

FUNDING TOOLKIT FOR NEURODIVERGENT ARTISTS



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1: ABOUT THIS GUIDE AND DEFINITIONS

This guide is for people looking to obtain funding for a visual arts project. In particular, it aims to support neurodivergent artists and creatives who might find it difficult to access the funding application process.

It may be particularly helpful if you are considering funding for the first time. Alternatively, you may have already tried to find funding and are now looking for further guidance.

This aim of this guide is to give you the tools, advice and tips that will help you to confidently:

- Research and identify the best potential funders for your project
- Understand what potential funders are looking for in a project
- Provide funders with the information they need to understand exactly what you and your project can offer them

Definitions

Arts funding is financial support provided for a specific artistic purpose. Funding may also be referred to as a grant, bursary, prize, or award.

A **funder** is any person, group or organisation that has the motivation and the resources to support the arts. This could be a big arts institution, a small charity or even a local shop. The funders' aims may be charitable, philanthropic, or simply commercial.

The **recipient of the funding** may be an artist, a group of artists or organisation.

An **artwork** or **arts project** can range from the production of a single artistic work to a complex process requiring research, group work, promotion, gallery costs and so on.

A **call** by a funder is an announcement that the organisation is offering finance to artists to produce or submit an artwork or project for a specific purpose, such as an exhibition, award, or residency.

Insurance is recovery or compensation for any loss or damage.

Support in kind is alternative or additional contribution to your project that is non-cash. This could be materials or services provided that are free of charge. For example: an offer to use a gallery to display the art free of charge.

2: INTRODUCTION

There are many organisations looking for new and exciting work to fund, both for emerging and established artists. Funding organisations range from very high-profile institutions such as Arts Council England and The National Lottery Heritage Fund to much smaller organisations.

Finding funding depends on many factors: how much money is available, how many artists are competing for it and how well your work matches the funder's requirements.

Your aim is to find the right funder for you and show them why your project is the right one for them. You will need to research different funders and think about the most effective ways to present yourself and your work.

Finding funding may seem like a difficult process. Just take it slowly and methodically.

Tip: Think of this as a learning process. You will learn new things about arts funding, while at the same time you will be creating a set of information and samples of your work that you will be able to reuse time and again.



3: FUNDING Q & A

What is funding?

In short, arts funding is used to get art made.

Funding is important in all sectors of culture and business. Within the arts people use funding in many ways. Examples:



- Get a school or community project off the ground
- Create an artwork, exhibition, or event
- Buy equipment and materials
- To fund a course, a residency, or a period of research.

Keep in mind that from the funder's point of view, funding is a cash investment. Money is limited and the funder has to grant it responsibly. The funder will need to be sure that when they award funding, the recipient will use the money as agreed.

Why do funders support the arts?

Art is seen as both a vital element of the national culture and a commercial business. For this reason, a wide range of government institutions, companies, organisations, and individuals provide funding. Funders have their own interests and goals and are more likely to support you if your aims connect with theirs.



Funding organisations have various reasons for supporting the arts. Examples:

- Promote art for its own sake, as a business investment,
- Fund social or community arts projects.

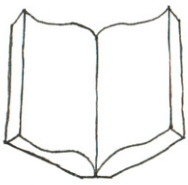
When looking for a funder, think about the sort of project the funder might be willing to support, and how your project would bring the right sort of benefit to the funder.



What do artists use funding for?

Artists need money to cover their time, their materials, and a place of work. If the artwork is to be shown, there may be further costs for exhibition space, promotion, lighting and so on.

Here are a few examples:



Research



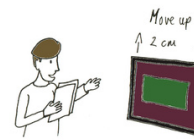
Studio
space



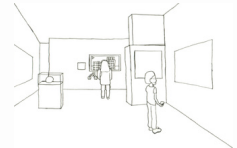
Your time



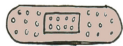
Other
people's time



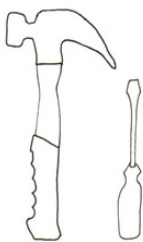
The curation
of the work



Gallery hire
and expenses



Insurance



Installation



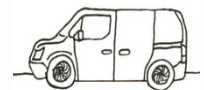
Private views



Marketing



Supporting
information



Transport and
shipping

Who can apply for funding?

