

# Visual Artist and Craft Maker Awards Bursaries 2023/24

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**#VACMAScotland**

Guidance for applicants



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

Awarding funds from  
**THE NATIONAL LOTTERY®**

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## Background

Creative Scotland works in partnership to offer small grants to visual artists and craft makers for their creative development at all stages of their career. This guidance document is designed to support applicants and covers all the criteria and process but please use your local partner's application form to apply. For a full list of partners and schemes please visit [www.creativescotland.com/vacma](http://www.creativescotland.com/vacma)

These awards are supported by Creative Scotland through funding from the National Lottery in partnership with a range of local partners across Scotland. The schemes are managed locally by these partners.

## Funds available

The VACMA scheme offers two levels of bursaries and you should apply for the one that best suits your situation.

- **Bursaries of £750** (For applicants that have been practicing for over 5 years, regardless of whether they have gone through formal education or not).
- **Early-career bursaries of £500** (For applicants that have less than 5 years' experience outside of education/training, graduated in 2018 or later, or that have not studied art formally but have been practising as an artist for up to 5 years).

## Who can apply?

Visual artists and craft makers who can demonstrate a commitment to developing their creative practice and who are living, working or maintaining a studio space within the Local Authority area to which they are applying. Please contact your local partner for clarification if you need to.

## Examples of things that have been funded

- Researching a new body of work
- Experimenting with new materials
- Skills development and courses
- Artistic mentoring
- Masterclasses
- Residencies that have a clear selection process and support structure
- Additional support for making new work for exhibition
- Equipment where there is a clear rationale for how it will develop your practice and support experimentation.

## Exclusions

We cannot accept applications from:

- Students in full time education - **please see the VACMA FAQ for further detail regarding student eligibility**
- Projects/activities that have already started or are planned to start before the panel meeting date - **please allow 8 weeks from the deadline**
- Projects that include partnership funding from other VACMA or Creative Scotland programmes - **please apply to only one VACMA region for support**
- Community and/or educational projects
- Business development activities
- Filmmaking projects that fall outwith the visual arts context
- Illustrators or graphic designers who are working exclusively within a commercial context - applicants must be able to demonstrate that they are working within a visual arts or craft context
- Applications purely focused on marketing and websites
- Previous VACMA recipients that have not submitted their end of project report before the application deadline.

## What we are looking for (criteria)

We want to hear about your work, your ideas and your experience.

VACMA will give priority to applications that clearly show:

- **Commitment to practice** - your application material demonstrates an ongoing commitment to the development of your visual arts or craft practice.
- **Creative Development** - your application clearly describes the opportunity for development and how the bursary will specifically enable you to experiment and develop the critical and technical aspects of your work.
- **Clear project plan** - your application material shows that there are clear and appropriate plans in place to deliver the activity proposed.

## Commitment to Practice

The VACMA selection panel will consider your experience to date through the assessment of your overall application including your written responses, your CV and examples of work provided.

Your CV helps to show your experience and commitment to your practice. Put newest things first and take out any non-art related activities. This guide might help: [Artist CV | Art Quest](#)

Your supporting material/images should be carefully selected, in focus and of good quality in order to best show your work. Remember to include titles, dates, materials, dimensions and, where appropriate, the venue in which the work is shown.

**Make sure that your work is well documented.** The panel want to see your work clearly. Good and clear images show that you value your work and have a level of professionalism. If you are proposing to develop work in a new medium then you should consider how your choice of images support that. You may find this [guide to photographing your artwork](#) helpful.

Successful applicants will have demonstrated a level of commitment to their practice and will have achieved a body of work out with formal education. If you have been practicing for less than 5 years you may want to consider applying for the **early-career bursary**.

These bursaries aim to support artists at all stages of their career but please note that it is a priority for all VACMA partners to support new and diverse voices to become established in their practice. This means that if you have received funding from a VACMA scheme before we may prioritise support to newer applicants.

## Creative Development

Have a clear reason for applying. Describe the stage that you are at within your creative practice and how a bursary at this point will support your creative development and experimentation, for example, to support your ideas, research, skills and ability to create new work. Your artist statement may also be included to support your application.

Clearly written text will help us understand your work and what you are wanting to do. Think about how your proposed activity relates to your previous work, learning or long-term goals as this will help us to understand your application within a wider context.

