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Visual Artist and Craft Maker Awards Bursaries 2024/25

#VACMAScotland
Guidance for applicants

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Summary

The Visual Artist and Craft Maker Awards (VACMA) is a programme of small grant schemes delivered in partnership with a range of local authorities and art organisations across Scotland. The schemes are managed locally by these partners.

VACMA offers fixed bursaries of £500 and £1000. The purpose of these bursaries is to **support visual artists and craft makers in their creative and professional development**.

VACMA has two deadlines:

- **Autumn deadline: 5pm, 22 October 2024**
- **Winter deadline: 5pm, 4 February 2025**

Please check with your local scheme before applying as some partners only run one deadline. For a full list of partners and links to the individual schemes, please visit the Creative Scotland website.

VACMA is supported by Creative Scotland through funding from the National Lottery. As such a VACMA bursary cannot be used as partnership funding for any other Creative Scotland funding programmes.

How to apply

This guidance document provides an overview of the criteria and application process. Please read it before starting your application.

To apply please use your local partner's application form which you can access on their website. You will also be asked to provide the following documents:

- CV
- 6 examples of work
- Equalities Monitoring Form

A copy of the application questions can be found at the end of this document in Appendix 1.

Alternative Formats, Languages and Access Support

We are committed to offering clear and accessible application processes and programmes that are open to everyone. Information is available in alternative formats and translations can be provided on request.

Creative Scotland offers support with the VACMA application process to applicants who self-identify as d/Deaf, disabled, living with chronic illness, mental illness or neurodivergence (such as dyslexia, autism, ADHD). You can find more information about the types of support, level of contribution **on our website**.

If you require access support, please contact our enquiries team at least 4 weeks before the application deadline. You can reach them on **enquiries@creativescotland.com**.

How much can I apply for?

VACMA offers fixed bursaries of £500 and £1,000. You should apply for the level of bursary that best suits your circumstances.

- **£1,000 Bursary** is for artists and makers who have been practicing for over 5 years, regardless of whether they have gone through formal education or not.
- **£500 Early-Career Bursary** is for artists and makers that have been practicing for less than 5 years. This includes recent graduates (2019 or later) and those that have not studied art formally but have been practising as an artist or maker for up to 5 years.

Who can apply?

- Scotland-based visual artists and craft makers who live or maintain a studio space in the Local Authority area that they are applying to.
- Previous VACMA recipients who have submitted an End of Project Report.

This fund is for practising artists and makers. Applicants should have achieved a body of work out with formal education (unless a recent graduate) and have experience of the public engaging with their work.

Part-time students can apply but will need to prove their part-time status and that the activity they are applying for does not contribute toward their academic studies. Further detail regarding student eligibility is included in the VACMA FAQ (Appendix 2).

Please contact your local scheme if you require clarification.

Who cannot apply?

- Students in full time education.
- Artists or makers who do not live or maintain a studio space in the Local Authority area they are applying to.
- Individuals working in artforms other than visual art or craft.
- Previous VACMA recipients who have not submitted an end of project report before the application deadline.

What can the funding be used for?

The bursaries can be used to support a wide range of activities that support applicants to develop their creative practice.

Activity can include, but is not limited to:

- Professional training, courses and peer-to-peer learning.
- Mentoring and skills development.
- Testing new ideas and processes.
- Researching and developing a new body of work.
- Experimenting with sustainable and renewable materials, circular design and low impact processes.
- Residencies that are tailored to your creative and professional development.

- Equipment where there is a clear rationale for how it will develop your practice and support experimentation.
- Additional support towards making new work for an exhibition or presentation.

What this fund does not support

VACMA does not support:

- Activities that are scheduled to begin before you hear your decision. You must allow at least **8 weeks** from the deadline before starting your activity.
- Academic activity and courses or training that result in an accredited qualification.
- Business start-up and business development activities.
- Applications that are solely for marketing and website costs.
- Filmmaking projects unless you are a visual artist with a moving image practice.
- Community or educational projects.
- Illustration and graphic design that sits outside of a visual art or craft context.
- Building projects such as building renovations or refurbishments.
- Applications that are solely for framing and presentation costs.
- Projects that include partnership funding from other VACMA or Creative Scotland funding programmes.

