

Commissioning Brief



Commissioning Brief No: 103004
BBC Sounds: Dramatic Storytelling

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SECTION A: EDITORIAL OPPORTUNITY

BBC Sounds Commissioning Brief - 2019/20: Dramatic Storytelling

- BBC Sounds operates a rolling podcast commissioning round throughout the year which has no deadlines for submissions. (There is a short period at the end of each financial year when the rolling round pauses and then re-launches.)
- This rolling round is split into four briefs: Funny, Quirky, Odd; Discover, Explain; Dramatic Storytelling and Pop cultures, sub cultures. These four areas recognise that the best podcasts often do not conform to traditional genres and formats but often combine, adapt and transform them.
- BBC Sounds will also open additional rounds asking for ideas in specific subject or format areas. Please check the BBC Radio commissioning site for details.
- All proposals must be submitted through Proteus (see Section B for how to gain access and detailed instructions).
- You will be notified of a decision about your proposal after a maximum of 90 days after the point of submission. (See Section C for the commissioning timetable.)

Guide price per episode:

- Strand: approx. £1-5k per episode
- Box set: approx. £6-8k per episode
- Flagship: dependent upon IP

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About BBC Sounds

BBC Sounds brings together live and on-demand radio, music and podcasts into a single personalised app and website. On-demand audio and podcasts for BBC Sounds will be driven by five commissioners based within existing audio commissioning teams across the BBC, working closely with the BBC Sounds central commissioning team to deliver the editorial vision.

All commissioners are focused on innovation in podcasting and on-demand audio; looking to reflect and create new listening habits through digital first audio.

Jason Phipps, Commissioning Editor for podcasts on BBC Sounds, has a pan-BBC perspective often working with multiple BBC teams as well as external partners. Young adult podcast drama, targeted youth factual and distinct crossovers in comedy and factual are Jason's main focus.

Louise Kattenhorn, Commissioner for Radio 1 and 1Xtra, will be concentrating on companion podcasts for BBC TV programmes such as Obsessed With... Line of Duty and Killing Eve, music-focused youth zeitgeist titles and fresh comedy and music titles for a Radio 1 audience.

Richard Maddock, Commissioning Editor at Radio 5 Live, will focus on the best sport factual and conversational podcasts, popular dramatic documentaries, and factual investigations.

Rhian Roberts, Digital Commissioner for Radio 4, Radio 4 Extra & Radio 3, will focus on the best in mind-expanding comedy, innovative and entertaining factual, globally relevant drama



and audio book titles.

Finally, John Leagas, from BBC Children's, will be commissioning 'coming of age' podcasts for children/young adults and drama aimed at under 16 year olds.

There will be a series of time-bound commissioning briefs for BBC Sounds along with our rolling open round. Podcasts will continue to also be commissioned by other parts of the BBC including BBC World Service as well as Nations and Local Radio which will be available on BBC Sounds.

Our three priorities are:

- **Innovation:** podcasts which play with and exploit the form's creative storytelling possibilities. Podcasting allows for genre bending and reinventions of the grammar of radio. We are looking for ideas which raise the bar for originality, whether that's in the treatment of a subject, an unprecedented collaboration with new partners or across networks – or something else entirely!
- **New voices:** podcasts that authentically represent the rich diversity of voices and lived experiences relevant to under 35 audiences. The best podcasts often feature a host or narrator who has a particular personal insight or position on the story
- **New audiences:** podcasts which engage existing podcast listeners who don't consume BBC output **and** podcasts which convert new people to the joys of podcasts. So we want to hear brilliant ideas aimed at sophisticated listeners who may consume hours of US podcasts but not consider listening to the BBC. But we also want popular, mainstream ideas that appeal to wide audiences and may act as 'gateway' podcasts for brand new listeners.

The target audience for podcasts commissioned by the BBC Sounds commissioning team is people in the UK aged 18-34.

Be bold, be daring, surprise us. Be led by your insights into this audience - not by what the BBC has commissioned before.

We recognise that in order to break new ground, ideas need to be developed and tested. Before a full commission, we will fund piloting work – whether that's chemistry tests, script development, or production of part of an episode – during which suppliers should expect a high level of oversight and feedback from the commissioner.

Proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria:

1. The **quality** of the idea;
2. How the idea meets a **need or needs of the target audience** (aged 18-34) as identified by BBC research (see list below);
3. How much the **idea is a distinct addition to the overall UK podcast market**, and how it takes the **best public service content to younger curious audiences**
4. How well your idea fits with **what makes podcasts distinctive from radio** – see Appendix A;
5. How your idea fits with the BBC's **wider creative calendar**.



18-34 Audience Needs – as identified by BBC audience research

Social Connection

- The need to interact with friends and family, to learn about and to build relationships.

Learning & Discovery

- The need to enhance your knowledge or skills through learning about the world and the way that things work.

Mood Management

- Young people's most frequent need of media is to change or enhance their mood. This can involve stimulation ('I want to feel actively engaged in something'), wind-down ('I want to relax'), killing time ('I want to not feel bored') or background noise or mood setting ('I want to feel comforted or have a feeling of good company').

Independence

- The need for inspiring and helpful experiences that help them develop their sense of self, identity and independence.



EDITORIAL BRIEF

Dramatic Storytelling

These podcast commissions will tell big stories over long story arcs, tackling complex subjects and characters in depth. These investigations and dramas will be bespoke commissions with episodic frameworks designed to make the best of the stories.

Podcast dramas, whether scripted or improvised, are a particular area of innovation and ambition in the podcast space. We would like to encourage highly ambitious proposals in this area focused on fun and popular ideas that would extend the BBC's track record in brilliant drama on screen and in radio. These proposals must be distinct from radio and recognise and exploit the sophistication of the podcast fiction market. Before submitting proposals, please read the [overview of the US and UK drama podcast market on the BBC Sounds page on the Radio commissioning site](#).

Examples of podcasts which have been creatively ambitious in this space: The Heart's No series and Kaitlin Prest's The Shadows, which mixes drama and biography; George The Poet's Have You Heard George's Podcast?, which extends poetic language in podcast form; real-life dramas such as S-Town and storytelling exposés like The Butterfly Effect with Jon Ronson, which unspool their narrative through compelling interviews, empathetic narrators and cinematic sound design and music; true crime thrillers such as In the Dark, The Dropout and Up and Vanished; innovative fictional dramas that play with genre, tone and character such as Welcome to Night Vale, Passenger List, The Black Tapes, Archive 81 and Wolverine: The Long Night.

We have a number of factual podcasts already in development for 2019 and so we are particularly looking for fiction ideas or highly innovative factual/fiction projects that can land in the Spring of 2020. To this end, we will shortly be running a specific commissioning round in 19/20 for podcast drama; please check the Radio commissioning site.



SECTION B: FULL PROPOSAL AND CRITERIA

COMPLIANCE AND BBC EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

You will be required to deliver podcasts that are in line with the BBC's Editorial Guidelines and be able to adapt to the BBC's changing editorial and business needs during the period of the commission.

Unless based on a pre-existing BBC brand, the BBC's approach to contracting podcasts commissioned against this brief is that the Supplier retains ownership over any new IP created. The BBC requires an exclusive 10 year worldwide licence to make the content available through the BBC Sounds app and website and publish globally via RSS feed. The BBC requires the exclusive option to either recommission further series, transfer the content/format to other BBC Public Services (for an agreed fee) or commission derivative works based on the content. On confirmation of a commission, you will be contacted by a member of the Commercial, Rights & Business Affairs team to further liaise on the contract. Please only submit a proposal if you are happy with these contracting principles.

To submit proposals, you will need to be a registered supplier to BBC Radio. More information about the criteria for becoming a BBC Radio supplier and how to register is here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/1L6ff727k9rVTNbLY8cBHm5/becoming-a-supplier>

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the following instructions. Proposals not complying with these instructions may be rejected by the Commissioner whose decision in this matter will be final.

1. WHAT WE WILL NEED FROM YOU

In Proteus, go to 'Create a Proposal', which sits under Commissions. Fill in your proposal title, then choose BBC Sounds in the network field, the relevant financial year and relevant Commissioning Brief. Fill in the estimated number of episodes, duration and price, your team's details and an estimated delivery date. Then go to the Synopsis section to enter your proposal. We need the following information from you – in two parts. Part 1 should be entered in the Short synopsis field; Part 2 in the Full synopsis field. The minimum amount of words is 500; the maximum is 6000.

When writing your proposal please keep in mind the assessment criteria in section 2.

