



4

# Spring Commissioning Round 2026 DRAMA

Programmes for transmission April 2027-March 2028

PICOS: Spring 2026 | Timeline C | Factual Narrative Series, Arts & Drama

# CONTENTS

**SECTION A: RADIO 4..... 3**  
**SECTION B: EDITORIAL OPPORTUNITIES ..... 6**  
**SECTION C: COMMISSIONING TIMETABLE..... 18**  
**SECTION D: COMMISSIONING PROCESS..... 19**



## SECTION A: RADIO 4

Welcome to the Radio 4 Commissioning Round Briefs for 2027/28.

It's been another excellent year on Radio 4.

As you will know, we launched the biggest schedule change for a quarter of a century, introducing a series of new strands and podcasts, in 2024. The last year has seen those programmes bed in and become a welcome part of the refreshed schedule, alongside another terrific year of commissioned programming.

The History Podcast went from strength to strength: Invisible Hands, The Second Map, Half-Life, The Fort and The House at Number 48 were just some of the brilliant series that told gripping stories and garnered big followings as a result.

The van Tulleken twins got out their prescription pads to tackle some of the most thorny health questions in their new podcast, What's Up Docs? And Naomi Alderman has chalked up 25 fascinating short features telling the story of the world's most interesting minds in Human Intelligence.

Other notable series include What Happened to Counter Culture? with Stewart Lee, the extraordinary Anatomy of a Cancellation, Katherine Rundell's gorgeous evocations of endangered species in A Carnival of Animals and Rory Stewart's exploration of heroes in The Long History of Heroism.

In December we celebrated all things Austen with dramas, factual series and features marking the writer's 250<sup>th</sup> birthday. Central Intelligence returned updating the story of the CIA with a glittering cast including Kim Cattrall, Ed Harris and Johnny Flynn. And, for the third year running, a Radio 4 drama – Sleaze – picked up the prize for Best European Audio Fiction at the Prix Europa Awards.

On Friday nights The Naked Week replaced The Now Show, giving satire a new surprising journalistic twist and Strong Message Here, with Armando Iannucci, took on the job of decoding the week's political language.

The Reith Lectures were delivered by historian Rutger Bregman, who urged the millions listening around the globe to take hopeful lessons from history and summon their moral courage to make the world a better place.

Despite an increasingly competitive speech market, our linear audience held steady and our podcast listening grew significantly year on year, with Radio 4 podcasts and programmes being responsible, once again, for a record number of downloads (and occupying the majority of the top ten on demand slots on BBC Sounds).

The year ahead presents us with new challenges. Donald Trump is tearing up the post-war political consensus, Iran is imploding and Reform are topping the polls in the UK. May will



see important elections across England, Scotland and Wales. Graduate employment is running worryingly low and AI is causing both excitement and consternation as it continues to disrupt everyday human activity.

Then there is the continued rise of what Hannah Arendt calls “Defactualisation”. The challenge of explaining the truth to our audiences as competing perspectives, “hallucinating” AI and politically-driven disinformation swirl around us. I think Radio 4 has a duty to step into the fray and try its best to explain what is really going on - as it did in programmes like Anatomy of a Cancellation.

So we have to be fearless with our journalism, making good on our duty to explain and contextualise the complex world around us as well as chart where we might be heading.

It also means we have a responsibility to provide the companionship and escape that we all need to maintain our sanity in the face of an often grim news landscape; we have to provide our audience with hope.

Drama, comedy and entertainment become even more vital for our audience. These genres can provide much needed relief and they can also be brilliant and surprising ways to engage listeners on difficult or complex subjects, entertaining them whilst simultaneously informing and educating.

All of this needs to come wrapped up in world-class storytelling, with world-class performers, presenters, actors and contributors. If the Reithian mission for Radio 4 is reassuringly constant, the manner in which we capture people’s imaginations and draw them into our world should be constantly evolving.

Always remember, in everything we do, we have a responsibility to reflect the whole of the UK and the rich, varied and changing lives of the people living here. We must be a broad church, giving voice to experiences, viewpoints and perspectives that come from all corners of the country. Please look to feature issues and viewpoints from all points on the social, political and geographic compass, even those views that might not necessarily chime with your own.

