



Sligo County Council
Comhairle Chontae Shligigh

Sligo.

Funding for Arts, Culture & Tourism Related Festivals & Events Sligo County Council

Sligo County Council is committed to supporting the development of the arts, culture, and heritage sectors across the county. The Council recognises the vital contribution of voluntary committees, community groups, and professional organisations in sustaining Sligo's diverse cultural landscape.

Through a range of annual funding schemes, the Council assists voluntary, community, and professional bodies, as well as festival and event organisers, in fostering a vibrant and sustainable cultural environment.

Each scheme has its own eligibility criteria & this page is to encourage applicants to look at the different priorities, requirements and assessment criteria for each scheme or fund before choosing which is the most appropriate one for them to pursue.

An inter-departmental approach to funding is being piloted by Sligo County Council in 2026 to seek to minimise duplication of funding in the future from Sligo County Council. As part of this, for example, organisations, festival & event organisers who are awarded arts grant funding may no longer be deemed eligible under the various Tourism & Commercial Events Fund* & vice versa.

Duplicate Funding: Please ensure that there is no duplication of funding from Sligo County Council, Local Community and Development Committee and LEADER funded projects. Please state all agencies that you have applied to for funding

A Note on Festivals and Events:

Festivals have a wide range of origins and purposes. These may include **specialist festivals** such as those dedicated to theatre, music, food, or comedy, where the presentation of specific artforms or themes is the principal focus. In contrast, **community festivals** are primarily designed to bring people together and celebrate within their own community

Tourism and commercial festivals serve a different role — they are events (often larger scale) that stimulate local economic activity, animate public spaces, enhance the visitor experience, and promote Sligo as a destination. *

Arts festivals on the other hand have a strong artistic vision, focusing on providing audiences with access to innovative and high-quality arts programming in a range of settings. They place artform development and platforms for artists to present their work to the public at the core of their work. Arts festivals may be single-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary in nature, encompassing a diverse range of creative practices & opportunities.

****Note: Category 1 Festivals supported through the recommendations of the County Sligo Festivals & Events Strategy 2025-29 will continue to be funded at this level for the duration of the Strategy***

Applying For Arts, Culture & Tourism Funding Schemes:

From 2026 as part of Sligo County Council's Digital Transformation Programme, most grant applications will now move online to Sligo County Council's Grant Portal.

Grants Portal: <https://sligo-self.achieveservice.com/en/>

Applicants must first register via the Portal before being able to log in.

Advertisement of Funding Schemes:

Funding Schemes are advertised on the Grants Section of Sligo County Council's website:
<https://www.sligococo.ie/grants/>

Each department also advertises and promotes their individual schemes via a range of online platforms, print and broadcast media, websites, Sligo PPN and other appropriate channels.

Below is a list of annual schemes currently operated by Sligo County Council, additional schemes may be announced during any year and will be advertised accordingly.

Current Funding Schemes:

APPLICATION WINDOW		FUNDING STREAM
Jan		Commercial, Tourism & Regional Festivals & Events Open Call
May/June		Culture Night Fund
Nov/Dec		Arts Grant Fund Strands 1 & 2
Nov/Dec		Creative Ireland Open Call
Nov/Dec		Commercial & Tourism Festivals & Events Category 2: Festival Development Fund 2026

Please see detailed information on all schemes below:

Commercial, Tourism and Regional Festivals & Events Open Call

Fund:	Commercial, Tourism & Regional Festivals Open Call
Frequency:	Annually via Open Call
Application Open:	5th January
Advertised:	Print / Grants Portal & Online Sligo Live Invest Visit
Application Close:	23rd January
Award:	2nd March subject to adoption at Council Meeting
Application Process:	Online via Sligo County Council's Grant Portal
Grant Threshold:	Maximum award €5,000 (Subject to Funding each year)
Administrated by:	Tourism Unit
Contact:	aquinn@sligococo.ie

About the fund:

This is a combined Regional Festival & Event Fund with funding streams from Fáilte Ireland's Regional Festival and Participative Event Funding scheme and Sligo County Council's contribution to support Commercial/Tourism/Regional Festivals. The scheme supports commercially driven, typically at a medium to large scale, that deliver clear tourism, economic, and community benefits.

