

Commissioning Brief



Commissioning Brief No: 103004
BBC Sounds: Dramatic Storytelling

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SECTION A: EDITORIAL OPPORTUNITY

Commissioning Brief: 103004

Commission contacts	Jason Phipps, BBC Commissioning Editor for Podcasts Rachel Simpson, Curation and Commissioning, BBC Sounds
Duration of episodes	TBC – dependent upon the story
Number of episodes	TBC – dependent upon the story
Commissioning Year	2018/2019
Commissioning Round (Proteus)	BBC Sounds Podcasts
Guide Price per Episode	Strand (a weekly podcast of 25 episodes or more): : approx. £1-5k per episode Box set (a limited season/s of 6 to 15 episodes): approx. £6-8k per episode Flagship: guide price dependent upon talent, exclusive access to a story etc

Process

- Enter your proposal in Proteus Round “BBC Sounds Podcasts “ according to the instructions and criteria below
- The BBC Sounds podcast commissioning process is a rolling one with no deadline for submissions. You will be notified of a decision about your proposal after a maximum of 90 days from the point of submission. Refer to Section C (pages 9 and 10) for the full commissioning timetable.
- Email jason.phipps@bbc.co.uk and rachel.simpson@bbc.co.uk

About BBC Sounds Podcasts

BBC Sounds is at the centre of the BBC’s digital listening experience, re-inventing and growing BBC Radio and Music. Created in response to today’s world of on-demand content and audio streaming, the app will transform the way audiences discover and enjoy our output. It aims to give people, especially younger listeners, the best in entertaining, experimental and highly creative audio. Our podcast commissions for BBC Sounds will be distinct and will serve that younger audience who are already more likely to listen online and on-demand.

BBC Sounds podcast commissioning is based on:

1. The **quality** of the idea;
2. How the idea meets a **need or needs of the target audience** (aged 20-35) which have been identified by BBC research (see 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;
5. How your idea fits with the BBC's **wider creative calendar**.

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.

Types of Podcast

There are 3 episodic types:

- 1. Strand:** Large volume - approx. 25 episodes or more taking up daily or weekly space in a listener's media diet.
- 2. Boxset:** Medium volume – approx. 6 to 15 episodes suitable for very targeted ideas and formats, taking a listener on a specific journey or narrative arc.
- 3. Flagship:** Limited number of commissions per year. Blue chip collaborations with top journalists, producers and creatives.

If your idea requires a complicated structure or if you are proposing a run of more than 25 episodes, we would first commission a boxset before committing to a longer run.

We are looking for content not available anywhere else on the BBC. Be bold, be daring, surprise us. Podcasting allows for genre-bending and reinventions of the grammar of radio. Podcasting does best when the host/narrator has a particular insight or position on the story or content. Podcasting is a great space to grow new voices and diversify voices across the board. We want you to send us proposals for audio experiences that will excite and inspire the next generation of listeners.

Also note: we are open to piloting distinct formats and testing new and unique voices. Please state if you feel that piloting is critical to your idea.



EDITORIAL BRIEF

Dramatic Storytelling

The biggest brands in podcasting have been focused on ambitious stories in fiction and non-fiction. 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.

Examples in this space include: real-life dramas such as S-Town or storytelling exposés like The Butterfly Effect with Jon Ronson, which unspool their narrative through killer tape, empathetic narrators and cinematic sound design and music; true crime thrillers such as Death in Ice Valley, Dirty John, Up and Vanished, and Atlanta Monster; fictional dramas like Homecoming, Sandra and Limetown, and binge-worthy sci-fi, fantasy or horror such as Wolverine: The Long Night.

While we are open to ideas in every area, we are particularly looking for ideas targeted for the Sounds audience in the following areas: food and drink; money and personal finance; style; sports and sporting stories.



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.

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**, plus, when relevant, your own supplier information. Fill in the estimated episode number, 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.

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

- Intended publication period** – e.g. if your proposal is time sensitive and needs to be produced and syndicated within a specified time frame

- Estimated number of episodes** – we will be commissioning box sets and flagships but it would be wise to structure the pitch around season 1



Narrative arc – A description of how the story maps out over your chosen number of episodes. What are the story beats? What are the twists and/or reveals and when do they happen? Who are the contributors and talent? If it's a book adaption, do you have the rights sorted?

Detailed episode breakdown - two or three sentences per episode explaining the episode content, key subjects, guests and contributors. How long do you think an average episode would last?

Dream tape – if you're pitching an idea that explores a topic, tells a story and depends on specific access to people, or relies on specific recordings, please make sure you have this access and have these recordings with clear rights and permissions

Promotional strategy – including bespoke images, trails, video and audio assets for social media, plans for syndicating content across multiple platforms, simple pointers to key communities you could use to build awareness or common podcasts that would help you grow. Describe what you will deliver.

Estimated price per episode – in your initial proposal, we only need a guide price range: choose **either** £1-5K per episode, **or** £3-8k per episode, **or** more than £8k. Should your proposal go through to Stage 3 of the commissioning process, we will then ask you for a detailed budget breakdown.

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).

The planned location for the production team who will produce the podcast should you be successful.

Evidence that you have the skills to deliver, or the ability to acquire the skills to deliver, the production of the podcast in line with this commissioning brief.

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.

Confirm that you accept the BBC's contract terms.

Please note that the BBC is currently completing new terms and conditions for commissioning Podcasts that will shortly be made available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/25pj6s2n6N9yVjxgbXThbNW/agreements-contracts>.

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

Initial Evaluation:

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.

- Your idea should land with our key demographic 20–35 and meet the audience need state/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

For Dramatic Storytelling:

- If your idea is non-fiction, do you have "dream tape"? Dream tape is compelling, unique recordings that lift or anchor the story; think Adnan's prison conversations down the line.
- Your idea should have a compelling narrator embedded in the story - a relatable person who can create an empathetic bridge for our key 20-35 demographic to access this story.
- The complexity and arc of your idea should lend itself to the podcast form.
- If your story is historical it should chime with or illuminate a big contemporary issue for our key demographic 20-35.

Final Evaluation:

Strategic Fit

- Fit against audience need/s (see page 4)
- Diversity and inclusion i.e. ability to attract and retain listenership of diverse range



Assessment Criteria

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

Value for Money

- 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

Risk

- 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 and rachel.simpson@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 and Rachel Simpson. 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.

COPYRIGHT

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

CONFIDENTIALITY

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.



APPENDIX

Appendix – 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.