In theory, anyone can apply for funding - it is up to the funder whether or not they grant it. Funders will support individual artists and groups of artists working collaboratively.



How do funders find artists?



Funders often put out a call or request to artists to apply for funding for a particular project. This would normally be presented on the website or via social media. If you set up an account with your chosen funders you can receive alerts whenever a new opportunity arises.

How do artists find funders?



If an artist finds a call/request from a funder, they can apply for the funding. Alternatively, an artist might need funding for a project of their own for which there is no obvious funder. In that case, it is up to the artist to look for a funder and ask them for support. See Section 4 for further information.

What is an Open Call?



Arts organisations will sometimes announce a funding “Open Call”, perhaps for a residency, contribution to an exhibition or other artistic opportunity. With an Open Call, the funder is inviting any artist to apply, without restrictions on, for example, age, experience, and ethnicity.

4: FINDING A FUNDER

Introduction

Finding appropriate funders is one of the most significant challenges that artists encounter. The following sections will provide an overview of the best way to approach this.

When funders announce a funding call, the information they provide will show you exactly what they are looking for. The most established and well-known bodies receive high numbers of applications every year and set strict limits on their funding. You can apply to these organisations for funding if you think they are right for you, but also consider smaller organisations.

Background research



It is beneficial to undertake some research before you start the process, there are some further resources and information in Appendix A. This should give you a general idea of who funders are and how it all works. Bear in mind that funded projects range from high-profile commissions with specific artists to smaller amounts to support local projects.

Ask around



Attending networking events or using social media contacts can be a good way to find opportunities. Generating conversations both online and in person can sometimes lead to potential opportunities.



Useful arts organisations and institutions

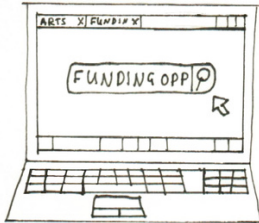
Listed below are some of the most high-profile commissioners of art in the UK. Have a look at their websites, especially for funding schemes and information packs. This should give you an idea of what each type of funder is looking for and how they release opportunities.

- Arts Council England
- National Lottery Heritage
- Arts Fundraising and Philanthropy
- Elephant Trust Grants
- Jerwood Develop Programme Fund
- The Jarman Award (for moving image artists)
- The FLAMIN Fellowship (for moving image artists)
- Somerset House Studios
- Cockpit Arts
- ArtsAdmin
- The Arts Foundation
- CuratorSpace
- Artquest
- Creative Scotland

Sign up to receive emails for any upcoming projects that might be of interest. Keeping all correspondence carefully filed is a good way of monitoring your progress with each organisation.

Web searches

The following should help you to determine what sort of organisations are most likely to be interested in your work.



- Look for individuals or organisations that have funded artists in the past. Try search terms such as *arts + award, prize, sponsor, grant, bursary, community*. See what has been awarded in the past, who to and for what sort of work.
- Bookmark useful sites.
- Search for organisations with some connection to themes in your own work.
- Follow organisations on social media platforms, setting alerts for any new posts.

Think local



You may find opportunities in your local community e.g., a company, shop, school, or independent cinema. Think about the art that you make and what a local funder might gain from supporting you.

Talk to funders

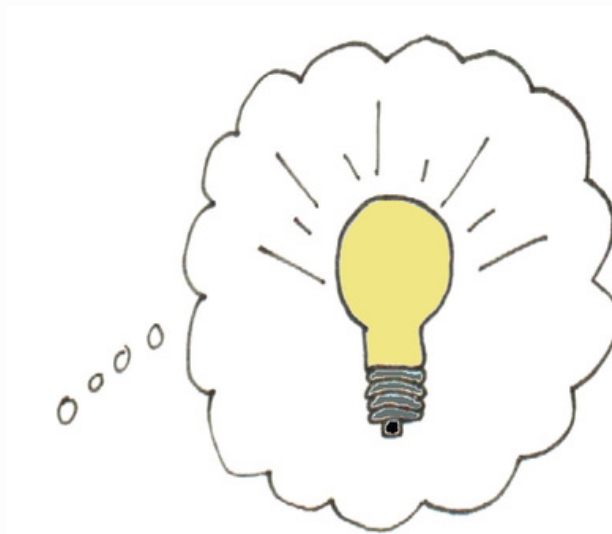


If you can, try to talk directly to possible funders, whether in person, via a call or email. This will give you the opportunity to find answers to questions, highlight your work and perhaps start to build a relationship. The information you pick up should also help you with any application you make to that funder.

