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01 / A SMALL, USEFUL SEARCH

Find work that fits your art

Research one potential client before you write. Use the blank sheet on page 3 to decide whether to contact, research further or park the idea.

☐ 1. Name your portfolio fit

Choose one service you can deliver and one portfolio piece that shows it. Explain why its format, style or subject could help this organization. Check that you have the skills and time.

☐ 2. Save dated public evidence of need

Use the organization's own brief, request, event or launch page. Record its URL, publication or event date, and the date you checked it. A planned event alone does not confirm a commission or budget.

☐ 3. Verify a legitimate contact route

Use published business enquiry or submission instructions. Reopen the source before sending. Follow deadlines and no-pitch rules. Do not guess email addresses or collect private contact details.

☐ 4. Ask one modest question

Name the public need and one relevant portfolio piece. Ask whether submissions are welcome, or ask for scope and timing if invited. Use a link only when allowed; avoid large attachments and unpaid custom work.

☐ 5. Set a follow-up and stop boundary

Follow the stated reply timeline. If none is given and the channel permits it, review after about a week and send at most one follow-up. Stop on a decline, a stop request, a closed brief or one unanswered follow-up. Do not switch channels to keep chasing.

Choose: Contact if fit, current evidence and a permitted route are clear. Research if a key fact is missing. Park if the fit or route fails.

This checklist supports your own research; it does not supply leads or guarantee sales.

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02 / WORKED EXAMPLE

An illustrator’s first enquiry

Fictional example: illustrator Mina Vale, Lantern Field Press, the portfolio piece, source labels and all details below are invented. There are no real leads or contact details.

Portfolio fit

Mina offers botanical cover illustration and has capacity for one cover. Her invented “Wild Seed” portfolio piece shows plant drawing with space for a book title. That format may suit a nature publisher.

Dated public evidence

SOURCE A — an invented publisher brief, dated 12 November 2026, invites illustrators to submit one relevant portfolio link for a spring field-guide cover. Checked 19 November 2026; closes 26 November 2026.

Fact, then unknowns

Fact in this scenario: the brief invites portfolio submissions. Still unknown: fee, usage rights, exact artwork scope and delivery date. Mina cannot assume the publisher will commission her.

Public route and decision

SOURCE B — an invented submissions form accepts one portfolio link and says not to follow up. Mina rechecks the brief and form. Decision: contact through the form, then wait; no follow-up.

A modest first message

Hello Lantern Field Press team, I saw your field-guide cover brief. I make botanical cover illustrations; my “Wild Seed” piece may fit: [one portfolio link]. Could you share the artwork scope, usage rights and delivery date? Thank you, Mina.

Follow-up boundary

Record the submission date. The form says no follow-up, so Mina sends none. If declined or asked to stop, close the enquiry. Silence is not permission to chase through another channel.

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03 / REUSE FOR ONE CANDIDATE

Your potential-client sheet

Print another copy for each candidate. Record public business information only. Keep evidence separate from what you hope it means.

Organization: _____ Checked on: _____

1. Service + portfolio piece / link + why it fits

2. Evidence: exact need + source URL + publication / event date

3. Published contact route + instructions / deadline / no-pitch rule

4. Unknowns to verify: scope, timing, budget or fit

5. First message: one need, one piece, one small question

Decision: ☐ Contact ☐ Research ☐ Park

Reason / next action: _____

Sent on: _____ Review date: _____

Follow-up permitted? _____ Stated timeline / rule: _____

Closed on / reason: _____

Stop rule: At most one permitted follow-up; none after a decline, stop request or closed brief. Close after one unanswered follow-up. Do not chase on another channel.