## Clear Project Plan

We will look for evidence that your delivery plans are viable. Make sure you are realistic about the amount of time that it will take to deliver your proposed activity. Please note that we cannot fund any activity that takes place before the application decision date so you must allow at least **8 weeks from the deadline** before your activity begins.

We ask that you think about any risks that are attached to your project and tell us how you will mitigate them. If you have done any preparatory activity, such as identifying courses or contacting potential partners/collaborators it is useful to let the panel know about this.

For an exhibition or residency that you have been invited to do, you should include a letter of confirmation from the venue or host organisation detailing their contribution to the project.

If you are proposing to stage your own exhibition, the panel would expect to see evidence that you have considered the full scope of the activity involved and that you have a clear and appropriate plan in place for reaching audiences, including, where appropriate, the use of accessible venues.

You should also ensure that the activity you are applying for is feasible within the level of bursary applied for. It may sound obvious but please ensure that there is a clear connection and relationship between your written application, your use of budget/bursary and your images.

## Budget

As we are offering fixed bursaries, we are just asking for a summary of the overall income of your project/activity including, where applicable, any additional funds and in-kind contributions. Partnership income is not a requirement of the fund, however if the VACMA bursary is only covering part of your planned project/activity we will want to know how you are going to resource the rest of it.

These awards are funded by the National Lottery through Creative Scotland with a range of partners across Scotland. VACMA cannot be used as partnership funding for any other Creative Scotland funding programme (i.e. if you are applying to the Open Fund and VACMA for the same activity, this would be considered 'double funding').

## Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

We want to ensure that the culture and creative sectors better reflect the full diversity of Scotland today. We therefore want more people, from across all parts of society, to be able to access and take part in a range of artistic and creative activities - and also, for all who want to, to have the opportunity to work in the creative and cultural sectors.

Creative Scotland's EDI commitments are about fairness, and everyone having the opportunity to access culture and creativity. They are also about developing the necessary conditions for the creative activities we support to welcome all views and voices.

- Equality is about removing barriers
- Diversity is about supporting and reflecting different cultures in Scotland, enabling different voices to be heard
- Inclusion is about creating opportunities for people to work in, engage with, participate in, and experience arts and creativity throughout the country.

The VACMA programme is designed to create opportunities that will help people to progress their practice despite the barriers they may face. We want to know how the principles of equalities, diversity and inclusion have impacted on you directly and/or how you intend to support these principles through your work. For example, if you are unable to travel or participate in certain activities due to a health condition, disability, caring responsibilities and/ or geography, a bursary can support you to undertake research and access courses/support at a distance through online or other means. We will also consider equipment purchases where the equipment is not readily available or accessible.

Where applications are equally weighted, the Panel's decision will take account of the impact of funding in the context of these EDI principles and support will be prioritised to applications accordingly.

For further information, please see:

[Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion | Creative Scotland.](#)

## Environmental Sustainability

Creative Scotland is committed to using our work to ensure that Scotland's culture and creative sectors make an invaluable and significant contribution to addressing the climate emergency that is affecting us all, locally, nationally and internationally.

Our **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Plan** encompasses both mitigation (how we reduce our emissions) and adaptation (how we adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change). It sets out not only how Creative Scotland can address these challenges, but also how we define our organisation's role in supporting the culture and creative sectors to achieve their own climate ambitions. While we do not expect all projects to have an environmental sustainability focus, we do ask applicants to consider and articulate how they are responding to the climate emergency and the environmental impacts of the proposed activity.

For further information, please see:

**[Environmental Sustainability | Creative Scotland.](#)**

You may also find the following resources helpful:

**[Artists' Environmental Resource | Fife Contemporary Resources for Artists | Creative Carbon Scotland](#)**

## Digital

There has been a shift in the use of digital platforms and presentations, and we are aware that many artists and makers use digital technology to create and present their work. We are also aware that some people face barriers due to health conditions, disability, caring responsibilities and geography, and that digital ways of connecting can help to overcome this. As such we are supportive of online alternatives which open up opportunities for artists and makers to develop their practice.

