

**YOUTH
MUSIC**

YOUTH MUSIC NEXTGEN FUND: GUIDANCE DOCUMENT



The National Foundation for Youth Music, Studio LG01, The Print Rooms, 164-
180 Union Street, London, SE1 OLH

Registered charity number 1075032/ Limited company number 03750674

What is the Youth Music NextGen Fund?

The Youth Music NextGen Fund is for early-stage musicians and music adjacent creatives aged 18-25, to invest up to £3,000 in their own projects and make their ideas happen. The fund is especially aimed at those whose lack of finance holds them back from pursuing their goals.

It's open to d/Deaf, Disabled or Neurodivergent creatives up to 30 years old, as the impact of barriers they face in the industries impacts them further into their careers.

We welcome applications from Singers, Rappers, Songwriters, Producers, DJs to A&Rs, Managers, Promoters and Agents, right through to roles that have yet to be defined.

The NextGen Fund intends to help young people build confidence in applying for funding, project planning and execution. We especially would like to hear from people who have never applied for funding before. It is unlikely that we'll prioritise your application if you've already received significant financial support for your work (for example through an Arts Council or a PRS Foundation grant).

We have 2 rounds of funding a year, so if you aren't ready yet, there will be opportunities to apply in the future.



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Youth Music is an open organisation – please get in touch if you've got any questions.

What's new in January 2025?

We've made some small but important changes since the last round of NextGen funding.

Increasing how much you can apply for

We have increased how much you can apply for to £3,000 in recognition of the increased cost of living. We have also increased the maximum you can spend on equipment to £700.

All applicants still need to allocate a minimum of £500 of their budget to Time to Create. Please remember that you can apply for more under this section – we want to make sure that you're paying yourself fairly.

Re-applying if you are unsuccessful

If your NextGen Fund application is turned down by Youth Music, you can now re-apply in the following round (you no longer have to sit-out a round before making another application). Please note that there will now be 2 rounds of NextGen Fund per year.



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1. What is this fund for?

This fund is designed to help emerging artists and professionals develop the skills needed to participate in the fast-moving music industries. Modern creatives are having to be more versatile than ever, and we want to see young people challenging themselves to adapt to the modern climate. This could be developing skills like video editing, graphic design or coding alongside their artistic venture.

You can apply to develop a project that you can run and deliver mostly yourself. Here are some examples of ideas:

- **A creative music project:** single releases, an EP or contribution towards an album campaign. The music can be already made or in the process of being created. Most of the applications we receive are for EPs. We aren't against you doing them, but we want to see creative approaches into how you make, release, and promote them. Giving a clear explanation of why you are choosing the format you work in is also helpful; it may relate to where you are in your journey, or a personal creative challenge. Telling us about what you have released so far will help us understand why you are taking the next steps you are.



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- **A music-based business:** starting a record label or music platform.
- **A platform that supports underrepresented voices and perspectives:** supporting leaders that build communities and help facilitate others in pursuing their creative goals.
- **An event or series of events showcasing other emerging artists:** we want to support new promoters and help new artists gain experience performing on stage.

As well as funding time for you to pursue your idea, we can also cover costs linked to:

- **Career development** - Training, Mentoring and Networking.
- **Audience development** – Marketing and Promotion.
- **Equipment and Software.**
- **Business development** – Administration costs such as Insurance and fees.

All projects need to be released within a year of being awarded the funds, and ideas that aren't accessible to the general public cannot be funded. For example, it couldn't fund a training course with no project outcome.



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2. Who is this fund for?

People working towards a career in the music industries, but lack key contacts, resources, and insights. They might be:

- Musicians, Producers, Engineers, DJs, MCs, Rappers, Songwriters.
- Managers, Promoters, A&Rs, Agents.
- Activists and campaigners who are transforming the music industries.

In our funding decisions, we will prioritise:

- People who do not have the financial means to invest in themselves to get their ideas started.
- People that are too early stage to be funded by larger grant programmes like Arts Council England and PRS Foundation.
- Those who might be discriminated against, for reasons that could include Gender, Race, Disability, location, or other characteristics.
- People who are creative, entrepreneurial and are multi-disciplinary - even if they don't recognise themselves as such.

