

MusicFutures Promoter+ Programme – GUIDANCE

Up to £4,500 for emerging music promoters. A 12-month programme that includes bootcamps, 1:1 mentoring and partner-led support.

Overview

While the UK's creative sectors continue to make significant contributions to overall economic growth, emerging music promoters are operating within an increasingly challenging landscape, marked by reduced touring opportunities, a steep decline in grassroots venue infrastructure, and unstable gig-economy conditions.

Data from leading industry bodies demonstrates that these growing financial pressures and post-EU barriers have deepened systemic inequalities, resulting in a critical lack of diversity among active promoters and a subsequent under-representation of diverse genres, cultures, and communities within the live music sector.

The [Liverpool City Region Music Board's Keeping Music Venues Thriving Consultation Report](#), supported by MusicFutures and University of Liverpool' Institute of Popular Music, highlights this issue and emphasises the need for the Liverpool City Region's live music sector to develop stronger niche audience communities instead of relying on casual attendance.

MusicFutures would like to directly respond to this exclusionary landscape by empowering under-represented talent and championing under-supported musical cultures to build a more resilient, inclusive, and diverse live ecosystem. The MusicFutures Promoter+ is a 12-month, high-impact programme designed to identify, incubate and empower emerging music promoters in the Liverpool City Region (LCR) who are:

- from under-represented backgrounds and/or
- championing under-supported genres, cultures and communities

We want to work closely with emerging promoters who are facing real challenges in live music promotion. MusicFutures brings deep research and development (R&D) expertise to the table, and we are looking for partners with fresh ideas they want to bring alive. Whether your focus is

on modern ticketing solutions, deeper fan engagement, community building, or creating entirely unique event experiences, we are here to help. By combining upskilling, mentoring and practical event delivery with grant funding and support from our partners, Promoter+ is all about building your capability, resilience and long-term growth.

About MusicFutures

MusicFutures is a UKRI/AHRC-funded initiative working to accelerate inclusive and sustainable innovation in music across the Liverpool City Region. We support creators, artists, entrepreneurs, and companies to explore new ideas, build new capabilities, and test new approaches across the music sector.

Programme Partners

Promoter+ is delivered in partnership with:

- Skiddle
- Liverpool Philharmonic

Eligibility

Who Can Apply

This programme is aimed at:

- Emerging music promoters (individuals or micro-businesses) based in the Liverpool City Region.
- Promoters from under-represented backgrounds (including but not limited to race/ethnicity, gender, disability, sexuality and socio-economic background).
- Promoters supporting under-served genres, cultures and communities.
- Promoters who are already delivering activity and are ready to grow their practice.

Applicants must:

- Be based in the Liverpool City Region.
- Be actively developing a music promotion practice.
- Be able to commit to a 12-month programme (including bootcamps, mentoring and event delivery).
- Be willing to work toward measurable KPIs (audience development, operations, growth, sustainability).

Not eligible:

- Large companies or promoters operating at a scale that is not considered “emerging”.
- Public bodies, universities or schools (unless collaborating in a way that supports an eligible promoter).
- Applicants unable to commit to delivery requirements (including events delivery and reporting).

Lead Applicant Requirements

- Lead applicants can be an individual promoter, collective, community organisation or CiC, sole trader OR a micro-business (under 5 employees).
- Must be based in or significantly benefiting the Liverpool City Region.
- Within Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) limits (see Appendix 1).
- Applicants may lead only one application, but can collaborate on other proposals.

Funding Scope

What We’re Looking For

We fund promoters to use live events as an opportunity to pursue research and development - R&D – by which we mean, for instance, the testing of new formats, reaching new audiences, experimenting with how new fan experiences could look like or developing new ways of engaging communities. Events are treated as live prototypes: a way to test approaches, build capability and generate learning and future sustainability, not simply business-as-usual delivery.

Marketing/Promotion costs attached to the R&D/events are permitted, particularly where you are testing new approaches to building toward developing and sustaining new or underserved audiences in the region.

What We Cannot Fund

- **Business as usual event delivery:** We cannot fund routine events that lack a clear purpose, problem-solving goal, or structured plan. This includes standard gigs, standard promotions, and album releases (often called “putting on nights”). Your project must focus on solving a specific challenge, testing/learning, and developing a scalable proposition.
- **Marketing and promotion** as a standalone activity (PR, ads, social media campaigns, playlist/radio plugging) with no testing or learning attached.
- **Travel/touring costs** where travel is the main purpose of the spend.
- **Equipment purchases (kit)** as the main purpose of the budget (instruments, computers, hardware). Note Equipment/Capital Expenditure is capped at 20% of total project costs.
- **Core operational costs/overheads** not directly tied to the supported sustained audience development R&D activity (rent, utilities, routine admin, staff costs not directly tied to delivery of this project).
- **Retrospective costs** or work already completed before the project start date.

Assessment Criteria

Assessment Criteria

Applications will be assessed in relation to the following criteria. Across all criteria, we are looking for genuine R&D and innovation – evidence that you will test new formats, reach new audiences and develop new ways of engaging communities:

1. Strategic Alignment

- Does the opportunity align with MusicFutures' mission and long-term goals?
- Does it support innovation, growth, diversity, and sustainability in the music industry?
- Is it consistent with current priority areas (e.g., emerging talent, technology, audience development, inclusivity)?
- Does the promoter contribute to under-supported genres, cultures and communities, and align with the programme's purpose of inclusive growth and sustainable promoter development in the LCR?

2. Market Potential and Audience Reach

- Is there a clear target audience and demand for the proposed work?
- Does the opportunity demonstrate potential for growth or scalability beyond the funding period?
- Are there plans for marketing, distribution, or audience engagement?
- Is there a clear community or scene, and a credible plan to reach and serve new audiences authentically through new formats and new ways of engagement?

