



**audio
content
fund**

**BIDDING
GUIDELINES
DOCUMENT**
February 2019

WHAT IS THE AUDIO CONTENT FUND?

The Audio Content Fund is a new scheme designed to provide funding to support the creation of original radio and audio production in the UK. The ACF is part of a pilot Contestable Fund, funded by the UK Government, to support the provision and plurality of difficult to produce UK public service content. The ACF is responsible for distributing a grant of up to £3 million.

Funding will be used to produce distinctive, public service radio programming that is traditionally more difficult to support on a commercial basis (such as documentaries, comedy, drama, events).

FUNDING PRINCIPLES

The Fund will accept applications from production companies, for audio content that is guaranteed to be broadcast on an Ofcom-licensed radio station (i.e. UK commercial or community radio stations that meet the funding criteria).

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document provides guidelines for production companies interested in bidding for funding in 2019. It outlines the evaluation criteria, and the process by which funding decisions will be made. Applicants should read these guidelines carefully, and use them to help prepare their applications before each funding round opens.

THE AUDIO CONTENT FUND IS FUNDED BY DCMS

The Audio Content Fund is administered by a not-for-profit company funded by a grant from the UK Government's Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Applications will be assessed by an independent panel of experts and judged against a set of agreed evaluation criteria.



**Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport**

KEY INFORMATION

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO BID?

Bids should come from production companies that are registered with Companies House (you will be asked to provide a company number during the application process). The production company must be separate from the broadcasting radio station.

WHAT CAN THE FUNDING COVER?

Funding is available for broadcast radio content, including the production costs of directly-related on-air promotional content at the discretion of the Panel.

Funding will not be available for advertisement slots and non-broadcast material (such as videos, websites, social media or printed material). Funding is not available for the staging of events, though it is available for content created at or via events.

HOW DO WE MAKE A BID?

Bids must be submitted via the Audio Content Fund website, which will be open for bids during set time periods in the year. In 2019, the bidding rounds will be:

- 1 April 2019 – 28 April 2019
- 8 July 2019 – 4 August 2019
- 14 October 2019 – 10 November 2019

Outside of these funding rounds, applications that are particularly time-sensitive – for example, short-notice commissions reacting to current events – may be considered if a substantive case can be made, at the Managing Director and Assessment Panel's discretion.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER WE'VE MADE OUR BID?

Once each bidding round has closed, there will be an assessment period of approximately 8 weeks (subject to volume of applications received).

The bids will be assessed against a set of criteria defined by DCMS (see Assessment Criteria section). This will initially be by the Fund's Managing Director (who will assess them for eligibility and basic compliance with the criteria), and ultimately by the Fund's Assessment Panel, who will make the final decisions about each funding round.

Following assessment, funding will be awarded to the successful bidders. A list of successful applicants, and the amounts funded, will be published on the Audio Content Fund website.

WILL WE GET FEEDBACK?

Feedback will be provided to unsuccessful applicants, but it will not be possible to enter into discussion about that feedback. At the end of each round, the ACF will publish a full list of programmes commissioned, including production companies and broadcasters, and the amount funded.

HOW MUCH MONEY IS AVAILABLE EACH YEAR?

In financial year 2019-20 the Fund will allocate grants in the region of £660,000, and this expected to be in proportionate amounts across three rounds.

For 2020-21 it will be around £1,000,000. Funding in 2021-22 would also be around £1,000,000 and is subject to the success of the previous two years.

ARE THERE ANY FUNDING LIMITS?

Applicants can bid for projects of any size – however, the Fund is subject to EU State Aid rules, which mean that no one bidding company can receive more than €200,000 during a rolling three-year period from all sources of public funding. You will therefore need to plan and prioritise your projects carefully. This limit does not apply to the broadcaster, just the production company receiving the funding.

CONTRACTS AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The Fund will not seek ownership of intellectual property regarding the content created and will not be recouping any profit from content produced. Successful applicants will be required to sign a funding agreement with the Fund, which will outline the agreed deliverables and require a level of reporting once the content is broadcast.

Producers should seek their own contractual agreement with their chosen broadcaster, particularly in regards to intellectual property rights and share of any revenue.

WHEN WILL WE RECEIVE THE FUNDING?

Approved bids will be paid 50% of the agreed budget on signature of a funding agreement, (which it is anticipated will happen within 4-6 weeks of the commission being approved). The remaining 50% will be paid after broadcasting, upon delivery of post-TX reporting.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Bids for the fund will be measured against eight eligibility criteria, as set out in the scoping paper published by DCMS in October 2018. There are three mandatory criteria, and five supplementary criteria. In your application, you will be asked to outline how you meet these criteria – your answer for each section will be limited to 250 words.

