

**INVEST FAQs and Criteria**

Please make sure to read this document before submitting completed applications.

**Timeline**

* Open for applications from Friday 29th September 2023.
* **Deadline for submission to the programme is Wednesday 18th October 2023 at 5pm. Late applications will not be accepted.**

**1 Background**

Theatre and Dance NI is the sole support and representative professional membership organisation for theatre and dance in Northern Ireland with key goals to connect, support development and advocate for our artists and the industry.

Since 2017, Theatre and Dance NI has gathered evidence linking the sustainability of NI’s cultural sector to the introduction of direct support for freelance artists. This programme has been shaped throughout by extensive consultation and evaluation with artists, freelancers, sectoral stakeholders and former participants.

**2 Frequently Asked Questions**

**When is the deadline?**

Wednesday 18th October 2023 at 5pm.

**Where do I submit my application to?**

Please submit your application to invest@theatreanddanceni.org

**Who can apply?**

* We welcome individual applications from emerging talent through to established artists, intending to develop their practice.
* You must have an active membership with Theatre and Dance NI. If you are not a member you can sign up by [clicking here](https://theatreanddanceni.org/membership/become-a-member/#join). Please be aware that if you are not a member of Theatre and Dance NI before the closing deadline of this application, you will not be eligible for this bursary.
* We welcome applications from artists who have never applied for investment before.
* We welcome submissions from all eligible applicants, irrespective of religious belief, political opinion, race, age, gender, disability, marital status, sexual orientation or people with dependants or without.

**Who cannot apply?**

* Those living and working outside of Northern Ireland.
* Those in full time education (students) and / or training.
* Under 21s.
* Full time employees of funded organisations, production companies, venues or community groups.
* Theatre and Dance NI staff and board members.
* Belfast City Council or Arts Council of Northern Ireland staff or board members.

**Please note, this is a fund for the individual artist therefore you cannot apply as part of or on behalf of a partnership or collaborative group.**

**What will I do on INVEST?**

* **Bursary** - £3000. The bursary should be used towards developing your practice. This could include but is not limited to training course fees, individual tuition, additional mentoring, conferences, related travel and accommodation, networking, training, residencies, seeing other work and research and development.
* **Support -** Support from the TDNI team including Steven Atkinson (Producer, Long Acre Arts).
* **Mentoring** - One-to-one industry mentors based on your artform, what your aspirations are, what you want to achieve through the INVEST programme and the mentor's area of expertise. Previous mentors have included: Pádraig Cusack (inc. War Horse, Producer, The National), Dannielle Lecointe-Mosca (Choreographer, Director, Dramaturg & Creative Coach, Zoo Nation), Lawrence Cook (Dramaturg, BBC Radio Scotland) and Tanya Dean (Dramaturg).
* **Networking** - Group sessions to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration and where artists can expect to gain access to national and international industry leaders.
* **Training** - Skills development training sessions and workshops including a Programme Induction, Professionalising Your Practice, People & Conflict Management, IP & Copyright, Pitching Your Work and Theatre Tax Relief.

As part of the programme, TDNI will schedule several professional development training sessions to enhance participants learning. Some sessions will be pre-designed (as listed above); and through collaboration with participants, we will create a full schedule of activity that is bespoke to the group and its individuals where possible. While participants are advised to attend all sessions where possible, it is required you attend a minimum of six.

As part of the programmed sessions, INVEST will include a residential in Spring 2024. The residential location is to be confirmed and will be scheduled around participant availability. The programme induction session and residential are compulsory.

**How long is the programme?**

The programme will run from November 2023 and conclude no later than July 2024.

**Where will I need to be?**

Most sessions will be held in person in Belfast. Mentor sessions will be held either in-person or online. Residential location is to be confirmed and will be based on participant availability.

**What can I spend my bursary on?**

Please identify the aspect of your practice you wish to develop. When paying yourself or other artists, you should use the industry standard day/week rates relevant to your discipline. Please see [Independent Theatre Council](https://www.itc-arts.org/rates-of-pay/), [Equity](https://www.equity.org.uk/login), [UK Theatre](https://uktheatre.org/performers-stage-management/) and [Writers’ Guild](https://writersguild.org.uk/rates-agreements/) for guidance on the rates of pay.

INVEST solely exists to support artists professional development. This could include but is not limited to:

* Training course fees.
* Individual tuition and additional mentoring.
* Related travel and accommodation to festivals, shows etc.
* Networking.
* Professional development training including but not limited to intensives, classes, workshops, conferences, and meetings.
* Research and development.
* Residencies.
* Seeing other work.

**Can I go outside of the island of Ireland as part of INVEST?**

We encourage artists to go see and train nationally and internationally so INVEST can be used towards travel costs for professional development including but not limited to training, workshops or to go and see other work.

