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What is the CEDOxConverge Ideas Fund?

The CEDO x Converge Ideas Fund is a one-off funding opportunity for Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) students.

It is designed to help you take your very first steps in exploring a creative idea that could grow into a creative enterprise or business in the future.

You do not need:

- Business experience
- A registered company
- A fully formed idea

You do need:

- An idea you want to explore
- Curiosity and willingness to learn

What is the fund for?

This fund supports early-stage experimentation and exploration. It is about trying things out. That might include:

- **Testing an idea**
For example: exploring a new performance concept, trialling a workshop format, trying out a creative collaboration, experimenting with a new way of engaging audiences
- **Prototyping a new product, service or creative process**
For example: creating an early version of an experimental performance piece or a first version of a piece of production tech, or sound tool, testing a new movement method, or piloting a performance-based wellbeing activity.
- **Running a pop-up event**
For example: a pop-up mini-performance, an interactive installation, a small public workshop, a site-specific musical intervention, or a temporary exhibition or showcase.
- **Staging a scratch night or work-in-progress performance**
For example: sharing the first 10 minutes of a new piece, testing an early script or score, trying out choreography in front of an audience, or inviting feedback on an early-stage devised work.

These activities help you understand whether your idea could develop into a creative business.

You should show that this is a first step towards something that can develop further, and that you are thinking about how the idea might eventually grow in the future.

What could my idea become in the future?

This fund supports your first step towards your idea. It does not need to create any final outcome.

Your idea might eventually develop into:

- A Social Enterprise
- A Not-for-Profit/Charity
- A Commercial Enterprise

What other support will I get?

All applicants, and award winners, can receive:

- Wraparound support and mentoring from the Creative Enterprise Development Office (CEDO)
- Support on your next steps from the Converge Team
- Guidance on future funding opportunities

How much funding is available?

There are up to 5 awards of £1,000 available.

Who can apply?

You must:

- Be a current RCS student (undergraduate or postgraduate)
- Be leading the project/idea

Your idea must be:

- Exploring the potential to become a creative business;
- In a pre-registration stage;
- In an early trading stage (registered and trading for less than 6 months).

How can I use the funding?

Important Note: this fund cannot be used for any coursework and should only be used for extra-curricular projects.

The fund cannot cover:

- Companies which have already been registered and trading for more than 6 months
- Any retrospective costs from a project which has already taken place
- Any costs related to your curricular coursework
- Pieces of large-scale equipment including laptops
- Living costs, rent, overhead bills (Subsistence costs)
- Debts
- New instruments
- Membership of professional bodies (e.g Equity, Musicians Union)
- Formal tuition fees

Can Student Visa Holders apply?

If you are a Student Visa Holder you are eligible to apply for the Ideas Fund. However, there are conditions attached to your visa that you must be aware of before undertaking any form of work activity.

As per the terms of your visa laid out by the Home Office, you cannot: be self-employed or work in certain jobs.

You can work towards a business idea in a “*pre-trading phase*” and later, apply for a visa that allows entrepreneurship, like a talent visa, start-up visa, or a post-graduate work visa. Pre-Trading activities can include business planning, mentorship, shadowing a professional, attending professional training, R&D, market research, prototyping, and other preparatory work. However, it’s critical that these funds are not used for activities directly related to trading, as this would be outside the scope permitted during the pre-trading phase and would be a breach of Student Visa terms.

You cannot undertake any paid work as an entertainer according to the terms of your visa. Therefore, this fund cannot be used by Student visa holders to pay for their own performance work or to pay for other Student visa to undertake entertainment work.

You should also check your eVisa to confirm the number of hours you are permitted to work per week. Any time spent working on this funded project should be counted towards your maximum allowance per week.

Student’s studying on Visitor visas are not permitted to undertake any form of paid work and their family can only participate on a voluntary basis.

Student visa holders are responsible to ensure that their activities do not breach their visa conditions.

If you are unsure about any aspect of eligibility, please contact cedo@rcs.ac.uk.

Distance Learners

If you are a distance learner, on one of our Online & Blended Learning courses (i.e. MA Creative Arts Practice) you are eligible to apply for the Ideas Fund.

However, your project must be undertaken in your primary country of residence.

You are solely responsible to ensure that your activities do not breach the terms of any visa conditions laid out if you enter the United Kingdom.

Public Liability Insurance

Public Liability Insurance protects you if someone is injured or property is damaged during your project.

You should consider whether your project needs this. We can provide support on deciding whether it is required for your project at this stage.

Student-rate insurance is often available through unions such as:

- [Musicians Union](#)
- [Equity](#)
- [BECTU](#)
- [Scottish Artists Union](#)

Addressing Systemic Barriers in the Performing & Production Arts

We believe there can be no innovation in the performing & production arts unless systemic barriers are challenged, and actions taken to address structural inequality in the arts and higher education. We have therefore committed that at least 30% of this funding will be given to projects which are led by:

- people from the global majority and those from the global south
- people from working class backgrounds
- those who are neurodiverse and/or disabled people
- members of the LGBTQIA+ community
- care-experienced people
- migrants
- people who are or have been homeless
- those with lived experience of the criminal justice system
- Romany travellers
- those who face barriers to opportunities due to mental health issues, substance misuse, and unpaid caring duties

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If you feel that this list is not representative of people facing systemic barriers, please let us know, so we can continue to improve our process.

