



Arts Council Strategic Funding 2026

Guidelines for Applicants January–December 2026

Deadline for submitting applications:

5.30pm (Ireland time)

Thursday, 4 September 2025

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Important notes

Applicants with disabilities

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

If you have a disability and need help with submitting your application, 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

Learn more about [access costs for artists or participants with disabilities](#).

Data protection

The Arts Council collects data as part of your application. We use the information you provide to assess your application, to communicate and engage with you, and to understand your organisation and the activities for which you are seeking funding.

We recommend that you read [our privacy notice](#) for information on how we process and protect your personal data.

If you have any queries in relation to our processing of personal data, please email dataprotection@artscouncil.ie.

Freedom of Information

Information provided to the Arts Council may be disclosed in response to a request made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

If recipients consider that certain information should **not** be disclosed because of its confidentiality or commercial sensitivity, recipients must, when providing such information, clearly identify such information and specify the reasons for its confidentiality or commercial sensitivity.

If recipients do not identify such information as confidential or commercially sensitive, it is liable to be released in response to a Freedom of Information request without further notice to, or in consultation with, the recipient.

The Arts Council will, where possible, consult with the recipient about confidential or commercially sensitive information so identified before making a decision on a request received under the Freedom of Information Act.

- To familiarise yourself with the provisions of the Act, see www.foi.gov.ie
- Our Freedom of Information policies can be viewed here: www.artscouncil.ie/Contact-us/Freedom-of-information

1. About Strategic Funding 2026

1.1 Purpose of Strategic Funding

The purpose of Strategic Funding is to invest in and support the organisations that are needed to lead, sustain and develop the arts in Ireland.

Organisations that receive Strategic Funding must play a critical part in delivering the policy priorities of [Making Great Art Work](#), the Arts Council's ten-year strategy.

1.2 Changes to Strategic Funding 2026

We have reduced the need for repetition throughout the 2026 application form.

Some questions now have a 'No change' option.

If there has been no change to your approach since your 2025 application, you can enter 'No change' for those questions.

1.3 Aims and objectives of Strategic Funding

The Arts Council provides Strategic Funding to organisations to ensure that they can:

- Deliver excellent artwork and/or events, activities and services
- Create excellent opportunities for artists and/or arts professionals to develop their practice and/or to create or to be engaged in high-quality work
- Ensure that the diversity of contemporary Ireland is reflected in the work we support
- Enable more people to enjoy high-quality arts experiences
- Increase depth of engagement by and with the public

- Ensure excellent standards in governance and management in the arts.

1.4 Eligibility for Strategic Funding

Strategic Funding is open to **organisations only**.

You can make only one application each year for Strategic Funding.

To be eligible for Strategic Funding, your organisation must:

- Be formally constituted as either a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) or a Designated Activity Company (DAC) or a statutory body.
- Apply in its own name and not in the name of another company or individual
- Have previously successfully applied for Arts Council funding either in the name of your organisation or in the name of a key person involved in the organisation.

Note: Organisations that are not formally constituted as either a CLG or DAC may apply on the understanding that they will commit to formally incorporating as a CLG or DAC if their application is successful.

1.5 Who is not eligible for the Strategic Funding programme?

- Organisations that have already applied for funding through Arts Grant Funding 2026 or the Festival Investment Scheme 2026
- The exception is if the Arts Council has permitted you to apply
- Organisations that already receive this funding must discuss their Strategic Funding application in advance with the relevant arts team

- Members of the Council of National Cultural Institutions (CNCI) directly funded by the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport
- First-time applicants who have not discussed their application in advance with the relevant arts team.

1.6 Costs and activities that you can apply for

Strategic Funding is intended to support:

- The operating costs (core costs) of your organisation
- The activities that your organisation undertakes.

All activities

All activities must be included in this application, including touring activities in 2026.

Work in an international context

We do not support costs that are directly related to the touring and dissemination of work abroad.

You can apply for activities involving international exchange, collaboration or co-production if you can clearly show that:

- The activities benefit people, artists or the arts in the Republic of Ireland
- Your overseas partners will contribute to the relevant activity costs.

1.7 Supporting material that you need to submit

You must include mandatory supporting materials with your application in addition to your application form. These documents help the person assessing your application to get a clearer understanding of your proposal.

If you do not provide all the required supporting material, your application may not be assessed.

It's important that you read the information below carefully and that you include the supporting material that we ask for in your application.

Mandatory supporting materials

Currently funded organisation

If your organisation currently receives Strategic Funding, you must submit:

- A completed Actual Arts Activity Report (A-AAR) for 2024
- Your audited accounts for your most recent financial year.

If you have already supplied the above information to the Arts Council, you do not need to supply it again.

All applicants

- A completed [Arts Activity Report \(AAR\) template](#) that includes:
- Activities for 2025 (year to date and projected to year-end)
- Planned activities for 2026.

See [3.6 Downloading the application form and the AAR template](#) and [3.8 Complete your Arts Activity Report \(AAR\) template](#) in these guidelines for more information.

The AAR template can be downloaded from the funding page on OLS.

- Your management accounts, both in the same format:
- 2025 projected to year end
- Projected accounts for 2026.
- Your planned activities — additional to the information in the AAR template:
- Detailed budgets
- You can use our Individual Activity Budget (IAB) template for this purpose
- The template is available on the [Strategic Funding page](#) on our website.

