

Commissioning Guidelines

To consider approaches to artist commissions opportunities that aim to:

Reduce artist labour in applying for commissions

Create inclusive access to opportunities

Include a variety of regions across the country

Attract a diversity of applicants

Invite relevant applications

Develop and maintain good working conditions

Manage expectations and requirements

Aid communication and understanding

Ensure outputs are agreed and met

Identify and assess outcomes

1.Outlining the Vision

The **vision** will **inform** the artist brief for the callout and the general direction of how the project is held. This should be informed by:

Previously successful commissions and projects

Specific expectations and requirements

Support systems for the artist to deliver

Relevant policies and frameworks



2. Creating a Brief

The brief is a one to two page **outline summary** of the project that can clearly and succinctly outline the aims, objectives, expectation and working processes.

It can also be redeveloped into a variety of documents for marketing and distribution. From this brief a call out for artists to submit interest can be made.

When creating the call for proposals consider key topics such as:

The critical engagement the project should have (aims & objectives)

The scale, nature and ambition of the project (scope)

Does it exist in the virtual space, live space or both (criteria)

Description of artist's role based on artists feedback

Details of the project team and their roles, responsibilities, and time allocated

Selection method and criteria

2.Creating a Brief

Artist's copyright and ownership of work

Outlining the markers of a successful delivery

What is the project not about? What kind of practice are you not looking for?

Delivery expectations (marketing guidelines, community engagement, etc)

**Collect key references that inspire and inform the project
Information about commissioner & project history**

Submission requirements & contact details

Timeframe of call out, selection and delivery (including inclusive timings for access)

Artist Fee (referencing nationally recognised rates of pay)

Production Budget (including expected meeting, planning and delivery time)

Consider inclusive wording and language

Links to any working policies (EDI, freelancers, etc)

Any public information should also be made available as an audio recording, and any submissions should be accepted in a variety of accessible formats.

2. Creating a Brief

Creating FAQ's

As project briefs and callouts tend to be concise documents there are often many questions left. Helping artists apply by preempting some of these with the information that the organising team has, will help them make an informed decision about applying.

FAQ's should be considered an evergreen document that can be added to as artists get in touch with various queries that had not been considered or were not totally clear. Have FAQ's ready when the call out goes live and include a level of transparency around expectations and delivering partners.

Distribution

Where the callout goes and who shares the opportunity is central to the success of applications. A call out may be geographically specific, or specific to a certain community of practice or group of people. All of these factors should be considered before sharing through the relevant networks.

There are 3 modes of distribution.



Developed through the Social Art For Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (SAFEDI) AHRC EDI research fellowship by Dr. R.M. Sánchez-Camus with support from Lead Fellow Dr. Amanda Ravetz and commissioned SAFEDI Fellowship artists.

The 3 modes of distribution.



The open invitation is a call out that goes nationally or globally, across listings and online platforms for distributions requesting applications. Where these are posted will reflect who applies. This list is not finite, and in between these options is a spectrum of distribution models that may be variations of these three. All briefs should include an audio track of the content to ensure access equity. All applications should allow submission in the form of written, recorded spoken, recorded video, or other means as outlined by artists with access needs.

Direct Invitation

A **specific artist**, or group of artists, is invited to submit a proposal for a relevant commission. This mode can be utilised when the delivery timescale requires targeted invitations, or where the project would benefit from the practice or experience of a particular artist. This requires previous in depth research into artists and practice before assuming a match is possible.

Limited Invitation

A **specific group**, sector, or types of artists are invited to develop and submit proposals in response to the artists brief. The selection is developed by the organisation and their partners. This requires previous in depth research into artists and practice before assuming a match is possible. A proposal development fee should be included.

Open Invitation

A **general artist callout** is issued nationally and/or internationally and advertised across various arts opportunities sites. Delivering to such a scale requires funding in place to support the selection and feedback process to all those who apply. Consider the quantity of submissions vs. staff capacity to respond. Calculate time spent per application against time allocated to recruitment match staff capacity.

5. Selection Criteria

Outlining the selection criteria will help the applicants know what they are being assessed against and also guide the selection panel to make their decision.

Every commission should have specific criteria against which it is being selected. Being transparent about the selection criteria will help create a more equitable process. For example, a selection criteria may choose 5 to 10 main targets that the applicant and proposal need to address and each application can be scored accordingly.

The amount of subjective discretion from each member of the selection committee can be addressed in their notes on the feedback. Development of the selection criteria would be integrated with the brief development as the two are born from and inform each other.

Selection criteria might include:

Artist's experience: quality and scope of work to date - concept and realisation

Artist's interest in collaboration or ability to work as part of a team

Matching of proposal to brief

Scope for community involvement or educational projects

Financial viability - achievable and realistic budget breakdown

Technical viability - production timeframe and plan development

Environmental sustainability

Aligned with commissioner & partners vision and ethos

Consideration into equitable access and addresses access needs.

