

RDS Craft Awards - Established Maker Award

Applicant Guidance (2026)

1) About the Award

The Established Maker Award recognises professional craft practitioners who demonstrate outstanding craftsmanship, artistic ambition, and sustained contribution to contemporary craft. It supports ambitious, developmental, creative, research-led, or sector-facing projects that meaningfully extend an established practice (e.g., major works, advanced research, international opportunities, material experimentation, mentorship, residencies, exhibitions, publications, and proportionate studio investment). Funding supports future activity only (not retrospective costs).

2) Who Can Apply (Eligibility)

- Makers operating at an established professional level (typically 10+ years of practice) with a sustained track
- Applicants should meet the general programme eligibility published in the *RDS Craft Awards – Rules of Entry (2026)* (e.g., residency and applicant status).
- One application per person/collective; collaborations are eligible where one lead applicant is identified (see Conditions of Entry).

Note: “Established” refers to the maturity of practice, consistency of excellence, sector engagement, and capacity to deliver an ambitious proposal, not solely years in practice.

3) What the Award Supports

Proposals that extend, deepen, or scale an established practice, including (but not limited to):

- Project development and creation of major work/bodies of work.
- Advanced research or technique development; material/process experimentation.
- Mentorships, residencies, exhibitions, publications, international opportunities.
- Sector-facing initiatives that share knowledge or strengthen craft ecology.
- Targeted studio investment where essential to the project's delivery and outcomes. All activity must be forward-looking; funding cannot support completed or retrospective work.

4) Eligible Costs

Applicants may include a proportionate mix of project costs necessary to deliver the proposed outcomes, for example:

- Professional fees (artist/technical), mentorship, specialist services.
- Materials, processes, fabrication, prototyping, trials, testing (directly linked to the proposal).
- Research and development costs (incl. archive access, specialist labs/equipment hire) aims.
- Travel (economy) and modest accommodation required to deliver the project.
- Proportionate studio investment that is clearly justified by the project (e.g., safety-critical tooling essential to the proposed work).

5) Ineligible Costs

- Retrospective costs or already-completed activity.

- General living costs (e.g., rent, utilities) or ongoing overheads not directly linked to the project's delivery.
 - Unjustified capital purchases not essential to achieving the stated outcomes.
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6) Application Requirements

Submit your application via the online portal during the 2026 window (see Timeline).

Applications must include:

- Completed application form.
- 2–6 high-quality images of recent work (normally within the last five years).
- A concise project proposal (objectives, methods, partners, timeline, outcomes).
- Fully itemised budget (clear costs, quotes where possible; value for money).
- 150-word maker statement (public-facing biography).
- Optional: up to 3-minute video (context/process).
- Agreement to participate in RDS publicity if shortlisted/awarded.

One entry per applicant; entry is free. See programme Rules of Entry for general conditions and category-specific guidelines.

7) Judging Process

- Applications are verified and reviewed by an independent judging panel.
 - Longlisting (April–May) → Shortlist meeting → Onsite judging → RDS Craft Awards Ceremony
 - Panel recommendations proceed for approval; conflicts of interest are declared and managed; confidentiality applies.
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8) Assessment Criteria

Panels assess applications against published criteria (indicative 1–5 scoring per criterion):

1. Craft Excellence & Mastery — Technical refinement, innovation, consistency.
2. Artistic Vision & Sectoral Impact — Clarity, originality, contribution to contemporary craft.
3. Project Proposal Quality & Feasibility — Ambition, structure, credible plan and partners.
4. Budget Quality & Proportionality — Realistic, justified, future costs, value for money.
5. Public or Sector Benefit — Sharing skills/insights; strengthening the craft community.

Note: Judges allocate funding within the total allocation available and are not obliged to award the full fund if applications do not reach the benchmark standard.

9) Awardee Requirements

Successful applicants will be asked to provide:

- A short mid-point progress update.
 - A final report with images documenting outcomes.
 - One public-benefit action, e.g., talk, demo, tutorial, or written reflection for RDS audiences.
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10) Timeline (2026)

- Application window: 2 March – 13 April 2026 (online submissions only).
 - Longlisting: April–May; Shortlist meeting (May); Onsite judging (September); Awards Ceremony (19 November). *(Panel stages subject to final confirmation.)*
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11) Key Tips for a Competitive Application

- **Anchor the proposal** in your established track record and show how this award would **advance** your practice meaningfully (not just maintain it).

- Demonstrate sector benefit (knowledge-sharing, audience engagement, skills transmission, or ecosystem building).
 - Ensure the budget is proportionate, clearly itemised, and strictly future-focused.
 - Submit concise, high-quality images that evidence mastery and align with the proposal.
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12) Conditions & Integrity

- Conflicts of interest must be declared; affected judges abstain from assessment of the relevant application.
 - Confidentiality applies to applications and deliberations.
 - Judges may recommend partial funding or withhold awards if standards are not met.
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13) Contact & Access

For queries regarding eligibility, submission, access needs, or guidance on selecting the appropriate category, please consult the **RDS Craft Awards – Rules of Entry (2026)** and the **Established Maker category guidelines**, or contact the Awards team arts@rds.ie

Appendix — Application Checklist (Established Maker)

- Completed online application form
 - 2–6 images (recent work; professional quality)
 - Project proposal (objectives, methods, partners, timeline, public/sector benefit)
 - Fully itemised budget (quotes where possible; future costs only)
 - 150-word maker statement (public-facing bio)
 - Optional: video (max 3 minutes)
 - Agreement to participate in RDS publicity if shortlisted/awarded.
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