

### Background

Creative Scotland has established small grants scheme with a range of Local Authorities across Scotland to support visual artists and craft makers in their creative and professional development. The award schemes are intended to support practitioners at all stages of their career who have demonstrated a commitment to their work and in developing their practice to produce a body of work over time.

This guidance document is designed to be read alongside the guidelines and application form for the local scheme you are applying to. If you haven't already identified the appropriate scheme and location, and downloaded the application form and guidelines, then take a look at [www.creativescotland.com/vacma](http://www.creativescotland.com/vacma)

### What we're looking for in your application:

We want to hear about your work, your ideas, and your track record. When we make decisions we give priority to the applications that demonstrate the quality of work most clearly, the opportunity for development as well as an ongoing commitment to developing a visual arts or crafts practice.

Funding is provided to support artist/makers to take advantage of specific opportunities or that can progress their creative and professional development. Applicants should outline how the funding applied for will further develop their work or practice and how that specific project or development will support progression.

We will give priority to applicants who can best demonstrate the following:

- *Quality of work in relation to contemporary practice*  
Quality of work is extremely important and we will assess this from your written application, CV as well as the supporting visual material. Providing clearly written text which is explanatory but also concise will help us to understand your work to date and what you are applying to do. Think about how your work relates to current, recent and historical practice as this will help us to assess your work within a wider context.

Your CV helps to show your track record as an artist or maker. In your CV put newest things first and take out any non-art related activities. This guide might also help you in refining your CV: [www.artquest.org.uk/how-to-articles/artist-cv/](http://www.artquest.org.uk/how-to-articles/artist-cv/)

Your supporting material should be of a good quality and carefully selected to show your current work and back up your application. Ensure it is clearly labelled and remember to also include an image list with titles, dates, materials, dimensions and, where appropriate, the venue the work is shown in. Make sure that your visual material is well photographed and that the standard of image is high. The panel want to see your work clearly so do avoid images that do not give a strong sense of the work. Good images show that you value your work and have a level of professionalism.

If you are proposing to develop work in another medium – how does your choice of images support that move?

- *Commitment to the development of practice both conceptually and technically*  
We are interested in your ideas and the methods you use to make work. Explaining your ideas in a straightforward way will help us to understand your application better. Consider how your proposal will help you to develop your work both practically and in relation to your ideas. The stage within your career or timing of proposal is also useful to think about.
- *That funding would have a positive impact on the long term development of practice which would be difficult to achieve without such support*  
Please give a clear outline as to how funding at this point will impact on your ongoing practice and your wider professional development as an artist. This may also relate to other relevant projects or opportunities and how you best develop these. This is not a breakdown of your financial situation, personal circumstances or previous funding bids but rather how your project (or plan) may help your long term creative and professional development. Have a clear and real reason for applying.

Please note that these Visual Arts and Crafts Makers Awards are funded directly by Creative Scotland as part of our support for individual artists and makers. They are not intended to be used as partnership funding for other Creative Scotland funded projects and you shouldn't apply for these awards with the intention that the funding will supplement other Creative Scotland funding (ie. if you're applying to the Open Project Fund and a VACMA award for the same project, this would be considered 'double funding' and would risk making both your applications ineligible).

- *A clear plan of proposed activity that shows how funds might be used*  
Please give a clear budget that has a clear plan of how the funds may be used to support the development of your practice. Make sure the costs of the project are accurate and realistic. Some otherwise strong applications fall down on the budget being poorly thought through. If you need more assistance with pulling together a budget, the Cultural Enterprise Office has produced this [very useful guide](#).

For artists applying to develop work specifically for an exhibition, it helps the panel to see the contribution from the gallery/ organising venue involved. Please include this information particularly if this is a publicly funded gallery. Additionally, please note that hiring a gallery to show your work is not a priority for these funds

As stated earlier, the focus of this fund is to support new opportunities for creative development and the change this can bring to your practice. Whilst we recognise that artists/makers time is crucial to creating new work or undertaking professional development activities, we are not able through this fund to support day-to-day living costs or replace other income.

For the purposes of this application, any time contribution is viewed as an in-kind contribution and part of your professional practice. However, we would like to better understand the nature of this contribution so please provide the information as indicated on the application form. For more information on rates of pay, see the Scottish Artists Union guidance: [www.sau.org.uk/rights/pay/](http://www.sau.org.uk/rights/pay/)

## **The application process explained**

Details of the application process and decision making timescales will be outlined in the guidance for the local scheme which you're applying to.

In broad terms, all applications to the funds will go to a panel meeting, which will make decisions on who is supported. The panel is usually made up of around 5 arts professionals, and this will include at least one artist and one maker. We use advisors to help us achieve a broader perspective on current practice and they may be a mix of artists, makers, curators, tutors or other arts professionals. Creative Scotland officers may also be involved in the panel.

In advance of the panel meeting, the panel will have read and considered the written applications and will normally have had access to the visual material. It is important that your written application and visual material support one another and the relationship between them is clear. An image list should be enclosed with your application in order to give the panel all the information they need. Remember the panel members may not be familiar with your work or the ideas or methods you are using.

During the meeting the visual and written material is reviewed and assessed against the stated criteria for the funds in the local guidelines. The recommendations for awards are based on these discussions.

### **What happens if I'm unsuccessful in my application?**

Please remember that these funds are competitive which means that not all applications that meet the criteria will be funded. If you are unsuccessful you may be successful in another round so please do not be deterred from applying for the next suitable opportunity.

If you are not successful in your application please take time to reflect on the feedback given or ask for feedback if available. If you do not understand the feedback you have been given or need more clarity you can call or email the person whose contact details will be on your letter. You may have just missed out on receiving funding due to poor images or lack of clarity for example. Being turned down is not necessarily a comment on the quality of your work, but rather the strength of your proposal. If you are serious about developing your professional practice, it is important to ask for feedback and take it on board, whether you intend to re-apply to this scheme, or are planning to apply for any other funding scheme. If you are re-applying, we would expect you to have noted the feedback and addressed any issues raised. We have had experience of a good number of people being turned down in one round, and then successfully re-applying with a stronger and more focussed application due to taking on board the feedback from the panel.

**Try to be as clear as possible in your answers. As a guideline questions should be answered in no more than 500 words.**

**It may help to ask a friend who doesn't know the details of your application to read it and give you feedback before you hand it in.**

**You may also find [this Cultural Enterprise Office publication](#) useful. And there is lots of useful advice and support at [Artquest](#).**