Northern Sound Programme 2026

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

Northern Sound — Application Guidance

Before you begin: Please ensure that you are only applying for the level of funding required. The maximum level of funding for Northern Sound is £10k. However, the average grant awarded will be less than this maximum amount. Also note that you may not receive the entirety of your request depending on the decision of the panel.

Section 1: Applicant Details

This section collects foundational data required about who you are. If you are a manager or representative, pay close attention to the authorisation permissions required.

Applicant Name / Address (including postcode) / Email / Phone / Pronouns

- **What to put:** The primary contact details of the person physically filling out this form.

Please provide your professional music creator/artist name and/or company.

- **What to put:** Your public-facing artist, band, or company name.

If you are applying on behalf of a music creator please provide us with a direct contact email for the main music creator in the application and their legal name. (If you are the main music creator you can write n/a).

- **What to put:** If you are a manager, label representative, or agent filling out this form, provide the artist's full legal name and active personal email address. This ensures we can verify permission and maintain direct lines of contact. If you are the self-managed lead artist, simply enter "N/A."

Section 2: Artist Details

Which genre would most closely describe your music?

- **What to put:** Select or state your primary genre (e.g., Post-Punk, Indie Folk, Electronic/Techno, Jazz Fusion). If your sound blends styles, pick the closest primary umbrella genre and list sub-genres in brackets to help assessors assign relevant panel reviewers.

Which of the following are you based in: Tees Valley, North East or West Yorkshire?

- **What to put:** Select the specific region where the primary artist/band is physically based. Eligibility for NMEO funding relies on geographical alignment with these target Northern regions, so ensure your address history matches this selection.

Please provide your manager's name and company (if applicable).

- **What to put:** State your primary manager's full name and business/management company name. If you are self-managed, state "Self-managed."

Please list the representatives of the artist (eg. Lawyer, Agent, Manager, Label) and provide their role and email address.

- **What to put:** List key team members key to your international strategy using the format: Name | Role | Company | Email. Including team members demonstrates existing industry infrastructure and "export readiness." If you do not have external representation yet, list any informal advisors or write "N/A."

Short bio: This should describe you to a decision panel but may also be used for case studies / NMEO promotional work. Up to 150 words

- **What to put:** Write a concise, 3rd-person summary highlighting your

sound, recent achievements (e.g., notable support slots, key festival plays, radio airplay), and current trajectory. Keep it engaging, factual, and free of filler hype—focus on key milestones that show why you're ready for export support.

If you are signed to a record label and/or publisher, please provide the company names here. Please also specify if the company is an Indie, Major or Major Label Subsidiary.

- **What to put:** State your release and publishing partners clearly. Different funds have different eligibility criteria but for the NMEO, you are still eligible regardless as to whether you are unsigned, on an Indie, or with a Major. It is about whether or not you need support and if the opportunity is relevant to your career position and direction.

Links: Website / Social Media Pages (Separate lines for Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, etc.) / Image Link.

- **What to put:** Direct, working URLs. Double-check that your permissions are set to public.

Video Link:

- **What to put:** A link to a recent live performance (e.g., live session, festival footage, or high-quality rehearsal video) showcasing your capability to perform internationally. Do not submit covers. Remember that you are applying for support for live performance, so this can be a very useful asset for assessors.

Music Examples:

- **What to put:** Direct streaming links (e.g., SoundCloud, Spotify, private WAV links).

Section 3: Data

Please state you/the music creator's earnings from music in the last 12 months.

- **What to put:** Enter a specific figure reflecting music-only revenue (e.g., PRS/PPL royalties, live performance fees, digital streaming payouts, synchronisation deals, or session fees). Do not include supplementary

day-job earnings, such as retail work or instrument teaching.

Please state what percentage of the above annual income is from overseas services, sync, live or streaming revenue?

- **What to put:** An estimated percentage e.g., 15%. If you currently have zero international income, write "0%".

Please provide details of average venue capacity for your shows both in the UK and overseas at the time of writing, providing an example of each (venue name and location).

