

Service Charter



Contents

- **Who we are**
- **Service standards**
- **Our promise to you**
- **Funding programmes**
- **Communicating with us**
- **Making a complaint**
- **Funding Reviews**
- **Equality and Diversity**
- **Freedom of Information**
- **Data Protection**
- **Useful information**
- **Contact us**

Who we are

The Arts Council is the development agency for the arts in Northern Ireland, providing the main support for artists and arts organisations throughout the region through a range of funding opportunities. We invest public money and National Lottery funds in organisations and people who develop and deliver arts programmes across all of society.

Our Arts Officers offer specialist guidance on funding and project development to artists and organisations working across the spectrum of arts activities in Northern Ireland.

Our aim

Our aim is to place the Arts at the heart of our social, economic and creative life

- To be an advocate for the arts
- To provide development opportunities and a more stable environment for artists
- To stimulate demand for, and growth within, the arts
- To increase opportunities for people to access and participate in the arts.
- To improve our performance and accountability

Our sponsoring department

Our sponsoring government department is the Department for Communities. The Arts Council is governed by a Council of board members appointed by the Minister for Communities.

Service Standards

We adhere to the following commitments to make sure we provide the best possible service and standards of customer care:

- Ask for your views and listen to them
- Take account of your needs and respond to them
- Make sure we are easy to contact and that we answer phone calls, emails and letters quickly and efficiently, taking account of your different communication needs
- Respond to requests for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act
- Be professional, honest and open, and accept responsibility for our actions
- Provide clear and relevant information, guidance and feedback
- Process grant applications effectively and efficiently, with impartiality and confidentiality
- Provide an effective complaints process

We monitor our performance against our service standards and aim to continually improve the services we offer. We use business planning KPIs to monitor our service standards and we report on them in our Annual Report.

Our promise to you

- **Give you a quality service**

We promise to manage our funds effectively, to ensure that our funding programmes reflect the developmental needs of the sector, and to make the application process as simple as possible.

- **Act as an advocate**

We promise to be a visible advocate for the arts, campaigning for more support

- **Remain committed to artistic development**

We promise to develop the arts throughout Northern Ireland and to encourage talent and the pursuit of excellence

- **Increase opportunities for everyone to access and participate in the arts**

We promise to develop opportunities for more people from all backgrounds and circumstances to engage with the arts

- **Be open and accountable**

We promise to maintain the highest standards of governance, openness and accountability, throughout the organisation

- **Communicate clearly**

We promise to inform you of our priorities and our key decisions

Funding programmes

The Arts Council makes funding available to organisations and individuals through a number of programmes. Full details are available from our website [here](#).

For each funding programme we will provide clear information throughout the process on our website. If difficulties arise during the grant process, we will be available to help.

In particular, we aim to do the following:

- Publish the aims for each programme, together with clear information about who can apply
- Publish how long it takes to make a decision on an application
- Publish all the criteria we assess applications against, the process we will follow, and details of who will make the final decision
- Publish the standard terms and conditions that will apply to projects we fund
- Explain how we will monitor projects we have funded
- Provide clear information about the level of support available for people before they apply. We will tell you who your dedicated arts officers are and how you can contact them for more information

We will process grant applications effectively and efficiently

In particular, we aim to do the following:

- Let you know, in writing or by email, that we have received your application, within 20 working days of the closing deadline
- Will adhere to the decision dates published within the guidance notes

If your application is successful, we will send you a Letter of Offer. The letter will set out the following:

- How much grant we have awarded
- How long the grant is available for and how it will be paid
- The name of your arts officers
- What you can and cannot use the grant for
- Conditions you must meet and any further information or documents we need before we can release funds
- Details of monitoring and evaluation arrangements, including the records you must keep
- Guidance for acknowledging Arts Council support and for promoting your project

If your application is not successful, we will:

- Tell you why, in writing
- Give you the opportunity to discuss the matter with us
- Provide you with the opportunity for a formal review of the decision if you are dissatisfied with the decision.

Communicating with us

We will ensure that all our communications with you will be professional, honest, open and respectful. We expect you to treat us in the same way and we reserve the right not to respond to any communications that we deem to be abusive, vexatious or inappropriate.

Telephone calls

Staff telephone numbers are available on our website. If a member of staff is unable to take your call or if you are phoning outside of office hours, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, you can leave a message. You can also leave a message with our switchboard. We aim to respond to telephone enquiries within 5 working days.

Written correspondence

Staff email addresses are available on our website. We aim to respond to emails no later than 5 working days from the date of receipt and to letters and other correspondence within 10 working days. Where we need to consult with others or gather information we may take a little longer but, in such circumstances, we will acknowledge your enquiry and tell you when to expect a full reply.

Digital media

We welcome comments from social media users on the information and content that we post on our digital and social media channels:

www.artscouncil-ni.org

twitter.com/ArtsCouncilNI

www.facebook.com/ArtsCouncilNI

These channels are monitored during working hours, 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. We aim to respond to any questions, comments or enquiries as soon as possible.

Comments left on these channels will not be treated as official complaints.

Making a complaint

If you wish to make a complaint, we have a procedure for you to use. Full details are on our website [here](#).

This procedure applies to complaints about services supplied by the Arts Council or by third party organisations/individuals funded by the Arts Council. It also applies to complaints from members of the general public over funding decisions.

Complaints from organisations/individuals who have been rejected for funding or who feel they have not received sufficient funding should be dealt with under the **Funding Review** procedure.

Should you have any queries about how to go about making a complaint, please email complaints@artscouncil-ni.org

Funding Reviews

If you are unhappy with a funding decision, you are entitled to ask for a funding review. The Funding Review Procedure Guidelines are available on our website [here](#).

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the Funding Review, you can take your complaint to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will not normally investigate a complaint which has not been through the Funding Review procedure.

Equality and Diversity

The Arts Council has obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act to ensure that equality of opportunity and good relations are central to policy making, policy implications and review, as well as service delivery.

These responsibilities place a duty on the Arts Council to address inequalities and demonstrate measurable positive impact on the lives of people experiencing inequalities.

As part of its commitment to creating a more diverse and equal society, the Arts Council produces an Annual Report to the Equality Commission and a Disability Action Plan which sets out our commitment to promoting positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and encourages participation in all aspects of the arts.

Details of work carried out by the Arts Council to fulfil its statutory equality and good relations duties, including the delivery of its Equality Scheme and Disability Actions Plans are available on our website [here](#).

Freedom of Information

As an open and transparent organisation we are committed to routinely publishing as much information as possible; however if you want information which is not on our website or otherwise available through our guide to information, you may ask us for it in accordance with further provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and of the Environmental Information Regulations 2005. The procedure for making a Freedom of Information request is available on our website [here](#).

Data Protection

The Arts Council is committed to protecting the rights and privacy of individuals in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. If you want to ask us for information which we may hold about you personally then this will be dealt with under the Data Protection Act 1998. This would include information which is limited to you as a person. The procedure for making a subject access enquiry is available on our website [here](#).

Useful information

- [Strategic Plan](#)
- [Art form funding policies](#)
- [Organisational structure](#)
- [Funding review procedure](#)
- [Freedom of Information](#)
- [Complaints procedure](#)

Contact Us

www.artscouncil-ni.org

This information may be available in alternative formats on request.

Published: April 2017