XRtists - Frequently Asked Questions

QUESTION	ANSWER	THEME
1. Do consortium partners need to be HEIs (Higher Education Institutions)?	No, consortium partners do not need to be HEIs, they can be from the commercial or cultural sector. The consortium lead hub must be eligible for UKRI funding.	**Consortium partners/Eligibility**
2. Can an organisation be involved in the consortium if they are not a research body, and will they receive funding to cover R&D costs?	Yes, organisations that aren't research bodies can be involved as one of the consortium partners and can receive funds for their involvement in XRtists activities, including R&D if it contributes to the delivery of XRtists objectives, from the consortium hub lead organisation. To become a consortium partner, your organisation should look to approach eligible organisations in your networks who may be likely to make an application as the consortium lead. There is more on eligibility of organisations in the 'Who can apply' section of the Xrtists call page where it also gives specific advice for partners: *'Consortium partners from cultural organisations and the commercial sector that contribute to the delivery of Xrtists activities can receive funds from the consortium lead hub organisation to cover their involvement.*	**Consortium partners/Eligibility**

	You can only apply once to be a lead hub organisation but may be named as a partner on multiple applications.'	
3. As skills training is a key deliverable for this call, could any of the devolved funding be allocated to supporting bursaries to cover the loss of income that a person or company might experience by undertaking training?	Targeted bursaries may be considered in certain circumstances as part of a training offer when used to, for example, create opportunities or remove barriers for groups who are typically underrepresented in the kinds of training opportunities that XRtists represents. It is expected that these bursaries would come from the allocation for consortium support activities (maximum 40% – £2.4m). Peer reviewers will assess whether the proposed spend on bursaries is appropriate, and represents value for money, according to the individual application.	**Devolved funding (costings)**
4. If my university leads a consortium or is a member of it, can I participate as an individual practice-based researcher if I am not employed by the University?	Any partners who form part of the successful consortium will be ineligible to apply for devolved funding. However, if you are not employed by the University and not a partner on the consortium, you and/or your organisation would be eligible to apply for devolved funding.	**Devolved funding - eligibility**

5. Although consortium partners themselves are unable to access the devolved funds, would awardees of the devolved funding be able to then spend it on the services of any of the consortium partner institutions?	This may be possible, but we would not expect preferential treatment and we do expect the need to be justified as best use of funds and value to the programme on a case-by-case basis, in discussion with the successful consortium.	**Devolved funding – spend on consortium partner services**
6. Is there a limit to how many bids an IRO (Independent Research Organisation) could be included in?	There is no limit to the number of bids the IRO can be included in, however they can only apply once to be the host of the consortium (lead hub organisation). This is on the call page in 'Who can apply': 'You can only apply once to be a lead hub organisation but may be named as a partner on multiple other applications'.	**Eligibility (on multiple bids)**
7. Will there be any mechanisms or procedures which the consortium must implement regarding the devolved funding deployment, or will they be able to run the R&D calls independently?	The consortium will need to consider how the devolved funding will be allocated via an appropriate review and assessment process. These processes are to be proposed by the successful consortium in discussion with the funders but the allocation of the devolved funds must be fair and transparent and within the guidelines set out by the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) principles of assessment and decision making. There are 3 levels of devolved awards – Entry level are small scale awards and could potentially be determined by the consortium members themselves. It may be appropriate for the prototyping and follow-on-funding awards to have some external review where the funders or expert advisors not involved in the consortium can advise.	**Devolved funding (procedures)**

	In line with the programme objectives, EDI will need to be considered in the design of the funding mechanisms and decision-making processes.	
8. Are there any expectations around the relative balance of the role of the hub in relation to the other organisations in the consortium?	Arrangements are to be worked out within each consortium at the point of application, according to what each consortium partner, including the lead hub, can offer to support delivery of the objectives of the programme. These roles should be appropriate to ensure the effective delivery of the programme objectives.	**Lead hub (Relationship with consortium)**
9. Is there an expectation that all parts of the UK will benefit equally from XRtists investment and activity?	It is not expected that all parts of the UK will benefit from the XRtists programme equally. However, the opportunities should be equally available to creative organisations and practitioners wherever they are in the UK. The required make-up of the consortium reflects the expectation that delivery of XRtists will spread awards and benefits across all four UK nations. There are some requirements for how the devolved funding can be distributed across the four nations, which will be discussed with the successful consortium.	**Regional activity**
10. What is in and out of scope both for consortia support and for devolved funding, for example: Heritage, Music, Stage, Screen media, Games and Animation etc.?	All aspects of the creative and cultural sector are within scope for both consortia support and devolved funding. However, we wouldn't expect the commercial games sector, for example, to be a primary beneficiary of this scheme, which is aimed more at the not-for-profit arts and culture sector.	**Scope of subject areas**

