



An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir,
Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán
Department of Tourism, Culture,
Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media



Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council

PUBLIC ART COMMISSION

Information Brief

Title: Public Art Commission: Esker Arts in collaboration with Lough Boora Sculpture Park

Commissioner: Offaly County Council

Location: Esker Arts | Lough Boora Sculpture Park

Timescale: One Year

Deadline for Stage 1 Submission: 03.01.25

Budget: 20,000 euro (EX VAT)

Context

Offaly County Council is inviting proposals for a public art commission for **Esker Arts, Tullamore**, working in collaboration with Lough Boora Sculpture Park Co. Offaly.

The commission seeks professional artist (s) / arts teams, to consider both sites and to develop a proposal that will have an iteration, whatever form that takes, in Esker Arts, and potentially Lough Boora Sculpture Park – the work will form part of the collection for Esker Arts. **(Please note: the commission is not looking to site a permanent sculptural work within the Lough Boora Sculpture Park.)**

Funding

Offaly County Council is the commissioner. The project will be managed by the Arts Office of Offaly County Council.

The Per Cent for Art Scheme is made available through **capital funding for Esker Arts**, by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

Commission Approach

Offaly County Council seeks proposals that will demonstrate how artist(s) will work collaboratively with communities of both Esker Arts and Lough Boora Sculpture Park. Offaly County Council is looking for an imaginative project that demonstrates an innovative approach, enabling creative dialogue between stakeholders and communities, while representing best practice within the realm of public art practice.

Proposals will be accepted from all art disciplines and practices including; visual arts, dance, film, literature, music, theatre, digital arts, performance, live art, multimedia, video art, sound art, socially-engaged practice, participatory, research-based. Engagement with stakeholders and community is a prerequisite and every effort should be made to involve communities as some aspect of the proposal.

The commissioner seeks a creative dialogue between an artist (of any discipline) and Lough Boora Sculpture Park and Esker Arts and identified communities. This will lead to an artistic work/outcome in any form or discipline, that takes account of both contexts. The artwork, for example, might be influenced, researched, produced with two iterations at both sites, or it might take the sites/contexts, of Lough Boora as the generator of an idea that is manifest/ created for/installed/or performed at, etc., Esker Arts.

The creative dialogue with identified communities and Esker and Lough Boora could lead to works that are either temporary, ephemeral or permanent, for example this could manifest as a small sculptural work, a two-dimensional wall work for Esker in any medium, a song or series of songs, a poem or poems, a performance work – theatre/dance, etc. a short film. **The work will form part of the collection for Esker Arts.**

Budget

The total budget is **20,000** euro, **Ex VAT**, inclusive of all costs, expenses, insurance and other charges or contingencies.

Artists should outline their own fees in the budget (see submitting your proposal), please see the Arts Council's Pay the Artist Policy <http://www.artscouncil.ie/about/artists-pay-policy/>

Eligibility

The following eligibility criteria will apply:

- Professional practicing artists* (s)
- Artists working in all art forms welcome to apply
- Artists at all stages of their career
- Incomplete submission **will not be eligible**

*A Professional Artist can be defined as someone for whom their art form is their whole-time occupation **or** who holds a third level qualification in their field of practice **or** has been paid and advertised as a solo or leading performer/exhibitor in a state funded institution **or** has been published or produced by a recognised publisher or theatre/film company or venue **or** is recognised as a professional by his/her peers and received recognition in the form of commendations, rewards, awards, grants, appointments to panels, etc.

Sustainability

Applicants are encouraged to consider sustainability in their proposals. See Visual Artists Ireland for guidance on this. 'Sustainable art is a vital practice for addressing environmental concerns through creative expression. This brief guide explores various approaches, materials, and strategies for incorporating sustainability into artistic practices, providing clear action points for artists committed to reducing their ecological footprint.' [Sustainable Art Practices: Some Thoughts for Visual Artists](#)

Commissioning Process

This is a two-stage competition process.

Stage 1 – From an open call selected artists will be short-listed and invited to make a more detailed proposal.