5: THE APPLICATION

Completing an application can take a considerable amount of time and energy. Understanding the application and what information you need to supply can be hard, especially if you struggle with visualising the end goal. If you find it tricky picturing the final result and what you would like to achieve, preparing some physical notes or a mind map may help.

Planning is crucial at this stage, make sure that you structure your time and plan well ahead. Provide a balanced application, giving the funders what they are looking for and carefully following the guidelines.



Before you start writing

Make sure you read through the application carefully and prepare any notes you need. You might find that there is no deadline, but you should apply within a timely manner to ensure that there is time for your application to be considered.

Have a proper look for how your chosen funder has structured the application, you might need to set up an account for example Arts Council England's Grantium can take up to 10 days in order for it to be approved.

Download or print out a blank copy of the application and draft your answers either in a Word document or by hand before you complete the application online. This is so you can be clear on your responses as some applications time out if you have not done any work on them within a certain timeframe.

Reread the guidelines to make sure you are working towards the correct deadline and understand the uploading or delivery details.

Complying with the brief

Ensure you understand any specific instructions within the application, especially noting the following:

- Never exceed the stated word count, character count or page limits
- Be aware of any mandated font and font size
- Follow any specific time and format requirements for video or audio applications

Accessibility support

If you need any access support, there is a variety of support offered to neurodivergent artists. You might want to get in touch with the funders to confirm any specific support available before you start the application. See Section 6 for more details.



Completing the application

We will now address each section of the funding application in more detail. The application forms vary so the wording in them may be different from the headings used in this section.

(I) Personal information

This should be straightforward. The funder will need basic information such as:

- Your name and contact details
- Your qualifications if applicable (e.g., if you have a degree).
- Any experience that you have that is relevant to your application. This means previous projects, participation in exhibitions, commissions, or collaborations

It would be useful for you to have a document ready (something like a CV) with all this information on it. Keep this up to date with any shows, talks, or creative collaborations that you are a part of.

(II) Project details

This is basic information about the artwork or other project that you want the funding for. It can be a little difficult to describe and explain your proposals, especially while it is still in the concept stage, the following suggestions may help:

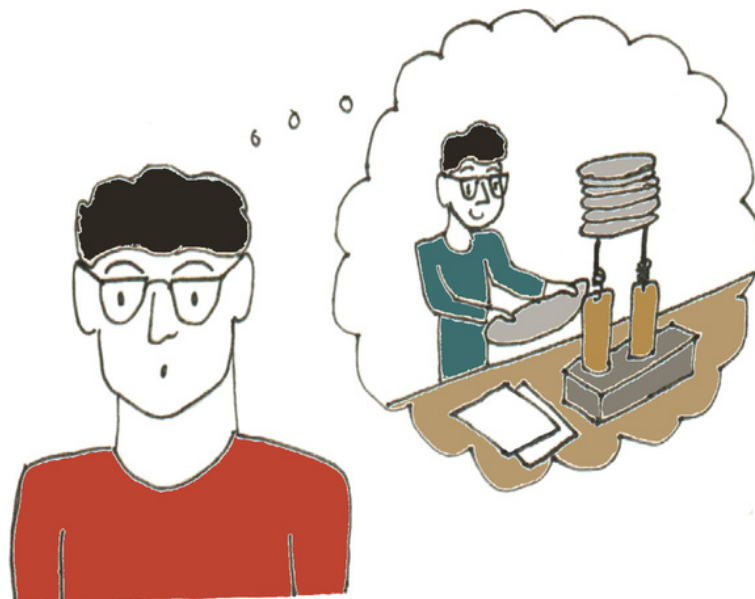
- What type of project is it (e.g., what mediums are you working in)?
- How would you describe the project in more detail?
- What materials will you use?
- How many other people will be working on the project with you, if any?
- When do you expect to commence and complete the project?