Criteria

VACMA will give priority to applications that clearly demonstrate:

- **Commitment to practice** - your application material demonstrates relevant experience and an ongoing commitment to the development of your visual arts or craft practice.
- **Creative development** - your application clearly describes the opportunity for development and the anticipated impact on your creative skills and ideas.
- **Clear project plan** - your application material demonstrates that the proposed activity is feasible and that there is a clear delivery plan in place.

It is also a priority for VACMA to support Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Environmental Sustainability. We take these into consideration when prioritising applications as the funds aim to support a diversity of voices. This means that, when faced with high demand, we may prioritise support to newer applicants and those that have faced barriers to progressing their practice. We will also prioritise projects and activities that consider and work to mitigate their environmental impact.

What we are looking for

Commitment to Practice

The panel will look at your written responses, CV and the examples of work when assessing your application. Your CV helps to show your previous experience and commitment to your practice. Put the newest things first and take out any non-art related activities. [This guide on Artquest's website](#) might help.

Examples of work should be carefully selected, reflect your current practice and be of good quality. Remember to include titles, dates, medium and (where relevant) the dimensions of the work. Good, clear images show that you value your work and demonstrates a level of professionalism. You may find this guide to photographing your artwork helpful.

If you are proposing to develop work in a new format or medium, it is helpful to include 1 or 2 images that illustrate this change.

Creative Development

Have a clear reason for applying. Provide a full outline of the activity that you are applying for and describe how it will benefit your creative and professional development. The panel will want to understand how the proposed activity links to your previous work and the anticipated impact that it will have on your creative skills, ideas and future opportunities.

Try to be as specific as possible. For example, if you are applying for training or mentoring support, who will you work with and why? How will this benefit your practice?

Clear Project Plan

The panel will assess the feasibility of your proposed activity based on the information you provide. Make sure your timeline is realistic and that you **allow at least 8 weeks from the deadline before starting your activity**. We cannot fund any activities that begin before you receive your decision.

Think about any risks that might impact your project and tell us how you will mitigate them. For example, if you are planning to undertake a course, have you researched the dates and availability? Would you be able to adjust your timeline if your original dates are no longer feasible?

If you are applying for support towards an exhibition or residency, you should include a letter of confirmation from the venue or host organisation detailing their contribution to the project.

If you are proposing to stage your own exhibition, we would expect to see evidence that you have considered how you will reach audiences, and the use of accessible venues.

Budget

As the bursary levels are fixed, you do not need to provide a breakdown of the costs involved in your project/activity. However, you should make sure that what you are proposing is feasible within the bursary level that you are applying for.

If your project involves you working with others, for example mentors or tutors, we ask that you pay attention to how much you are paying those involved in the delivery of your project. More guidance on rates of pay is available on the [Creative Scotland website](#).

Partnership income is not a requirement of the fund. However, if the VACMA bursary is only covering part of your planned project or activity, you will need to tell us how you are going to resource the rest of it. Please detail any other cash or in-kind contributions in the budget section of the application form.

Personal Access Costs can be requested in addition to the VACMA bursary. Please see the section below and the VACMA FAQs (Appendix 2) for further information.

VACMA is supported by Creative Scotland through funding from the National Lottery. As such a VACMA bursary cannot be used as partnership funding for any other Creative Scotland funding programme. This includes, but is not limited to, other VACMA schemes, the Open Fund for Individuals and the Stephen Palmer Travel Bursary.

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Creative Scotland and all VACMA partners are committed to supporting **Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion** (EDI). It is a priority for the funds to support a diverse range of voices to develop and become established in their practice. This means that when faced with high demand, we may prioritise support to applicants who have not received support through VACMA before and those that face barriers to progressing their practice.