Radio 4 is the biggest speech station in the world. We commission nearly 8,000 new programmes and podcasts every year, chosen from the many offers submitted to our commissioners. This is alongside having editorial oversight of all the regular news sequences, programmes and strands that sit in the schedule and on BBC Sounds.

One of our responsibilities is to ensure that all of this sits together in a coherent, complementary schedule for the audience. So it’s always worth listening carefully to the live network schedule and to the podcasts we commission in BBC Sounds to see what new and existing strands and podcasts the ideas you pitch might sit alongside.



I promise that we will do our best to make the decision-making process as smooth and efficient as we can. In return, we ask that you read these guidelines carefully and take the advice contained within seriously.

None of us know what comes next in this turbulent world but one thing is certain: brilliant, risk taking, ambitious, original ideas, with talented people attached, wrapped up in clever treatment, will always be sought out and devoured by our audience.

Thank you

Mohit

**Mohit Bakaya**  
**Controller, BBC Radio 4 & Radio 4 Extra**  
**Director, BBC Speech Audio**



## SECTION B: EDITORIAL OPPORTUNITIES

### Alison Hindell, Commissioning Editor, Drama & Fiction

I'm writing these briefs with Christmas listening still in my mind. What those programmes, collectively, express to me is a microcosm of what drama and fiction do for Radio 4 as a whole.

From the 250<sup>th</sup> celebration of Jane Austen's birth with her complete works on Sounds to the joyful escapism of Wodehouse; from imaginative biographical dramas brought to life by fabulous casting (*The Truth about Phyllis Twigg* and *Plum in Prison*) to original takes on the real world (*Regifted*); from family sagas such as *Almonds and Raisins* to fantastical science fiction in *Spores*; from the magisterial poetry of *Murder in the Cathedral* to new commissions from writers such as Jeanette Winterson. And not forgetting the celebrations of that spine of Radio 4, *The Archers*, on its 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, the most long-lived continuing drama in the world and the most downloaded show on Sounds. This snapshot of the ambition and scope of the genre is, of course, replicated all year round by the work that you do for the network. So a big and appreciative thank you for your creativity and imagination.

Across all the slots that are open in this round, we will welcome proposals for original and inventive ideas realised in brilliant audio storytelling for listeners. I have spoken about the need to listen more to the network, so while developing ideas to put forward, it's worth asking yourselves how each idea will sit in the context of Radio 4. We are still expecting to commission a broad range of stories representing a variety of voices and opinion from around the UK; ideas with climate resilience at the heart, and stories centring on women's lives in all strata of society (i.e. not just domestic). However, across the board, we will be avoiding further American stories as we are broadcasting two series of *Story of America* this year to mark the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

In considering recent commissions and the place of audio drama in the wider drama sphere, I would welcome more use of metaphor and allegory in telling contemporary stories and interpreting the world. We have no shortage of social realism in which the stories can sometimes feel super-imposed onto the 'issue' at the heart of an offer, or vice versa, rather than organically entwined.

And after this fabulous year we'll be hoping for some sparkly Christmas-appropriate stories for December 2027.

### Casting

We would encourage you to continue to be ambitious about high-profile casting. It's never going to be for many projects but several of you achieved that in the past year and we thank you. For some A-list household names, the negotiations can be time-consuming and sometimes frustrating and we will try and back you for the right name, flexing schedules and budgets, within reason, to help. There are also many wonderful and well-known actors that love audio - and love the BBC - and that don't cost the earth. Either way, we want to make



the most of the profile that stars can bring to a project and it is helpful if you negotiate some promotional involvement as part of the contract.

## **Numbers**

We say this every year: we receive thousands of ideas in every round and a judicious and realistic approach is recommended rather than multiple short proposals. Please study the briefs carefully and focus on truly original and memorable stories that respond precisely to what is asked. Remember you are competing in a vast field and suppliers who put in a large number of ideas do not do proportionately better than suppliers who offer a balanced and well-developed, but smaller, portfolio.

In some slots (clearly marked), we are capping numbers: a cap is a maximum, not a minimum, and we will not think the worse of you if you offer less than the cap, possibly even the opposite.

Proposals for all briefs that are offered below the guide price will be viewed with interest.

## **Short proposals**

The first stage of the offers process, for all slots, is to send us a short proposal of no more than **300** words.

