IMMERSIVE ARTS

CONTENTS:

ABOUT IMMERSIVE ARTS

Immersive Arts is an ambitious three-year programme taking place across the UK, using an artist-led approach to working with immersive technologies.

This exciting programme encourages artists of all backgrounds and experience to explore, experiment or expand how they work, or would like to, with immersive technologies.

Immersive arts means different things to different people. We define it as making art with technology to actively engage with an audience.

Think virtual, extended and augmented realities:
- engaging multiple senses
- bridging the gaps between physical and digital spaces
- connecting people to each other and the environment
- changing the way we think and create.

IMMERSIVE ARTS

You don't have to be tech-savvy (though you can be) to apply. All you need is a curious mind and a creative practice. Then, through a mix of funding, training, research and events, Immersive Arts will support you to figure out what/ how you want to develop and create.

Essentially, it's all about breaking down barriers, making what can be an exclusive field of practice much more accessible to all. In this way, we want to amplify as many different voices as we can, to help disrupt established ways of being, doing, thinking and creating.

It's a highly collaborative process — we are learning in tandem with you. Our integrated research will share insights about what works best for the sector and create opportunities for audiences of all backgrounds to engage.

Collaborative leadership

Immersive Arts is run by a collaborative consortium of ten partners who are embedded within the UK's immersive arts and research communities and committed to creating positive change in the sector.

Programme lead: [University of the West of England (UWE Bristol)](#)
Programme hub: [Pervasive Media Studio](#) – a creative technology research and development space run by Watershed in partnership with UWE Bristol and University of Bristol
Executive producer: [Watershed](#)

Research partners:

[University of Bristol](#) and [Innovate UK Immersive Tech Network](#)

IMMERSIVE ARTS

Producing partners:
England: [Watershed](), Bristol
Northern Ireland: [Nerve Centre](), Derry and Belfast
Scotland: [Cryptic](), Glasgow
Wales: [Wales Millennium Centre](), Cardiff

UK-wide partners:
[Crossover Labs](): Immersive media training and artist development, Sheffield
[Unlimited](): Commissioning disabled artists and changing perceptions of disability, Wakefield
[XR Diversity Initiative](): Promoting inclusivity in the XR community, London

Funding for Immersive Arts is provided through a collaboration between the UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), Arts Council England, the Arts Council of Wales (ACW), Creative Scotland and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI). Funding from Creative Scotland, ACW and ACNI is provided by The National Lottery.

ACCESS SUPPORT

What is available?

You can apply to Immersive Arts by audio, video or text, and in English, Welsh, or British Sign Language. If you need to apply in a different format or require additional support (like sign language interpreters or scribing assistance for example), then please get in touch. We may be able to provide financial assistance.

Application guidelines are available in:

- large print
- easy read
- audio
- British Sign Language
- Welsh.

Our website and application portal are compatible with screen readers/ other assistive technologies and meet WCAG 2.1 AA standards.

How to request access support

If you need this information in any other format, access support to apply, or have any other access questions, send us an email or call or text on 07926699909.

Note our phone is only staffed during daytime working hours - if you call outside those hours leave a message and someone will get back to you.

The deadline for access support is 4 November 2024, four weeks before the application deadline, which gives us a bit of time to ensure you get the support you need.

Access support for awardees

We will ask all successful applicants for details of any access requirements needed to participate in the programme and, where relevant, can provide additional funding for that purpose.

IMMERSIVE ARTS

Costs for support workers and/ or access equipment/ technology are usually funded via Access to Work. We encourage artists applying with such requirements to set up Access to Work for ongoing support.

Mentoring and training support offered along with the funding can be tailored for those with access requirements and/ or caring roles.

For example, the Development Labs run by Crossover Labs as part of the Experiment awards will have three alternative, flexible options:

- **Residential**
  One week (five days)

- **Online**
  Five days spread over five weeks

- **Relaxed track**
  Ten half days over a longer duration in response to each cohort, with online and in-person options.

