



Invitation to tender for Evaluation of the Blueprint Programme 2022-2026

July 2022

About Blueprint

Arts & Business NI are currently delivering *Blueprint*, a five year capacity and financial growth programme to support small to mid-scale artistic and cultural companies in Northern Ireland. The aim of the *Blueprint* programme is to help these organisations in NI become more financially sustainable with a more diverse range of income sources.

The founding principles of *Blueprint* are based on supporting investment in driving transformational change within the arts and cultural sector in NI with the support of both private and public funders.

Blueprint uses a fusion of capacity building training, mentoring, masterclasses, cohort learning sets and capitalisation investment to meet a gap in current provision. There are several strands to the programme including training and development, the issuing of grants and working with policy developers and funders to support changing the eco system of arts funding in Northern Ireland.

It will support and develop a cluster of organisations, investing in them over a five year period to strengthen long term financial sustainability. They will be supported through a pipeline that will enable them to develop a commercial product or service that they can take to market, or enable them to simply try a new fundraising approach that they have not tried before.

Throughout this programme learning will be captured and a pool of resources developed that can be shared with a wider cultural audience.

You can read more about the detail of the Blueprint Programme in our [Online Blueprint Brochure](#)

Blueprint Programme at July 22

As of July 22, we have completed Phase 1 of the programme.

This phase ran from January 22 – June 22 and included 30 organisations who completed six training days, participated in group learning and received additional advice and support through a dedicated mentor. Phase 1 laid the foundations for building long-term financial strength, looking at topics such as creative resilience, leading change, building financial sustainability and purpose-driven governance.

In August 22, 15 organisations will be selected from the group to continue with Phase 2. They will be supported over the remaining four years to develop and build their financial resilience.

Across these four years the 15 companies will receive additional training via masterclasses, and continue to receive tailored mentoring and specialist technical assistance. In addition they will work



with other participants to share learning through peer learning sets. The organisations will be able to access a range of investment grants over the remaining four years for research and development, capacity and capitalisation. These investment grants will help support the participating organisations to build a strong balance sheet for the longer term through increasing income and building reserves.

Strategic Aims

The strategic aims of the Blueprint Programme are to:

- Strengthen Organisations' Balance Sheets
- Diversify income from non-public source
- Strengthen skills within cultural organisations
- Facilitate and create platforms for collaboration
- Advocate for adaptive and long term financial resilience in the Arts ecology in NI

Evaluation Objectives

Overall Approach

Arts & Business NI wish to appoint an evaluator/evaluation team that will help us achieve the strategic aims of the Blueprint Programme.

The successful candidate will be required to tell the story of the Blueprint Programme as a whole, drawing together lessons from each of the organisations involved in the programme and provide the quantitative and qualitative data that will allow us to influence arts policy and funding practice.

The evaluation should be delivered in a collaborative relationship with Arts & Business NI. As this is a pilot programme introducing a new concept of funding in Northern Ireland, we expect the evaluation process will be developmental, iterative and formative. We welcome an approach with learning constantly feeding back into the programme. Innovative methodologies and approaches will be welcomed. We are happy for the evaluator to refine and define the evaluation learning questions with us and we hope they will inform our thinking and provide recommendations throughout the programme.

We are keen to build on the learning from this programme and would like to make public as much of this as possible. We would welcome a range of innovative ideas about how we can communicate findings throughout and at the end of the evaluation.

Key Objectives

We are keen to develop this in partnership with the appointed evaluation however some key objectives are:

- To evaluate the immediate and long-term impacts of the programme on the arts and cultural organisations.