**What can the bursaries NOT be used for?**

* The INVEST bursary can be used to put towards the research and development of your creative processes to ultimately develop your professional practice. It is not to directly fund the creation, production or touring of work.
* Requests for retrospective costs or programmes/courses/training that have already begun or completed.
* Commercial projects.
* Work that forms part of under-graduate or post-graduate study or that will be assessed as part of an academic course.
* Work that forms part of existing professional or academic employment.

**When does the programme take place?**

Successful participants will be notified by early November 2023. The programme should conclude no later than July 2024. Most of the workshops/training sessions/activities will take place between January and July 2024.

**Will you assign me a mentor?**

We can help assign a mentor/s based upon your application and the skills you wish to develop. If you have a specific mentor/s in mind, you can include this in your application. This will be discussed with you on commencement of the programme.

**What if I want to work with/be mentored by somebody as part of INVEST who I have never worked with before?**

This programme has been designed to support artists to build new connections and networks. Please include the names of anyone who you might wish to work with/be mentored by during the INVEST programme even if you have never met them before. If you are accepted onto the programme, the INVEST team will work collaboratively with you to make initial contact and assist you to develop a relationship.

**I work for an organisation as a curator and/or producer, can I apply?**

This programme is designed for independent creatives only. If you are part-time in a creative role within an organisation, you are still welcome to apply if you can show that the professional development activity benefits your independent practice rather than the organisation or your role within the organisation. In addition, participants will be expected to attend some compulsory group meetings and training, so we urge you to consider this upon submission. You cannot apply if you are employed full time within an organisation, company, venue, or community group.

**I have had a bursary from Theatre and Dance NI (or Theatre NI or Dance Resource Base) before – can I apply again?**

Yes, however you must have completed your previous evaluation report.

If you have been a previous participant in the INVEST programme, you are not eligible to apply. If you applied to the programme last year and were unsuccessful, you may reapply.

**Do I have to apply using the application form?**

You can apply using the application form or you can submit a pre-recorded video/audio file (questions 10 to 13). Use **WeTransfer or Dropbox** to share your video/audio file. Please make sure the link/s are working before your submission. If you are applying via pre-recorded video/audio, submit your link under each relevant question on the digital application form.

**What supporting evidence should I provide with my application?**

* Supply no more than two examples of your artistic work.
* Supporting evidence that best exemplifies your work and is of good quality video/audio.
* Clearly label the work with a title (i.e. in the file name) to show what it is or where it was presented.
* If your practice is performance-based, share a clip of a relevant event/show, rather than still images.
* Choose a clip from a performance, rather than promotional film as we want to see examples of your work. This can include a show reel so long as it demonstrates you and your practice.
* Do not submit video/audio materials that are more than five minutes long or work that contains large amounts of text.
* Use **WeTransfer or Dropbox** to share files and make sure the link is working before submission.

**How will I provide evidence of my development as part of the programme?**

This is a publicly funded programme. Participants will be required to share their experiences, processes and progressions with TDNI, their mentor and their fellow INVEST artists. Please indicate clearly in your application (question no.15) how you might intend to report your progress.

**What should I include in my budget?**

Please include **all** projected costs in your budget to achieve what you would like to do through the INVEST programme. Any additional cost above the bursary amount will be at your own expense.

**Is my information kept private?**

Yes. All information provided to Theatre and Dance NI will be held in strict confidence and is held solely to evaluate your application. Information about Bursary recipients will be shared publicly with the approval of the Artist.

**I’ve read the guidance and FAQ but still have a question. What should I do?**

If you have any further questions, please contact invest@theatreanddanceni.org.

**3 Criteria for decisions**

**What is the INVEST panel looking for?**

The INVEST panel will select the applications that best deliver the stated mission of the programme:

* Support a diverse group of artists to develop their careers and practice.
* Support artists in the longer term to create and produce work to the highest professional standards.
* Support artists to develop and sustain their careers.

A good application will give a snapshot of your current creative practice and the professional development you wish to undertake through INVEST. We encourage you to be realistic about what can be achieved.

The panel will make their decision based on the information provided. The decision-making process will be evidence-based. It is important to include all details in the application and support material.

Please do not assume that the selection panel have any prior knowledge of you or your work. If the programme is oversubscribed, you may be required to attend an interview with the selection panel. This would be no longer than 30 minutes.

4 Decisions

**The Expertise**

Additional advice will be sought if a particular form of arts practice is believed to be outside the panel's expertise.

**Successful applications**

Successful applicants will receive a contract from TDNI, and payment of 70% once relevant signed paperwork has been received. The final 30% will be paid on the conclusion of the programme (July 2024). All payments will be processed within 30 days of receipt of an invoice.

**Unsuccessful applications**

We will let you know by email no later than November 2023.

