

The Arts Council

Main-scale Opera Provision from 2018



CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Purpose

The purpose of this process is to:

- (a) Identify through an open-application and dialogue process the most appropriate regular provider of an annual season of Irish-produced, main-scale, predominantly core-repertoire opera in Dublin from an agreed date in 2018, and the subsequent regular touring of some of this repertoire to appropriate venues in other parts of the country.
- (b) Form the basis of a short term funding agreement with that provider in respect of a particular programme with the intent that any future funding would subsequently be applied for, and adjudicated through, the Council's general funding programmes.

Background

This process takes place in the twin contexts of the Arts Council's overarching *Making Great Art Work* strategy and its December 2016 *Opera Policy and Strategy* deriving from this, and from the Council's opera policy-and-provision review process carried out in 2015–16. Potential applicants should make themselves familiar with these two important contextualising documents.

The restoration of regular, Irish-produced, main-scale, core opera repertoire has been identified as one of a number of strategic priorities in opera in order to ensure a more balanced national opera repertoire provision and a critical requirement for opera artists and opera audiences.

Outline Provision Requirements

The Arts Council is now seeking proposals from experienced professional producers of opera to regularly produce an annual programme featuring between three to four main-scale, predominantly core repertoire, fully professional opera productions per 'season' (period mid-September/October to April/May) in the most appropriate venue(s) in Dublin, with a view to regularly touring some productions to Cork and Wexford at an early juncture.

While appropriate international casting, creative input and co-production is desirable, the company's productions should predominantly feature Irish/Irish-based opera artists and other professionals, and should be of the highest possible artistic quality.

In the context of the Council's strategic priorities regarding the artist and public engagement, the core objectives in planning and organisation of the programme of productions and related activities should be to:

- (a) contribute appropriately to the development of Irish opera professionals and the development of the artform in Ireland
- (b) secure and grow large and diverse Irish audiences for opera in the short, medium and long term.

Through sound artistic and business planning, the forging of key artistic and business partnerships and a strategic approach to maximising revenue from other sources, applicants should seek to maximise the leverage of, and return on, Council investment.

Profile of applicants

The successful applicant is likely to be one of the following:

- (a) a new entity formed by an existing production company or companies
- (b) a new entity formed/led by experienced opera professionals with strong track records in the core elements of opera production
- (c) an existing production company with a strong track record of opera production to a high standard.

The successful applicant is likely to have a deep understanding of opera production and opera audiences and have a strong track record which includes successfully addressing artist development and audience development in previous work.

The Arts Council's preferred structure for the entity with which a funding agreement will be signed is a not-for-profit corporate entity (such as a CLG), with appropriately configured governance. Note – for 'new entity' applicants, it is not a requirement for the corporate entity to be incorporated/registered at the time of application.

Application and Selection Process

The process of selecting a single applicant will be in two stages:

Stage 1

- Submission of written proposals by applicants.
- Assessments of applications by Arts Council executive.
- All application information and executive assessments forwarded to the panel.
- Shortlisting of applicants by the expert panel based on the scored criteria detailed below.

Stage 2

- Any further information and/or clarifications requested by the expert panel communicated to the shortlisted applicants.
- Dialogue with AC executive if required
- Assessment of the further information and/or information provided by the Arts Council executive, as well as all application information, forwarded to the expert panel.
- Presentation of shortlisted proposals to the expert panel by the applicants.

- The expert panel scores the shortlisted applications and make a recommendation to the Arts Council.
- Consideration of the recommendation of the expert panel by Arts Council.
- Dialogue with the recommended applicant, if agreed by the Arts Council, to agree the conditions upon which funding is being offered.

Advisory panel

The expert advisory panel will comprise:

- Chair - Chair of the Arts Council
- 2 members of the Arts Council
- International Expert x 2
- Irish Expert x 2

The Arts Council's executive will also participate as technical, non-voting member(s).

Outline Process & Timetable.

Dates*	Process Stage
Week Feb 13 th	Process announcement/communication
Wednesday 1 st March 11am	Application process information workshop for potential applicants
MONDAY 3th APRIL 12 NOON.	Deadline for Submission of proposals.
3- 12 th April	Executive preliminary assessment of proposals.
Wk. 17/18 th April	Panel decision on shortlisting, Communication to applicants. With any requests for additional information /clarification from shortlisted applicants
c. 25 th April	Proposal dialogue with shortlisted applicants if required.
4th May	Submission of any finalised proposals.
10th /11 May	Presentation of proposals by shortlisted applicants. Panel decision on recommendation to Council.
24th May	Presentation of panel recommendations to Council for consideration and decision.
c. 31 May	Communication of Council decision to shortlisted applicants.
c. 21 June	Finalisation of funding agreement with successful applicant.

