



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

VACMA

VISUAL ARTIST & CRAFT MAKER AWARDS

VISUAL ARTIST AND CRAFT MAKER AWARDS BURSARIES 2026/27

Guidance for applicants



A'toirt seachad maon bho
Awarding funds from
THE NATIONAL LOTTERY®

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ALTERNATIVE FORMATS AND LANGUAGES

We are committed to offering clear and accessible application processes and programmes that are open to everyone. Funding guidance and application forms can be made available in other formats as required.

To request materials in other formats or languages, contact Creative Scotland's Enquiries Service by emailing: enquiries@creativescotland.com.

If you are a d/Deaf BSL user, you can access our services with the Contact Scotland-BSL programme. Visit www.contactscotland-bsl.org for more information.

ACCESS SUPPORT TO MAKE AN APPLICATION

Creative Scotland can help cover the cost of services that support you in applying for funding. Access support is available to individuals – or the lead applicant of a group – who are defined as disabled under the Equality Act 2010, such as:

- d/Deaf or hard of hearing
- Disabled
- Living with a chronic or mental illness
- Neurodivergent (e.g. dyslexia, autism, ADHD).

To find out what support is available and how to request it, please visit the [Access Support](#) section on Creative Scotland's website.

WHAT IS VACMA?

The Visual Artist and Craft Maker Awards (VACMA) is a programme of small grant schemes delivered in partnership with a range of local authorities and art organisations across Scotland. The schemes are managed locally by these partners.

VACMA offers fixed bursaries of £500 and £1000. **The purpose of these bursaries is to support visual artists and craft makers in their creative and professional development.**

VACMA HAS TWO DEADLINES:

- **Autumn deadline: 5pm, 20 October 2026**
- **Winter deadline: 5pm, 2 February 2027**

Please check with your local scheme before applying as some partners only run one deadline. For a full list of partners and links to the individual schemes, please visit the [Creative Scotland website](#).

ELIGIBILITY

Who can apply?

This fund is for practicing visual artists and craft makers who are based in Scotland.

To be eligible, you must:

- **Live or maintain a studio space** in the local authority area you are applying to
- Have **submitted an End of Project Report** if you are a previous VACMA recipient.

Part-time students can apply, but you must:

- Provide evidence of your part-time status
- Confirm the activity you are applying for does not contribute toward your academic studies.

Further detail regarding student eligibility is included in the [VACMA FAQs \(Appendix 2\)](#).

If you are unsure about eligibility, please contact your local scheme.

Who cannot apply?

You are **not eligible** to apply if:

- You are a **full-time student**
- You **do not live or maintain a studio space in the local authority area** you are applying to
- You work in **artforms other than visual art or craft**
- You have previously received VACMA funding but have not submitted an end of project report by the application deadline.

FUNDING DETAILS

What can the funding be used for?

The bursaries are designed to help you grow and develop your creative practice. You can use the funding for a wide range of activities including:

- **Training and learning:** This could be professional courses, workshops or peer-to-peer learning.
- **Mentoring and skills development:** Working with a mentor or developing new skills to support your creative growth.
- **Exploring new ideas:** Trying out new techniques, materials or creative approaches.
- **Research and development:** Investigating and planning a new body of work.
- **Sustainable practices:** Experimenting with sustainable and renewable materials, circular design and low impact processes.
- **Residencies:** Taking part in a residency that supports your creative and professional development.
- **Essential equipment:** Buying equipment that clearly helps you experiment or develop your practice.
- **Creating new work:** Getting extra support to make new work for an exhibition or public presentation.

What the funding doesn't support?