11. Are there any favoured formats for outputs to be supported by consortia and devolved funding, for example: VR headsets, installations, particular technologies?	There are no favoured output formats. Outputs should be relevant to the call objectives and the creative ambitions of the applicants and there is flexibility for the consortium to respond to this. We expect to see a range of different types of technological expertise, within the consortium.	**Outputs (formats)**
12. Is there a preference for the Annual Showcase to be digital or in person?	The expectation would be for an in-person event with a hybrid option, to fully support both inclusivity and engagement.	**Annual showcase**
13. Could the showcase be linked to a technology festival context or arts context?	The annual showcase could, potentially, form part of another established event if a strong enough case could be made for how this would help meet the showcase objectives and if it was clearly branded as the XRtists showcase. In addition to the annual showcase, the consortium members or award beneficiaries would also be encouraged to participate in relevant established events or conferences to support the presentation and distribution of new immersive innovations enabled by the XRtists programme.	**Showcasing**
14. For previous AHRC calls (Creative Clusters, CoStar etc.) applicants have sought letters of support from national arts/creative funding bodies. Is that feasible for this programme?	To avoid a possible conflict of interest, letters of support should not be sought from the national arts/creative funding bodies who fund this program (Arts Council England, Arts Council of Wales, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Creative Scotland and AHRC). Letters (or emails) of support from every consortium partner and all named partners listed in the application are however required, showing their contribution. These are to be submitted within one document in the application. See 'How to apply' section of call page.	**Applications (project partners letters of support)**
15. What's your sense of the balance between the objective to be genuinely inclusive and the	The successful consortium will be required to build a genuinely inclusive funding programme. Applicants must ensure that	**EDI**

need to deliver the volume of outputs that you've indicated?	proactive EDI measures are built into the structure of the consortium and its activities at a fundamental level. The volume of outputs in the call documentation are indicative and bidders are at liberty to propose alternative figures if they feel they are justified to deliver the programme effectively.	
16. Does the support programme provide opportunities for individual artists?	Yes. The XRtists programme will develop a pipeline of funding opportunities to support both organisations and individuals at different scales and levels of experience	**Devolved funding (individuals)**
17. Do the devolved funding awards need to be sequential (e.g. do prototype awards need to be applied for following entry-level awards etc.)	No, the programme will support development at different level of experience, but applicants will not be required to have received entry-level funding in order to be eligible for Prototype funding. However, Follow-on funding will only be available for previous XRtists awardees.	**Devolved funding**
18. Is there a maximum number of partners within a consortium?	There is no maximum number of partners, either UK-wide or in a particular nation. Consortia will need to consider how partners will realistically be managed, as well as what resources and expertise each partner can offer. Letters of support for each consortium partner will need to be included, formatted into a single document and attached to the application.	**Consortium partners**
19. Is the entry level aimed at the tech or creative sector?	The XRtists programme is primarily designed to support the creative and cultural sectors. Eligibility for devolved funding should reflect the aims and objectives of the XRtists programme. However, the design of entry level activities could include opportunities for arts and cultural organisations to form collaborations with tech sector partners.	**Devolved funding (entry level awards)**
20. How would this programme be distinguished from CreativeXR and Creative Industries Clusters?	The XRtists programme builds on the successes and lessons learned by the funding partners from programmes such as the Creative Industries Clusters and CreativeXR. XRtists has an entry-level focus that was not the case with CreativeXR and aims to support creative experimentation and	**Relation of XRtists to other programmes**

