



Festivals Investment Scheme 2026

Guidelines for Applicants

Round 1 for festivals commencing 1 January– 30 June 2026

Band A – for awards up to €10,000

Band B – for awards of €10,001–€25,000

Band C – for awards of €25,001–€45,000

Round 1 deadline: 5.30pm (Ireland time), Thursday 29 May 2025

Applicants with disabilities

The Arts Council makes every effort to provide reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities to engage with our services.

If you have a disability and need help with submitting your application, please contact us as early as possible before the deadline.

Contact: Disability Access Officer

Phone: 01 618 0200 or 01 618 0243

Email: disabilityaccess@artscouncil.ie

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Getting help with your application

If you have questions about using the Online Services website, visit the FAQ section on our website: www.artscouncil.ie/FAQs/online-services/

If you have a technical question about the online application process and your question is not answered in the FAQ section, you can email onlineservices@artscouncil.ie, or call the Arts Council on **01 618 0200/01 618 0243**

If you have a query about your application that is not technical in nature, you should email or phone the arts team to which you are applying for funding. <http://www.artscouncil.ie/Contact-us/Staff-and-adviser-lists/>

To watch our YouTube guide on making an application, go to <https://www.youtube.com/artscouncildemo>

Key points to remember

- In order to make an application, you **must** be registered for an Arts Council Online Services (OLS) account. If you do not have one, you can sign up for one [here](#). Please note that it can take up to **five working days** for a new user to be registered on OLS, so give yourself plenty of time to do this ahead of the deadline.
- We strongly advise that you read this document carefully before beginning the process of making your application.
- We also strongly advise that you start the process early and give yourself **plenty of time** to make your application.
- We recommend that you aim to upload your application **at least forty-eight hours** before the advertised deadline. That way, if you encounter a technical problem, you will have time to contact us so that we can assist you in resolving it.
- Please note that, on account of the large volume of applicants using the online system on the last day of the deadline, we cannot guarantee that we can resolve any technical issues you may have if you contact us **after 2.00pm on the day of the deadline**.
- Please read the following checklist carefully:

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- ☐ I have read and understand these guidelines.
 - ☐ In the event that I have had an issue, I have contacted the Arts Council for assistance.
 - ☐ I have filled in all of the sections of the application form relevant to my application.
 - ☐ I have prepared all required supporting material as set out in these guidelines and have this ready to upload.
 - ☐ I have asked someone else to check my application to make sure there are no errors and that nothing is missing.
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Important scheme note

Choosing the correct band for the Festivals Investment Scheme (FIS)

There are three funding bands in the Festivals Investment Scheme and each one is designed to support festivals at different stages of their development. An organisation may make **only one application** under the Festivals Investment Scheme in a year (i.e. one application in one band per calendar year). You should choose the one most suitable for your festival organisation.

Those operating:

- A small festival, a new festival wanting to test new ideas, a festival that is in the early stages of development or a festival without a formal business structure should consider applying to Band A.

Funding available up to €10,000

- A small to mid-scale festival, a festival that is seeking to build programme capacity in a particular artform/arts-practice area or which wishes to develop strategies for public engagement should consider applying to Band B.

Funding available €10,001–€25,000

Note: organisations **must be** established for a minimum of **three years** and have executed **three consecutive festival programmes** as a minimum requirement to apply to this band (see section **1.3 Who can apply?** for further details).

- A mid-scale festival that is strategically led and wishes to develop its capacity in the area of artform development (e.g. co-commissioning, producing, etc.) should consider applying to Band C.

Funding available €25,001–€45,000

Note: organisations **must be** established for a minimum of **five years** and have executed **five consecutive festival programmes** as a minimum requirement to apply to this band (see section **1.3 Who can apply?** for further details).

It is further advised that the following applicants should speak with the Head of Festivals before making an application:

- Festival organisations intending to apply to Band C for the first time
- A festival previously supported through Band B wishing to apply to Band C.

New or returning applicants to the scheme may wish to consider attending the Festival Investment Scheme application clinic. Further details can be found [here](#)

Band transfers

If applying to Bands B or C, applications may be moved into a lower band (if eligible):

- If there is not sufficient evidence in the application for the band under which you applied

- If the funding requested is below the financial support available in that band.

Note: applicants will be informed in writing of band transfers if applicable.

Applications do not move into higher bands under any circumstances.

Band awards

In **Band A:** Awards that are offered may be less than the funding band **maximum** due to the competitive and budgetary context of the scheme.

In **Bands B and C:** Awards that are offered may be less than the funding band **minimum** due to the competitive and budgetary context of the scheme.

The Arts Council also reserves the right to award less in circumstances where it considers the information provided to match a lower band of investment than the one to which your organisation applied.

1. What you need to know about the Festival Investment Scheme

1.1 About the award

Deadline for the submission of applications

All applications must be made using the Arts Council's Online Services.

The deadline for receipt of Round 1 applications is:

5.30pm, Thursday 29 May 2025

Why we support festivals

Festivals are key producers and presenters of the arts and are critical for engaging diverse audiences and broadening public access to the arts. They provide vital platforms and opportunities for artists to develop their practice and often showcase the arts in new and challenging ways in conventional and non-arts spaces.

Small-to-mid-scale festivals in particular play an important role in delivering arts to the public and developing a vibrant and sustainable arts profile at a local level; providing essential access to the arts in areas of low engagement. They offer important opportunities for artists and audiences to interact in what is often a celebratory context. That context can be shaped by elements such as the locality, and those who organise the event. It can enable communities to curate and define their history, social commentary and reflect their identity and sense of community through festival programmes and events.

In this regard, the Arts Council acknowledges the valuable contribution made by voluntary committees in developing and sustaining festivals. It also acknowledges the complex and special nature of 'festival-making' as a creative act and its curatorial role in the development of artistic programming, which can establish new collaborative partnerships for artists as well as diversified approaches to creating art with the public.

The Arts Council's role is to advocate for and support the development of a diverse and varied arts-festival ecology, and to provide a suite of supports that encourage best-practice festival models that increase opportunities for public engagement and participation in the arts or develop the work of an artist/artform.

