance your members have reached. You should demonstrate your commitment to repertoire and technique development in relation to your existing repertoire and technical standards. If you are a youth band, you should demonstrate the potential for development in terms of education and musicianship.

Criterion 2: The purchase of the musical instruments should have the widest possible impact. You need to give careful consideration to the way in which the work of your performing group is presented so that it provides maximum access to people from all sections of society, including but not limited to the involvement of children and young people through a youth or access programme. You need to consider how your application addresses the needs of communities in areas of social and economic deprivation. You need to show that you are committed to principles of equal opportunity in all aspects of the performing group's activities. You should explain your need for the instruments and the anticipated impact of new instruments on musical development.

We will also take into account the age of the instruments currently owned by the organisation/performing group in relation to their expected lifetime; the number of instruments currently owned by the organisation/performing group in relation to the envisioned size of the group, and the range of instruments currently owned by the performing group in relation to the envisioned size of the group.

Criterion 3: You need to show that the applicant organisation has a sound financial and management footing. You need to outline clearly how you have decided which instruments you need to purchase, who will be responsible for making payments to suppliers, accounting for financial procedures (including adhering to procurement stipulations) and future reporting to the Arts Council.

It is important to note that all awards must be completed by 31 March 2026. You need to show that you have a clear and comprehensive plan for managing the purchase of musical instruments so that purchases and delivery can be completed successfully within the timetable and budget you set. Once awarded, grants cannot be increased.

How are decisions made?

All applications will be assessed against the criteria as listed above, taking into account the programme's aims and priorities. Assessor recommendations are then subject to a moderation process. Depending on the level of award, final decisions will be made by Grants Committee.

Is the Arts Council Decision Final?

There is a review procedure, which is available on the website and will be sent out to any unsuccessful applicants.

If you receive an award

Letter of Offer

Following the decision, successful applicants will be issued 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 project 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 purchases.
- 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 purchases must be completed.
- **If there are any changes to your application proposal from the original application, the Arts Council must be informed immediately in writing before any expenditure is incurred.** 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 will payments be made?

Payment of the grant will normally be made in 2 stages. The first payment of up to 80% of the award will be made upon provision of a supplier's invoice. The second and final payment will be made **retrospectively upon proof of payment and delivery**. Payments will be made through BACS transfer.

Procurement of goods and services

Applicants must seek the best value for money in relation to all proposed equipment purchases: best value for money is defined as the most advantageous combination of cost, quality and sustainability to meet your requirements.

Successful applicants must ensure that any purchases made with grant funds are in compliance with the guidance on procurement as stated in their Letter of Offer and as set out on pages 15 and 16 above. They must also maintain a clear audit trail of robust decision-making and retain all appropriate procurement documentation. The Arts Council will reserve the right to inspect this documentation at any point, and it will be specifically requested should your project be selected for a Verification Visit.

Post-project monitoring

- At the end of the project, you will have to submit an End of Project Report on a pre-supplied form. On this form you will have to give details of the final income and expenditure for the project.
- At a set date following project completion, you will be required to return an Evaluation Report detailing how and to what extent the new instruments have impacted on your organisation.
- **Verification Visits** - Your project may also be subject to a verification visit by ACNI staff to ensure that the project grant has been spent as agreed in your letter of offer and that all processes (e.g. procurement, processing of payments within your organisation) related to project delivery were in compliance with Letter of Offer conditions and your own stated financial procedures. It is therefore important that you retain all the project documentation which evidences this.

The Arts Council will retain a financial interest in the instruments purchased for a period of between 5 and 10 years, dependant on the value of the instruments purchased. **You will not be able to dispose of any instruments within that time period, which will be stated in your letter of offer, without the Arts Council's approval.**

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.

It is a requirement of ACNI 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 agree to a Safeguarding Commitment which must have been formally approved by your organisation.

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 the safeguarding commitment statement as part of your application form.

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

Openness and Accountability

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

Information supplied by you will be held in manual files and also on a computer-based grants management system. Reports from the information you supply and from comments made on your application by external assessors and staff members are likely to be held on both manual and computer-based systems. The information you supply will be made available to those assessing any other 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 as a consequence 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 all the following purposes: statistical reporting, application assessing, accounting purposes and for contacting you.

The details of your grant will be public information (see Openness and Accountability). However, any personal details will be held within our grants management system and our paper 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 1998 to access the data held on you by Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

Email notifications

Applications to the Musical Instruments for Professional and Non-Professional Performing Groups Programme will only be accepted online.

The online application system has been tested and is sending out relevant notifications. We are aware, however, 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 – btinternet, yahoo and virgin – and customized 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.

And finally...

If you have any queries about the programme or need any help or advice completing the application, please contact the Arts Council. A list of staff can be found on the website - [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Contact Us \(opens in a new window\)](#).

These Guidance Notes are available on request in large print format and disk, and also on the Arts Council's website here: [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Musical Instruments for Professional and Non-professional Performing Groups \(MIP+NPG\) \(opens in a new window\)](#)