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## Buddy System Guidelines

### 1. Introduction - What is the 'Buddy System' all about?

The Buddy System has been newly introduced to the Influss - An Artistic Residence programme as a support structure designed to enhance the residency's three pillars of inquiry, immersion and experimentation. By pairing each artist with a locally based peer, it aims to deepen engagement with the Maltese cultural context while encouraging horizontal relationships between local and international practitioners.

### 2. Objectives of the Buddy System

The Buddy System is intended to provide contextual navigation and support, peer-to-peer exchange and community building and well-being, through the below duties:

- Provide local insights, offering situated knowledge that foreign artists might not easily access alone.
- Support in navigating the local context, acting as another point of contact on the ground together with the residency coordinators.
- To offer peer support in navigating practical, field-related challenges that may arise during the residency.
- Encourage peer-to-peer exchange rather than top-down facilitation or purely administrative guidance.
- To build networks that extend beyond the Cultural Directorate's residency coordination structures.
- To create space for timely, contextual feedback from someone who becomes familiar with foreign artists' process.
- Enable the growth of a network of local and international artists with potential for future collaboration.
- Prevent isolation and support the roots of connectivity and belonging for visiting artists.

**The system is not intended to replace professional production, curatorial, or administrative roles; nor is it a substitute for formal mentoring or technical production services.**

### 3. Key Dates (Based on the International Residency Timeline)

Publishing of Buddy System Call	30 April 2026
Buddy System Call Deadline	16 June 2026
Buddy System Call Results	10 July 2026

The Buddy System accommodates a maximum of four peers that will be supporting the international artists, distributed across two distinct cohorts. Applicants will be asked to specify their availability to one or both of the following periods, for a maximum of four weeks:

- Cohort 1: 31 August - 30 September 2026
- Cohort 2: 15 October - 15 November 2026

**Note on Flexibility:** The dates listed above are indicative. Commencement of the programme will depend on applicants' availability and international artists' arrival and departure dates, subject to flight schedules and logistical coordination.

### 4. Eligibility Criteria (Who can be a buddy?)

The intention is for Buddies to be locally based practitioners who possess a deep, working knowledge of Malta's cultural, social, and/or community landscape.

The profile of a Buddy is flexible by design. The Culture Directorate is looking to build a diverse pool of skills, backgrounds, and networks to ensure the creation of highly tailored, meaningful matches based on the specific process and thematic focus of the incoming international artists.

To be eligible, applicants must:

- Be based in the Maltese Islands throughout 2026
- Be able to communicate effectively in English and/or Maltese
- Have at least 2 years of active professional experience in their respective field.

Professional Profiles:

Applications from individuals who identify with any of the below roles are welcome:

**Artists & Creative Practitioners:** Active in any single or multiple artistic disciplines.

**Cultural Workers:** Producers, organisers, curators, or cultural managers navigating the local arts ecology.

**Community & Social Impact Practitioners:** NGO representatives, activists, or community organisers whose work intersects with arts, culture, or social change.

**Researchers & Educators:** Academics, writers, or teachers whose research engages with artistic disciplines or cultural heritage.

**Cultural Collectives:** Representatives of local active collectives (provided one primary individual is identified as the dedicated point of contact for the residency).

## 5. Financial Support and Time Commitment

Each selected Buddy will receive a professional fee of **€500 (exc. VAT)** for their participation in the programme. This fee will be paid against the submission of a valid tax invoice to the Culture Directorate as delineated in section 6.

The role requires an estimated commitment of **25 hours** spread across the duration of the residency. To ensure the collaboration is meaningful but manageable, this time should be distributed across the following core activities, divided into three main phases:

### 1. Onboarding and Planning:

- **Online Preparatory Session:** To introduce the residency and the Buddy System Framework to all the selected individuals.
- **Buddy & Artist Planning Session** (Online or In-Person): An initial meeting with the matched artist to set intentions, establish working boundaries, and co-create a brief *Buddy-Artist Action Plan* (outlining goals, preferred modes of contact, and planned activities).

### 2. On-the-Ground Engagement:

- At least 2 on-the-ground sessions, which may take diverse forms (to be chosen collaboratively). Examples include:
  - Context-related outings: visits to relevant neighbourhoods, spaces, initiatives etc
  - Site-specific visits related to the artist's research or practice
  - Hands-on session: shared making session, studio visit, workshop, informal gathering etc

### 3. Networking and Integration:

- Support to the Culture Directorate team in compiling a list of recommended connections, initiatives, and spaces relevant to the artist's practice.
- Support the artist in making relevant on-the-ground introductions to people, organisations, or communities (within reason and capacity).
- Attendance at a sharing, open studio, or showcase event related to the residency, if relevant and feasible.

Time distribution may vary per artist and should be mutually agreed upon and clarified in the Buddy-Artist Action Plan at the start of the collaboration.

## 6. Disbursement of Remuneration

- Tranche 1 (60% - €300): Advanced upon the signing of the Buddy System Agreement along with the first submitted draft of the Buddy - Artist Action Plan and the first invoice.
- Tranche 2 (40% - max. €200): Released upon the successful completion of the brief Buddy System feedback form, intended to help the Culture Directorate in further developing of the programme.

## 7. How to Express Interest

Those interested in being a part of the Buddy System Network should complete this checklist:

- Indication of language skills, availability periods, and any specific areas of focus (example disciplines, communities, geographies, or topics).
- A short biography outlining relevant practice, local knowledge, and experience.
- A brief motivation (min. 300 to 500 words max.) explaining why they wish to be involved as a buddy, their interpretation of the role, and what they can offer to incoming international artists.
- Scanned copy of Official National Identification (ID Card or Passport)
- A CV and/or portfolio (or equivalent documentation for the representative selected from NGOs/collectives).

## 8. Selection and Matching Process

### 8.1 Selection Process

While all individuals who express interest will be added into the Buddy System Network, the selection of four Buddies for the 2026 cohort will be done based on pairing with the International Artists selected. Selection for the Buddy System Network will be dependent on:

- Relevance and quality of experience.
- Knowledge of local context and networks.
- Capacity to commit the required time.
- Balance across disciplines, backgrounds, and perspectives within the overall buddy pool.

### 8.2 Matching Process

In order to ensure a transparent process and facilitate a productive collaboration, the selected International Artists will be involved in the matching process as follows:

- For each incoming international artist, buddies will be shortlisted based on: discipline, thematics, working processes and contextual needs.

- An anonymised buddy bio for each potential match will be shared with the International Artists for feedback before final matching.
- The matches are confirmed and an initial schedule of meetings is agreed on, adapted to the residency cohort and timeline.