On application forms, you will be asked if you identify as part of one or more of these communities (you will not be required to select which category). No proof will be required, and we expect our RCS community to be honest and only select this option on the form if it does apply to them.

Can I pay myself and my collaborators?

Within our community of artists, it is vital that you are paid fairly for your expertise and your time. This is not only important for yourself but as a form of solidarity with others. Paying yourself and your collaborators fairly should be an industry standard to help ensure that everyone is able to access and create art.

Wherever possible, we strongly encourage you to aim for payment of the [Real Living Wage](#) for yourself and for all people being paid to undertake work in your project. You may also use your chosen union rates (i.e. Musicians Union, Equity, etc), which should be clearly identified in your project budget. If you're not sure about union rates, then you should be using the Real Living Wage as a guide.

Things to consider:

- This is a small fund, so plan realistically
- You may need to scale your project, slow your pace, or work in phases
- Avoid trying to fit a large project into a small budget

If your project involves community research or workshops, think carefully about what you offer participants in return for their time.

International Students: Please refer to the section above on Student Visa Holders.

How are applications assessed?

Those applicants which make the strongest case for funding will be selected. We are looking for applicants to articulate clearly and specifically the opportunity that the prize will provide.

It is vital that you highlight the difference that this small pot of funding will make towards the development of your idea.

Strong applications will:

- Show an ambition to develop a creative business
- Clearly explain the core idea
- Describe how the idea could grow
- Include a clear and realistic budget
- Provide a realistic timeline with key steps

What happens after I apply?

Applicants should receive an automated email from our online system, Zoho, confirming the form has been received. If you have not received this email, please contact us at cedo@rcs.ac.uk

Applications will be reviewed initially by an internal team at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Creative Enterprise Development Office. Final overview and approval will rest with the Converge Steering Group Microfinance Committee. Recipients will be encouraged to apply to the Converge Performing & Production Arts Challenge or the Converge KickStart Challenge.

Funds must be disbursed by the end of March 2026. Recipients will be invited to participate in a national networking and training event in late March or early April 2026. (Pending Ministerial confirmation).

Funding recipients will be asked to provide EDI details which is required by the Scottish Government and will be compiled anonymously by Converge.

Key Dates

- Application deadline: Thursday 12 February 2026 at 17:00
- Converge Networking and Training Event: late March / early April 2026 (TBC)
- An in-progress meeting held with CEDO team must be completed by: Wednesday 30 September 2026

Late applications will not be considered.

How do I make an application?

Please click here to submit an online application.

The deadline for application is Thursday 12 February 2026 at 17:00. Late applications will not be considered.

Video application will also be considered. If you would like to apply this way, please contact Stephanie at cedo@rcs.ac.uk.

You will also be asked if you would like to receive the CEDO newsletter, to hear about more funding opportunities or other support available to you as an RCS graduate.

If you select to receive the CEDO newsletter, you will be asked to provide information on your current work circumstances. We have a compliance obligation to report on the impact of activities like the Make It Happen Fund to the Scottish and UK Governments and to HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency).

More importantly, this data is directly related to the resource that we receive from the Scottish Funding Council to continue impactful programmes like the Make It Happen Fund and other CEDO activities.

This is in line with our data privacy policy which you can find here: www.rcs.ac.uk/policy/privacy

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Before submitting this application, please be aware that The Research & Knowledge Exchange Department and The Royal Conservatoire expect you to act as leader on your project and that all responsibilities and accountabilities for its administration are devolved to you.

By submitting an application, you are agreeing to take ownership of your project.

*We take your privacy very seriously. Please find a copy of our privacy notice at:
www.rcs.ac.uk/policy/privacy*

Application Question	Weak (1 point)	Satisfactory (2 points)	Strong (3 points)
In no more than 300 words, please outline your business idea and plans to develop the business with this funding.	<p>The applicant does not clearly describe the business idea.</p> <p>The applicant does not indicate a realistic plan for development.</p>	<p>Sufficient outline of the applicant's business idea.</p> <p>Some plans provided for development but only with minimal detail.</p>	<p>Applicant provides a compelling description of their potential business idea.</p> <p>Detailed plans are provided for the development of the idea in this stage.</p>
<p>In no more than 400 words, please outline the goals for your business and how you see the idea becoming a self-sustaining business in the future (i.e., not wholly reliant on public funding).</p> <p>You should provide indication of your potential audience/customer/clients and how you plan to reach them.</p>	<p>Little or no evidence the applicant has thought through the steps of managing a self-sufficient business.</p> <p>No potential audiences/customers/clients are identified.</p>	<p>Sufficient connection made between the business idea and the applicant's goals.</p> <p>Steps could include more detail and assessment.</p> <p>Applicant has considered potential audiences/users, but could include more detail.</p>	<p>Applicant provides indication of their goals.</p> <p>Applicant provides direction which would indicate that the business idea will become self-sufficient.</p> <p>Applicant provides indication of who they might work with, any potential audiences, and who their eventual clients will be.</p>

Please provide a detailed timeline.	Minimal information provided or very unrealistic timeline.	Some information is given for the timeline but more detail could be provided or it could be more realistic.	Applicant has a clearly-defined and realistic timeline.
Please provide a detailed budget.	No budget is provided or very minimal detail.	Budget is somewhat realistic and some research is evidenced.	Budget is realistic and detailed. Quotes or indication of research is provided.