3. Who is this fund not for?



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YOUTH MUSIC

If you have the financial means to deliver your project, we recommend not applying, as it would allow more people who don't to have access funds to receive support.

We are not able to fund:

- **Signed Artists.** If you are signed to a record label, publisher or management company, we will not be able to support your project. We want to keep the fund open to people who aren't at that stage yet.
- **People in full time employment in the music industries already.** This specifically means working in the area of the industry you want to progress in. For example, we won't exclude someone who works at a major music venue at the bar, but we would if you were already an A&R at a major record company.
- **Groups and collectives.** The recipient of the grant will be one individual and we would like to know about how this grant will support your career development and your ideas. If you are intending on working with others as part of your project that is fine, but we want this grant to primarily support you as an individual.

4. How can I get help with my application?



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YOUTH MUSIC

Please get in touch if you have any questions about the application process:
creatives@youthmusic.org.uk

You can also arrange a call with one of our team to discuss your application. 15-minute slots are available while the fund is open. Email creatives@youthmusic.org.uk to arrange this.

You also can read some of our [reflections on previous rounds, and tips for future applicants](#).

5. When is the application deadline?

Upcoming application deadlines for NextGen Fund can be found on our [website](#). Applications must be submitted by 5pm.

We regularly update this webpage with future application rounds, so if you aren't ready to apply yet, or you're trying to rush through your application to meet the deadline, it's better to wait and give this your best shot.

6. What can you spend the funding on?



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Make sure that you have budgeted for all areas of your project, from planning to release.

You don't have to have any existing funding already to apply, but a grant can act as a proportion of overall costs, with other sources of finance involved.

- **Time to Create** – We have allocated every applicant **at least £500** for you to spend as you see fit during the duration of your project. You can apply for more under this section. This can be for living expenses, childcare, or any personal items needed to help you deliver your work. See it as a wage for creating and delivering.
- **Project Expenses** - Any costs associated with producing the work. For example:
 - Recording and Production costs such as studio time, Mixing and Mastering. We would suggest not overspending in areas such as Mixing and Mastering and looking for affordable quotes.
 - Session musician fees at the Musicians Union rate
 - Manufacturing
- **Equipment** - £700 maximum - Hardware and software necessary to completing the project to a high standard, that will be also an asset to you with future projects.



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YOUTH MUSIC

- **Training** - £200 maximum - Affordable training that will help you develop your skills needed to deliver the project and or level up your skill set for future employment potential. For example, a conference ticket or online course.
- **Marketing** – £500 maximum - We want to see creative marketing spends, not just money allocated to online marketing, or social media ads. Provide as much detail as possible here, as this is where we want to hear about your creativity towards building an audience. Paying for press is optional, but you shouldn't be above creating your own creative marketing plan. The more of the project you can deliver yourself, even if it's something you are doing for the first time, the stronger your application will be.
- **Travel** - £200 maximum - We encourage remote work and online collaboration where possible. We also cannot fund any travel outside of the UK.
- **Other** - List any other spending for your activity that is not included elsewhere that is related to your project. You can include an amount for unexpected costs – this is known as “contingency”.



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YOUTH MUSIC

- **Access** - If you identify as d/Deaf, Disabled or Neurodivergent, we can provide extra funding to help you make your application and to run your project:
 - **Personal Access Budget**

If you have any personal access costs you need to run your project, you can include these on top of the £3,000 maximum grant. There is an option in the application form to select if you require access costs to fulfil your project. This might include costs for British Sign Language interpreters, personal assistants, support workers or other access costs. Youth Music is a [Living Wage Funder](#), which means that we expect all people employed on Youth Music-funded programmes to be paid the Real Living Wage. If you want to apply for a personal access budget, and would like to discuss your requirements before applying, please get in touch with Youth Music:
creatives@youthmusic.org.uk
 - **Support with making your application.**

You can also apply for support with the costs of making an application via [Youth Music's Access Fund](#). This is a separate process so don't include costs related to planning and submitting your application within your budget.



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- **Access to Work**

Some d/Deaf, Disabled or Neurodivergent applicants or those with health conditions may be entitled to get money for personal support and equipment from the Government's Access to Work scheme.