VACMA does not support:

- **Activities starting too soon:** Projects must begin at least 8 weeks after the application deadline. Activities scheduled to start earlier will not be supported.
- **Artists or makers with no experience of presenting their work publicly:** Including those who only present work through social media.
- **Accredited academic courses:** This includes any training or education that leads to a formal qualification.
- **Business related activity:** Funding is not available for start-ups or business development.
- **Marketing and website costs:** Applications focused mainly on marketing or website creation.
- **Filmmaking (unless part of a visual arts practice):** Only visual artists working with moving image as part of their practice are eligible.
- **Community or educational projects:** Projects with a community or teaching focus.
- **Graphic designers and illustrators:** This fund does not support graphic designers. Illustrators can apply if they can demonstrate an independent creative practice beyond client-based work.
- **Building or renovation work:** Studio refurbishments or similar construction projects.
- **Framing and presentation costs only:** Applications solely for framing or presenting work.
- **Duplicate funding:** Projects that include partnership funding from other VACMA or Creative Scotland funding programmes.

How much can I apply for?

VACMA offers fixed bursaries of **£500** and **£1,000**. You should apply for the level of bursary that best suits your proposed activity, regardless of your career stage.

FUND CRITERIA

Criteria

VACMA will give priority to applications that clearly demonstrate:

- **Commitment to practice** – your application demonstrates relevant experience and an ongoing commitment to the development of your visual arts or craft practice.
- **Creative development** – your application clearly describes how the funding will help you develop as an artist or maker, and the difference it will make to your practice.
- **Clear project plan** – your application provides a clear outline of what you plan to do with the funding and explains how you will do it.

We will also consider

It is also a priority for Creative Scotland and all VACMA partners to support **Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)** and **Environmental Sustainability**.

VACMA is designed to be an **accessible entry point** into public funding and provide opportunities for people to progress their practice despite the barriers they may face.

If demand is high, priority may be given to:

- People who are **newer to public funding**
- Those who have had **fewer opportunities** to develop their practice.

We will also prioritise projects and activities that consider and work to mitigate their environmental impact.

These resources may be helpful:

- **[Resources | Shape Arts](#)**
- **[Artists' Environmental Resource | Fife Contemporary](#)**
- **[Resources for Artists | Culture for Climate Scotland](#)**

What we are looking for

The following notes are designed to help you understand what we are looking for in an application.

Commitment to practice

We want to see that you have an active and committed visual arts or craft practice. We will look at all your application material, including:

Your CV

- Make sure it is up to date and list your most recent experience first.
- Focus on art-related activities – leave out anything that isn't relevant to your creative work.
- This [guide](#) by Artquest offers useful tips on how to write an artist's CV.

Your written responses

- Use the application form to expand on the information in your CV.
- Describe the processes and methods you use to make your work.
- Tells us whether your work explores any specific themes or concerns.

Examples of your work

- Choose good quality images that represent your current practice.
- If you plan to work in a new format or medium, include 1 or 2 images that show this shift.
- You might find [this guide](#) on how to photograph your artwork useful.

Creative development

We want to understand what difference the funding will make to your practice, and how it will help you to develop as an artist or maker.

Your application should clearly explain:

- **What** you want to do with the bursary
- **Why** you want to do it
- **How** it will develop your practice.

Try to be as **specific** as possible. For example:

- If you're applying for training or mentoring, say who you'll work with and why you've chosen them.
- Explain how this activity will help you to develop as an artist or maker, and how it will impact your creative skills and ideas.

Clear project plan



We want to know that what you're proposing is realistic and achievable. We will look for:

- **A clear timeline** showing how the project will be structured.
 - Remember to allow at least **8 weeks after the application deadline** before starting any activity. We cannot fund anything that happens before you receive your decision.
- Show that you have **considered risks** and have plans to manage them.
 - For example, have you checked dates and availability for a course or residency?
 - Do you have a backup plan if something changes?
- If you are applying for support towards an **exhibition or residency**, include a **letter of confirmation** from the venue or host organisation. This should outline their role and contribution.
- If you are planning to **organise your own exhibition**, show that you've thought about:
 - How you'll reach an audience.
 - The accessibility of the venue.

Budget

- You **don't need to provide a budget** because the bursary levels are fixed.
- However, you should make sure that your proposed activity is achievable within the amount you're applying for.

If you're working with others (such as mentors or tutors):

- Make sure you're paying them fairly.
- Guidance on rates of pay is available on the [Creative Scotland website](#).

