



Creative Communities on a *Shared Island*

Local Authority Partnerships with Creative and Community Organisations 2026-2028

Timeframe	
Mid 2026 ←————→ November 2028	
Funding	
Strand 1	Total of €750,000
Strand 2	Total of €600,000
Strand 3	Total of €250,000



Artist Farm Walk.
Photo: Brian Farrell



Who is Organising this Grant Call?

The Creative Ireland Programme is an all-of-government culture and wellbeing programme based in the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport with the ambition to inspire and transform people, places and communities through creativity.

We are committed to the vision that every person in Ireland should have the opportunity to realise their full creative potential.

Our strategic goals are to:

- Establish a community of practice and participation
- Promote understanding of the value of creativity
- Measure impact and build evidence
- Embed creativity in public policy

There are 5 Pillars in the Creative Ireland Programme:

- 1 Creative Youth
- 2 Creative Communities
- 3 Creative Health & Wellbeing
- 4 Creative Climate Action
- 5 Creative Industries

The Ties That Bind Project.
Photo: Alison Miles

What is Creative Communities?

Creative Communities is a partnership initiative between the Creative Ireland Programme and Ireland's 31 local authorities, supported by the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport, and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

The Creative Communities pillar within the Creative Ireland Programme harnesses the potential of local authorities to deploy creativity as a strategy for wellbeing, social cohesion and economic success.

Each local authority has a Culture and Creativity Team, led by a Director of Service, that delivers the Creative Communities initiative in their area. This team is the cornerstone of Creative Communities as it brings together expertise from across the entire local authority.

What is the Shared Island Initiative and how does it link with Creative Communities?

The Government's Shared Island initiative aims to harness the full potential of the Good Friday Agreement to enhance cooperation, connection and mutual understanding on the island and engage with all communities and traditions to build consensus around a shared future.

The objectives of the Shared Island/ Creative Ireland initiative are:

- 1 Connect people-to-people, community-to-community. Deploy culture and creativity – innovatively and collaboratively – as a strategy for wellbeing, social connection, or local economic development;
- 2 Enable communities, working with artists and the wider cultural and creative sectors to experience creativity through the lens of their counterparts, and ensure mobility of people across the island;
- 3 Enhance broader community and civic understanding of the value of consensus amongst communities around a shared future, through the lens of cultural and creative engagement;
- 4 Ensure that initiatives are planned collaboratively on a Shared Island basis, to generate tangible and sustainable legacies into the future.



*Birds of a Feather project.
Photo: Emilija Jefremova*

Where we have come from – Creative Communities on a Shared Island 2023-2025

The first Creative Ireland Shared Island grants totalling €1.5 million are detailed [here](#). They enabled partnerships between local authorities, cultural and creative organisations, and community groups across the island of Ireland to co-design and deliver projects.

The evidence gathered to date highlights how creativity serves as a powerful and multifaceted tool for dialogue by creating safe, accessible, and non-confrontational spaces where diverse groups can connect, share experiences, and build mutual understanding.

This **Creative Communities on a Shared Island** scheme builds on this experience and the expertise of local authorities' existing strategic north-south and east-west (Ireland-Britain) ambitions to develop them into a collaborative network across the island of Ireland to recognise and utilise the inherent creativity of all who live on the island of Ireland. We welcome projects that focus on the new [Shared Home Place](#) initiative.

Duncairn Creative Collective
Photo: Stanislav Nikolov



What do we mean by Creativity?

Creativity involves innate human abilities and learned skills. Everyone has the capacity for creative engagement and expression; and this experience is an act of personal fulfilment. The capacity of individuals and organisations to transcend accepted ideas and norms and, by drawing on imagination, to create new ideas that bring additional value to human activity.

Relevant fields of activity may include, but are not limited to:

- Animation
- Architecture
- Augmented & virtual reality
- Circus
- Coding
- Creative Digital Technology
- Creative writing
- Comedy
- Cultural heritage
- Dance (all genres)
- Design (all disciplines)
- Digital games
- Fashion
- Film
- Literature
- Multi-disciplinary arts
- Murals
- Music (all genres)
- Podcasting
- Street Art & Spectacle
- Storytelling
- Theatre
- Traditional arts
- Visual arts

Projects can utilise a range of different creative disciplines/ artforms across its lifetime.