IMMERSIVE ARTS

ABOUT THE FUNDING

With £3.6million of funding available till 2027, Immersive Arts will fund over 200 UK-based artists through three strands:

- Explore
- Experiment
- Expand

Each strand is designed to support artists at different stages in their creative development.

Eligible artists can submit an application to one strand in each round of funding and apply again for subsequent rounds whether or not they were funded through an earlier application.

Applicants should apply for the full amounts available in each strand (ie £5,000, £20,000 or £50,000). You do not require match funding to apply.

EXPLORE - £5,000

Ideal for:

- artists with little or no experience in immersive arts
- individuals, small creative collectives or organisations (of 10 people or fewer).

Helps artists with:

- early stage exploration of immersive technologies
- developing basic immersive arts skills and knowledge
- experiencing immersive artworks

- meeting potential collaborators and partners
- expanding their immersive arts networks.

Successful applicants will be supported for up to six months (ie for the duration of their proposed project) by the Immersive Arts producers and wider network.

You won't be expected to make a piece of work with the funding, but we will ask you to share your learning in a light touch way.

Explore funding criteria. The proposal:
- will enable the applicant to explore the use of immersive technology in a creative way
- has the potential to positively impact the applicant's creative practice
- is, alongside the budget and timeline, clear, achievable and resourced appropriately.

EXPERIMENT - £20,000

Ideal for:
- artists who are ready to get their ideas off the ground and test their work out with an audience
- individuals, small creative collectives or organisations (of 10 people or fewer).

Helps artists to:
- create experimental works, proofs-of-concept or prototypes to test out with small audiences

- experiment with immersive technology in a way that develops their practice
- consider access, diversity and inclusion relevant to their project.

Successful applicants will be supported for up to nine months (ie for the duration of their proposed project) with:
- training through our Development Labs (run by Crossover Labs), that will focus on idea development, user experience, approach and audience strategy
- opportunities to test and refine prototypes with small audiences.

Experiment funding criteria. The proposal:
- will enable the applicant to experiment with immersive technology within their creative practice in a new and/ or positive way
- has the potential to be tested with small audiences, to gain insight for the development of the applicant's creative practice and/ or wider sector
- contains relevant and appropriate access, diversity and/ or inclusion considerations
- is, alongside the budget and timeline, clear, achievable and resourced appropriately.

EXPAND - £50,000

Ideal for:
- artists with an immersive project in development
- creative collectives and organisations (of 50 people or fewer).

Helps artists to:

- provide support to significantly progress existing projects or prototypes
- bring well-developed concepts to fruition with comprehensive support
- enhance audience engagement and reach
- consider access, diversity and inclusion relevant to the project.

Successful applicants will be supported for up to 12 months (ie for the duration of their proposed project) with:

- bespoke mentoring from Crossover Labs, the Immersive Arts partnership and network
- support to develop and implement their project
- opportunities to enhance and scale the impact of their work.

Expand funding criteria. The proposal:

- is focused on the development of an existing immersive project/ prototype
- will enable the applicant to expand the application of immersive technology within their creative practice in a new and/ or positive way
- presents a clear ambition for reaching an audience through immersive arts, either in terms of depth of engagement or scale of reach
- contains relevant and appropriate access, diversity and/ or inclusion considerations
- is, alongside the budget and timeline, clear, achievable and resourced appropriately, with a strong team in place to deliver it.

IMMERSIVE ARTS

HOW & WHEN TO APPLY?

The first round of funding for all three strands is open until midday, Monday 2 December 2024.

Round one timeline

Funding strand	Deadline	Applicants notified	Project durations
Explore	2 December 2024	February 2025	March - August 2025
Experiment	2 December 2024	February 2025	March - November 2025
Expand	This strand has two-stages to the application process, to help protect artists' time and energy.		
Stage one expression of interest	2 December 2024	Mid January 2025	March 2025 - February 2026
Stage two interview	Early February 2025	February 2025	

IMMERSIVE ARTS

How to apply

To apply for a grant, you'll need to create an account in our [application portal](#). We recommend reading this [step-by-step guide](#) before you start your application.

You can save and return to your application - you don't have to complete it in one go.