Additional supporting material required in certain cases

In the following cases, you may need to submit some additional supporting material with your application.

Disability access costs

If your application includes disability access costs, you must upload a document listing these costs.

Include your total disability access costs in a separate budget document. This can be your own document or the [disability access costs template](#) that you can download on the [Strategic Funding](#) webpage.

Note: Make sure that you have read [our privacy notice](#) and that you provide us with your consent in your application form. We cannot process your application for disability access costs without your consent.

Learn more about [disability access costs for artists or participants with disabilities](#).

Working with other organisations

You must upload the following supporting material if you work with certain groups or have referred to them in your application.

- Evidence from other organisations or entities of:
- Any confirmed financial support
- Sponsorship
- Partnership.
- Evidence in relation to touring, co-productions or other activities involving third parties:
- Any confirmed memorandums of understanding (MOUs)
- Financial agreements
- Partnership agreements.

Working with vulnerable people

You must provide an acknowledgement that you adhere to the [National Policy and Procedures on Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse](#).

Note: We may ask you to provide more evidence of adherence to these policies and procedures if your application is successful.

Working with animals

If your proposal involves working with animals, you must provide a copy of your *Animal Welfare Protection Policies and Procedure*.

Working with or providing services to children and young people

If your proposal provides cultural, recreational, educational or other services to children or young people under the age of 18, you must have

suitable child-protection policies and procedures in place (section 4 of the application form).

If you receive an offer of funding from the Arts Council, the drawdown of the funding will depend on the satisfactory completion of the Arts Council's Self-Audit of Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures.

We review each Self-Audit that we receive. We check them to make sure that they meet the standards of our Quality Assurance Framework. If an audit does not meet the standards, the applicant may not be able to draw down their funding.

The Arts Council reserves the right to request copies of any documents, records or other information referred to in the Self-Audit. Failure to comply with this request may affect future funding opportunities.

You do not need to upload an additional document. [Note about climate policy and action plans](#)

You are not required at this time to submit a climate policy and action plan with your application.

However, if you are awarded Strategic Funding for 2026, you will be required to submit an organisational climate action policy and action plan (or other equivalent evidence of environmental commitment).

This will be a condition of funding when you sign your 2026 funding agreement.

Note: This is not a criterion for assessment.

2. How we assess and score your application

We will base our assessment of your application on the following criteria:

- Artistic quality and development of the arts
- Engagement
- Organisational capacity
- The extent to which the organisation is critical to the arts infrastructure
- Equality, diversity and inclusion.

Assessors will consider applications using:

- Their professional judgement, based on the information you provide within the application
- Their knowledge of the previous work of your organisation and of the wider arts landscape
- The competitive context in which all applications are evaluated.

Your application will be assessed and scored against the criteria below.

2.1 Criterion 1: Artistic quality and development of the arts

We take account of the artform or arts practice context for your proposal.

We assess the track record of your organisation and the potential for the outcomes of your proposal to achieve:

- Excellent artwork and/or events
- Excellent activities or services
- Excellent opportunities for artists or arts professionals to develop their practice

- Excellent opportunities for artists and arts practitioners to create or be engaged in high-quality work.

2.2 Criterion 2: Engagement

In the context of assessing applications for funding, the Arts Council defines ‘Engagement’ as:

“The quality of interaction that your organisation has with the individuals it works with and/or the people it serves.”

We recognise that arts organisations work in different ways and attend to the needs of different groups of people:

- Participants
- Collaborators
- Audiences
- Volunteers
- Artists or other arts practitioners.

Taking this and your organisation type into account, we evaluate your application based on:

- Your track record in engagement
- Your planned actions and measurable outcomes to deliver engagement
- How you plan to evaluate your activities and outcomes.

If children and young people are your primary target group or among the main groups that you serve, we assess:

- The opportunities you provide for children and young people to participate in the arts
- How you involve them in your decision-making.

You can find additional guidance on completing the engagement section of the application form on [the Resources and Toolkits](#) section on our website.

Organisations looking for guidance about how they can include young people in decision-making may find [the Hub na Óg participation framework](#) helpful.

2.3 Criterion 3: Organisational capacity

We consider the track record of your organisation and its potential to achieve excellent standards of governance and management.

We assess:

- The suitability and the skill set of your board and management
- The financial resilience of your organisation, including financial controls, planning and planned developments for 2026
- Your approach to fundraising and generating income from other sources
- The financial information that you provide
- The quality and benefits of any partnerships that support the delivery of your activities
- Your approach to ensuring fair pay and conditions for artists.

2.4 Criterion 4: The extent to which the organisation is critical to the arts infrastructure

We assess applicants based on how essential we consider them to the strategic development of the arts within their particular artform or arts practice area.

The following considerations inform this assessment:

- The artform or arts practice context in which your organisation operates

- Your organisation type
- The kind of work your organisation does
- The community or people your organisation serves
- The local and/or national context in which your organisation operates
- The need to ensure that an appropriate range and balance of work is supported by the Arts Council's Strategic Funding programme.

This assessment is also informed by [Making Great Art Work](#) and by artform, arts practice and corporate policies.

