

Coimisiún
na Meán

SOUND & VISION

Round 50: Funding to Support Independent Commercial Radio

Guide for Applicants

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Section 1: Introduction

Sound and Vision 4 (“the Scheme”) is a funding scheme for television and radio programmes and developing broadcasting, established under the provisions of the Broadcasting Act 2009 as amended (“the Act”). There are six stated objectives for the Scheme set out in Section 155 of the Act, one of which is to develop local broadcasting.

In response to a request from the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Ms Catherine Martin, T.D., and to further achieve these objectives, Coimisiún na Meán is implementing this funding initiative **to support Independent Commercial Radio**. Funding of up to a total of €2.5 million is available.

Section 2: Aims and Objectives of the Round

In this time of significant disruption in the media, Independent Commercial Radio can fulfil a crucial role in supporting local democracy and building resilient communities in Ireland. In this regard, the sector has demonstrated through previous Sound & Vision covid funding rounds how it can foster community spirit and be inclusive, informative, educational, engaging and entertaining for Irish audiences locally, regionally and nationally. Sound & Vision funding can play a significant role in assisting the sector in building these resilient communities. To construct resilient communities, broadcasters can focus on several key aspects. Firstly, they can prioritise producing and broadcasting informative and engaging content that addresses the specific needs and interests of the local community and its constituent parts. By providing informative, educational programmes, and culturally relevant content, broadcasters can foster a sense of belonging and connection among community members, including those on the margins, both on-air and off-air.

Investing in programme-making and community engagement initiatives, such as town hall meetings, workshops, and public forums, can encourage dialogue, participation, and collaboration. The Sound & Vision Scheme funding can serve as a valuable resource, enabling broadcasters to enhance their production capacity, programming, improve technical infrastructure, and develop innovative community-focused projects. This financial support can empower broadcasters to fulfil their mission of building resilient communities by fostering inclusivity, promoting dialogue, and supporting local initiatives.

This round aims to offer Independent Commercial Radio stations funding to develop and produce new and additional content for their audiences. In consultation with the Independent Broadcasters of Ireland (“IBI”), Coimisiún na Meán has identified several strategic areas for such programming that will deliver on the objectives of the fund but also assist with the developmental and programming needs of stations and ensure that any content produced is relevant and adds to each broadcasters unique programming philosophy and schedule.

Section 3: Strategic Themes of the Round

Therefore, applications and any resulting programming should address one or more of the following broad Strategic Themes¹.

Media Literacy

Should support the station to empower audiences with the skills and knowledge to understand how media works in the changing media environment.

Digital Transformation

Should support the station in exploring methods to digitise, use of platforms, extend their audiences, including younger and minority audiences, and enhance programme initiatives, including those further to Media Literacy and Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

¹ Refer to Appendix 2.

Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Should support the station to build capacity in programme making and programme content that aims to build on diversity, accessibility, inclusiveness and representation of the mix of people living in their communities and particularly for those groups and individuals in their communities whose stories and voices are not often, if seldom, heard.

Developing Communities and Communities of Interest

Should support the station in creating initiatives that foster enhanced engagement, interaction and support among listeners that, in turn, can expand the reach of the station's output, bring the community together and provide opportunities for people to connect with the station and each other. Stations are encouraged to be inclusive through all stages of the programme production process and associated activities, i.e. involvement with, and by, listeners from all walks of life and to help build strong, diverse communities that better understand how their communities can be shaped and developed and become more resilient.

In this regard, An Coimisiún strongly encourages broadcasters to put forward ideas for creative, innovative and additional programming that will result in valuable content for both the station(s) and audience(s), including minorities and youth.

Who can apply?

This funding round is only open to full-time commercial sound broadcasting services.

Section 4 : How much funding is available?

There is up to €2.5m being made available in this round.

To ensure that the aims of the round are best achieved, a higher level of funding is available to sound broadcasting services tasked and committed to providing more speech and information programme content than to sound broadcasting services primarily music-driven, including niche music. In this context, the maximum funding award amounts are set out in the table below.