3. Financial Viability

- Is the budget realistic and well structured?
- Are there other sources of funding or revenue streams?
- Does the project demonstrate value for money and sustainability beyond initial funding?
- Does the project allow for return on investment if profit making? If yes, how?
- Is there a credible pathway to a repeatable, financially sustainable promotion practice across the three supported events and beyond?

4. Innovation and Future Readiness

- Does the opportunity leverage new practices and approaches to music events, promotion and audience engagement?

- Will it prepare the music sector for future trends? (ie engaging with GenA/GenZ, underserved audiences or genres)
- Does it encourage experimentation and risk-taking in a managed and responsible, and evaluative way?
- Does the applicant treat events as live prototypes – a structured way to test new formats, audiences and engagement approaches and to capture learning (R&D)?

5. EDI and Environmental Responsibility

- Does the project promote and address inclusivity and equity?
- Are there measures to minimise environmental impact?
- Does it contribute positively to community development?
- If the project involves a team, is the project team diverse?
- Does the promoter demonstrate inclusive intent and responsible practice (accessibility, safer spaces, outreach) for under-represented audiences?

6. Track Record and Capability

- Does the applicant have the skills, experience, and resources to deliver the project successfully?
- Are partnerships or collaborations in place to strengthen delivery and route to market/access to audiences?
- Is there evidence of past success or learning from previous projects?
- Does the applicant show readiness to deliver (even if early-stage), with evidence of past activity, learning or community trust?

Funding Details

Funding Available

- Up to £4,500 in grant funding to support the delivery of a minimum of three events.
- Plus a 12-month programme of bootcamps, 1:1 mentoring and partner-led support.
- Activity must be fully completed and reported on within the programme period.

Eligible Costs

- Your time.
- Other people's time – i.e. working with specialist collaborators, artists and crew.
- Venue/space hire (where relevant).
- Event production and delivery directly tied to the supported events and R&D activity.
- Ticketing, audience research, testing and evaluation.
- Essential capital equipment (max 20%).

Match Funding

Match funding is not required, but evidence of additional support and income for your activity (e.g. box office/anticipated ticket sales, partnerships, value in kind) will enhance your application. Please detail:

Cost Requirements

Eligible costs must:

- Comply with UKRI requirements.
- Demonstrate value for money.
- Support R&D, testing and the development of your promotion practice.
- Exclude business-as-usual delivery costs unless essential to the supported activity.

Payment Schedule

Payments will be made in stages:

- 80% at project start.
- 20% at completion/project end review.

Promoter+ Support Programme

Recipients of the Promoter+ Programme will join a cohort of participants who will undertake a structured 12-month programme of support as you develop your promotion practice. Depending on the needs of the cohort, this may include:

- Induction & diagnostic (questionnaire + roundtable).
- Bootcamp 1: Industry & the Art of Promotion (audience development, cultural relevance).
- Bootcamp 2: Tools, Tech, Innovation, Data & Event Management.
- 1:1 mentoring matched to your individual needs.
- Partner-led sessions (including with Skiddle and Liverpool Philharmonic).
- Workspace / venue access and favourable hire options (where relevant).
- Peer learning through cohort sessions, demos and progress check-ins.
- Funding, investment and accessing further support (i.e. other funders, R&D support).

Project Requirements

Project Criteria

- Participants will be expected to:
- Deliver a minimum of 3 events during the delivery window.
- Attend programme sessions (including induction/diagnostic, bootcamps and cohort check-ins).
- Engage in 1:1 mentoring across the programme period.
- Work with the programme team to set KPIs and track progress (audience, operations, growth, sustainability).

- Participate in monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

Proposals should also:

- Align with MusicFutures' goals of innovation, experimentation, creativity, inclusion, sustainability and ecosystem growth.
- Demonstrate potential for cultural, audience and community impact.
- Show how the support helps you take your promotion practice to the next level.

Collaboration

Collaboration is welcome, and you can work with others, but it is not required.

IP Arrangements

Participants will retain ownership of their work. MusicFutures will retain the right to use your work for monitoring, publicity/marketing, teaching and research purposes.

Monitoring

Participants must participate in regular meetings, monitoring and reporting, aligned with UKRI guidelines – including KPI tracking, progress updates and basic financial record-keeping related to supported activity – keeping financial and project records for a retention period of up to 6 years.

Application Process

How to Apply

Applicants submit:

- An online application form.
- Optional supporting materials: past flyers, links, short video, event photos, ticketing links, press, or a short pitch deck.
- Application link: <https://musicfutures.co.uk/opportunities/>
- Information sessions and applicant briefings will be published on MusicFutures social channels.

Assessment Process

- Eligibility check.
- Review by MusicFutures assessors and partners.
- Follow up clarification (if needed).
- Selection and award.

Important: Applications that are incomplete or do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be assessed.

Support for Applicants

We are committed to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) across all MusicFutures programmes.

- Reasonable adjustments may include:
- Alternative submission formats.
- Video or audio applications.
- Access support during briefings and workshops.

Individual adjustments will be provided wherever possible.

Key Dates and Timeline

- Call opens: July 2026
- Funding Call Q&A Webinar: 6th August 2026, 1PM
- Deadline: 1st September
- Assessment Period: September 2026
- Decisions announced: September 2026
- Programme delivery window (12 months): September 2026 - September 2027

Appendix 1 – Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA)

Funding is awarded under the MFA regime. Applicants must declare all MFA/de minimis funding received in:

- The current financial year.
- The previous two financial years.

This includes:

- MFA awards.
- De Minimis awards.

Further guidance: Subsidy Control Act 2022.