- **What to put:** Provide realistic audience capacities you regularly draw, formatted clearly. E.g., UK Average Capacity: 250 (Example: Yes Basement, Manchester) | Overseas Average Capacity: 100 (Example: Monarch, Berlin). Be honest; assessors evaluate growth trajectory rather than just raw numbers.

If you have any other overseas revenue streams, please state and estimate the percentage value of your annual income from this area. If you are applying for funding for a specific showcase e.g. Japan, please separate that information where possible.

- **What to put:** Detail non-touring international earnings such as international sync licensing, overseas merch sales, direct-to-fan platforms (Bandcamp/Patreon), or international publishing royalties. Provide an estimated percentage breakdown of your total annual music income and isolate figures for your target territory if applicable.

Please provide your current streaming numbers (monthly listeners) in the USA, UK, Japan, Canada, Europe and Other (rest of world). This can be broken down by platform if preferable.

- **What to put:** Extract regional monthly listener counts or total stream figures from your Spotify for Artists, Apple Music for Artists, or distributor dashboard. Present them clearly by territory (e.g., UK: 4,500 / USA: 1,200 / Europe: 2,000 / Rest of World: 800).

Section 4: Activity Details

This section establishes the definitive timeline and physical locations of your international project.

Please provide the name of the activity to be supported in the format of:
If Showcasing: Name of event / Start date / End date / Anticipated audience

If Touring: Number of dates / Across which locations / Start date / End date / Anticipated average audience

- **What to put:** Use the precise requested formatting:
  - Showcasing: [Event Name] / [Start Date - End Date] / [Anticipated Audience Size]

Touring: Where are you going on the tour? (Dates, venues, locations, shows confirmed / pencilled / not yet discussed?)

- **What to put:** Summarise your planned routing clearly. Complete the detailed routing in the grid below. The greater the degree of confirmation, the stronger your application will be (but be honest about it)

Please state which showcase you are applying for and – according to the published guidance – provide the official showcase invite where relevant (upload).

- **What to put:** Specify the exact NMEO-partnered showcase event name and upload your formal PDF invitation, performance contract, or official email confirmation from the festival organisers. Check current NMEO guidelines to confirm whether your chosen showcase requires an uploaded invite prior to application.

Section 5: Making the Case

This is the narrative heart of your application. Use this section to prove your "Export Readiness" to the independent assessors.

What are the highlights of your music career so far? Give details of your profile in the UK including recent touring, festivals, recordings, airplay and media. Please also provide any industry interest from labels, publishers, agents etc and popularity on social media / music publications.

- **What to put:** Provide a bulleted, evidence-backed list of key milestones from the past 12–24 months. Include notable support tours, festival appearances, key radio plays (e.g., BBC Radio 6 Music, Radio 1), press features, and active team/industry interest.

Please provide a recent web link to a review of your music, a reference from a music industry professional or video review.

- **What to put:** Insert a working hyperlink to a recent album/single review, a live show review from a reputable blog/publication, or an unlisted quote/reference letter from an industry professional (e.g., promoter, radio presenter, agent).

Please provide any international successes or showcases played over the past 24 months.

- **What to put:** Highlight any previous international momentum, including overseas showcase festivals (e.g., ESNS, Reeperbahn, SXSW), DIY international dates, playlist inclusions in target territories, or international press. If this is your first international activity, detail initial international traction or radio support.

Tell us about the demand for your music and/or services outside of the UK.
Please give details of international activity and/or media coverage so far. Also include details of international industry interest and existing relationships. Please use this section to explain to our assessors why you are 'export ready' and if applying for a specific market, the reasons why you are targeting it.

- **What to put:** Build a strong narrative for why now and why this target market. Cite evidence of overseas demand (e.g., top streaming cities, international ticket sales, label/booking agent interest in the region) and explain how this specific trip acts as the tipping point for your international career.

Please provide the rationale for your tour location(s) or your showcase decision.

- **What to put:** Why this event? Or why these tour locations? Why not somewhere? Else? What was it that made you decide this was the place to go? What benefit will this have on your career and why? What factors helped you make this decision?

What is your current expected fee for a gig?

- **What to put:** Your average guarantee or standard performance fee in pounds.