In this regard the Arts Council offers financial support to small-to-mid-scale festivals to deliver high-quality arts experiences for audiences, and prioritises programmes engaged with, and relevant to, local communities or communities of interest.

The Arts Council acknowledges the diversity of festival operating models and the rich variety of arts-practice areas presented by festivals and their critical role in broadening public access to the arts. In this regard the Arts Council welcomes applications from organisations operating annual, biennial or triennial festival programmes and supports both multi-disciplinary arts festivals as well as those in a single artform discipline through this award.

How we support festivals

The Festivals Investment Scheme is a competitive scheme that offers funding to support the staging of festivals on a **non-recurring basis**.

It is important to note that funding under this programme is offered on a once-off basis.

Therefore, those offered awards in previous funding rounds of the Festival Investment Scheme should **not assume** that funding will be provided or provided at previous levels of support.

Where eligible, applicants select the band most applicable to their festival model and funding request.

Due to the competitive nature of this scheme, it is important to note that for Round 1 2025 the Arts Council received 108 applications and was able to support 65 proposals (60% of applicant organisations). The average award offered under this funding scheme in this previous round was:

- Band A €6,720
- Band B €17,756
- Band C €42,249

Qualifying dates for the Festival Investment Scheme 2026

The Festival Investment Scheme 2026 **Round 1** is for festivals that commence their festival activity **between 1 January 2026 and 30 June 2026**. If your festival falls outside of these dates, it will **NOT** be eligible for assessment.¹

Changes to the Festival Investment Scheme 2026

If you have applied to the Festival Investment Scheme before, please note that we have made changes to both the application form and guidelines. Below is a list of these changes.

Guidelines

Section	What has changed?
1.2 Objectives, purpose and priorities of the Festivals Investment Scheme	We have updated this section in relation to certain programmes of work which are <u>no longer prioritised for funding consideration.</u>
1.5 Who cannot apply?	We have updated this section in relation to organisations and models of practice that are <u>no longer able to apply to the Festival Investment Scheme.</u>
1.6 What may you apply for?	We have updated the <u>different types of disability access costs</u> and how to request additional funding support.
1.7 What may not apply for?	We have updated information in relation to <u>fundraising activities, competitions and profit-making.</u>
1.8 What supporting material to submit with your application?	We have made changes to the <u>type of supporting materials that must be provided with your application.</u> This affects

1. Exceptions will be granted for festivals that take place between 1 July–31 December 2026 where they have made in writing a business case for applying to Round 1 and have received written approval from the Head of Festivals in this regard (festivals must provide evidence of this).

	applications for new festivals and those seeking participant or personal disability costs .
3.2 The assessment process	We have updated this section to include participant and personal access costs .
3.3a Criteria for the assessment of applications – artistic quality and artform priorities	We have updated the artform priorities in Table 3 . Please note that some of these have changed. Please ensure that you refer to these ahead of making an application.
3.4 The scoring process	We have updated the scoring matrix . Both the narrative and scoring values have changed.

Application form

Section	What has changed?
Section 1: General	1.6 We have changed this section so that you can only select your primary artform area. You must select only one box . Otherwise, your application will NOT upload when you try to submit it via the Arts Council's Online system.
Section 4: Priorities of the award	4.2 We have changed the way applicants record their activity reporting and targets. Notes are provided in this section of the application form to support applicants in completing this section.
Section 5: Financial management	<p>5.1 We have changed the way we collect information on disability access costs. You must select YES/NO in this section and then follow the instructions.</p> <p>5.2 We have changed the way we want you to report on artist fees in this section of the application form. Here, we expect to see a breakdown of costs.</p> <p>Provide details about the activity, the number of artists to be engaged in this activity and the fee per artist. 5.5 We have added a question about participant and personal disability access costs in this part of the application form. Please ensure you refer to disability access costs information in section 1.6 What may you apply for? in the <i>Guidelines for Applicants</i> and in section 5.1 of the application form before answering this question.</p>
Section 6: Project management	6.1 We have added a question for NEW festival applicants only . This allows us to understand the research you have undertaken in relation to your proposal.
Section 7: Supporting documentation	We have updated the types of mandatory supporting materials required with your application . Please read this section carefully before submitting your application.

1.2 Objectives, purpose and priorities of the Festivals Investment Scheme

Objectives

To ensure a diverse and varied arts-festival ecology by supporting a variety of small-to-mid-scale festival programmes and festival models to deliver high-quality and engaging arts-festival activity/programmes for audiences so as to contribute to the development of arts practices and to increase opportunities for public engagement.

All awards and schemes are informed by the Arts Council's ten-year strategy (2016–25), *Making Great Art Work: Leading the Development of the Arts in Ireland* (<http://www.artscouncil.ie/arts-council-strategy/>).

Purpose

The Arts Council will achieve the objectives of the Festivals Investment Scheme by supporting project proposals that:

- Express an overarching artistic vision that resonates with the nature of the proposed activities and demonstrates **artistic excellence**
- Show evidence of commitment to the Arts Council's **artform priorities relevant to the programme proposed**
- Demonstrate sound and effective festival and financial management, a track record of excellence, and delivery to a high standard, ensuring the project proposed is **feasible**.

Priorities of the scheme

Priority will be given to proposals that:

- Demonstrate **public engagement** by:
 - Evidence of audience-development strategies that provide opportunities for the public to attend arts events and/or to participate in arts activities
 - Providing opportunities for the public to collaborate with artists.
- Demonstrate **festival priorities** by:
 - Producing evidence of a high level of integration with local resources and support from a diverse range of partners
 - Demonstrating a commitment to collaboration with organisations that support and strengthen the festival's work
 - Showing an understanding of the context/place the festival is being presented in, and evidence of the value and relevance to the immediate community
 - Evidencing an awareness of artists living in the region, and how the festival works to support their development.
- Demonstrate **equality, diversity and inclusion priorities** by:
 - Showing how equality, diversity and inclusion are included in the organisation's working practices.

Note: In a festival context we **recognise public engagement** as: audience members, readers, listeners, attendees or other consumers, volunteers, participants or public collaborators.