Sound Broadcasting Contract Type & Content	Maximum amounts that can be applied for (85%)
Local Broad-format	€95,000
Regional Youth, Quasi-National Speech	€85,000
Local Music-driven & National Music- driven	€70,000
Niche Music-Driven	€40,000

Coimisiún na Meán reserves the right to offer an applicant a lower amount of funding than is requested. Where this occurs, An Coimisiún will provide feedback and rationale for this decision.

Are there limits to the grant amount applicants can receive?

Under State Aid Rules, the Scheme can only offer up to a % of an overall project budget. The maximum offer will not represent more than the following:

Amount of Grant	Max. percentage of the total eligible budget
€0 - €20,000	Up to 95%
€20,001 - €40,000	Up to 90%
€40,001 - €55,000	Up to 85%
Great than €55,001	To be negotiated on a case-by-case basis but will not exceed 85%

What can stations use the funding for?

The main objective of Sound & Vision is to support the production of high-quality content that is additional for Irish audiences. By additional, we mean content that would not otherwise be created (because, for example, it is challenging or not feasible to produce). By funding such content, Sound & Vision adds to Irish audiences' viewing and listening options.

Funding is therefore available for costs directly related to, and that support, the achievement of the project.

Examples of eligible costs include:

- Staff & Salary costs for workers hired and/or assigned to the delivery of the projects/activities (excluding any funding received from other sources that cover staff and salary costs).
- Associated administrative costs (excluding any funding received from other sources that cover administration & overhead costs).
- Associated utilities/running costs (excluding any funding received from other sources that cover administration & overhead costs).
- Project delivery costs.
- Relevant studio space costs.
- Station communications and promotions for awareness of the station's activities relating to the funded project and/or activities.
- Training and development and mentoring costs.
- Travel and expenses for participants involved in the project/s.

The funding will **not** cover the following costs:

Capital or Office Equipment Costs generally, Sponsorship/Fundraising Events, Debt and debt service charges, Interest owed, Bad debts, Work that has already taken place, Projects/activities/positions that are already receiving ongoing public funding from the Irish Government, or any other public source or the EU, charges/costs for any other projects funded by commercial or public (government & EU) sources, statutory fines, Licence fees/copyright, Shareholder costs/loans and any such types of costs.

A note about capital costs

In most cases, capital costs are ineligible. However, some smaller capital costs (for example, the purchase of recording equipment) may be eligible for funding. In these cases, applicants must provide a detailed rationale for why these capital costs are required and why the Scheme, not the broadcaster, should pay for them. The request and justification will be assessed on a case-by-case. Coimisiún na Meán may contribute up to 80% of such capital costs.

Section 5: How to apply

Complete an application form, attach accompanying documents (audited accounts etc) and submit it through www.cnamonline.ie by the closing date of **12 noon on 31st August 2023**. Your application will be assessed against the scheme criteria with regard to the specific themes of this round.

What to include in your application

Before you begin your application, it is crucial to thoroughly understand the objectives and requirements of Sound & Vision 4 and the objectives of this round. Familiarise yourself with the eligibility criteria, project duration, funding limits, reporting obligations, and specific guidelines. This information will help you tailor your application accordingly.

Define Your Project Goals: Clearly define the goals of your project and how they align with the themes of the round. Determine the specific issues or challenges you aim to address within the EDI, Media Literacy and/or Digitisation, and Developing Communities and Communities of Interest domains. Outline the expected outcomes and impact of your project, demonstrating how it will benefit your station, your audience and the wider local broadcasting sector (if applicable).