**Some dates may be subject to change, any changes will be notified to applicants.*

Selection considerations, criteria and scoring

In the context of its policy and strategy for opera and taking all relevant considerations into account, the application selected will be the one which is judged to be in the best long-term interests of the development of the art-form in Ireland, the development of Irish opera artists and Irish opera audiences.

A scoring template will be used in evaluating and ranking applications. This will be as follows:

EVALUATION HEADING	% weighting
ARTISTIC & OTHER PROGRAMME PROPOSALS Including consideration of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The artistic quality, balance and mission-appropriateness of artistic plans & proposals for main-scale productions.• Value-adding artistic partnerships.• Other annual programme elements and proposals (including, if relevant, any other production proposals) and how these complement and integrate with the main-scale programme.	40%
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT Including consideration of : <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality and feasibility of plans for audience reach, impact, growth and development.	25%
FEASIBILITY: ORGANISATIONAL & BUSINESS PLANNING Including consideration of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evidence of sound, feasible production planning and budgeting,• The quality and feasibility of business plans, including plans for generation of revenue from different sources.• Track record and ability to deliver on plans and proposals• Key collaborative organisational /business partnerships supporting the proposal.	25%
STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS Including consideration of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extent to which proposals meet Council's strategic national priorities for opera audiences, artists and art form development.• Impact of proposal in terms of national opera production infrastructure strength and diversity• Artistic and business risk	10%
	100%

Deadline for proposals

Initial proposals, with supporting documentation attached should be clearly marked '**Opera - call for proposals**' in the subject line and **emailed** to OperaCall17@artscouncil.ie . Proposals and supporting documentation must be received by **12 noon on Monday 3rd of April 2016**.

Proposal emails (including attachments) should not exceed 500 MB in size.

Receipt of applications and supporting documentation will be acknowledged by email.

Note: if the proposal and/or any required supporting documentation is not received by the deadline, the proposal will be deemed ineligible and will not be considered.

Queries & Feedback

All queries on this process and any requests for feedback following the process should also be emailed to:

OperaCall17@artscouncil.ie

The Arts Council may publish queries and answers to queries on the opera section of its website for the information of any potential applicant.

Notes:

1. Canvassing of Arts Council staff, advisory panel members or Arts Council members by or on behalf of an applicant organisation is prohibited and will result in disqualification of the applicant.
2. At all stages of the process, the Arts Council reserves the right not to make an award as envisaged and to pursue other means of achieving the objective of the process.
3. Applicants may appeal against a decision on the basis of an alleged infringement or unfair application of, or deviation from, the Arts Council's published procedures for this process. If you feel that the Arts Council's procedures have not been followed, please see the appeals process at http://www.artscouncil.ie/en/fundInfo/funding_appeals.aspx or contact the Arts Council for a copy of the appeals-process information sheet.
4. In order to ensure fairness and equity in decision-making, Arts Council members, staff, adviser and other panel members involved in the decision-making process must 'declare an interest' where they have a close personal or professional link with an applicant or application. An 'interest' is either 'pecuniary' or 'non-pecuniary' (e.g., family relationships or friendships, or partners, or formal or informal business partnerships etc.).

The interest must be declared as soon as the person becomes aware of it. This may be at the point when he/she is approached to sit on the panel (if the 'interest' is known at

that stage) or within three working days of receiving notification of the list of applicants. Where an interest is declared, the person involved will not receive papers relating to that application and will be required to leave the room when the specific application is being reviewed.

It is understood that in some instances a person involved may not realise that a conflict of interest exists until he or she receives and reviews the panel papers. In such instances the person involved must alert an Arts Council staff member or the Chair of the advisory panel as soon as they become aware that a conflict may exist.

If the Chair has a conflict of interest, he/she must declare it as soon as he/she becomes aware of it – this should be done in writing and in advance of the first application-review meeting. In this instance, the Director of the Arts Council or a member the Council will chair the discussion on the conflicted application.

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES & KEY INFORMATION:

Proposals should be submitted electronically as a single A4 Word document, (which should include summary budget and audience figures) with detailed budgeting supporting the applications contained in a separate Excel spreadsheet document.

Other supporting documentation provided (see below), should be clearly named as separate attachments.

All proposals should contain the following:

1. Contact & Company Information:

Applicant Name:

ARN

Postal Address

Principal contact

Email:

Telephone:

List of key staff

List of company directors (where applicable)

Company type, company registration number (where applicable)

2. Proposal contents list :

Provide a list of all documents (with file names) being submitted as part of the proposal.

3. Executive Summary: This should not exceed two A4 pages

4 Artistic – Programme Plan.

This should:

- a) Set out a clear mission/rationale underpinning the shaping of the artistic and related activity programmes and artistic choices.
- b) Name Artistic Director/other key artistic personnel, the proposed basis of their engagement (full-time or part-time), any proposals for recruitment/ succession,

primary processes/approaches to engaging and working with key creative personnel and casting for productions.