The Festivals Investment Scheme **will take account of the regional and local spread** of arts activity, and may prioritise festivals taking place in areas where relatively little arts activity currently occurs over those that are already served by arts activity, including the work of other organisations in receipt of Arts Council funding.

Non-priorities

The following activities are considered non-priorities for funding consideration:

- Proposals for an ongoing arts event series or for arts events/arts activities that are spread throughout a year (e.g. quarterly or monthly programmes in any artform)
- Arts programmes primarily focused on the delivery of workshops series, summer schools, ongoing classes or one-off single events, etc.
- A festival that take place at the same time and in the same location as, or under the auspices of, a festival supported through the Arts Council's Strategic Funding programme.

Exceptions will be made for those applicants who are able to show (with evidence) that the artistic programmes and the public benefit of both festivals are distinct, and/or the proposed festival programme is underpinned by a partnership agreement between both festivals. Partnership agreements must be provided as evidence with your application.

1.3 Who can apply?

The Festivals Investment Scheme has two rounds. You can only apply to the round applicable to your festival dates.

Round 1 is open to organisations resident in the Republic of Ireland promoting **festivals** with a clear artistic purpose and which commence between **1 January–30 June 2026**.

An organisation may make **only one application** under the Festivals Investment Scheme in a year (i.e. one application in one band per calendar year).

Note: If your organisation provides more than one festival programme in a calendar year and you wish to apply for funding to support these programmes, they should be included in one application. The dates of your earliest programme should satisfy the qualifying dates for the round your organisation is applying to (see section **1.1 About the Award**).

For applicants to Band B:

- **Organisations must be established for a minimum of three years** and executed three consecutive festival programmes for the festival project named in section **3.1** of the application form (these do not need to be Arts Council-funded programmes).

For applicants to Band C:

- **Organisations must have been established for a minimum of five years** and executed five consecutive festival programmes for the festival project named in section 3.1 of the application form (these do not need to be Arts Council-funded programmes).

As part of its [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#), the Arts Council is committed to offering **equality of access, opportunity and outcomes** to all potential applicants regardless of their:

- Age
- Civil or family status

- Disability
- Gender
- Membership of the Traveller community
- Race
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Socio-economic background.

The Arts Council welcomes applications that are representative of the diversity of Irish society, including but not limited to any of the characteristics outlined above, and/or initiatives that deliver equitable opportunities or outcomes for those involved.

1.4 Who is the applicant?

The applicant is the organisation that will receive any funding offered and that will be required to accept the terms and conditions of that funding.

Any funding offered will only be **paid into a bank account** held in **the name of the applicant organisation**.

All documentation provided must be in the name of the applicant organisation – e.g. if you apply to the Arts Council for funding under the name Newtown Arts Festival Committee, then all documentation, including bank and tax details, must be in that name.

1.5 Who cannot apply?

Organisations that are not eligible to apply under the scheme include the following:

1. Individuals.
2. Organisations whose proposals are better suited to another funding programme offered by the Arts Council or by another funding agency (in this case, we will redirect you to the more appropriate funding opportunity).
3. Commercial organisations that share out profits to members.
4. Organisations/festivals based outside of the Republic of Ireland. However, applicants based in the Republic of Ireland may collaborate with an organisation based abroad.
5. Organisations where the dominant element of the programme is competitive in nature.
6. Organisations in receipt of Strategic Funding, Partnership Funding or Arts Centre Funding.
7. Organisations that have applied for or are in receipt of Arts Grant Funding 2026 to undertake any festival programme.
8. Members of the Council of National Cultural Institutions (CNCI) directly funded by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.
9. Organisations directly funded by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media for festival programmes in 2026 (including funding offered through the Small-Scale Local Festivals and Summer Schools Scheme).
10. Organisations proposing festival programmes that fall outside the qualifying dates for this application round. See section **1 About the Festivals Investment Scheme** and section **1.3 Who can apply?**
11. Those organisations where the dominant features of their programme are non-arts related – e.g. heritage, food, sports, stand-up comedy, roleplaying/historic reenactments or gaming events.
12. Programmes where there is no benefit to the public, such as professional development programmes, conventions, conferences and trade fairs.

1.6 What may you apply for?

You may apply for funding in relation to activity costs that your festival expects to incur. These might include:

- Artists' fees (including performance fees)
- Venue-rental costs
- Staff costs (e.g. administrative, technical and front-of-house support directly related to the festival)
- Audience development – activity carried out with the objective of developing ongoing relationships with current and new audiences
- Marketing and publicity costs
- Technical and production costs
- Travel costs and expenses for artists
- A contribution to festival programme archiving.

How much funding may you apply for?

The maximum amount that may be awarded to a successful applicant under Band A* is:	€10,000
The maximum amount that may be awarded to a successful applicant under Band B** is:	€25,000
The maximum amount that may be awarded to a successful applicant under Band C*** is:	€45,000

* In Band A:

The maximum amount of funding you may request is the difference between the **proposed expenditure** and the **proposed income** you indicate in your budget (section 5.4 of the application form). This figure should be no higher than the award limit of €10,000.

** In Band B:

The maximum amount of funding you may request is the difference between the **proposed expenditure** and the **proposed income** you indicate in your budget (section 5.4 of the application form). This figure should be no lower than €10,001 and no higher than the band limit of €25,000.

*** In Band C:

The maximum amount of funding you may request is the difference between the **proposed expenditure** and the **proposed income** you indicate in your budget (section 5.4 of the application form). This figure should be no lower than €25,001 and no higher than the band limit of €45,000.

Note: If you are seeking funding for €10,000 or less, you should select Band A in section 1.5 of the application form and online when submitting your application.

If you are seeking funding between €10,001 and €25,000, you should select Band B in section 1.5 of the application form and online when submitting your application.

If you are seeking funding between €25,001 and €45,000, you should select Band C in section 1.5 of the application and online when submitting your application.

Applicable to all bands

Proposed expenditure should include all eligible costs relevant to your application (see section **1.6 What may you apply for?**).

