

ULSTER-SCOTS BROADCAST FUND APPLICATION CALL

The Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund (USBF) is seeking digital content projects. The projects should be aimed at supporting learning about aspects of Ulster-Scots such as language, culture and heritage. These projects will be delivered online and may include interactive elements that support active learning. Proposals for projects intended for a range of audiences will be considered. These might include school-based audiences (any Key Stage), children and young people not in a school learning environment and adults of all ages.

Content should be engaging and may include a variety of media.

As with television content the overarching aim to ensure that the heritage, culture and language of Ulster-Scots are expressed through the project remains. Specific guidance on the type of projects envisaged is detailed below.

In addition to digital content applications the USBF is still open to television production and development applications. In these cases the standard USBF guidelines apply including the requirement for a broadcaster to be attached to the project.

All applications including supporting documentation must be received by **Monday 6th July 2020**. All applications will be assessed with decisions intended to be made by in early August 2020.

WHO CAN APPLY?

Registered independent companies with a permanent agency in Northern Ireland.

The USBF will accept co-production arrangements where the co-producer does not have a permanent agency in Northern Ireland provided the project and the co-production clearly fulfil all of the stated criteria and the project, in the view of the Investment Committee, contributes more significantly to the aims of the USBF than a similar project without the co-production arrangement.

WHAT TYPE OF PROJECTS MAY BE SUPPORTED?

The USBF is looking for digital content projects that will contribute to the promotion and understanding of Ulster-Scots heritage, culture and language.

The USBF is looking for the following type of digital content projects via this call:

- Projects that encourage active learning through engagement with content. That is, include elements of interaction.
- The primary objective is to develop content and provide experiences that promote interest in and learning about Ulster-Scots.
- Projects that will appeal to and/or have links with the local Ulster-Scots community and/or the wider Ulster-Scots diaspora.
- Projects intended for school-based audiences will also be considered. These projects should help support teachers embed aspects of Ulster-Scots in curriculum-based learning. (Northern Ireland Curriculum).
- Digital or online content that has an association with radio or television content;
- Tourism related content;
- Projects that can 'piggyback' on existing portals or platforms.

CHALLENGES

There are 2 key challenges for these types of project. The first challenge is the need to explain how a digital content project will reach its target audience. The second is to evidence the necessary quality of the project without the benefit of a television broadcaster both ensuring and endorsing the standard of the content.

AUDIENCE REACH

Applications for digital content projects often address the question of audience reach by reference to the accessibility and power of the internet. However, that any given

website could potentially be viewed by an almost infinite audience is not a compelling argument to the USBF. Instead, the USBF will assess the real likelihood of viewers seeking out the content and the extent to which the proposition has built in drivers of audience or is utilising portals known to attract significant audiences.

The USBF envisages that the following might represent compelling evidence that an engaged audience could be reached:

- Piggybacking on a portal that already reaches a dedicated audience;
- A built in self marketing dynamic that can help awareness of the project spread in a viral manner;
- With formal education content, a commitment from CCEA to make the materials available and to distribute the materials to all interested schools. In contrast, the support of individual schools or a small group of schools does not represent compelling evidence that a substantial audience could be reached;
- Digital or web-based content that has an association with long running radio or television content has the potential to reach a substantial audience utilising cross promotion where, for example, the web address is trailing on the end of the television programme or read out on the radio programme repeatedly and regularly.

Substantial Audience

There is no single fixed definition of a 'substantial audience' although for general audience content there is some guidance in noting that the audience requirement for television broadcast content is 40,000 viewers. Digital content delivered through over the web is capable of reaching comparable audiences.

Smaller audiences may be acceptable where the audience is highly engaged – evidenced through the interaction. For example, a content proposal that could

evidence that it would be made available to every primary school in Northern Ireland, and could also evidence that it had reason to expect that more than half the primary schools would actively engage with the content, would be extremely compelling despite the fact that this audience number would be approximately 11,000.

In all instances, there will be 2 aspects to assessing the substantial audience criteria; that is, the level of availability of the content, and the actual number of people likely to be reached. Once again, the availability test will be assessed on rather more than the content's presence on a website but rather the extent to which an audience can be evidenced to be clearly made aware of the content.

QUALITY OF THE PROJECT

Outside of the television broadcasting framework it is much more difficult for the USBF to satisfy itself that the quality of any given project will be of a sufficient standard.

For a digital content-related application to the USBF to be successful, it must provide compelling evidence that the quality of the project or content will be of the highest level. There is no single prescribed way of illustrating the quality of a project, but the following list may provide some guidance;

- the experience of the team involved in the project is an important factor;
- endorsement by other experienced assessors of the relevant content might also address this issue;
- in formal education, programming endorsement by CCEA that the content was directly relevant to the curriculum in a manner consistent with the general priorities of the Fund would be helpful.

LEVEL OF FUNDING AVAILABLE

The USBF envisage that awards of no higher than £50k per project will be made and applications will be accepted for any level up to this. It is expected that at least 2 projects will be supported.



The State Aid limitation in connection with USBF funding requires that all projects include an element of match funding. Northern Ireland Screen will work with projects that would be attractive to the USBF to seek appropriate match funding and resolve this issue.

APPLICATION

Please contact Suzanne Harrison, Funding Manager, (suzanne@northernirelandscreen.co.uk) to discuss a potential application before applying. After this discussion a link to the online application form will be sent out.

All applicants must complete an online application form. Please ensure that all supporting documentation is submitted either online with your application or via email to the USBF (usbf@northernirelandscreen.co.uk).

Failure to provide the requested supporting documentation will result in your application being eliminated from the call.

TIME FRAME

All applications including supporting documentation must be received by **Monday 6th July 2020**. All applications will be assessed with decisions intended to be made by early August 2020.