



HOME Slough: Streets Alive, Summer Festival, 2018
Photo © David Blood

Guidance for Applicants to the National Portfolio Creative People and Places Extension Year Funding 2025-2026

Published: January 2024



Awarding funds from
THE NATIONAL LOTTERY®

arts council.org.uk

Access support

We are committed to being open and accessible to everyone. We realise some people may find that there are barriers to applying for a grant or accessing our services. Our **Access Support information sheet** explains the ways we can help.

Do you need this information in another format?

You can also find the following versions of this guidance on our [website](#):

- audio
- British Sign Language (BSL)
- Easy Read
- large print

Contents

If you are reading this guidance online, you can click on the contents below or the chapter titles at the top of each page to go straight to what you need:

Access Support	2
Welcome to the National Portfolio Creative People and Places Programme Extension Year 2025-2026 Guidance	4
Section One: Aims and Objectives	6
Section Two: Before you start your application	9
Section Three: How to Apply	14
Section Four: Making Your Application	18
Section Five: How we make our Decisions	20
Section Six: If Your Application is successful	23
Section Seven: Other things to be aware of	25
Contact us	30

Welcome to the National Portfolio Creative People and Places Programme Extension Year 2025-2026 Guidance

Welcome to the National Portfolio Creative People and Places Programme Extension Year 2025-2026 Guidance

Creative People and Places (CPP) makes a key contribution to the delivery of Arts Council England's 10-year strategy [Let's Create](#); in particular our [Cultural Communities Outcome](#) but also our [Creative People](#) Outcome. We also expect Creative People and Places extension year applicants to consider our four Investment principles – you can read more about these [here](#).

Section One: Aims and Objectives

Section One: Aims and Objectives

Some communities have limited engagement with arts and culture due to barriers like lack of opportunities, socio-economic factors, and physical accessibility. The goal of Creative People and Places is to ensure that everyone can access culture and express creativity, fostering thriving communities through inclusive and collaborative cultural approaches.

The vision is to support the public in shaping local arts and culture, increasing attendance and participation in excellent cultural experiences. This investment aims to foster long-term collaborations among communities, arts organisations, museums, libraries, and voluntary sectors, encouraging innovative cultural programmes that genuinely engage people and involve a variety of partners.

The **central aims** of the fund are as follows:

1. Engage more people from the identified places in a wide range of arts and cultural experiences as audiences and/or participants
2. Empower communities to lead and shape local cultural provision.
3. Ensure both the engagement process and the creative and cultural experiences on offer are relevant and excellent.
4. Encourage partnerships between publicly funded, amateur, voluntary, community and commercial sectors, as well as collaboration across various cultural institutions.
5. Take an Action Research approach to community engagement in arts, creativity and culture; learn what works best and share that learning.

Things to consider

In thinking about how you will achieve the above aims, applicants should consider how you will

1. Develop programmes that respond to the demographic in your area and are inclusive of the **whole** place
2. Take an asset-based approach (see glossary)
3. Both respond to public creative and cultural interests and provide a **taste of the widest possible range of high-quality experiences** (as audiences and participants) to support people to make an informed choice about the kinds of culture they may like
4. Challenge and support people **to try new and different things** with **all** partners being introduced to new and broader creative and cultural choices (local, national and international) and different ways of working with communities
5. Be clear about what is different about your approach. Describe anything in your proposal that you believe is not currently being tested anywhere else and might be distinctive to your programme.
6. Reflect Arts Council England's four [Investment Principles](#)

The outcomes we are looking for:

Alongside the central aims of the fund as outlined above, the programme is driven by three key questions:

1. Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by creativity and culture and what are the most effective ways to achieve this?
2. What approaches enable us to deliver on our aspiration for excellence, both in the process of community engagement and the creative and cultural experiences on offer?
3. What else are we learning that facilitates better public engagement in creativity and culture?

Section Two: Before you start your application

Section Two: Before you start your application

Check your Eligibility

Please read the eligibility requirements for the fund carefully. If you do not meet any of these requirements, we will be unable to consider your application for funding.

Who can apply?

- Existing lead organisation, applying on behalf of a consortium whose activity focuses on benefiting people from places included in the list of currently funded Creative People and Places
- A new lead organisation, who is already on a consortium but not currently acting as the accountable body – subject to agreement from Arts Council England
- All consortia must continue to include representation from community groups and cultural organisations (as set out in this guidance)
- The lead applicant must have a registered office in England or Wales
- National portfolio organisations can only apply if the activity proposed is in addition to their funded activity
- All grant funds from this one year extension programme must be applied to delivering a self-contained, financially ring-fenced, creative and cultural project with a clear benefit to the public and in a way that ensures no grant funds contribute to an organisation's profits

CPPs applying under a new Lead Organisation

In exceptional circumstances, and with prior Arts Council England Permission, we will accept applications from a nominated replacement lead organisation, to apply to become the accountable body, on behalf of existing Consortia that are currently delivering CPP Programmes. The new lead organisation **must be an existing member** of the current consortium and set up a Grantium Profile if they don't already have one.

Where a new lead organisation is applying to be the accountable body for an existing CPP, it is the consortium's responsibility to consider the following:

- The transfer of any CPP owned assets from the existing Lead Organisation, over to the new Lead Organisation;
- The transfer of any staff over from the existing lead organisation to the new Lead Organisation;
- Complete the relevant forms to seek permission for transfer of lead responsibility

Who cannot apply?

