



Scoileanna Ildánacha/Creative Schools 2025

Guidelines for Applicants

Deadline: 5.30pm (Ireland time), Thursday 8 May 2025

Your school/centre must have an [Online Services \(OLS\) account](#) to access the application form and make an application.

You can learn more about using OLS on [this FAQ page](#).

Give yourself plenty of time ahead of the deadline to create an account. It can take up to five working days for us to register your account.

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**.

We recommend that you upload your application **two days** before the deadline. This gives you time to resolve any technical issues you may have.

If you have disability access requirements, we can support you with your application.

Please contact our Disability Access team by emailing - disabilityaccess@artscouncil.ie as early as possible in your application process.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS	2
Getting help with your application	3
1. About Scoileanna Ildánacha/Creative Schools	4
1.1 Objectives and priorities of Creative Schools	4
1.2 Who is eligible to apply to Creative Schools?	4
1.3 Who is not eligible to apply to Creative Schools?	5
1.4 Who is the applicant for Creative Schools?	5
1.5 What is your school/centre applying for?	5
1.6 What commitment do participating schools/centres need to make?	7
2. Making your application	8
2.1 Register with the Arts Council's Online Services system	8
2.2 Fill in the application form	9
2.3 Make your application online	11
3. Appendix: Processing and assessment of applications	13
3.1 Overview	13
3.2 The assessment process	13
3.3 Criteria for the assessment of applications	13
3.4 Scoring process	14
3.5 The decision-making meeting	15
3.6 Outcome of applications	16

Getting help with your application

If you have questions about using the Online Services (OLS) website, you can visit the Frequently Asked Questions (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, you can email onlineservices@artscouncil.ie or call the Arts Council on

- **01 618 0200**
- **01 618 0243**

To watch our video guide on YouTube to making an application, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-a3xeZdZj3oh>

If you have a query about your application that is not a technical question, contact the Creative Schools team in the Arts Council at creativeschools@artscouncil.ie or 01-6180200

[Staff contacts list](#)

[Creative Schools | The Arts Council | An Chomhairle Ealaíon](#)

1. About Scoileanna Ildánacha/Creative Schools

Creative Schools is a flagship initiative of the Creative Ireland Programme to enable the creative potential of every child. The Arts Council leads Creative Schools in partnership with the Department of Education and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

Creative Schools is an important part of the Arts Council's strategy to plan and provide for children and young people (<http://www.artscouncil.ie/arts-council-strategy/>).

1.1 Objectives and priorities of Creative Schools

Creative Schools supports schools and Youthreach centres to put the arts and creativity at the heart of children's and young people's lives.

Its objectives are to support schools and Youthreach centres to:

- Empower children and young people to develop, implement and evaluate arts and creative activity throughout their schools/centres.
- Stimulate additional ways of working that reinforce the impact of creativity on children's and young people's learning, development and well-being.
- Provide opportunities for children and young people to build artistic and creative skills, such as curiosity, imagination, persistence, communication and collaboration.

The Creative Schools method: A guided journey over two years

- Each participating school/centre is assigned a Creative Associate.
- The Creative Associate works with the school/centre to carry out an analysis of their current engagement with the arts and creativity. This is a whole-school conversation.
- The Creative Associate encourages the school community to use creative ways to engage everyone in this process.
- Informed by this analysis and shared understanding, the school community then creates a Creative Schools Plan unique to their school/centre.
- Each school will identify a School Co-ordinator, who will work closely with the Creative Associate to ensure whole school participation and ensure that the school's needs and contribution to the process are also embedded. It is crucial that the School Co-ordinator has management support to enable the programme to develop.

1.2 Who is eligible to apply to Creative Schools?

All Department of Education recognised primary and post-primary schools, Special Schools and Youthreach centres in the Free Education Scheme that have **not** already participated in a previous round of Creative Schools.

Note about the Creative Clusters initiative

Creative Clusters is an initiative of the Department of Education led by and in partnership with the Education Support Centres Ireland (ESCI) and funded through the Schools Excellence Fund.

Although schools/centres cannot participate in both Creative Schools and Creative Clusters at the same time, they can apply in the same year. This means schools/centres that apply successfully to both initiatives must choose to accept an offer from **either** Creative Schools 2025 **or** Creative Clusters 2025.

1.3 Who is not eligible to apply to Creative Schools?

- Schools/centres that have already participated in a previous round of Creative Schools are not eligible to apply.
- Crèches, playgroups, preschools, Early Start Units and *naíonraí* are not eligible to apply to Creative Schools.

1.4 Who is the applicant for Creative Schools?

The applicant is **the school/centre**.

Please use the name of your school/centre used on its bank account and for tax details. We can only pay any grant offered into a bank account held in the name of the school/centre.

1.5 What is your school/centre applying for?

Creative Schools 2025 is a two-year developmental programme.