Stage 2 – Comprises of a limited competition with artists directly invited to make submissions from stage 1. Artists invited to stage 2 of the process will be paid a fee of 500 euro to develop the proposal.

Stage 1

Applicants are invited to submit:

- A current **CV**
- **Statement of Interest** to include an outline concept of the project and the approach to commission, i.e. what is the project idea, how you intend to engage with communities, how you will engage with Esker Arts and Lough Boora Sculpture Park and your intention with regards the final iteration of the commission (500 words max)

- Relevant examples of recent work (up to 3 examples) – examples should be included within one PDF document and not provided as weblinks etc.

Short listed applicants from Stage 1 will be invited to submit a more detailed proposal¹.

Stage 2

Stage 2 of the process will comprise of a limited competition with artists directly invited from stage 1, to make submissions. Shortlisted applicants will be required to provide a more detailed proposal including:

1. A more detailed concept proposal outlining your ideas (this to include further details of planned engagement with the community, and locations of the commissions and how this application relates to your practice (up to 1500 words)
2. Relevant examples of recent work that support your concept proposal (up to 3 examples) should be included within one PDF document and not provided as weblinks etc.
3. A full budget with headings such as:
 - Artist's fee (daily rates)
 - Any resources needed e.g.
 - i. rental of venues, equipment etc.
 - ii. supply of materials,
 - iii. other professional fees, licences, etc.
 - Any transport/ travel/ accommodation costs
4. Timescale - give a detailed outline of the timescale for the project including projected numbers of days worked for: research, community contact, plus a preliminary schedule and expected delivery dates.

The tender contract will be based upon delivery of the commission within a maximum period of eight months from signing the contract.
5. Name two referees

¹ As applications will be short listed on the basis of information supplied, applicants should ensure that information given is sufficiently comprehensive. Details of all relevant information relating to experience, qualifications, response to the brief etc. must be supplied. Failure to include this information may result in applications not being shortlisted.

Assessment and criteria

Proposals will be assessed by a selection panel appointed by Offaly County Council, the members of which will have appropriate expertise in Public Art Commissioning including representatives from Offaly County Council, community representation and external expertise.

A selection panel will assess proposals using the following criteria. **(1000 Marks)**

- **Quality and Originality of the idea** - Artistic excellence, innovation and uniqueness of proposal presented both on a stand-alone basis and with reference to other competing applicants and in relation to the brief.
300 marks
- **Concept and relevance** - Appropriateness to social and cultural context of the receiving community and locality, and quality of the proposed approach to community engagement and involvement.
300 marks
- **Track Record and Feasibility** – Ability to deliver the project and realise a quality outcome with regards management of time/budget/community engagement. This includes the track record of the artist and demonstrated capacity to manage, and deliver the project as outlined and within budget and demonstrate value for money.
250 marks
- **Impact** – The potential impact on the community engaged, and how the Project can raise the cultural profile of Tullamore and Offaly.
150 marks

Offaly County Council reserve the right not to proceed with any proposal under this invitation and consider other appropriate courses of action.

Guidelines for Applicants

Prior to the signing of the Contract for Services, the Artist will be required to furnish Offaly County Council with a:

- Tax Clearance Certificate
- Public Liability Insurance Certificate (see Appendix 1)
- A Health and Safety Statement
- Child Protection Statement (if project requires same)
- Supplier Set up form for Account System

The successful submission will be subject to Health & Safety checks, which will be carried out by specialised staff of Offaly County Council prior to contracts being signed and throughout the commission.

Child Protection

In line with [Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children \(2017\)](#), Offaly County Council is required to ensure that contracts issued to anyone whose work brings them in contact with children are meeting their obligations under the [Children First Act 2015](#).