2.5 Criterion 5: Equality, diversity and inclusion

We assess how much your application demonstrates that you are taking positive steps in the areas of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

We will consider:

- How much your application demonstrates an awareness and understanding of EDI issues (such as identified inequalities, under-representation, lack of accessibility) as they relate to your organisation and its work
- The quality and appropriateness of any planned activities and commitments to support your organisation to become more inclusive
- The appropriateness of the resources that you have allocated to any relevant planned activities
- The specific provision identified for ensuring accessibility to services. For example, this could include considerations or specific measures in relation to:
 - Physical accessibility for artists in venues
 - Physical accessibility for artists at events
 - Accessible websites

- Accessible programmes
- Captioning or ISL for audiences.
- The evidence of board (or equivalent) ownership of your EDI plans and their commitment to them
- How much the application demonstrates access to relevant expertise, insight or peer support to develop any planned policies or deliver planned activities
- Any particular contribution that the organisation makes to the wider ecology with respect to the Arts Council's ambitions for diversity, equality and inclusion.

We expect to see evidence of your commitment to at least two EDI goals in your application. These should relate to priorities for your organisation.

We suggest at least one internally focused (e.g. staff, board or volunteer development) and one externally focused (e.g. audiences or partnership development).

Make sure that you provide this evidence, as your score will be determined by what is included in your application.

EDI action plan

By 2026, all Strategically Funded organisations should have a published, publicly available EDI action plan to support their published EDI policies.

If you do not have a published, publicly available EDI action plan in place, please be aware that:

- It will be a condition of your funding to have this in place no later than 30 June 2026
- If you are offered Strategic Funding for the first time in 2026, you will be required to have a policy and action plan in place by 30 June 2026.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit | The Arts Council | An Chomhairle Ealaíon

Access costs for artists or participants with disabilities

We are committed to making our funding schemes and the work we fund accessible to everyone. To meet this goal, we offer financial supports to remove barriers for artists and participants with disabilities. These are known as disability access costs.

We take the description of disability from the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, together with Irish legislation and case law. We broadly include all people with disabilities. For example, people with physical, medical, cognitive, intellectual, learning, emotional or sensory impairments.

There are two types of disability access costs that you may need to consider for your application: personal disability access costs and audience disability access costs.

The Arts Council provides separate funding for personal disability access costs in addition to your core budget. You must fund audience disability access costs from within your core budget.

Personal disability access costs

These supports should help you to 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, mentors or collaborators
- Production staff
- Core staff or key administrative personnel.

Examples of supports are, but not limited to, the following:

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

Note: You can apply for these costs in addition to the maximum amount available for the award.

Audience disability access costs

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

Examples of supports 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 Braille or audio.

Note: The Arts Council does not currently provide additional funding for these costs. You must include these costs in your core application budget.

How to apply for disability access costs

If you include disability access costs in your proposal, you must upload a document listing these costs with your supporting material. An optional template is available on the [Strategic Funding page](#) on the Arts Council website. You must also show the costs in two separate lines in your application form:

- A line for personal disability access costs

- A line for audience disability access costs.

Note: Whether you use your own document or the Arts Council template, the two types of disability access costs must be shown separately.

Will the disability access costs be affected if the funding I am offered is less than I requested?

If you are offered funding that is less than you requested, we will discuss any appropriate adjustment to your disability access costs with you when reviewing the revised budget.

How do I draw down my personal disability access costs?

If your application is successful, we will give you information on how to draw down your funding. Personal disability access costs are drawn down separately from your core funding. You may be asked to complete a short report on how you used these funds.

2.6 Including touring activity in your application

Any touring activities that you are planning for 2026 must be included within this application.

- You **cannot** apply separately to the Touring of Work Scheme for 2026
- You **can** apply to the Touring of Work Scheme – Advance Planning for tours taking place in 2027.

If your application for touring activity is successful, you will also be asked to provide signed memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and detailed budgets to verify that the tour is taking place before that portion of the funding is released.

To include touring activities in your application, you must:

- Provide a written overview of your touring plans in the application form
- List these activities, including costs, separately within the AAR template
- Include any written evidence that you have to support your touring plans as part of your supporting materials.

2.7 Scoring process

The Arts Council will use a scoring system for Strategic Funding applications for 2026.

This system shows how we evaluate and score your application against each of the assessment criteria.

The scores indicate how well your application has met each criterion. Assessors may award a score to the nearest 0.5.

Eleven possible scores may be used, as follows:

Numeric score	Description	Explanation
6.0	Exceptional	The application addresses all relevant aspects of the criteria comprehensively and in an exemplary manner.
5.5		At the top end of 'Excellent'.
5.0	Excellent	The application addresses all relevant aspects of the criteria convincingly and successfully. There are no concerns or areas of weakness.
4.5		At the top end of 'Very good'.
4.0	Very good	The application addresses the criteria very well. Any concerns or areas of weakness are minor.
3.5		At the top end of 'Good'.

3.0	Good	The application addresses most of the criteria well, although there are some gaps.
2.5		Between 'Sufficient' and 'Good'.
2.0	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	Not sufficient	The information provided in the application is not detailed enough to be able to make an assessment against the criteria.
1.0	Poor	The information provided is not enough to be able to make an assessment against the criteria.