What is your current average current audience size? (There is no right answer here, just make an honest estimate).

- **What to put:** State a realistic estimate of the number of ticket-buying attendees or crowd sizes you draw at your standalone headlines or featured slots (e.g., "150–250 headline / 500+ festival stages"). Accuracy is crucial for budget and scale assessment.

What promotional activity do you have planned prior to your trip to ensure the maximum impact of your goals?

- **What to put:** Outline your pre-trip marketing strategy. Include PR campaigns, localized social ad targeting, pitching to international delegate lists, pre-event networking emails, and targeted invitations sent to key industry figures in the destination country.

What are your 5 key goals from the trip/activity? (eg. US agent / Festival bookings / International work for my clients)

- **What to put:** Provide 5 highly specific, realistic, and measurable professional outcomes (e.g., 1. Secure a European booking agent; 2. Confirm 3 festival slots for next summer; 3. Meet face-to-face with X label representative).

Section 6: Budget

Your budget must prove financial feasibility.

Please state the requested amount in pounds only.

- **What to put:** Input the exact monetary figure requested from the NMEO grant as a whole integer (e.g., 2,500).

Please state the professional (manager) request amount (if applicable) and region they are based. (Please answer only in figures, e.g. 1000).

- **What to put:** If your manager is joining you to execute business meetings, request up to 1,000 as an extension.

Please state the total amount of funding requested from the NMEO. (Please answer only in figures, e.g. 5000).

- **What to put:** Enter the final numerical figure of your total NMEO request (e.g., 3500). Double-check that this figure matches your detailed expenditure breakdown.

Please state your total project budget expenditure. (Please answer only in figures, e.g. 5000).

- **What to put:** The absolute total cost of the trip.
  Remember that although NMEO can technically support the total value of your activity, the greater the additional percentage you can demonstrate from other sources, the stronger and more robust your argument will be. Ensure you check prices and don't be tempted to just round figures up.

Please state for the remainder of the budget will be funded.

- **What to put:** Detail all match-funding sources covering costs outside the NMEO request. Examples include personal contributions, band reserves, record label investment, merchandise revenue, or performance guarantees. Demonstrating varied funding sources builds assessor confidence.

How many performing members are travelling or taking part in the activity.

- **What to put:** Enter the number of essential performing artists/band members travelling (e.g., 4). Note: essential crew/management should be accounted for separately in your main budget details.

Section 7: Visas

Immigration compliance is critical. Errors here can cause application rejection or formal funding clawbacks if your trip falls through. Take the time to look at visa guidance and give yourself ample time to get your visas processed or risk jeopardising your entire trip.

Do you understand the visa requirements for attending this showcase/writing camp and have you obtained or are you planning on applying for a visa for this trip?

- **What to put:** Select Yes. You must show you have proactively researched your destination requirements using resources like the Musicians' Union (MU) or ISM guides.

Please specify which visa you have applied for. If you haven't yet applied, please tell us what you are planning to apply for.

- **What to put:** State your precise immigration route based on your destination.
- For example to play at SXSW or the Folk Alliance you might require an O-1B, P-1B, O-2, or P-1S. Doing your research is absolutely essential. Some artists will try and enter the USA and play on an ESTA. This carries an extreme risk of being turned away at the airport. Again, do your research.
- If you are planning on travelling to Europe - for example to play ESNS or Reeperbahn - research what the legal requirements are and detail on your application. There is no blanket EU-wide exemption for short-term cultural or creative work and rules are set individually by each of the EU Member States. They can be drastically different, so don't get caught out - While many countries offer permit-free routes for artists, musicians, and crew for short stays (often 5 to 90 days), others strictly require permits even for single-day engagements. Also ensure you are aware of rules regarding relevant permits (like ATA carnets) for your instruments and gear.

Relevant Resources:
• Independent Society of Musicians (ISM): https://www.ism.org/visa-guide-europe/
• Musicians' Union (MU): https://musiciansunion.org.uk/working-performing/working-overseas/working-in-the-eu
• UK Music: https://www.ukmusic.org/policy-campaigns/touring-and-working-in-the-eu/