Make sure you complete all required sections and upload all requested documents before submitting. If you need help with anything, please [get in touch](#) .

Apply now to:
- [Explore](#)
- [Experiment](#)
- [Expand](#)

Guidance on supporting documents

You can upload documents or links to support your application, just make sure they meet the following criteria:

- **Weblinks**
  Please link to specific pages, projects, articles, etc, rather than a general website.

- **Documents can be a maximum of three pages or slides and no more than 5MB** We accept the following formats - .pdf/ .doc/ .docx/ .ppt/ .pptx/ .xls/

.xlsx

- **Image files can be a maximum of 5MB**
  We accept the following formats - .jpeg/ .jpg / .png/ .gif

- **Video files can be a maximum of 10MB**
  We accept the following formats - .mp4/ .mov/ .avi

- **Audio files can be a maximum of 10MB**
  We accept the following formats - .mp3/ .wav/ .aac

Note we can only review 10 minutes of audio and video files. If the file you are sharing is longer, please specify the time codes for the 10 minutes you would like us to review.

ELIGIBILITY & ARTFORMS

Eligibility criteria

You are eligible to apply for an Immersive Arts grant if you:
- are an individual artist, creative practitioner or creative technologist
- are an arts-based organisation, small group or collective (10 people or fewer for Experiment and Explore, up to 50 people for Expand)
- are based in the UK
- are aged 18 or over
- have a UK bank account in your own name.

See also the criteria for each funding strand on pages 6-9

IMMERSIVE ARTS

What counts as immersive art?

We know the term 'immersive art' has many meanings for different people and across many sectors. For this programme, we mean art that uses technology to actively involve the audience.

We are interested in the use of virtual, augmented and extended reality in the creation of artwork that bridges physical and digital spaces, engages multiple senses, and connects people to each other and/ or to their environment.

See the examples of immersive technologies below. We welcome applications which make the case for using other technologies that enable an audience to be actively involved in the artwork.

- **Virtual Reality (VR)**
  Projects that create digital environments, allowing users to interact within a computer-generated world using devices such as VR headsets and motion controllers.

- **Augmented Reality (AR)**
  Initiatives that overlay digital content (usually visual or audio) onto the physical world through devices like smartphones, tablets or AR glasses, enhancing the user's perception of their environment.

- **Mixed Reality (MR)**
  Developments that blend real and virtual worlds to produce new environments where physical and digital objects coexist and interact in real-time, often using headsets with 'pass-through' capabilities like the Meta Quest 3 or Apple Vision Pro.

IMMERSIVE ARTS

- **Extended Reality (XR)**
  A collective term that encompasses VR, AR, and MR, referring to all physical-and-virtual combined environments and human-machine interactions generated by computer technology and wearables.

- **Spatial computing**
  Projects that use spatial mapping and perception technologies to create interactive experiences in the physical space, enabling intuitive interactions between the user and digital content.

- **360-degree video**
  Utilisation of immersive video technology to create engaging and interactive storytelling experiences, allowing users to look around and explore a scene in every direction.

- **Spatial audio**
  Projects that use 3D audio effects to place sound in 360 degrees around a listener.

- **Binaural sound**
  Projects that utilise a stereo sound technique that gives audiences a sense of space and distance.

- **Haptics and sensory feedback**
  Incorporating tactile feedback and other sensory technologies to enhance the immersive experience, making the digital interactions feel more real and engaging.

- **Responsive environments**
  Installations that use technology such as movement, audio, touch or

depth sensing to acknowledge and respond to the presence of the audience in creative and imaginative ways.

The funding programme aims to create inclusive and accessible opportunities by breaking down the barriers for artists of all backgrounds to engage with immersive tools.

Therefore all artforms are eligible as long as the applicant demonstrates a genuine interest in exploring, experimenting with, or expanding their use of immersive technologies in their creative practice. We are also interested in supporting bilingual or multilingual productions.

What can the funds be used for?

You will need to outline a budget as part of your application. Note the focus and criteria for each of the three funding strands is different.