Note: If your application scores 1.5 or lower against **any** assessment criterion, it won't be considered for funding. The score given for each criterion is multiplied by a weighting to get a percentage rating, as follows:

	Weighting	Percentage
Artistic quality and development	(4.167)	25.0%
Engagement	(4.167)	25.0%
Organisational capacity	(3.333)	20.0%
Critical to the infrastructure	(3.333)	20.0%
Equality, diversity and inclusion	(1.667)	10.0%
Total		100.0%

Here is an example of what a complete set of scores might look like in percentage terms:

	Score	Weighting	Percentage %
Artistic quality and development	5.5	(4.167)	22.9%
Engagement	4.5	(4.167)	18.8%

Organisational capacity	5.0	(3.333)	16.7%
Critical to the infrastructure	4.0	(3.333)	13.3%
Equality, diversity and inclusion	4.5	(1.667)	7.5%
Total	23.5		79.2%

2.8 How scores relate to funding offers

While scores will play a significant part in the making of funding offers, they are not the only factors.

The amount of funding that you are offered will reflect the overall available budget in conjunction with the assessment criteria.

As part of our ongoing relationship management process, we will also use scores to inform discussions with organisations on areas where they are doing well and where there might be scope for improvement.

2.9 What happens after you receive funding

There are different levels of reporting requirements set out in our Conditions of Financial Assistance. These are based on the amount of funding offered and the turnover of your organisation.

If your organisation is awarded Strategic Funding, you will also have to meet monitoring requirements according to Arts Council strategic priorities on:

- Artist and artform development
- Audiences
- Public engagement
- Operating model.

These reporting requirements will be included as part of your funding agreement sent to you. You will have to agree to these before you can receive your funding.

3. Before you apply – preparing your application

The deadline for submitting your application is 5.30pm (Ireland time) on Thursday, 4 September 2025.

There are **four parts** to your application for Strategic Funding:

- A **summary** of your organisation and finances, which you fill out online using our Online Services website
- Your **application form**, which you fill out offline (on your own computer) and upload using Online Services
- Your **AAR template**, which you fill out offline and upload using Online Services
- **Supporting material**, which you gather in electronic format offline and upload using Online Services. See [1.7 Supporting material that you need to submit](#).

3.1 Register for an Online Services account

We can only accept online applications for Strategic Funding.

We do not accept application forms or supporting material in any other way (for example, by post, fax or email).

You need an [Arts Council Online Services account](#) to submit your application. You must have a PPS number to create an Online Services account. If you do not have a PPS number, contact onlineservices@artscouncil.ie.

New applicants

If you're a new applicant, you should register for your Online Services account **as soon as possible**.

It can take up to five days for us to complete the registration process for you.

Online Services will email you a unique Artist Registration Number (ARN) and a password for your account within five working days.

How to register

1. Go to [the Online Services funding portal](#).
2. Click **Sign up**.
3. Select to register as an organisation/group.
4. Click **Next**.
5. Enter the name of your organisation and your main contact's first name and surname.
6. Enter your organisation's address.
7. Enter your organisation's email address and contact number.
8. If you have one, enter your organisation's tax number.
9. Enter the code for the spam filter.
10. Click Register.

Previous applicants

If you've previously registered for an account, you do not need to make a new account for this application.

You should use your existing account and ARN to apply. If you've forgotten your password, you can [request a new one](#).

Technical requirements for using Online Services

To use Online Services, your computer and web browser need to meet the following requirements.

PC

- Windows 7 operating system or a newer version of Windows
- The latest version of one of these browsers:
- Google Chrome
- Mozilla Firefox
- Microsoft Edge
- Safari

Apple Mac

- Mac OS X v10.5 Leopard (or a newer version of Mac OS)
- The latest version of one of these browsers:
- Google Chrome
- Mozilla Firefox
- Microsoft Edge
- Safari

3.2 Apply under your organisation's name

We can only pay any funding that we offer into a bank account that is held in the name of the organisation that you registered with and enter in section 1.1 of the application form.

This means that any documentation that you submit as part of your application must be in the name of your organisation.

Example

You apply to the Arts Council for funding under the name 'Ballyfermot Arts Centre'. Any documentation that you submit must be in this name. This includes bank details and tax details.

3.3 Check the software on your computer before applying

You must use a desktop or laptop computer to submit your application. You cannot apply using a mobile phone, tablet or other device.

You need to use Microsoft Word (Desktop) or OpenOffice Writer to complete your application form. Make sure that you have one of these programs installed on your computer.

Using OpenOffice

OpenOffice Writer is free software that you can download from [OpenOffice's official download page](#). You can learn more about using OpenOffice to complete your application form in [this Arts Council video](#).

You must use OpenOffice Writer version 4.0.1 or earlier. More recent versions of OpenOffice Writer can alter how our application forms appear when they're submitted through Online Services.

If you have any issues installing or using OpenOffice, contact onlineservices@artscouncil.ie as soon as possible. This is to make sure that we have enough time to help you resolve the issue.

Important notes for Apple Mac users

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.

If you have a Mac with the operating system Mac OS Catalina (10.15) or newer, you won't be able to install OpenOffice 4.0.1. You need to install OpenOffice version 4.1.11 or newer instead.

3.4 Take time to prepare your application

You should give yourself plenty of time to prepare for submitting your application. This is so you have enough time to make the best possible application that you can.

Download the application form from your Online Services account as early as possible so that you can get familiar with it.

Make sure to check that:

- You are applying for the right award
- You have downloaded the correct application form
- Your application meets the guidelines in this document
- You have enough time to complete all the application tasks before the deadline.

You should upload your application to the Online Services funding portal at least 48 hours before the deadline. That way, if you have any technical difficulties, you will have time to contact us to help you.