During the programme, participating schools/centres develop a Creative Schools Plan for their school/centre and begin to implement it.

We provide participating schools/centres with the following package of supports:

- A once-off grant of €4,000 (in total) towards implementation of their plan in the two school years 2025–26 and 2026–27.
- A Creative Associate who advises and supports their assigned school/centre for a maximum of nine days in each of the two school years.
- Training for the teacher nominated by their school/centre as the Creative Schools Coordinator. One-day substitution cover per year per school is paid to facilitate their attendance. This training also provides the opportunity to meet other participating schools/centres and the Creative Schools team.
- Participation in Creative February, a national celebration of the arts and creativity.

What activity can you use the funding for?

The funding is to support schools/centres to implement their Creative Schools Plan. Schools/centres decide how they want to use the funding in consultation with their Creative Associate.

You should aim to achieve the ideas that you generate from discussions and creative engagement with staff, children and young people, families, and the wider community. This may include but is not limited to:

- Creative methods to develop arts and creativity policies and plans
- Working with artists and/or creative practitioners
- Exploring creative ways to teach and learn
- Arts and creative professional development for teachers
- Enhancing creativity in curriculum delivery across diverse subjects
- Connecting arts and creativity to wellbeing indicators
- Engaging with local arts and creative organisations
- Providing workshop, exhibition or performance opportunities for the children/young people
- Visiting galleries, theatres, heritage sites, cinemas, museums, libraries and local arts centres.

When can you begin spending the funding?

Schools/centres wait until their Creative Associate has had the opportunity to work with the school community before they begin spending their funding. The creative consultation and planning process with the Creative Associate enables the inclusion of a wide range of voices. It supports the school community to generate new creative ideas and opportunities. This process influences how schools/centres use their funding.

Note on pay and conditions for artists:

The Arts Council is committed to improving the pay and conditions of artists. The Arts Council has published a policy on the fair and equitable remuneration and contracting of artists called *Paying the Artist*: <https://www.artscouncil.ie/about/artists-pay-policy/>

Disability access costs

Schools/centres that are awarded Creative Schools 2025 funding may be eligible for additional funding to support personal disability access costs.

For example, you may be able to apply for additional funding for costs arising from:

- disability access supports to engage with your Creative Associate if you or they need them
- disability access supports to work with artists with disabilities
- additional costs to consult and engage with children and young people with disabilities or additional needs

These costs might include ISL Interpretation, an access support worker, additional time, etc.

1.6 What commitment do participating schools/centres need to make?

As part of their participation, schools/centres need to:

- Nominate a Creative Schools Coordinator for participation in the initiative. This must be a principal or teacher currently employed in the school/centre.
- Commit that your Creative Schools Coordinator will attend all the required training events and is supported to do so.
Note: one-day substitution cover per year per school/centre will be paid to facilitate Creative Schools Coordinators' attendance at required training courses.
- Ensure that your Creative Schools Coordinator has significant time to work with your assigned Creative Associate throughout the duration of the initiative.
Note: there is no substitution payment available for these ongoing activities.
- Mobilise the school/centre community to engage with the Creative Schools initiative.
- Commit to giving significant time and resources to developing, implementing and evaluating your Creative Schools Plan. This includes drawing on the time of staff, children and young people, families and the board of management, and supporting the School Co-ordinator to progress this.
- Commit to ensuring the voice of children and young people is central to your school's/centre's participation, and to the development, implementation and evaluation of your Creative Schools Plan.
- Evaluate and report to the Arts Council on your experience of the initiative so as to share your lessons learned to help inform our planning and further policy development in this area.
- Cooperate with research and evaluation.

Child Protection and Welfare Quality Assurance

If we award your school/centre funding, you will need to complete the Arts Council's Child Protection and Welfare Quality Assurance self-audit before you can draw down your funding.

Please visit www.tusla.ie for more information about *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*.

2. Making your application

2.1 Register with the Arts Council's Online Services system

Applications for Creative Schools must be made through the Arts Council's [Online Services \(OLS\) application system](#). We cannot accept applications made in any other way – e.g. by post, fax or email.

If your school/centre already has an OLS account, you do not need to register again. You should use your existing Arts Reference Number (ARN) to apply.

If your school/centre does not have an OLS account, please set one up here:

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

Make sure to register your school/centre as an 'organisation/group' rather than as an 'individual'. Please use the name of your school/centre used on its bank account and tax details. We can only pay any grant offered into a bank account held in the name of the school/centre.

Within five working days, we will email you a unique Artist Reference Number (ARN) and password. You can use these to sign in to your school's/centre's account on the Arts Council's Online Services (OLS) system to access the application form.

Technical requirements for using Online Services

Note: you 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 need to meet the following requirements to use Online Services successfully:

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- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 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 |
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|------------|--|
| 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 |
|------------|--|
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Note: you 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

You can learn more about using OpenOffice to complete your application form [in this video](#).

