

## **ProConnect Business Grants Guidelines**

These guidelines relate to Creative England's Hertfordshire ProConnect programme, a dedicated programme of support for film-related businesses. We also welcome applications from companies that are not currently active in film but are either currently in the supply chain for film and television production or wish to expand their business model into this area and can demonstrate that they have the skills and capability to do so. Please read the guidelines carefully before submitting your application. This is a rolling fund so there is no current deadline for applications. If you are unsure about any aspect, please email [proconnectherts@creativeengland.co.uk](mailto:proconnectherts@creativeengland.co.uk)

### **About Creative England**

England's creatives, innovators and originators make this country's creative economy one of the strongest in the world. Our job at Creative England is to ensure the TV, film, games and creative digital industries thrive and continue to lead the way. We fund, connect, mentor, advocate and collaborate at all levels of the industry, from individuals and small independents to large internationals, creating the right conditions for more success. More than anything, we are united – a place for creatives, investors and experts to collect and forge ahead. Our Production Services team provides tailored support to filmmakers & TV production companies operating in England outside of London to shoot on location in the English regions. We can help to source studios, crew and locations as well as assist with the on-the-ground issues or organising permissions to film or close roads, etc. As part of its remit the Production Services team is committed to help grow the infrastructure for film and TV production in the regions to ensure that England remains a great place to produce world class content and support a multi-million-pound industry. For further details please visit [www.creativeengland.co.uk/film-and-tv](http://www.creativeengland.co.uk/film-and-tv).

### **About Hertfordshire ProConnect**

Hertfordshire ProConnect aims to grow the infrastructure of the film and TV production industries in Hertfordshire. It is a three year programme of activity which will provide a bespoke programme of workshops, one-to-one consultations and large networking events designed to help SMEs and sole traders working in or in the supply chain to film and TV to grow their businesses.

As part of this programme, we are offering small business grants to support business growth. But we do not supply production funding here. Please visit our website for more information on production funding.

The ProConnect Business Grants are designed to support and enable business growth so we will consider proposals that illustrate how the funding applied for fits within an overall business growth plan. Please note that Hertfordshire ProConnect is designed as a momentum fund to assist small businesses and start-ups that are able to demonstrate commercial viability or evidence strong market potential.

### **What does Hertfordshire ProConnect offer?**

Hertfordshire ProConnect offers a range of support for SMEs and sole traders based in and around Hertfordshire. We offer a series of workshops on a range of subjects to support growth from monetising IP, pitching to commissioners to understand international financing and managing a team. In addition we will be running larger scale networking events over the three year duration of the programme to enable delegates to network and make connections to help them on their path to business growth.

- Up to £5,000 of business planning support, this is non-recoupable and in the form of a grant

These grants are designed to subsidise much of the cost of procuring expert third party services in order to aid growth. We will ask grant applicants to identify the consultants they want to work with as part of the application process, and they will need to demonstrate that they have adhered to our Procurement Policy so that we can ensure EU procurement compliance. Creative England also has a database of consultants who have identified their particular areas of specialism so we can help applicants to find people to provide quotes if the applicant company is unable to find anybody suitable.

### **Who can apply?**

All applicants must meet the following essential requirements listed below.

If you have any concerns about your eligibility then please contact [proconnectherts@creativeengland.co.uk](mailto:proconnectherts@creativeengland.co.uk)

Essential Requirements: Regardless of the level of support or funding you apply for, the following are minimum requirements:

- Your business must be based in the Hertfordshire LEP area.
- The application submitted will in the majority of cases come from a limited company or LLP that is actively trading in England. Your company and/or its management must evidence a significant track record in film /TV or related or supply chain activity and demonstrate how any Creative England support might build on this.
- Your business proposal must include as a significant component one (or a combination of) the following: film or TV development or production or a clear indication of how your business works with the film and TV production industry as either ancillary or facility company or a supply chain company.
- You must demonstrate that you understand the basic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of your current business model.
- You will be required to articulate a clear vision and implementation plan for your proposed future business growth and/or sustainability.