Part 1 – to contain:

- 3 possible podcast titles**

- Podcast description** – as it would appear in the BBC Sounds app to users (max 180 characters)

- Target audience and the audience need/s your podcast meets** - explain why your podcast will appeal to your target demographic and how it meets the audience need/s (see page 4)



Clear outline of format - explaining the treatment, i.e. number of hosts and/or contributors, key components and a typical structure of an episode around which the content will be wrapped.

Estimated number of episodes – it would be best to plan a season 1 and build out from there

Part 2 – to contain:

The name and contact details of your nominated representative (a single point of contact within your organisation who will be responsible for all communication related to the commissioning brief). Please include an email and telephone number as there is not a field in Proteus to automatically supply this.

Confirmation that you have the relevant rights - to use already recorded tape, music, other source material such as books etc.

Details of any third party suppliers. You may want to work in partnership with third parties to deliver the brief. If so, you should include:

- responses on behalf of each partner
- details of the responsibilities of each partner
- an outline of the main personnel who will be responsible for the production and delivery of the podcast.
- an explanation of how working in partnership would be successfully achieved, including a proposed legal structure (e.g. one lead contractor and sub-contractors).

Risk management. You should identify specific risks e.g. production risk, business continuity etc.; and the processes or systems that will be put in place to manage these.



2. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Your proposal and interview, should there be one, will be evaluated according to the main criteria below. There are two stages of evaluation: the initial evaluation covers editorial; the final evaluation covers strategic fit, value for money and risk. For more information on the four stages of the commissioning process, see pages 9 to 10.

The final evaluation panel will consist of the following people:

- Jason Phipps, Podcast Commissioning Editor
- Procurement
- Business Affairs
- Subject matter experts from across the Networks may also be consulted.

Assessment Criteria
<p>Initial Evaluation:</p> <p>Editorial proposal and capability - this is testing the overall quality of your idea. The bullets below are indicators of the sort of things we are looking for.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your idea should land with our key demographic and meet the audience need/s which have been identified by BBC research• Your idea should be a distinct addition to the overall UK podcast market, and take the best public service content to younger curious audiences• Your idea should fit with what makes podcasts distinctive from radio
<p>Final Evaluation:</p> <p>Strategic Fit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fit against audience need/s (see page 4)• Diversity and inclusion i.e. ability to attract and retain listenership of diverse range of young people• Ability to innovate and evolve the podcast in line with changing audience habits• Plans for engaging young audiences via social media and interactive content• Fit with the BBC's wider creative calendar <hr/> <p>Value for Money</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Price per episode• Financial plan [including budget]• Where relevant, ability to attract and sustain commercial investment• Efficient production process particularly where working in partnership with other suppliers <hr/> <p>Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business Continuity (incl. Delivery)• Production Risk• BBC Reputation• Conflict of interest• Ability to comply with all relevant UK legislation and BBC Policies (not limited to Editorial)



SECTION C: THE COMMISSIONING PROCESS

THE FOUR STAGES

STAGE 1 – IDEA GENERATION

- Submit your Full Proposal – parts 1 and 2 – via Proteus. Use the tick boxes on pages 6 and 7.

STAGE 2: INITIAL EVALUATION – EDITORIAL – up to 90 days

- Jason Phipps, Podcast Commissioning Editor, and the Commissioning and Curation team will assess your proposal against the Assessment Criteria on pages 8 and 9.
- **After a maximum of 90 days** from the point of submission, you will be notified via Proteus that:
 - Your proposal has been rejected
 - Your proposal will be moved directly to stage 4 and final evaluation
 - Your proposal will be moved to stage 3 for a maximum of a further 6 weeks.

STAGE 3: IDEA CLARIFICATION – up to six weeks

- The Podcast team – plus, where necessary, content experts – will arrange approx. two meetings within the maximum period of six weeks to discuss your idea and shape it ready to be potentially greenlit. These creative conversations and the decisions made in shaping the idea will be documented in Proteus.

STAGE 4: FINAL EVALUATION – STRATEGIC FIT, VALUE FOR MONEY AND RISK

- You may be asked for an interview as part of the final evaluation stage. This may be required to ensure due diligence around higher risk commissions – e.g. on-going strands, podcasts with potential serious legal or editorial implications or podcasts that will be considerable investments in terms of time and money.