Using OpenOffice to download, complete and upload the application form

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iT9XxgmgoEo>

If you are an OpenOffice user, you **must** use OpenOffice Writer version 4.0.1 or earlier. More recent versions of OpenOffice Writer than 4.0.1 change 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. If you have a Mac with the operating system Mac OS Mojave (10.14) or earlier, the OpenOffice website might tell you that you need to download version 4.1.1 or 4.1.2. Ignore this recommendation and download 4.0.1 instead.
- 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 take time to get familiar with the Online Services website well in advance of the application deadline. Also, give yourself plenty of time to complete the application form.

The Online Services site often has heavy traffic on the 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.

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 that you report any technical issues with us well in advance of the deadline. Make sure that you give us a contact phone number and 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

Download the Creative Schools application form from your Online Services account. 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.

Making your case

To make the best case for why your school/centre should participate in Creative Schools, give careful consideration to what you include in the following sections of the application form.

In each section your answers might include your school's/centre's current strengths, along with areas for potential development.

2.1 Rationale for application

Give a summary in up to three short points of why your school/centre would like to participate in the Creative Schools initiative.

Note: this question is **not** scored.

If your application is successful, we may publish this summary on the Arts Council website, on our partners' websites, and in published material relating to Creative Schools. For this reason, you should keep in mind that what you write here may have a wider audience beyond the assessment team.

2.2 Benefits for learning and development

What you write here should help the Creative Schools assessment team understand how your participation in Creative Schools can support your school's/centre's learning and development in the arts and creativity.

It should include details about how you hope to develop the arts and creativity in your school/centre from your current starting point, how this relates to teaching and learning, and how it relates to your school's/centre's development priorities.

You may like to include information about: challenges and opportunities in your school/centre that you would like to embrace; areas of learning and development in your school/centre that would most benefit from artistic and creative engagement; what outcomes you would hope to see.

Note: please do not include proposals for specific projects or activities. You will develop these as part of your Creative Schools Plan in consultation with your Creative Associate.

2.3 Capacity for participation

What you write in this section should outline how your school/centre will support whole-school engagement throughout your Creative Schools journey.

You should include information about how you will mobilise your school/centre community to engage fully with the initiative. You should also explain how your school/centre management intends to give time and resources to developing, implementing and evaluating your Creative Schools Plan, and how it will support teachers and staff to be involved in particular, how the School Co-ordinator will be supported and facilitated to work with the Creative Associate.

2.4 Voice of children and young people

In this section you should describe how you will ensure that the voice of children and young people will be at the centre of your work as a Creative School. You should describe how this can be achieved in ways that differ from or enhance current

methods/practice in use in your school/centre.

Include details about your commitment to developing processes to involve children and young people in a meaningful way in the development, implementation and evaluation of your Creative Schools Plan.

[3 1. How much are you requesting from the Arts Council?](#)

Creative Schools 2025 offers a flat-rate grant of €4,000, and this section of the application form is pre-populated with this fixed amount.

The assessment criteria is published below in the Appendix **3.3 Criteria for the assessment of applications**.

2.3 Make your application online

There are four main stages when making your application online. Click **Save draft** at the end of each stage. You can come back to your application and revise it at any time before you submit it.

1. Choose funding programme and download application form

Go to [the Online Services website](#) and sign in with your ARN and password.

Click the **Make an application** button on your home page. Follow the prompts to choose the funding programme you want to apply for.

Give your application a unique reference name.

Download the application form to fill in offline.

2. Request funding amount

Specify the amount of funding you are requesting, which should be €4,000.

3. Upload your application form

Follow the prompts to upload your completed application form.

The Online Services system will prompt you to upload supporting materials. You do not need to follow this instruction because there are **no supporting materials for Creative Schools**. You only need to upload your application form.

4. Submit your application

When you are satisfied that you have uploaded your application form, click **Submit**.

After you submit your application, you will not be able to make any changes to it.

You will receive two emails. You will get the first email immediately after we receive your application. The second email will arrive a few minutes later and it will contain your application number, which will be used in all correspondence related 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.

Note: if you have saved 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 you see a

Scoileanna Ildánacha/Creative Schools 2025: Guidelines for Applicants

message saying 'Cannot upload form', please try saving it as a **.doc** file and uploading it again.

3. Appendix: Processing and assessment of applications

3.1 Overview

The Arts Council considers all applications, makes decisions and communicates decisions 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

We process all the applications we receive as follows:

- 1 We acknowledge the application.
- 2 We check if the application is eligible – all eligible applications then progress to the assessment stage.
- 3 The Creative Schools team, Arts Council adviser(s) and/or staff make an assessment and score all eligible applications.
- 4 The Creative Schools team, Arts Council adviser(s) and/or staff review all applications to ensure, in so far as is possible, that a broad range of schools/centres and regions are represented, and make a recommendation on which schools/centres are successful or unsuccessful.
- 5 The executive reviews all applications and recommendations, and makes decisions.
- 6 We communicate the decisions in writing to applicants.
- 7 Decisions are noted by Council.