Partnership funding is not a requirement of the fund, but:

- If the VACMA bursary is only covering part of your project, explain which part it will support and how you'll fund the rest.
- You can include other cash or in kind contributions (such as donated space or materials) in your application.

Duplicate funding:

- As VACMA is supported by Creative Scotland through funding from the National Lottery, it **cannot be used as partnership funding for any other Creative Scotland funding programme**. This includes, but is not limited to, other VACMA schemes, the Open Fund for Individuals and the Stephen Palmer Travel Bursary.

PERSONAL ACCESS COSTS

Individuals who are defined as disabled under the Equality Act 2010 and those with caring responsibilities can apply for support towards Personal Access Costs. These are costs related to your access needs and might include reasonable adjustments or support to help you, or a key collaborator, to fully participate in your proposed activity.

Key points:

- Personal Access Costs are separate to your bursary request.
- This is so that you can spend the full bursary amount on your planned activity.
- If applicable, you will be asked to give a brief description and breakdown of your Personal Access Costs in the application form.

For more information on **Personal Access Costs** please read the [**VACMA FAQs \(Appendix 2\)**](#).

APPLICATION PROCESS

How to make an application

To apply, please:

- **Use the correct application form** for your local area
- **Follow the submission process** for your **local scheme**.

You can find a copy of the application questions in [Appendix 1](#) at the end of this document.

What to include in your application:

Along with your application form you will be asked to submit:

- **Your CV**
- **6 examples of recent work**
- **An Equalities Monitoring Form.**

The **Equalities Monitoring Form** helps us understand who VACMA is reaching. It's anonymous, kept separate from your application, and has no impact on the outcome. All data is managed confidentially, 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.

PLEASE NOTE: If your application is successful, we may use examples of your work in reports and publicity material. Each scheme is responsible for their own privacy notice which relates to the information you provide in your application and how it is processed. This notice is included in the application form -please read it before submitting.

Decision-making process

Eligibility check

1

All applications go through an initial eligibility check to make sure that they meet the requirements of the fund.

Panel review

2

Eligible applications are reviewed by a panel. These include representatives of the local partner organisation and external experts such as artists, makers, curators, tutors or other arts professionals. Creative Scotland staff may also attend panels to observe. Panels change regularly to ensure a range of voices contribute to the decision-making process.

Panel process

3

- The panel will read your application and review your work.
- They discuss your visual and written material against the criteria. The recommendations for awards are based on these discussions.
- Decisions are based only on what you submit – panel members won't use any prior knowledge of you or your work.
- This evidence-based decision making ensures fairness for all applicants. Please do not assume that the panel will know or have already seen your work.

Decisions

4

You'll hear back within **8 weeks** of the deadline, and will be contacted if there's a delay.

If you're unsuccessful:

- You can request feedback.
- Being turned down isn't a reflection on the quality of your work – it may just mean others were a better fit this time.
- These funds are competitive, so even strong applications may not be funded.
- Many applicants have successfully reapplied after using feedback to strengthen their proposal.

AFTER FUNDING

Reporting requirements

All successful applicants are expected to complete an End of Project Monitoring Report. This report helps us to monitor the impact of the bursaries and supports the development of the scheme. Your local partner will be able to provide you with the template for this report.

All VACMA recipients must complete an End of Project Monitoring Report before they can apply for another VACMA bursary.

Further information and support

For questions regarding your eligibility, 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

If you have a general enquiry about VACMA or any other Creative Scotland funding programme, please contact Creative Scotland's Enquiries service by emailing enquiries@creativescotland.com

APPENDIX 1:

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

This appendix provides a list of the questions that are contained within the application form however **you must use the application form for your local area when applying**. You can access this via your local partners website.

