

Platform @ The Pixel Mill

Platform is a business accelerator programme for video game companies in Northern Ireland aimed at supporting companies to self-publish a new game based on an original IP within 12 months.

Working out of The Pixel Mill based at the Ormeau Baths in Belfast, companies will have access to facilities, mentors, training and funding as well as the opportunity to attend markets to build their business network and meet consumers.

Northern Ireland Screen is inviting applications from companies to take part with support for up to 3 successful companies to develop their business and build their teams.

Platform is split into 3 stages, where companies will be challenged with developing an idea for a game, validating the market opportunity for that idea and taking it into full production. The stages will be as follows:

Rapid prototyping: 8 weeks of idea generation and prototyping. Companies will be challenged to come up with 6 game concepts, creating a prototype for each, which they can create and release within 36 weeks on a budget of £50,000. Validating the business case and market opportunity for each.

Vertical Slice: Companies will choose the strongest game ideas (2-3) from rapid prototyping and spend 12 weeks creating verticals slices/demos which demonstrate the core mechanics, art style and narrative. During this stage companies will have the opportunity to attend Gamescom to meet with publishers. While the ultimate aim is to self-publish, the goal of this stage is to get companies used to pitching multiple ideas to publishers and validate which idea is the strongest to take forward into full production.

Full Development: Based on the market validation carried out by companies, they will select a game which they will take into full production for 24 weeks with the goal of self-publishing the game by the end of Feb/start of March 2021. During this stage companies will have the opportunity to attend EGX.

By the end of **Platform** companies will be expected to have published a game which is within the scope of the budget and time allowed. It is important that companies have a concerted focus on marketing and community building around their games throughout the programme.

During the programme companies will have milestones/deliverables which they will be required to meet in order to move on to the next stage of development. Summary as per below.

Stage	Time	Deliverable	Funding
Rapid Prototyping	8 Weeks (April/May)	6 Prototype Games with accompanying market research	£10,000
Vertical Slice (Pre-production)	12 Weeks (June/July/Aug)	2-3 Vertical Slices of Games with accompanying pitch decks (including budget, marketing plan, publisher feedback and production schedule)	£15,000
Full Development (Production)	24 Weeks (Sept/Oct/Nov/Dec/Jan/Feb)	Fully developed and published game.	£35,000

- Up to 3 teams
- Up to £60,000 in development funding per company
- Up to 12 Months Office Space and access to mentors
- Market Attendance – Gamescom and EGX

Recruitment

Platform is open to companies that meet the following criteria:

- Limited Companies
- Companies must consist of 2 or more team members (ideally 3) with the key roles of programming, art and business development covered within the team.
- Companies and team members must be committed to **Platform** full-time for the duration of the programme
- The company, or at least 2 of the team members, have released/published a video game or product in the last 3 years.
- Company, including its team members, is able to join **Platform** on the 30th March 2020.

Application Process:

All companies interested in joining **Platform** must complete the online application form.

The deadline for applications is **Wednesday 12th February 2020 at 12 noon.**

Interview Stage

Selected companies from the application stage will be invited to attend an interview with Northern Ireland Screen. The interview will involve a presentation and questions from a panel.

Pre-application meetings

Those interested in applying to **Platform** and who would like to have an informal chat can arrange to meet with our Interactive Manager, Rory Clifford. They can request a meeting by emailing rory@northernirelandscreen.co.uk.

Timeline

Date	Detail
15 th Jan	Application Opens
12 th Feb	Application Closes
14 th Feb	Successful applicants notified
19 th Feb	Interviews
w/c 24 th Feb	Successful interviewees notified and contracted
30 th Mar	2020/21 cohort move & start date

Evaluation criteria

- Experience/knowledge of the team
- Company can demonstrate that key roles are covered by team members;
 - 1. Programming
 - 2. Game Design
 - 3. Business Development/Marketing
- Ability to concisely develop and pitch a video game

Office Space

The maximum guarantee of space to a **Platform** company is 6 months. A further 6 months will be dependent on performance review and completion of milestones.

Platform Induction

Successful **Platform** companies will receive a full induction to the facilities and the programme with a bootcamp during the first week of the programme (w/c 30th Mar).