We do not expect projects to have an EDI focus, however we do expect all applicants to consider and respect these principles when designing their activity. If you have experienced any barriers to progressing your practice, you can tell us about them.

If you or a key collaborator in your project are Deaf, disabled, neurodivergent or living with chronic illness you can request support with Personal Access Costs that are directly related to the delivery of your proposed activity. Personal Access Costs are treated separately to your bursary request, this is to ensure that applicants with access needs are able to use the full bursary for their planned activity.

For more information on Personal Access Costs please read the VACMA FAQs (Appendix 2).

Environmental Sustainability

It is also a priority for Creative Scotland and all VACMA partners to support and encourage **environmental sustainability**. While we do not expect projects to have an environmental focus, we do ask that all applicants consider the environmental impact of their activities and explain the steps they are taking to mitigate this impact.

You may find these resources helpful:

Artists' Environmental Resource | Fife Contemporary

Resources for Artists | Creative Carbon Scotland

Submitting your application form

Please use the application form for your local area. Your completed application should be sent to the email address provided on the application form for your local scheme. You must include an electronic signature or send a scanned version of the signatory page.

Along with your application form you will be asked to submit:

- A CV detailing your experience to date
- 6 examples of recent work
- An Equalities Monitoring Form.

The Equalities Monitoring Form provides us with essential statistical information so that we can understand who receives funding and identify any gaps. It is anonymous and will be processed separately from your application. Data is managed confidentially, has no bearing on your application and is processed in accordance with Data Protection laws and GDPR. If you do not know some of the information or if you prefer not to provide it, you can fill in the 'Prefer not to answer' box.

Examples of work from successful candidates may be copied and held for use in reports and publicity material. Please note that each scheme is responsible for their own privacy notice which relates to the information you provide in your application and how it is processed. This notice is included in the application form. Please read it before submitting your application.

Decision-making process

All applications go through an initial eligibility check to make sure that they meet the requirements of the fund.

Eligible applications go to a panel where decisions are made on who is supported. Panels are made up of representatives of the local partner organisation and external members. External panel members help us achieve a broader perspective and they may include a mix of artists, makers, curators, tutors or other arts professionals. Creative Scotland staff regularly attend panels to maintain an overview of VACMA. Panels change regularly to ensure a range of voices contribute to the decision-making process.

In advance of the panel meeting, the panel will read your application and review the supporting material. During the panel meeting, the visual and written material is discussed against the criteria. The recommendations for awards are based on these discussions.

The panel will only use the application material to make its decisions. Panel members will not bring prior knowledge of you or your work into the decision-making process. We call this evidence-based decision making and it is designed to ensure that every applicant is treated fairly. Please do not assume that the panel will know or have already seen your work.

Decisions are communicated within **8 weeks** of the deadline. You will be contacted if there is any change to this timetable.

Reporting requirements

All successful applicants are expected to complete an End of Project Monitoring Report. This report helps us to understand the impact of VACMA and supports the development of the scheme.

Please note, that if you wish to apply for another VACMA bursary in the future, you must first submit an End of Project Monitoring Report. Your local partner will be able to provide you with the report template.

What happens if I'm unsuccessful?

These funds are competitive which means that not all applications that meet the criteria will be funded. If you are unsuccessful, please take time to reflect on the panel's feedback, or ask if feedback is available. If you do not understand the feedback or need more clarity, you can email your local partner.

Being turned down is not necessarily a comment on the quality of your work but rather the strength of your proposal compared to others being considered. We have had experience of people being turned down in one round, then considering the panel feedback and successfully reapplying with a stronger and more focussed application.

Further information and support

For questions regarding your eligibility, the application process, guidance or application form, please contact your local scheme. A full list of participating partners and links to the individual schemes can be found at www.creativescotland.com/vacma

If you have a general enquiry about VACMA or any other Creative Scotland funding programme, please contact Creative Scotland's Enquiries service. You can do this by email, through our website or social media.

