



ÚDARÁS
CRAOLACHÁIN
NA hÉIREANN

BROADCASTING
AUTHORITY
OF IRELAND

Guide S&V4 COVID-19

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1. Introduction

Sound and Vision 4 (“the Scheme”) is a funding scheme for television and radio programmes and developing broadcasting, established under the provisions of the Broadcasting Act 2009 (“the Act”). There are six stated objectives set down in the Act, one of which is to develop local and community broadcasting. Among other things section 154(1)(c) of the Act provides for the funding of new programmes which raise awareness and understanding of global issues impacting on the State and countries other than the State and such ancillary measures as are necessary to support that objective.

In response to a request from the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment and to further the achievement of these objectives, cognisant of the National and Worldwide Health Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the BAI is implementing a new initiative for listeners to independent commercial radio stations throughout Ireland to support the raising of their awareness and understanding of this national and worldwide rapidly evolving health crisis. In this regard, independent commercial radio stations are an essential component of the media landscape in Ireland and enjoy great popularity and strong listenership. More than half, 55% tune into their local or regional station and 43% listen to a national station.¹ The broadcast content produced by these stations is unique in bringing local and other perspectives to a global issue.

In line with the statutory requirements, which are embedded in the Authority’s Strategy Statement, the objective of this funding initiative is to serve a public need for listeners to independent commercial radio, to acknowledge and support the important role that local, regional radio and other national stations have and expertly fulfil in being a source of trusted information for their listeners and particularly, in these uncertain times.

2. Aims and Objectives of the COVID-19 Funding Initiative

The aims of the funding initiative are to:

- **Enhance Social Awareness and Understanding of the COVID-19 Crisis:** Offer independent commercial radio stations the opportunity to provide programming that will enhance their listeners awareness and understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic as the situation develops and evolves.
- **Capacity Building:** Offer support to the independent radio sector in these challenging times to ensure that they have the capacity to inform and educate their audiences about this national and worldwide health emergency. This will support the stations in sustaining their services and in continuing to implement a responsive approach and impart information that helps local, regional and other national audiences to understand the risks, safety measures and provides topical information particular to their franchise area.

3. Eligibility / Who can apply for funding?

The COVID-19 funding initiative is open to BAI licensed commercial sound broadcasting services only. In this regard, the initiative offers grant funding to commercial sound broadcasting services licensed by the BAI and which:

- Demonstrate effective Financial Management, including up-to-date Management Accounts;
- Publish compliant annual accounts, including signed audited accounts; and,
- Have a good compliance track record with the BAI.

¹ JNLR/ Ipsos MRBI Report January – December 2019.

4. Funding Available

There is a total funding of €2.5m being made available this year and the closing date for applications is **Wednesday, 29th April 2020**.

Further to the Minister's request, and in line with the aims of this funding initiative, the Authority has agreed that the award amounts will be made having regard to the sound broadcasting service type. A higher level of funding is being awarded to sound broadcasting services that are tasked and committed to providing more speech and information programme content than to sound broadcasting services that are primarily music-driven. In this context, the maximum funding award amounts are set out in the table below.

Sound Broadcasting Content	Maximum € Award
Speech & Information Local	€95,000
Speech & Information National	€85,000
Local, Regional & National Music-Driven	€70,000
Niche Music-Driven	€45,000

The BAI reserves the right to offer a lower amount of funding to an applicant than is requested. Where this occurs, the BAI will offer feedback and rationale for this decision.

5. What can the COVID-19 Funding Initiative fund?

The ultimate aim of this funding initiative is to enhance listeners awareness and understanding of the COVID-19 crisis as it develops and evolves. In this regard, funding is available to support independent commercial radio activities that positively impact on this public awareness and understanding and in particular, at local and regional levels.