- **Legal Name** (for finance and contracting purposes):
- **Preferred Name** (if different from your legal name):
- **Pronouns** (optional):
- **Address:**
- **Postcode:**
- **Contact telephone number:**
- **Email:**
- **Website** (optional) :

What is your primary artform? (please select):

- Craft
- Visual Art

Which of the following applies to you (please select):

- I live in [name of Local Authority area]
- I maintain a studio space in [name of Local Authority area]

If applicable, please provide address of your studio:

What level of bursary are you applying for? (please select):

- £500 Bursary
- £1000 Bursary

When will your project start:

When will your project end:

Please provide a short summary of your proposed activity. (Max 30 words)

We may use this text for marketing and communications purposes if you are successful.

Tell us about your creative practice. (Max 250 words)

What kind of work do you make and how do you make it? Does your work explore any specific themes or concerns?

What activity will the bursary support? (Max 300 words)

If successful, how will you spend the funds. Try to be as specific as possible.

How will the bursary contribute to your creative and professional development?

(Max 300 words)

How does the proposed activity build on your work to date, and what difference will it make to your visual arts or craft practice.

Please provide a brief timeline for your project and tell us about how you will manage any risks. (Max 200 words)

Outline the key stages of your project and explain how you will deal with any risks you've identified. You can use bullet points in this section.

If your proposal has a public element, tell us who you are aiming to reach and how you will make sure it is accessible. (Max 200 words)

Please note that there is no expectation for projects to have a public outcome.

Would you like to make the panel aware of any barriers that have limited your ability to develop and progress your practice? If so, please tell us about them here.

(Max 200 words)

Tell us how you will reduce the environmental impact of your proposed activity and / or how you are responding to the causes and impact of climate change through your practice. (Max 200 words)

Have you received funding through VACMA or any other Creative Scotland funding programmes in the last 3 years? (Please select):

- Yes
- No

If yes, please tell us the name of the fund and the year it was awarded.

Are you awaiting a decision from any other Creative Scotland funding programmes?

(Please select):

- Yes
- No

If yes, please tell us the name of the funding programme.

What is the total cost of your project (not including personal access costs)?

This should be at least the bursary amount.

If your project is reliant on any other income, tell us where this income will come from and whether it is confirmed.

Would you like to request support with Personal Access Costs? (Please select):

- Yes
- No

If yes, provide a brief description of your Personal Access Costs and how they relate to your proposed activity. You should tell us how much you are requesting and include a simple breakdown of these costs.

Please list your examples of work in the table below:

	Description of artwork e.g title, medium, dimensions, location	Year it was made / presented
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

APPENDIX 2: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is there a limit to the number of VACMA applications that I can make?

There is no limit to the number of VACMA applications that you can make, however, you can only apply once each round. If you have received a VACMA bursary previously, you must submit an end of project report before you reapply.

When faced with high demand, we may prioritise applicants who are newer to public funding and those who have had limited development opportunities.

What VACMA Scheme should I apply to?

You should apply to the scheme in the Local Authority area that you live in. If the area that you live in doesn't have a VACMA scheme, you can apply to a scheme in another area, if you maintain a studio space there. If you are unsure, please check with the scheme in question before applying.

There is no VACMA scheme where I live, can I apply to another scheme?

You can only apply to a VACMA scheme in another area if you maintain a studio space there.

How do I know if there is a VACMA scheme in my local area?

A full list of VACMA schemes can be found on the [Creative Scotland website](#). Please note, some VACMA schemes cover more than one Local Authority area. Where this is the case, it will be clearly stated in the title.

If you are still unsure if your area is covered by VACMA please contact our Enquiries team on enquiries@creativescotland.com.

What are Personal Access Costs?

Personal Access Costs are costs that are related to removing barriers (for you or a key collaborator in your project) due to disability or caring responsibilities. VACMA can support Personal Access Costs that are directly related to the delivery of your project or activity.

Personal Access Costs are separate to your bursary request. This to ensure that all applicants can spend the full bursary amount on their planned activity.

Who can request Personal Access Costs?

You can request Personal Access Costs if you or a key collaborator in your project are:

- d/Deaf
- Disabled
- Neurodivergent
- Living with chronic illness or a long-term health condition
- Hold caring responsibilities.

