

NORTHERN MUSIC EXPORT OFFICE

FAQs

generator.org.uk/northernmusicexportoffice



Proudly based in the North of England

International Artist Programme 2026

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE GONE THROUGH THE 'GENERAL FAQs' ON THE HOMEPAGE INFORMATION FIRST, AS THIS COVERS GUIDANCE AND ELIGIBILITY RELEVANT TO ALL PROGRAMMES.

What is the International Artist Grant?

The International Artist Grant is specifically designed to support artists that are export ready. If you have been invited to perform at any international showcase, anywhere in the world and in any genre, you are welcome to apply for support. Similarly, if you have credible and relevant plans to tour the EU or further afield, this is the programme for you.

What exactly does 'export-ready' mean?

Being export ready means demonstrating to a panel of industry experts that you are at a point in your career wherein funded international activity will likely result in demonstrable outcomes. Demonstrable outcomes might mean showingsignificant progress in securing an international agent or booking an overseas festival slot.

You will need to demonstrate a strong profile here in the UK. You can do this via examples of national radio airplay, press coverage, decent audience numbers touring domestically, or strong streaming / release metrics.

Am I eligible?

Aside from being ready for export you will need to demonstrate a few other things, namely:

You will need to be based in the parts of the North that are funding the NMEO. These are Tees Valley Combined Authority, The North East Mayoral Strategic Authority, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Liverpool City Region. If you are unsure whether you are in one of these Combined Authorities, there is a detailed list at the end of the document unpacking them more thoroughly. See the end of this document for a more detailed list.

You will need to make a solid business case. If you are touring, that will mean making sure your dates are either confirmed or very nearly confirmed (for example, confirmed pending approval of funding). If you are showcasing, you will need to have a list of confirmed or targeted meetings with international industry executives (labels, agents, publishers).

Lastly, you need to show that you are well-prepared, i.e. submit your application a minimum of 8 weeks before you intend to leave – Ideally you should be looking more at 10 – 12 weeks.

Does it have to be the artist that applies?

No – An authorised representative acting on behalf of the artist can apply e.g. a manager, publisher or booking agent.

Do I need an official invitation from my chosen event to apply?

100% Yes. You must have received a formal, official invitation to perform or participate at an eligible international industry-facing event before you apply for funding. You will be required to provide this as part of your application. Stating that you are expecting a positive outcome from your showcasing application really won't be enough.

What if I just want to play a festival abroad?

We prioritise international festivals and conferences that feature a dedicated music industry conference element geared toward professionals rather than the general public. Examples include SXSW, Eurosonic (ESNS), Reeperbahn,

Folk Alliance International and WOMEX.

How much can I apply for?

You can apply for a maximum of £10k but be very wary that competition for funds is fierce. You should only apply for what you genuinely and demonstrably need. Asking for less means you will represent better value for money in terms of investment and can improve your chances of success.

What can improve my chances of success?

- The strength of your business plan: confirmed meetings, well-defined objectives, e.g. securing an agent, etc.
 - A well-articulated and strong track record: Providing numbers for audiences, streams, etc.
 - A realistic and proportionate proposal that demonstrates you have identified the most cost-effective travel and accommodation
 - Quality music! Preferably including a link to a well recorded live video that will show the panel how you perform live
-

What can the grant pay for?

What **can** be supported:

- International travel (flights, trains)
- Accommodation
- Visas, petition, visa-related legal advice and carnet fees
- Reasonable per diems
- Personal access costs
- Baggage fees e.g. for backline
- Essential PR, marketing, and showcase promotion
- Travel insurance and instrument insurance for the duration of the trip

What **cannot** be supported:

- Buying permanent equipment or plugins
- General ongoing band overheads
- Production of physical merchandise

- Retrospective Costs: Any flights, visas, or hotels booked or paid for **before** you receive an official grant approval letter
 - Venue hire fees or stage setup costs (the showcase event host handles venue hosting)
 - Travel or per diems for non-essential entourage, partners, or extra crew not essential to the performance
 - Salaries
-

When should I submit my application?

The short answer is, as soon as possible – As soon as you receive your invite.