This should cover a summary of the plot, your ambition for the project, how it responds to the brief, and what is its audience appeal. It is also important to give an indication of the theme, tone and genre and to know where your piece is set – what is the location and the voice of your story? Be explicit and transparent: if you know what the ending will be, tell us.

All short proposals will be pruned hard to save everyone unrealistic amounts of development work.



**Which briefs are open in this round, and are they capped?**

<b>Commissioning Brief name</b>	<b>Commissioning Brief number</b>	<b>Cap on ideas</b>
<b>28' Drama Series (Limelight Podcast)</b>	<b>47168</b>	Max of 4 ideas per supplier
<b>44' Drama</b>	<b>47019</b>	Max of 2 NEW series/serial ideas per supplier.  (This does not include Returners)
<b>57' Saturday Drama</b>	<b>47080</b>	Not capped
<b>57' Sunday Drama</b>	<b>47112</b>	Not capped



<b>Commissioning Brief name: 28' Drama Series (Limelight Podcast)</b>	
<b>Commissioning Brief no: 47168</b>	
<b>Commissioning Round: Spring 2026   Timeline C   Factual Narrative Series, Arts &amp; Drama</b>	
<b>Duration (inc. announcements)</b>	28'
<b>Schedule slot</b>	Fri 14.15
<b>Transmission period</b>	April 2027 - March 2028
<b>Guide price range per episode</b>	£14,630

## Editorial Opportunity

As well as *The Archers*, Limelight titles regularly feature in the top ten on Sounds. It is a successful formula: the two series of *Central Intelligence* together are now nearing 4 million listens and we can see that people who come to Sounds for the first time specially for this series are also going on to listen to other Limelight titles.

We were particularly excited by the most recent offers and were spoilt for choice for punchy, original, gripping stories with a serious underbelly. In the coming year, as well as the ongoing story of the CIA and returning audio forensics series *Exemplar*, we have time travel in the Arctic; students of forensics solving cold cases; an apparent ghost story set in an underground bunker; an illegal immigrant worker witnessing a murder as he delivers a pizza; and a nail-biting race against time to stop a hostile AI, carrying a serious warning about the direction we are going in.

A successful Limelight offer aims high with an exciting, surprising idea told within a recognisable genre, in such a way as to engage both the core audience and to appeal to lighter drama listeners. We're looking for plot-driven, binge-listen boxsets with cliffhangers that drive listeners on to the next episode, underpinning our engagement with compelling and fully-drawn characters. These serials work best with a clearly identified, smallish cast in each episode and a straightforward timeline. An imaginative, rich sound design is also a vital element.

We continue to want stories that explore a rich range of genres and this time we want to push this success further by adding in a specific call for fresh, new whodunnits. The appetite for this genre is enormous, and not only on Netflix. Since launching the Whodunnit feed on Sounds (populated largely by archive titles) there have been 162 million downloads, and we want to commission new, modern and sophisticated titles to capture this listener



enthusiasm. These will be mainly, but not exclusively, set in the present day, and will range from witty cosy crime to darker noir scenarios.

This is a slot for the best and most inventive writers working in dramatic fiction today, either as a distinctive authorial voice, or as lead writer in a writers' room. This is not the place for first-time writers, other than, potentially, as a contributor writer in a team. We are not looking for anthologies, biopics or dramatisations of books. And we are not looking for titles that are conceived as returners.

The slot is on-air all year round, with boxsets of each title published on BBC Sounds to coincide with the broadcast of the first episode. RSS release currently follows on from an initial Sounds exclusive 'window'. Details of this pattern may change but we will continue to require RSS rights as part of the deal – see below. Most titles will be commissioned at **five episodes**.

Competition for this slot will be extremely strong and, to reflect the additional call for whodunnits, the cap this year will be for **no more than four ideas per supplier**.

Titles here are co-commissioned with Rhian Roberts, our Podcast & Formats commissioner, who also leads the Digital team. If you are offered a commission, you can expect to work more closely with Alison and Rhian, and with the digital team who will lead on artwork and digital assets.

## Full Proposal

If you are invited to submit a full proposal, you will need to provide an episode-by-episode synopsis including what happens at the end; an outline of the main characters; and an indication as to why listeners will be excited to listen. We'd like to know who it is aimed at and what will be the structure, style and pace. As sound design is a distinctive and important element in a Limelight title, please also tell us how you will use sound and music. More fully developed ideas are more likely to be commissioned.