- To identify key learning that is emerging, especially around what people are doing, or could do differently and create regular, accessible and meaningful reports that will enable partners to identify and understand any key themes and shared challenges.
- To identify how Arts & Business NI can embed key learning from the Blueprint Programme into their core work and delivery beyond the end of the current programme.
- To identify any possible improvements to the support and development training provided through the programme, and make appropriate recommendations to ensure it remains responsive to the needs of the participants.
- To develop and deliver innovative methods of capturing and sharing the stories and learning emerging, ensuring that these can be shared with arts and non-arts funders interested in working with the arts organisations.
- To design and implement an evaluation framework the four years of the Blueprint Programme that captures the progress and development of each of the 15 participating organisations against their own identified aims and outcomes as well as helping partners to understand the possible wider impacts of the programme.

Skills and Experience

We are looking to appoint an evaluator with the following set of skills and experience:

- Relevant experience delivering collaborative, iterative and progress-based evaluation processes.
- Relevant experience working with organisations to support and develop their own learning and skills development in the context of evaluation.
- Knowledge of arts-based funding and financial development programmes and research projects both nationally and internationally.
- An understanding of the challenges faced by arts organisations working in Northern Ireland
- Experience of developing more accessible and visual approaches to the sharing of stories and learning.
- Experience of planning and producing impact reports, drawing out common lessons and making recommendations for a variety of audiences

Timeline and Budget

The evaluation element of the programme will run from October 2022 – March 2026
The maximum budget for the evaluation within this timeframe is £65,000 (inclusive of VAT where applicable).

While we aim to ensure that funds are used in an appropriate and productive way, we will not be appointing an evaluator on the basis of the lowest tender.



Criteria for award

Selection will be based on the following criteria and weighting:

Details of proposed methodology	50%
Experience of delivering an evaluation of a programme costing £500,000 within the past 3 years	15%
Experience of evaluating a learning and capacity development programme	15%
Experience of working in the arts and cultural sector	10%
Value for money	10%

Proposal

Please include the following information within your proposal, clearly setting out responses following the numbering below:

1. A detailed description of how you would approach the work and deliver the support, including suggestions for evaluation models and proposed outputs.
2. A description of your knowledge and experience of the arts sector both within and outside NI.
3. A timeline for the work, indicating when you would plan to deliver different activities. This should include key milestones in the project and deliverables against each of these. We will welcome submissions that allow for a planning and development period.
4. A detailed budget for the period October 2022 – March 2026 including all costs, expenses and VAT, specifying all day rates, the number of days proposed and the cost of particular activities.
5. Details of the staffing you propose. A description of the team's skills which outlines how you meet the skills requirements.
6. Details of how you will project manage the commission and quality assure your work.
7. An overview of your experience and/or your organisation: charity, company or other reference or registration number; summary annual income and expenditure for the 2021-2022 financial year; projected income for 2022-2023; membership of trade bodies, kite marks or awards relevant to this contract.
8. References and examples of 2 previous similar projects.
9. A statement on how you would ensure compliance with GDPR regulations.
10. Any other relevant information that will assist us in our decision.
11. Your contact details, including email address and phone number.



Timeframe and Tender Process

If you have any questions regarding the Blueprint Programme or technical questions regarding the evaluation tender, please get in touch with Sarah Jones s.jones@artsandbusinessni.org.uk by 26th August.

Proposals should be submitted to s.jones@artsandbusinessni.org.uk by Friday 2nd September 2022.

If interviews are required applicants will be informed on Friday 9th September with interviews taking place the following week.

Arts and Business NI

Arts & Business NI (A&B NI)'s commitment as an organisation has always been to help sustain and strengthen the arts and cultural sector in NI. Working with the sector on entrepreneurial approaches to income generation is an important aspect of our work. Underpinning our work is also our belief that there is a real imperative for us all to look at how we work together to secure the future of a strong and culturally rich Northern Ireland.

Operating successfully in NI for over 30 years, we provide practical intelligence and vital earnest support and advice to help cultural organisations to strengthen governance, improve strategic business planning and have a more diverse income model. We utilise our networks and intelligence to help the Arts navigate the pathway to improved financial sustainability in a way that doesn't jeopardise or compromise artistic integrity, supports artistic practice and sustains growth.