

BBC announces landmark audio Terms of Trade as part of an ambitious package to support a thriving UK audio sector

The BBC has today confirmed an ambitious new package that will support the UK audio sector with increased investment in speech programming, more commercial opportunities for production companies, a training partnership to nurture talent, and the return of the BBC Indie Development Fund for 2024/25.

A new Terms of Trade agreement for audio commissions has been developed together with AudioUK following detailed negotiations to secure a fair, future-facing deal for the independent audio production companies that produce a huge volume of distinctive content for the BBC, attracting millions of listeners and showcasing some of the best British content there is.

The deal increases the funding production companies receive for content and opens up more opportunities for them to exploit their IP and take advantage of the commercial distribution market, either through BBC Studios' global infrastructure should they choose, or via third parties. This reflects the changing audio landscape in the UK and globally, and ensures the BBC is well placed to commission the best ideas and high-quality programmes from the sector for linear and on demand consumption.

The BBC's successful Indie Development Fund will return for 24/25 which funds projects that help to build up production capabilities across the UK, and the BBC also plans to invest in AudioUK's successful Audiotrain training programme.

Charlotte Moore, BBC Chief Content Officer said: "Today's ambitious deal with AudioUK, on behalf of the independent audio sector, ensures that the BBC will continue to be the place where producers come with their best ideas, resulting in an unrivalled content offer for our audiences. The BBC has a unique role to play in the thriving UK audio sector, and our increased investment will boost British creativity and develop skills and production capabilities across the UK."

Chloe Straw, Managing Director of AudioUK said: "The independent production sector has driven the rapid growth of the audio market over the past decade, thriving both creatively and commercially. The BBC excels when collaborating with the sector, and we are pleased with its recognition of the need for a new approach to the Terms of Trade, to reflect developments in the audio industry and give producers more choice when it comes to their IP, as well as a baseline for commissioning terms. These terms provide a standard framework within which producers from across the UK can engage with the BBC. We very much welcome the BBC's support for our Audiotrain scheme as well as its continued backing of independent audio businesses through the Indie Development Fund."

New Terms of Trade

Under the new Terms of Trade, speech prices will be increased overall by 10% for commissions, with the BBC actively developing plans to invest in music audio, strengthening the supplier base and meeting the challenges and opportunities specific to that genre. The BBC will review the tariffs across music and speech content on an annual basis.

The deal brings together the linear and on demand rights in one agreement, allowing for more flexibility, and grants the BBC the licence to buy three packages of network transmission, combined with a five year licence on BBC Sounds in speech, 12 months in music. Producers will be able to choose how they wish to exploit ex-UK and commercial rights, with the option to use BBC Studios as a distributor, should they choose, or do so independently, and they will receive a greater share of revenue for all forms of commercial exploitation. The BBC will also work in partnership with the producers to roll out a clear process for transferring audio-originated IP to screen.

The Terms represent a framework for producers engaging with the BBC, but they do not preclude the BBC and an individual-producer from concluding an agreement covering variations to the Terms, should they both wish to do so.

Investing in Audiotrain

Building on the BBC's extensive commitment to developing people with new skills, the BBC will invest in Audiotrain, AudioUK's training programme, over three years.

Audiotrain nurtures talent, refines skills, and fosters innovation within the audio industry. With its focus on providing practical training, mentorship, and networking opportunities, Audiotrain aligns perfectly with the objectives of the BBC's Across the UK strategy.

Backing the best ideas

The BBC is committed to a level playing field and fair competition so that the best ideas are commissioned for our audiences – across independent producers, BBC Studios and BBC public service. In addition to the existing contestability framework, the BBC has also committed that 100% of new speech programmes will be competed.

Applications for the BBC Indie Development Fund will open in mid-July, with successful applicants receiving a one-year investment of between £10-£25k towards a variety of areas, ranging from increasing and diversifying the talent pool to boosting production capabilities and training. The fund supports the BBC's priorities, including increasing diversity and content from all parts of the UK, allowing the BBC to better reflect, represent and serve all audiences.

The BBC will also be increasing its transparency and reporting on pricing, tariffs and contestability data via the annual Supply Report – as well as continuing to develop its engagement with producers across our commissioning website, briefs, webinars and events. The BBC will also look to evolve the radio commissioning framework to ensure it remains fit for purpose across both Speech and Music programming.