Develop a Project Proposal:

a. Executive Summary: Begin your proposal with a concise executive summary that highlights the key aspects of your project. It should provide a compelling overview of your objectives, target audience, and expected impacts.

b. Project Description: Provide a detailed description of your project, including its scope, methodology, and timeline. Clearly explain how your project will address the chosen themes of this round: GEDI, Media Literacy, Digitisation, and Developing Communities and Communities of Interest. Outline the activities, resources, and expertise required to ensure successful project completion.

c. Budget Planning: Develop a comprehensive budget that outlines the anticipated costs of your project. Include all necessary expenses, such as personnel, training, marketing, and evaluation. Ensure that your budget aligns with the funding limits and guidelines set by the Scheme. The purchase of equipment or other capital costs is allowed subject to a maximum % of the overall budget. The application must also provide a rationale for such purchases and why the broadcaster is not in a position to cover this cost. The budget details provided **must be** specific to the proposed project, i.e. the total budget should reflect the total costs of the proposed project only.

d. Partnerships Collaborations: If applicable, highlight any partnerships or collaborations you have established or plan to establish to strengthen your project. Partnerships can enhance the quality, reach, and sustainability of your initiative. Partnerships can also include other sources of funding.

Highlight Impact and Innovation: To increase your chances of securing funding, emphasise the potential impact and innovation of your project. Highlight any unique or innovative approaches you will employ and how they will benefit the target audience.

Evaluation and Monitoring: Demonstrate your commitment to evaluation and monitoring by outlining how you will measure the success of your project. Specify the key performance indicators (KPIs) you will use to assess the impact of your activities. This will help An Coimisiún understand how you will track progress and make any necessary adjustments throughout the project lifecycle.

Prepare Supporting Materials: Gather all relevant supporting materials, such as biogs of key team members, letters of support from any partners. These materials should reinforce the credibility and capabilities of your team and demonstrate the potential of your project.

Review and Proofread: Thoroughly review your project proposal for any errors, inconsistencies, or missing information. Ensure that the proposal is clear, concise, and well-structured.

What not to include in your application

Please do not include any information that is considered personal or confidential in nature. Such information

Please do not include budgets and/or costings for anything other than those directly related to, or that support the, production of this application.

Section 6: How will my application be assessed?

For the guidance of applicants, Coimisiún na Meán sets out below how the procedures for each of the stages will be applied in assessing the applications. The assessment and decision phases are:

- Qualification
- Qualitative
- Strategic Assessment
- An Coimisiún

Qualification Phase: Applicants must meet several minimum criteria to be considered for funding. They must be eligible to apply, and the application must be for activities permitted under this round, and the funding sought must be within the limits allowed. The Qualification Scoring Matrix is set out in Appendix 1. Applications will not be considered further if these minimum criteria are not met. Coimisiún na Meán will liaise with the applicant and provide detailed feedback on any issues identified at this stage of the process.

Qualitative Assessment Phase: If the Applicant and the application are deemed eligible in the Qualification Assessment Phase, the application qualifies for consideration for the award of funding. The next stage is the Qualitative Assessment Phase, during which the application is assessed on its own merits in the context of the funding round objectives and predetermined qualitative criteria. The Qualitative Assessment Scoring Matrix is set out in Appendix 1. We will assess how your application will address the themes of this round and the level to which the application demonstrates that you meet the other criteria.

There are four mandatory criteria, and an applicant must achieve a score of 50% or more in each of these criteria to qualify for further assessment for the award of funding. The mandatory assessment criteria are as follows:

- **Public value for listeners to independent commercial radio**
- **Development**
- **Feasibility & Track Record**
- **Resources & Need for Funding**

Strategic Assessment Phase: In instances where there are more qualifying applications than funds available, Coimisiún na Meán will have a second evaluation phase. This will focus on the quality of individual applications and the overall package of funding awards that best fulfil the aims of this funding initiative. Final recommendations are then submitted to the Commissioners for ratification.

The Strategic Assessment Scoring Matrix is set out in Appendix 1. The assessment criteria for this phase are:

- Diversity of content sources, voices, stories & audience expectations
- Uniqueness of content
- Recommendations from the assessment panels

An Coimisiún Consideration: The final stage sees an Coimisiún make final decisions on the application, considering recommendations from previous assessment phases. Coimisiún na Meán's funding decisions aim to support projects that provide a significant public value and, particularly in this instance, a significant public good in providing a programme resource that educates and informs. Coimisiún na Meán will also have regard to the strategic impacts of any proposal on the sustainability of the sound broadcasting service.