Email: enquiries@creativescotland.com

Web: Fill out a form [on our website](#)

If you are a D/deaf BSL user, you can access our services with the Contact Scotland-BSL programme.

Go to: www.contactscotland-bsl.org for more information.

Appendix 1 – Application Questions

The application questions are the same across all the VACMA schemes. This appendix provides a list of the questions that are contained within the application form, however **you must use the application form for your local area when applying**. This can be downloaded from your local partner's website.

At the beginning of the application form you will be asked to provide your name, address, contact details and website (if applicable).

1. **Project start date / Project end date**
2. **Level of bursary applied for** (please select): £500/£1000
3. **Artform** (please select): Visual Art/Craft
4. **Which of the following statements apply to you** (please select): I live in [name of Local Authority area] / I maintain a studio space in [name of Local Authority area]
5. **Please provide a short summary of your proposed activity.** (Max 30 words)
Please note that we may use this text for marketing and communications purposes if you are successful.
6. **Please tell us about your creative practice.** (Max 250 words)
Provide a brief outline of your interests and motivations, your creative process, the work that you make and any key achievements to date.
7. **Please provide a description of your proposed activity.** (Max 300 words)
Tell us what do you want to do and why? You should expand on the information provided in the summary above. Try to be as specific as possible.
8. **How will this contribute to your creative and professional development?** (Max 300 words)
How will the bursary support you to develop your creative skills and ideas? How might this impact on your practice now and into the future?
9. **Please provide a brief timeline for your project and tell us about how you will manage any risks.** (Max 200 words)
Please outline the key stages of your project and tell us about any risks that you have identified and how you will mitigate them. If you have done any preparatory work, you can tell us about it here. You can use bullet points in this section.
10. **Is there a public element to your proposal?** (Max 200 words)
If so, please tell us what it will involve and how you will reach or engage people?
11. **Please tell us how you will consider Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) within your proposed activity and/or wider practice.** (Max 200 words)
If you wish to make the panel aware of any barriers that have impacted upon your practice or proposed activity, you can tell us about them here.
12. **Please tell us how you will minimise the environmental impact of your proposed activity and/or how you are responding to the causes and impact of climate change through your practice.** (Max 200 words)
13. **Have you received a VACMA award before?** (please select): Yes/No
14. **Do you require support with Personal Access Costs?** (please select): Yes/No
If yes, please provide a breakdown of these Personal Access Costs.

You will also be asked to provide a summary of project income and to complete an artwork submission form that includes the title, date, dimensions (where applicable) and medium of the work.

Appendix 2 – Frequently Asked Questions

Is there a limit to the number of VACMA applications that I can make?

There is no limit to the number of VACMA applications that you can make, however it is a priority for all VACMA partners to support a diversity of voices. This means that if you have received a VACMA bursary before, we may prioritise support to newer applicants.

If you have received a VACMA bursary before, you must submit an end of project report before you reapply.

What VACMA Scheme should I apply to?

You should apply to the scheme in the Local Authority area that you live in. If the area that you live in doesn't have a VACMA scheme, you can apply to a scheme in another area in which you maintain a studio space. If you are unsure, please check with your local partner before applying.

There is no local scheme in my area, can I apply to another scheme?

Some VACMA schemes cover multiple Local Authority areas, please check the full list of VACMA schemes to see if your area is covered.

If your local authority area isn't covered by a VACMA scheme, you may be eligible to apply if you maintain a studio space in a local authority area with a VACMA scheme. Please check with your local partner before applying.

How do I know if there is a VACMA scheme in my local area?

A full list of partners and schemes can be found on the [Creative Scotland website](#). Some VACMA schemes cover more than one Local Authority area. Where this is the case, it will be clearly stated in the title of the VACMA scheme. If you are still unsure if your area is covered by VACMA please contact our Enquiries team on enquiries@creativescotland.com.

What are Personal Access Costs?

Personal Access Costs are costs related to your own access needs, and/or the access needs of any key collaborators involved in your project, for example a mentor or tutor. We are aware that applicants who are Deaf, disabled, neurodivergent or living with chronic illness may have additional costs that relate to their access needs. We are also aware that those with caring responsibilities face barriers to progressing their practice.