(III) Artistic vision

The funder will want to know what you want to achieve artistically through your artwork or project. To explain this, it may help you to think about:

- How did you come up with this idea or project in particular?
- What does the group/individual want to achieve, and how are you going to show that to the funder?
- What feelings and emotions are you trying to communicate?
- Is there anything about your project that makes it unique?

To assist in developing a strong theme within your work, it may be suitable to do engagement sessions which may take the form of workshops, talks and online discussions.



(IV) Who is your work aimed at and why?

If your work is catered to a certain audience, then you will need to identify this and target the appropriate funding bodies. Example: A local school may be looking for something relevant to a particular key stage of learning.

Think about your audience engagement. You may wish to consider:

- What kind of audience would be interested in this particular artwork?
- Why do you want to engage this kind of audience?
- What is it about the artwork that would interest and engage this audience?

Provide as much information as possible particularly to describe the ways that you intend to engage and excite your audience. The funders may be more interested if you are targeting a specific demographic that aligns with their own direction (e.g., age group, sexual orientation, race).

(V) How will you create your project?

This is a description of what you will do practically to create your artwork, It may help you to think about:

- Whether you are working individually or with others
- The different stages of the project, and what you will be doing in each stage
- What kind of workspace you are using or planning to use
- What equipment or materials you intent to use
- Your estimate of how long the project will take and when it would likely be completed
- Where you will show the artwork



(VI) Your previous work

This is your opportunity to show the funder what you have achieved in the past, think carefully about the work you want to show. The funders will use it to see who you are as an artist and to assess how well your work relates to what they are looking for.

(VII) Collaboration

This is where you provide details of the people or groups you are working with, and how you will cooperate practically with each other to produce your artwork.



Think about:

- Who are the people/groups, and how many people are involved in the project
- The skills and experience of the people/groups
- What will each person be doing in the project

If it is a large and/or complex project:

- Will your collaborators be organised into teams and if so, who will be the point of contact?
- How will individuals or teams interact?

It is useful to produce a contacts list with people's names, email addresses and job roles clearly identified.

(VIII) Activity Plan

The funder needs to be sure that you can successfully complete your project on time and may ask you to provide them with an activity plan. You need to show the funder that you have planned your project sensibly and that your time and cost estimates are realistic.

For each stage, show:

- Start and end dates
- Milestones defining each stage clearly
- Tasks documenting what you will do to achieve this milestone and how long will this take

Important note: Should you fall ill during the project, contact the funder explaining the situation, and ask for an extension. Many funders will be flexible if your circumstances change.

You may need to provide the funder with details of how you will monitor and report your progress.

(IX) Evaluation

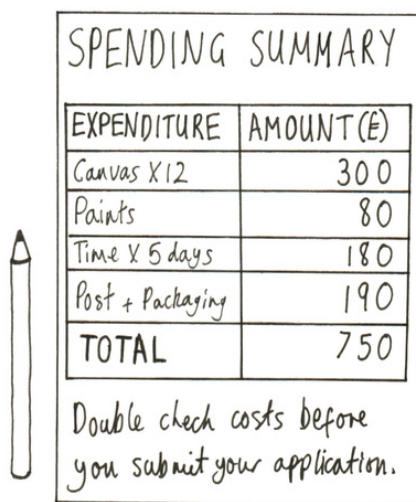
Evaluation is where you will keep a record and track how the project is progressing both during the preparation and delivery.

Funders will want to understand how you will achieve this to see if it meets their expectations. Evaluation may take the form of how many people you hope to visit your workshop or workspace, the number of visits there have been on a project website and feedback via social media.

(X) Finance

In this section you will need to provide a breakdown of the funding that you are applying for. The funder needs to know in detail, how much funding you are requesting and how you will spend it.

You may get a table to complete detailing all of your costs and your expected income, this may be in an Excel format or an embedded PDF within the application.