## Rights

Titles commissioned for **Limelight** are intended for RSS release, global distribution and commercialisation via BBC Studios. Commission is conditional upon the requisite rights being granted to the BBC under the Audio Terms of Trade to allow for such exploitation, including any underlying rights. The BBC will exclusively own and control the RSS feed on which the title will be published and will have the right to register the feed title as a trademark.



<b>Commissioning Brief name: 44' Drama</b>	
<b>Commissioning Brief no: 47019</b>	
<b>Commissioning Round: Spring 2026   Timeline C   Factual Narrative Series, Arts &amp; Drama</b>	
<b>Duration (inc. announcements)</b>	44'
<b>Schedule slot</b>	Tue-Thu 14.15
<b>Transmission period</b>	April 2027 - March 2028
<b>Guide price range per episode</b>	£23,450

## Editorial Opportunities

### Series & Serials

Series and Serials have more impact than one-off dramas and so approximately half the 44' slots will be given over to Series & Serials. The other half will be for single dramas that we will commission later in the year. Some series will be returning titles that are demonstrably popular with listeners both on-air and on Sounds; but we are also keen to find new multi-episodic titles, either for single runs of one complete story, or with the potential to become a new returner. However, we will not commit to more than one series until the first series has been tried and tested.

**Returners** – we may want to commission some returning serials early in order to secure the space for them and to give you time to make them. Series with several runs under their belts are not automatically guaranteed a returning slot: if you are unsure whether your serial should be offered for a further run, please check with me by email in good time ahead of the short proposal deadline. However, if we re-commission returners there is less space for new ideas. So, if you are keen to try something new, you should be ready to consider closure for some older series.

Your short proposal should indicate the scope of the new season, how many episodes you are hoping to sell, what the arc is of this run, and why we should re-commission it. We will also need an indication as to how early in the next financial year you could deliver: returners should aim to deliver in the first two quarters (i.e. April – October 2026). If you are invited to make a full proposal for a returning idea you will be asked to provide Sounds numbers as well as evidence of press and listener reactions.

**New Titles** – we are looking for a small number of satisfyingly complex stories driven by fascinating characters in original situations – and that are not already covered elsewhere in



this slot or in Limelight. That means we don't want any more series about prisons or the justice system, medical professionals, undercover policing, immigration and integration, education, or mediation. In addition, this year we will be starting on an iconoclastic take on the Roman Emperors and a one-off series about the UK housing market told through six inter-connected single dramas.

New series ideas need to be distinctive from the genre-based stories that go to make up Limelight. There is more room in 44' episodes for nuanced character development and carrying more than one storyline, and for intellectually complex subjects. Your short proposal should reflect that.

Some approaches that we would be interested to see include:

- A big, historical epic with a British or international setting (but not American). This might focus on an individual or a community, in public or private life, with a context of familiar – or not-so-familiar – events. We will not commission more than one of these in a year. This will be a statement piece for the network.
- Rom-coms and love stories are still in short supply.
- We have a cautious interest in fantasy: there is an audience appetite for this genre but it needs to work within the context of Radio 4, and it needs to convince the Controller.
- Given the call for both cosy crime & whodunnits in the 28' Drama brief, we are not looking for more of these here.
- If you have had a pilot commissioned at 44', you should put in a short proposal here and deliver the completed pilot episode as soon as you can. We will not commission series without having first heard the pilot episode. If, having developed the pilot, you think subsequent stories would actually work better at 28', please say so.

Once again, we are capping the Series & Serials offers at **no more than two NEW series/serial ideas per supplier**. This cap does not include Returners – although see above and don't over-offer.

### **New Makers**

In order to rationalise the commissioning of the single 44's, the opening for New Makers (which is also for single 44's) is being held over until later in the year. While that means there is no separate opportunity at this point, new companies, producers and directors are, of course, still welcome to submit ideas here but, without ring-fenced slots, your credentials in drama-making elsewhere will need to be strong.