Who can apply?

The Creative Ireland Programme invites applications from local authority Culture and Creativity Teams in Ireland working in partnership with local or national community, cultural and creative organisations in collaboration with North-South and/or East/West (Ireland-Britain) partners.

The lead applicant must be a local authority based in Ireland. Applications with both East/West (i.e. England, Scotland and Wales) as well as North/South dimensions are welcome. Applications should ensure that funding is shared fairly with partners with meaningful activity with North-South and/or East/West (Ireland-Britain) partners.

Partners can include:

- Arts and cultural organisations or institutions
- Creative organisations, networks and collectives including all-island networks
- Public sector bodies, including local authorities in Northern Ireland, or established networks
- Charities or not-for-profit organisations
- Social enterprises
- Community groups and networks
- Business, commercial companies
- Philanthropic and research bodies including universities
- Communities of place **and** communities of practice
- Individuals with a local authority (in Strand 3 only)

What are we looking for?

The proposals should meet the objectives below either by building on existing local authority networks or relationships, or innovating to create new local authority-led community/creative collaborations:

- Connect people-to-people, community-to-community.
Deploy Culture and Creativity – innovatively and collaboratively
- Enable communities, working with artists and the wider cultural and creative sectors (see definition later in the document), to experience creativity through the lens of their counterparts, and ensure mobility of people across the island with including North-South and/or East/West (Ireland-Britain);
- Enhance broader community and civic understanding of the value of consensus amongst communities around a shared future, through the lens of cultural and creative engagement;
- Ensure that initiatives are planned collaboratively on a shared island basis, to generate tangible and sustainable legacies into the future.

We want to see creative projects that will enhance cooperation and collaboration between communities of place and or practice, recognising that culture and creativity are essential to sustaining and developing vibrant communities.

Principles and Values

The principles and values of **Creative Communities** should be used as a reference point for developing project concepts:

- i Broaden access to, and participation in, cultural and creative activities locally.
 - ii Use Culture and Creativity as a catalyst for collaboration and innovation.
 - iii Strengthen the capacity of Local Authorities to integrate Culture and Creativity across place-making, regeneration, renewal, and the development of vibrant, creative, and sustainable places.
 - iv Investing in Culture and Creativity to support environmental, social, and economic returns that help deliver local authority agendas – from local and regional, to national and international.
 - v Build on the agility and integrated approach of Culture and Creativity Teams in local authorities to sustain further delivery of targeted collaborative programmes.
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Funding

There are three strands of funding available during the period 2026–2028. Local authorities in Ireland may apply under all three strands:

Strand One

Grant funding up to €250,000 each will be awarded to a maximum of three large-scale proposals. At least one grant will be awarded to a partnership specific to the border region (i.e. involving one or more of the following local authorities: Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth). One application in Strand One will be considered for each lead local authority, however you may be included as part of a collaboration led by another local authority.

Strand Two

Proposals are being sought for up to four medium scale projects. Grant funding up to the value of €150,000 for individual local authorities in Ireland is available. Two applications led by local authorities can be submitted;
you may be included as part of a collaboration led by another local authority

Strand Three

Proposals are being sought for up to five small scale projects. Grant funding up to the value of €50,000 for individual local authorities in Ireland is available. Two applications led by local authorities can be submitted;
you may be included as part of a collaboration led by another local authority

The timeframe for project delivery is May 2026 to November 2028.

How is Funding Allocated and Administered?

Funding will be offered to local authorities to administer under the current 5 year Service Level Agreement with specific outputs added to an appendix to the Service Level Agreement.

The Creative Ireland Programme is administered through the Department of Culture, Communications, and Sport. The administration of the grant must adhere to Circular 13/2014 – Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds. Grantees should read and familiarise themselves with this circular before commencing.

How to Apply Online

- Applications can be made by completing the online application form at <https://creativeireland.submit.com> **no later than 1pm, Friday 27th February.**
- All personal data you submit to us as part of the application process, will be processed in accordance with [Department's Privacy Policy](#).
- NOTE: The below will not be considered:
 - Applications received after the above deadline
 - Application submitted by post, e-mail, hand or courier
 - Applications with a status of 'draft' at the closing date and time

Using The Application Portal

- Clarifications and additional information will be provided on the application portal.
- Your application form can be saved in draft on the online portal and returned to later.
- If you need to navigate away from your current page, please ensure that you have saved your progress.
- Upon submission, you will receive an email advising that your application has been received.