Ensure that the application process clearly outlines the selection criteria.

6. Selection Committee members

A balance between internal and external members of a selection committee best represents a fair approach.

The names of those on the selection committee should be made public as part of the call out. This will inform how an artist may develop their proposal.

Committee members can be a mix of arts professionals with community members, and include a range of voices to make the selection process more equitable.

Appointing a Selection Panel

The appointment process can include a range of stakeholders who have an interest in the commission, a creative professional representative of the commission's sector, partner organisation staff, community representatives, any external representatives whose expertise would add equity and a Chair who can manage the various interests.

Where possible members of the selection panel should be involved from the earliest stage in the selection process and should see the stages through to completion. Query and address any access needs of the selection panel. Full information regarding the artist brief and selection process should be circulated to each panel member at the beginning of the process. If working with community members both as participants and in the selection process, there are various ways to delineate involvement.

Local people and/or communities can be involved as:

Collaborators in the artist's proposal

Subject matter of the artist's proposal

Hosts of an artist commission

Attending live events, presentations and exhibitions as part of the final delivery

Participating in the Selection Panel

Attending public events, meetings and workshops as part of the process

Participants in the development of artists work

Assessing criteria against the brief

7. Longlisting and Shortlisting

There are various modes of beginning to select the candidates. A successful and informed brief, callout and FAQ should **connect** with well matched candidates if it is clear who you are looking for and what is on offer.

If a call out has attracted too little attention or has had an overwhelming response that may not be totally relevant then it's worth considering how to better frame the offer, while being realistic about the budget.

Longlisting allows each member of the selection committee to include their chosen applicants to the shortlisted selection. The longlist generally includes some cross overs but often has some new and interesting perspectives.

From here begins the shortlisting, where the selection committee will choose an amount of artists to score. The amount of artists shortlisted will depend on the amount of commissions available.

Shortlisting artists are sometimes asked to come in for an interview or to develop their proposals further. Best practice would have funds available for travel and for any labour requested from the artists.

8. Notifying

Artists who have applied and not been selected for the shortlist should receive an explanation of the process and a general outline of how the criteria was applied. Avoid short replies that begin with the typical responses that are given. A unique and individual approach will reflect highly on the organisation and the project.

Artists who have been shortlisted and not been selected for the commission should have specific feedback given to their proposal. Often the selection is not about relevance or ability but due to other factors that may have favoured another proposal. Outlining these are important for learning and growth.

A good selection criteria feedback form from the selection committee will already have all the information necessary to give adequate feedback. If possible, best practice recommends that artists that are not selected can be also given advice on other places where their submissions may be welcome for funding.

9. Awarding

Artists who have been selected should be notified in two stages. First is the congratulatory email outlining why the proposal was selected, a clear offer, and a request to accept the offer. Once the artist has accepted the offer, the second step can outline what is needed to get started and address any access needs.

Avoid selecting an artist along with a list of tasks, expectations and work in the same communications exchange. These are expected parts of a commission and can come after the honours of the award have been given.



1. Return to the Vision

Review the original vision that informed the artist brief for the callout and the general direction of how the project will be held. This was informed by:

Previously successful commissions and projects

Specific expectations and requirements

Support systems for the artist to deliver

Relevant policies and frameworks

And now has new information including:

Who the selected artists are

What the access needs are

Who may be the participants or community involved

What learnings have changed the vision based on the process of recruitment

2.Roles and responsibilities

Artists

Create a role description

Outline support staff, processes and procedures

Identify main point of contact

How can the artist change the direction of the vision?

Is the artist's role collaborative? If they bring in other creative practitioners or community members, how are they credited and who clarified their role?

How does that artist engage with evaluation?

Outline any expectation to engage in other programming such as talks, events, workshops



2.Roles and responsibilities

Producers / Curators

Understanding and implementing policies, plans, strategies

Understanding scope of the project

Networking artists with other creative collaborators

Presenting the work to other stakeholders and outside parties

Drafting the artists' briefs

Organising the selection process

Reviewing and/or drafting budgets

Reviewing and/or drafting contracts

Reviewing and meeting statutory obligations (Health and Safety, Disability Discrimination Act, legal and insurance matters)

Liaising between artist, commissioner, local authority, community where needed

Supporting artist and any community participants wellbeing

Managing monitoring and evaluation strategy

Support in presentations of final delivery where needed

Ensuring adequate documentation

Organising PR & Marketing

3. Budget

Organisational costs

Developing project plan

Managing the recruitment and commissioning process

Managing community engagement

Arranging presentations of practice

Running auxiliary public presentations (talks, workshops, events)

PR & marketing



3. Budget

Access Costs

Access can include a huge variety of costs including:

childcare/ other caring responsibilities

Catering & refreshments

Travel costs

Communications costs: phone top ups/ hiring tablets/ laptops for people in digital poverty