Section 7: The Decision-Making Process

The following procedures will be followed by Coimisiún na Meán in determining the suitability of an applicant for the award of funding:

Coimisiún na Meán

An internal panel of Coimisiún na Meán staff will first consider whether the application satisfies the qualification criteria as set out. This will include consideration of the application against the qualifying criteria and a summation of the application prepared by the Executive.

The internal panel, following discussion, will assign a Pass or Fail classification under each of the qualification criteria set out in the Scoring Matrix on page 9 of this Guide. Any applicant that does not meet with any one of the listed criteria will be disqualified and will receive detailed feedback from Coimisiún na Meán.

An eligible application is assigned to a Qualitative Assessment Panel comprised of Coimisiún na Meán staff and where feasible, one external assessor. An application will be assessed by each panel member independently and then a meeting will be convened to discuss each application. The panel will agree the assessment report and associated score for each application and determine the suitability of the application for the award of funding. On completion of the panel assessment meetings, including signoff on the assessment meeting documentation, the complete list of funding recommendations is compiled. If the recommended amount exceeds that which is available for the round, a strategic assessment phase will be required.

A Strategic Assessment Panel, comprised of Coimisiún na Meán staff, is convened to consider the outcomes and recommendations from the Qualitative Assessment Phase. This discussion includes regard to the applications, the strategic criteria and the recommendations of the assessors. The panel agrees on a score for each application, and a final list of funding recommendations is agreed. The draft minutes of the meeting and draft scoresheets are circulated to panel members for consideration and approval. On signoff of the documentation, a note to the Commissioners setting out the recommendations and associated rationale, including details of the applications, is drafted and presented at the Commissioners' meeting for consideration, decision and ratification.

What happens if I am offered funding?

If your application is successful and an offer of funding is made, you will be contacted with an offer of funding. The offer will set out a brief assessment report of the application, the amount of funding being offered, and any terms and conditions attached to the offer.

What happens if I am not offered funding?

Coimisiún na Meán will issue an assessment report to the applicant if an application is unsuccessful. This report will provide an overview of the Assessment Panel's recommendation and offer constructive feedback on how the application might improve. The decision of Coimisiún na Meán is final, and there is no appeals process in place.

Section 8: Contracting and drawdown of funds

The award of a funding contract will be subject to the successful applicant confirming his/her acceptance of the offer of funding and any condition(s) attached to it by the Coimisiún na Meán. In this regard, a successful applicant is required to enter into a contractual agreement with Coimisiún na Meán, on terms to be specified by Coimisiún na Meán.

Coimisiún na Meán will release up to 95% of the funds awarded on signing the funding contract. The remaining 5% will be paid when delivery and approval of the final project report is complete.

A successful applicant must provide specific documentation when contracting with Coimisiún na Meán. Below is a non-exhaustive list of what is required at the contracting stage. Note that these documents do not have to be in place when applying; they are included here for guidance only.

- Budget & Finance Plan pertaining to each initiative and associated outcomes and programme outputs
- Project plan, including milestones, outputs and outcomes
- Grant Details
- Insurance Certificate
- Tax Clearance Information
- Bank Account information, including BIC and IBAN

Please note: If any relevant documentation is already on file at Coimisiún na Meán, there is no need to duplicate it.

Reporting

The grantee must report on the expenditure of the grant to confirm that it has been used for the purpose outlined in the funding application and as approved by Coimisiún na Meán on the funding award. These requirements will be set out in the funding contract. All grantees must retain documentary evidence of expenditure incurred against the grant for audit purposes. Coimisiún na Meán may also conduct random audits as provided for in the funding contract.

Where can I find out more information?

Take time to read the Guide for Applicants and the application form. Please also attend Coimisiún na Meán's **webinar** for applicants for this round. All eligible applicants will be notified about the event. For any other queries, please email s&v4@cnam.ie.