3.5 **Note:** Online Services often has heavy traffic on the final afternoon of the closing date and your documents may take much longer than usual to upload. Prepare your supporting documents

You must include supporting documents with your application in addition to your application form. This helps the person assessing your application to get a clear understanding of your proposal.

To see exactly what you need to submit, go to [1.7 Supporting material that you need to submit](#).

We will only accept supporting documents that you upload in electronic format to the Online Services funding portal. If you have documents that are not in electronic format, you should scan them and save them so that you can upload them.

You must also submit all your supporting documents in separate files.

Acceptable file formats

Check the table below to see the file formats that you can use as part of an application. You can only submit these file types.

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

Naming your files

It's a good idea to collect all your files in one folder on your computer so that they are easier to upload all together.

Use filenames that make it clear what your files contain or represent.

It should be clear from the filename whether the document is a CV, a budget sheet or another type of supporting material.

Here are some examples of files with clear filenames for an applicant called Ballyfermot Arts Centre:

- BallyfermotArtsCentre - Budget.xls
- BallyfermotArtsCentre - Personal Disability Access Costs.doc

File size limits

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

3.6 Download the application form and the AAR template

You can download the Strategic Funding application form and the AAR template on the Online Services funding portal.

1. Go to the [Online Services login page](#).
2. Log in to your account.
3. Click **Make an application** at the bottom of the page.
4. Select your organisation's primary contact for this application.
5. Click **Next**.
6. Under **Choose funding programme**, select your funding programme.

Use the buttons at the bottom of the page to download the application form and AAR template.

3.7 Complete the application form

Follow the instructions in each section of the application form. The information below will give you a summary of what you need to include in the form.

1. Your organisation

In this section, provide details of your:

- Organisation name and ARN
- Organisation type
- Legal status
- The main artform or arts-practice area of your work
- The primary target for your organisation's work
- A summary of your organisation's mission and artistic policy.

2. Your application and the assessment criteria

In this section, you respond to the assessment criteria by answering a series of questions. It is **essential** that you read each question carefully.

This section has been set out in the same order that we apply the assessment criteria.

Note: You give the details of your proposed programme within the Arts Activity Report template. Do not add those details in this section.

3. Financial and other information

Provide detailed financial information in the AAR template and your supporting materials, not in the application form.

See also the section on 'Mandatory Supporting Material'.

You must fill in section 3 of the application form if you are expecting your organisation to have any of the following four situations.

Surplus or deficit

You are expecting a surplus or deficit at the end of the current year.

You must explain how you plan to deal with it.

Exceptional costs

You expect to have exceptional costs in the twelve months from 1 January–31 December 2025.

You will need to detail these exceptional costs.

Exceptional sources of funding

You expect to have exceptional sources of funding in the twelve months from 1 January–31 December 2025.

You will need to detail these exceptional sources.

Requesting an increase in funding

You are requesting an increase in funding for 2026.

You must provide a rationale for the increase and a summary of the activity and any related outcomes.

If the request is linked to a one-off cost, make this clear as part of your statement. Make sure that you describe the activity as a distinct activity in the AAR.

We will consider your request in the context of the five assessment criteria, along with the other information you provided as part of your application.

Declaration

Use this section to formally declare your application for funding to the Arts Council.

The declaration must be signed by:

- The chairperson of the organisation's board of directors or governing body
- The most senior executive officer or a second board or committee member.

Supporting documents

This section has a checklist of the supporting documents that your application requires.

Use it to make sure that you have uploaded everything that you need to include.

Note on maximum characters count for answers

Each section of the application form has a maximum character count (including spaces) with an approximate number of words given as a guide.

Your answers must stay below the specified maximum count for each question.

It is acceptable to write shorter answers if you have covered the points you need to make.

3.8 Complete your Arts Activity Report (AAR) template

The Arts Activity Report (AAR) template is a spreadsheet that captures your detailed financial, audience and staff figures, as well as summary information about the work that you undertook in 2025 and the work you plan to undertake in 2026.

The AAR process was introduced for three reasons:

1. As part of our commitment to become better at monitoring the outcomes and impacts of our investments as a tool for advocacy, advice, policy development and case-making.
2. As a means of assessing and tracking applicants' work in a consistent and systematic manner.
3. To act as the basis for funding agreements with arts organisations.

There are two worksheets within the AAR template, one for 2025 and one for 2026.

- **Currently receiving Strategic Funding:** You must complete both the 2025 and the 2026 worksheets.
- **New applicants:** You only need to complete the 2026 worksheet.

If you do not complete all of the relevant worksheets, your AAR may not be valid and we may not be able to assess your application.

Important: You must upload your AAR template as a Microsoft Excel or OpenOffice Calc file. DO NOT convert it to a pdf file.

There are helpful pop-outs with instructions within the AAR template that show you to how to complete it.

Parts of the AAR template

The AAR template has four parts. You must complete all parts.

- Part 1: Core expenditure and income
- Part 2.1: Activity detail
- Part 2.2: Financial detail
- Part 2.3: Audience/engagement/employment/event numbers

The sections below will give you more information about what you need to include in each part.

Part 1: Core expenditure and income

Core expenditure

Core expenditure is any day-to-day costs associated with running your core business. These may also be known as overheads, operating costs or fixed costs.

Some examples of this kind of costs are:

- Staff costs
- Rent
- Mortgage
- Utility bills
- Day-to-day administration costs that you must meet regardless of any specific arts activities that are happening at any given time.