3.3 Criteria for the assessment of applications

We acknowledge that all schools/centres begin this creative journey from different starting points. We assess applications according to the criteria below.

1. Benefits for learning and development (section 2.2 of your application)

- How the school/centre hopes to develop its engagement with the arts and creativity from its current starting point.
- How participation will support teaching and learning in the school/centre.
- How the school's/centre's development priorities can be addressed through their participation in the initiative.

2. Capacity for participation (section 2.3 of your application)

- The commitment of the school/centre to supporting whole-school engagement with Creative Schools.
- How the school/centre community will be mobilised to engage fully with the initiative.
- The willingness of the school/centre management to identify and allocate suitable time and resources to the initiative.
- How relevant staff will be supported to participate in the initiative as part of their existing roles.

3. Voice of children and young people (section 2.4 of your application)

- How the school/centre will ensure that the voice of children and young people will be at the centre of its work as a Creative School.
- How this can be achieved in ways that differ from or enhance the current methods/practice of decision-making in use in the school/centre.
- The commitment of the school/centre to developing processes to involve children and young people in the development, implementation and evaluation of the Creative Schools Plan.

4. Range of schools/centres

- How Creative Schools 2025 represents the various types of Department of Education recognised schools/centres.
- How Creative Schools 2025 represents Department of Education-recognised schools/centres on a regional basis.

3.4 Scoring process

The Arts Council has a scoring system for Creative School applications. This system is intended to provide clarity to applicants as to how we evaluate their application against the assessment criteria. The scores offer an indication of the extent to which an application meets each criterion.

Assessors consider applications using their professional judgement based on:

- The information provided within the application
- Their knowledge of the Irish education system and the wider arts and creative-learning landscape
- The competitive context in which all applications are evaluated.

We score each eligible application against the first three assessment criteria using the following scores:

Numeric score	Word value	Explanation
0	Not met	In the view of the assessor, the application provided no evidence and does not meet the criteria.
1	Potential to meet	In the view of the assessor, the application has potential but does not meet the criteria.
2	Met adequate	In the view of the assessor, the application meets some elements of the criteria and is viewed as adequate.

3	Met good	In the view of the assessor, the application meets the criteria and is viewed as good.
4	Met very good	In the view of the assessor, the application meets the criteria and is viewed as very good.
5	Met excellent	In the view of the assessor, the application meets the criteria and is viewed as excellent.

Following the assessment and scoring of all eligible applications against criteria 1, 2 and 3, applications are ranked by score nationally.

Criterion 4: range of schools/centres

In line with the objectives and priorities of the Creative Schools initiative, we review the applications nationally to ensure that as a broad range of schools/centres and regions as possible are represented.

To ensure this, some applications may achieve an additional score of 5 for criterion 4. An application can only achieve this additional score once.

0	Balance in the range of schools/centres met
5	Application supported balance in the range of schools/centres

Applications are then ranked by their scores.

Taking all four criteria into account, the maximum score a school/centre can receive is 20 out of 20.

All applications are then recommended as successful or unsuccessful based on their final score.

3.5 The decision-making meeting

The Arts Council executive reviews all applications and recommendations and makes decisions.

Declaration of interest

In order to ensure fairness and equity in decision-making, the Creative Schools team, Arts Council adviser(s) and/or staff reviewing/assessing applications and making decisions must declare a conflict of interest where they have a close personal or professional link with an applicant or are linked in any way with an application.

A 'conflict of interest' is either 'pecuniary' or 'non-pecuniary' (e.g. familial relationships, personal partnerships, or formal or informal business partnerships, etc.).

The person must declare the interest as soon as they become aware of it. Where an interest is declared, the individual concerned does not receive the application relating to that applicant and is required to leave the meeting when the specified application is being reviewed.

3.6 Outcome of applications

We will inform all applicants about the outcome of their application in writing before the end of June 2025.

If your application is successful, we will send you a letter of offer detailing the supports awarded, including funding, as well as the terms and conditions of the award. You will also receive information about drawing down your payments. Following acceptance of the offer, schools/centres will be matched with a Creative Associate. Creative Associates will begin to work with schools/centres in October/November 2025.

The Arts Council receives a large volume of applications, and demand for funding always exceeds the available resources. Eligibility and compliance with application procedures alone do not guarantee that your application will be successful. If your application is not successful, you can request feedback from the Creative Schools team.

The Arts Council reserves the right to offer the award to unsuccessful applicants at a future date.

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.