



Program Guidelines for Creative Businesses

Creative Industries Fund 2026–2027



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Program Overview for Creative Businesses

The **Creative Industries Fund** (CIF) helps Nova Scotian creators get national and international exposure to reach more people and sell their products or services more widely. The programs' main goal is to boost sales and grow the presence of Nova Scotia's cultural products outside the province. CIF is administered by Nova Scotia's Department for Culture, Communities, Tourism and Heritage (CCTH).

This guideline document is for creative businesses only. If you are a non-profit or service organization, refer to CIF Guidelines for Non-Profits and Service Organizations.

Who Can Apply

Eligible creative registered businesses and sole proprietors, who want to undertake activity between April 2026–March 2027 that will help expand business to markets outside of Nova Scotia.

Application Window

Apply between April 1 and December 1, 2026. Applications are assessed in the order they are received. The fund may close prior to December 1 if all available funds have been invested.

Funding Amounts

Up to 50% of eligible project costs, to an overall maximum of \$30,000. There are some limits on selected activities. See Appendix A and B for details.

Contact and Application Submissions

For any questions regarding this fund, contact Jennifer Smith, Creative Industries Coordinator: creativeindustries@novascotia.ca

Accessibility Statement

If you encounter any barriers or need accessibility support during the application process, contact the Program Officer at least two weeks before the deadline for assistance.

Commitment to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA)

The Department for Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage (CCTH) is committed to ensuring our programs and services are equitable, accessible, and inclusive. Understanding the demographics of our clients and people we serve will help us determine whether our programs, funding allocations, and processes are inclusive of Nova Scotia's diverse communities.

Program Objectives for Creative Businesses

The **Creative Industries Fund** (CIF) helps Nova Scotian creative businesses share their work across Canada and around the world to increase sales and awareness of creative products from the province. The fund also helps businesses build their brand and reach new audiences. The program encourages applicants to grow or diversify how they earn money with the goal of strengthening the ability of Nova Scotia’s cultural products to compete in markets beyond the province.

The Creative Industries Fund will support eligible applicants with the cost of the project where there is demonstrated potential for fulfilling the objectives of the Fund.

The objectives of the Creative Industries Fund are:

- Expanding sales or distribution outside Nova Scotia
- Building brand awareness or engagement in new markets
- Reaching new audiences, partners, or buyers
- Increasing or diversifying revenue streams
- Supporting long-term export growth for your business

The kind of activities the program can support include:

- Business, strategic and or marketing plans focussed on export development
- Digital and traditional marketing campaigns aimed at national or international audiences.
- Market intelligence, research, or lead-generation for new markets outside of the province
- Rebranding for international markets
- E-commerce strategies and improvements to e-commerce systems that support sales outside of Nova Scotia
- Travel to attend trade shows, showcases, or other activities that directly support export growth.
- Touring for Performing Arts companies
- Screen travel to major markets (see **“Appendix B”** for restriction details)
- Touring for musician clients (see **“Appendix B”** for restriction details)

Eligibility Requirements for Businesses

All applicants are encouraged to speak with the Program Officer prior to application submission to determine their eligibility.

Applicant Eligibility

Creative businesses are eligible to apply, if they are:

- A Nova Scotia-based and in good standing* with the Provincial Registrar of Joint Stock Companies, federally registered under the Corporations Act, or a sole proprietorship with a GST/HST number.
- Working directly in the following disciplines:
 - » Fashion and Design
 - » Production and Fine Craft
 - » Published Works
 - » Visual and Applied Arts
 - » Performing Arts
 - » Screen (see Appendix B for additional eligibility criteria)
 - » Music (see Appendix B for additional eligibility criteria)

If you are a non-profit or service organization, refer to CIF Guidelines for Non-Profits and Service Organizations.

Ineligible Applicants

You are not eligible to apply if you are:

- A business or sole proprietor not directly working in one of the creative industries listed above
- A business not in good standing with the NS Registry of Joint Stocks or the federal Corporations Act at the time of application*; or a sole proprietor who does not have a registered GST/HST number
- A sole proprietor who does not have a registered GST/HST number, or is unable to provide their SIN if they do not have a registered GST/HST number
- A business working on Digital Gaming and Animation (these sectors receive support through InvestNS.)