We recognise that digital exclusion exists across areas of the population, particularly for those who already face other barriers to participating in the arts. To help you think about these areas and, where applicable, the safety of others you may find these resources useful:

**[Building an Online Audience | The Space](#)**

**[Designing for accessibility is not that hard | UX Collective](#)**

**[Creating Safety | Creative Scotland](#)**



## How to apply

Applicants should use the application form for their local area. Completed application forms must be signed by the applicant, at this time we ask that you include an electronic signature or send a scanned version of the signatory page. Please ensure that the format remains the same when completing your form.

**Application forms can be typed or handwritten.** If hand-written, it should be completed legibly in black ink.

*Please check with your local VACMA scheme as some partners are unable to receive postal submissions. With this being the case, hand-written applications may need to be scanned and emailed.*

Examples of previous work must be submitted with the application. **Please include up to six examples of recent work and list them on the Artwork Submission Form.** Whilst you can submit fewer, we encourage you to submit the full 6 examples as this helps the panel to gain a fuller understanding of your practice. You should select examples of work based on their relevance to your written application. Unless you are applying specifically for the Early-Career Bursary these should be examples of work from outside of education or training.

**Please send your completed application to the email address provided on the application form for your local scheme.** Examples of work from successful candidates may be copied and held for use in reports and publicity material.

## The Application Process

All applications go to a panel meeting where decisions are made on who is supported. The panel is usually made up of representatives of the local authority or partner organisation and arts professionals. We use panels to help us achieve a broader perspective on current practice and they may include a mix of artists, makers, curators, tutors or other arts professionals. Creative Scotland officers are regularly involved in the panels to bring a wider overview of developments at a national level. Panels change regularly to ensure a range of voices and knowledge.

In advance of the panel meeting, the panel will read and consider your written application. During the meeting, the visual and written material is reviewed and discussed against the criteria. The recommendations for awards are based on these discussions. The panel will only use the application material to make its decisions and members will not bring prior knowledge of you or your work into the decision-making process. We call this evidence-based decision making and it is designed to ensure that every applicant is treated equally. Please do not assume that a panel will know or have seen your work.

Alongside your application, you must complete an Equalities Monitoring Form. This provides us with essential statistical information so that we can understand who receives funding and any gaps. The Equalities Monitoring Form is anonymous and will be processed separately from your application. Data is managed confidentially, has no bearing on your application and is processed in accordance with Data Protection laws and GDPR. If you do not know some of the information or if you prefer not to provide it, you can fill in the 'Prefer not to answer' box. >

Each scheme is responsible for their own privacy notice that forms part of these guidelines and relates to the information you provide in your application and how it is processed. You should read this notice before submitting your application.

Applicants will be notified within 8 weeks of the deadline on the outcome of their application. You will be contacted if there is any change to this timetable.

### What happens if I'm unsuccessful?

These funds are competitive which means that not all applications that meet the criteria will be funded. If you are unsuccessful, you may be successful in another round so please do not be put off from applying again. If you are not successful, please take time to reflect on the feedback given or ask for feedback if available. If you do not understand the feedback or need more clarity you can call or email the person whose contact details will be on your letter. For example, you may have just missed out on receiving funding due to poor images or lack of clarity. Being turned down is not necessarily a comment on the quality of your work but rather the strength of your proposal compared to others being considered.

We have had experience of a good number of people being turned down in one round and then successfully reapplying with a stronger and more focussed application having considered feedback from the panel.

### Deadlines

**Autumn deadline: 5pm, Tuesday 24 October 2023**

**Winter deadline: 5pm, Tuesday 6 February 2024**

Not all VACMA partners run both deadlines, some will only have one deadline a year. Please check with your local scheme to see which deadline(s) they are running.

### Further information and support:

For questions regarding your eligibility or support with the application process, guidance or application form, please contact your local scheme. A full list of participating partners and links to the individual schemes can be found at [www.creativescotland.com/vacma](http://www.creativescotland.com/vacma)

If you have any general enquiries about VACMA or our other funding programmes, please contact our Enquiries Service.

You can do this by email, through our website or social media.

**Email:** [enquiries@creativescotland.com](mailto:enquiries@creativescotland.com)

**Web:** Fill out a form [on our website](#)

**Twitter:** Send us a tweet [@creativescots](#)

If you are a D/deaf BSL user, you can access our services with the Contact Scotland-BSL programme. Go to: [www.contactscotland-bsl.org](http://www.contactscotland-bsl.org) for more information.



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