

Unheard Voice Award

: individual writer

Open to writers from under-represented backgrounds

Artists Support Scheme

Sligo Arts Service Department in partnership with The Arts Council

Award: €2,000 + 4 one-to-one mentoring sessions

Closes: 5pm Thursday 23rd October 2025

Paper Application process: arts@sligococo.ie

Audio Applications: Only via We Transfer

The Unheard Voice Award aims to offer meaningful support to a writer from an under-represented background who considered themselves as an emerging or mid-career writer (see definitions of emerging & mid-career writers Page 3) and wishes to develop their craft.

This award is specifically for individuals from communities and backgrounds under-represented in Irish writing. This includes, but is not limited to those based on age, civil or family status, disability, gender, membership of the Traveller Community, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or displaced/migrant communities.

The award aligns with The Arts Council's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Implementation Plan, recognising the additional barriers faced by artists from under-represented communities as they strive to advance their careers and strengthen their artistic practice. For this award, writing quality & voice matter more than formal experience.

What the Award Provides:

- Bursary of €2,000 to support time and resources for writing and development.
- Four one-to-one mentoring sessions with an established writer.

Applications are welcomed in written or audio format (guidelines attached) to ensure accessibility for all writers.

We welcome applications from writers working in any form of creative writing – including fiction, poetry, theatre, screenwriting, and non-fiction.

This award is not about producing a finished work. Instead, we are looking for writers with potential, originality, and a clear vision of how this opportunity could help them progress in their creative journey.

Mentorship:

Sligo Arts Service will match the successful recipient with an established writer whose experience aligns with the applicant's needs and goals.

Who Can Apply:

This opportunity is open to:

- Emerging/mid-career writers based in the county of Sligo
- Individuals who identify as belonging to a background or community under-represented in Irish literature.

How to Apply:

1. Complete the [Application form](#)
2. **Alternative Application Format: Audio Submission (We Transfer)**
3. Submit your application (paper OR audio) to the email address: arts@sligococo.ie
4. Email 1 sample of your work along with your application whether written or audio – without this your application will not be accepted

Deadline for ALL applications: Thursday 23rd October at 5pm. Late or incomplete applications cannot be considered.

Audio Submissions:

Applicants may choose to submit a short audio recording instead of a written application. In your recording (5–7 minutes), please refer to the written application and answer the questions in it.

The audio MUST include:

1. Your name and contact details (telephone, address & email)
2. Your background and the community you identify with
3. Your writing journey so far
4. What you hope to achieve through the award
5. How the award and mentorship would support your development
6. An audio reading of a piece of work (include title & background) no more than 3 minutes in duration

How to record & submit an audio application:

You can record on your phone, computer, or any device. Save your file as .mp3, .m4a, .wav, or .mp4.

Submitting via WeTransfer:

1. Go to **wetransfer.com** and click “**Send a file.**”
2. **Add your audio file.**
3. Enter **arts@sligococo.ie** as the recipient and your own email to receive confirmation.
4. Include a short message with your **name** and note that this is your **Unheard Voice Award application.**
5. **Click “Transfer”** and wait for the confirmation email.

Tip: Keep your recording under 5–7 minutes and label the file clearly (e.g., Jane_Doe_UVA_Audio.mp3). Contact arts@sligococo.ie if you need help submitting.

Definitions of Emerging & Mid-Career Writers:

Emerging Writer:

- Has begun to develop their professional writing practice but has limited publication or production experience.
- Has demonstrated commitment to writing through completed work, participation in workshops, courses, or readings.
- May have some publications (e.g. in journals, anthologies, online platforms) but no full-length book yet published with a recognised publisher.
- Is not yet earning a significant portion of their income from writing.
- Is at a stage of developing craft, building networks, and seeking professional guidance or mentorship.

Mid-career Writer:

- Has established a publishing or production record and is working to consolidate or extend their career.
- Has at least one full-length work (novel, short story collection, poetry collection, or equivalent) published or under contract with a recognised, independent publisher.
- Demonstrates an ongoing writing practice and engagement with the literary community.
- May have received previous supports (residencies, bursaries, mentoring) and is now seeking to develop their audience, sustainability, or craft at a deeper level.
- Often in transition between “emerging” and “established,” focusing on advancing their career.

Assessment Criteria

- Writers who can articulate how the award would benefit their development and help them take the next step in their creative practice.
- Writers deemed to have potential, originality, and a clear sense of how this opportunity could help them.

1. Alignment with Award Purpose (25%)

- **Relevance of Background:** Demonstrates that the applicant identifies with a community under-represented in Irish writing (including, but not limited to, age, civil/family status, disability, gender, Traveller Community, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, displaced/migrant communities).
- **Stage of Career:** Shows that the applicant is at an emerging/mid stage of their writing journey and would benefit from mentored support.
- **Contribution to Diversity in Irish Literature:** Illustrates potential to bring a unique or underrepresented perspective to Irish writing.

2. Writing Potential and Originality (30%)

- **Creativity and Voice:** Demonstrates originality, distinctive voice, and creative ambition.
- **Craftsmanship:** Shows evidence of skill in literary structure, language, style, and clarity (appropriate to writing form – fiction, poetry, theatre, screenwriting, or non-fiction).
- **Potential for Development:** Indicates that the applicant's writing shows promise and could significantly benefit from mentorship and bursary support.

3. Clarity and Realism of Development Goals (20%)

- **Understanding of Opportunity:** Clearly articulates how the award (mentorship + bursary) will support their writing journey.

4. Quality of Application (15%)

- **Personal Statement:** Clear, coherent, and engaging; communicates background, motivations, and aspirations effectively.
- **Writing Sample:** Well-prepared, within guidelines (up to 10 pages), and reflective of potential.

5. Overall Impact and Potential Contribution to Irish Writing (10%)

- **Unique Perspective:** Contribution to increasing diversity and inclusivity in Irish literature.
- **Long-Term Potential:** Likely positive impact on applicant's creative journey and the broader literary landscape.

About Sligo Arts Service

Sligo Arts Service is a department within Sligo County Council and works to support and promote the development of the arts across County Sligo. Through funding opportunities, mentoring, residencies, partnerships & arts programming the Service aims to nurture creativity, foster inclusion, and ensure access to artistic expression for all communities in partnership with the Arts Council of Ireland.

The Unheard Voice Award is a new award, reflecting the continued commitment by Sligo Arts Service to equality, diversity, and inclusion within the arts, and its belief in the power of storytelling to reflect the richness and diversity of contemporary Ireland.

For more information about Sligo Arts Service visit:

www.sligoarts.ie

arts@sligococo.ie