Selection Criteria

The applications will be assessed by an evaluation panel and assessed against the criteria below. This is a competitive fund, and we expect there to be a large volume of high-quality applications. Unfortunately, we will not be able to fund all projects for which we receive applications.

It is our desire to produce a balanced programme with representation from across the island. We are looking for projects which are unlikely to receive funding under other schemes – instead we look to support projects which are clearly driven by a creative and cultural approach, with strong creative partners that deliver on the aims of the Shared Island initiative.

Applications must provide details of both cross-border partners and set out how collaboration between these partners will strengthen North South, or East West collaboration.

Criterion	Marks Available
Community to Community Engagement and legacy	50
Creative and Cultural Approach	50
Partners and Project Team	50
Evaluation Plan	15
The overall project and its aims	15
Feasibility	20
Total	200

Important Dates

Phase	Details	Date
Fund Opens for Applications	The online application portal will open for submissions.	1st December
In-person Networking Session	Two in-person networking sessions will be held to provide an overview of the available funding. This will allow prospective project partner applicants to ask questions. Belfast: Creative Ireland Grant Information Session Dublin: Creative Ireland Grant Information Session	Belfast: 14th January 2026, The MAC Dublin: 22nd January 2026, Radisson Blu Royal Hotel
Clarifications	Queries can be submitted by email to creativecommunities@ccs.gov.ie . Please use the subject heading Shared Island Creative Communities . We will endeavour to update the FAQ on the application portal as queries come in, however all final clarifications will be made by this date.	January–February
Fund Closes for Applications	Only applications received by 1.00pm on this date will be considered.	Friday 27th February
Evaluation of Applications	The evaluation panel, including representatives from the Creative Ireland Programme and Shared Island Unit, together with independent experts, will evaluate applications according to the criteria above.	March–April 2026
Applicants Notified	All applicants are notified of the outcome of their applications.	May 2026



Artist Farm Walk
Photo: Brian Farrell

Budget Considerations

When creating the project budget, please make sure you have discussed individual fees and project budgets with partners. We expect all members of Project Teams to agree your budget prior to the allocation of funding from Creative Ireland. We encourage you to consider:

- **Project Management** – For Strand A and Strand B, it is required to engage a project manager. Associated costs should cover administrative (for example to cover project management and/or financial administration), as well as any contribution towards overheads or other reasonable costs required to deliver the project.
- **Remuneration** – We are looking for a transparent and competitive budget that remunerates individuals and organisations properly for their time. Fees for artists should be in line with recognised industry guidelines ([see information from the Arts Council on the remuneration and contracting of artists](#))
- **Materials** – We are interested in supporting low carbon solutions and environmentally friendly practice in project planning and delivery, as well as your choices of partners and suppliers.
- Given the important learning that will emerge from these projects, we recognise project **evaluation** and reporting will have a cost and therefore can be included.
- Communication and engagement costs are eligible expenses and should form part of the budget for this funding.
- We recognise that Shared Island projects will incur additional costs for project teams and project participants to travel and stay overnight as part of the project. This needs to be budgeted for at application stage.

Other Costs May Include

- Costs to convene all island/ cross-border community events
- Documentation and evaluation costs
- Networking and/or showcasing of initiatives awarded funding

Ineligible Costs

Please note that ineligible expenditure includes:

- Costs not directly related to the project
- Retrospective costs i.e. expenditure which has taken place prior to the project approval date
- Capital requests for building improvements to workspaces and venues
- Standalone conferences
- Youth projects*

*The Creative Youth Nurture Fund (2026–2028) is supporting children and young people.



How to apply

Applications can be made by completing the online application form at <https://creativeireland.submit.com/>

The portal will close at 1pm on Friday 27th February 2026.
Queries should be directed to: creativecommunities@ccs.gov.ie

Please include 'Creative Communities on a Shared Island' in the subject title of the email so that we can direct your query.

