

Culture Development Workplan 2026 / 2027 – UNESCO City of Music “Additional Activity” for Approvals

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
UNESCO City of Music Workplan 2026/27 remaining activity for approval			
Theme 1: Placing Artists at the Heart			
Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival (CQAF) Micro bursaries programme	Continue to partner with the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival to provide grants for local music creators. 20 musicians / groups supported each year across all genres and backgrounds with a grant of £1000 towards the career enhancement or support of their choice, such as recording, mentoring, PR and more.	October 2026 to March 2027	£25,000
Co-designed wellbeing events and initiatives to ensure the physical and mental health of music creators is safeguarded and protected throughout the year.	Partner with key stakeholders and organisations in the sector hosting initiatives to support the physical and mental wellbeing of music creators. Launch an initiative to bring music into libraries during winter months to benefit local communities. Bring music wellbeing events to groups where access may otherwise be limited, such as newcomer communities through a partnership with Happy Women’s Group.	June 2026 to March 2027	£8,000
Co-design with sectoral stakeholders a series of projects that will allow for the Priorities within Theme 1: Placing Artists at the Heart.	Partner with key stakeholders and groups to launch initiatives that address priorities across Theme 1, such as ensuring there is enhanced inclusivity in music, seeking investment and export opportunities for artists and industry representatives at varying stages of their career and continuing to engage with young people to expand their understanding of the world of music.	June 2026 to March 2027	£12,000
Theme 2 : Nurture the Sector			
NI Music Prize & Sound of Belfast	Annual programmes that celebrate the very best of new, established and emerging Northern Irish music. Recognising outstanding talent while providing opportunities for live performance, industry engagement and audience development. Second year or a three-year partnership.	June 2026 to March 2027	£55,000
Music Connections Website – a one-stop-shop online Music Directory to promote and connect all facets of the music business and those working in it.	Final year of delivery for Music Connections website and online directory and support service for musicians.	June 2026 to August 2026	£30,000
Music Business Accelerator Programme	Following the launch of the Music Business Accelerator- programme scoping exercise with the local sector, Stage One will launch in 2026 to provide local businesses with	June 2026 to March 2027	£10,000

Appendix 1

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	tailored support and connections to specific industry events, in collaboration with colleagues in Economic Development.		
City of Music Industry Sessions	Continued programming of free and accessible educational events around an array of topics within the music industry and partnering with groups that provide skill development opportunities. A space to allow local music creators and entrepreneurs to network together. Partners include EmuBands, Imagine Festival, The Night Institute, Belfast TradFest and Native Events.	June 2026 to March 2027	£8,000
Allocate programming funding to support organisations who seek to develop and promote diverse and under-represented genres	Continue to support projects and partnerships that develop and promote diverse and under-represented genres where gaps are identified, working with groups such as Sonic Arts Research Centre and Soultrane.	June 2026 to March 2027	£14,000
Co-design with sectoral stakeholders a series of projects that will allow for the priorities within Theme 2.	Partner with key stakeholders and groups to launch initiatives that address priorities across Theme 2, such as providing pathways for artist and industry representative attendance at international conferences to develop new networks, including The Great Escape, as well as sourcing alternative education opportunities for continuous upskilling of the local music sector and creating pathways for local music businesses to be nurtured.	June 2026 to March 2027	£15,000
Belfast Music Forum	Host the inaugural Belfast Music Forum to bring different music communities together, mirroring the Visual Arts Forum and the Festivals Forum, and provide sector support identified through direct engagement, data and research opportunities. Utilise this engagement to inform future planning and respond to immediate sectoral needs.	June 2026 to March 2027	£8,000
Theme 3: Igniting the Live Experience			
Purple Flag Alignment	Alignment with the city of Belfast's Purple Flag, partner with key stakeholders and groups to launch initiatives that enhance Belfast's night-time economy, culture and governance to ensure the city is fulfilling its economic and cultural potential after dark, as well as ensuring our venues are safe and accessible for audiences and artists.	June 2026 to March 2027	£8,000
Theme 4: Unlock the unifying power of UNESCO			
Music as a key asset for the outward promotion of NI	Collate Belfast music-focused imagery and videos that can be utilised when promoting Belfast on a global platform, such as during UNESCO City of Music forums, as well as capturing significant moments in projects supported through the Music Matters	June 2025 to March 2027	£5,000

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	delivery and new opportunities, such as the launch event for an all-Ireland UNESCO network in September.		
Co-design with sectoral stakeholders a series of projects that will allow for the Priorities within Theme 4.	Partner with key stakeholders and groups to launch initiatives that address priorities across Theme 4, such as supporting the sector to develop assistive and interactive technologies to increase the accessibility of music for all, enhancing the visibility of Belfast globally as a key music destination and working with the film and design sector to weave music throughout the city across different outputs and artforms.	June 2026 to March 2027	£12,000