<b>Commissioning Brief name: 57' Saturday Drama</b>	
<b>Commissioning Brief no: 47080</b>	
<b>Commissioning Round: Spring 2026   Timeline C   Factual Narrative Series, Arts &amp; Drama</b>	
<b>Duration (inc. announcements)</b>	57'
<b>Schedule slot</b>	Sat 15.00
<b>Transmission period</b>	April 2027 - March 2028
<b>Guide price range per episode</b>	£29,370

## Editorial Opportunity

This is an under-sung slot and we want to up its game with more ambitious and audiophonically exciting commissions. In relistening to Tom Stoppard's radio work recently, I was reminded, of course, of his playful skill with language, but also struck by a sense that these stories were most suited to being told in sound. I'd like to encourage you and your writers to give more thought to that: not just beautiful sound design as a backdrop and a world for the play, but sound as an active element in the storytelling. Think beyond the naturalistic frame and conjure up ideas that can play with the medium.

We want to continue presenting these single dramas as collections and this year's starting point is:

**Dreams and Delusions** – whether daydreams or nightmares, bold ideas built or broken; ambitions realised or thwarted; follies pursued; ideals made concrete or shattered; noble, self-serving or dangerous undertakings in the real world or in alternative realities. To sustain 57 minutes on a Saturday afternoon, these pieces will still need to have strong storytelling – we are not asking for acoustic art installations. They will be either fictional or factually-inspired stories with a broad range of tone and setting; possibly fantastical but probably not out-and-out fantasy. We will be looking for stories of contemporary resonance although some of them may have historical settings.

The importance of eye-catching and intriguing titles can't be over-stated with new work. The title is your shop window or your billboard and needs to draw listeners in.

In this slot we are particularly interested in plays written by high-profile writers or with specific casting in mind or attached. We are keen to commission established writers at the top of their game who are excited by the possibilities offered by audio drama as a storytelling medium.



Please note: this will be a toughly-competed slot and we therefore strongly advise that you do not enter multiple ideas here.

**Full proposal to include**

If you are invited to submit a full proposal, please include a full breakdown of the story, the main characters and the way in which sound is a crucial component. What will be the structure, style and pace; and why do you and your writer think your drama fits this collection?



<b>Commissioning Brief name: 57' Sunday Drama</b>	
<b>Commissioning Brief no: 47112</b>	
<b>Commissioning Round: Spring 2026   Timeline C   Factual Narrative Series, Arts &amp; Drama</b>	
<b>Duration (inc. announcements)</b>	57'
<b>Schedule slot</b>	Sun 15.00
<b>Transmission period</b>	April 2027 - March 2028
<b>Guide price range per episode</b>	£29,370

## Editorial Opportunity

The Sunday Drama is exclusively for audio dramatisations based on UK and world literature. Productions here revisit works from the past with universal human themes and reveal what these works say to the present; they also offer purely diverting and entertaining stories that, through a good plot, engaging characters and a compelling audio world, take the listener elsewhere in their imaginations. We welcome titles published up to the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that have won recognition and have traction.

We are looking for a broad range of experience and perspective in the titles we are offered and we'd also like to see offers from skilled writers who are new to dramatisation. The best audio dramatisations reinvent the original for the audio medium – sometimes with a radical update but always with the personal stamp of the dramatist – they are not simple copy & pastes of the source material.

As with other slots, more titles by or about women would be welcome, as would proposals for chamber productions with modest-sized casts.

Most projects will be commissioned at two episodes and occasionally longer for big or very significant titles, particularly if you can secure the rights that will allow a long life on BBC Sounds. We will also commission some shorter titles at single episodes.

We expect that most titles in this slot will continue to be accompanied by Opening Lines which is broadcast immediately before the Sunday Drama. That programme is designed to talk about the book at the heart of your drama and the producers of that strand may contact you about your plans.



We are still interested in occasional non-fiction titles in this slot, but with fiction titles we have less space for approaches that blend in elements of biography, unless that is part of the original text.

Here are some areas to consider but please don't try to cover all the bases as you are unlikely to win commissions under all of these.

- Canonical British and global titles, mainstream and eye-catching classics with either traditional or iconoclastic 21<sup>st</sup> century approaches. Last year, I asked for obvious titles and you rose to the challenge giving us a wonderful collection for 26/27. Please check the [List of Published Titles](#) to find out more. This year, I'd like more in that vein.

