

IMAGINE!

Festival of Ideas & Politics

Open Call Guidelines

1. Overview & Purpose

Every autumn, Imagine! Belfast invites individuals, community groups, artists, charities, and organisations to submit event proposals for our upcoming festival the following Spring. The next Imagine Festival of Ideas & Politics runs from **5-11 April 2027**.

We aim to encourage participation from under-represented groups and stimulate debate on issues often excluded from local political discourse. We adopt an expansive, imaginative interpretation of "*ideas and politics*" to give the entire community a direct role in shaping our curated programme.

2. What We Are Looking For

- **Formats:** We welcome proposals for events including, but not limited to talks, debates, discussions, performances, exhibitions, workshops, film screenings, family activities, online and hybrid formats.
- **Tone & Content:** Creative, engaging, thought-provoking, and accessible events that encourage active audience participation and discussion.
- **Originality:** We prioritise original proposals over repeat events.
- All submitted events must directly align with our core **Festival Values:**

Independent & Imaginative Thinking: Encouraging creative expression, pushing boundaries, and facilitating constructive dialogue on vital civic issues.

Pluralism & Respectful Debate: Promoting open discussion, mutual respect, good relations, and cultural diversity within a safe, inclusive, and non-partisan space.

Inclusivity & Accessibility: Removing financial, physical, and social barriers to ensure broad, active public participation across all demographics.

Community Empowerment & Protection of Minorities: We actively support and empower under-represented communities and protected minority groups. We will not accept submissions that feature hate speech, targeted harassment, or defamatory content directed at any group or individual.

- **Theme:** For 2027, we would particularly welcome events around the theme of **deliberative democracy, social justice and equity, economics, climate action, digital futures & AI**, and the **impact of arts & culture**- however, please do not regard this as a prescriptive list.

3. Application Requirements & Eligibility

- **Dates & Location:** Events must take place during the festival week from 5-11 April, held as public events in Belfast and/or online.
- **Accessibility:** Events must be as physically and financially accessible as possible, with a preference for free-to-attend or Pay What You Can offerings.
- **Exclusions:** We cannot accept applications directly from political parties.

4. Support Provided

- Guidance on securing suitable venues in Belfast.
- Centralised marketing, promotion, and ticketing support (a 10% commission on ticket sales applies for managing this service).
- AI generated images and/or artwork are prohibited from use to promote Imagine Festival events. We have clear guidelines on text free, simple images and our experienced team of designers can assist if needed.

- Micro-funding options (subject to eligibility criteria and availability – see financial support section of application).

5. Terms, Conditions & Festival Rights

- **Selection & Right of Refusal:** Due to the volume of submissions, we review every proposal carefully but are unable to provide individual feedback on every application. Submission of a proposal does not guarantee inclusion in the festival programme. Imagine Belfast Ltd explicitly reserves the right to decline or refrain from proceeding with any submitted event at its absolute discretion, particularly where an event is determined not to be operationally viable, poses logistical or health & safety concerns, or is inconsistent with our published festival values.
- **Ticketing & Financial Terms:** Imagine Belfast Ltd provides a central ticketing and box office infrastructure; a standard 10% commission fee is retained on all ticket sales to cover administrative and processing costs.
- **Conditional Acceptance & Right of Cancellation:** Imagine Belfast Ltd reserves the right to withdraw, remove, or cancel any provisionally accepted or scheduled festival event at any stage prior to or during the festival. This right may be exercised due to operational feasibility, safety risks, breach of our values/guidelines, or where the event poses a potential risk to the reputation, safety, or legal standing of the organisation.
- **No Contractual Binding:** The publication of an event in promotional materials or online listings remains conditional and does not constitute an unalterable contractual commitment by Imagine Belfast Ltd to run the event. Where Imagine Belfast Ltd has explicitly agreed in writing to provide a specific subsidy, those agreed financial commitments will be honoured only where Imagine exercises its right to cancel the event, ensuring contributors are not left out of pocket. Imagine Belfast Ltd is not liable for subsidising events cancelled, withdrawn, or unperformed by the organiser.