



Creative Practitioners Application Guidelines

Creative Connections

Shared Island Pilot Programme

1. Introduction

The Departments of Education in Northern Ireland and Ireland are pleased to invite creative practitioners to participate in a pilot creative partnership programme for children and young people, teachers, creatives and school communities.

Creative Connections is seeking creative practitioners and artists who are passionate about working in partnership with educators and young people in primary, post primary and special schools to participate. Creative Connections is a broad creativity programme and welcomes professional artists and creative practitioners who work across a diverse range of disciplines; from digital creativity to movement, traditional and environmentally responsive creative practice, to visual arts and theatre, all practices are welcome. Creative Connections is particularly keen to work with creative practitioners who are interested in working collaboratively with children, young people and educators in school settings.

Creative Connections will run from September 2026 to June 2027 and will combine online and in-person engagements for young people, teachers and creative practitioners, including support for youth leadership and professional learning for educators and artists. To facilitate and build creative partnerships, Creative Connections 2026/27 will create cross-border clusters of schools and practitioners from Northern Ireland and Ireland. In their Clusters, young people, teachers, creative practitioners and school communities will engage in creative in-school residencies, shared planning and collaboration to build learning relationships supported by a Creative Connections Facilitator.

1.1 Participation and Young People's Voice

Creative Connections is a cross-border programme funded by the Department of the Taoiseach and supported by the Department of Education and Youth, Ireland and the Department of Education in Northern Ireland. The Department of Education in Northern Ireland are particularly encouraging expressions of interest from schools supporting pupils living in RAISE localities in Northern Ireland and The Department of Education and Youth in Ireland welcomes expressions of interest from all



schools in Ireland, especially DEIS primary, post-primary and special education schools.

Creative Connections gives children and young people the unique opportunity to work with professional creative practitioners in schools, bringing creativity and the arts directly into their learning. The programme emphasises young people's right to a voice in decision-making, allowing the participating young people to partner with teachers and creative practitioners in leading learning (see Hub na nÓg, the national centre of excellence and coordination in children and young people's participation in decision making for further information: <https://hubnanog.ie/>).

1.2 Aims of Creative Connections

The evolving aims of Creative Connections are to:

- Enhance learning, teaching and assessment through creative partnership and process
- Enhance school development priorities and practitioner confidence through creative pedagogies and professional learning
- Support young people's agency
- Connect communities through creativity
- Champion emotional health and wellbeing to enhance readiness to learn

2. Programme Overview:

Creative Connections will fund and support professional learning for creative practitioners and teachers to work in partnership with young people through in-school residencies, developing cross-border interdisciplinary communities of practice within both jurisdictions. The programme combines in-school creative residencies with cross-border cluster collaboration, creating opportunities for children and young people, teachers and creative practitioners to connect, plan and learn together through creativity.

2.1 Professional Learning Events

1. Creative Connections will begin with shared planning and creative learning activities, including an online introduction for all participants and a 2-day residential event for creative practitioners and teachers.
2. These sessions will enable young people's participation in decision-making with teachers and creative practitioners at the beginning of the programme in addition to supporting relationship building, creative collaboration and learning.
3. Creative practitioners are paid to attend all Professional Learning events and meetings (see payment details below). Travel and accommodation for residential events are covered by the programme.



2.2 Programme Structure

1. Creative practitioners and schools from Northern Ireland and Ireland will form cross-border clusters, working together as creative learning communities throughout the year.
2. Clusters will focus on building relationships, exploring shared interests and shaping creative activity informed by youth voice and professional learning.
3. Each school will receive cluster funding to support cross-border creative collaboration and will be supported by a trained facilitator to guide collaboration and partnership in 3 cluster meetings throughout the school year. Creative Practitioners are expected to attend relevant meetings as part of this process.
4. An additional grant will be available through a separate application process for schools to support cluster meet-ups and shared activity.

2.3 Creative Residencies in Clusters

1. Each creative practitioner will work with two schools (one from their own jurisdiction and one cross-border) to support creative engagement with young people.
2. Each creative practitioner is funded to deliver two 30-hour residencies (up to 9 hours planning and 21 hours delivery per school)
3. Online collaboration and where possible, in-person engagement, are encouraged in Creative Connections with flexibility accommodated in how sessions are delivered.
4. Residencies may run consecutively or concurrently, shaped through collaborative planning between teachers, young people and creative practitioners.
5. Accommodation and subsistence may be claimed where eligible (see payment details below).
6. Each school receives a materials grant to support both residencies.

2.4. Participation Support

Creative Connections Celebration and Sharing Learning Day will take place centrally in May 2027, this event invites participating young people, teachers, creative practitioners and facilitators to gather, connect and exchange practice and learning. Dates and venue to be confirmed.

