

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

National Lottery Commissioning Programme

Application Guidance Notes

Deadline for Applications: 12 noon, 1 November 2023

Decisions: December 2023

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

Please Note: The maximum award available is £25,000.

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



Awarding funds from

The National Lottery®

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the National Lottery Commissioning 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 Commissioning Programme | Arts Council NI \(opens in a new window\)](#).

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, including alternative language versions. You can also contact us at that address if you have any queries about any aspect of the programme or its application requirements. Further contact details for all our Artform staff can be found on the Arts Council Website [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Contact Us \(opens in a new window\)](#).

In promoting these award schemes, the Arts Council particularly welcomes applications from groups referenced in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Is your proposal timeframe suitable?

This programme only relates to those proposals that will take place between **1 January 2024 and 31 December 2024**. 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.

Purpose & priorities

The purpose of the Commissioning Programme is to enable organisations to commission new work.

The finished work should be in a form capable of being presented, exhibited, published, performed and/or disseminated in its entirety at the point of completion in Northern Ireland (if applicable abroad) either live or online.

This programme prioritises applications that:

- Propose commissions of high artistic quality;

- Are planned to reach significant audiences primarily in Northern Ireland through live performance, exhibition, publication, broadcast, recording, and/or other audience channels;
- Provide for an extended life and/or extended public reach and impact for the work or project that has been created;
- Demonstrate a strong collaborative-engagement process between the commissioner, performers and the commissioned artist(s) in the development of the new work; and
- Demonstrate innovation and deepen the experience and understanding of the artform.

All awards and programmes are informed by the Arts Council's 5-year strategic framework (2019–24), *Inspire, Connect & Lead* which can be found on the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's website: [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Draft 5 year Strategic Framework for Developing the Arts 2019-2024 \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Commissions may be applied for across all artform areas supported by the Arts Council. Proposals may also be cross-artform.

Eligibility

Who can apply?

The Arts Council welcomes applications from the widest possible range of organisations. You will be required to provide proof that you have a legal constitution.

Who cannot apply?

- Individual artists or sole traders applying to commission themselves
- Commercial trading companies
- Companies that exist to distribute a profit
- Broadcasters (excluding community service broadcasters)
- Central Government Departments.
- Organisations applying to commission an artist who is a serving Board member or Trustee of that organisation.
- Organisations who are in breach of any previously issued ACNI award grant conditions

How many applications can you submit?

You may submit only one application. However, you can include a number of commissions within the one submission.

You will be required to give full project details and budgets for each individual commission. The Council may choose to fund all, some, or no elements of your application.

How much funding is available?

The maximum award available is £25,000.

Even though the Arts Council will only fund the commission fee you propose to pay the artist, you must provide details of all income and expenditure relating to the project in order to demonstrate the overall viability of the commission in terms of its public engagement.

What you can apply for

The Commissions Award only supports fees paid to the artist(s) by the commissioner¹. All other costs relating to the rehearsal, production, presentation, exhibition or dissemination of the commissioned work must be borne by the commissioner.

PLEASE NOTE: For visual art commissions, commissioning fees can include the creation of new work for exhibition.

You must supply the details of all proposed expenditure and income in appropriate detail in a budget document which is uploaded with your application.

Proposed expenditure should include:

- The fee you propose to pay the commissioned artist* from Arts Council funding
- Any additional fee you propose to pay the commissioned artist from any other sources of funding
- All performance costs, venue-hire costs, technical costs, promotion and publicity costs, administrative costs, etc. of the performance(s) or other public event(s) for which the work is being commissioned.

Proposed income should include what you expect to receive from other funders, box-office receipts, programme sales, commercial sponsorship, etc.

It is important to include all in-kind support** in both income and expenditure, to reflect the full and true value of your proposal, and to provide an indication or verification (where possible and appropriate) of the security of projected income.

*** Note on Artists Pay:** The Arts Council is committed to improving the pay and conditions of artists. We have published 'Rates of Pay for Artists Guidance' which is available on the Arts Council of Northern Ireland website [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Rates of Pay for Artists \(opens in a new window\)](#) on the fair and equitable remuneration and contracting of artists. It is important that you refer to this document in advance of making your application. You will be asked as part of the application process to set out how you will ensure proper pay and conditions for the artists that you work with. This will help us assess the feasibility of your application.

¹ Best practice or relevant union guidelines regarding commission fees should be observed by all applicants.

**** Note on In-kind Support:** If you expect to receive in-kind support, you need to put a financial value on it so that the contribution it makes to the real value of your proposal is clear. You should think of in-kind support both as income and expenditure, ie., whatever amount you declare on the income side, you should also declare on the expenditure side. Time contributed by directors or board members may not be included as an in-kind cost.

