

Creative Proposals

Artists Professional Development + Mentoring

Presented by :: FINGAL Arts Office

with :: Annette Moloney :: curator + commissioner + collaborator

Thurs 6 Feb 2025

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Some Do's + Don'ts of Writing Proposals

Admittedly, writing proposals can, at times, be challenging and time consuming for Artists.

It's not always easy to communicate an early-stage idea, and it can take time and effort to convert a blank A4 sheet into a clear and creative proposal that will, hopefully, capture the imagination of a Selection or Assessment Panel, generally made up of fellow Artists. On top of that our arts practices are constantly changing and evolving, which leaves us with the challenge of having to renew and refresh how we communicate what we do. The following are some general tips and advice on writing proposals.

Assessment Process

Pay particular attention to the Selection or Assessment Criteria listed on the opportunity that you are applying for. The Criteria are generally included in the Artists Brief or Application Form. This is the main 'Exam Question' that you can try to address in your Proposal, by writing a few sentences on each one.

Ideally you should be able to reread your Proposal before submitting it and have these headings or criteria addressed within the information.

Fingal Artists' Support Scheme – 2025

Criteria For Assessment

- _ Artistic quality of the proposal – 50 points
 - _ The track record and potential of the applicant – 50 points
 - _ Feasibility of the proposal. Capacity to deliver the proposed activity – 20 points
 - _ Supporting material submitted – 30 points
- Total – 150 points

Other broad examples of Criteria might include:

- _ strength and clarity of idea
- _ originality and innovation
- _ artistic ambition
- _ connection or potential impact within the given context
- _ track record (or potential) of the artist
- _ other proposals and available resources
- _ feasibility
- _ criteria specific to the opportunity (required skills, training or experience, etc)

Sample Headings for Proposals

The following are some general headings or reminders of what you might need to include in your proposal. The headings are examples only, and might not suit your idea or your artform, so please feel free to creatively corrupt the headings in whatever way works best for you and your practice...

summary of your proposal (about 1-2 sentences) – start with a short and clear summary of your idea and what you propose to do. This aims to capture the Panel's attention. This sentence can be hard to write and is often best tackled as the end of the process of writing your Proposal

your idea – describe your idea in more detail (about / up to 200 words) – this should be clear and concise, not hidden in art speak

your intention for the project – what is your vision and goal for the project? How will it be developed within its specific context, etc (about / up to 200 words)

outline project plan – your proposed timeframe – what you will do and when

feasibility – consider and admit to what might go wrong (but what hopefully won't...) and how you might deal with this

potential impact within the context and public / staff engagement – this section gives you an opportunity to outline in more detail your intention for the project and how you plan to engage with any communities of interest or groups as the project develops. If your project is more technical or developed more in a studio or rehearsal context this information can be set out in the project plan section, as above

budget – include this as a spread sheet or table. Double check all 'Total' or 'Subtotal' calculations, the Panel will do the same, particularly where public funding is being invested

additional information – give more information on the connection between your proposed project and your arts practice. Is this project a continuation of previous research or the development of a new body of work? (Either one can be equally engaging for the Assessment Panel...)

your practice – give more information on your practice to date, similar to a short Artists Statement

documentation – some opportunities encourage artists to use whatever means 'to communicate your idea'. This might include text, images, mind maps or other formats. Support material could include specific online links to audio or video recordings, sample scripts or chapters, visuals, publications, etc

Do... **Supporting Documentation** – do add clear titles to your previous work in your proposal, including for example: your name | title of the work | short description, including materials, dimensions (metric), duration, context, etc. | year. If submitting images include an image list, with a small thumbnail image and the information listed above. When submitting a PDF that includes other artists work make sure to tell the Panel what page your work is on. That way the Panel jumps to your page and not another artist's...

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- Do...**
- Cover Sheet** – include a clear and eye-catching cover sheet with your proposal PDF, include information such as the opportunity or context you are applying for, your name, date, etc.
 - Header / Footer** – you could use the header / footer option in the document to add your name to each page. Generally, this information can be found under ‘page set-up’ or ‘header and footer’. This subtle information can help to remind the Panel which Artist the Proposal is coming from. (There is some footer information included on this Handout as an example).
 - Graphic Layout** – try to think of an attractive basic graphic layout to make your Proposal stand out from the many others submitted. A blank A4 sheet can be a dull and commonplace thing, until you put it in the hands of an Artist... Think of your Proposal as a small desktop-printed publication, or your own self-published catalogue, book or CD that represents you, your practice, your ideas, your research and the time that you invest in your work.
 - CV & Biog** – in your CV and Biog put your most recent experience first, outlining your experience as an Artist. Feel free to include other work and voluntary experience, if relevant, but place these in a separate section.
- Don't** – or some common pitfalls...
- ... submission of incomplete material – make sure to review the check list in the Artists Brief or opportunity. You could also add a cover letter stating what you have included
 - ... an undeveloped or too obvious an idea; an idea not connected to its context or too similar to previous work – unoriginal
 - ... an unconvincing proposal
 - ... submission of multiple proposals – uncertainty? Each must be clear and original
 - ... more historical than contemporary – lacks connection with today
 - ... more commercial than artistic – what is the artistic intention?
 - ... proposal has too much text or is too wordy, at the expense of other elements e.g. images, drawings, diagrams etc. Refer to your support material or documentation such as links
 - ... not enough detail in the proposal or too much irrelevant detail or information
 - ... lack of budget or no budget breakdown – this is essential when connected to public funding
 - ... title of proposal as Gaeilge or in other language with no translation
 - ... over embellishment or self-praise in a CV or Biog – do write outside yourself
- Finally...**
- It's not easy... We've all been there, with that sense as you submit your Proposal that *'I hope I've included everything; I haven't forgotten anything and have done justice to the idea...'* It's part of the process of imagining yourself as an Artist working in the given context. **TIME** is a key factor in the development of clear and creative proposals. This allows for research, drafting, proofing, editing, developing support material and, finally, submission. Ideally get someone else to read your proposal at draft stage, a fellow artist or maybe a non-artist, to make sure it's clear and doesn't lead the Selection Panel in the wrong direction. Keep an eye on your time management and try to win in the battle against procrastination...
- Fingal Artists' Support Scheme 2025**
- Fingal County Council is pleased to announce the 2025 edition of the Fingal Artists' Support Scheme. This funding stream offers professional artists the opportunity to apply for up to €5,000 to support travel and professional development opportunities, a residency, or towards the development of work. The scheme is designed to nurture and advance the practice of individual professional artists in Fingal and is open to practitioners at all career stages working in the disciplines of music, visual art, drama, literature, film, and dance.
- Eligibility Criteria:
- Applicants must have been born, have studied, or currently reside in the Fingal administrative area.
 - Applicants must be over 18 years of age.
 - Projects or initiatives must take place between 1st May and 31st December 2025.
 - Only one application per artist is permitted.
 - Previous recipients of this award are welcome to apply again.
- Application details:
- The closing date for applications is Friday, 21st February 2025, at 4PM.
 - Submission must be made online through the Submit platform.
- Please read the Fingal Artists' Support Scheme Guidelines for Applicants 2025 [here](#)
- For further details or to apply visit <https://submit.link/3df>
- For additional assistance, please contact the Fingal Arts Office at artsoffice@fingal.ie
- <http://fingalarts.ie/fingal-arts-office/bursaries-funding-residency-schemes/fingal-artists-support-scheme-2025/>