Income not directly related to activity

This is any income that comes into your organisation that is not directly attributable to specific artistic activities.

This may be local authority grant funding, sponsorship or fundraising that you are not attributing to a particular activity but which you are setting against your overall costs.

Any income that is not directly attributable to specific artistic activities should go here.

Whole-time equivalent (WTE) – artists

You must include the whole-time equivalent hours per week that artistic staff work for your organisation.

The whole-time equivalent formula is:

$$(\text{The number of days in a week a person works}) \div 5$$

For example, you may have an artistic director who works 2.5 days per week. This would give a WTE of 0.5.

Using the formula:

$$2.5 \div 5 = 0.5$$

For the purpose of data collection, the term ‘artistic’ means anyone whose main role is the creation, delivery or facilitation of art. Some examples include:

- Artistic director
- Producer
- Production manager
- Visual arts technician
- Curator editor.

Whole-time equivalent (WTE) – non-artists

You must include the combined whole-time-equivalent hours per week that non-artistic staff work for your organisation. Some examples are administration, finance and marketing staff.

For example, you may have:

- A full-time administrator
- A full-time accounts person
- A half-time marketing person.

This would give a combined WTE number of 2.5.

Community Employment Scheme numbers

This is the number of individuals that you employ through the [Community Employment Scheme](#) or other scheme.

Part 2.1: Activity data

In this section, you must include activities that you completed in 2025 and have planned for 2026.

- The maximum number of activities allowed in the AAR template is 20.
- If you are planning more than 20, group your proposed activities by artform or by area of work.

- Include any commercial or other activities that will not be supported by Arts Council Strategic Funding as a single activity.
- List as **separate activities** any that will be presented or disseminated **outside the Republic of Ireland**. Include any associated engagement.

Note: If an activity has both a live audience and a separate broadcast/digital audience, list the activity twice and provide these figures **separately**.

A. Activity name

This is name that you give to an individual activity.

This might be the name of a specific artwork or, in certain cases, a generic name, such as ‘Music programme’ or ‘Work for children’.

B. Brief description of the activity

Include a brief description of the named activity.

This is to help assessors understand the context for the activity and how it sits within your overall mission as an organisation.

C. Artform

Select the **primary** or main artform for the activity from the drop-down menu.

If more than one artform involved in the activity, select ‘more than one artform’.

D. Activity type

Choose the activity type from the dropdown menu that most closely represents the activity that you are undertaking.

The options in the dropdown menu are:

- **Ticketed performance or event:** A performance that tickets are sold or distributed for. This includes a free event if there is a booking process.
- **Non-ticketed performance or event:** Any event where people do not need to purchase a ticket to attend. Some examples include a street performance, a parade and an outdoor show.
- **Book/publication:** A book, such as a novel or poetry collection, or a publication, such as a periodical or journal, whether physical or online.
- **Production and/or distribution of artefact:** An example is the creation of a series of prints or other art objects that might be sold or distributed in other ways.
- **Broadcast/online/digital distribution of work:** The broadcast or distribution of a work online or digitally. Some examples include a televised musical performance, an online artwork and the online publication of a magazine or journal.
- **Exhibition:** A visual art exhibition, including elements such as the gallery installations of sculpture, and art film and sound installations.
- **Participatory, education or outreach activity:** Any activity where people are involved in artistic production by:
 - Making, doing or creating something
 - Contributing ideas to a work of art, regardless of their skill level
 - Taking part in workshops or other similar activities.
- **New work development activity:** Any activity where the purpose is the development of a new piece of work. Some examples include the dramaturgical process for a new play and the editing process for a new book.

- **Research/archiving/digitisation:** Any activity where the main purpose is research or the archiving or digitisation of materials relating to arts practices.
- **Artist-focused/artform-development activity:** Any activity where the main focus is on supporting artists and helping to develop their practice or their work, or ancillary events such as information clinics, seminars or conferences aimed at professional artists.

E. Primary target of the activity

Choose the primary target from the drop-down menu that most closely represents the target group for the activity that you are undertaking.

The options are:

- **General audiences:** The primary target of the activity is not specified. It is open to anyone to attend or to engage with (although the work is often unlikely to be suitable for children).
- **Families:** The activity would be suitable for adults and children to attend together.
- **Children (0–15):** The primary target of an activity is children up to 15 years of age.
- **Young people (16–23):** The primary target of an activity is young people between the ages of 16 and 23. Some examples include:
 - Youth theatre
 - Youth dance
 - Young writers.
- **Particular communities:** The primary target of an activity is a specific group or community of interest. Some examples include:
 - Older people

- People with disabilities
- People in particular geographic areas (urban and rural, especially remote)
- Members of minority communities
- People who experience socio-economic disadvantage status (by social class, education, income).
- **Practising artists or arts professionals:** An activity focused on supporting professional development or serving a community of artists. For example, it could be an activity for artists that is by run by a resource organisation.

Part 2.2 Financial detail

F. Total cost

The total direct cost to your organisation of undertaking the activity.

Important: To allow us to collect data in a consistent manner, you cannot allocate full-time staff costs or other core costs to activities.

An example of this might be the salary costs of a full-time programme manager.

Although their main function is the overseeing and delivery of programmes of activities, they are a full-time permanent member of staff and their salary should be recorded as a **core cost**.

