

# Freelancer Policy



## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to recognise the important role freelance workers play within our organisation and the contribution they make to Northern Heartlands' vision based on their own skills, experience and engagement within the cultural sector more widely. We gain a lot from our engagement with Freelancer workers, and we are seeking to establish a mutually beneficial and equitable working relationship.

This policy was introduced in 2024 and will be reviewed on a bi-annual basis.

This policy has been developed in consultation with freelance practitioners and through research of other best practice models across the sector. This includes work developed by Arc Stockton as an organisation leading good practice examples in this area and with North East Cultural Freelancers ([North East Cultural Freelancers](#)) including North East Culture Partnership's 'Freelancers Checklist'.

## 2. Commissioning Work/Advertising Opportunities

Northern Heartlands is a 'place-based' participatory arts organisation. We encourage a practice that works towards cocreation - working with the community and artists to develop creativity through shared enquiries, projects, activities, and events. This means we don't always know what the end will be when we start; it also means that freelance workers play an important role in generating the conditions and enabling creativity for all involved.

When we describe creativity, the [Creative Habits of Mind Model](#) created by Creativity Culture and Education and The Centre for Real World Learning, can be useful for developing a shared understanding.

Opportunities that arise for freelancers are posted on our website and on our social media platforms. Our Artist Briefs provide clear application guidance including a deadline for applications and any decision-making process.

We are committed to ensuring equity of access and will ensure that applicants are provided with the opportunity to advise us of any access requirements which we will always endeavour to meet.

When commissioning work with freelancers we will agree fees, arrangements, responsibilities, timescales and where relevant any outcomes for the activity in writing. This may not always be within a formal contract and could take the form of an email exchange. This will include what is expected from us both.

Anything agreed via email exchange will subsequently be included in a formal contract.

Occasionally circumstances and arrangements can change. We will always try and find alternative ways for freelancers to engage in the contracted work and receive payment as planned, providing alternatives (e.g. blended delivery, online, rescheduling an agreed date) where appropriate, practical and possible for the purpose of the work. If work does have to be cancelled or rearranged. Any changes to arrangements will be made in writing wherever possible by either party and given with as much advanced notice as is possible.

When agreeing work, Freelancers will always be given a named point of contact within Northern Heartlands. This is reflected in the freelance/supplier contract.

We value Freelancers' time and are mindful of the time meetings and travel time can take. Where possible, we will try to save costs/time by offering opportunities to talk by phone or meet online. Where appropriate, we will include time for negotiating and agreeing contracts as well as time for planning, development and delivery.

We like to plan well in advance and for activities to run smoothly and as stress free as possible for all involved. This means that freelancers should expect to be asked about the arrangements for their activity in advance of delivery, to enable rooms, equipment, refreshments etc to be set up prior to the start of the activity. This can also include providing relevant paperwork such as risk assessments or outline activity plans.

### **3. Fees and Payments**

Northern Heartlands is a Living Wage employer. This means we pay Freelancers fairly and above minimum wage. Agreed rates of pay for freelancers will always be commensurate with experience and in line with rates recommended by professional bodies e.g., Artists Union, Writers Guild, Musicians Union.

Northern Heartlands aims to pay freelancers within 14 days of receipt of invoice if not sooner. We agree fees and payment schedules in advance of any work. We expect freelancers to scale the activity to fit within the available fee, not to reduce your fee or work unpaid hours. We want freelancers to tell us if our expectations are in keeping with the fee available. We will arrange advance payment or part-payment where appropriate for agreed work and we either pay directly or repay any agreed additional expenses as soon as possible (receipts should be retained and passed to us for our financial records).

We do not have a purchase order system, but we will make payments on the basis of an invoice with the following information being submitted at least seven days before payment is due:

- Contract number (stated on your contract or shared in confirmation email)
- Invoice date
- Contact details including email and phone number
- Date, nature of work undertaken and agreed fee
- Bank or building society account details, to enable electronic payments

We acknowledge that freelancers have to make provision for sick pay, holiday pay, pension, training and development, tax, National Insurance and other costs within their fees, so we expect rates to be higher than the salaried equivalent.