- c) Set out an annualised repertoire & related activities calendar/ plan, beginning in 2018, and covering 18/19, 19/20, 20/21 seasons. An indicative artistic programme for the 2021/2022 is also requested to give an overall sense of the long-term artistic vision of the company.
 - i. This should clearly name Opera titles/composers, proposed venue(s), dates, projected number of performances, key casting /creative team proposals and clear proposals in respect of chorus and orchestra.
 - ii. The number of main-scale productions in Dublin should be projected to the following minima: 2018: three; 2019: four, 2020: four
 - iii. Plans should include performances of selected repertoire in both Cork & Wexford from 2019 (one production) and 2020 (two).
 - iv. Related /supporting activities (and if relevant, any other production being proposed by the company as part of its plans) should also be mapped onto the artistic /programme activity plan to give a comprehensive view of the entirety of the company's proposed programme of activities in the period.
 - v. Specify particular policies, proposals or programmes in respect of the engagement and development of Irish opera artists.
 - vi. Specify any key artistic partnerships and collaborations with other organisations in Ireland and abroad.

5 Audience reach and development proposals.

Public Engagement is one of the Arts Council's Strategy priorities, and is a key concern of its opera policy and strategy.

Proposals should set out audience projections for 2018 to 2020, for the productions and related activities which are at the subject of the proposal.

Underpinning this there should be a clear and feasible supporting rationale and plan for audience reach, growth and development during the period.

Applicants are encouraged to take a broad view of audience development to include issues of education, outreach and access for particular audience communities.

Proposals should incorporate a demonstrated commitment to growing and diversifying their audience and public engagement. This element of proposals should have the

potential to have a long-term, sustainable impact on the ambitions and policy of the company, and the different publics engaged with opera through their work.

6 Business/Financial Plan:

For the purposes of the business planning exercise, the level of Arts Council investment potentially available to the successful applicant is a figure of the order of €1.8 m for the initial period from second half of 2017 to the end of 2018. Projected investment figures for subsequent years should bear this investment level in mind while making proposals to deliver the principal production output levels envisaged at 4 (c) ii. and 4.(c) iii above.

The business/financial plan should:

- a) Cover three full financial years 2018-2020 (may also include costs in 2018 which might be incurred in 2017 – 2018 can be treated as a 18 month period including the latter half of 2017)
- b) Demonstrate sound cost budgeting for all productions and related activity, for core organisation overhead, sales, marketing, fundraising costs etc.
- c) Show clear summary projection information, with basis of projection indicated, to maximise revenue from different sources
- d) Set out key features of marketing, sales and revenue-raising strategy, plans & projections.

7 Organisation Plan

Clearly set out proposed company/organisation structure, key roles including the nature of employment (full-time/part-time, contract for services etc.), and (where possible) name individual key-role personnel. You may also stipulate where it is proposed that the company will be based.

8 Track record:

- a) Pre-existing applicant companies: Provide an outline of the company's history, and summary of the past five years' activities.

OR

- b) In the case of a new entity being formed or proposed by existing companies, please follow the guidelines for existing companies in respect of each of the companies involved.

OR

- c) In the case of new entities making application, provide a clear summary (supported by inclusion of appropriate CV's in supporting documentation) of the track records of key company personnel, and seek to make a clear case for a major investment choice based on this.

Supporting Documentation:

All applicants should include:

- A separate, clearly labelled Excel spreadsheet workbook with detailed budget and other numeric calculations used to derive summary figures in main application.
- Letters confirming support from any key artistic or business partners.
- If an existing company, a statement of the current financial position of the company and the most recent (2) sets of annual reports/audited accounts.
- CV's of key artistic and executive personnel.
- A selective provision of other material believed to be of significance in supporting the proposal. (Note: Selectivity is important. It is the significance and extent to which any supporting material speaks to the proposal rather than the volume of supporting material which is important).

Acceptable file formats

The following table lists file formats that are acceptable as attachments.

File type	File extension
text files	• .rtf/.doc/.docx/.txt
image files	• .jpg/.gif/.tiff/.png
sound files	• .wav/.mp3/.m4a
video files	• .avi/.mov/.mp4
spreadsheets	• .xls/.xlsx
Adobe Acrobat Reader files	• .pdf

For convenience, gather together all the files you need in an accessible location on your computer.

Submitting audio/video links

You may provide links to material hosted on YouTube, Vimeo, or SoundCloud, instead of attaching material directly. To do this, copy the URL (the full address of where your material is hosted) into a Microsoft Word or OpenOffice Writer document or equivalent and attach it as a weblink-supporting document.

Please note:

Any audio or video links you provide must be to YouTube, Vimeo, or Soundcloud. Links to other hosting sites will not be viewed.

Check carefully that the link works from within the document you upload – that is, that it links correctly to your material on the relevant platform.

If you do not wish material you upload for the purposes of your application to be publicly viewable, adjust the settings for the file appropriately.