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

It is also important to reflect all in-kind support¹ in both income and expenditure, so reflecting the full and true value of your proposal (see below)

¹ Note on in-kind support	<p>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 expenditure and as income: <u>whatever amount you declare on the expenditure side, you should also declare on the income side (i.e. the same amount).</u></p> <p>Time contributed by directors or board members may not be reckoned as an in-kind cost.</p> <p>If the total income for your project is in-kind only, you must explain why other sources of income are not provided in your proposed budget.</p>
² Note on artists' pay	<p>The Arts Council is committed to improving the pay and conditions of artists. In this context, the Arts Council has published a <u>policy</u> on the fair and equitable remuneration and contracting of artists. This includes best-practice principles for all those working in the arts to aspire to.</p> <p>All artists engaged in Arts Council-funded activities must be fairly paid. Anyone seeking funding from the Arts Council must tell us how they will ensure that artists will receive fair pay and conditions and provide details of this in their budgets. We will use this as part of the application assessment process and will not offer funding if we consider pay to be too low or below industry standards, or where the terms of engagement are not appropriate. Through our reporting mechanisms we will monitor compliance.</p> <p>We do not set or recommend rates of pay, but we recognise the role of those organisations that are mandated to do so and will refer to these where they exist. We also commit to supporting key representative and</p>

	resource organisations to review industry rates and develop new tools that support the contracting process.
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You are asked to indicate income, expenditure and amount requested at two stages during the application process:

- Online, when you initiate the application (totals only)
- In section 5 of the application form.

Access costs for artists or participants² with disabilities

The Arts Council is committed to making our funding programmes and the work we fund accessible to everyone.

The Arts Council takes the description of disability from Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which states:

‘Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.’

You can include disability access costs within your application and there are two types that you can apply for.

1. Participant or personal disability costs

These supports should remove barriers for artists or participants with disabilities who are delivering your proposal. For example:

- You
- The main artists, individuals, groups or organisations involved in your proposal
- Partners or collaborators
- Production staff
- Core staff or key administrative personnel.

Examples of support may include:

- An ISL interpreter for a participant or participants
- Services of an access support worker
- Additional rehearsal or studio time

Note: You can make an additional funding request for these participant and personal disability access costs.

2. Audience disability access costs

2. The Arts Council defines participants as those who express themselves creatively by taking part in artistic activities.

These are costs for making your work accessible to persons with disabilities and should be considered a normal part of your work. We want to ensure that more people enjoy high-quality arts experiences and that everyone can access and enjoy the work we fund.

Example of access costs to make your work accessible to your audience may be:

- Having an ISL interpreter for your event or performance
- Using an audio-description service
- Making your website compatible with screen readers
- Producing exhibition materials in other formats such as in Braille or audio.

Note: You should include audience disability access costs in the total amount that you request. The request must be within the maximum amount available for the award.

What if the funding I'm offered is less than I requested?

If you are offered funding that is less than you requested, we will discuss with you how you plan to deliver your proposed activity when reviewing the revised budget.

How to apply for disability access costs

We need to understand why you are applying for disability access costs and how they meet the needs of your participants or your audience.

If you include disability access costs in your proposal, you must show the costs in two separate parts of the application form.

- Your audience disability access costs should be included as a line in section 5.2 of the application form (Detailed budget: expenditure).
- Your request for participant or personal disability access costs should be placed in section 5.5 of the application form. You must also upload a document (in addition to and separate from your application form) which provides a 'line-by-line' breakdown of these costs. An optional template is available on the Festival Investment Scheme funding page [here](#).
- To see how we assess your application, see section 3 of the guidelines below.

Note: Make sure that the totals are the same on both; and make sure that the amount requested equals TOTAL EXPENDITURE **minus** TOTAL INCOME.

1.7 What may you not apply for?

Activities and costs that you may not apply for include the following:

- Activities that are **not arts-related** – e.g. events relating to heritage or crafts, food fairs, stand-up comedy, gaming or sporting events
- Training programmes for individuals or programmes taking place in a formal education setting where the activity does not engage with the local community
- Festival activities that have already taken place or that will have commenced before a decision is made on your application (this excludes research, preparation and planning

for your festival programme taking place on the dates outlined in section 3.1 of your application form)

- Activities by registered charities that are for fundraising for other organisations
- Activities that are for participating in a competition
- Activities that are for profit-making
- Once-off academic conferences or symposia with no wider public benefit
- Festival activities taking place outside of the Republic of Ireland
- Capital costs, such as the purchasing of equipment
- Competitive events.

1.8 What supporting material to submit with your application?

Supporting material means material(s) **separate from** and **additional to** your application form. This helps the person assessing your application to get a clearer understanding of your proposal. Please carefully read the following list of what supporting material is required, as failure to comply with this is the most common reason for applications being deemed ineligible.

Types of supporting materials

There are three types of supporting materials, which are listed below in more detail.

1. Mandatory supporting materials

- Mandatory supporting materials are materials which **must** be provided in addition to your application form. The types of supporting materials required **will depend on the funding band under which you are applying**. You should refer to **Tables 1 and 2 (below)**, which outline the minimum requirements for mandatory supporting materials in each funding band and how to prepare these materials.

Note

- In order to be considered eligible for assessment under the Festival Investment Scheme, you **must ensure that any** mandatory supporting materials are submitted **online**.
- **If you do not submit mandatory supporting material, your application will be deemed ineligible and will not be assessed.**

2. Materials that are required in certain circumstances (if relevant)

- For applications involving animals
- For applications relating to participant or personal disability access costs.

You should refer to **Tables 1 and 2 (below)**, which outline the details of the supporting materials required in each funding band

3. Optional supporting materials

- Depending on the nature of your application and the programme proposed, you may wish to include other supporting materials in support of your application – e.g. a detailed draft programme or background information on your festival. **You can include materials that you believe support your case for support.**
- Please ensure that optional supporting materials are clear and concise.

