

Platform @ The Pixel Mill

Platform is a video game accelerator aimed at supporting Northern Ireland Studios to develop a new video game based on an original IP within 12 months.

Based out of the Pixel Mill based at the Ormeau Baths in Belfast, **Platform** will give studios access to facilities, mentors, training and funding as well as the opportunity to attend industry events to build their business network.

Northern Ireland Screen are inviting applications from studios to take part with support for up to 4 successful studios to develop their business and build their teams.

Platform is split into 3 stages, where studios will develop an idea for a game, validate the market opportunity for that idea and take it into production. The stages will be as follows:

Prototyping: 8 weeks of idea generation, prototyping and studio development. Studios will come up with 3 game concepts, creating a prototype for each, which they can create and release within 36 weeks on a budget of £50,000. Validating the business case and market opportunity for each.

Vertical Slice: Studios will choose the strongest game idea from prototyping and spend 10 weeks creating a vertical slice which demonstrates the core mechanics, game loop, and art style. During this stage studios will have the opportunity to attend Gamescom to build their industry network.

Full Development: Based on the market validation carried out by studios will take the vertical slice/demo into production for 26 weeks with the goal of self-publishing the game by June 2025.

By the end of **Platform** studios will be expected to have published a game (full release/demo) which is within the scope of the budget and time allowed. It is important that studios have a concerted focus on marketing and community building throughout the programme.

During **Platform** studios will have milestones/deliverables which they will be required to meet in order to move on to the next stage of development. Summary as per below.

Stage	Time	Deliverable	Funding
Rapid Prototyping	8 Weeks (July/Aug)	3 game prototypes with accompanying market research	£10,000
Vertical Slice (Pre-production)	10 Weeks (Sept/Oct/Nov)	Vertical slice of chosen game with production plan and schedule	£15,000
Full Development (Production)	26 Weeks (Nov/Dec/Jan/Feb/Mar/Apr/May)	Fully developed and published game.	£35,000

- **Up to 4 teams**
- **Up to £60,000 in development funding per company**
- **Up to 12 Months Office Space and access to mentors**
- **Market Attendance – Gamescom**

Recruitment

Platform is open to studios that meet the following criteria:

- Registered as a Limited Company
- Studio must consist of 2 or more team members (ideally 3) with the key roles of programming, art, design and business development covered within the team.
- Studio and team members must be committed to **Platform** full-time for the duration of the programme
- The Studio, or at least 2 of the team members, have released/published a video game or product in the last 3 years.
- Studio, including its team members, is able to join **Platform** at the beginning of July 2024.

Application Process:

All studios interested in joining **Platform** must complete the online application form.

Deadline for applications is **5pm on Friday 5th July 2024**.

Interview Stage

Selected studios from the application stage will be invited to attend an interview with Northern Ireland Screen. The interview will involve a presentation and questions from a panel.

Pre-application meetings

Those interested in applying to **Platform** and who would like to have an informal chat can arrange to meet with our Interactive Manager, Kerry Michelle O'Brien. They can request a meeting by emailing kerrymob@northernirelandscreen.co.uk.

Timeline

Date	Detail
w/c 12 th June	Application Opens
5 th July	Application Closes
w/c 8 th July	Successful applicants notified
w/c 8 th July	Interviews
w/c 15 th July	Successful interviewees notified and contracted
22 nd July	2024 cohort move-in & start date

Evaluation criteria

- Experience/knowledge of the team

- Company can demonstrate that key areas are covered by team members;
 - Programming
 - Art
 - Game Design
 - Business Development/Marketing
- Ability to concisely develop and pitch an idea for a video game

Office Space

The maximum guarantee of space to a **Platform** company is 6 months. A further 6 months will be dependent on performance review and completion of milestones.

Platform Induction

Successful **Platform** studios will receive a full induction to the facilities and the programme with a bootcamp during the first week of the programme (w/c 22nd July).

Induction will include;

- Equipment set-up and systems intro day
- Intros to mentors and key NIS Staff
- Workshops delivered by mentors covering: Marketing, Games Design, Business, Publishing, Project Management, Legal and Accounting.

Skills

The Pixel Mill will offer a cross-section of expertise and resources which **Platform** studios will have access to. Expertise/Resources will cover the breath of the creative and business disciplines needed to run a modern-day video game company.

Mentors will be available throughout the year to provide advice and guidance to studios on areas such as:

- Publishing/Marketing
- Programming
- Game Design
- Art Direction
- UX/UI
- Business Development
- Accounting
- Legal
- Production
- Leadership

FAQ

When can I apply for Platform?

Applications open w/c 12th June 2024 and will close at 5pm on 5th July 2024.

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

Platform starts on Monday 22nd July and runs for up to 12 months until the end of June 2025.

How much funding is available?

Studios may be awarded up to £60,000 in funding across the **Platform** accelerator programme. This is dependent of meeting agreed milestones.

How long will Platform studios have access to The Pixel Mill?

Platform studios will be given desk space for 6 months initially with a further 6 months pending performance review.

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

The terms of the funding provided through **Platform** are Northern Ireland Screen's standard development funding agreement terms. Northern Ireland Screen takes a recoupment position once a game is launched. Northern Ireland Screen will not take equity in a company.

We have a company and want to apply but don't want to work out of The Pixel Mill?

Studios accepted onto **Platform** will be provided with desk space at The Pixel Mill but do not need to base themselves out of The Pixel full time. However, there will be an expectation that studios will need to attend certain workshops/meetings in person.

My company is not based in Northern Ireland, Can I still apply for The Pixel Mill?

Yes, however your company needs to be based out of The Pixel Mill. The company also needs to be registered as a limited company in NI. Your team members need to be residents in Northern Ireland, i.e. living in Northern Ireland and paying tax.

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

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

I am an individual developer, can I apply?

Platform is aimed at video game studios. The company must consist of at least 2 full-time members of staff. However Northern Ireland Screen has development funding opportunities which may be more suitable. Please contact Kerry Michelle O'Brien, Interactive Manager by email at kerrymob@northernirelandscreen.co.uk.

Our company has an idea for a game already, can we apply with it?

Studios may have an idea for a game before joining **Platform** however all studios are expected to take part in each stage.



If studios have an idea for a video game and are interested in development funding please contact Kerry Michelle O'Brien, Interactive Manager by email at kerrymob@northernirelandscreen.co.uk.

Our company is not set up yet. Can we still apply to be on Platform?

Yes, as long as the company is registered at Studios House and has a bank account set-up in the company's name before the start of the programme so you can still apply. However, it is important to demonstrate the track record of individual teams if the company has no history of publishing games.

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

Graduate teams that are not in full-time education can apply for **Platform**. Graduate teams may also be interested in applying for [Transfuzer](#).

I'm not interested in Platform but like to be able to work out of The Pixel Mill. Is that possible?

Yes, however desk space within The Pixel Mill is limited and requests are dealt with on a first come first serve basis. If you are interested in learning more click here or contact Kerry Michelle O'Brien, Interactive Manager by email at kerrymob@northernirelandscreen.co.uk.

What markets will Platform studios attend?

It is expected that **Platform** studios will attend Gamescom 2025.

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

It is expected that studios will have at least self-published their game in some format by July 2025. However, there are a number of milestones/deliverables during the course of the programme, relative to each stage.

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

You will find out 22nd July 2024 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 w/c 15th July 2024.

Who will be on the interview panel?

Applicants will be assessed by Northern Ireland Screen.

What is Northern Ireland Screen looking for?

We are looking for teams that have a passion for the video games industry, the ability to generate ideas and the ambition to run a video games company.