Some examples of access costs are:

- A BSL interpreter
- Assistive Technology
- Support Worker costs
- One-off or short-term childcare or caregiving costs.

This list is not exhaustive. You should tell us what you require in order to deliver the activity outlined in your application.

Please note that childcare costs are classed as a taxable benefit, so whilst VACMA can reimburse these costs, you will be responsible for reporting this to HMRC. We cannot support contributions to ongoing childcare or caregiving costs that are already in place and that do not directly relate to specific project activities or skills development.

What do you mean by Assistive Technology?

The phrase ‘assistive technology’ is used to describe products or systems that support and assist individuals with disabilities, restricted mobility or other impairments to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible. For example, software for text-to-speech.

Devices like laptops and tablets are not considered ‘assistive technology’ and can only be included if current hardware will not allow for the installation of new assistive technology that is required to deliver your project / activity. For example, if the RAM or CPU memory is not powerful enough.

In line with accessibility costs provided by other schemes such as Access to Work and Disabled Students Allowance, only the most cost-effective device that has the specifications required to run the specified assistive tech will be permitted.

If requesting support to purchase a device such as a laptop or tablet for your project, you must specify the technology and device model required, with an explanation of how they meet the needs of the individual using them, for this to be approved.

How much can I request towards Personal Access Costs?

There is no limit to the amount that you request towards Personal Access Costs, however, the costs requested must be directly related to your proposed activity. As these are small pots of funding, the panel reserves the right to offer a reduced contribution towards Personal Access Costs.

Is there any guidance on how much to pay Support Workers?

There is no definitive guidance on rates of pay for Support Workers, however the following resource may be helpful: [Access to Work Support Worker Pay Rates](#).

In line with Creative Scotland’s commitment to Fair Work we would expect payment of at least the Real Living Wage to anyone providing these services. Please note, that we do not recommend the use of artist rates for Support Worker roles.

Can I request additional budget to make my project accessible to audiences?

No. We will only consider requests for Personal Access Costs, which are costs related to removing barriers for you as an individual or for a key collaborator in your project. Costs related to making your project accessible to audiences or participants fall under general project costs and should be covered by the main bursary. They include things like captioning and use of accessible venues.

Do Personal Access Costs include travel and accommodation?

In most cases travel and accommodation costs would not be classified as Personal Access Costs. Generally, they are viewed as core project costs and should be covered by the bursary. However, if you are d/deaf, disabled, neurodivergent, living with a chronic illness or a long-term health condition you may experience higher travel and accommodation costs. If this is the case, you can include these additional costs under Personal Access Costs. For example, if you require a Support Worker to accompany you, taxis to/from your destination or additional accommodation for a carer.

How do I request Personal Access Costs?

When filling out the application form you will be asked if you would like support with Personal Access Costs. We will ask you to provide a brief description of the Personal Access Costs that you are applying for and a breakdown of the amount requested.

Is there anywhere else I can access support with Personal Access Costs?

You may also be eligible to apply for support from the UK Government's Access to Work fund, which can help cover some of the extra costs of carrying out your job, or travelling to, from and during work if you are disabled. More information on Access to Work is available on the [UK Government website](#).

Do I need any formal qualifications to apply?

No, you do not need to have any formal qualifications to apply. However, you will need to demonstrate that you are a practicing artist or maker. Applicants should have achieved a body of work and be able to demonstrate experience of presenting their work publicly. For example, through public exhibitions, craft fairs, performances, talks, events and socially engaged projects.

What do you mean by the term 'practising'?

We use the term 'practising' to mean an artist or maker who is consistently active and has experience of presenting or reaching the public with their work. For example, through public exhibitions, craft fairs, performances, talks, events or socially engaged projects. We cannot fund artist or makers who have no experience of presenting their work publicly, or who only present their work through social media.

I am a recent graduate, can I use my degree show as evidence that I have achieved a body of work?

Yes, you can include your degree show as evidence that you have achieved a body of work. However, you may also want to include some examples of work that you have developed since graduating, to show how your practice has continued to develop.