*You must have an **active** registration status with either the NS Registry of Joint Stocks or the federal Corporations Act at the time of application. Business must be in good standing (e.g., not defaulted, revoked, struck off, dissolved, etc.).

Confirm your registration status prior to submitting your application.

Project Eligibility

Project Scope:

Your proposed project must be related to commercial activities outside of Nova Scotia, with fully developed exportable product(s), service(s), and/or intellectual property; this could be related to travel, but it could also be related to marketing campaigns and other export activities.

Project timeline eligibility:

- Applications are open for projects that have a project start date between **April 1 2026 and March 31, 2027**.
- Activity can continue beyond March 31, 2027, so long as the project starts between April 1 and March 31, 2027.
- Any activity or costs that takes place before April 1 2026, or before the application submission, is not eligible.
- Projects that start between December 1 and March 1 must be submitted before the Dec 1 deadline. Applications are assessed in the order they are received. The fund may close prior to December 1 if all available funds have been invested.

Project Costs

The CIF can contribute **up to 50% of the eligible costs** of a project – this is not the same as 50% of the total project budget. Appendix A outlines eligible and ineligible expenses, as well as caps (max amounts) that some budget items have. There are also industry specific caps, see **“Appendix B: Music and Screen – Eligibility and Funding Caps”** for more details.

Projected revenues from the project (such as product sales or non-guaranteed ticket sales, etc.) cannot be used as part of the applicant’s contribution. You must be able to fund your portion of the project independent of these funds.

Applicants must disclose if another funder or organization is covering a specific expense. If the costs are fully covered by another source, the program cannot contribute to the cost. If another source is paying part of an eligible expense, the program’s contribution can only be applied to the remaining, uncovered portion and may result in a contribution of less than 50%.

All costs (except for those specifically detailed in Appendix A) must be supported by actual receipts after project completion, as the province may ask for proof of payment.

How to Submit an Application

Each application submission should have the following:

1. Application Form
2. Written responses to questions listed in Application form
3. Your Timeline with clear project start and end dates, and key steps (including prep and follow up activities, scheduled sales meetings, etc.).
4. Budget in either an Excel or using the template available on our [website](#).
5. Quotes, CVs, Statements of Work, Confirmations, where applicable

Music Touring and Screen applicants have additional submission requirements, see [“Appendix B: Music and Screen – Eligibility and Funding Caps”](#).

Applicants can provide supplementary information for further context; however, applications will be assessed on the strength of the information provided in the application form and required documents.

Applications should be submitted via email to creativeindustries@novascotia.ca with the subject line: “Application–Business Name–Export/Development”. Ensure that your organization’s name is on all files. All files must be in Word, Excel or PDF format.

We cannot accept applications, or portions of applications, in formats, such as Google Docs, Numbers, WeTransfer, Google Drive, Dropbox, etc.

What happens after you’ve applied?

It can take up to 12 weeks for your funding application to be assessed and reviewed for approval. It can take longer if more information is needed or if your application hasn’t been filled in correctly.

Application Review Process

1. **Review of submitted materials.** The program officer reviews your application for eligibility and completeness. If your application is missing required components, applications will be assessed purely based on the application materials submitted and scored accordingly.
2. **Assessment of applications.** Applications are assessed in batches by a panel of staff members of the Culture and Heritage Development Division using the evaluation criteria provided in the application guidelines. The assessments are based on the content of an application and not on personal knowledge or outside research.

3. **Ministerial Review.** After the panel has reviewed your application, recommendations (Recommended, Not Recommended or Ineligible) are forwarded to the consideration of the Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage. Note that applications are ‘under review’ until such time as the Minister conveys a final decision, and updates regarding the status of application cannot be given during this period. External factors outside of our control may impact timelines.
4. **Notification of results** are sent via email. If your Notification letter states that your applications is
 - » **Recommended:** it means your project is approved for funding. The amount of funding approved will be stated in this letter.
 - » **Not Recommended:** it means your application did not achieve the minimum score required and it will not receive funding.
 - » **Ineligible:** The detail provided in the submission was incomplete or your application did not meet the eligibility criteria.

Application Evaluation

Applications to the Creative Industries Export Fund will be assessed according to Evaluation Criteria found in **“Appendix C”**. The maximum score is 100.