	the development of technological skills and knowledge from entry-level up. There is also an aim to support ecology building beyond and across regional borders	
21. Where is the art in the thinking behind this programme?	The XRtists programme is aimed at creative research and development within the arts and culture sector and the outputs of the funded activity will reflect the creative vision and aspirations of the participants.	**Remit of XRtists programme (Arts aspect)**
22. If Partners already have Arts Council funding can this be included as match funding.	No. Funding received from previous Arts Council awards cannot be used as match funding.	**Partners (match funding)**
23. Are other emerging tech in scope, including, for example, AI?	XRtists is primarily focussed on immersive experiences but the funders are keen to encourage the consortium to support experimentation with other emerging technologies that have creative applications, in so far as the consortium might have access to the appropriate expertise.	**XRtists programme (scope)**
24. Are training and skills paid at 100 % or 80%?	If delivered by a university, as part of consortium, training would usually be paid at 80% fEC.	**Training and Skills (costs)**
25. Can I apply as lead applicant, but specify the lead HUB as a different partner?	No. The lead applicant should be based at the lead Hub organisation.	**Lead hub in consortium**
26. Is there a way to register interest in becoming a partner to consortia?	A survey was created to help applicants share details for the purpose of building a consortium building, however, the survey is now closed.	**Consortium building**
27. Is prior experience of running funding programmes required?	Within each consortium there should be appropriate prior experience of running funding calls, or similar programmes. This should be reflected in your application and will be part of the management capability that will be assessed during peer review.	**Consortium (funding programmes prior experience)**
28. Will the XRtists programme have any direct links with previous AHRC-funded programme (Costar, Creative Industries Clusters etc.)?	The XRtists programme does not have any direct links with any previous AHRC-funded programmes. Recipients of AHRC grants associated with such programmes would be eligible to apply to be part of XRtists, as appropriate.	**XRtists programme (relation to other programmes)**

29. Is there a second stage to the application review process?	Following the peer reviews of all applications, a moderating panel will assess the applications based on the reviews and invite the highest scoring applicants to interview. Interviews are scheduled to take place during November	**Application process (review stages)**
30. What does success look like at the end of the programme.	We would like the applicants to propose this as part of their application. At a headline level, success will be measured by how well the consortium meets the objectives of the call.	**XRtists programme**
31. Do partners need to be from the UK?	Yes, consortium partners need to be UK based for this opportunity. International contributors could be brought into the programme delivery to contribute to objectives (e.g. as mentors, or to contribute to knowledge exchange around areas like international financing or co-production).	**Consortium partners**
32. Should the PI have more expertise in XR or arts and culture?	The consortium is expected to offer a wide variety of expertise in both XR and arts and culture. A project lead with either an Arts or XR background would be eligible for the role.	**Consortium lead**
33. Call criteria sets out a requirement to include Workshops, mentors and funding for production - is this cost part of the devolved funding budget or costed in from the remaining 40% of budget?	Assuming you mean the production of creative outputs, this would be taken from the devolved funding budget. It is expected that consortium funds (the remaining 40%) would cover workshops and mentors as part of their training package delivered by the programme.	**Devolved funding**
34. Do English partners need to cover 2 regions in England? (Or only if 1 is in London)?	The consortium must contain partners in two regions of England.	**Consortium partners**
35. Who owns the IP on the creative outputs from the devolved funding strands?	The expectation is that IP resides with the devolved funding applicant/creators. Advice on rights/IP is a topic that should be considered within the training offer for XRtists, delivered by the consortium, particularly for those who may be creating IP in the XR field for the first time.	**Creative IP**
36. Is there potential to use devolved funding for 'community building' and other interventions?	The devolved funding (minimum 60%) is to be used for funding creative projects at the Entry-level; Prototype and Follow-on funding levels as described on the call page. It's expected that workstreams outside of this, including community building would be funded through the remaining funds (maximum 40%).	**Devolved funding (use of funds for other interventions)**