Supporting materials required for each application band

The table below outlines the type of supporting materials required in addition to your application form. **This will depend on the nature of your application and the funding band under which you are applying.**

Table 1

Supporting materials	Funding Band A	Funding Band B	Funding Band C
CVs of those managing your festival	Only mandatory for applicants proposing a new festival	Not required	Not required
Draft programme for your proposed festival	Only mandatory for applicants proposing a new festival	Optional	Optional
Letters or agreements of support/MOUs for your 2026 proposed activities (*one of which must be from your local authority)	Optional	Mandatory maximum of 3 letters	Mandatory minimum of 5 letters*
Strategic plan, festival development plan or business plan	Not required	Not required	Mandatory
Animal-welfare statement	If relevant to your application	If relevant to your application	If relevant to your application
Participant or personal disability access costs – itemised breakdown	If relevant to your application	If relevant to your application	If relevant to your application

If you do not submit the required **mandatory** supporting material(s), your application will be deemed ineligible and will not be assessed

Preparing your supporting materials

Table 2

CVs of those managing your festival	<p>MANDATORY FOR NEW FESTIVAL APPLICANTS ONLY</p> <p>You are only required to provide CVs if you are making an application for a new festival. In order for those assessing your application to gain a better understanding of how your festival will be managed, CVs of those managing the proposed project should accompany your application. Your CV should highlight any relevant experience of managing, curating or producing festival or event programmes.</p> <p>CVs should all be placed in one document and uploaded with your other application materials.</p>
Draft programme of events for your 2026 proposal	<p>MANDATORY FOR NEW FESTIVAL APPLICANTS ONLY (OPTIONAL FOR ALL OTHER APPLICANTS)</p> <p>If you are proposing a new festival, you must provide a draft programme as a separate document.</p> <p>No set format is required, but applicants are encouraged to keep information clear and concise. You may wish to consider providing a breakdown of your festival programme timetable, further detail on the artists involved, and any curatorial information/artistic plan that you believe supports your application.</p> <p>Additional programme information should be placed in one document and uploaded with your other application materials.</p>
Letters/ agreements of support/MOUs for your 2026 proposed activities	<p>MANDATORY FOR BAND B & BAND C APPLICANTS</p> <p>What is a letter of support?</p> <p>A letter of support is a written statement made by an individual or organisation in support of your proposed festival programme. (This can be in the form of a letter or an email addressed to the festival that outlines the details of the support.) It should NOT be from the applicant about their own festival.</p> <p>The number of letters required in each funding band is outlined in table 1. You must ensure that your letters of support are for your 2026 proposed programme. We will not accept documentation that relates to a previous festival Project. Therefore, you should make sure your letters include your proposed festival dates.</p>

	<p>In preparing your letters of support, you should consider providing these from a variety of stakeholders that best reflect and demonstrate the festival's range of partnerships.</p> <p>Letters of support should be placed in one document and uploaded with your other application materials.</p> <p>What is an MOU? An MOU is a memorandum of understanding. It is an agreement outlining the nature of a partnership between two or more parties. The Arts Council MOU template is provided for applicants here.</p> <p>NOTE FOR BAND C APPLICANTS ONLY Please note that one of your letters of support must be from your local authority to be eligible for support in funding Band C. This can be from any department within the local authority. The letter should outline why the local authority endorses or supports the work of your festival. If the local authority provides in-kind or financial support this should also be included. We will also accept letters of support from Údarás na Gaeltachta and Ealaín na Gaeltachta for those organisations operating festival programmes in Gaeltacht areas</p>
Strategic/ business plan or festival development plan	<p>MANDATORY FOR BAND C APPLICANTS</p> <p>This is a planning or working document that provides evidence of having developed a strategic vision for your festival for the coming years and a commitment to the review and evaluation of its operations.</p> <p>The plan should provide a series of operational actions or a roadmap for your organisation that should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. It should outline how your festival will be developed and the management, resources and supports required to underpin the successful delivery of this plan.</p> <p>It should complement and underpin the programme you have proposed in your application.</p> <p>Note If your organisation has an existing strategic, business or festival development plan, this must be uploaded with your application. If the plan is past its first year, the organisation should provide evidence that it has undertaken a review of the plan and updated it accordingly.</p> <p>Organisations without a strategic, business or festival development plan should use the Arts Council's Festival Development Plan Template, which should be completed and uploaded with your application.</p> <p>Is there a particular layout required for the strategic, business or festival development plan?</p> <p>The document you provide does not require a standardised layout as business strategies and the scope and scale of work will differ from</p>

	organisation to organisation. However, clear and concise language should be used.
Animal-welfare statement	<p>RELEVANT IF YOUR APPLICATION INVOLVES ANIMALS</p> <p>If your proposal involves working with animals, you should provide a copy of your <i>Animal Welfare Protection Policies and Procedures</i>.</p>
Participant or Personal Disability Access Costs	<p>RELEVANT IF YOUR APPLICATION REQUESTS PARTICIPANT OR PERSONAL DISABILITY ACCESS COSTS</p> <p>If you are seeking additional participant or personal disability access costs, you should provide a document outlining these costs, and outlining how they have been arrived at. Please also ensure that the total amount of these costs outlined in the supporting document is included in section 5.5 of the application form.</p>

Important note

Format for supporting material

All supporting material for this funding programme must be submitted online. **Hard-copy or emailed supporting material will not be accepted.**

For information on the formats you may use for supporting material you wish to upload as part of your application, see section **2.3 Prepare any supporting material required for the application**.

1.9 Eligibility

Your application will be deemed **ineligible**, and will not go any further in the application process, if any of the following is true:

1. You miss the application deadline.
2. You do not submit a completed application form through Online Services (an application form attached as a supporting document will not be accepted).
3. You fail to complete all of the sections in the application form relevant to your proposal.
4. You cannot apply as set out in sections **1.3** to **1.5** above.
5. You fail to provide all mandatory supporting materials, as set out in section **1.8** above.

Note: In the event that your application is ruled ineligible, it will not be assessed.

2. Making your application

2.1 Register with the Arts Council's Online Services

All applications must be made through the Arts Council's Online Services; applications made in any other way (by post, fax or email) will not be accepted.

You must have an Online Services account to make an application. If you do not already have an Online Services account, sign up by filling out the registration form here:

<https://onlineservices.artscouncil.ie/register.aspx>.