Personal Access Costs are separate to your bursary request. This to ensure that all applicants can spend the full bursary amount on their planned activity.

Who can request Personal Access Costs?

You can request Personal Access Costs if you or a key collaborator in your project are:

- d/Deaf
- Disabled
- Neurodivergent
- Living with chronic illness or a long-term health condition
- Hold caring responsibilities.

Some examples of access costs are:

- A BSL interpreter
- Specialist equipment or software
- A Personal Assistant for a disabled person
- One-off or short-term childcare costs.

This list is not exhaustive. You should tell us what you require in order to deliver the activity.

Please note that childcare costs are classed as a taxable benefit, so whilst VACMA can reimburse these costs, you will be responsible for reporting this to HMRC.

Can I request additional budget to make my project accessible to audiences?

No. We will only consider requests for Personal Access Costs, which are costs related to removing barriers for you as an individual or for a key collaborator in your project. Costs related to making your project accessible to audiences or participants fall under general project costs and should be covered by the main bursary. They include things like captioning and use of accessible venues.

Do Personal Access Costs include travel and accommodation?

In most cases travel and accommodation costs would not be classified as Personal Access Costs. Generally, they are viewed as core project costs and should be covered by the bursary. However, if you are d/deaf, disabled, neurodivergent, living with a chronic illness or a long-term health condition you may experience higher travel and accommodation costs. If this is the case, you can include these additional costs under Personal Access Costs. For example, if you require a Personal Assistant, taxis to/from your destination or require additional accommodation.

How do I request Personal Access Costs?

When filling out the application form you will be asked if you would like support with Personal Access Costs. If you select 'yes' we will ask you to state the amount and provide a breakdown of the costs involved.

Is there anywhere else I can access support with Personal Access Costs?

You may also be eligible to apply for support from the UK Government's Access to Work fund, which can help cover some of the extra costs of carrying out your job, or travelling to, from and during work if you are disabled. More information on Access to Work is available on the [UK Government website](#).

Do I need any formal qualifications to apply?

No, you do not need to have any formal qualifications to apply. However, you will need to demonstrate that you are a practicing artist. We expect applicants to have achieved a body of work and have experience of the public engaging with their work. For example, through public exhibitions, craft fairs, performances, talks, events or socially engaged projects.

What do you mean by ‘practising artist/maker’?

We use the term ‘practising artist/maker’ to mean an artist or maker who is consistently active and has experience of presenting or reaching a wider public with their work. For example, through public exhibitions, craft fairs, performances, talks, events or socially engaged projects. We cannot fund artist/makers who have no experience of a public engaging with their work or whose only experience is presenting their work through social media.

I’m a recent graduate, can I use my degree show as evidence that I have achieved a body of work?

If you are applying for an early-career bursary you can include your degree show as evidence that you have achieved a body of work. However, you may also want to include some examples of work that you have developed since graduating.

If you are applying for the £1,000 bursary you must demonstrate that you have achieved a body of work outwith formal education.

Can students apply to VACMA?

Students in full-time education are unable to apply for VACMA. If you are a part-time student, you can apply but you will need to prove your part-time status and clearly demonstrate that the activity you are applying for does not contribute to your academic studies.

We would usually expect this to be demonstrated through a letter from your supervisor, tutor or someone with a similar level of close understanding of your studies, especially if there is any thematic overlap between your studies and the project/activity you are applying for. You may also be able to demonstrate this by including a scan of your matriculation letter if it clearly shows your subject area and your part-time status.

VACMA cannot support students with their living costs, tuition fees or costs related to full-time, long-term, formal or accredited programmes of education in the UK or abroad. For further information on student finance in Scotland, visit: [Student Information Scotland](#).

Can I apply to VACMA to develop a new facet of my practice?