Funding is available for costs directly related to the achievement of enhanced awareness and understanding of this worldwide health emergency, including costs that support the achievement of these outcomes. The types of costs covered are:

- Staff & Salary costs for workers assigned to the delivery of the projects / activities (excluding any funding received from other sources that cover staff and salary costs).
- Associated administrative costs (excluding any funding received from other sources that cover administration & overhead costs).
- Associated utilities / running costs (excluding any funding received from other sources that cover administration & overhead costs).
- Project delivery costs.
- Relevant studio space costs.
- Station communications and promotions for awareness of station's activities relating to the funded project and/or activities.
- Training and development and mentoring costs.
- Programme production costs, including any required measures that must be applied in response to National Emergency obligations.
- Travel and expenses for participants involved in the project/s.

The funding initiative will not cover the following costs:

Capital or Office Equipment Costs, Sponsorship/Fundraising Events, Debt and debt service charges, Interest owed, Bad debts, Work that has already taken place, Projects / activities / positions that are already receiving ongoing public funding from the Irish Government, or any other public source or the EU, charges / costs for any other projects funded by commercial or public (government & EU) sources, statutory fines, Licence fees / copyright, Shareholder costs / loans and any such types of costs.

The independent commercial broadcasters can add to the diversity of existing programming within their respective franchise areas and assist in promoting and enhancing awareness and understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic by its listeners. Activities could include research, programme planning and development, production, presentation, broadcasting, public service awareness announcements and the training and development of programming staff to perform such activities including a focus on journalism skills. The Act excludes the funding of the station's standard news and current affairs content. It is important that the funding is used for content particular to the COVID-19 pandemic funded further to the S&V4 COVID-19 initiative and is identified as such. Grantees will have to provide measurements on the impact on the public awareness and understanding outcomes for their respective target audiences.

6. The Application Process

An application submitted for the award of funding under this funding initiative must comply with all of the requirements set out in this Guide.

- **Application Form:** The BAI publishes a tailored application form and potential applicants to the COVID-19 Funding Initiative should complete the form:

Application Form: S&V4 COVID-19 (attached at Appendix 2)

The Application Form requires certain information under a range of headings to enable the BAI to assess the application. Please ensure all relevant sections are complete.

- **Application Checklist:** In order to be in a position to make an application for funding, you should be able to answer 'Yes' to the following 6 questions:

1	I am applying on behalf of a broadcasting service or broadcasting services that holds / hold a commercial sound broadcasting contract/s with the BAI to provide a commercial sound broadcasting service/s	Y/N
2	I have read the S&V 4 Scheme and the current Guide for Applicants: S&V4 COVID-19 Funding Initiative	Y/N
3	I will complete the application form template and save it as one MSWORD/PDF (less than 8MB) prior to emailing it to sv4@bai.ie Any material considered confidential is saved in an appendix and the rationale for seeking confidentiality is clearly set out and emailed in a separate document to sv4@bai.ie	Y/N
4	I have completed all mandatory fields on the application form	Y/N
5	The information provided in the completed form has been verified as true and correct by an authorised signatory from the station and/or authorised representative of the holding company	Y/N
6	I have prepared all of the required supporting documentation (Staff list; Annual Audited Accounts or equivalent; Management accounts or equivalent; if training & development, an outline plan and expected outcomes)	Y/N

- **Applying:** The BAI will only accept one application form per station to the COVID-19 Funding Initiative. Joint applications are permissible from stations that are part of the same group.