You **must register as an organisation/group** and not as an individual.

Within five working days you will be emailed a unique ARN (Artist Reference Number) and password that you can use to sign in to Online Services.

Requirements for using Online Services

Note: you will need to use a computer or laptop to submit your application. Our Online Services website does not work on phones or tablets.

Your computer and Internet browser will need to meet the following requirements to use Online Services successfully:

PC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Windows 7 operating system or a newer version of Windows• OLS will work with the latest versions of all browsers – e.g. Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome, Safari, Mozilla Firefox
Mac	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mac OS X v10.5 Leopard or a newer version of the Mac operating system• OLS will work with the latest versions of all browsers – e.g. Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome, Safari, Mozilla Firefox

Note: you will also need to have Microsoft Word (Desktop), or OpenOffice Writer installed to complete the application form itself. OpenOffice Writer is free software that can be downloaded here: <https://www.openoffice.org>.

OpenOffice users

Please refer to our video *Using OpenOffice to download, complete and upload the application form* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iT9Xxgmg0Eo>

You **must** use OpenOffice Writer version 4.0.1 or earlier. More recent versions of OpenOffice Writer than 4.0.1 have changed how our application forms appear when they are submitted through Online Services.

Important notes for Apple Mac users

- Note the section in the YouTube video (at 1 min. 20 secs; link provided above) that deals with the issue of downloading version 4.0.1 on Macs with the operating system Mac OS Mojave or an earlier version installed.
- You cannot download OpenOffice 4.0.1 onto a Mac with the operating system Mac OS Catalina. If your Mac has this operating system or a newer version installed, you will have to download and use OpenOffice version 4.1.9 or newer.

If you cannot meet, or do not understand, any of these requirements, please contact us for advice as far as possible in advance of the deadline.

Give yourself enough time to complete the application

You should become familiar with the Online Services website well in advance of the deadline and in advance of preparing an application. It is likely that there will be heavy traffic on the site on the final afternoon of the closing date. You should prepare your application and submit it well in advance of the deadline.

Upload times can be much longer than download times. It may take you longer than you think to upload your supporting materials.

Getting technical support

If you need technical support while making an online application, you can contact the Arts Council by emailing onlineservices@artscouncil.ie or by phoning 01 6180200/01 6180243. We recommend you report any technical issues with us well in advance of the deadline. Please provide a contact phone number and make sure that you are available to receive a return call from us.

We deal with queries on a first-come first-served basis.

Please note that there is often a high volume of calls as the deadline approaches and that technical-support calls received after 2.00pm on the closing date may not be resolved before the deadline.

2.2 Fill in the application form

If you have not already done so, download the application form for the award you wish to apply for. The application form is a Microsoft Word (Desktop)/OpenOffice Writer-compatible document that you fill in offline (on your own computer). The application form includes guidance on how to fill in each of its sections.

Note: the application form is formatted in such a way that the Arts Council can extract information from the form for assessment purposes. It is **very important** that you type inside the grey boxes in the form, and that you do not delete them and/or type outside them. If you do this, the form will not upload properly.

2.3 Prepare any supporting material required for the application

You are required to include supporting material with your application. For example, this might include a letter of support– e.g. text, video, images or sound recordings (see section **1.8 What supporting material must you submit with your application?**).

You must submit all such supporting material online – if necessary, you should scan or save material in electronic format.

Acceptable file formats

The following table lists file formats for supporting material.

File type	File extension
text files	.rtf/.doc/.docx/.txt
image files	.jpg/.gif/.tiff/.png

sound files	.wav/.mp3/.m4a
video files	.avi/.mov/.mp4
spreadsheets	.xls/.xlsx
PDF files	.pdf

For convenience, gather together all the files you need in an accessible location on your computer.

Submitting URL links

Note: links to streaming platforms and websites may be used to provide samples of work. Stand-alone supporting material such as CVs and letters of support etc. **must** be uploaded as separate documents with your application.

Instead of uploading material directly, you may provide links to material hosted on streaming platforms that do not limit access through financial subscription. To do this, copy the URL (the full address of where your material is hosted) into a Microsoft Word (Desktop)/OpenOffice Writer or PDF document and upload it as a weblink-supporting document.

While not an exclusive list, examples of acceptable sharing platforms would be YouTube, Vimeo, SoundCloud, Bandcamp.

Please note that we will not accept links to the following sources:

- File-sharing sites – e.g. Google Drive, OneDrive
- Social-media platforms – e.g. Meta/Facebook, Instagram

Note: assessors will only view materials in the URL links that you provide. It is important that you check that any links in the document work **and** that they bring the viewer to the correct source to be able to access and view your supporting material.

Please do not flag your material as ‘private’ as it will not be accessible for the assessment. Change the settings on your video to ‘unlisted’ if you do not wish the application supporting material on your YouTube channel to be publicly viewable.

Naming files appropriately

Give all files that you intend to upload filenames that make it clear what they contain or represent – i.e. it should be clear from the filename whether the document is a CV, a sample text or a review of previous work.

Please submit supporting documents in separate, appropriately named files.

Good filenames for an applicant called Jack Russell	russelljack Architecture Project application.doc
	russelljack performance clip.mp4
	russelljack Architecture Project budget template round 1.xls
	russelljack youtube link.doc

The total combined limit for all supporting material uploaded with a single application is **40MB**.

Note: characters not allowed in the file names ." * : < > ? / \

2.4 Make your application online

To make your application online, you go through four main stages. Click **Save draft** at the end of each stage. You can come back to your application and revise it at any time before you finally submit it.

2.4.1 Choose a funding programme and download application form

To start a new application, click the **Make an application** button on your home page, and follow the prompts to choose the funding programme you wish to apply for and to give your application a unique reference by which to identify it. At this stage you can also download the application form (if you have not already done so).

2.4.2 Request funding amount

At this stage specify the expenditure and income related to your proposal, and the amount of funding you are requesting. The **amount requested** should equal the **Total expenditure** minus the **Total income**. The final figures you enter here should be the same as those you enter in section **5.4** of the application form.