More info on this can be found here: <https://disabilityarts.online/atw/>

If you have questions, please email us at creatives@youthmusic.org.uk

7. How to apply

You will need to [complete and submit an online application](#), this will cover:

A. Who you are and your previous work

Tell us your contact details and provide some examples of your previous work. You can upload a one-page portfolio document and provide links to recordings, videos or your strongest social media account that best represents your work.



B. Your project

This is the main section of the application form where you will tell us about what you want to deliver with the funding.

You have the option to answer these questions using:

- **Text:** We suggest writing this in a separate document and copying it into the application form when you are finished. You will not be judged on grammar or writing style, all we need is clarity. Use bullet points if necessary. **Maximum 1,000 words.**
- **Upload a document:** You can upload a visual presentation or PDF Document to answer these questions. **Maximum 2 pages.**
- **Video** – You can also respond to the questions in video format if you feel more comfortable speaking about your idea. It may be worth having the questions in clear view to ensure you are answering all the questions clearly. Your video must be **no longer than 6 minutes long.**



YOUTH MUSIC

C. Budget

Here you'll need to tell us what you're going to spend on your project. Your total budget must be between £1,000 - £2,500 (**£500 will be automatically included in your budget for 'Time to Create'**) and there are some limits on how much you can spend on certain items. (See Section 6.)

D. Reference

We will ask for the name of someone who can act as a referee. We will only contact them if your application is successful. This should be a professional connection who knows you and your work as a creative. For example, someone you've worked with on a previous project or a Music Leader from a course or programme you've participated in.

Please make sure that this is someone **who does not stand to benefit financially from this project**. For example, please don't choose a producer who you plan to hire to produce your EP.

E. Monitoring



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YOUTH MUSIC

Lastly, we'll ask you to complete some optional monitoring and equal opportunities questions to help us gather some information about who is applying for this fund. This will help us ensure we are equitable and representative in our approach and our funding decisions.

8. How we'll make decisions

We will only be able to fund a limited number of applications in each funding round. This means we will have to make some difficult decisions. The strength of your application will be assessed alongside the other applications we receive by a group of assessors. A final shortlist will then go through to an expert judging panel.

Your application will be assessed on the following criteria:

- **Eligibility check:** We will conduct an initial check to make sure your application is eligible. It will need to contain enough detail and information to make a full assessment. If you have not included supporting documents or links that you refer to, we will not be able to assess your application.



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YOUTH MUSIC

- **The strength of your project:** Strong applications will be focused on creating something new or making something happen. Projects should enable you to develop your skills and explore new ground. Strong project ideas should be interesting, exciting or innovative. But remember to make sure it is realistic and achievable too.
- **The potential benefit to you and your career:** We want you to have a clear idea about where you're going in your career and how your project will help you get there. We also want to have confidence that you'll be able to deliver the project to a high standard, and that it will enable you to take your career forwards.
- **The strength of the project plan:** Strong applications will be well planned. They'll have an accurate and reasonable budget. They will be clear about what will happen and how. We need to know when things will take place and who will be involved. Timescales will be realistic and achievable in 12 months.
- **Ensuring we fund fairly:** We will fund a diverse range of applicants. To do this we will use data to help guide our decision making. This will enable us to invest across a variety of projects, genres, individuals and geographical areas.



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9. What happens if I am successful?

You will be informed by email and sent an offer of funding. To accept the offer you will need to:

- Sign a funding agreement.
- Send us proof of your bank details and proof of your identity.

Once we have approved these documents, you will receive a payment for the project costs. This will normally arrive in around 6 weeks of signing and returning your funding agreement. This will be 85% of your total grant.

At the end of your project you'll need to complete a short reporting form detailing how the money was spent and how it has impacted you. On completion, you will get the remaining 15% of your grant.

We'll encourage you to share your final work with us, and to present this back in a way that best suits your work and will be most useful for you in the future. This could be a recording, video, slide deck, blog post, photos, etc.

10. What happens if I am unsuccessful?



YOUTH MUSIC

Demand for the NextGen Fund is very high. We will not be able to fund all the applications we receive. Each unsuccessful applicant will get some short comments on their application.

Unsuccessful applicants are welcome to apply again, as long as they still meet the Fund's eligibility criteria (see Section 12).

11. Dos and Don'ts

- **DO Ensure your online presence is up to date**

We're going to look at your social media and links you provide, so make sure they reflect your most recent or strongest activity.