Should you be invited to an interview, we will notify you which members of the evaluation team will be attending this meeting. You should expect to be asked to discuss and elaborate on your proposal, and answer questions about it. It is also possible we may ask you to bring additional relevant material to this meeting – for example, a pilot episode. If this is required, funding would be provided to a pre-agreed budget - up to a maximum of £3k - dependent upon the complexity of the pilot episode.

- The evaluation team will evaluate your Proposal against the assessment criteria on pages 8 and 9 taking into account the responses given during the interview, and any other additional material requested.

Note: At any stage of the process, we may need to come back to you to seek clarification. Your answers will be factored into the evaluation process as appropriate.

COMMISSION AWARDED

Following confirmation by the BBC that you have been awarded a commission, the BBC will enter into a contract with you on the BBC's new terms and conditions for commissioning Podcasts.



The Commissioning Fee will be based on the budget proposed by you and accepted by the BBC during the commissioning process. It will be a fixed-price fee, and you will be solely responsible for any overspend.

The BBC reserves the right to change the timescales above if necessary for whatever reason. We will inform you of any changes as appropriate.

FEEDBACK

If you're unsuccessful after attending an interview / pitch meeting, you may request feedback. Once notified you have two weeks to request feedback. Requests for feedback should be made to jason.phipps@bbc.co.uk rachel.simpson@bbc.co.uk and elisha.sessions@bbc.co.uk

Feedback will be provided within two weeks of receiving the request.



SECTION D: WHAT TO EXPECT FROM US

NOMINATED REPRESENTATIVE

The BBC's nominated representatives for this commissioning brief are Jason Phipps, Rachel Simpson and Elisha Sessions. No individual other than the BBC's nominated representatives (or their delegates as advised by the BBC) is authorised to discuss the contents or the substance of this commissioning brief with you. We'll let you know of any change or addition to the BBC's nominated representatives.

RESPONSES TO YOUR QUESTIONS

In the interest of fair competition, where we feel it's appropriate, anonymised questions and responses will be circulated to all producers.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The BBC is a signatory to, and will abide by the principles of the [APC Code](#).

Subject to Section 2, paragraph 5 (Freedom of Information Act), the BBC will keep confidential all commercially sensitive information included in responses to this commissioning brief and will only use this information for the purposes of evaluating the Proposal, provided that you have identified the confidential nature of any such information in your response documents.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

As a public authority, the BBC is required to comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("FOIA"), which came into force on 1 January 2005. The FOIA is intended to deliver greater accountability for decisions and spending across the whole of the public sector. It requires public authorities to strike a balance between achieving transparency and protecting genuinely confidential or commercially sensitive information.

You should be aware that, under an FOIA request, the BBC may be required to disclose information contained within the Proposal or future contractual information. Following a request, the BBC may take the views of organisations submitting proposals into account when deciding what information will be disclosed.

For more information on the Freedom of Information Act see bbc.co.uk/foi

COSTS

You submit responses to this commissioning brief and take part in this process at your own cost.

If additional supporting material is requested prior to an interview (should one be required), we will notify you of how and when to submit this in good time ahead of this.

This commissioning brief is not a contract. However, the information contained in this commissioning brief, together with your responses, will form the basis of the final contract between you and the BBC.



The BBC reserves the right to exclude any producer that is found to either:

- a) have provided information which is untrue, or
- b) be in breach of any of the terms of the non-disclosure agreement.

By submitting your proposal, you confirm acceptance of the key contract terms.



APPENDICES

Appendix A – What makes podcasts distinct from radio?

A cheeky list of 11 'commandments' of podcasting!

1. A podcast is not a radio programme even if radio programmes can be made available to the public as podcasts.
2. For a younger generation who will never own a radio, podcasts are their radio but, reread rule 1.
3. The story and topic will always be the guide for the length of a podcast.
4. Podcasts are built for the headphone generation, be respectful, warm and gentle inside their heads.
5. Use your f-bombs wisely; be informal, be intimate, but, the freedom to use raw language does not mean it's an obligation.
6. Podcasts are a visually powerful form of audio, they can be cinema for the ears.
7. The angels are in the detail, podcasts tell big, thorny and emotionally complex stories, real and made up.
8. Podcasts offer clarity in chaos; in a manic news cycle, podcasts offer focus and context.
9. Podcasts are tribal; they bond and deepen communities.
10. Regardless of where they spring from podcasts are natively global digital forms of audio.
11. Podcasts are agile; they can take all the rules above and change them, except rule 1.

