

To mark the Ulster-Scots role in the foundation of the United States of America as the nation celebrates its 250th anniversary in 2026, the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund proposes the creation of a landmark digital project.

BACKGROUND

On 4th July 2026, the USA will celebrate 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Many Ulster-Scots people helped create this document that shaped the future of the United States of America and inspired other nations in their quest for independence. Twenty US Presidents, as well as many leading economists, industrialists, educators and creatives – past and present – can also trace their ancestry to Ulster.

DIGITAL PROPOSAL

The 250th anniversary of the founding of the USA will be a national celebration with global resonance. This proposed digital project will tap into that narrative by recounting the often-overlooked story of the role of the Scots-Irish in American Independence. It will also celebrate three centuries of close cultural connections between Ulster and the USA.

The project could take the follow existing [Ulster-Scots pocket trail map](#) and [online content](#) as its source. A company could create a multi-media version of an updated map and text, potentially presented as an app guiding users to locations around Ulster and learning about the people and places associated with the story along the way.

Additional potential interactive elements should be designed to appeal to children *and* adults to tell the story of the Scots-Irish in an engaging and innovative way. This could include animation, gaming, podcast, VTs, VR and quizzes.

As the key financial stakeholder, the USBF will oversee the creation of a team of Ulster-Scots consultants/writers whose work will form the editorial foundations of the digital resource. The USBF would like companies with a strong track record in delivering historically significant multi-media projects to work with this team to ensure delivery of a high-quality project.

Also worth looking at is USBF funded website [Making Northern Ireland](#), an online resource produced by the Nerve Centre to mark the centenary of Northern Ireland in 2021. Meticulously researched, and embedded with audio links, interactive maps and learning resources, the website has provided additional inspiration for the creation of a USA 250 digital project.

WHY THE USBF

This anniversary has huge Ulster-Scots significance and the USBF is extremely keen to play a role in ensuring delivery of a definitive overview of the role of the Ulster-Scots with an online digital resource. Not only will this help reach an international audience, but it will also ensure a robust depiction of the Ulster-Scots/Scots-Irish story – past and present – with a nuanced and detailed telling never before seen or heard on a global stage.

The 250th anniversary is the ideal opportunity, not least with Vice President JD Vance's Scots-Irish (aka Ulster-Scots) heritage portrayed in *Hillbilly Elegy*, his best-selling autobiography and subsequent film directed by Ron Howard and streaming on Netflix. Moreover, the US government has launched [Task Force 250](#) to oversee anniversary events and commemorations in the USA.

POTENTIAL COLLABORATIONS

NI-based companies are invited to put together a treatment to deliver the final product alongside input and support from committed stakeholders. Several Northern Irish organisations are stakeholders in the story and could work with an independent company to create something special and enduring.

In 2024, the **Ulster-Scots Agency** worked with the **National Archives** to display one of only 26 surviving copies of the 1776 Declaration of Independence at **PRONI** in Belfast. PRONI is now working with the **Mellon Centre for Migration Studies** on a 2026 project collating archives relating to the anniversary.

The **National Museums NI** Ulster American Folk Park (UAFP) opened on 4th July 1976, marking the 200th anniversary of US Independence, and will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2026. The UAFP is built around the original Mellon homestead and tells the story of Irish and Scots-Irish emigration from Ulster to America. The National Museums NI is planning its own anniversary celebrations.

The **Ulster University** and/or **Queen's University Belfast** have worked on similar history-based projects [Bad Bridget](#) and [The Witches of Islandmagee](#).

Tourism Ireland also wishes to capitalise on the anniversary by tapping into the US Diaspora keen to connect with their Irish roots. The national tourism agency is also at the cutting edge of digital interaction. You can view their [Wild Atlantic Way](#) interactive content here, with similar resources linked at the end of the page.

BUDGET incl. HOSTING and SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

We estimate a budget of no more than £70k to complete, deliver and market this project. A robust social media marketing campaign must be included in the treatment and budget. Depending on total costs, the USBF will consider funding up to 75% of the production budget. The remaining 25% can be financial and/or 'in kind' support from key stakeholders. This could include copyright use of the existing Ulster-Scots Agency map as detailed above. The budget should include a 10% production fee and costings to host the site/app for no less than five years from date of delivery.

DELIVERY DATE

Delivery of the completed project must be at least three months before the 250th anniversary of the US Declaration of Independence i.e. **April 2026** ahead of launch to fully capitalise on the 4th July 2026 anniversary and beyond.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

The deadline for applications is **Friday 18th April 2025**. If you would like to discuss submitting an application, please contact Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund Executive, Heidi McAlpin at heidi@northernirelandscreen.co.uk.