Applications should be submitted to the BAI by email to sv4@bai.ie

- **Verification of Information:** All information submitted as part of an application for funding must be true and correct. You are required to include with your application a declaration by a suitable authorised person that the information contained in the application and in the additional documentation accompanying the application is true and correct to the best of that person's knowledge and belief. Should any amendments need to be made by the applicant to the Application or its accompanying documents, the BAI should be informed immediately.
- **Confidential Information:** Information which an applicant considers to be confidential should be presented in an annex to the application which is clearly marked 'confidential'. The BAI will ensure that such information is appropriately handled including on completion of the particular application process.
- **Freedom of Information:** The BAI undertakes to use its best endeavours to hold confidential any material provided in response to this process, subject to the BAI's obligations under law, including the Freedom of Information Act 2014 ("FOI Act"). Applicants and Contractors are asked to consider if any of the information supplied to the BAI in an application or during subsequent contracting should **not** be disclosed because of its information content, to identify same and to specify reasons for its sensitivity. The BAI will consult with applicants about confidential, personal or commercially sensitive information before deciding on any request received under the FOI Act. Such information may be released in response to an FOI request.
- **Data Protection:** In order to operate this funding initiative effectively, we will require information about the applicant, partner applicants and detailed information on the proposed project/s. This data and documentation will include personal information such as job titles, salaries and e-mail addresses.

The BAI shall comply with its obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation Directive, the Data Protection Act 2018 and any other applicable data privacy laws and regulations when handling and processing any such personal information submitted to this funding initiative.

The information submitted in an application, including any personal information, will be used to process the application and to liaise with the applicant.

Any personal information submitted will only be retained in the event that the application is successful. Such information would be required for the funding contract and subsequent measuring of the performance of the grant and the associated outcomes. The information may also be used for the purpose of reviewing the funding initiative and by external researchers. In such instances all personal information would be anonymised.

The BAI is obligated and committed to protecting all personal data submitted in response to a call for applications to this funding initiative. The BAI has an appointed Data Protection Officer who is registered with the Data Protection Commission.

You can find out more on how the BAI processes personal information in the BAI's published policy at: <https://www.bai.ie/en/about-us/data-protection-policy/> and the BAI's terms and conditions at: <https://www.bai.ie/en/about-us/terms-conditions/>.

7. The Evaluation of Applications

The BAI will process applications as they are received and it is envisaged that there will be an evaluation period of approximately 4 weeks, depending on the quality of the application submitted. There are a number of stages in the evaluation process and each stage involves the assessment of an application against predetermined criteria which are underpinned by the 2009 Act as reflected in the policies of the BAI. The assessment and decision phases are:

- Qualification
- Qualitative
- Strategic Assessment
- Authority

For the guidance of applicants, the BAI sets out below how the procedures for each of the stages will be applied in assessing the applications.

7.1 Qualification Phase: Applicants must meet a number of minimum criteria to be considered for funding. This includes that Applicants to the COVID-19 Funding Initiative must be eligible to apply and the application must be for activities that are permitted under this initiative (refer section 3 of this Guide) and the funding sought must be within the limits permitted. The Qualification Scoring Matrix is set out at Appendix 1. If any of these minimum criteria are not met, applications will not be considered further. The BAI will liaise with the Applicant and provide detailed feedback on any issues identified at this stage of the process. The applicant may then resubmit the application.

7.2 Qualitative Assessment Phase: If the applicant and the application are deemed eligible in the Qualification Assessment Phase, the application qualifies for consideration for the award of funding. The next stage is the Qualitative Assessment Phase during which the application is assessed on its own merits in the context of the COVID-19 Funding Initiative objectives and predetermined qualitative criteria. The Qualitative Assessment Scoring Matrix is set out at Appendix 1. We will assess how you demonstrate that the outcomes of what you propose will enhance the awareness and understanding of your listeners of the COVID-19 pandemic, how integral a source your station is for speech content for your listeners, how necessary the funds are for the station and in particular, its sustainability, and the level to which the application demonstrates that you meet with the other criteria.