Applicants must disclose all other sources of funding secured or anticipated for their festival or event. This information will be considered during the evaluation process. Preference may be given to organisations that have not received significant funding from other sources. It should also be noted that the purpose of this scheme is to support Commercial and Tourism related festivals and priority will be given to same.

The scheme recognises that festivals play a vital role in:

- ✓ Attracting visitors and enhancing the tourism profile of the region.
- ✓ Strengthening community identity and pride.
- ✓ Supporting local businesses and the wider economy.
- ✓ Animating towns and villages by creating vibrancy, activity, and memorable experiences.

This scheme also supports Sligo's tourism objectives, which are to:

- ✓ Grow sustainable tourism by leveraging the county's natural landscapes, cultural heritage, and outdoor activity assets.
- ✓ Attract and retain visitors.
- ✓ High-quality experiences.
- ✓ Ensure that tourism supports communities, regional growth, and sustainable development across the northern Wild Atlantic Way.
- ✓ Festival / Events span over 2 days will be looked on favourably

Eligibility:

- ✓ Contribute significantly to the tourism and economic development of Sligo.
- ✓ Animate towns, villages, and communities.
- ✓ Align clearly with the objectives of the County Development and Economic Development Plan (DEDP).

Ineligibility:

The following categories of festival and participative events are **ineligible** under this funding arrangement:

- ✓ Agricultural shows and countryside fairs with limited tourism appeal.
- ✓ Spectator-based sporting events.
- ✓ Circuses and carnivals.
- ✓ Christmas fairs, markets and parades.

Culture Night Fund

Fund:	Culture Night Fund
Frequency:	Annually via Open Call
Application Window:	Opens May/June Closes June
Application Process:	Online via Sligo County Council's Grant Portal
Grant Threshold:	Varies
Administered by:	Sligo Arts Service
Contact:	artsoffice@sligococo.ie

About the fund:

Culture Night is an annual celebration in September that celebrates all that our culture is today. It can take place across a wide range of sectors – culture, arts, heritage, education, hospitality, tourism, health, commercial and corporate enterprise.

Eligibility:

- ✓ Arts, heritage and cultural venues, groups and societies (professional and amateur), festivals, artists, musicians and other creatives and collectives. Creative/cultural organisations, community groups, youth and older persons etc and creative enterprises who engage with communities
- ✓ Events must take place after 4pm on Culture Night
- ✓ Events must be free and accessible to the public.
- ✓ Events must have a cultural focus.
- ✓ Be specifically programmed for Culture Night
- ✓ Where relevant, applicants must demonstrate their interest in and ability to engage target audiences.
- ✓ Be accessible (where possible), inclusive & celebrate the diversity of our linguistic and cultural heritage.
- ✓ Applicants must demonstrate that professional artists employed will be supported in their work and remunerated fairly.

Arts Grant Fund: Strand 1 Arts Infrastructure

The Arts Grants fund activities which meet the criteria of The Arts Act (2003). In this Act 'the arts' is defined as: *any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form, and includes, in particular, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture, and includes any medium when used for those purposes.*

Strand 1 Arts Infrastructure

Fund:	Arts Infrastructure: Arts Venues, Workspaces & Organisations
Frequency:	Annually via Open Call
Application Window:	Opens November, Closes December
Application Process:	Online via Sligo County Council's Grant Portal
Grant Threshold:	Varies
Administered by:	Sligo Arts Service
Contact:	artsoffice@sligococo.ie

About the fund:

The objective of the scheme is to support Sligo's arts infrastructure which is defined as arts & cultural venues, workspaces & organisations & those who play a distinctive role in developing & maintaining a vibrant and sustainable arts environment at local, regional, national, and international level in partnership with Sligo County Council.

