

Visual Artist & Craft Maker Awards

(VACMA)

Information Session

Ideas / Mentoring / Exploration / Development
Creativity / Opportunity / Support / Practice / Skills
Presentation / Experimentation / Research / Reflection



Creative Scotland is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland on behalf of everyone who lives, works or visits here.

Image: Scottish Sculpture Workshop. Photo by Ross Fraser McLean/Studio RoRo

We are:

- a funder
- an advocate
- a development agency
- an organisation that seeks to influence others

Photo: Emer Tumility, Indoor Games



Funding Overview

Creative Scotland distributes funding from the **Scottish Government** and the **National Lottery**.

With this, we manage **three key strands of funding**.

Multi-Year Funding (MYF)

- Three-year funding (2025-28) for cultural organisations
- Currently supports **251 organisations** working across Scotland

Open Funding

- Supports the development and delivery of creative activity and programmes of work
- Two strands: **The Open Fund for Individuals and The Open Fund for Organisations**
- Covers all artforms and the geography of Scotland
- Applications accepted throughout the year
- Individuals can apply for grants of £500-£50,000

Targeted Funding

- Supports projects and partnerships that address strategic needs
- Includes initiatives such as the **Youth Music Initiative (YMI), Culture Collective and VACMA**

What is VACMA?

**VACMA is a programme
of small grant schemes
designed to support
visual artists and craft
makers in their creative
and professional
development.**



Photo: Peacock Visual Arts by Neil Corall

**Supported by Creative
Scotland through
National Lottery
funding.**

**Delivered in partnership
with Local Authorities
and arts organisations
across Scotland.**

Image: Pigment 1, Colours of Oban,
Renuka Ramanujam, 2023. Photo by
Renuka Ramanujam



Working Across 24 Local Authorities

- Aberdeen
- Angus
- Argyll and Bute
- Ayrshire (North, South & East)
- Dundee
- East Lothian
- Edinburgh
- Fife & Perth and Kinross
- Forth Valley (Falkirk, Stirling & Clackmannanshire)
- Glasgow
- Highlands, Moray and Na h-Eileanan Siar
- North Lanarkshire
- Orkney
- Shetland
- South Of Scotland (Scottish Borders and Dumfries & Galloway)
- West Dunbartonshire

How Much Can I Apply For?

VACMA provides fixed bursaries of:

- **£500 Early-Career Bursary:** for artists and makers who have graduated within the past three years or those who can demonstrate experience of the public presentation of their work within the same timeframe.
- **£1000 Bursary:** for artists and makers who can demonstrate more than three years' experience of the public presentation of their work.

What Can the Bursaries Be Used For?

VACMA bursaries can support a wide range of activities, including:

Training and learning

→ Professional courses, workshops, or peer-to-peer learning

Mentoring and skills development

→ Working with someone to develop your skills and ideas

Exploring new ideas

→ Testing new techniques, materials, or creative approaches

Research and development

→ Investigating ideas for a new body of work

Sustainable approaches

- Experimenting with renewable materials, circular design, and low-impact processes

Residencies

- Tailored to support your creative and professional development

Equipment

- Where it supports experimentation and the development of practice

Creating new work

- Additional support for exhibitions or public presentations

...and more

Deadlines

- **Autumn deadline:** 5pm on **21 October 2025**
- **Winter deadline:** 5pm on **3 February 2026**

Please check with your local scheme to see which deadline(s) they are running.

Criteria

(What we are looking for)

Commitment to Practice

We look for evidence that you are actively developing your creative practice. This includes:

Your CV

- List the most recent activities first
- Remove any non-art-related experience

Examples of Work

- Choose high-quality, recent examples
- Ensure they support your written application
- If working in a new medium, include 1-2 examples of early experimentation

Written Responses

- Use the application to expand on your CV by sharing your motivations, interests and key achievements

Creative Development

We want to understand how the bursary will support your growth as an artist or maker. This includes:

Reason for applying

- Have a clear reason for applying
- Tell us what you want to do and how it will develop your skills and ideas

Relationship to previous work

- Describe how the proposal builds on your past experience

Experimentation

- Explain the difference it will make to your practice
- What change do you want to achieve?

Clear Project Plan

We want to see that your proposal is well thought out and achievable. This includes:

Timeline

- Clearly outline the key stages of your activity
- Allow at least **8 weeks** from the deadline before starting

Risk

- Identify potential risks and explain how you'll mitigate them

Letter of support

- Required if applying for an exhibition or residency you've been invited to participate in
- Should outline the host organisation's contribution

Self-Initiated Exhibitions

- Include a clear plan for reaching audiences
- Use accessible venues

We will also consider

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

Creative Scotland and VACMA Partners are committed to supporting Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

- Projects do not need to have an EDI focus, but you should **respect these principles** when designing your activity
- If you have **experienced barriers** to progressing your practice you can tell us - this will be considered during the decision-making process
- When demand is high, we will prioritise support to **newer applicants** and those who have had **fewer development opportunities**

This helps ensure the fund benefits a broad and diverse range of artists and makers.

