



XR

Introduction

Northern Ireland Screen is the screen agency for Northern Ireland. We are committed to maximising the economic, cultural and educational value of the screen industries for the benefit of Northern Ireland. Our mission is to accelerate the development of a dynamic and sustainable screen industry and culture in Northern Ireland.

Our 3 economic, cultural and educational objectives are for:

1. Northern Ireland to have the strongest screen industry outside of London in the UK and Ireland;
2. Ensure the industry supports vibrant and diverse cultural voices that will be recognised and celebrated equally at home and abroad;
3. Mainstream across Northern Ireland the most successful screen and digital technologies education provision in Europe.

Northern Ireland Screen is a company limited by guarantee, currently employing 33 people and we are governed by a Board of thirteen directors. The Chairwoman is Rotha Johnston and Kenneth Branagh is Honorary President.

Background

We are looking for amazing projects to help support companies and organisations to bring their XR project to life.

XR is a new programme aimed at supporting companies working on innovative ideas within the XR industry. The programme, which is being delivered in partnership by Northern Ireland Screen, Future Screens NI and Digital Catapult NI, is seeking 3 start-ups or established companies who have an ambition to make new innovative Immersive content, products or services.

XR is an umbrella term for VR (Virtual Reality) AR (Augmented Reality) and MR (Mixed Reality). In wider terms XR can also include Haptics and, in the context of this programme, the wider technology that supports the delivery or support of these technologies, for example how AI, 5G or IoT might complement the use of XR. XRX is open to ideas from across industries including; entertainment, healthcare, manufacturing, education, design, tourism, consumer goods, and marketing. XRX aims to support XR where it is helping companies secure a competitive advantage.

XRX is seeking ideas and projects that fall broadly into these categories:

Creative Products/Services -Innovative use of technology to drive the adoption of XR in the Creative Industries, via a product or service, which uses new/emerging technology to engage with audiences, support content creation, improve production workflows or distribute content. For example:

SideQuest - <https://sidequestvr.com>

Animotive - <https://www.retinize.com/animotive>

Enterprise Deployment - Clever deployment of **AR, VR or MR** within your business to help efficiency e.g. to produce and visualise a Digital Twin of a product or system or completely reimagine your business's training processes via the use of immersive technology, like VR.

*“Businesses, the economy and society are at a crucial stage in the adoption of virtual reality and augmented reality. Everything is in place for these technologies to now deliver on their promise by improving the way organisations operate, making processes faster and more effective, and creating incredible new experiences. **Jeremy Dalton**
Head of VR/AR, PwC UK*

<https://www.pwc.com/seeingisbelieving>

Innovative Content - Using XR to create immersive games or experiences that use the uniqueness of the medium to engage and entertain audiences. XRX wants to see projects which use the storytelling and interactive potential of XR to create new IP's. What innovative narrative, technology or methodologies can you deploy to make something very unique for audiences? Example of content:

Time Stall -

https://www.oculus.com/experiences/quest/2055554051161375/?locale=en_GB

Under Present -

https://www.oculus.com/experiences/quest/1917371471713228/?locale=en_GB

While this is a good catch all of the kinds of projects that we are looking for, please do apply even if you aren't sure if your idea fits into one of these categories squarely or not, as the intent here is to discover brand new ideas for this medium and uncover talent within NI. The strength and potential of the idea is key.

Why Apply

XRX will provide in-depth support and mentorship for companies that wish to secure seed investment or realise their ambitions to deploy new and emerging tech actively inside their business within the next 12-18 months. Successful applicants will receive:

- 6 month-long bespoke program of support, which offers mentoring and dedicated help to develop a company's idea. Tailored support to guide companies through not only the creative process of XR development but also the business and IP end of how to develop and deploy their idea.
- Each successful applicant will receive a £30,000 in funding split across two phases:
 - Idea Development- £10K - 8 weeks of working with mentors and resources to refine the initial idea
 - Proof of Concept - £20K - 16 weeks of development, taking project idea and creating an executable product/service/content.

Access to office space in the Ormeau Baths, in Belfast within The Pixel Mill and/or access to the XR technology at the Digital Catapult Immersive Lab.

- Connections to a network of local, national and international industry contacts via the collaboration partners.

Who should Apply

The application is open to companies and organisations of all sizes.

We are particularly interested to hear from those who have not previously worked in the XR sector but have a strong desire to see their project enhanced by this technology and can demonstrate how this might be achieved with our support.

Applicants could be a design or software company who are on the cusp of pivoting into Immersive Technology based on a sales marketing or production efficiency opportunity that they have spotted, to harness this new technology but aren't sure what this entails in order to fully develop the right skills or XR software pipeline to fully realise your ambition.