Eligibility

- ✓ Dedicated/purpose-built arts & cultural venues with a year-round programme of arts activity that stimulates public interest in the arts, promotes knowledge and appreciation and strives to improve artistic standards at a local level
- ✓ Workspaces that provide space for multiple professional artists (4+) to work in and/or access to facilities, equipment etc
- ✓ Established arts/cultural organisations wishing to programme events (including event series) or undertake a programme of work (training, workshops etc) throughout the year
- ✓ Promote fair and equitable pay for artists
- ✓ Are accessible (where possible)
- ✓ Promote inclusivity
- ✓ Can be any creative activity eg performances, exhibitions, readings, talks, workshops, art/craft demonstrations, heritage events, interactive installations, craft activities, film screenings, animation
- ✓ Engaging with the Irish language are encouraged,
- ✓ Celebrate the diversity of our linguistic and cultural heritage

Arts Grant Fund: Strand 2 Arts Festivals & Events

The Arts Grants fund activities which meet the criteria of The Arts Act (2003). In this Act 'the arts' is defined as: *any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form, and includes, in particular, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture, and includes any medium when used for those purposes.*

Strand 2 Arts Festivals & Events

Fund:	Arts Grants Arts Festival & Events Fund
Frequency:	Annually via Open Call
Application Window:	Opens November, Closes December
Application Process:	Online via Sligo County Council's Grant Portal
Grant Threshold:	Varies
Administered by:	Sligo Arts Service
Contact:	artsoffice@sligococo.ie

About the fund:

This scheme funds activities which meet the criteria of The Arts Act (2003). An arts festival may represent one artform or may include a wide variety of different artforms. Arts events are also eligible under this fund. Festivals or events may also be programmed over a number of months (e.g. an extended concert series).

Eligibility:

- ✓ Independently run arts festivals and events/event series
- ✓ Demonstrate a clear artistic mission and purpose
- ✓ Can be either single or multi-disciplinary artform programmes
- ✓ Festivals or events must be longer than one day in duration and can be programmed over a number of months (e.g. an extended concert series)
- ✓ Provide access to innovative and high-quality arts programming
- ✓ Provide engagement opportunities for the public
- ✓ Promote artform development
- ✓ Promote opportunities to engage with the work of local, national and international artists in a range of settings
- ✓ Support the work of professional (non-commercial) artists and practitioners
- ✓ Promote fair and equitable pay for artists
- ✓ Be not for profit and non-commercial
- ✓ Are accessible (where possible)
- ✓ Promote inclusivity

Creative Ireland Open Call

Fund:	Creative Ireland Open Call
Frequency:	Annually via Open Call
Application Window:	Opens November Closes December
Application Process:	Online via Sligo County Council's Grant Portal
Grant Threshold:	Varies - See categories A, B and C below
Administered by:	Culture Team Sligo
Contact:	CreativeIreland@sligococo.ie

Funding will be divided into three categories: Projects are 100% funded.

- **Category A) €500 - €1,000**
- **Category B) €1,001 - €5,000**
- **Category C) €5001 - €10,000**

About the fund:

The Sligo Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2027 aligns with the Government's Creative Ireland initiative in placing creativity at the centre of public policy for the first time, and in encouraging and supporting greater access to and participation in creativity, to improve the wellbeing of all citizens. It will foster better and more innovative collaboration between the public and private sectors, and between artists, creatives, and the wider community; to empower and enable every person living in Sligo to have the opportunity to realise their full creative potential.

Funding applications must support the following Culture and Creativity themes:

- Creative Place
- Creative Economy
- Creative Communities
- Climate Action, Biodiversity and Environment
- Creative Youth

The Creative Ireland Values in Sligo

The Creative Communities partnership will be delivered in line with the following principles and values:

- Broaden access to, and participation in, cultural and creative activities locally.
- Use culture and creativity as a catalyst for collaboration and innovation in achieving greater wellbeing, social cohesion, and economic development.
- Strengthen the capacity of local authorities to integrate culture and creativity across place-making, regeneration, renewal, and the development of more vibrant, creative, and sustainable places.
- Investing in culture and creativity to support environmental, social and economic returns that help deliver local authority agendas – from local and regional, to national and international.