2.4.3 Upload application form and supporting material

Follow the prompts to upload your completed application form and any other required supporting material (see section **1.8 What supporting material must you submit with your application?**). You do not have to upload everything at the same time. You can save your application as a draft and come back to it later.

Note: if you have completed your application form as a **.docx** file, and you are confident that your application form is filled in correctly (including typing inside the grey fields) but Online Services displays a message saying, 'Cannot upload form', please try saving it as a **.doc** file and uploading it again.

2.4.4 Submit application

When you are satisfied that you have uploaded everything you need to support your application and have ticked the declaration, click **Submit**.

Once submitted, your application cannot be amended. Do not submit your application until you are completely satisfied.

You should receive two emails. The first will be issued immediately your application is received by the Arts Council. The second may arrive a few minutes later and will contain your application number, which will be used in all correspondence relating to this application. **Note:** it is important that you contact onlineservices@artscouncil.ie if you **do not** receive the second confirmation email containing the application number.

3. How we process and assess your application

3.1 Overview

The Arts Council considers all applications, makes decisions and communicates these to applicants in accordance with set procedures. The aim is to ensure that the system for making awards is fair and transparent.

3.2 The assessment process

All applications received are processed by the Arts Council as follows:

-
- 1 After you submit your application, you should receive two emails:
 - The first will be sent immediately and will acknowledge your application.
 - The second should arrive a few minutes later. It will contain your application number, which we will use in all correspondence about your application.

Note: these emails only mean that our online system recognises that you have submitted an application. They do not mean that your application is eligible for funding.

If you do not receive the email with your application number, contact onlineservices@artscouncil.ie
 - 2 Your application is checked for eligibility. Please see section **1.9 Eligibility** above.
 - 3 In some cases, the arts area to which you have applied may not be the best fit for your proposal. In such a case, we will contact you and ask you if you are happy for us to move your application to a more appropriate arts team for assessment. You will then have a choice to have your application moved, or for it to remain under the arts area to which you applied.
 - 4 Adviser(s) and/or staff make a written assessment of the application, which is then scored by the executive.
 - 5 Those applications which score 60% and above are shortlisted and recommended for funding consideration. Funding consideration also includes allowable participant and personal disability access costs, where requested. Those scoring under 60% are not considered.
 - 6 The executive reviews all shortlisted applications and recommendations and makes funding decisions. Funding decisions are made in application score order until the available budget is allocated.
 - 7 Funding decisions are communicated in writing to applicants.
 - 8 Funding decisions are noted by Council
-

Time frame for award decisions

The Arts Council expects to announce decisions for the Festivals Investment Scheme Round 1 2026 in mid-September 2025.

3.3 Criteria for the assessment of applications

Applications are assessed in a competitive context and with consideration of the application form and the supporting materials submitted. All applications are assessed against criteria of **a)** artistic merit and artform priorities, **b)** how they meet the priorities of the award, and **c)** feasibility. Each of these criteria is described in turn.

a) Artistic merit and artform priorities

The assessment of artistic merit focuses on the applicant's previous practice/track record as well as on the nature of the proposed activity, and includes consideration of:

- The quality of the idea and the proposed programme as outlined in the application form
- The artform/arts-practice context in which the activity is proposed
- A demonstration of high artistic quality and vision (artists and programme)
- Support for the development of individual artforms/arts practices and for developing capacity among artists and practitioners
- The ambition and originality demonstrated in the proposal.

Your application will be assessed by the team responsible for the chosen primary artform, and which may, in certain instances, request a secondary assessment from another artform/arts practice team. The primary artform is the one that you select when submitting your application via Online Services.

In addition to artistic merit, we will prioritise applications that align with the following artform priorities. The assessment of artform priorities will depend on the primary artform or arts-practice area relevant to the applicant's proposal. The different priorities are outlined in table 3 (below).

Table 3

Artform/arts-practice area	Priority
Architecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for the public to access high-quality architecture programmes (exhibitions, discussions, events, etc.) with a view to increasing public awareness and understanding of architecture as an artform and its role in society.
Arts Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include the creation and/or presentation of artistically ambitious work that is developed by professional artists in collaboration with non-arts professionals (individuals or groups)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a clear outline of rationale and methodologies for engagement and artistic collaboration with participants • Provide opportunities for artistic collaboration between artists, individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds in alignment with Arts Council Equality Human Rights and Diversity Policy (Cultural Diversity and the Arts; Equality, Human Rights & Diversity policy).
Children and Young People's Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a particular commitment to, or focus on, children or young people's engagement with quality arts experiences • Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the targeted age group(s), and include strategies for developing and improving young people's personal engagement with the arts • Include strategies to ensure children and young people from socially and/or culturally diverse backgrounds can participate in the festival • Provide opportunities for children and young people to participate in and inform the planning and/or evaluation of the artistic programme.
Circus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present artistically ambitious, high-quality proposals that demonstrate excellent skill level in a variety of circus disciplines • Proposals developed in collaboration with local authorities and/or formal organisations with an established track record in the delivery of arts services and/or artistic programmes (e.g. arts centre, resource organisations, production companies, etc.).
Dance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present artistically ambitious dance, across genres, with a focus on high-quality public performances and seek to develop new communities for dance • Support partnerships, co-production and collaboration across the dance and wider arts sector • Demonstrate the capacity to contribute to broader artform and audience development of Irish-based and international dance works.
Film	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide unique opportunities for the public to access programmes of cultural cinema that would not otherwise be available in their locality or region.
Irish Language Arts and Irish Literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festival programmes that prioritise the Irish language-based arts.
Literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme contemporary literature events in ambitious and imaginative ways • Focus on developing readership for contemporary literature • Display excellent treatment and remuneration for participating writers and artists • Work with booksellers and/or libraries.
Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festival programme centred on high-quality professional public performances • Appropriately feature Irish music.