Birds of a Feather Project
Photo: Emilija Jefremova

Appendix I

Relevant Shared Island documentation for reference purposes

Government of Ireland

- [Creative Ireland Shared Island Evaluation Report](#)
- [Shared Homeplace](#)
- [Shared Island Initiative Report 2024 - Action on a Shared Island](#)
- [Collaborating on Healthcare on an All-Island Basis: A Scoping Study](#)
- [Shared Island Youth Forum Outcome Statement](#)
- [Shared Island Initiative Report 2022 – Action on a Shared Future](#)

National Economic and Social Council

- [Shared Island; Shared Opportunity: NESC Comprehensive Report Council Report No 157, April 2022](#)

ESRI

- [Sharing the Island: Economic and social challenges and opportunities: Evidence from an ESRI research programme](#)

The Future of cross-border cooperation in the arts

- [Policy Briefing and Executive Summary](#)

Cavan County Council and UCD

- [Building Capacity for the Cultural Industries: Towards a Shared Island Approach for Dance and Theatre](#)

International Journal of Nursing and Health Care Research

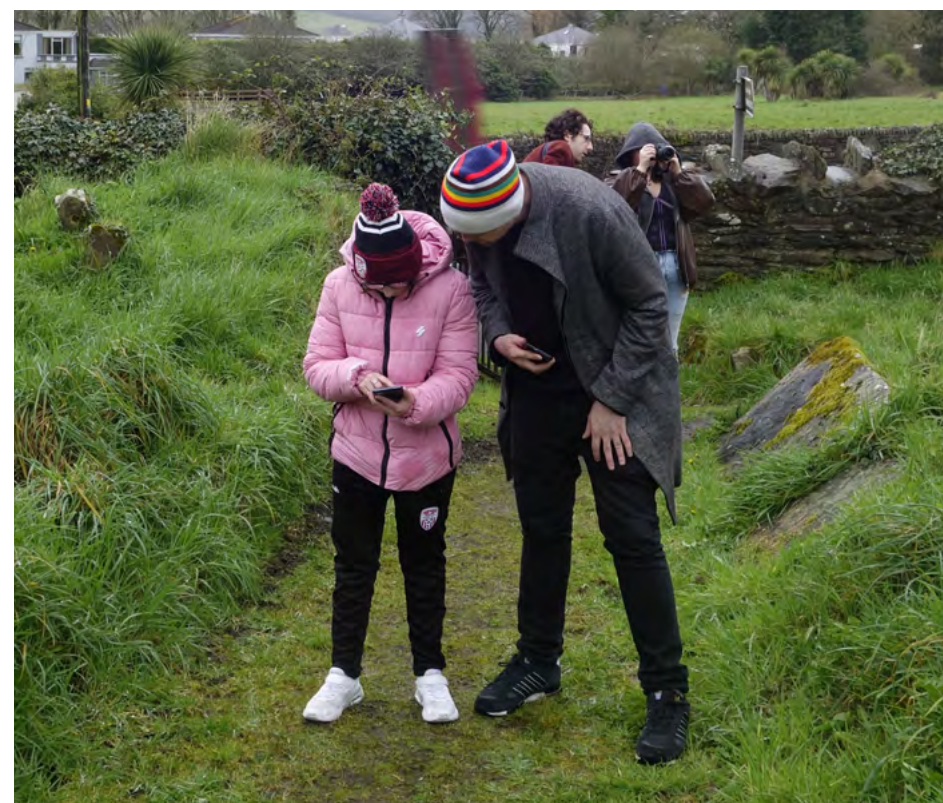
- [Evaluation of Social value of the Creative Ireland Health & Wellbeing Project – The Art of Life in the International Journal of Nursing and Health Care Research](#)

Donegal County Council & Derry City & Strabane District Council

- [Collaborative Audience Development](#)

iCommunity A Vision for Addressing Challenges on our Shared Island

- [Community and Voluntary Sector](#)



Shared Histories: Diverse Views Project.
Photo: Photo Museum Ireland.

Clár Éire Ildánach
*Creative Ireland
Programme*



An Roinn Cultúir,
Cumarsáide agus Spóirt
Department of Culture,
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#SharedIsland

Cover Image::
Birds of a Feather Project
Photo: Emilija Jefremova