- Build on the agility and integrated approach of Culture and Creativity Teams to sustain further delivery of targeted collaborative programmes.

Eligibility:

The following criteria **must** be clearly met in order to qualify your project for consideration:

- ✓ The quality of the project and the collaborative nature of the proposal.
- ✓ Collaboration must include creatives and /or artists working in conjunction with communities / places of interest / latest technologies.
- ✓ The ability to align with and deliver the vision and priorities of Sligo's Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023 – 2027: <https://sligolibrary.ie/creative-ireland-programme/>
- ✓ The unique nature of the project proposed.
- ✓ The benefit to professional artists and creatives in the community.
- ✓ The ability to deliver the project by October 2026.
- ✓ Clear governance and structure of collaborative arrangement.
- ✓ The extent to which the proposal builds awareness of and supports: Creative Communities whereby the concept of people work together to transform their communities, their lives and their environment through creativity.

* **Creatives:** This denotes anyone working within a creative industry/sector, including craft, design, fashion, architecture, film, photography and food.

Creative Ireland funding cannot be used to fund monuments, murals or the purchase of equipment.

Tax Requirements: Applicants who apply for funding to Creative Sligo Open Call do not have to be registered for tax purposes. If the applicant is registered for tax purposes, then they are required to be tax compliant. In line with revised tax clearance procedures, which came into effect in January 2016, the Tax Clearance Access Number and Tax Reference number must be submitted to the local authority for verification purposes. VAT should only be paid where it is included in the proposal.

All monies granted must be drawn down with claims submitted by 31st October in grant year.

Commercial and Tourism Festival & Events Category 2: Festival Development Fund 2026 (Limited to 6 Festivals)

Fund:	Festival Development Fund 2026
Frequency:	Annually via Open Call (Subject to Funding each year)
Application Open:	24 th November
Application Close:	12 th December 12 th at 4pm
Award:	2 nd March subject to adoption at Council Meeting
Application Process:	Circulated by the Festival and Event Coordinator
Application to be submitted:	aquinn@sligococo.ie
Grant Threshold:	€3,000 per Festival
Administered by:	Tourism Unit
Contact:	aquinn@sligococo.ie

About the fund:

Along with continued funding towards implementing development and non-financial actions set out in this strategy, 2026 will also see the introduction of a new annual open call for a special development fund for **Category 2 Developing Festivals with Potential for Tourism**. Subject to assessment criteria to be set out and limited to six successful applicants.

Eligibility:

- ✓ Aligning with the Sligo DEDP projects / actions for festivals and events.
- ✓ Adopting a professional approach to event management, governance, structure, finance and funding, and providing evidence of maximising revenue opportunities.
- ✓ Motivating domestic and overseas tourists to travel to Sligo specifically for the festival and/or encouraging tourists to stay longer in Sligo because of it.
- ✓ Having a unique, differentiated and focussed proposition that is firmly embedded in Sligo's strengths and is hard to replicate in another location.
- ✓ Having a clear understanding of audience needs and undertaking regular audience research.
- ✓ Animating the Wild Atlantic Way brand proposition and the Visit Sligo brand proposition in promotion and in programming.
- ✓ Providing opportunities for audiences to enjoy immersive and participative experiences.
- ✓ Demonstrating an ability to leverage existing funding to create a sustainable, long-term future.
- ✓ Having sustainability at the heart of decisions and practices.
- ✓ Adopting and implementing an ethos of accessibility and inclusivity.

Please note this scheme is by invite only by the Sligo County Council Tourism Unit to developing festivals with potential for tourism.

Category 1 Festivals are ineligible to apply.