2.4.1 Vetting / Safeguarding and Service Level Agreement

1. Successful creative practitioners are required to complete Garda Vetting (via Tralee Education Support Centre) and AccessNI vetting (via the Education Authority), as well as the Children's First and EA Safeguarding training.
2. Creative practitioners are never left unaccompanied or unsupported when engaging with students. During in-school Residencies teachers always retain responsibility for the learning,



health and safety of students. Schools should notify all creative practitioners of the Child Protection Policy, Safeguarding Statement, Designated Liaison Person and all image policies and safety procedures within the setting. Creative practitioners will be supported financially in applying for vetting in both jurisdictions.

3. Successful creative practitioners will be required to sign a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Creative Connections, Tralee Education Support Centre accepting the terms and conditions prior to commencement. The Creative Connections Programme can only begin once all documentation, vetting and Professional Learning requirements are complete.
4. It is a specific condition of Creative Connections that creative practitioners, teachers and students work closely and collaborate to plan, develop and evaluate the residency.

2.5 Payment and Expenses:

Creative practitioners are paid for their time across all programme elements, including Professional Learning Events (PLEs), cluster meetings and Residencies

- Daily rate (for PLEs/Meetings): €150 / £129 (or €50 / £43 per hour where applicable)
- Residency fee: €3,300 / £2,838 (total for two 30-hour residencies)
- Travel: €0.2123 per kilometre / £0.1825 per 0.62 miles to events/meetings (unvouched)

Accommodation and subsistence are covered for residential events.

For residency delivery, accommodation/subsistence may be claimed up to €205.53 / £176.75 per night (maximum of 3 nights per residency), where the distance from home address to school exceeds 100km/62.14miles (one way). Receipts are required for verification.

3. Creative Connections Eligibility

Creative Connections is seeking to invite 6 creative practitioners working in Northern Ireland and 6 creative practitioners working in Ireland to work with 6 schools in each jurisdiction in 2026/27. Final number of participating schools will be dependent on overall applications and programme capacity.

Applications for Creative Connections are welcomed from creative practitioners and artists of all disciplines. We especially welcome those who have prior experience of, and are passionate about, working with children, young people and educators in schools.

4. Creative Connections Application

Applications to Creative Connections 2026/27 will be accepted from creative practitioners in both jurisdictions through an [online application form only \(link below\)](#) hosted by National Arts in



Education, Tralee Education Support Centre. The link will be open Wednesday 22nd April to Wednesday 6 May 2026.

National Arts in Education aims to notify all practitioners on the status of the Expression of Interest in the week commencing 18 May 2026

4.1. Applications Outline

Applications from creative practitioners will be assessed by the Creative Connections team in collaboration with the Departments of Education in their jurisdictions, using the criteria outlined below. **Maximum 200 words per answer.**

4.2 Assessment and Scoring

Creative Connections applications will be assessed and scored using the following criteria:

4.2.1 Child Protection Compliance (Essential Requirement)

Completion of the Children First E-Learning Programme, EA Safeguarding, Garda Vetting and AccessNI are mandatory requirements. Applications that do not demonstrate compliance will not be considered.

4.2.2. Professional Creative Practice and Experience

Scoring based on: Demonstrated depth and breadth of professional creative practice (minimum 3 years), including quality of work, range of contexts and evidence of collaboration with organisations, communities or education settings.

Applications should clearly outline the practitioner's artistic discipline(s), professional experience and examples of relevant projects, particularly those involving children and young people or participatory practice.

4.2.3 Motivation to Participate in Creative Connections

Scoring based on: Strength and clarity of the applicant's motivation to engage in the programme, including their interest in working in educational settings, collaborating with teachers and young people and participating in a cross-border initiative.

Applications should demonstrate enthusiasm for partnership, shared learning and contributing to Creative Connections as a collaborative and inclusive programme.

4.2.4 Creative Connections as a Professional Learning Experience

Scoring based on: The extent to which the applicant identifies meaningful professional learning goals and demonstrates openness to reflection, collaboration and development.



Applications should outline how participation will support the practitioner’s own learning, including working in partnership with educators, cluster schools and young people, and engaging in co-creation and shared practice.

4.2.5 Vision of Creativity and the Arts in Education

Scoring based on: Clarity and strength of the applicant’s vision for the role of creativity and the arts in education, including its value for children and young people’s learning, development and wellbeing.

Applications should demonstrate an understanding of how high-quality creative experiences can support curriculum learning, inclusion, and meaningful engagement for all learners.