Induction will include;

- Equipment set-up and systems intro day
- Intro's to mentors and key NIS Staff
- Workshops delivered by mentors covering: Marketing, Games Design, Business, Publishing, Project Management, Legal and Accounting.
- Talks from experienced local video game developers
- Intro to Rapid Prototyping

Skills

The Pixel Mill will offer a cross-section of expertise and resources which **Platform** companies will have access to. Expertise/Resources will cover the breadth of the creative and business disciplines needed to run a modern-day video game company.

Mentors will be available throughout the year to provide advice and guidance to companies on areas such as:

- Publishing
- Marketing
- Programming
- Game Design
- Business/Business Development
- Accounting
- Legal
- Leadership

Other resources will be made available to **Platform** companies such as QA and user testing facilities. Companies will also be able to attend various events and workshops held at The Pixel Mill as well as game jams and demos throughout the year.

FAQ

When can I apply for Platform?

Applications open on Wednesday 15th January 2020 and will close at 12 noon on Wednesday 12th February 2020.

When does Platform commence and how long does it run for?

Platform starts on Monday 30th March 2020 and runs for up to 12 months until the end of March 2021.

How much funding is available?

Companies may be awarded up to £60,000 in funding across the **Platform** accelerator programme. This is dependent of meeting agreed milestones.

How long will Platform companies have access to The Pixel Mill?

Platform companies will be given desk space for 6 months initially with a further 6 months pending performance review.

Does Northern Ireland Screen take any ownership of IP created during Platform?

The terms of the funding provided through **Platform** are Northern Ireland Screen's standard development funding agreement terms. Northern Ireland Screen takes a recoupment position once a game is launched. Northern Ireland Screen will not take equity in a company.

We have a company and want to apply but don't want to work out of The Pixel Mill?

Companies applying for **Platform** need to base themselves out of The Pixel Mill.

My company is not based in Northern Ireland, Can I still apply for The Pixel Mill?

Yes, however your company needs to be based out of The Pixel Mill. The company also needs to be registered as a limited company in NI. Your team members need to be residents in Northern Ireland, i.e. living in Northern Ireland and paying tax.

For companies relocating to Northern Ireland will Northern Ireland Screen provide any support?

Northern Ireland Screen will not be providing any relocation support for companies moving to Northern Ireland.

I am an individual developer, can I apply?

Platform is aimed at video game companies. The company must consist of at least 2 full-time members of staff. However Northern Ireland Screen has development funding opportunities which may be more suitable. Please contact Rory Clifford, Interactive Manager by email at roryclifford@northernireland.co.uk.

Our company has an idea for a game already, can we apply with it?

Companies may have an idea for a game before joining **Platform** however all companies are expected to take part in each stage.

If companies have an idea for a video game and are interested in development funding please contact Rory Clifford, Interactive Manager by email at roryclifford@northernireland.co.uk.

Our company is not set up yet. Can we still apply to be on Platform?

Yes, as long as the company is registered at Companies House and has a bank account set-up in the company's name before the start of the programme so you can still apply. However, it is important to demonstrate the track record of individual teams if the company has no history of publishing games.

We are a student/graduate team, can we still apply?

Graduate teams that are not in full-time education can apply for **Platform**.

I'm not interested in Platform but like to be able to work out of The Pixel Mill. Is that possible?

Yes, however desk space within The Pixel Mill is limited and requests are dealt with on a first come first serve basis. If you are interested in learning more click [here](#) or contact Rory Clifford, Interactive Manager by email at rory@northernireland.co.uk.

What markets will Platform companies attend?

It is expected that **Platform** companies will attend Gamescom and EGX.

What will the company be expected to deliver by the end of Platform?

It is expected that companies will have at least self-published their game by Feb/Mar 2021. However, there are a number of milestones/deliverables during the course of the programme, relative to each stage.

When will we hear if our application has been successful or not?

You will find out on Friday 14th February 2020 if you have made it through to the interview stage.

Where will the interviews take place?

The interviews will take place at the Northern Ireland Screen offices in Belfast.

When will the interviews take place?

The interviews will take place on Wednesday 19th February 2020.

Who will be on the interview panel?

Applicants will be assessed by Northern Ireland Screen team and mentors from The Pixel Mill.

What is Northern Ireland Screen looking for?

We are looking for teams that have a passion for the video games industry, the ability to come up with ideas and the ambition to run a video games company.