Section 9: Freedom of Information

Coimisiún na Meán undertakes to use its best endeavours to hold confidential any material provided in response to this process, subject to Coimisiún na Meán's obligations under the law, including the Freedom of Information Act 2014 ("FOI Act"). Applicants and Contractors are asked to consider if any of the information supplied to Coimisiún na Meán in an application or during subsequent contracting should not be disclosed because of its information content, to identify the same and to specify reasons for its sensitivity. Coimisiún na Meán will consult with applicants about confidential, personal or commercially sensitive information before deciding on any request received under the FOI Act. Such information may be released in response to an FOI request.

Section 10: Data Protection

In order to operate this funding initiative effectively, we will require information about the applicant, partner applicants and detailed information on the proposed project/s. This data and documentation will include personal information such as job titles, salaries and email addresses. Coimisiún na Meán shall comply with its obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation Directive, the Data Protection Act 2018 and any other applicable data privacy laws and regulations when handling and processing any such personal information submitted to this funding initiative. The information submitted in an application, including any personal information, will be used to process the application and to liaise with the applicant. Any personal information submitted will only be retained in the event that the application is successful. Such information would be required for the funding contract and subsequent measuring of the performance of the grant and the associated outcomes. The information may also be used for the purpose of reviewing the funding initiative and by external researchers. In such instances, all personal information would be anonymised. Coimisiún na Meán is obligated and committed to protecting all personal data submitted in response to a call for applications to this funding initiative. Coimisiún na Meán has an appointed Data Protection Officer who is registered with the Data Protection Commission. You can find out more about how Coimisiún na Meán processes personal information in Coimisiún na Meán's published policy at www.cnam.ie

Appendix 1 - Assessment Criteria

Qualification Scoring Matrix

Criteria	Yes/ No
<p>Eligibility: Is the Applicant eligible to apply for funding, and does the application comply with the fundamental requirements of S&V4? This has regard to whether:</p> <p>a) the status of the applicant complies with the requirements of the Scheme and the funding initiative; is the applicant an entity that has a current full-time commercial sound broadcasting contract with An Coimisiún or the holding company that has several entities that have full-time sound broadcasting contracts with Coimisiún na Meán?</p>	
<p>b) the funding amount requested falls within the limit permissions of the funding initiative.</p>	
<p>Is the Application Complete? Has the applicant complied with all the competition guidelines and submitted all the relevant documentation? (this includes a signed declaration from an authorised individual).</p>	

If any of these minimum criteria are not met, applications will not be considered further. Coimisiún na Meán will liaise with the applicant and provide detailed feedback on any issues identified at this stage of the process.

Qualitative Assessment Scoring Matrix

Mandatory Criteria	Available Score
<p>Public value: To what extent will the proposal deliver on the aims of this funding initiative and SV4? How well has the applicant demonstrated that the initiatives would help to build resilient communities? To what extent will new voices and their stories be included, supported and heard in the proposal? To what extent does the proposal demonstrate media literacy value, off-air and/or on-air? What level of additionality does it offer for its target audience? In this context, is the proposal in line with the applicant's programming commitments as set out in its Commercial Sound Broadcasting Contract, and how does it add to the schedule and content for the audience?</p>	40
<p>Development: To what extent will the proposal support the station's development? Is the approach to digital transformation detailed and development outcomes clear? To what extent will the proposal assist the applicant in building programme-making capacity and better deliver on gender, equality, diversity and inclusion for its communities off-air and on-air? Has the applicant demonstrated that the initiative would reach and serve new audiences? To what extent will the proposal build stronger ties within the community and its constituent parts? What approaches to environmentally friendly production techniques are being adopted? Does the approach align with the applicant's environmental policy if applicable?</p>	20
<p>Feasibility & Track Record: Does the proposal clearly demonstrate in terms of objectives, approach and planning that the project outcomes are feasible? Regard shall be given to the qualifications, experience and suitability of the person or team who / that will manage implementation. The applicant's track record with its current Commercial Sound Broadcasting Contract will be considered and the capacity of the applicant to deliver.</p>	20
<p>Resources & Need for Funding: Are the resources proposed clearly explained and are they adequate and realistic in the context of the proposed proposal? Does the proposal represent value for money? How much is the funding needed?</p>	20

An Applicant must score a minimum of 50% under each criterion to qualify for consideration of award of funding.