There are four mandatory criteria and an applicant must achieve a score of 50% or more in each of these criteria to qualify for further assessment for the award of funding. The mandatory assessment criteria are as follows:

- Public value for listeners to independent commercial radio
- Feasibility
- Resources & Need for Funding
- Track record

7.3 Strategic Assessment Phase: In instances where there are more qualifying applications than funds available, the BAI will have a second evaluation phase. This will focus on the quality of individual applications as well as on the overall package of funding awards that best fulfils the aims of this funding initiative. Final recommendations are then submitted to the Authority for ratification. The Strategic Assessment Scoring Matrix is set out at Appendix 1. The assessment criteria for this phase are:

- Diversity of speech/information content sources
- Audience expectations
- Uniqueness of speech/information content
- Recommendations from the assessment panels
- Track record

7.4 Authority Consideration: The final stage sees the Authority make final decisions on the application, considering recommendations arising from the previous assessment phases. The Authority's funding decisions are also informed by its Strategy Statement 2017-2019 and in particular, the mission *to regulate, foster and support broadcasting*, including in the Irish language. In this regard, the Authority's funding decisions aim to support projects that provide a significant public value and particularly in this instance, a significant public good in providing a programme resource that educates and informs. The Authority will also have regard to the strategic impacts of any proposal on the sustainability of the sound broadcasting service.

8. The Decision-Making Process

The following procedures will be followed by the BAI in determining the suitability of an applicant for the award of funding:

8.1 An internal panel of BAI staff will firstly consider whether the application satisfies the qualification criteria as set out. This will include consideration of the application against the qualifying criteria and a summation of the application in this regard prepared by the Executive.

8.2 The internal panel, following discussion, will assign a Pass or Fail classification under each of the qualification criteria set out in the Scoring Matrix on page 12 of this Guide. Any applicant that does not meet with any one of the listed criteria will be disqualified and will receive detailed feedback from the BAI.

8.3 An eligible application is assigned to a Qualitative Assessment Panel comprised of BAI staff. An application will be assessed by each panel member independently and then a meeting will be convened to discuss each application. The panel will agree a score for each application and determine the suitability of the application for the award of funding. On completion of the panel assessment meetings, including signoff on the assessment meeting documentation, the complete list of funding recommendations is compiled. If the recommended amount exceeds that which is available for the round, a strategic assessment phase will be required.

8.4 A Strategic Assessment Panel, comprised of BAI staff, is convened to consider the outcomes and recommendations from the Qualitative Assessment Phase. This discussion includes regard to the applications, the strategic criteria and the

recommendations of the assessors. The panel agrees a score for each application and a final list of funding recommendations is agreed. The draft minutes of the meeting and draft scoresheets are circulated to panel members for consideration and approval. On signoff of the documentation, a note to the Authority setting out the recommendations and associated rationale, including details of the applications, is drafted and presented at an Authority meeting for consideration, decision and ratification.

8.5 Once a funding recommendation is ratified by the Authority, the BAI Executive notify the applicant of the reasons for the decision. Where the BAI has awarded funding, the applicant is notified, provided with feedback and informed of the requirements for the next phase of the process, the contracting phase. Where the BAI has rejected an application for funding, the applicant is notified and provided with information on the performance of their application in the assessment process. The Applicant can liaise with BAI staff to discuss any amendments required to make a re-submission.

For information, only the funding offers ratified by the Authority will be made public. Any applications rejected for funding will not be individually publicised.

9. Contracting

The award of a funding contract will be subject to the successful applicant confirming his/her acceptance of the offer of funding and any condition(s) attached thereto by the BAI. In this regard, a successful applicant is required to enter into a contractual agreement with the BAI, on terms to be specified by the BAI. A copy of the template contract is available on www.bai.ie/en

On signing of the funding contract, the BAI will release 95% of the funds awarded. The remaining 5% will be awarded on the submission of the Final Project Report.

When contracting with the BAI a successful applicant will be required to provide certain deliverables to the BAI. For information, below is a non-exhaustive list of what would be required at contracting. Note that these documents do not have to be in place when making an application; they are included here for guidance only.

- Budget & Finance Plan
- Project plan, including milestones, outputs and outcomes
- Grant Details
- Signed Statement of Commitment from Chairperson or the Financial Controller
- No Set off letter from the relevant Bank
- Tax Clearance Information²

10. Reporting

The grantee must report on the expenditure of the grant to confirm that it has been used for the purpose as outlined in the application for funding and as approved by the BAI on the award of funding. Project outcome reports will be required. The BAI will provide outcome report guidelines.

