



Program Guidelines for Non-Profits and Service Organizations

Creative Industries Fund 2026–2027



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Guidelines Non-Profits and Service Organizations

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Program Overview for Non-Profits and Service Organizations

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 non-profits or service organizations. If you are a creative business, refer to CIF Guidelines for Businesses.

Who Can Apply

Eligible creative non-profits and service organizations, 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

- **Industry Support:** Generally, from 50% up to 100% of eligible project costs (max. \$30,000).
- **Export:** Generally max 50% of eligible expenses up to max \$30,000

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 Non-Profits and Organizations

The Creative Industries Fund (CIF) helps non-profit organizations improve the export readiness of their industry and increase awareness of Nova Scotia’s creative industries as a whole.

Projects must be designed to help your non-profit reach customers and/or markets outside of Nova Scotia to be considered for this fund.

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 to:

- promote distribution of creative content to national and international markets
- increase the exports of Nova Scotian creative products
- build brand awareness and increase audience engagement in new markets
- diversify and increase revenue streams
- increase the export potential for Nova Scotian cultural products outside of Nova Scotia

Eligibility Requirements

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

Applicant Eligibility

Non-profits and service organizations are eligible to apply, if they:

- are Nova Scotia based, and in good standing* with the Provincial Registry of Joint Stock Companies or federally registered under the Corporations Act.
- Have a mandate to support one of the following disciplines:
 - » Fashion and Design
 - » Production and Fine Craft
 - » Published Works
 - » Visual and Applied Arts
 - » Performing Arts
 - » Music
 - » Screen

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Ineligible Applicants

- Municipalities, First Nation Band Councils, museums, archives, libraries, churches/faith-based organizations, multi-cultural associations, or any other organization whose main operational and programmatic focus is not the delivery of arts and culture programming.
- Universities, colleges, other post-secondary institutions, school boards, public/private secondary schools, First Nations schools administered by a First Nation and Indigenous administered schools
- Non-profits and service organizations not directly supporting one of the creative industries listed above
- Non-profits and service organizations working on Digital Gaming and Animation (these sectors receive support through InvestNS.)

*Applicants are required to be a registered non-profit organization in good standing (e.g., not defaulted, revoked, struck off, dissolved, etc.). You must have an active registration status with either the NS Registry of Joint Stocks or the federal Not-for-profit Corporations Act at the time of submission.

Applicants are ineligible if the status has not been updated to active and verification has been provided at the time of assessment.

Project Eligibility and Scope

Non-profits can apply to the Creative Industries Fund in one of two categories: **Industry Support** and **Export**.

Industry Support

Industry Support projects are those intended to **develop the export capacity of the industry or sector they represent**. Organizations can apply with projects intended to provide exposure and export development opportunities for Nova Scotian creative businesses and sole proprietors.

The kind of Industry Support activities the program can fund include:

- Market intelligence, research or lead generation in new markets
- Industry professional development initiatives
- Industry marketplace development initiatives
- Industry growth initiatives

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Export

This category directly supports the export activities of the **applicant organization**. These projects will include export activities outside of Nova Scotia, with fully developed 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.

The kind of Export activities the program can support for non-profits include:

- Business, strategic and marketing plans
- Market intelligence, research, or lead-generation for new markets outside of the province
- Touring for Performing non-profit organizations.

If you are unsure whether your project is Industry Support or Export, contact your Program Officer.

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 1 April 2026, or before the application submission, are 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

For **Industry Support**, CIF can generally support between 50% and 100% of the eligible costs of a project up to a total of \$30,000.

For **Export**, CIF can generally support up to a maximum of 50% of the overall eligible costs of a project, up to \$30,000.

Eligible costs

Eligible costs are project expenses that that CIF can support. This may not be every cost associated with a project. There are also funding limits on some categories.

“Appendix A” outlines many of the CIF’s eligible and ineligible expenses, and the funding limits where applicable. This list is not exhaustive, and applicants should discuss expenses not on the list with the program officer prior to application submission.

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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.

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. A timeline with clear project start and end dates, and key steps (including tour dates, scheduled sales meetings, prep and follow up activities, etc.)
4. A detailed budget with revenues and expenses, using either an Excel document or the template available on our [website](#)
5. Quotes, CVs, Statements of Work, Confirmations, where applicable

*If unsure of which application form is applicable for your organizations project, reach out to the program officer.

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: "CIF Application –Organization Name". 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. **Recommendations are sent for approval.** 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 Fund will be assessed according to Evaluation Criteria found in "**Appendix B**". 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.

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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.

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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 an overdue final report is 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 100% of an eligible expense for Industry Development projects, and up to 50% for Export projects.

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

Eligible Expenses*

- Consultants to develop business, strategic and marketing plans
- Market intelligence, research, business matchmaking or lead generation in new markets
- Marketing campaign production and deployment costs, including graphic design, photography/videography services (limited to \$5000, not to exceed 30% of overall budget), radio and online ad audio recording, print and delivery, translation, necessary web updates, ad placement costs, and evaluation and reporting
- Event registration and/or booth fees
- Essential artist fees, and performance and crew fees for live performances
- Equipment rentals when required to complete the project.
- Shipping costs, where applicable
- 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.
- Administrative costs, to a maximum of 10% of the total project costs
- Travel costs 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
 - » **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)
 - » **Meals Allowance:** \$100/day per person. This does not apply to the last day of travel, or to days where meals are provided as part of an organized event.

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For Industry Support projects only:

- Event hosting costs, such as venue rentals, audio-visual equipment and support, and refreshments, when directly tied to the capacity building activity
- Honorariums for industry professionals acting in a training/mentorship capacity
- Some in-province travel costs **may** be eligible; applicants must discuss with a program officer before applying

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 (unless pre-approved for Industry Support projects)
- Airfare booked with redeemed points
- Production costs and content creation costs not related to marketing or promotional activities
- 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)
- Alcohol
- 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 expense prior to submitting an application.

Appendix B: 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:

- promote distribution of creative content to national and international markets
- increase the exports of Nova Scotian creative products
- build brand awareness and increase audience engagement in new markets
- diversify and increase revenue streams
- increase 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 project includes three reasonable, measurable goals
- The project increases the capacity of local creative workers in the export economy
- The project provides opportunities for local artists and creatives
- The project provides meaningful opportunities for underrepresented artists, contractors and/or cultural workers at various levels of the organization, including senior leadership, staff and/or contracted parties
- The applicant demonstrates presence of and adherence to policies/initiatives that support practices of equity, diversity and inclusion within their business/organization

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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