This ensures consistency in terms of how data is presented. This may mean that, in certain cases, you have **no direct costs** against a particular activity. This is acceptable.

G. Earned income

Income from ticket sales or the sales of books, publications or other art objects.

H. Income from other sources

Any income from sources other than sales.

Some examples include:

- Sponsorship
- Fundraising
- Grant income from sources other than the Arts Council.

I. Outcome/subsidy required

This is a sum that the template calculates automatically.

It is the difference between the cost of the activity and any income against it.

Note: In some cases, the total income from an activity is greater than the total cost. This is not a problem. The purpose is for us to get an overview of your proposed activities and the costs and incomes relating to each.

Part 2.3: Audience/engagement/employment/event numbers

J. Audience/engagement number – paying, and

K. Audience/engagement number – free

These two sections relate to the audience that engages with the activity.

For the purposes of data gathering, ‘Engagement’ is taken to mean one of four things:

1. **Audience members:** Attendees, readers, listeners, viewers, attenders, visitors or others engaging with art and arts events.

Some examples include:

- Recitals

- Book sales
 - Concerts
 - Plays
 - Dance performances
 - Art exhibitions
 - Literary events.
2. **Members of the public participating:** This can be in the making or creation of art or in arts-related workshops, classes or events. Some examples include post-show discussions and public Q&As.
 3. **People volunteering to work on or at an event:** Some examples include volunteer staff at an arts festival or as front-of-house staff at a local arts centre. **Note:** This is not the same as participants in arts events. Participants are actively involved in the creation, making or presenting of work.
 4. **Arts practitioner participants:** Artists, arts professionals and/or other practitioners taking part in workshops, classes or other developmental activities.

In all of these cases, individuals are either paying or not paying to attend/engage with the art. **They are not being paid.**

You can find additional guidance on completing the engagement section of the application form on [the public engagement page](#) on our website.

L. Number of artists employed

The number of artists employed, contracted or commissioned directly in the making or delivery of an activity.

For the purpose of data collection, the term ‘artist’ is taken to mean anyone whose main role is the creation, delivery or facilitation of art.

Some examples include:

- A production manager
- An editor
- A producer
- A visual arts technician
- A stage manager
- The graphic designer of a book cover.

Note: Leave this blank if you are a presenter, venue or festival, and you are not directly employing the artists to deliver the activity.

M. Number of others employed

The number of non-arts professionals employed or contracted in the delivery of an activity.

Note: Leave this blank if you are a presenter, venue or festival, and you are not directly employing people to deliver the activity.

N. Number of performances/objects/events/days open

This is to help us to understand how many opportunities the intended beneficiaries of your proposed activities have to engage with each activity.

Some examples include:

- The number of individual performances of a play or dance piece
- The number of books printed
- The number of art objects created
- The number of workshops, classes or other events held.

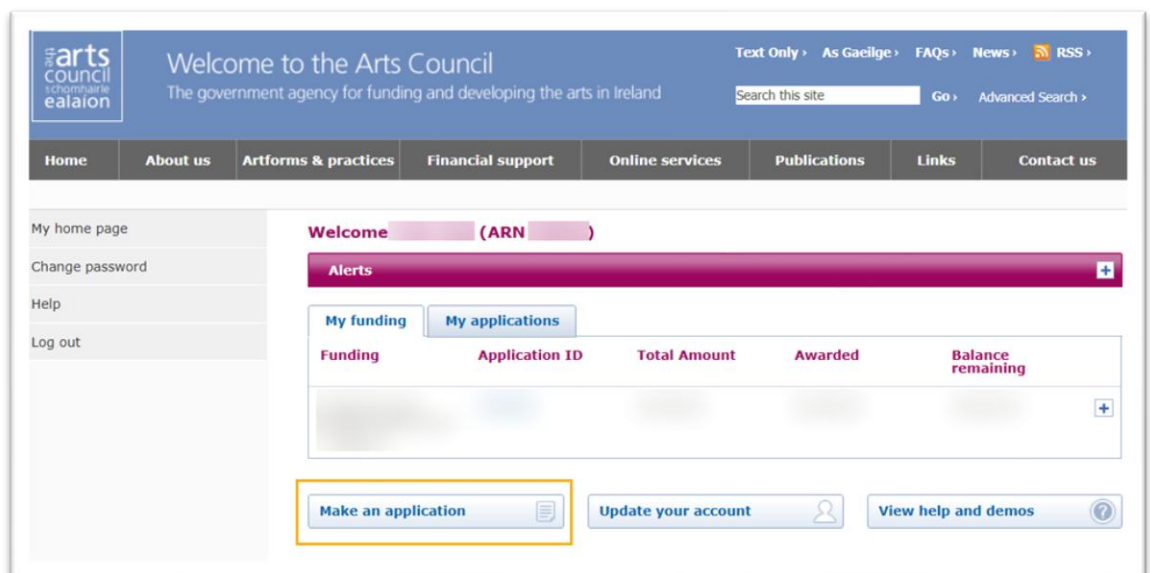
In the case of visual arts, it is taken to mean **the number of days** that an exhibition is open to the public.

4. Submit your application

Now that you have completed your application form and AAR template and collected your supporting material, you can submit your application.

4.1 Log in to your account

1. Go to the [Online Services login page](#).
2. Log in to your account.
3. Click **Make an application** at the bottom of the page.