² If such documentation is already on file at the BAI, there is no need to duplicate it. Simply inform the BAI that the documentation was previously submitted for another BAI activity.

Project Reports

All grantees must submit a final report to drawdown the last payment tranche as set out in the grant agreement. All reports should contain information on how the money has been spent and the outcomes achieved. This should include evidence of listenership interaction, feedback and audience listenership figures and copies and/or compilations of relevant broadcast content, depending on volume. Please use the Final Project Report form published by the BAI.

Audit

All grantees must retain documentary evidence of expenditure incurred against the grant for audit purposes. The BAI will conduct random audits as provided for in the BAI's funding contract.

Duplication of Funding

If successful you will be asked to certify that the costs of the activities proposed are not being met from any other source.

Appendix 1 – Assessment Scoring Matrices

Qualification Scoring Matrix

Criteria	Yes/ No
<p>Eligibility: Is the applicant eligible to apply for funding under the COVID-19 Funding Initiative and does the application comply with the fundamental requirements of S&V4? This has regard to whether:</p> <p>a) the status of the applicant complies with the requirements of the scheme and the funding initiative; is the applicant an entity that has a current fulltime commercial sound broadcasting contract with the BAI or the holding company that has a number of entities that have fulltime sound broadcasting contracts with the BAI?</p>	
<p>b) the commercial sound broadcasting contractor/s demonstrate/s effective Corporate Governance and Financial Management</p>	
<p>c) the funding amount requested falls within the limit permissions of the funding initiative i.e. €95k or under.</p>	
<p>Enhancement of public awareness and understanding of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Has the applicant provided confirmation that the proposed project is directly related to this public awareness and public understanding amongst its listeners?</p>	
<p>Is the Application Complete? Has the applicant complied with all of the competition guidelines and submitted all the relevant documentation? (this includes signed declaration from an authorised individual).</p>	

If any of these minimum criteria are not met, applications will not be considered further. The BAI will liaise with the Applicant and provide detailed feedback on any issues identified at this stage of the process. The applicant may then resubmit the application.

Qualitative Assessment Scoring Matrix

Criteria Mandatory	Available Score
Public value: To what extent does the proposal enhance the awareness and understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic? In this regard, to what level is the applicant considered a source of trusted speech/spoken content? To what extent is the proposal in line with the applicant's programming commitments as set out in its Commercial Sound Broadcasting Contract?	40
Feasibility: Does the proposal clearly demonstrate in terms of objectives, approach and planning that the project outcomes are feasible? Regard shall be had to the qualifications, experience and suitability of the person or team who / that will manage implementation.	10
Resources: Are the resources proposed clearly explained and are they adequate and realistic in the context of the proposed proposal? Does the proposal represent value for money? How much is the funding needed?	5
Track Record: The track record of the applicant with its current Commercial Sound Broadcasting Contract will be considered and the capacity of the applicant to deliver.	5

An Applicant must score a minimum of 50% under each criterion to qualify for consideration of award of funding.

Strategic Assessment Scoring Matrix

Criteria	Available Score
Diversity of content sources: The extent to which the application adds to the diversity of speech/information content relating to the COVID-19 Pandemic as well as diversity in the range of content sources proposed.	30
Audience Expectations: The extent to which the applicant has demonstrated the likelihood of the proposed content meeting audience needs and expectations in the franchise area.	20
Uniqueness of content: Regard shall be had to any unique or innovative features in the content proposed in the application.	20
Recommendations of the assessment panels: the extent to which the proposal enhances the awareness and understanding of COVID-19, the realism of the proposal and the need, and the value, for money	5
Track Record: The track record of the applicant with its current Commercial Sound Broadcasting Contract will be considered and the capacity of the applicant to deliver.	5