Please read the short overview for each strand for more information:

- [Explore](#)
- [Experiment](#)
- [Expand](#)

The Immersive Arts programme does not require you to have match funding in order to apply.

Eligible costs

- **Project development**
  Planning, research and development, and execution of immersive arts projects.

- **Materials and equipment**
  Purchase or rental of materials, equipment, software licences and other technical tools.

- **Professional fees**
  Payment to artists, collaborators, technical support and other professionals involved in the project (see details on fair pay on page 18).

- **Training fees**
  Formal or informal support or learning related to the project.

- **Travel, accommodation and subsistence**
  For collaborations, research, residencies, attending relevant events, workshops or project-related activities.

- **Marketing/ audience development**
  For Experiment and Expand strands only.

- **Venue hire**
  Studios or spaces required for project development, rehearsals, events or exhibitions.

- **Access and inclusion**
  Costs that support accessible, diverse and inclusive audience engagement and participation (eg sign language interpreters, captioning, creating accessible formats, etc).

Access provisions for funded artists, such as support workers, interpreters and travel costs associated with removing barriers to working do not need to be included in this budget.

We will ask all successful applicants for details of their access requirements at the start of the programme, and work with them to ensure the proper resources are in place.

Ineligible costs

While the Immersive Arts project aims to provide comprehensive support for the development of immersive arts, there are certain activities and costs that are not eligible for funding.

Understanding these ineligible costs will help ensure your application aligns with the funding eligibility and criteria.

Examples of ineligible costs:
- capital expenditures
- overheads/ general running costs not related to the project
- debt repayment
- non-artistic activities
- fundraising events
- equipment not directly related to the project

- formal education and tuition fees
- projects in formal education settings (eg activity undertaken by students as part of their academic curriculum)
- costs already covered by other income or funding
- alcohol

As a grant, this funding is inclusive of any VAT which may be applicable. Therefore you should budget for any relevant VAT associated with your project proposal.

If you're unsure about ineligible costs, please get in touch.

Guidance on fair pay

Ensuring fair pay for all individuals involved in your project is a key principle of the Immersive Arts programme. We therefore expect any applicant seeking funding to pay themselves and others involved with their project fairly.

Fair pay helps to maintain industry standards, supports sustainability in the arts and fosters a professional and respectful working environment.

Where applicable and appropriate, we expect applicants to state an appropriate industry pay standard in their budgets.

These resources may help you incorporate fair pay into the budget section of your funding application:

- Artist's Union England
- Artists' Union Scotland
- Arts Council of Northern Ireland

- [a-n The Artists Information Company](#)
- [Unlimited's Nothing for Nothing campaign](#)

SELECTION PROCESS

Understanding how your application will be evaluated is crucial to ensuring it meets the funding aims and criteria and gives it the best chance of being selected.

See the details below on our selection process for the first funding round of the Immersive Arts programme.

How will my application be evaluated?

Initial eligibility check

- Once submitted, your application will undergo an initial review to ensure it has been completed correctly and meets the eligibility criteria (see page 12-18).

- Applications that do not meet these criteria will not progress to the next stage.

Criteria evaluation & scoring

- Eligible applications are reviewed by a panel of experts in the field of immersive arts, consisting of reviewers from a broad range of backgrounds, reflecting the programme's values regarding access,

inclusion and diversity.

- The panel will review, discuss and rank each application against the specific funding criteria of the relevant funding strand.

Interview (Expand only)

- Shortlisted applicants for Expand will be notified in mid January 2025 and invited to interviews in early February 2025.

- The timeline will be confirmed when applications are submitted, and we'll provide a detailed overview of the interview process in advance.

Portfolio balancing

- A final process of curation and balancing will be made by the Immersive Arts national partners, to ensure that we have a balanced cohort in terms of range of ideas, art form, geographical location and lived experience.

- All applicants will be told in February 2025 whether or not their application was successful.

Application feedback

As we're expecting a high volume of applications, we will not be able to give individual feedback. But we are committed to sharing learning from the programme - we will write a short report reflecting on the first round of applications and why shortlisted applicants were selected.