Plus some of the following:

- Classic European titles (pre-war or earlier), or British titles set in Europe, and in particular, titles that illustrate the relationship between France and England over the last thousand years.
- Island and maritime life - works set on or beside the sea.
- Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold – titles depicting political or societal change.
- Feel-good escapism – including holiday and festive Christmas stories.
- Audiophonic approaches to narrative poetry or plays written in verse (not many of these).
- We are still interested in stageplays that break into two parts (and see below re 87' plays).

Some of your choices in any of these categories may be set texts on the different GCSE/A level/undergraduate courses around the UK. Please tell us in your offer if that is the case.

### **Who and what to avoid?**

Jane Austen, Agatha Christie & Dorothy L. Sayers.

America – as previously mentioned, we have commissioned two seasons of American titles to mark the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of American Independence and we will not be looking for more.



## Full proposal to include

If you are invited to submit a full proposal, please include an episode-by-episode synopsis, including the end of the story, which should outline **the approach of the proposed dramatisation** and how (or whether) it differs from the original book – this is what will distinguish your ideas. We also find it useful to have a summary of the main characters; and a brief statement on why you and your writer are excited by this idea and what is the appeal for the audience.

In addition, we'd like to know what it will sound like: what will be the structure, style, pace, use of sound and music - what the listener will hear.

Please send a copy of the book with the proposal unless we have specifically said otherwise during the pitching meetings. An indication of whether rights are available in principle is crucial.

**NB: this year, to help me get started on the reading, the deadline for receipt of supporting materials is Friday 24 April, which is earlier than the deadline for submitting full proposals in Picos.**

## 87' slot

Soon after the last offers round, we were pleased to announce a small increase in the number of longer plays we will commission and we now have a monthly slot at 87' comprising a mix of new and repeat productions. In addition, we have established the Spotlight feed on Sounds to build a collection of long-form classic and historical dramas, both original and adapted from stageplays. This brief is not open in this Spring round as the numbers are too small to make that viable. If you wish to offer into this slot, you are asked to do so through the Open Round, following an email exchange with me, and after the results of the short proposals have been announced. Offers made through the open round before then will be rejected. We will not consider more than **one offer per supplier** at any one time for this slot.



## SECTION C: COMMISSIONING TIMETABLE

Stage	Dates	Activities
Round opens	w/c 19 January	Publish commissioning briefs and open round in PiCoS.
Presentations by the Director of Speech and Commissioning Editors	<b>GLASGOW:</b> Mon 02 Feb <b>SALFORD:</b> Tues 03 Feb <b>CARDIFF:</b> Weds 04 Feb <b>LONDON:</b> Fri 06 Feb	The commissioning team brief programme-makers. A recording of the London presentation will be available online soon after the event.
1. Short proposal	<b>Weds 04 March</b> <b>12 noon</b>	<b>Deadline for short proposals in PiCoS.</b> Late submissions cannot be accepted. If you have questions you need answered before submitting short proposals, send them to the commissioning co-ordinator well before the deadline.
	w/c 23 March	Commissioners shortlist proposals and notify producers of outcomes. Full proposals requested from those proceeding to next stage.
2. Full proposal	Between 27 March & 12 May	Opportunity to discuss shortlisted short proposals (by phone, Teams or in person, availability allowing) prior to submitting full proposals.
	<b>Fri 24 April</b>	<b>Deadline for supporting material</b>
	<b>Weds 13 May</b> <b>12 noon</b>	<b>Deadline for full proposals in PiCoS.</b> Late submissions cannot be accepted.
3. Conditional commission	Late July	Results released. Commissions subject to contract. Editorial specifications and price agreed.



## SECTION D: COMMISSIONING PROCESS

The BBC reserves the right at any time prior to award of a commission, and without incurring any liability to the affected suppliers, to accept or reject any proposal, withdraw any briefs, or annul the commissioning process, rejecting all proposals.

### PiCoS

All proposals must be submitted via PiCoS. If you experience any issues with PiCoS, please contact [PiCoS.support@bbc.co.uk](mailto:PiCoS.support@bbc.co.uk).