Hertfordshire ProConnect cannot support

- Individuals who wish to apply outside of a company structure
- Companies based outside of the Hertfordshire LEP area
- Special Purpose Vehicle or subsidiary companies that have been established purely for individual projects or productions Local authorities or academic institutions
- Hertfordshire ProConnect is unlikely to support;
- Sole traders operating through a limited company, unless there is clear evidence that Hertfordshire ProConnect support will lead to an increase in staff numbers
- Businesses operating primarily in the exhibition sector
- Companies that have yet to demonstrate commercial value to their work e.g. those that are solely producing short films or self-financed features

Please note that some of the areas excluded by ProConnect may be eligible for support elsewhere within Creative England. For more information please visit [www.creativeengland.co.uk/film-and-tv](http://www.creativeengland.co.uk/film-and-tv).

### **The Application Process**

The Eligibility stage: Before submitting a full application we will ask you to complete an Eligibility questionnaire online. This will determine whether you are eligible for financial support under Hertfordshire ProConnect.

Full application stage: Once you have been selected as eligible for support, you will immediately be able to progress to the full application online form for ProConnect funding of a non-repayable grant of up to £5,000. The grants provide financial support to successful applicants to help them with their business growth. This may include acquiring specialist expertise, knowledge and contacts that will help your company reach the next stage of its development. We will require you to specify what the grant would be used for and to demonstrate how this will support your company's growth. We will also ask you to submit a proposed budget and workplan. Please note that the award cannot be used to pay staff, management, directors or shareholders of the company for their contributions to the business growth plan.

The plan should demonstrate how you will use Hertfordshire ProConnect funding to grow, develop and diversify your business in order to access new markets, or new routes to market and not simply to sustain existing activity.

As a guide, we would expect the plan to include:

- A brief history of the company
- CV's or bios of all directors and key personnel involved in implementing your (business proposal
- Details of previous achievements in financial and creative terms, including a (summary of the critical and commercial success of each project – please be as specific as possible and detail awards, festival selections, revenues, audience figures etc
- An evaluation of where the company is currently positioned within the industry and opportunities for future growth
- A detailed business proposal and implementation strategy showing how you will achieve that growth
- Any market analysis or research that supports your strategy
- Key milestones year by year, including start and completion dates for proposed areas of activity
- A detailed line-item budget including income and expenditure projections for the full period (minimum 3 years) covered by your business proposal, including all other sources of matchfunding whether external or from the applicant company itself

### **All Applications**

All applications should be made by the online form and submitted electronically. We regret that we cannot accept applications by disc, fax, email or by post except by prior arrangement. Following submission, you will receive an email confirming that we have received your application, together with a tracking number to be used in all correspondence. If you have not received such email confirmation by the end of the day following your submission, then please contact us at [proconnectherts@creativeengland.co.uk](mailto:proconnectherts@creativeengland.co.uk)

### **How much can I apply for?**

The maximum amount available for business planning support is £5,000. This will be subject to a preapproved budget and work-plan and not every business may need the maximum award. Your request for investment should reflect the nature of your proposed business activity and demonstrate

why Hertfordshire ProConnect support is important to your plans for growth. The level of funding will be commensurate with the market potential of your proposal and the likelihood that it will succeed. The impact that the level of investment will have on each individual company's potential for sustainability and growth will also be a key consideration.

### **How much match funding is required?**

Match funding is not required for the Hertfordshire ProConnect Business Grants.

### **Deadlines and Decision Timetable**

Business Grant Applications: This is a rolling fund so there is no current deadline for applications. We aim to process applications for business planning and give you our decision within 6 weeks. In the first instance, please ensure we are provided with:

- The completeness of the application and any requested supporting information
- A single point of contact at your end for any potential questions that may arise
- The amount of funding applied for
- The financial structure of your business

### **Assessment and Selection Criteria**

Eligible applications will be assessed by members of Creative England's Hertfordshire ProConnect executive team. We may also use external assessors and/or appropriately qualified independent professional advisors. We recognise that applications may contain commercially sensitive information and all proposals will be dealt with in the strictest confidence. It may be necessary to request a meeting with you or additional information in order to complete a proper assessment. We will inform you if this will have a material impact on our decision-making timescales. All businesses are unique and our assessment criteria may vary depending upon the specific nature of your proposal. As this is business planning support, we will typically consider the track record of your business and its management, the feasibility of your future growth plans, and the impact that our support might have on your company. We expect a very high demand for support and we have a finite amount of money to award. Even if your application meets all the above criteria, we may not necessarily be able to fund you. The decision of Creative England's Hertfordshire ProConnect investment panel is final. All successful and unsuccessful applications will be confirmed in writing as soon as possible after a funding decision has been made.