| MANDATORY CRITERIA | SUPPLEMENTARY CRITERIA |
|--|---|
| <p>We require all applications to score well in these criteria.</p> <p>Quality: Productions must be of broadcast standard, aspiring to meet the high-quality purposes and characteristics that are expected from public service content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can you demonstrate your track record of producing high quality broadcast content? Who are the experienced production staff and senior leadership that will ensure this quality? | <p>We would expect applications to score well against <u>at least two</u> of these supplementary criteria.</p> <p>Nations and Regions: Merit will be given to productions that are representative of the nations and regions, both on and off air, and which improve the provision of content which is reflective of the cultural identity of the UK's nations and regions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will the project represent the cultural identity of the Nations and Regions of the UK? Is the team based outside of London or in the Nations and Regions? |
| <p>Additionality: The Audio Content Fund is designed to support new content that does not already exist on the radio station, and would be difficult to produce without our intervention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can you demonstrate that the content is entirely new on the target radio station? How can you demonstrate that the content represents an increase in public service value for the network? | <p>Diversity: Merit will be given to productions that promote diversity both on and off air, and projects which tackle under-representation, including gender, disability, age, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Funding will not be awarded to productions targeting young audiences that promote negative stereotypes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will the project promote diversity on-air? How will you demonstrate the team's experience tackling under-representation? |
| <p>Audience Reach: In general, all content supported by the Audio Content Fund would be expected to deliver significant audience reach on analogue or DAB radio. This would normally mean content would be broadcast, and simultaneously streamed for free online, on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a national UK commercial radio station; a regional or large local commercial radio station that covers a whole city or county; or a network/partnership of several stations (which could include community radio). <p>Applicants must clearly demonstrate how significant audience reach would be achieved. This would usually be expected to be via the use of industry-standard RAJAR audience data. Other MRS-accredited survey data will be considered if RAJAR is not available.</p> <p>Content could be repeated over a discrete time period, in order to achieve this. It is our expectation that content will be broadcast in prominent schedule slots, and given significant on-air promotion around the time of TX.</p> <p>Content should also be made available to the entire UK via appropriate online distribution – though, on-demand listening cannot be counted towards the significant audience reach targets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What day(s) and time slot(s) will the content be broadcast on, and how many broadcasts will it get? What is the expected audience reach on broadcast radio, and what measurements will you use? What are the on-air and off-air promotion plans for the content? | <p>Innovation: Merit will be given to programmes that introduce new ideas and innovative approaches to public service output, and to programming in general, on the station concerned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will the project demonstrate innovative approaches towards production, storytelling or other features of programming? How will the project and its topics represent innovation for the broadcast station? |
| | <p>New voices: Merit will be given to initiatives that introduce fresh voices and enable smaller content producers to compete in the audio and broadcasting landscape.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will the project introduce new voices, perspectives and ideas to the public service landscape? Will the project be produced by staff who are relatively new to the industry, or from a smaller company (e.g. under five people)? |
| | <p>Plurality: Merit will be given to submissions that will result in an increase of public service content on the broadcast station, or within a genre of output. Submissions should demonstrate the impact they will have on the broadcast station's marketplace.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will the project increase the amount of public service programming on the target station? How will the project increase the amount of public service programming within its genre of output? |

SPECIAL CONDITIONS FOR CERTAIN TYPES OF CONTENT

Content in UK indigenous languages: Up to 5% of awards will be assigned to content presented in UK indigenous languages. Examples of such languages are Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, Irish and Ulster Scots – though this is not an exhaustive list. Applications will be assessed with the support of relevant experts. The impact on the 'Audience Reach' criteria will be considered when assessing this type of content - submissions will need to demonstrate how content can reach the relevant audiences, rather than necessarily reaching large audiences.

Content to be broadcast on Community Radio: Community Radio stations should endeavour to form networks or partnerships in order to increase the potential reach of funded content. The impact on Audience Reach will be considered when assessing programming to be broadcast in this way - submissions will need to demonstrate how content can have a significant impact within communities. Should appropriate audience reach data not be available, evidence demonstrating the equivalent impact of the station in the target community may be accepted, at the discretion of the Assessment Panel (for example, through evidence of delivery of key commitments required by the Ofcom licence, or through established training programmes or extensive charitable work).

OTHER DOCUMENTS WE WILL REQUIRE

Budget Breakdown: All applications must be accompanied by the Fund's mandatory budget form, providing a breakdown of how the funds will be spent on the production. You can download a copy of this form from the Audio Content Fund website. All projects will need to demonstrate value for money, and should represent industry-standard prices.

Guarantee of Broadcast letter: All applications must be accompanied by a letter from the broadcast radio station, outlining the commitment to transmit the programme as described in the application. This must be on the radio station's letterhead, signed by the responsible person, and supplied as a PDF file.

AFTER PRODUCTION AND TRANSMISSION

Post-TX reporting: All successful commissions will be required to submit a report to Audio Content Fund after the content has been broadcast. This report will be based on a pro-forma, and will include details of the times and dates of broadcast, relevant audience figures, confirmation of how the funding was spent, and other evidence of how the criteria were actually met in the content as broadcast.

Copies of the funded content: All successful commissions will be required to submit a copy of the commissioned content, which may be used for promotional purposes.

Promotional material: The Fund will also require any accompanying promotional material (logos, photos etc) which may be used online and in print for promotion.

CONTACT

If, after reading this document, you have any further questions about the process please contact us at info@audiocontentfund.org.uk