



OUR NATIONAL PORTFOLIO, 2018-22

Libraries Narrative



The 2015-18 portfolio contained no library organisations because they were not eligible to apply previously. The proposed 2018-22 portfolio is seven library organisations, including one Sector Support Organisation, which will represent under 1 per cent of the portfolio, with a total value of £1.6 million. We are only supporting libraries that are making a strong arts and cultural offer. We are not investing in the libraries' core statutory offer.

Public libraries are trusted spaces, free to enter and open to all. In them people can explore and share reading, information, knowledge and culture. They provide a safe, creative space that is enjoyable and easy to use – physical, virtual and in the community. They have books, digital resources and well-trained, friendly people to help users.

Public libraries are changing fast. They are now more creative places, and the librarian has moved from being a gatekeeper and custodian to the role of curator, creator and facilitator. Increasingly library services are also being integrated and co-located with other local services, and communities are becoming involved in the design and delivery of library services.

Consequently, libraries reach more widely across people and places than many of our funded organisations. Libraries increasingly produce quality artistic activity, collaborating with arts organisations and individual artists through Grants for the Arts funded projects. Libraries are particularly effective in reaching children and young people and their families, and are always looking to try new business and operating models.

For the first time, libraries will now be part of our National Portfolio. With seven successful applicants across England, they will have a total of £1.6 million per annum to animate their libraries, using culture and creativity to deliver on their priorities.

Most of those joining the portfolio have a strong track record delivering Grants for the Arts projects. Others have benefitted from strategic funds, which shows how we've used different investment streams to develop the ground for the full integration of libraries.

The library organisations joining are the Society of Chief Librarians (Sector Support Organisation), London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, Culture Learning and Libraries (Midlands), Community and Cultural Services Cambridgeshire, Suffolk Libraries, Libraries Unlimited (Devon) and St Helens Council Library Service.

The libraries cohort makes an especially strong contribution to Goal 5 priorities including Cultural Education Partnerships, Quality Principles, and the libraries' Children's Promise. Similarly, the inclusion of library services strengthens the capacity of the portfolio to reach people not currently highly engaged in arts and culture.

Library services joining the portfolio will find organisations across the country incorporating libraries into their ways of working. Spark Arts, Loud in Libraries and Small Green Shoots are three examples of how the arts and cultural sector is reaching out to libraries.

There is an impressive breadth and depth of partnerships both with arts/cultural and other organisations, and a broad range of governance models represented – mutual, trusts and local authority run.

There is a broad range of digital activity proposed, which includes content creation and distribution, as well as audience engagement. The number of joiners is relatively small, and they are all Band 1 organisations. They will need to demonstrate their contribution to the Creative Case for Diversity, as well as the Arts Council's expectations on governance, financial viability and resilience.

In this they can be supported by existing National Portfolio Organisations and the new libraries Sector Support Organisation – the Society of Chief Librarians. The Society of Chief Librarians represent all 151 public library services in England, enabling them to deliver sector wide reach for our goals and priorities. They are a key sector-led partner for the Arts Council, and our investment has enabled the development of 'universal library offers', which have levered in additional funds from other partners.

MORE INFORMATION:
[artscouncil.org.uk/npo](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/npo)

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