audio content fund

BIDDING GUIDELINES DOCUMENT
v5 – 27ᵗʰ Mar 2020

WHAT IS THE AUDIO CONTENT FUND?

The Audio Content Fund is a 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 2020. 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 select your company from an official list 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. Funding cannot cover staff development or training. Funding cannot cover "pay to play" fees – we expect stations to broadcast the content free of charge.

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. The dates of current and future rounds are published on the "How To Bid" section of the website.

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. Bids that meet the criteria will then be seen 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.

HOW MUCH MONEY IS AVAILABLE EACH YEAR?

In financial year 2020-21 the Fund will allocate grants in the region of £1,000,000, and this expected to be in proportionate amounts across three rounds.

Funding in 2021-22 will 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.

WILL BIDS ATTRACT VAT?

Grant payments are outside the scope of VAT, so producers should not include VAT on the invoices that they submit to the Audio Content Fund.

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 future revenue.

CLEARANCES AND RIGHTS, INCLUDING MUSIC

Producers will be responsible for all clearances including music rights, which must be covered by the broadcasting station or included in the production budget.

WHEN WILL WE RECEIVE THE FUNDING?

Approved bids will be paid 100% of the agreed budget on signature of a funding agreement (usually within 4-6 weeks of the commission being approved).

CAN WE USE FUNDING FROM OTHER SOURCES?

Yes. You should declare any additional funding in your bid (e.g. sponsorship, branded content, broadcaster funding)

WHEN MUST THE CONTENT BE BROADCAST?

The content must be broadcast, and post-TX reporting delivered to the Fund, within 12 months of approval.

SHOULD WE CREDIT AUDIO CONTENT FUND?

The Audio Content Fund should have a short audio credit at the end of each piece of content, stating that the content is "supported by the Audio Content Fund"

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Bids will be measured against eight eligibility criteria set by DCMS, and two additional criteria set by the funding panel. <u>All answers are limited to 200 words.</u>

MANDATORY DCMS CRITERIA

<u>Quality:</u> Productions must be of broadcast standard, meting the high-quality purposes and characteristics that are expected from public service content.

- *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?*

<u>Additionality:</u> The fund supports new content that does not already exist on the radio station, and would be difficult to produce without our intervention.

- *How can you demonstrate that the content is entirely new on the target radio station?*
- *How can you demonstrate that the content is an increase in public service value for the network?*

<u>Audience Reach:</u> All content supported by the ACF is expected to have significant audience reach on analogue or DAB radio. This would normally mean content would be broadcast, and streamed for free, on:
o a national UK commercial radio station;
o a regional or large local commercial radio station that covers a whole city or county; or
o a network/partnership of several stations (which could include community radio).

Reach figures can include any repeats during the broadcast period. It is our expectation that content will be placed in prominent schedule slots, and given significant on-air promotion around the time of TX.

Content should also be made available to the entire UK via appropriate online distribution – though, on-demand listening will not be included in the reach figures.

For stations that participate in RAJAR, applicants will be asked to enter a broadcast plan – selecting timeslots and the number of weeks. Our system will use the latest survey to estimate reach based on the broadcast plan.

For stations that don't participate in RAJAR, we will estimate audience reach using the Ofcom Measured Coverage Area (MCA) of the station. Applicants will also have the opportunity to submit additional evidence.

- *In what day(s) and time slot(s) will the content be broadcast, and how many plays will it get?*
- *What are the on-air and off-air promotion plans for the content?*

SUPPLEMENTARY DCMS CRITERIA

<u>Nations and Regions:</u> 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 reflects the cultural identity of the UK's nations and regions.
- *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?*

<u>Diversity:</u> 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.
- *How will the project promote diversity on-air?*
- *How will you demonstrate the team's experience tackling under-representation?*

<u>Innovation:</u> Merit will be given to programmes that introduce new ideas and innovative approaches to public service output, and to programming in general.
- *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?*

<u>New voices:</u> Merit will be given to initiatives that introduce fresh voices and enable smaller content producers to compete in the audio and broadcasting landscape.
- *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)?*

<u>Plurality:</u> 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.
- *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?*

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA

<u>Audience Impact:</u> Describe how this project will provide value to its listeners. This is your opportunity to explain how your idea exhibits strong public service characteristics, and will improve listeners' lives.

- *How will it change what they do, think, learn or feel?*

<u>Restrictions as a result of Coronavirus:</u> Describe how you will deliver this project if restrictions on movement and guidelines on social distancing are extended into your planned production period.

- *Think about availability of contributors and production team, methods of recording content, and flexibility of your production and broadcast timeline.*
- *How will you give us confidence that your project is deliverable, if restrictions continue for some time?*

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. Evidence demonstrating the impact of the station in the target community will be welcomed (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. All projects will need to demonstrate value for money, and should represent industry-standard prices. Please see Appendix 2 for a copy of the form, and download links for Excel and PDF files.

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. Please see Appendix 3 for a template letter.

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

APPENDIX 1: APPLICATION TEMPLATE

All applications will be via the website at audiocontentfund.org.uk, which will have a clear step-by-step submission process. The following template lists all the information that the application process will ask for, in order to help you prepare your entries.