Strategic Assessment Scoring Matrix

Criteria	Available Score
<p>Diversity of content, sources & audience expectations: The extent to which the application adds to the diversity of radio content and the range of content sources proposed. The extent to which the applicant has demonstrated the likelihood of the proposed content meeting audience needs and expectations in the franchise area.</p>	40
<p>The uniqueness of content: Regard shall be had to any unique or innovative features in the content proposed in the application.</p>	20
<p>Recommendations of the assessment panels: the extent to which the proposal addresses the criteria of the round, the realism of the proposal and the need, and the value, for money.</p>	40

Media Literacy

Media literacy is the key to empowering people with the skills and knowledge to understand how media works in this changing environment, to interrogate the accuracy of the information, to counter unfair and inaccurate representation, to challenge extremist views and, ultimately, to make better-informed media choices. This is especially significant for those who might otherwise need help navigating an increasingly noisy media landscape and sound-bite-orientated society. In addition, media literacy can help people develop much-needed skills in the areas of creativity and problem-solving in technology- rich environments – an area that Ireland scores below average compared to other developed nations. The Media Literacy Policy can be accessed here: <http://www.bai.ie/en/download/131565/>

Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In 2018, the BAI developed a [Gender Action Plan](#). The Plan addresses four key areas in promoting greater gender equality. These are Data collection and publication, Supporting Research, Encouraging the development of gender initiatives internally and with stakeholders and Enhancing accountability processes, including monitoring and reporting.

Future of Media Commission Report

Established by Government in September 2020, the Future of Media Commission was tasked with developing recommendations on sustainable public funding and other supports to ensure media in Ireland remains viable, independent, and capable of delivering public service aims. The Commission's report, which was published on 12 July 2022, contains a total of 50 recommendations, which in effect, constitute a strategic agenda for transforming Ireland's media sector. The Report can be accessed here: <https://assets.gov.ie/229731/2f2be30d-d987-40cd-9cfe-aaa885104bc1.pdf>

Appendix 3: Budget and Budget Notes Guidelines

- The budget form template (part of the application form) provides the category of costs that the applicant must set out. If you wish to use a software programme to compile your budget, you may do so, but please ensure that it follows the structure as set out on the following page and includes budgetary notes for each line item. You should then attach the completed budget to your application form and clearly mark the attachment as 'Budget'.
- If the application is a group application, please provide a separate budget for each station in the group. If there are shared resources, please identify the associated costs and how they have been apportioned across the group.
- Explain how you are going to achieve the proposal described in the application using the resources listed in the budget. Applicants must adequately justify the costs indicated (e.g. by way of the assumptions underpinning the projected costs), and where necessary, provide a breakdown of each input.
- Staff costs can include those assigned to the project and also, other staff costs, including any costs relating to the staffing, including management or supervision costs, excluding any funding received from other sources to cover staff costs.
- Clearly identify where the same person fulfils more than one role, and indicate rates per day paid and the number of days proposed for each role.
- The notes should provide a breakdown of any costs that are 'bundled' in the budget, e.g. travel and subsistence, and they should explain why particular cost lines are necessary and justified in the context of the proposal.
- The programme production costs should be based on the total number and hours of programme content that you propose to make.
- If digital first costs are included, a rationale for same must be provided and breakdown for such costs must be indicated, including, separately, any access provisions if applicable.
- Administrative and overhead costs can include any such costs required to support the proposal such as office materials and supplies, phone, reception, insurance and utilities excluding any funding received from other sources that cover administration and overhead costs.
- Applicants should also include a summary of the items that have been included in the overhead costs and detail insurance cost indicated.
- A note for any "other" line included must be provided.