Any contract issued will be made in adherence to Offaly County Council Child Protection Policy, Offaly County Council Arts Service Child Safety Statement, and Offaly County Council’s Health & Safety Policy

Competition Timeline

Schedule below may change due to unforeseen circumstances:

Advertisement of Commission	w.c. 18.12.24
Deadline for receipt of Stage 1 submission	03.01.25
Notification of Shortlisting Decisions	w.c. 13.01.25
Deadline for receipt of Stage 2 submissions	12.02.25
Announcement of Stage 2 decisions	w.c. 17.02.25
Contract Signing	w.c. 24.02.25
Commission Completed	END OCT 2025

Submitting your Proposal

Submissions should be sent via email and in one PDF attachment.

Hardcopy submissions will not be accepted.

Please note that due to Offaly County Council’s firewall security, emails over the size of 5mb will not be received. It is recommended that you compile your documents into one pdf document under the size of 5mb.

Offaly County Council’s short listing and commissioning decisions at Stages 1 & 2 will be final. Canvassing will disqualify an applicant.

The deadline for receipt of Stage 1 submissions is 03.01.25

Submission for Stage 1

Applicants are invited to submit:

- A current **CV**
- **Statement of Interest** to include an outline concept of the project and the approach to commission, i.e. what is the project idea, how you intend to engage with communities, how you will engage with Esker Arts and Lough Boora Sculpture Park and your intension with regards the final iteration of the commission (500 words max)
- Relevant examples of recent work (up to 3 examples) – examples should be included within one PDF document and not provided as weblinks etc.

Short listed applicants from Stage 1 will be invited to submit a more detailed proposal².

Please Note: Tenders received after the date outlined above will not be accepted under any circumstances.

Submissions to be sent via email to arts@offalycoco.ie – Please ensure to use the title **Public Art Commission Esker Arts** in the subject line of the email. The Arts Office will acknowledge receipt of your submission – if you do not receive an email acknowledgement please contact the arts office on email below.

For further enquires please contact 057 9357400 or arts@offalycoco.ie

² As applications will be short listed on the basis of information supplied, applicants should ensure that information given is sufficiently comprehensive. Details of all relevant information relating to experience, qualifications, response to the brief etc. must be supplied. Failure to include this information may result in applications not being shortlisted.

APPENDIX 1

Liability and Insurance

- The Artist will be responsible for any hazard or liability within their control while the work or its components are at the artist's house or studio, or any place where the work or its components may be kept or during transportation, prior to or during the project.
- The Artist should hold adequate Public Liability insurance cover for the process of the project, and will provide the Commissioner with evidence of adequate public liability insurance prior to carrying out any project in a public place or accessible to the public or on any property owned by Offaly County Council, Bord na Mona (regarding Lough Boora Sculpture Park) and Esker Arts including any community engagement activities or installation of any artwork/performance etc.
- The Artist shall keep Offaly County Council, Bord na Mona (Lough Boora Sculpture Park) and Esker Arts fully indemnified from and against all actions, proceedings, claims, demands, losses, costs, expenses damages and liability arising directly or indirectly as a result of activities, of the Artist, their subcontractors, agents or employees in the performance of the commission.
- The Artist is required to have in place the following insurances in relation to all works and activities in connection with the Commission to include all activities in any location in connection with the production, creation, installation and launch of the Artwork:
 - Public Liability Insurance cover of €6.5million with an indemnity to principal extension.
 - Employers Liability cover of €13 million with an indemnity to principal extension (where employees are engaged by the Artist in connection with the Commission).
- The Artist or their associates will insure any materials used by the Artist or their associates in connection with the Commission.
- Whenever required to do so by the Council, the Artist will produce to the Council the said policy or policies together with satisfactory evidence that the same is/are valid and subsisting and that all premiums due thereon have been paid.
- The Artist will work in accordance with Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and associated Regulations. The Artist will be required to complete and implement a Health and Safety Statement and Risk Assessment.

Freedom of Information

Offaly County Council is a Freedom of Information (FOI) body. When submitting information, Artists should indicate what parts of their submission are commercially sensitive and what parts they consider should be kept confidential should the Council receive an FOI request relating to the submission.