Questions 2-5 Scoring	Criteria
0	Does not meet the criteria. No evidence.
5	Meets the criteria. Provides satisfactory evidence.
15	Meets the criteria. Provides strong evidence.
20	Meets the criteria. Provides exceptional evidence.
Other Scoring	
10	Supporting access to creativity (Creative Youth Plan, p41)
10	Up to 10 marks allocated based on overall cohesion, proposed aims and quality of the application.

4.3 Creative Connections Timeline

Applications to participate in Creative Connections are made by schools in both jurisdictions through this online form hosted by National Arts in Education, Tralee Education Support Centre.

Applications Creative Connections 2026/27:

[Creative Practitioner Creative Connections 26/27 – Fill out form](#)

Please note only online applications will be accepted. Closing date is 6 May 2026

Creative Connections	Timeline
Applications open	Wednesday 22 April 2026
Applications close	Wednesday 6 May 2026
Notification of Application Status	Week commencing 18 May 2026
Creative Connections Professional Learning Events	September 2026
Programme completion and review	May/ June 2027



Appendix 1: Application Form

Text for Microsoft Forms

Section 1

Creative Practitioners Applications: Creative Connections 2026/27

Thank you for your interest in Creative Connections 2026/27, a cross-border creativity pilot programme running from September 2026 to June 2027 for creative practitioners and schools in Northern Ireland and Ireland.

If you take part as a creative practitioner, you will be part of a cross-border cluster involving 4 schools (2 in Northern Ireland and 2 in Ireland) working together through a shared creativity theme of connection.

You will also work in partnership with another creative practitioner from across the border to deliver two 30-hour in-school residencies — one in a school in Northern Ireland and one in a school in Ireland.

The programme also includes:

- Cross-border meetings and collaboration
- Professional learning events for teachers and creatives
- A mix of online, in-person and residential learning and partnership opportunities

Please complete this form to express your interest in taking part.

Note

Email addresses are collected in this Application Form for verification purposes. You do not need to create or sign-in to a Microsoft account to complete. However, if you choose not to complete this application using a Microsoft account, please be aware your progress will not automatically save. We recommend that you prepare your text in a word document as you complete the form and submit your application before leaving this page

Section 2

GDPR | RGCS

Under the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, National Arts in Education, Tralee Education Support Centre is required to ensure that data is fairly obtained and processed. By



submitting this form, you agree to receive details from National Arts in Education (NAE) about Creative Connections and other creative initiatives. You may withdraw from receiving this information at any time.

Information collected from this application will be shared with the Department of Education and Education Authority, Northern Ireland, the Department of Education Ireland, the Department of the Taoiseach and National Arts in Education, Tralee Education Support Centre, the administrative base for the Creative Connections programme. If you have any queries or wish to withdraw your data, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Shared Island NAE Team at National Arts in Education Tralee creativity@traleeesc.ie

Email address:

- A copy of your response will be sent to the email address entered below.
- Please check your junk mailbox and contact our team if you require support.

Please select the jurisdiction most applicable to your practice:

- a. Creative practitioner in Northern Ireland
- b. Creative practitioner in Ireland

Section 3

1. **Name**
2. **Address and Eircode / Postcode**
3. **E-mail**
4. **Contact Number**
5. **Creative Practice – please give some detail**
6. **Qualifications**
 - a. Professional qualification / experience
 - b. Link to professional work

Questions for Expression of Interest

1. **Child Protection**

Please note that compliance with child protection procedures is mandatory for all practitioners working with children and young people in schools.

I have completed the Children First E-Learning Programme.

- Yes
- No
- I will complete if successful



I am willing to undergo Garda Vetting with Tralee Education Support Centre and Access NI under Education Authority

- Yes
- No

Maximum word Count per question: 200 words

2. Professional Creative Practice and Experience

Please outline your professional creative practice:

- Ensure that your response gives a clear outline of the breadth and depth of your creative practice
- Outlining the type of practice and different contexts in which you have worked
- Give detail of any professional or organisational collaborations you have undertaken

3. Please insert links to your professional work

Please outline any links to your professional work here.

4. Motivation to participate in Creative Connections

Please outline your motivation to participate in the cross-border programme Creative Connections and your passion and interest for working in education and working in partnership with educators, children, young people and school communities.

5. Creative Connections as a Professional Learning Experience

Please outline the learning outcomes you hope to achieve in your professional learning in Creative Connections. Please consider the importance of learning, shared learning and collaboration in partnership with teachers and children in your response.

6. Vision of Creativity and the Arts in Education

Please outline your vision for creativity and the arts in education. In your response, please outline why it is important in your professional role that creatives work in educational spaces and that children experience high quality arts experiences through curriculum and through partnerships.