The illustration shows a hand-drawn pencil pointing to a table. The table is titled 'SPENDING SUMMARY' and has two columns: 'EXPENDITURE' and 'AMOUNT (£)'. The rows are: 'Canvas X12' with amount '300', 'Paints' with amount '80', 'Time X 5 days' with amount '180', 'Post + Packaging' with amount '190', and 'TOTAL' with amount '750'. Below the table, there is a handwritten note: 'Double check costs before you submit your application.'

EXPENDITURE	AMOUNT (£)
Canvas X12	300
Paints	80
Time X 5 days	180
Post + Packaging	190
TOTAL	750

Double check costs before you submit your application.

Before you submit:

Always make sure you have someone else read your work through. Ask a friend or a peer (preferably with experience of this) to review your application before you submit. This will help identify any mistakes, address unclear phrasing, or check for fundamental issues like 'have you answered the question?'

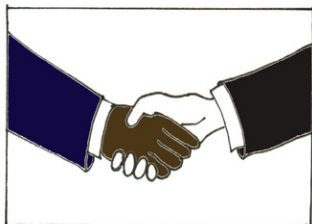
If you haven't got anyone in your immediate circle to look at your application, then think about someone from your wider contact list, this could be a lecturer, neighbour, or support worker. Many people will be keen to offer support.

Always double check your application, making sure that you are comfortable with your responses.

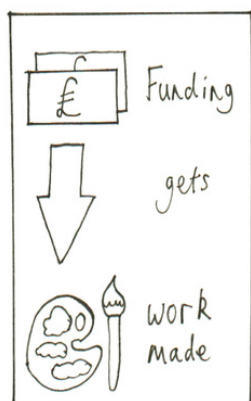
6: ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORT

The following are some of the accessibility tools that may be available to assist you in your application.

Access to Work



Access to Work is a grant to help support disabled and neurodivergent people. This could be adjustments such as providing equipment, having someone assist with administration (e.g., writing emails, support person during meetings) or it could be having a support worker help document someone's thoughts and ideas for the application. There is an eligibility-criteria that has to be met in order to gain any further support. For more information take a look at the GOV.UK website: [What Access to Work is - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/what-access-to-work-is)



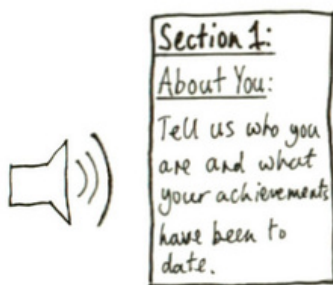
Easy Read guides

Easy Read guides are effective guides that help neurodivergent and learning-disabled people understand something without having to read the entire document or application. Easy Read applications may have images accompanying the text, the text may be shorter and use plainer language.

Audio or video application



If you find it difficult to write, then you may be able to apply using a different format, for example an audio or video file. Most funders will state a time limit for audio or video applications, do not exceed this as they may not watch all of the application or they may reject it completely if it is too long. Furthermore, ensure that you comply with any requirements on the allowable file formats.



Audio recording of the application form

Some applications have an audio transcript where sections of the application are read out. If this is not available you may have access to your own screen reading software.



British Sign Language (BSL)

Some organisations may provide BSL interpreters via video hosts like YouTube where further guidance and advice is provided. The BSL interpreters may also be available to assist in meetings and interviews with the relevant organisation.



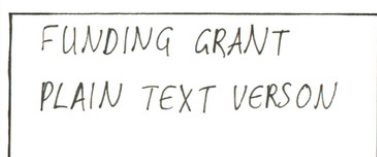
Help with writing the application

You may be able to receive assistance to help you complete the application. This could be a family member, support worker or someone through the Access to Work support. A support worker is someone who can assist you in organising your plan and ideas, help you write the application and support with any other issues.



Enlarged version of the application

If you are visually impaired or blind, you might find it easier to download a large print version of the application. The application has same content, but the font size is bigger. Braille versions of the application may also be available by request.



Plain text

Plain text is essentially a text version of the application or document without any formatting such as images, variation in fonts and text colours.

7: AFTER SUBMISSION

After you have submitted your application, all the submissions will be reviewed by a person or panel.

There may be some delay in the time it takes for the reviewer(s) to address all the applications and the waiting times may be quite considerable. Check the guidance and make a note in your diary of when you are likely to have a response.