37. What is the rationale for supporting 225 projects? Is it the consideration of impact and legacy of the programme to go for a large number of smaller awards rather than a smaller no of larger awards?	The rationale is to support broadly across the UK and to provide awards at entry level, for those with little or no immersive experience. The figures on the call page are indicative and each consortium application can include a rationale to amend their totals.	**Devolved funding (rationale)**
38. Is any research to come from the devolved funding?	Devolved funds would be expected to cover production time and costs. The entry-level and prototyping awards are both inherently R&D focused, in that they set out to fund small-scale research and development and prototyping activities respectively. See the what we're looking for section on the call page for more details for more details of what's expected from the devolved funding.	**Research costs**
39. In the call doc, it states 4000 words for the application, however in the application form it says 2000 words. Can you confirm, please?	The correct word count for this section is 4,000. This question refers to an error on the call page which should now have been corrected. If you're still having difficulty, please contact heh@ahrc.ukri.org	**Application process**
40. Our organisation is better suited to devolved funding. How will we find out about these and when will applications be open?	The successful consortium is scheduled to start from the 1st February 2024. After an initial set-up period, the consortium will advertise their open devolved funding opportunity later in 2024. The successful consortium award will be announced via the AHRC website.	**Devolved funding (applications)**
41. We are part of a university who are developing immersive tech. Do we need 5 organisations in our consortium?	Yes, at least 5 organisations are required to make up an eligible consortium, including the lead hub organisation who must be eligible to receive UKRI funding. Please refer to the eligibility criteria provided in the call page.	**Eligibility of consortium**
42. Our intention is to apply to one of the stages for an innovative tech project. What should we do next - should we be a partner?	You are welcome to be a partner in the consortium but doing so will make your organisation ineligible for devolved funding. More details of devolved funding opportunities will be released in 2024.	**Consortium partners**

	The final decision on the successful consortium should be available on our AHRC website towards the end of 2023.	
43. UK partners cannot be from the same region. What is the definition of region and the rationale behind this decision?	Examples of regions within England are given in the call page and refer to the five ACE area boundaries: also available on the Arts Council England website. More widely, the rationale is to allow partners to help with the delivery of the programme objectives, ensuring a spread across the UK.	**Regional allocation**
44. The call spec states that the programme needs to include entry level training. Should this apply to the prototype and follow-on awards?	The Consortium should look to support all levels of the award, including through a package of training. We expect organisations would have different training needs at different stages of experience and funding. Training and learning are likely to be to be very important at the entry level.	**Devolved funding (award levels)**
45. The research aims seem to be very market driven. Would there be scope for more psychologically driven research?	The consortium should focus on undertaking research and mapping which will support the adoption and implementation of creative immersive technologies within the arts and culture sector across the UK.	**Research (scope)**
46. If the BBC R&D are a partner, are they an IRO and would they be considered to be in London or the Manchester region?	The BBC are not an eligible IRO but could be a consortium partner. Their region would depend on where their activity for the purposes of the consortium is most centred. Alternatively, as a nationwide organisation, the BBC could be included in addition to the regional partners that make up consortium.	**Consortium partners (eligibility)**
47. The webinar presentation centred on grassroots support but could support also be aimed at a medium or large organisation?	There is a focus on supporting smaller organisations, but the point is to encourage people and organisations with limited experience of Immersive content. A medium or large organisation with limited prior experience of XR production would also be eligible for devolved funding at entry level, for example.	**Devolved funding (eligibility)**
How do the funders contribute to the programme; how hands on will they be?	There will be a Funders forum who will be in regular contact with the consortium, providing funds and the support and	**Role of Funders (post award)**

	holding meetings, to discuss matters pertaining to the governance and the delivery of the grant with the consortium. Funders could also potentially support on the peer review process for some of the devolved funding. In general, it will have an arm's-length and supportive role, advocating for and championing the programme. The funders also have a presence in each of the four nations and so will be able to provide some region-specific guidance.	
To make the prototypes, there would need to be studio time. What is the break-down of support from the consortium; can we expect the consortium to provide facilities for prototype development?	To support prototype development the consortium should provide access to mentors, workshops and facilities in addition to funding for production. The specifics of this support should be determined by the consortium and will be assessed by peer review.	**Devolved funding/Consortium support (prototype development)**
Are FE colleges eligible as partners?	Yes, they could be a consortium partner if they are able to offer the expertise required within the consortium.	**Consortium partners (eligibility)**