Environmental Sustainability

Creative Scotland and VACMA Partners are committed to supporting and encouraging environmentally sustainable ways of working.

- Projects don't need to have an environmental focus, but you should consider the environmental impact of your activity and **take steps to mitigate** this where relevant
- VACMA can support artists and makers to **explore environmental sustainability** through their practice
- When demand is high, we will prioritise projects that actively consider and work to **reduce their environmental impact**

This helps ensure the fund supports our aim to promote and encourage good practice.

Other Important Information

Budget

Budgeting is an important part of any project. Applicants should be **realistic** about what can be achieved with the bursary amount.

As Bursary Levels are fixed, a breakdown of costs is not required

→ however you should make sure your activity is feasible within the bursary amount

Partnership income is not a requirement of the fund

→ but if your project or activity costs more than the bursary, you must explain where the additional income is coming from

VACMA cannot be used as partnership funding for other Creative Scotland programmes

→ including the Open Fund for Individuals and Stephen Palmer Travel Awards

Personal Access Costs

Personal Access Costs are **project related costs** that help to **remove barriers** for you or a key collaborator (e.g. a mentor or a tutor). Personal Access Costs are additional to the bursary.

You can request support if you or a key collaborator are:

- d/Deaf
- Disabled
- Neurodivergent
- Living with chronic illness or a long-term health condition
- Holding caring responsibilities

Examples of eligible costs include:

- A BSL interpreter
- Specialist equipment or software
- A Personal Assistant for a disabled person
- One-off or short-term childcare costs

You can request Personal Access costs **in the application form**.

Applying to VACMA

Access Support

Access Support contributes to the cost of services that help applicants overcome barriers to applying for funding.

Support is available to individuals defined as disabled under the **Equality Act 2010**, including:

- d/Deaf or hard of hearing
- Disabled
- Living with a chronic or mental illness
- Neurodivergent (e.g. dyslexia, autism, ADHD)

To find out more and request support:

- Visit the **Access Support** section on Creative Scotland's website
- Contact Creative Scotland **ideally 4 weeks before the deadline**

How to Apply

Make sure you read the VACMA Guidelines and understand the fund criteria.

Accessible formats are available on the Creative Scotland website.

To apply:

- ➡ Visit to your **local partner's website** and download the application form
- ➡ **Answer all questions** on the form
- ➡ Submit your completed application for **before the deadline**, including:
 - Your CV
 - Examples of work
 - Equalities Monitoring Form
 - Letters of confirmation/support (where relevant)

Decision Making Process

All applications go through an **initial eligibility check**

Eligible applications are reviewed at a **panel meeting**

- panels include local partner representatives and arts professionals
- artists and makers often sit on panels

The panel will

- review your written responses and supporting material
- consider your application against the **fund criteria**

The panel will only use the application material

- no prior knowledge of you or your work is considered
- this is called **evidence-based decision making**
- it ensures that every applicant is treated **fairly**

You will receive a decision within **8-weeks** of the deadline.

What if I am unsuccessful?

If your application isn't successful, it's important to take time to **reflect on the feedback** provided - or request feedback if it's available.

Being turned down is not necessarily a reflection of the quality of your work, but rather the **strength of your proposal** compared to others being considered. You may have missed out due to poor quality documentation or a lack of clarity in your responses.

Many applicants have gone on to **reapply with a stronger, more focused application** after considering the panel feedback.

Use the experience to refine your proposal and try again.

Other Sources of Information and Advice

a-n The Artists Information Company

www.a-n.co.uk

Applied Art Scotland

www.appliedartscotland.org.uk

Artquest

www.artquest.org.uk

Craft Scotland:

www.craftscotland.org

Illustrated Freelancers Guide

www.creativescotland.com/resources/professional-resources/guidance-and-toolkits/the-illustrated-freelancers-guide

Primer Scotland - Resource for Visual Arts Graduates

www.creativescotland.com/resources-publications/guides-toolkits/primer-scotland

SCAN

www.sca-net.org

Scottish Artists Union

www.artistsunion.scot

Scotland's Workshops

www.scotlandsworkshops.com

Further information and support

For questions about:

- Eligibility
- The application process
- The guidelines or application form

Please contact **your local VACMA scheme**.

Find a full list of participating partners and links to individual schemes at: www.creativescotland.com/vacma

For enquires about other Creative Scotland funding programmes
email: enquiries@creativescotland.com

#VACMAScotland

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Working across Scotland to support artists and
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