



## MiniGame @ The Pixel Mill

### Introduction

Northern Ireland Screen is the screen agency for Northern Ireland. We are committed to maximising the economic, cultural and educational value of the screen industries for the benefit of Northern Ireland. Our mission is to accelerate the development of a dynamic and sustainable screen industry and culture in Northern Ireland.

Our 3 economic, cultural and educational objectives are for:

1. Northern Ireland to have the strongest screen industry outside of London in the UK and Ireland;
2. Ensure the industry supports vibrant and diverse cultural voices that will be recognised and celebrated equally at home and abroad;
3. Mainstream across Northern Ireland the most successful screen and digital technologies education provision in Europe.

Northern Ireland Screen is a company limited by guarantee, currently employing 33 people and we are governed by a Board of thirteen directors. The Chairwoman is Rotha Johnston and Kenneth Branagh is Honorary President.

### Background

**MiniGame** is a programme for video game companies in Northern Ireland aimed at supporting new teams coming together to develop their first game.

The focus of **MiniGame** is on creating mini/short games that can be published within 6 months. These can be narrative games that can be completed in a couple of hours, an endless runner with unique mechanics, a turn based strategy with interesting gameplay loops. Concise games that players can pick-up and enjoy in an afternoon.

**MiniGame** aims to support new teams coming together for the first time, so that they can build credibility and develop the internal knowledge/workflows needed to create, develop and release engaging video games.

## **MiniGame Induction**

Successful **MiniGame** companies will receive a full induction to the facilities and the programme on the **10<sup>th</sup> September**.

Induction will include;

- Intros to mentors and key NIS Staff
- Talks from experienced local video game.
- Intro to Prototyping

## **Resources**

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

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

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

**MiniGame** will be hosted in the Pixel Mill based at the Ormeau Baths in Belfast, or remotely if teams are not based in Belfast, where companies will have access to facilities and mentors. Those interested in applying to **MiniGame** 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](mailto:rory@northernirelandscreen.co.uk).

## **Programme**

**MiniGame** is split into 2 phases, where companies will be challenged with developing an idea for a game, validating the market opportunity for that idea and taking it into production. The stages will be as follows:

**Prototyping/Vertical Slice:** 6 weeks of idea generation and prototyping. Companies will be challenged to come up with 2 game concepts, creating a prototype for each. They will choose one prototype to develop into a vertical slice from which they can create and release a finished game within 16 weeks on a budget of £15,000. Validating the business case and market opportunity for each.

**Production:** Based on the market validation carried out by companies, they will select a game which they will take into full production for 16 weeks with the goal of self-publishing the finished game by the end of Feb 2022.

By the end of the production phase 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.

Phase	Time	Deliverable	Funding Available
1. Prototyping/Vertical Slice	6 Weeks w/c 13 <sup>th</sup> Sept – w/c 18 <sup>th</sup> Oct	2 Prototypes and Vertical Slice with accompanying market research	Up to £9,000
2. Production	16 Weeks w/c 25 <sup>th</sup> Oct– w/c 14 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Fully developed and published game.	Up to £15,000

## **Application process**

**MiniGame** is open to companies that meet the following criteria:

- Legally incorporated independent game companies. The company does not need to have been registered with companies house prior to the submission of the expression of interest but must be registered with Companies House should the team progress to Stage 3 and be required to submit a Screen Fund application form
- 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 full-time for the duration of the programme
- The company must be a new studio with no previous titles released, however teams members can have worked on games that have been previously released by other studios.
- Company, including its team members, is able to join **MiniGame** on the **13th September 2021 to 18th February 2022**.

### **Application Process:**

The application process will contain three stages:

Stage 1: Complete Expression of Interest - this is an online form (alternative formats available) and all companies interested in applying to **MiniGame** must complete it.

Stage 2: Interview Stage - Companies will be shortlisted based on the expression of interest forms and those shortlisted will be invited to attend an interview with Northern Ireland Screen. The interview will involve a presentation and questions from a panel.

Stage 3: Screen Fund Application - this is an online form and a link will be sent to the successful companies following interview stage.

As the budget is limited we anticipate that up to 2 successful companies will be supported to develop their business and build their teams and invited to submit an application to the Screen Fund for funding.

**Evaluation criteria** Your expression of interest will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- I. Knowledge of the team of game production
  - a. This can be through student projects, modding in your time or taking part in game jams.
- II. Company can demonstrate that key roles are covered by team members;
  - a. Programming
  - b. Art
  - c. Game Design
  - d. Business Development/Marketing
- III. Ability to concisely pitch a video game

### **Timeline**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Detail – dates are indicative</b>
Submission of Expression of Interest	9 <sup>th</sup> July – 13 <sup>th</sup> August
Shortlisting	19 <sup>th</sup> /20 <sup>th</sup> August
Interviews	1 <sup>st</sup> /2 <sup>nd</sup> September
Notification to successful Companies	3 <sup>rd</sup> September
Submission of applications to Screen Fund for funding	6 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> September
Letter of offer issued	10 <sup>th</sup> September
Phase 1	w/c 13 <sup>th</sup> Sept – w/c 18 <sup>th</sup> Oct
Phase 2	w/c 25 <sup>th</sup> Oct– w/c 14 <sup>th</sup> Feb

## **FAQ**

### **When can I apply for Mini Game?**

Applications open on **9<sup>th</sup> July 2021** and will close at 5pm on **13<sup>th</sup> August 2021**.

### **When does Mini Game commence and how long does it run for?**

**MiniGame** starts on 13th September 2021 and runs for up to 6 months until **18th February 2022**.

### **How much funding is available?**

Companies may be awarded up to £24,000 in funding across the **Mini Game** programme. This is dependent on meeting agreed milestones.

### **How long will Mini Game companies have access to The Pixel Mill?**

**MiniGame** companies will have access to facilities and mentors at the Pixel Mill during the programme.

### **Does Northern Ireland Screen take any ownership of IP created during Mini Game?**

The terms of the funding provided through **MiniGame** 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 accepted onto **Mini Game** will be provided with desk space at The Pixel Mill but do not need to base themselves out of The Pixel full time. However, there will be an expectation that companies will need to attend certain workshops/meetings in person. There is also flexibility to work from home if government Covid-19 guidance needs to be met.

### **My company is not based in Northern Ireland, can I still apply for Mini Game?**

Yes, however your team members need to be resident in Northern Ireland.

### **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?**

**Mini Game** 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 [rory@northernireland.co.uk](mailto:rory@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 **Mini Game** 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 [rory@northernireland.co.uk](mailto:rory@northernireland.co.uk).

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

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

**I'm not interested in Mini Game 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](mailto:rory@northernireland.co.uk).

**What will the company be expected to deliver by the end of Mini Game?**

It is expected that companies will have at least self-published their completed game on the platform of their choice by **w/c 14<sup>th</sup> Feb**. 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 by **23rd August 2021** if you have made it through to the interview stage.

**Where will the interviews take place?**

The interviews will either take place at the Northern Ireland Screen offices in Belfast or online via a Zoom call dependent on government Covid-19 guidance

**When will the interviews take place?**

The interviews will take place on **1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021**.

**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 new teams that have a passion for the video games industry, the ability to generate ideas and the ambition to run a video games studio.