Stipends for community members who need to take unpaid time off work to be involved in projects

Wellbeing sessions for artists / staff

Extra training /support / mentoring for people who are doing a commission / being on a panel for the first time

Supporting organisational staff to work flexibly- for example out of regular 9-5 m-f office hours so they can support artists / audiences who are commissioned/ involved whilst working/ studying/ caring during the day

Depending on length / capacity of project: building disability / LGBTQIA+ awareness / anti-racism training into projects / strands

Extra time for artists / staff to create image / audio descriptions for work

Accessibility software for websites etc,

Professional BSL, live closed captioning, audio descriptions, and more

Access costs should be applied to:

Core delivery team

Commissioned artists

Community participants

3. Budget

Shortlisting costs

Artists' design fees and expenses

Selection panel fees and expenses

Commissioning costs

Artists' (and any collaborator's) fees and expenses

Production fees

Fees to other experts (lawyer, bookkeeper, consultant)

Education and community programme

Community outreach expenses

Presentations of work

Documentation and evaluation

Contingency

Travel & Accommodation

PR & Marketing

Catalogue and/or website development

Basis of costs

Artists' recruitment and selection costs with reference to nationally recognised rates of pay.



4. Contracts

An Artist's Commission Contract will usually cover:

Names, definitions and contact details of commissioner and artist; and their subcontractors

Details of the commission, the design phase and the artists brief

Budget – artist's fee and payment schedule

Responsibilities of the artist

Responsibilities of the commissioner

Warranty that the artwork will be original

Intellectual property, copyright, reproduction rights and moral rights

Formal acceptance of work

Delivery of artwork – including timetable

Variations and terminations

Disputes and arbitration procedures

Schedule of work, including key dates that may impact on the commission

Final version of the Artist's Brief

5. Timetable / Schedule of Delivery

Multiple factors may change or disrupt the commission period. Effective communication between artist and commissioner should mitigate against any issues arising from these changes.

Main timetable events include

Developing the brief

Shortlisting

Interview and selection (Minimum 4 week submission period)

Community participation

Any anticipated date conflicts should be addressed in the artist brief.

Final delivery



6. PR & Marketing

Marketing plans are useful if expectations can be outlined in advance. These include:

Expectations of material and due date for submission

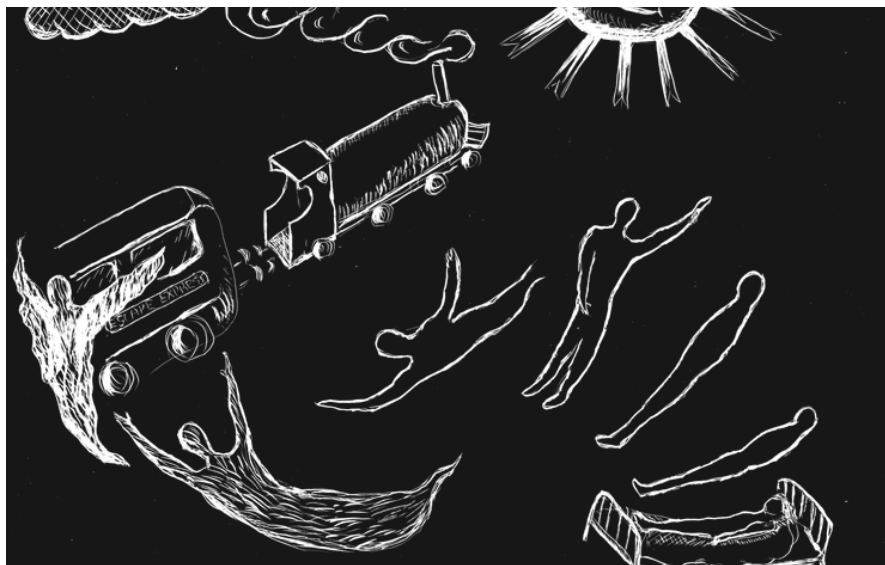
Review and approval of designed marketing material by the commissioned artist.

Platforms of distribution

Professional documentation where possible

7. Documentation and Archiving

All commissioned artists should have an outline of what is expected in terms of documentation. This includes representations of process and of final delivery. All photos and videos should be accompanied with photo credit, title where necessary and alternative text and image description.



8. Monitoring and Evaluation

Outlining the difference between the two and expectations of each are central to being able to report on the project.

Monitoring can include:

documentation reports,

written reports,

scheduled update communications via email/phone/video/text,
outlining milestones and how they are reached,

wellbeing check ins.

Evaluation can include:

meeting with an evaluator for a series of interviews,

producing a written report,

archival documentation of the process, outlining methodology and approach,

outlining what data is collected of participants,

outlining key learning,

outlining sustainability,

outlining future learning and next steps.