4.2 Check your contact details

4. Under **Declaration of identity**, check that the contact details are correct.
 - If correct: tick the checkbox next to Please confirm that your details are correct.
 - If not correct: click **Do you need to update your profile?** and update your contact details.
5. Click **Next**.

4.3 Choose the funding that you want to apply for

6. Under **Choose funding programme**, select **Strategic Funding** using the Funding dropdown menu.
7. Under **Available Award**, select the relevant artform or arts practice.
8. Enter a name for your application in the **Your reference** field.
9. Click **Download application form** to download the form for this award. [Learn more about completing your application form.](#)
10. Click **Next**.

Note: While you're completing the form, you may get logged out of Online Services. You can sign back in to continue submitting your application.

4.4 Enter your requested funding amount

11. In Section A under **Application amount requested**, enter:
 - **Amount requested:** The amount of funding you are requesting for 1 January–31 December 2026. This must match the figure in the second worksheet of your AAR template: 'ARTS COUNCIL REQUESTED AMOUNT 2026'.
 - **Total income:** Your estimated total income for 1 January–31 December 2026 **excluding** the amount you are requesting from the Arts Council.
 - **Total expenditure:** Enter your estimated total expenditure for 1 January–31 December 2026.The **Amount requested** should equal the **Total expenditure** minus the **Total income**.

The amounts you enter here should also match what you entered in section 3 of the application form.

12. In section B, enter your income information for 2024, 2025 and 2026. You should enter:

- Your actual figures for 2024 from your 2024 audited accounts
- Your expected figures for 2025 from your most recent management accounts
- Your forecast figures for 2026 from your AAR template.

13. Click Save draft and Next.

Tip: You can check the tables for an explanation of the income and expenditure items in section B.

Income item	Description
Income against core activities	Any income that your organisation receives from its non-artistic activities. Some examples include: • Local-authority grant funding • Facility or equipment rental • Professional fees
Income against artistic/programme activities	Any income that your organisation receives from its artistic or programme activities. Some examples include: • Box-office takings • Publication sales

	• Gallery sales/commissions • Workshops and seminars • Membership fees.
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Expenditure items	Description
Total core costs	All costs associated with the ongoing, day-to-day running of the organisation. This includes staff costs.
Direct artistic/programme activity costs	Direct costs associated with producing your organisation's programme. Some examples include: • Fees for artists • Costumes • Sets • Physical production • Printing or exhibition costs • Information provision

4.5 Upload your documents

14. Under Upload application form, click **Choose File**.

15. Select your application form from where you've saved it on your computer.

16. Click **Upload**.

Note: If you see a message that says **Cannot upload form**, try saving your application form as a .doc file and uploading it again.

If you still cannot upload it, [contact us](#).

17. Under **Upload supporting material**, select the type of document that you want to upload using the dropdown menu.

Important: Do not select 'Post document'.

18. (Optional) Add a note to describe the material that you're uploading.

19. Click **Browse**.

20. Select the supporting material file from your computer.

21. Click **Upload**.

22. Repeat steps 18–22 for all of your supporting documents.

23. Repeat steps 18–22 for your AAR template. You must select 'Arts Activity Report Template' from the dropdown menu so that assessors can identify it.

24. Click **Next**.

4.6 Submit your application

25. Check the details of your application carefully.

26. Under **Declaration**, tick the checkbox beside **I agree to the above declaration**.

Note: You cannot submit your application unless you tick this box.

27. Click **Submit**.

Notes about submitting your application

- Click **Save Draft** at any time to save your application without submitting it.
- You can come back to your application and make changes to it until you submit it.
- After you submit your application, you will not be able to make any more changes. Review your application carefully before you submit it.
- If you realise you've made a mistake after you've submitted your application, [contact us as soon as possible](#).

Need technical support?

Contact us if you need technical support while submitting your application.

- **Email:** onlineservices@artscouncil.ie
- **Phone:** 01 618 0200 or 01 618 0243

We cannot guarantee technical support if you call after 2.00pm on the closing date.

Review your details. When you are satisfied that you have included everything, click **Submit**.

5. After you apply – what happens next

After you submit your application, you'll get:

- An email immediately to tell you that we received your application
- A second email a few minutes later with your application number.

Note: If you do not receive these emails from us, contact us at onlineservices@artscouncil.ie as soon as possible.

5.1 How we make decisions

The Arts Council assesses all eligible applications that we receive. We make decisions on these applications and communicate our decisions to applicants according to our procedures.

Our aim is to make sure that the system for awarding funding is fair and transparent.

We process all the applications we receive as follows:

- We check [the eligibility of the application](#). All eligible applications progress to the assessment stage.
- We notify any applicants with ineligible applications by email.
- We assess your application and score it based on the assessment criteria.
- We prepare recommendations for Council and for the Arts Council Executive.
- The Council considers recommendations and makes final decisions for all requested amounts for €50,000 or above.
- The Arts Council Executive considers recommendations and makes final decisions for all requested amounts below €50,000.

- We inform you of the decision by email. You also receive a copy of the recommendation.

We may not be able to assess your application if:

- You have not included a completed AAR template
- You have not included all required supporting material
- You have not included all other supporting material relevant to your application
- You have applied for activities that are not permitted under this funding programme
- You have applied for activities that are more suited to another funding programme offered by the Arts Council or other grant-awarding government agency.

If your application is considered to be ineligible, you can apply again with the same proposal for future funding rounds if it meets the eligibility requirements.