Yes, the purpose of the VACMA scheme is to support artists and makers in their creative and professional development. This can include testing new ideas and approaches. You should however explain how your proposed activity relates to your previous work. If you are applying for support to develop a new strand of your practice (e.g. if you are painter wanting to develop a moving image practice) you should explain why. Sharing images of some initial experimentation can also help the panel to understand the direction your work is moving in.

If you are applying for support to shift your practice in a completely new direction (e.g. if you are a visual artist who is developing a craft practice or vice versa) sharing some initial experimentation helps the panel to understand that what you are proposing is viable. You may also want to consider applying for an early-career bursary, even if you have a well-established practice in another medium, to reflect the emerging nature of this new area of practice. Please note that the purpose of these bursaries is to support the development of existing practice rather than a career change.

Can I apply for a collaborative project with another artist?

You can apply to collaborate with another artist. If you are submitting a joint proposal someone will need to take the lead. On a practical level this means that they would receive and manage the funds.

If each of you are applying separately (to the same scheme or to different schemes) to fund your own costs, you should assess the risk around this approach and explain the impact it would have if one of the applications is unsuccessful.

Can I apply to VACMA for activity that sits within a larger project?

You can apply for support towards activity that sits within a larger project. However, you should be clear about the activity that VACMA will support and how it will benefit your creative development.

Does my project have to take place in Scotland?

While applicants must be based in Scotland, the project can take place anywhere. If your proposal involves travel within the UK or abroad, you should tell us how you will consider and reduce the environmental impact through your planning.

Can I use the bursary to purchase equipment and materials?

You can use a VACMA bursary to purchase equipment and materials as long as you can clearly explain how it will support the development of creative practice and enable you to experiment. If the purchase of new equipment is to make your practice more commercially viable or efficient it would not be a priority for support.

If your equipment/materials cost more than the bursary level applied for, you will need to explain where the rest of the budget is coming from and assess the risk around this.

Can I apply for funds to exhibit work, such as framing and canvas costs?

VACMA is designed to support creative development and experimentation. Applications solely for framing and presentation costs are not eligible.

Can I apply to develop a website or for marketing activities?

Applications that are solely focused on marketing and websites are not eligible for support. Applications that include some marketing and website costs as part of a wider project/activity are considered eligible, however the focus should be on the development of your creative practice. Applications that are focused on promotional activity only are unlikely to be a priority.

Can I apply to VACMA to support the start-up costs or development of my business?

VACMA does not support costs relating to business start-up and development. Individuals who are seeking support to start or develop their business should visit [Business Gateway](#).

Can I apply for a VACMA bursary to develop an application for the Open Fund for Individuals?

VACMA is designed to support creative development and experimentation. It cannot support an individual to develop a funding application to another Creative Scotland fund. However, VACMA can be used to develop ideas or test approaches that you could then further develop with support from another Creative Scotland fund, such as the [Open Fund for Individuals](#).

Can I apply to VACMA for support to deliver a community project if I have a participatory practice?

We will only consider community projects that are self-initiated and part of a socially engaged or participatory arts practice. Given the purpose of this fund, applications must demonstrate how the project/activity will impact on your creative and professional development.

Applications for funding to deliver a community or educational project on behalf of an organisation are not eligible for support.

Are the mentoring schemes running this year?

The mentoring schemes were paused due to COVID-19. However, we will continue to review this position and may reintroduce them in the future. If you would benefit from mentoring, you can use the bursary to arrange this yourself.

Can illustrators and graphic designers apply to VACMA?

If you can demonstrate that your practice and proposed activity falls within a visual arts or craft context, then you can apply for support. However, given that the focus of this fund is visual art and craft you may be less of a priority for support.

Does VACMA support heritage crafts?

Traditional and heritage craft skills are important both in terms of their creative output and the link to intangible cultural heritage and should be safeguarded and supported. VACMA supports traditional/heritage craft projects that contain a developmental element. Applicants must show they are developing their skills or creating work in new or innovative ways. VACMA does not support projects that are solely focused on the recreation of existing objects or designs.



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