To sign into PiCoS (<https://picos.tools.bbc.co.uk>) you will need a BBC Login account set up against the supplier you are pitching on behalf of. If you don't already have a BBC Login account or you are unable to access [PiCoS](#) with your existing BBC Login account, please [raise a request](#). You can find more information and a video of how to pitch ideas at the [PiCoS for Suppliers site](#). If your supplier has not yet registered for PiCoS please review the [eligibility requirements](#) and submit a [supplier registration form](#).

**Please ensure you have access to PiCoS well in advance of submitting your proposal.**

Everything in this commissioning round is open to competition. There is no formal eligibility questionnaire. If you are registered on the BBC supplier database it is assumed that you satisfy the basic eligibility requirements.

We invite proposals from all BBC departments and from registered independent companies who can demonstrate considerable experience in radio/audio or TV production at both producer and executive producer level. We are also eager to welcome new production talent into the world of Radio 4. If a producer has not made programmes for us before, please include their track record in the 'Production Experience' section in PiCoS.

### Short proposal stage

All Short Proposals must be submitted by the Short Proposal deadline, with no exceptions, and **following the guidance below**. Please do build in contingency. If you need any support to navigate through the site, you will find step by step guides with screenshots on the Supplier Academy page <https://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/picos-suppliers/#helpcards>.

### Guidance for submitting Short Proposals

**Round** Spring 2026 | **Timeline C** | **Factual Narrative Series, Arts & Drama**

**Brief** Enter each proposal under one brief only. If we consider it suitable for another slot, we will transfer it.



**Eligibility/Production experience** Please enter N/A in this box unless the producer or the executive producer is new to Radio 4. If they are new to us, please provide their production credits and experience.

**Proposal Title** Please use Title Case. It is fine to use w/t for working titles. Once an idea has been submitted into PiCoS, please do not change the title at any stage (pre or post commission) without discussing this with the commissioner first.

**Short proposal** This is where you sell your idea. **Max 300 words** (only the first 300 words will be read).

**Duration per episode** Please enter the duration as stated in the commissioning brief.

**Number of episodes** Please enter your intended number of episodes.

**Co-production** We welcome proposals from suppliers who wish to group together in a partnership. Please submit each joint proposal once only.

**Additional Information/Supporting media** Please do not submit any supporting media at Short Proposal stage. **IT WILL NOT BE READ. We will only request supporting media, where required, at Full Proposal stage.**

If you submit a proposal in error, or you decide that you no longer wish to proceed with an idea, please **withdraw the proposal** in PiCoS.

## Evaluation

Short proposals will be evaluated by the commissioning team who will shortlist the ones they wish to see as full proposals. We will release results in PiCoS. Proposals will show as **'Rejected'** or **'Awaiting full proposal'**. We regret that we cannot give feedback on rejected short proposals. At any stage of the process, we may come back to you to seek more information. Your answers will be factored into the evaluation process as appropriate.

## Pitch meetings

If your idea is shortlisted, you will be invited to discuss it with the Commissioning Editor - or, if applicable, the Commissioning Exec – before submitting a full proposal. This will be in person, on the phone or on Teams, depending on genre and availability. **We will not discuss ideas that have not already been submitted as short proposals.**

## Full proposal stage

Full Proposals for all proposals 'Awaiting full proposal' must be submitted by the Full Proposal deadline, with no exceptions, and following the guidance below. Please do build in contingency. If you need any support to navigate through the site, you will find step by step guides with screenshots on the Supplier Academy page <https://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/picos-suppliers/#helpcards>.



# Guidance for submitting Full Proposals

NB: If you no longer wish to proceed with an idea, please **withdraw the proposal** in PiCoS.

**Commissioning Brief** If the Commissioning Editor asks you to submit your Full Proposal under a different brief, please copy the proposal, submit it under the new brief, then withdraw your original proposal.

**Full proposal** This is where you sell your idea. **Max 1200 words** (only the first 1200 words will be read). Please open your Full Proposal with a **50 word summary** of your idea. Think of this as a fledgling Radio Times billing. Please note that, beyond the standard metadata and possible clip requirements, we do not require any extra digital deliverables to be offered for these commissions. The digital commissioning editor will look at the slate of commissions and assess the potential for any additional digital content, and whether it merits additional funding.

**Contributors** Enter any intended writer/abridger/performer/presenter, etc. here. You do not have to secure talent agreement before submitting an offer, but please let us know, in the Full Proposal field, the degree to which named talent has expressed an interest in the project or has intellectual ownership of it.