Other Funding Information Platforms

There are a number of additional/other funding streams which your organisation may qualify for within Sligo County Council and through other agencies. Some that may be of relevance are listed below:

Community & Voluntary Grant Scheme

The purpose of this scheme is to support Community and Voluntary Groups throughout the County who wish to undertake local small-scale Projects/Events in their area, in accordance with the categories below, subject to the relevant Grant Criteria/Guidelines. Grants funded under this scheme are 100% funded by Sligo County Council. The categories are as follows:-

1. Estates & Area Up Keep
2. Small Scale Community Events
3. Small Heritage Projects & Events.

The scheme will open in the week commencing 5th January 2026 and will close on Friday 23rd January 2026. The call for applications under these categories will be circulated widely via local press, Sligo County Council's website, through Sligo PPN and social media.

Total Budget available in respect of the above is €60,000 to be allocated as follows.

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|--------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Estates & Area Up Keep | €32,500 |
| 2. Small Scale Community Events | €12,500* |
| 3. Small Heritage Projects & Events. | €15,000* |

*The numbers and scope of applications to both the Small Heritage & Events Projects & Small-Scale Community Events Categories varies significantly year on year. Prospective applicants to these 2 categories in 2026 should note that the **average grant** sum awarded in 2025 was less than €1,000. Therefore, prospective applicants should take this into account when preparing their application.

Eligibility Criteria & Specific Guidelines

Estates/Area Upkeep Category

The aim of the Estates / Area Upkeep Category is to provide financial assistance to Residents Associations and Community Groups who work voluntarily to maintain and enhance their Estate & Local Area. Only annual recurring routine maintenance works will be considered for funding. New enhancement/ Development Projects are considered 'capital' works and are not considered eligible in this scheme. Equipment Purchases are not eligible under this scheme.

Community Events Category

The aim of the Scheme is to support and encourage small scale local events and activities which are undertaken by community and voluntary groups. Proposed events/activities must relate to an identified need and bring direct benefit to priority areas/groups. Group/Committee must demonstrate how they foster civic pride/promote health and wellbeing and/or are sustainable. Projects must outline in their application specific outcomes and methods of measurement of outcomes. Event or Activity must have taken place by October 31st 2026.

Heritage Projects and Events Category

The aim of the Scheme is to support and encourage events and activities which are undertaken by community and voluntary groups. In order to be of benefit to the wider community, any project offered funding by Sligo County Council under the C&V 2026 - Heritage Project and Events category must register an event during Heritage Week. Details can be obtained from www.heritageweek.ie. Event or Activity must have taken place by October 31st 2026.

All Applicants are to note: Costs incurred prior to application or, alcohol or “wages” related costs are not eligible expenditure

The Applicant Group/Committee must be registered with Sligo PPN (Public Participation Network). For details of the PPN please go to: www.sligoppn.com. To find your group's PPN number go to: <https://www.sligoppn.com/members-directory/> and type the name of your group into the search box or Tel: 071 - 9111352 for any queries in relation to PPN registration.

General Enquiries should be directed to Nola Gibbons at candvgrants@sligococo.ie or by phone at 071-9111340.

Night Time Economy Funding

Sligo Town is one of nine pilot towns and cities that has prepared an action plan setting out a range of actions to support the development of the night time economy. The initiative is funded by Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and delivered in by Sligo BID in partnership with Sligo County Council:

<https://www.sligococo.ie/News/NightTimeEconomyGrants/>

Sligo Arts Service:

Sligo Arts Service provides a range of supports for independent artists throughout the year. Their website also provide links to other agencies who support artists & arts activity:

<http://www.sligoarts.ie/>

The Arts Council:

The Arts Council is the national government agency for funding, developing and promoting the arts in Ireland: <https://arts council.ie/>

Sligo PPN:

(Public Participation Network) is an excellent local resource for organisations. Their website also provides a comprehensive list of various funding programmes that are available both locally & nationally: <https://www.sligoppn.com/updates/>