Can students apply to VACMA?

Students in full-time education are unable to apply for VACMA. If you are a part-time student, you can apply but you will need to prove your part-time status and clearly demonstrate that the activity you are applying for does not contribute to your academic studies.

We would usually expect this to be demonstrated through a letter from your supervisor, tutor or someone with a similar level of close understanding of your studies, especially if there is any thematic overlap between your studies and the project or activity you are applying for. You may also be able to demonstrate this by including a scan of your matriculation letter if it clearly shows your subject area and your part-time status.

VACMA cannot support students with their living costs, tuition fees or costs related to full-time, long-term, formal or accredited programmes of education in the UK or abroad. For further information on student finance in Scotland, visit: [Student Information Scotland](#).

Can I apply to VACMA to develop a new facet of my practice?

Yes, the purpose of the VACMA scheme is to support artists and makers in their creative and professional development. This can include testing new ideas and approaches. You should however explain how your proposed activity relates to your previous work. If you are applying for support to develop a new strand of your practice (e.g. if you are painter wanting to develop a moving image practice) you should explain why. Sharing images of some initial experimentation can also help the panel to understand the direction your work is moving in.

Can I apply for a collaborative project with another artist?

You can apply to collaborate with another artist. If you are submitting a joint proposal someone will need to take the lead. On a practical level this means that they would receive and manage the funds.

If each of you are applying separately (to the same scheme or to different schemes) to fund your own costs, you should assess the risk around this approach and explain the impact it would have if one of the applications is unsuccessful.

Can I apply to VACMA for activity that sits within a larger project?

You can apply for support towards activity that sits within a larger project. However, you should be clear about the activity that the VACMA bursary will support and how it will benefit your creative development.

Does my project have to take place in Scotland?

While applicants must be based in Scotland, the project can take place anywhere. If your proposal involves travel within the UK or abroad, you should tell us how you will consider and reduce the environmental impact through your planning.

Can I use the bursary to purchase equipment and materials?

You can use a VACMA bursary to purchase equipment and materials as long as you can explain how it will support your creative development. If the purchase of new equipment is to make your practice more commercially viable or profitable it would not be a priority for support.

Can I apply for funds to exhibit work, such as framing and canvas costs?

VACMA is designed to support creative development and experimentation. Applications solely for framing and presentation costs are not eligible.

Can I apply to develop a website or for marketing activities?

Applications that are primarily focused on marketing and websites are not eligible. Applications that include some marketing and website costs as part of a wider project or activity are considered eligible, however the focus should be on the development of your creative practice.

Can I apply to VACMA for business start-up or development costs?

VACMA does not support costs relating to business start-up and development. Individuals who are seeking support to start or develop their business should visit [Business Gateway](#).

Can I apply for a VACMA bursary to develop an application for the Open Fund for Individuals?

VACMA is designed to support creative development and experimentation. It cannot support an individual to develop a funding application to another Creative Scotland fund. However, VACMA can be used to develop ideas or test approaches that you could then further develop with support from another Creative Scotland fund, such as the [Open Fund for Individuals](#).

Can I apply to VACMA for support to deliver a community project if I have a participatory practice?

We will only consider community projects that are self-initiated and part of a socially engaged or participatory arts practice. Given the purpose of this fund, applications must demonstrate how the project/activity will impact on your creative and professional development.

Applications for funding to deliver a community or educational project on behalf of an organisation are not eligible for support.

Can illustrators and graphic designers apply to VACMA?

This fund does not support graphic designers. Illustrators can apply if they can demonstrate an independent creative practice beyond client based work.

Does VACMA support heritage crafts?

Traditional and heritage craft skills are important both in terms of their creative output and the link to intangible cultural heritage and should be safeguarded and supported. VACMA supports traditional and heritage craft projects that contain a developmental element. Applicants must show they are developing their skills or creating work in new or innovative ways. VACMA does not support projects that are solely focused on the recreation of existing objects or designs.



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