Offaly County Council undertakes to use its best endeavours to hold confidential any information provided by you in this submission subject to the Council's obligations under law including the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003. Should you wish that any of the information supplied by you in this submission should not be disclosed because of its sensitivity, you should, when providing the information, identify same and specify reasons for its sensitivity. Offaly County Council will consult with you about this sensitive information before making any decision on any Freedom of Information request received. In the event that Offaly County Council decided to release particular information provided by you, you will have the option of appealing the Council's decision to the Information Commissioner. Please note that in the event that no information is identified by you as sensitive, with supporting reasons, then it is likely to be released in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Acts.

APPENDIX 2

CONTEXT

Tullamore

Tullamore is the vibrant county town of County Offaly, with a population recorded in the 2016 census of 14,607. Tullamore is part of the linked Gateway Initiative under the National Spatial Strategy. The other linked Gateway towns, Mullingar and Athlone. The census shows that the community of Tullamore are young, vibrant and diverse. The town has a busy shopping centre, library, sporting facilities offering tourist attractions such as the Tullamore River, Offaly Grand Canal, Tullamore Dew, Charleville Castle, Lloyd Town Park and is within close proximity to Lough Boora Sculpture Park.

Esker Arts

Esker Arts provide a focal point of engagement for the arts, culture, education and creativity within the community. The art centre provides the opportunity to present theatre, music, cinema, visual arts, art and creative workshops, across the whole spectrum of artistic disciplines, as well as providing a vital resource, alongside other arts infrastructure in the county, for the promotion and development of the national profile of County Offaly as a location of culture and creativity.

The aim of Esker Arts is to support programming that is consistent, accessible, inclusive, stimulating, and of a high standard. The centre works in collaboration with other cultural infrastructure within the county, particularly Birr Theatre and Arts Centre, to develop initiatives, share resources, increase audiences and participation and raise the profile of Offaly nationally'. It is intended that this ambition will be realised through an alignment with the recently published Arts Infrastructure Strategy and the new Offaly County Council's Arts Strategy 2024-2028.

https://www.offaly.ie/app/uploads/Council/Council_Services_A-Z/Arts_Culture/Documents/61435-Offaly-CoCo-Art-Strategy-2024-2028-ENGLISH-SMALL.pdf

Lough Boora Sculpture Park

Where art meets nature – Lough Boora is home to some of the most innovative land and environmental sculptures in Ireland. The artists, inspired by the rich natural and industrial legacy of the bog lands, created a series of large-scale sculptures that are now part of the park's permanent collection. The Sculpture Park came into being through an international sculpture symposium in 2002. The symposium was the inspiration of sculptor/curator Kevin O'Dwyer who worked in collaboration with Bord na Móna and the Lough Boora Parklands Group to direct and project manage

the initial project, with funding for the commissions provided by the Arts Council of Ireland and Offaly County Council. The Sculpture Park has also hosted several initiatives and commissions, funded by the Arts Council and Offaly County Council, including education programmes such as an annual Hedge School and more recently commissions, such as the *Deep Mapping* commission, 'In The Open', and *Art in the Landscape*, a three year programme funded by the Arts Council under the Invitation to Collaboration Scheme, culminating in *Art in the Landscape: Festival of Change, 2024*. The Sculpture Park has also been regularly supported by Creative Ireland.

https://www.offaly.ie/app/uploads/Council/Council_Services_A-Z/Arts_Culture/Documents/Art-in-the-Landscape-A5-Eng-web.pdf

Offaly Arts Infrastructure Strategy

The Arts Office of Offaly County Council has, within its remit, the role of supporting and developing a number of Arts Infrastructural organisations within the County, to *support the development of concepts and models for spaces, existing and potential that align with innovative art production and presentation, with local enterprise and civic engagement*. The Offaly Arts Infrastructure Strategy for the County was developed to encourage a collaborative, cohesive, complimentary and self-sustaining network, between Offaly County Council supported venues. See for more information:

https://www.offaly.ie/app/uploads/Council/Council_Services_A-Z/Arts_Culture/Documents/Final_OCC-Arts-Infrastructure-Strategy-03AQ.pdf