- **DO Make it easy for us to hear your music or see your work**

We will ask you to provide a link to your most recent music (or other relevant work if you're not applying as an artist). Make sure that the link will take us to the content in one click.



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Registered charity number 1075032/ Limited company number 03750674

YOUTH MUSIC

- **DO Keep it simple**

Don't over complicate your idea, doing one thing well is better than trying to do lots of different things. Our assessment will look at whether we think you can deliver the project.

- **DO Be clear**

You don't need to use complicated language to communicate with us. Bullet points often help where there is limited word count.

- **DON'T assume knowledge**

Assume no one knows about your project, genre or journey – get someone to read it before you submit it.

12. Terms and Conditions

To apply you must:

- Be aged 18 to 25 at the point of the application deadline. If you identify as d/Deaf, Disabled or Neurodivergent, you can be aged 18 to 30.
- Be living in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.
- Have a UK bank account in the exact name you are applying under.



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YOUTH MUSIC

- Be able to start your project within 3 months of hearing your project has been funded.

What we can't fund

Youth Music is not able to fund the activities or items listed below. Please read through this section thoroughly. Your application will be declined if you include any of the following:

- Applications from people who are not aged 18 to 25 (or aged 18 to 30 if d/Deaf, Disabled or Neurodivergent).
- Activities, goods, or services that have already been bought or taken place before your project begins.
- Applicants who are already receiving significant financial backing.
- Activities that are not music or career development focused.
- Individuals can apply to start a new business idea, but we can't accept applications from existing organisations or businesses.
- Activities that promote a political or religious view.
- Opportunities already funded by Youth Music. E.g. you are being funded through an Incubator Fund project.
- Applicants who are looking to work with children (under 18 years old) or Adults at Risk. For example, we are not able to fund the delivery of music-making sessions or training with children or Adults at Risk. This is because we are unable to verify that necessary Safeguarding measures will be in place to protect those involved.



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YOUTH MUSIC

- If you have been funded before by the Youth Music NextGen Fund, then you are not able to apply again.

13. FAQs

Will I need to pay the money back?

No, but you will need to complete an evaluation form on completion of the project to receive the full amount.

Am I allowed to make profit?

Yes. We want to support your journey to building a sustainable career or revenue stream. You won't need to report this to us, but you will need to check what taxes you may need to pay on these.

I have been releasing music for several years, but feel as if I haven't got a break yet, can I apply?

Yes. We will not penalise experience, but if you have already had record and or publishing deals, high profile performances and press this fund is not for you.

How are decisions made?



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A team of assessors are brought in who will have knowledge of your genre or location and will judge on the criteria listed. This will be a mix of people from different ages, experiences, and backgrounds.

Can someone else write the application on my behalf?

We strongly encourage you to write it yourself. The experience of putting it together will help you long term with your creative ideas and we will not be judging on language used or grammar. If someone else is writing for you because of access reasons, that is completely fine.

Will there be future rounds of this fund?

Yes. So if you aren't ready to apply yet don't rush through your application to meet the deadline. It would be better to wait and give this your best shot. There will be 2 rounds per year.

Do I need match funding, or money to put into the project myself?

No. We especially welcome people who cannot fund projects themselves. Your ability to add extra funding won't be a decision-making factor. If you can fund a complete project yourself, not applying to this will allow someone else that doesn't have the resources to participate.



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Registered charity number 1075032/ Limited company number 03750674

YOUTH MUSIC

I'm a British Citizen but I'm not currently based in the UK, can I apply?

No. Activity must be based in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Can my project be based or include work overseas?

No. Activity must be based in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

What is Youth Music?

We're a national charity. We help marginalised young people to make and monetise music.

Every year, we raise £10 million to fund inspirational grassroots music projects and support aspiring young creatives up and down the UK.

We're campaigning to break down barriers for young people facing inequity, exclusion and discrimination.

Together with our partners, we're helping the next generation to transform their lives through music.

Youth Music Next Gen is our community platform for 18–25-year-olds offering and circulating talent development and job opportunities through our monthly newsletter.

If you have any questions, you can email us at creatives@youthmusic.org.uk and you can book a 15-minute call with us if you need more information.



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