Multidisciplinary Arts (MDA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a platform for more than one artform • Have imaginative approaches to programming across artforms, supporting new combined arts initiatives <p>Band C applicants must also demonstrate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing opportunities for artists from different artforms to collaborate and test new ideas <p>Provide opportunities for interdisciplinary arts practice.</p>
Opera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festival programme centred on high-quality professional public performances • Appropriately feature Irish opera.
Street Performance and Spectacle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate the capacity to deliver ambitious work of high public impact and visibility, providing opportunities for meaningful engagement in the arts by communities • Proposals developed in collaboration with local authorities and/or formal organisations with an established track record in the delivery of arts services and/or artistic programmes (e.g. arts centre, resource organisations, production companies, etc.).
Theatre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to present high-quality theatre work for general audiences by professional theatre artists and organisations that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Push the boundaries of professional theatre in terms of experimentation and innovation, and/or ○ Present theatre events in off-site and non-conventional spaces, and/or ○ Present professional theatre events for communities that do not have regular access to professional theatre.
Traditional Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a strong commitment to presenting and showcasing local and regional artists as part of a wider programme.
Visual Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly show an understanding of how to mediate the visual arts to people with a non-specialist knowledge of the artform • Have a particular commitment to, or focus on, supporting artists' development. <p>For Band C applicants only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support commissions focused on communities of place and interest.

b) Meeting the priorities of the award

Applications are assessed on how well they meet the priorities of the award – see section **1.2 Objectives, purpose and priorities of this award** for details of these.

c) Feasibility

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

- The proposed timetable or schedule and its management

- The financial information provided
- The track record of the organisation (or its management team if a new organisation)
- The availability of other supports/partners identified in the application
- The extent to which the applicant demonstrates the provision of equitable conditions and remuneration for participating artists.

3.4 Scoring process

The Arts Council scoring system for the Festivals Investment Scheme is intended to provide clarity to applicants in terms of how their application has been evaluated against the assessment criteria. The scores offer an indication as to the extent to which applications are deemed to have met each criterion.³

Assessors will consider applications using their professional judgement based on the information provided within the application, their knowledge of the work of your organisation in the public domain, their knowledge of the wider arts landscape, and the competitive context in which all applications are evaluated.

Assessors may award a score to the nearest 0.5.

The scores to be used are as follows:

Scoring matrix

Numeric score	Word value	Explanation
6	Exceptional	The application addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion comprehensively and in an exemplary manner. There are no shortcomings whatsoever. This score is reserved for the very best elements of applications and will be used very sparingly.
5.5		At the top end of 'Excellent'.
5	Excellent	The application addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion convincingly and successfully. It provides all the information and evidence needed, and there are no concerns or areas of weakness.
4.5		At the top end of 'Very good'.

3. An additional 0.5 can be applied to an application score under the 'Priorities of the award' criterion in response to an application proposal where it aligns with the Arts Council's spatial and demographic priorities as outlined in the Arts Council's spatial policy, *Place, Space and People*.

4	Very good	The application addresses the criterion very well. It gives clear information on the evidence needed. Any concerns or areas of weakness are minor.
3.5		At the top end of 'Good'.
3	Good	The application addresses the criterion well, although some improvements could be made. It gives information on nearly all of the evidence needed, although there are some gaps.
2.5		Between 'Sufficient' and 'Good'.
2	Sufficient	The application addresses the criteria at a basic level, but there are areas where detail is missing or the information is unclear.
1.5		At the bottom end of 'Sufficient'.
1	Poor	The information provided in the application is not detailed enough to be able to make an assessment against the criteria. It is not compelling or persuasive in a competitive-funding context.

How are scores weighted?

Each score offered under each criterion will be multiplied by a weighting to get a rating. The ratings are determined by the relative importance the Arts Council places on each criterion. The final score is expressed as a percentage.

The following percentiles and weightings will be used:

	Percentile	Weighting
Artistic merit and artform priorities	35%	(5.83)
Priorities of the award	45%	(7.5)
Feasibility	20%	(3.33)
Total	100%	

Example

Criterion	Score	Weighting	Percentage
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Artistic merit and artform priorities	5.0	(5.83)	29.2%
Priorities of the award	4	(7.5)	30%
Feasibility	4.5	(3.33)	14.9%
Total			74.1%

How do scores relate to funding offers?

Scores will play a significant part in the making of funding offers. Funding amounts will reflect the overall budgetary context in which the Arts Council is operating, along with the competitive nature of the scheme.

As part of our ongoing relationship-management process, scores will also be used to inform discussions with organisations on areas where they are doing well and where there might be scope for improvement. We do not disclose the identities of other applicants or share information with applicants about the scores achieved by other applicants.

Note: Applications that score 60% and above are shortlisted and **considered** for funding. Applicants should **not assume** that this will guarantee a funding offer; this depends on the budgetary and competitive context in each round and in each artform/arts practice area. Funding is distributed in application score order (per artform/arts practice). In some cases, there may not be the available budget to fund all applications that score over the 60% threshold.

Budget priority

In line with the Arts Council's ten-year strategy *[Making Great Art Work 2016–2025](#)* and the [Festivals Policy and Strategy 2020–2025](#), budget priority is given to the areas of Children and Young People's Arts, Street Performance and Spectacle and Arts Participation.

3.5 Outcome of applications

Successful applications

All applicants are informed in writing about the outcome of their application.

If your application is successful, you will be emailed a letter of offer detailing the amount of funding you have been awarded along with the terms and conditions of the award and your application assessment. You will also be told how to go about drawing down your award; your application assessment will be sent to you automatically.

Unsuccessful applications

The Arts Council receives a large volume of applications, and demand for funding always exceeds the available resources. If your application is not successful, you will be notified by email and then sent your application assessment.

Eligibility and compliance with application procedures alone do not guarantee receipt of an award.

Unsuccessful applicants are not eligible to apply for another Arts Council award to undertake the same activity. If the Arts Council feels that the proposed activity would have been more suited to a different award programme, an exception may be made. In such circumstances you will be informed in writing.

Appeals

Applicants may appeal against a funding decision on the basis of an alleged infringement or unfair application of, or deviation from, the Arts Council's published procedures. If you feel that the Arts Council's procedures have not been followed, please see the appeals process at http://www.artscouncil.ie/en/fundInfo/funding_appeals.aspx or contact the Arts Council for a copy of the appeals-process information sheet.