



From: The Minister

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Kellie Armstrong MLA

Via email: kellie.armstrong@mla.niassembly.gov.uk

Dear Kellie,

Follow up action to AQO 1350/22-27 raised at Question Time on 14th January 2025 – Musical Instruments Programme and charity applications

On 14th January 2025, in a follow up question to AQO 1350/22-27, you had asked whether “there is the potential to allow charities, such as Beyond Skin, that work with groups of musicians and make musical instruments available to people such as the Afghan women's solidarity group — a group of women who escaped the Taliban, which barred them from engaging with music — to apply”.

I have been in contact with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland who deliver the Musical Instruments Programme, and I can confirm that – as per the published programme guidance – charitable bodies who are involved in regular performance in any genre, who are based in and will make regular use of the instruments in NI, are eligible to apply to the Musical Instruments for Professional and Non-professional Performing Groups Programme.

The programme is designed to provide support for the purchase of musical instruments by both professional and non-professional groups involved in the regular performance of music, including community, youth, resource organisations and schools which are regularly involved in music performance in the non-professional sector. The Arts Council welcomes applications from the widest possible range of organisations and from applicants whose projects benefit individuals categorised



under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Particular priority is given to applications which can clearly demonstrate:

- a commitment to training / tuition / education and performance;
- a commitment to artistic development; and
- an ability to increase access to music provision in rural areas.

Required enclosures when applying to the scheme include:

- Two recent (within the last 3 years) sound or video recordings of the group performing; and
- A complete list of the performing group's activities in the past three years.

These are requested to evidence that the applicant is involved in regular performance. If Beyond Skin can provide evidence of regular performance they would potentially be eligible to apply.

I hope you find the above information useful and I recommend that any group interested in applying to the programme in future to visit the Arts Council website <https://artscouncil-ni.org/news> to keep abreast of release dates and criteria.

Yours sincerely,

Gordon Lyons MLA
Minister for Communities