Freelancer's planning and development time is factored into programmes and budget allocated accordingly. Any reports required as part of the contract must be provided before final payment is released. We acknowledge that administration can be time consuming and will always look at ways to keep this to a minimum for freelancers in areas such as applications, contracts and information-based forms. If you think we can do better in this, we do appreciate feedback on our processes.

Freelance staff are responsible their own tax and National Insurance.

### **4. Policies and Information**

Northern Heartlands has a number of policy documents which are available on a shared Google drive and can be viewed prior to signing a contract. Other NH policies which link directly with this policy are:

- Environmental
- Equity & Diversity
- GDPR
- Grievance Procedure
- Health & Safety
- Lone Working
- Safeguarding Children
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults
- Social Media

## **Safeguarding**

Everybody's safety is important to us at Northern Heartlands. Where required, Northern Heartlands will be able to arrange DBS checks. We want to support freelancers to facilitate meaningful activity that helps participants to explore ideas and express themselves. To do this we need participants to feel safe physically and emotionally and any risks associated with the activity must be considered and mitigated. Where appropriate we ask freelancers to support their activity with a risk assessment document. Northern Heartlands can support with templates and advice on this where needed.

## **Health and Wellbeing**

Northern Heartlands cares about the wellbeing of all of its staff whether full time, part time or contracted. We expect freelancers to have a healthy and safe environment in which to work which includes considerations about health and wellbeing. We will work with Freelancers to schedule breaks and make sure there is access to water and facilities wherever possible. The health and wellbeing of everyone involved in our programmes of activity is important to us.

## **Equity & Diversity**

Northern Heartlands is committed to the principles of equity and diversity. We will not discriminate against freelancers on the grounds of age, disability, race, gender reassignment, sex, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, or socio-economic background

# **5. Supporting Freelancers**

We will ask if freelancers have any access requirements before any contract is agreed and signed including the best method of communication, most convenient times for meeting, any reasonable adjustments we should make etc. We aim to meet the access requirements of all members of staff, including freelancers. This is built into our Freelance/Supplier contract. If freelancers have their own access rider, we are happy to receive this.

We want our processes to be as transparent as possible and we regularly publish information on our website about opportunities and how to contact us.

A lot of our communication takes place by via email. We aim to reply to emails from freelancers we are working with, wherever possible within 5 working days or an agreed deadline.

Where we have engaged in a call out/commissioning process, we will always advertise the timeline of deadlines, shortlisting, interviews and appointments. We will let successful and unsuccessful candidates know the outcome of decisions. For those shortlisted during any process, we will provide feedback about the process as well as the outcome. Where possible we will provide online or in-person 'find out more' sessions about a particular brief in good time and in advance of the published deadline for applications.

We may be able to offer office space and access to printing and/or other office facilities during the span of the contracted work. From time to time, we will offer professional development and networking opportunities for freelancers.

## 6. Learning and improving

We are a learning organisation and regularly reflect on our practice. We hope you will be able to tell us if something goes wrong or you notice an area for improvement. Any issues can be raised with your main point of contact or by directly contacting the Northern Heartlands' Director.

## 7. Freelancers' Data

Northern Heartlands is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. As such we are required to report on demographic data of everyone who works for us, whether employed full or part time or contracted. A link to an online questionnaire is provided as part of our freelancer supplier contract. Completing this questionnaire is entirely voluntary but will support Northern Heartlands and Arts Council England to work towards a fairer deal for freelancers more widely.

## 8. Grievance

Northern Heartlands has a Grievance Procedure in place for employees. This is currently (January 2025) being updated to include reference to freelancers who will have access to the process through the terms and conditions of their contract.

POLICY REVIEW TRACKING			
Review Date	Change proposed by	Revision Date	Approved by