10 – 12 weeks prior to the start of your activity is preferable. Less than 8 weeks will be considered ineligible.

Can you give visa advice or help obtain a visa?

No. The processing, securing, and legal compliance of all passports, performance visas and work permits are entirely the responsibility of the artist and their management. NMEO provides financial assistance toward these costs, but we cannot act as your visa advisor, sponsor, legal counsel, or liaison with foreign embassies.

You may find the below useful although the NMEO does not officially endorse any partner.

The Musicians Union

<https://musiciansunion.org.uk/working-overseas>

Help Musicians UK

<https://www.helpmusicians.org.uk/get-support/develop-as-a-musician/advice/visa-advice-service>

The Independent Society of Musicians

<https://www.ism.org/touring/>

Oleg Gaidar aka OG Co-DirectorWorld Touring Artists Consulting

www.wtaconsulting.co.uk

Covery Law

<https://covey.law/>

Viva le Visa

<https://www.vivalavisa.com/>

Tamizdat

<https://tamizdat.org/>

I'm planning a tour abroad, how "confirmed" do dates have to be?

The simple answer is that the more firmed up and robust your planning is, the stronger the case you will make. It might be that the dates are confirmed, pending you getting funding support and that is OK – Just let us know in your application. What assessors will pick up on, is if your planning is purely speculative i.e. you have barely discussed the tour with individual promoters and venues. It is essential you do your planning properly.

Can signed artists apply?

Yes. We support DIY/self-releasing artists as well as those signed to labels and publishers. If you are signed, you will be asked to explain why NMEO funding is still required. We expect medium-to-large companies who stand to benefit financially from your trip to contribute toward the costs. Artists signed to global Majors are considered eligible.

What about VAT?

VAT **must** be included in all your expenditure. VAT cannot be added to your request.

Do I need to contribute to the budget myself?

Although the NMEO can fund up to 100% of activity, we would expect contribution from other sources. The greater the percentage that the NMEO has to provide, the greater the risk to our investment. Therefore, the greater the investment percentage from parties other than the NMEO – such as the artist, manager, label, or external partners (such as the PRS Foundation) – the more robust your budget and the stronger your case.

I have access requirements, can they be included in my expenditure?

We recognize that music creators with disabilities or access needs may face higher project costs. To ensure equal opportunity, we offer additional grant support to cover these expenses. In the Equality Monitoring form, provided at the end of your application, you will have the option to provide any relevant information regarding your Access Costs; and to make the case for additional financial support

How heavily does the music sample impact my score?

The music is a major part of your application. Assessors will be looking at the strength of your business case and the quality of your music in terms of export potential. Ensure you submit your most outstanding – and recent – tracks that are reflective of what you will be performing abroad. Also ensure you provide direct streaming links to specific songs rather than general landing pages.

What happens if my visa is denied?

If your visa is denied or does not arrive in time for the showcase, you may be required to return any upfront grant funds paid out to you.

What is the process?

Once a month, a panel of industry experts will meet to review applications. Requests of up to £5k will be reviewed internally by the NMEO.

You should up to 6 – 8 weeks for your application to be assessed.

The first Instalment (90%) will be paid out upfront once you have electronically signed and returned your official Offer Letter.

The final Instalment (10%) will be released on completion of your 3 month evaluation, once approved by the NMEO.

What are the crediting requirements?

As a condition of funding, you must acknowledge the support of the Northern Music Export Office and our funding partners across your press releases, website and promotional assets. Logos and relevant marketing assets will be provided and must be included in promotional and socials activity relevant to NMEO support. You may also be asked to speak with an external evaluator or be involved in promotional filming, however this will remain at your discretion.

I'm unsure if where I live is eligible....

'Combined Authority' can be a confusing term. Here is a breakdown of where is eligible to apply:

Tees Valley

Darlington
Hartlepool
Middlesbrough
Redcar & Cleveland
Stockton-on-Tees

North East

Durham
Newcastle upon Tyne
Gateshead
North Tyneside
Northumberland
South Tyneside
Sunderland

West Yorkshire

Bradford
Calderdale
Kirklees
Leeds
Wakefield