Note: Some funding bodies will say on their website that if you have not heard from them within a certain time frame, then your application has not been chosen.

Each panel member will have reviewed the applications that have been submitted and will decide a shortlist from which the final selection can be made. If your application is of interest, then the funders might want to speak with you to discuss your proposal, this may take the form of a formal interview.

The panel members will usually consist of the funders, staff from the selected organisation and other artists. The breadth of knowledge and experience of the reviewer or panel will empower them to select the best overall proposals.





Notification of award

If you are successful to receive the funding that you applied for then congratulations! You will most likely be informed via email or be told to check your application status on the organisation's website via the online portal.

Can I apply for other projects with the same organisation if I don't get awarded?

This will vary with the organisation, the best way to find out is to read the guidelines. Some will be quite strict and say that if you don't get selected for a certain award, then you are not eligible to apply until a certain amount of time has passed. This can be either a few months or years, or in relation to funding rounds.

Why certain projects don't get funded

The application process can be very time consuming, funders often receive high numbers of applications, and they have strict success criteria. Sometimes it could just be that your particular proposal or project was not what the funders were looking for. This does not mean that your work is not professional or good enough. Make the rejection a learning experience and think about what you can use for the next application you submit or how your next submission could be stronger.

Feedback

Some organisations provide feedback, whilst many don't. Regardless of the outcome, try to elicit honest feedback to understand what could be improved next time.

8: SUMMARY

In this toolkit we have covered what funding is and why it is important to the visual arts, we have looked in depth at the application, addressed where you can go for funding, and listed measures that funders sometimes put in place to make the process more accessible and inclusive for neurodivergent artists.

Funding is important to enable artists to make a living through their work. Neurodivergent artists are underrepresented within the arts sector however there are several organisations who are there to help and support artist build careers.

Barriers do exist but with the right frame of mind and support where needed, neurodivergent artists do build strong careers delivering work through the funding process.

Stay positive, and good luck!

APPENDIX A: HELP & RESOURCES

The following resources may be useful for you.

Tips for writing a funding application:

[DASH Top 10 Tips.pdf \(dasharts.org\)](#)

[Funding for artists | Shape Arts \(shapearts.co.uk\)](#)

[Help With Your Application | Creative Scotland\(www.creativescotland.com\)](#)

[Arts Funding Grants: Preparing your application - Rachel Dobbs \(we-are-low-profile.com\)](#)

[How to Write a Grant Proposal by Preethi Burkholder \(artistsnetwork.com\)](#)

[Funding Library | The White Pube \(thewhitepube.co.uk\)](#)

[How to write a Kick Ass Application - Unlimited \(weareunlimited.org.uk\)](#)

["Funding" - Unlimited \(weareunlimited.org.uk\)](#)

[Grant Resources — The Grants Hub \(www.thegrantshub.com.au\)](#)

Application templates:

[resources | My Site \(christinapoultoncreative.co.uk\)](#)

[resources: Arts Council England - The Uncultured \(the-uncultured.com\)](#)

[Heritage Lottery Action Plan Template.xlsx \(live.com\)](#)

Funding opportunities and grants of interest:

[Our funding - Paul Hamlyn Foundation \(phf.org.uk\)](#)

[Grants for Artists, Writers and more | Apply Now | Creative Debuts \(creativedebuts.co.uk\)](#)

[Oppenheim-John Downes Memorial Trust - Background and Awards \(oppenheimdownestrust.org\)](#)

[Funding | The National Lottery Heritage Fund \(www.heritagefund.org.uk\)](#)

[Developing your Creative Practice | Arts Council England](#)

[National Lottery Project Grant.pdf \(artscouncil.org.uk\)](#)

Easy Read guide:

[DYCP Easy Read.pdf \(artscouncil.org.uk\)](#)

Access guidance:

[Access to Work: get support if you have a disability or health condition: What Access to Work is - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Access support | Arts Council England \(www.artscouncil.org.uk\)](#)

[Reasonable adjustments | The National Lottery Heritage Fund \(www.heritagefund.org.uk\)](#)

[Alternative Formats, Languages and Access Support | Creative Scotland \(www.creativescotland.com\)](#)

Applicants notes:

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