You might be an established games company requiring support via a mentor with expertise in a very specific XR skill and help finding the right platform to help solidify an amazing immersive story or experience?

Or perhaps you have a unique technology solution to an already problematic area within a sector that you feel would be perfect to develop into an XR facing platform, which will greatly benefit another sector.

Application Process

XRX is open to companies that meet the following criteria:

- Legally incorporated companies. The company does not need to have been registered with Companies House prior to the submission of the expression of interest but must be registered with Companies House should the team progress to Stage 3 and be required to submit a Screen Fund application form
- Companies must consist of 2 or more team members (ideally 3) with the key roles of design, programming and business development covered.
- Companies and team members must be committed full-time for the duration of the programme.
- The company must be working on a new IP/product/service or hasn't been made publicly available. Start-ups are encouraged, however existing companies are welcomed, or companies formed of team members that have worked within the immersive sector.

- Company, including its team members, is able to join XRX on the w/c 4th October to w/c 21st March.

Application Process:

The application process will contain three stages:

- Stage 1: Complete Expression of Interest - this is an online form (alternative formats available) and all companies interested in applying to XRX must complete it.
- Stage 2: Interview Stage - Companies will be shortlisted based on the expression of interest forms and those shortlisted will be invited to attend an interview with Northern Ireland Screen. The interview will involve a presentation and questions from a panel
- Stage 3: Screen Fund Application - this is an online-form, and a link will be sent to the successful companies following the interview stage.

As the budget is limited, we anticipate that up to 3 successful companies will be supported to develop their business and build their teams and invited to submit an application to the Screen Fund for funding.

Evaluation criteria

Your expression of interest will be evaluated against the following criteria:

1. The project idea has the potential to be brought to market or be successfully deployed in your business to make a significant impact. The project must be feasible within the time and budget allowed.
2. The project idea should be ready to be shaped into a tangible project with approval from peers or management where applicable.
3. Application should demonstrate the uniqueness of the idea within the commercial market.

2. Application should demonstrate that the existing team and resource meet the needs of delivering the project e.g programmer, designer etc.

Timeline

Date	Detail
Submission of Expression of Interest	20 th August– 16 th September
Shortlisting	17 th September
Interviews	23 rd September
Notification to successful Companies	24 th September
Submission of applications to Screen Fund for funding	27 th -28 th September
Phase 1	w/c 4th October – w/c 22nd November
Phase 2	w/c 29th November - w/c 21st March

FAQ

When can I apply for XRX?

Applications open on **20th August** and will close at **5pm on 16th September**.

When does XRX commence and how long does it run for?

XRX starts on **w/c 4th October 2021** and runs for up to 6 months until **w/c 21st March**.

How much funding is available?

Companies may be awarded up to £30,000 in funding across the **XRX** programme. This is dependent on meeting agreed milestones.

Does Northern Ireland Screen take any ownership of IP created during XRX?

The Funding provided via XRX consists of a development loan from Northern Ireland Screen and a grant from Future Screens NI

The terms of the funding provided through **XRX** are Northern Ireland Screen's standard development funding agreement terms. Northern Ireland Screen takes a recoupment position once a product/service is launched. Northern Ireland Screen will not take equity in a company. Northern Ireland Screen funding will total £24,000 across a project.

The funding from Future Screens NI will be administered by Northern Ireland Screen but will be a grant. There is no recoupment on this funding and Future Screens NI will not take equity in a company. Future Screens NI funding will total £6,000 across a project.

My company is not based in Northern Ireland. Can I still apply for XRX?

No, Your company needs to be based in Northern Ireland.

For companies relocating to Northern Ireland will Northern Ireland Screen provide any support?

Northern Ireland Screen will not be providing any relocation support for companies moving to Northern Ireland.

I am an individual developer, can I apply?

XRX is aimed at companies. The company must consist of at least 2 full-time members of staff.

We are a student/graduate team, can we still apply?

Graduate teams that are not in full-time education can apply for **XRX**.

What will the company be expected to deliver by the end of XRX?

Participating companies will be expected to deliver a working proof of concept by the end of the programme.

When will we hear if our application has been successful or not?

You will find out by **17th September** if you have made it through to the interview stage.

Where will the interviews take place?

The interviews will either take place at the Northern Ireland Screen offices in Belfast or online via a Zoom call dependent on government Covid-19 guidance

When will the interviews take place?

The interviews will take place on **23rd September**

Who will be on the interview panel?

The interview panel will consist representatives from Northern Ireland Screen, Digital Catapult NI and experienced industry professionals.