



MiniGame @ The Pixel Mill

Background

MiniGame is a programme for video game companies in Northern Ireland aimed at supporting new teams coming together to develop their first game.

The focus of **MiniGame** is creating mini/short games that can be published within 6 months. These can be narrative games that can be completed in less than an hour, an endless runner with unique mechanics, a turn-based strategy with interesting gameplay loops. Concise games that players can pick-up and enjoy in an afternoon.

MiniGame aims to support new teams coming together for the first time, so that they can build credibility and develop the internal knowledge/workflows needed to create, develop and release engaging video games.

MiniGame Induction

Successful **MiniGame** companies will receive a full induction to the facilities and the programme in January 2025.

Induction will include:

- Introductions to mentors and key NIS Staff
- Talks from experienced local video game studios
- Introduction to Prototyping

Resources

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

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

- Publishing
- Marketing
- Programming
- Game Design
- Business/Business Development
- Legal

MiniGame will be hosted in the Pixel Mill based at the Ormeau Labs in Belfast, or remotely if teams are not based in Belfast, where companies will have access to facilities and mentors. (If companies are not based in Belfast but are close to one of our regional partners there may be the option to offer access to office space outside of Belfast). Those interested in applying to **MiniGame** 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.

Programme

MiniGame is split into phases, where companies will be challenged with developing an idea for a game, validating the market opportunity for that idea and taking it into production.

The stages will be as follows:

- **Prototyping/Vertical Slice:** 4 weeks of idea generation and prototyping. Companies will be challenged to come up with 2 game concepts, creating a prototype for each. They will choose one prototype to develop into a vertical slice from which they can create and release a finished game, validating the business case and market opportunity for each.
- **Production:** Based on the market validation carried out by companies, they will select a game which they will take into full production for 16-19 weeks with the goal of self-publishing the finished game by the end of the 6-month period.

By the end of the production phase companies will be expected to have published a game which is within the scope of the budget and time allowed. It is important that companies have a concerted focus on marketing and community building around their games throughout the programme.

During the programme companies will have milestones/deliverables which they will be required to meet to move on to the next stage of development. Summary as per below.

Phase	Time	Deliverable	Funding Available
Induction and onboarding	1-2 weeks	Fully executed contract (to be provided by Northern Ireland Screen)	Up to £10,000
Prototyping/Vertical Slice	4 Weeks	2 Prototypes 1 Vertical Slice Vouching report (templates and guidelines will be provided) 1 development update report	Up to £7,500
Production	16 Weeks	1 playable build	Up to £6,000
Final Production	3 Weeks	Fully developed and published game 10x stills 2 minutes of gameplay footage Final vouching report (templates and guidelines will be provided) Final delivery report	Up to £1,500

Application process

MiniGame is open to companies that meet the following criteria:

- Legally incorporated independent game companies. The company does not need to have been registered with Companies House prior to the submission of the expression of interest. However, if the team is invited to submit a Screen Fund application, the company must be registered with Companies House.
- Companies must consist of 2 or more team members (ideally 3) with the key roles of programming, art and business development covered within the team. The team members must be Northern Ireland residents. 'Resident' means that Northern Ireland is the primary residence for tax purposes.
- Companies and team members must be committed to participating for the duration of the programme: **6 January 2025 – 27 June 2025**.
- The company must be a new studio with no previous titles released, however team members can have worked on games that have been previously released by other studios.

The Company, including its team members, can join **MiniGame** in January 2025.

- Applicants can apply for up to £25,000 based on an overall budget of £28,000. The match funding of £3,000 can be in kind and these costs should be clearly noted on the budget.

Stages of the 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 **MiniGame** 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 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.

Evaluation criteria

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

- I. Team's knowledge of game production
 - a. This can be through student projects, modding in your own time or taking part in game jams.
- II. Company can demonstrate that key roles are covered by team members.
 - a. Programming
 - b. Art
 - c. Game Design
 - d. Business Development/Marketing

III. Ability to concisely pitch a video game

Timeline

Date	Detail – dates are indicative
Deadline for submission of Expression of Interest	22/11/24
Shortlisting	27/11/24
Interviews	03/12/24 and 04/12/24
Notification to successful Companies	04/12/24
Submission of applications to Screen Fund for funding	11/12/24
Letter of offer issued	20/12/24
Start of MiniGame	06/01/25
Prototype/Vertical Slice	13/01/25
Production	10/02/25

FAQ

When can I apply for MiniGame?

Expression of interest will open on **12th November** and will close at 5pm on **22nd November**.

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

MiniGame starts on **06 January 2025** and runs for up to 6 months until **27 June 2025**.

How much funding is available?

Companies may be awarded up to £25,000 in funding across the **MiniGame** programme. This is dependent on meeting agreed milestones.

How long will MiniGame companies have access to The Pixel Mill?

MiniGame companies will have access to facilities and mentors at the Pixel Mill during the programme.

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

The terms of the funding provided through **MiniGame** 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?

Companies accepted onto **MiniGame** 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 companies will need to attend workshops and meetings in person.

My company is not based in Northern Ireland, can I still apply for MiniGame?

Yes, however your team members need to be resident 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?

MiniGame is aimed at video game companies. The company must consist of at least 2 team members committed to participating in the full length of the programme. 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@northernireland.co.uk.

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

Companies may have an idea for a game before joining **MiniGame** however all companies are expected to take part in each stage.

If companies 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@northernireland.co.uk.

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

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

I'm not interested in MiniGame 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@northernireland.co.uk.

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

It is expected that companies will have at least self-published their completed game on the platform of their choice by **27 June 2025**. However, there are several milestones/deliverables during the course of the programme, relative to each stage.

When will we hear if our expression of interest has been successful or not?

You will find out by **28 November 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 availability.

When will the interviews take place?

The interviews will take place on **3 December 2024 & 4 December 2024**.

Who will be on the interview panel?

Applicants will be assessed by Northern Ireland Screen and at least one other industry professional.

Application stage

Successful applicants will be notified on **4 November 2024**, and the company will be sent a link to the online application form from Northern Ireland Screen.

All applicants must complete an online application form and ensure all supporting documentation is submitted either online with the application or via email to Rebekah Farmer, Funding Executive rebekah.farmer@northernirelandscreen.co.uk.

Failure to provide the requested supporting documentation will result in the application being eliminated.

Applications will then be reviewed by a Heads of Department Committee within Northern Ireland Screen.

What is Northern Ireland Screen looking for?

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