Applications that score between 70–85 may see a reduction in investment.

Applications with a score of 69 or less will not be recommended for funding.

Funding Allocation

Funding will only be approved for the eligible items in your application. You may see a reduction in your requested funding, based on:

- Ineligibility of costs in the proposed budget
- The strength of your application against the evaluation criteria
- The available budget for the fund

Final investment amounts are at the discretion of the assessment panel.

Unsuccessful Applicants

If eligible applicants are not successful with their application, applicants

- can request feedback from the Project Officer regarding their application.
- can apply to the fund for other projects, as well as for other funding programs within CCTH

Successful applicants

Applicants who are approved for funding receive a letter outlining the terms and conditions of funding. Funding recipients must meet the following conditions:

- Funds received must be used for the activity as described in the application as outlined in the Financial Index of the agreement.
- Applicants who do not receive the amount they requested may be required to submit a revised budget based on the approved amount.
- The Department must be notified in advance of any significant changes in the activities or costs to which the contribution is allocated.
- Funding spent on ineligible items, or not spent appropriately, may be subject to repayment.
- Applicants must submit a final report detailing the results of their activity.
- Funding recipients are subject to provincial audit, which means we may ask for evidence of expenses.
- Support from the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage (CCTH) must be recognized as outlined in the “Requirements for Acknowledging Funding” as referenced in the Terms and Conditions letter.

Payment Procedure

Successful applicants will be able to choose one of two available payment methods. The preference is to provide approved payments through electronic deposit, but accommodation can be made to provide payment via cheque where necessary. It may take up to 8 weeks to receive the funds once an application is successful and the Terms and Conditions document is signed.

Final Reports

A final report must be provided to the department within 60 days of the project end date. This report will measure the success of your project against your objectives and measurable goals. It will also include a financial report that demonstrates funding was spent only on eligible expenses.

A template for final reports is available here: <https://www.novascotia.ca/creative-industries-fund-final-report>

Overdue Final Reports

Applications within CCTH or Arts NS may not be processed until overdue final reports are received and approved.

Using Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Organizations may choose to use generative AI tools to help draft their applications. If doing so, these tools should be used for support rather than as a replacement for one's own work. Ensure all submitted text accurately reflects the organization and the intended proposal. Applicants are responsible for reviewing and verifying any AI-generated elements for accuracy before submission.

Misrepresentation

Providing false or misleading information in an application may result in serious consequences, such as loss of eligibility for the current application and/or future applications.

Successful applicants are required to sign a Terms and Conditions agreement that includes additional provisions regarding accuracy and disclosure.

Appendix A: Eligible and Ineligible Costs

The Creative Industries Fund can cover up to a maximum of 50% of an eligible expense.

Example: Your registration fee for a trade show is \$600, CIF may cover up to a maximum of \$300.

Not every cost in your project may be eligible—the Creative Industries Fund supports specific types of costs, like the ones below.

Eligible Expenses

- Marketing strategy development with a qualified agency or consultant, for both online and traditional campaigns
- Market research consultants
- Marketing campaign production and deployment costs, including:
 - » Graphic Design
 - » Photography/Videography: generally to a maximum of \$5000 each
 - » Radio and online ad audio recording
 - » Print and delivery
 - » Translation
 - » Necessary web updates for export markets
 - » Ad placement costs
- Marketing campaign evaluation and reporting
- Event registration and/or booth fees
- Essential artist fees, performance and crew fees for live performances
- Equipment rentals when required to complete the project.
- Shipping costs, where applicable (example: sending larger goods to trade fairs)
- Travel costs outside of Nova Scotia, including:
 - » Travel visas where required
 - » **Destination Transportation:** Either economy flight, train or bus tickets, including baggage fees associated with the transport of project items (examples: instruments), or car rental and petrol costs (CRA rate \$0.73/km) to get to project location

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- » **Accommodations:** Actual costs, to a maximum eligible of \$300/night per room
- » **Local Transportation:** Actual costs, up to a maximum eligible of \$100/day for public transportation, airport shuttles, or taxis at your travel destination(s)—not applicable within Nova Scotia.
- » **Meals Allowance (per diem):** \$100/day per person. This does not apply to the last day of travel, or any expenses incurred in Nova Scotia.