**Delivery Date** For full proposals, we need a **realistic/accurate earliest possible delivery date**, linked to anniversary/event where relevant. This information is important and will be used when scheduling a commissioned programme.

**Production budget / Proposed price per episode** If you leave this blank, it will default to guide price. Please enter your forecast price if you expect it to be under or over the guide price.

**Additional Information/Supporting media** The Commissioning Editor will advise if they need any additional supporting media (such as published books, audio or scripts) to accompany your full proposal.

## Evaluation

We will evaluate all full proposals against the editorial brief and commission those which most successfully fulfil the brief. Commissioning decisions will be communicated in PiCoS. Brief feedback for rejected proposals will be given there. At any stage of the process, we may request more information. Your answers will be factored into the evaluation process as appropriate.



## Conditional commission awarded

Confirmation of all commissions is conditional on the issues listed below.

**Feedback** There will be important information included in the feedback field in PiCoS which will not be communicated through other means so it is vital that you take time to read this and share with colleagues.

**Price** Each conditional commission will be accompanied by a price based on what you have added to your final offer and judged as value for money by the commissioning, finance and business teams. If you wish to challenge the offer made, a detailed budget will be requested and evaluated by our finance and business teams with the aim of reaching agreement. Conditional acceptance may be withdrawn if agreement is not reached within a reasonable period. Radio 4 is not responsible for any costs incurred prior to full agreement.

**Rights** Radio 4 requires programmes to be contracted under the [Audio Terms of Trade](#). This will vary only in exceptional circumstances. Proposals with co-production funding will be welcomed.

**Schedule and delivery dates** We are unlikely to issue precise transmission dates for programmes not pegged to a particular anniversary or season but will give the calendar quarter in which we intend to place them. Precise delivery dates will be confirmed well before the start of each calendar quarter. We will use your given delivery dates to schedule commissioned programmes, but there will be instances where we would want programmes earlier. If you cannot deliver to meet the given transmission quarter, notify Richard Culver (Head of Planning & Scheduling) [richard.culver@bbc.co.uk](mailto:richard.culver@bbc.co.uk) and Elaine Boyd (Scheduling Manager) [elaine.boyd@bbc.co.uk](mailto:elaine.boyd@bbc.co.uk) within 14 days of results publication.

**Editorial** A conditional acceptance might have specific editorial conditions attached to it, e.g. that a particular presenter or actor is available. Fulfilment of them must be confirmed before the commission is finalised and before you start work. If they turn out to be unavailable we may accept a substitute but this must be agreed with the commissioning team.

**Compliance and BBC Editorial Guidelines** You will be required to deliver programmes in line with BBC Editorial Guidelines and be able to adapt to changing BBC editorial and business needs during the period of the commission. Proposals not complying with the requirements of this brief may be rejected by Radio 4, whose decision will be final.

**Delivery** Too many programmes go unsung because programme descriptions and audio are not delivered in time to hit our press and promotion deadlines. Late submissions also put pressure on our small Scheduling Team. If your programmes are commissioned these **must** be delivered by the deadlines we give you.



## Notes on Generative Artificial Intelligence

The BBC has issued [Information and Guiding Principles](#) to ensure the responsible use of Generative AI technology in BBC programmes. Is there (or might there be) any proposed use of Generative AI in the production and delivery of the programme which may require transparency in order to comply with the BBC's Principles and Guidance? If yes, please discuss with your commissioning editor at pitch stage and include details in your full proposal.

## Notes on Sustainability

The BBC is committed to informing and inspiring listeners about how they, as individuals, can take steps towards more sustainable living. Your proposal should consider how the editorial and production methods contribute towards the BBC's Net Zero strategy – you can read about this [here](#). Where appropriate, sustainability should be woven into the editorial – either implicitly or explicitly. Production methods should demonstrate good practice – minimising negative environmental impacts (e.g. from energy, waste, travel) and, where possible, making a positive contribution. For further information, please discuss sustainability with the Commissioning Editor and see our Radio Commissioning site [here](#).

If you have any questions about this commissioning brief, contact the Commissioning Co-ordinator:

Sharon Terry [sharon.terry@bbc.co.uk](mailto:sharon.terry@bbc.co.uk)