### **Awards and Conditions**

If your application is successful, you will be sent a formal offer letter that sets out the level of financial assistance agreed and the terms and conditions of our funding. This will form the basis of a funding agreement. All offers of funding will remain open for a specified amount of time. This will be determined by the scope and nature of any further materials we require for due diligence and contractual purposes. During this time a representative of Creative England's Hertfordshire ProConnect team will contact you to discuss and set the terms of your funding agreement with Creative England. After this time, the offer of funding will lapse unless extended at our sole discretion. It is a condition of any award that successful applicants co-operate with Creative England and the European Regional Development Fund in any PR and press activity relating to their funded activity.

Grants are generally paid 50% up front (on signature of contract) and 50% back end (on delivery of the business plan and evidence of expenditure to invoice level). Occasionally we'll vary this, if for example we feel that some further research needs to be undertaken before embarking on the business plan proper we might make the first tranche a smaller amount and further funding conditional on the results of the research.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

If your application is successful the Hertfordshire ProConnect team will liaise with you for the full duration of any activity that Creative England supports and agree with you in advance a reporting and evaluation schedule with appropriate KPI's. This will allow us to measure the effectiveness of our funding both for your business and in meeting our strategic aims.

### **Feedback**

While we aim to provide feedback on unsuccessful applications to Hertfordshire ProConnect, this may not always be possible due to the high volume of applications that we expect to receive. We welcome constructive feedback on our application and assessment processes.

### **Return of Materials**

All materials should be submitted electronically, please do not send us originals or hard copies unless specifically requested. Creative England will retain the application form for declined proposals for a period of two years after which it will be destroyed. Any information sent to us in addition to the application form and/or materials we have requested will be disregarded in the assessment of your application and will not be returned.

### **Resubmission**

We can only accept resubmissions if there have been significant and material changes to a previous proposal. Any proposed resubmission should be discussed in detail and in confidence with the Hertfordshire ProConnect team and invited by us in advance.

### **Speculative Submissions**

We regret that we are unable to consider proposals or read additional material that has not been formally submitted through the application process.

### **Solicitation**

In certain circumstances, we may solicit applications to Hertfordshire ProConnect directly. We will only solicit in accordance with the relevant terms of the National Lottery Act 1998. A solicitation does not guarantee funding and all solicited applications will be treated the same as any other application to Hertfordshire ProConnect in respect of assessment and decision making process.

### **Appeals and Complaints**

Creative England's decision in all matters concerning the assessment and selection of proposals is final. Inevitably, applicants may be turned down and may be disappointed as a result. Applicants who wish to make an appeal against a funding decision can only do so if they have good cause to

believe that the correct procedures, as published in these guidelines, have not been adhered to or applied in such a way as to prejudice the outcome of an application.

### **Freedom of Information**

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives members of the public the right to request information held by Creative England. This includes information held in relation to applications to Creative England's Lottery funding programmes. If you choose to apply to Creative England, you should be aware that the information you supply, either in whole or in part, may be disclosed under the Act.

### **Contact Details**

If you have any queries on the process, eligibility or the application process for ProConnect please email [proconnectherts@creativeengland.co.uk](mailto:proconnectherts@creativeengland.co.uk). Whilst the information and advice in these guidelines is believed to be accurate at the time of going to press, Creative England reserves the right to make changes at any time at its discretion. Neither Creative England nor any of its partners shall be responsible for any loss attributable to errors, omissions or other inaccuracies in the information contained in these guidelines.