Ineligible Expenses*

- Recurring or ongoing operational activities, or monthly subscriptions
- Employee wages not directly related to the project
- Travel costs that occur within Nova Scotia (including in-province travel to/from airport, train or bus station, and parking fees)
- Airfare booked with redeemed points
- Production costs and content creation costs not related to marketing campaigns
- Website maintenance and hosting fees, subscriptions
- Capital purchases (like buildings and software)
- Projects or project components already funded through the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage or Arts Nova Scotia
- Project costs that are fully funded through other funding programs/sources
- Quarantine costs related to travel and touring
- Rehearsal costs
- Promotional items (i.e. t-shirts, stickers and giveaways)
- Administrative costs
- In-Kind Costs: In-kind costs are costs that have a value but are not paid in cash. This can be volunteer time, donated equipment or space, or free professional services. They are not eligible for funding through CIF, but can be included in your overall budget to demonstrate organizational capacity and commitment, and to reflect the overall project cost.
- GST, HST, PST and QST

* The list of eligible or ineligible costs provided is not exhaustive. Applicants should contact the program officer about the eligibility of proposed activity and expenses prior to submitting an application.

Appendix B: Music and Screen – Eligibility and Funding Caps

Music Touring

Eligibility

- Touring artists must qualify as 'Artist III' or management companies/record labels who qualify as 'Business III' under Music Nova Scotia's applicant tiers: Eligible Applicant Tiers (musicnovascotia.ca)
- A tour with a minimum 6 paid dates or a showcase with a confirmed invitation outside of Nova Scotia

Financing Caps

- Funding is capped at \$20,000 per tour.
- Music touring investment is generally limited to a maximum of \$30,000 per year per applicant.

Additional Application Requirements

Proposals for Touring Support must also include the following attachments:

- Detailed Tour plan and schedule
- Performance Confirmations

Screen Travel

Eligibility

- Nova Scotian producers can apply for funding to travel to major recognized markets/festivals where they have been invited to screen a project.

Applicants must have:

- At least one on-air/screen production credit in the audiovisual industry
- A television project (includes streaming content) for which there is a one of the following
 - » broadcast development deal
 - » distribution deal
 - » a feature film project that has received development funding from CCTH or Screen Nova Scotia
 - » A feature film funding from agencies such as Telefilm Canada, Canada Media Fund or reasonable alternative

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Financing Caps

Individual producers/production companies are generally restricted to a maximum of **\$5,000 per request**.

CIF will generally fund screen travel to a maximum of **\$15,000 per year per** producer/production company.

Additional Application Requirements

Applicants must supply acceptance letters or invitations for markets and festivals.

Appendix C: Evaluation Criteria

Applications to the Creative Industries Fund will be assessed according to the framework below:

Business Case (30pts)

- The proposal reflects the capacity of project team to fulfill the project as proposed
- The proposed project is grounded by research and analysis including:
- Applicants rational for
 - » Project and capacity to complete project as suggested
 - » Clear, achievable and measurable objectives and strategies
 - » Critical Path/Timeline of project
 - » Key contributors with adequate support (quotes, proof of work, letters of support)

Alignment with Program Objectives (20pts)

The proposal clearly identifies how the proposed project will fulfill one or more of the program objectives. This can be done by:

- promoting distribution of creative content to national and international markets
- increasing the exports of Nova Scotian creative products
- building brand awareness and increasing audience engagement in new markets
- diversifying and increasing revenue streams
- increasing the export potential for Nova Scotian cultural products outside of Nova Scotia

Impact (30pts)

- The proposal identifies expected outcomes, which are supported by the business case.
- The proposal includes at least three reasonable, measurable goals
- The proposal explains how the project will increase the capacity of the applicant in the export economy
- The proposed project supports local artists and creatives, and/or provides meaningful opportunities for underrepresented artists, contractors and/or cultural workers
- The applicant demonstrates presence of and adherence to policies/initiatives that support practices of equity, diversity and inclusion within their business/organization

Financial Capacity (20pts)

- The application includes relevant financial documents, including a comprehensive budget with expenses and revenues clearly listed
- The project demonstrates the ability to fund the balance of the costs
- The project has additional confirmed funding supports
- The project is not reliant on pending funding or has demonstrated adequate contingency plans for unconfirmed funding
- The client has demonstrated value for money considerations