Access costs for D/deaf and Disabled artists

In addition to the maximum amount permitted, the Arts Council will also consider access costs specifically relating to the making of work by D/deaf, Disabled and Neurodivergent artists. An amount of up to £3,000 each year is available within the grant for successful applicants who can clearly demonstrate that additional costs are associated with the delivery of their project for people with particular needs as defined under Section 75 of The Northern Ireland Act 1998. If you wish to apply for additional funding on this basis, please note that you will need to upload the following information with your application: throughout the commissioning project

- A short document outlining your additional access costs
- An amount for access costs in the expenditure section of your application-form budget. This figure should also be included in the total amount you request.

What is an access cost?

Access costs for D/deaf, Disabled, and Neurodivergent artists cover any requirements you may have in order to remove barriers that might stop you from completing your proposal. In the proposal this may include, for example, costs towards additional time needed to complete an element of your proposal or additional assistance required to deliver your proposed activity.

What you cannot apply for

- Production costs
- Commissioning costs for Television and Film
- Costs other than the commission fee
- Activities that are more suited to another programme funded by the Arts Council
- 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 but advertising works in advance of a Council decision is undertaken at the organisation's own risk.

How to apply

Help With Your Application

These Guidance Notes and the relevant application form are available on request in large print format and other accessible formats if required, and also on the Arts Council's website at [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Commissioning Programme | Arts Council NI \(opens in a new window\)](#).

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 our website at [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Contact Us \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Making an 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 Commissioning Programme webpage [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Commissioning Programme | Arts Council NI \(opens in a new window\)](#).

- 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 12 noon precisely on the closing date, 1 November 2023.** 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 uploaded to your online application via the attachments page; others must be uploaded to the Government Funding Database (GFD - see notes below).

You **must** upload the following before submission. Further detailed guidance on these enclosures is included below and from page 12 onwards:

- Your organisation's **Constitution and/or Memorandum and Articles of Association** (if not available on the Government Funding Database)
- Most recent set of **Audited/Certified Accounts** – up to 31 March 2023
- **Management accounts** – if your accounts are not for 2022/23, i.e. up to the period 31 March 2023, you must upload a set of management accounts up to 31 March 2023 with your application.
- **Detailed budget** for the proposal
- **CVs of artists** to be commissioned, to include details of past works.
- At least one and up to Max 3 samples of previous work of the commissioned artist(s).
- **IF** applying for additional access costs, a **short document outlining access costs**.

Please keep in mind the following important points:

- All mandatory enclosures must be in the accepted formats as listed on page 12 below. 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 with your application form. 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.
- Unless explicitly stated as permissible in the Mandatory Enclosure details below, the submission of weblinks or website addresses in lieu of enclosure documents is not acceptable and will result in your application being made ineligible. Please check carefully.
- Use of Dropbox or similar cloud-based storage is not permitted as Arts Council cannot access sites of that nature.

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. A list of staff can be found on our website at [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Contact Us \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Mandatory Enclosure	Guidance on Enclosure
Project budget for the proposal	The Arts Council will only fund the commission fee(s) you propose to pay the artist(s); however you must provide details of all income and expenditure relating to the commissioned project(s) delivery in order to demonstrate the overall viability of the commission in terms of its public engagement. If applying for multiple commissions in one application, you must upload a separate budget for each commission applied for. The budget must provide a breakdown of all expenditure relating to the commission. Please give as detailed a budget as possible. You must provide a breakdown of costs over £1,000. You must also provide details of any partnership funding you have for the commission.
CVs of artists to be commissioned to include details of past works	Detailed up-to-date CVs or biographies (max. three pages) of the artists involved in the proposed commission(s) including details of past works.
Evidence/samples of previous work.	<p>At least one and up to Max 3 samples of previous work of the commissioned artist(s). Where the application relates to more than one commissioned artist, the applicant must submit at least one sample of previous work for each artist.</p> <p>(In the case of Music and Opera samples of previous work should ideally be audio or AV files or links and/or scores of works.)</p> <p>Depending on the nature of the commission, samples might be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound files • Scores

Mandatory Enclosure	Guidance on Enclosure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libretti • Audio Visual files • Writing, scripts, text (max 10 pages) • Image files <p>We can accept ONLY the following file formats: Image files (JPEG, GIF, TIFF, PNG) Sound files (MP3, WMA) Video files (QuickTime – AVI, MOV, MP4, WMV) Text files (DOC, DOCx, PDF) Spreadsheet files (XLS, XLSx)</p>
Constitution and/or Memorandum and Articles of Association	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.
Most recent set of Audited/Certified Accounts	Please note: if these accounts are not for 2022/23, i.e. up to the period 31 March 2023, you must upload a set of management accounts with your application.
Management Accounts up to the period 31 March 2023	If accounts uploaded to the GFD are not for the year 2022/23 (i.e. if your most recent audited accounts are for the 2021/22 financial year), we require a set of management accounts covering the intervening period up to March 2023. 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.
A short document outlining additional access costs	IF applying for additional access costs, you must submit a short document explaining the additional requirements and providing a breakdown of all associated costs. Please ensure to include costs associated with additional access in the total amount requested.