SUPPLIER DETAILS

- Main contact at supplier
  - Name, Job Title, Email Address
- Company Details
  - Registered Company Name
  - (Registered Company Number and Address will be auto-completed by look-up process)

BROADCASTER DETAILS (the following information is required per radio station)

- Name of Station
- Main contact at the station
  - Name, Job Title, Email Address
- Broadcast Details
  - Expected first TX date (dd/mm/yyyy)
  - Broadcast plan – if a RAJAR member, select your stations and timeslots using the timeslot picker, otherwise enter as free text
  - Audience reach – if a RAJAR member this is calculated automatically, otherwise enter any additional evidence as free text
- Guarantee of broadcast letter
  - Upload a document confirming the programme will be aired

CONTENT

- Content Details
  - Title of content
  - Short Description of Content (100 words)
  - Long Description of content (500 words)
- Format
  - Number of episodes (integer)
  - Average duration of each episode (hh:mm)

BUDGET

- Total amount of money being requested (£)
  - Upload the mandatory budget breakdown document
- Additional funding
  - If you will be using additional funding from any other sources to make this content, please provide details here

EVALUATION

- Audience Impact
  - Audience Impact - Describe how this project will benefit the listeners to this station (200 words)
- Mandatory Criteria
  - Quality - how does your submission meet the criteria for Quality? (200 words)
  - Additionality - how does your submission meet the criteria for Additionality? (200 words)
  - Audience Reach – how will your submission meet the expected audience reach you entered above? (200 words)
- Supplementary Criteria
  - Nations & Regions - how does your submission meet the criteria for Nations & Regions? (200 words)
  - Diversity - how does your submission meet the criteria for Diversity? (200 words)
  - Innovation - how does your submission meet the criteria for Innovation? (200 words)
  - New Voices - how does your submission meet the criteria for New Voices? (200 words)
  - Plurality - how does your submission meet the criteria for Plurality? (200 words)
- Restrictions as a result of Coronavirus - how you will deliver this project if restrictions impact production? (200 words)
- Special Conditions
  - Are you claiming special conditions for:
    Content in UK indigenous languages, or
    Content to be broadcast on Community Radio?

APPENDIX 2: MANDATORY BUDGET FORM

All applications must include a completed copy of this budget form.
- Download as Excel: http://audio.fund/budget-form-excel
- Download as PDF: http://audio.fund/budget-form-pdf

Production Company:	
Submission Name:	
Round Date (Month & Year):	

Personnel	Unit Description	Number	Rate (£)	Total
Presenter	e.g. Day			
Researcher / Assistant Producer				
Producer				
Executive Producer				
Cast / Contributors				
Director				
Writer				
Studio Manager / Engineer				
Production Manager				
Other				
Total Personnel Costs				

Production	Unit Description	Number	Rate (£)	Total
Studio / Equipment Hire				
Travel & Subsistence				
Interviewee & Guest Costs				
Insurance				
Other				
Other				
Total Production Costs				

Post-Production	Unit Description	Number	Rate (£)	Total
Editing / Mixing				
Music				
Archive				
Accounting				
Financial & Legal				
Other				
Other				
Total Post-Production Costs				

Sub-Total Eligible Budget	

Overheads	Rate (%)	Total
Production Fee		
Other Overheads		

Total Budget (ex.VAT)	

Grant funding is exempt from VAT

APPENDIX 3: 'COMMITMENT TO BROADCAST' LETTER

All bids must come with a 'Commitment to Broadcast' letter attached. This template should be formatted on company letterhead, and uploaded during the application process as a PDF file. Please do not augment this letter with additional pitch information.

Dear Audio Content Fund,

With reference to the Audio Content Fund's requirement that suppliers provide a "Commitment to Broadcast" letter with all applications, we are pleased to confirm that we have formed an agreement with:

Supplier Company Name:_____

Supplier Company Main Contact:_____

in relation to the following project:

Content Name:_____

Consisting of: _____ **episodes of** _____ **minutes length per episode**

Should the project be selected for funding, we have committed to broadcast the content not later than one year after selection, in the following slot(s):

Radio Station Name(s):_____

Day(s) of the week or exact date(s) if known:_____

Timeslot(s):_____

To be repeated (if applicable):_____

On-demand availability:_____

We are committed to broadcasting this content in the way described above. If any changes to this plan are necessary, we undertake to provide a new broadcast plan that would deliver similar or higher audience reach.

We will inform the Supplier and the Audio Content Fund of the details of the finalised broadcast plan at the earliest opportunity, and we will work with the Supplier to deliver to the Audio Content Fund all necessary audience reach information following transmission.

Yours sincerely etc.

Name
Position

APPENDIX 4:

This version of the Guidelines was published on 27 March 2020, and features the following updates:

CHANGES IN v4 SINCE v3

- KEY INFORMATION
    - o How Do We Make A Bid? – updated the dates for 2020 funding rounds
    - o How Much Money is Available Each Year? – updated the figures for 2020

- EVALUATION CRITERIA
    - o Audience Reach – updated guidance around how we estimate reach for stations that don't participate in RAJAR

- SPECIAL CONDITIONS FOR CERTAIN TYPES OF CONTENT
    - o Content to be broadcast on Community Radio – updated to reflect our revised approach to estimating audience reach on these stations

- APPENDIX 1 – APPLICATION TEMPLATE
    - o Broadcaster Details – updated to reflect changes to the way the application form works

CHANGES IN v5 SINCE v4

- KEY INFORMATION
    - o Who Is Eligible To Bid? – clarified the application process re. Companies House list
    - o How Do We Make A Bid? – removed funding round dates and referred to website instead
    - o What Can The Funding Cover? – added guidance about "pay to play" fees

- EVALUATION CRITERIA
    - o General – reformatted and edited slightly to allow for new content
    - o Audience Impact – updated to advise about this new criterion added during Round 2
    - o Restrictions as a result of Coronavirus – new section added

- APPENDIX 1 – APPLICATION TEMPLATE
    - o Evaluation – updated to include Restrictions as a result of Coronavirus