After you submit your application

- You will receive a Monitoring Form which will be published to your application account. You will receive an email advising you that the monitoring form is available for completion once it has been published to your account. You **must** complete and return the Monitoring Form by the timeframe specified as part of the application process. Failure to do so may affect eligibility.
- The Arts Council will undertake an eligibility check on your application. In the event of missing information, your application may be deemed ineligible and will not proceed to assessment. If ineligible the Arts Council will issue an email advising reasons for ineligibility.
- Eligible applications will be assessed by an Arts Development Officer, based on the information provided in the application form and enclosures.
- Officer 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.

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 Arts Council 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 \(opens in a new window\)](#)

- Constitution and/or Memorandum and Articles of Association
- Most recent set of Audited/Certified/adopted accounts.

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 2 documents listed above **AND** all the mandatory enclosures listed on page 9 at the time of submitting your online application.

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

How we will make our decision

Assessment criteria

We will assess your proposal against the following criteria.

Criterion 1: Artistic merit

Criterion 2: Meeting the purpose and priorities of the award

Criterion 3: Feasibility

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: Artistic merit

The assessment of quality of the proposal (artistic merit) focuses on the artist's previous practice as well as on the nature of the proposed activity and includes:

- The quality, including ambition and originality, of the idea/the proposed arts activity as outlined in the application form
- The track record of the artists involved in the project demonstrated through the CVs and other supporting material submitted
- The potential of the artist demonstrated through the application form

Criterion 2: Meeting the purpose and priorities of the award

Applications are assessed on how well they meet the purpose and priorities of the programme. We will consider whether the proposal

- Will reach significant audiences through live performance, publication, broadcast, recording, exhibition and/or other audience channels;
- Provides for an extended life and/or extended public reach and impact for the work or project that has been created;
- Demonstrates a strong collaborative-engagement process between the commissioner, performers and the commissioned artist(s) and the public in the development and presentation of the new work; and
- Demonstrates innovation and deepen the experience and understanding of the artform.

Criterion 3: Feasibility

The assessment of feasibility considers the extent to which the applicant demonstrates capacity to deliver the proposed activity. This includes:

- The proposed budget for the project
- The personnel involved in managing, administering and delivering the commission
- The extent to which the applicant demonstrates fair and equitable remuneration for the commissioned artist/s
- The track record of the applicant organisation
- The nature of the involvement of any project partners
- The proposed timetable or schedule

The decision process

- All applications will be assessed by an Arts Development Officer against the criteria listed above, taking into account the programme's purpose 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 Arts Council funding, if applicable), knowledge of the wider arts landscape, and the competitive context in which all applications are evaluated.
- Officer recommendations are moderated at a meeting attended by all assessing officers chaired by a Director. This meeting will make decisions on applications.
- Due to limited funds, it is not always possible to fund all applications recommended by officers.
- The final decision will be communicated to you via email.
- If successful, applicants will be issued with a letter of offer.
- If your application is rejected, the Council will provide you with detailed reasons for the rejection.

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 received your letter of offer from the Arts Council and met certain conditions of grant. 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

Each payment will have specific conditions attached to it; 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.

The final payment will be made upon submission of a post project report and evidence of completed work which, depending on the nature of the commission(s), may include for example:

- Sound files
- Scores
- Libretti
- Audio Visual files
- Writing, scripts, text (max 10 pages)
- Image files

If you receive an award

Post-project monitoring

At the conclusion of your project, you will have to submit an End of Project Report and provide a final income and expenditure account for the project together with evidence of completed work as detailed above. You will be required to evidence the appropriate use of Arts Council and National Lottery branding throughout the course of project delivery.

The project report will include

- Details of the how the project has benefited you;
- Evidence of appropriate use of Arts Council and National Lottery branding where relevant; and
- An evaluation of the project – was it successful? Did you meet your aims? etc.

We may discuss with you how this information is to be collected.

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

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

Publicity

Full listings of all the grants we award are published in our Annual Report and on our website. You will be required to acknowledge Arts Council of Northern Ireland funding in all your publicity. 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 will include your application) is potentially accessible by the public.

Information supplied by you will be held in manual and/or electronic 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 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 of 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 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 1998 to access the data held on you by Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

We view your signature on your application form as acceptance of the use of data as outlined above.

Email notifications

Applications to the Commissioning 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 – btinternet, 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.

If you have any queries about the programme or need any help or advice completing the application, please contact the relevant art form officer. Staff contact details are available from our website [Arts Council of Northern Ireland Contact Us \(opens in a new window\)](#).