- Organisations, consortia or individuals who are not currently funded as a Creative People and Places programme

Eligible Places

- Places that are already covered by Creative People and Places funding 2022-25 are eligible for this extension year funding.

How much can you apply for

The budget for this programme is based on an annual equivalent of the existing awards subject to a maximum equating to £1 million over three years. Applicants will not be able to apply for more funding (annual equivalent) than they are **currently** on and no more than £1 million pro-rata (£333,333 for one year). Eligible applicants were provided with this figure in December 2023.

What activity can be supported?

- Activities that support the aims of the programme in the eligible place or places as defined in the guidance

What activity cannot be funded?

- Activities that are not related to creativity and culture (see glossary definition)
- Activities that do not benefit or engage people in England (in the short or long term)
- Support for endowment funds or any significant capital costs. In that event, no more than 10 per cent of the grant may be allocated towards eligible capital costs (equipment etc)
- Activities (including buying goods or services) that have started, been bought, ordered or contracted before we make a decision about your application. This is because we cannot fund activity retrospectively
- Costs that are already paid for by other income including your own funds or any other funding
- Setting up your own grant application schemes
- Activity that is entirely focused on artist development programmes

Local Authorities

- Local authorities are one of the Arts Council's key strategic partners and many have brokered relationships and played a supportive role as organisations planned their proposals in the previous Creative People and Places programmes. Given that this programme is about communities and grassroots organisations taking the lead, local authorities are not eligible to submit applications themselves or be grant recipients. Local authority endorsement is not a funding requirement. Many of the current Creative People and Places programmes have developed good relationships with the local authorities in their areas while maintaining their independence.

Other Key Eligibility Points

- Applications must be made by a lead applicant on behalf of a consortium for eligible places only
- Activities must be delivered over one year and start on 1 April 2025.
- Activities must end on 31 March 2026.
- In all cases the application for funding should be for no more than the annual equivalent of your 2022-2025 grant. The amount you are eligible to apply for was confirmed via email in December 2023.

Section Three: How to Apply

Section Three: How to Apply

Applications for the extension round will consist of submission of the following documents by 30 May 2024

- A refreshed Business Plan, covering the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, which meets the aims and outcomes of the fund and the ‘Meeting the Brief’ and ‘Management and Governance’ criteria, outlined below
- An outline activity plan for the funding period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026
- An indicative budget for the funding period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026, which meets the ‘Financial Viability’ criteria outlined below
- Most recent set of Financial Statements for the lead organisation
- A single letter, signed by all consortium partners evidencing commitment to engaging in the programme, for an additional year
- Up to date Management accounts and Income and Expenditure statement up to 31 March 2024

If you are applying as a new lead organisation you must also submit the following:

- A completed Proposed New Lead Organisation Form approved by Arts Council England;

What your Business Plan, Activity Plan and Budget should include

Your Business Plan, Activity Plan and Budget will be assessed based on the extent to which they contribute to the aims and outcomes for the programme, outlined above and the extent to which they meet the Meeting the Brief, Management and Governance and Financial Viability Criteria, outlined below.

Meeting the Brief Criteria

Your outline Business Plan and Activity Plan should include/demonstrate the following as a minimum:

1. Evidence of incorporating the aims of Creative People and Places in your approach, such as community decision making, co-creation, and co-commissioning of excellent creative and cultural activity
2. Your methodology to ensure a strong community voice and empowerment in decision-making as well as excellence in the quality of experiences
3. Details of proposed activities alongside targets for engagement
4. Plans to ensure inclusivity, including addressing the needs of the local demographics
5. Plans for continuous learning and sharing with the wider cultural sector; Including a commitment to being an active member of the Arts Council funded national peer learning group(s), Hivebrite platform and Action Learning sets

Management and Governance Criteria

Your Business Plan / Activity Plan should include/demonstrate the following:

1. The skill and capacity to deliver the proposed programme including details of the delivery team; to evidence both engagement and creative/cultural expertise
2. Detailed governance structures and processes which both empower the delivery team and include lines of accountability
3. A transparent approach to managing any potential or perceived conflicts of interest
4. How the management and governance of the programme matches the principles of the programme and in particular the ambition for community voice and empowerment
5. A convincing approach to monitoring and evaluating the impact of your activities, considering the three questions specified in the guidance
6. An ability and commitment to meeting Arts Council England's monitoring requirements and actively participate in the national evaluation programme and network

Financial Viability Criteria

Your Business Plan / Budget should include/demonstrate the following

- A minimum of 15 per cent of the total cost of the activity from sources other than Arts Council England (further information about Match Funding can be found in our [Frequently Asked Questions](#)).
- Evidence of the financial viability of the lead organisation (see FAQs)
- Commitment to empowering the delivery team in terms of management of CPP ringfenced budgets

Section Four: Making Your Application

Section Four: Making Your Application

1. On 1 April 2024 you will receive an individual “Invitation to Apply” from Arts Council England. This will state your individual project number and provide details of how to find the application task on [Grantium](#).
2. You will be asked to supply the mandatory attachments as described in Section Three: How to Apply (to be uploaded on the ‘Attachments’ screen) to the application before submitting. The total file size for all attachments should not exceed 10 megabytes.

After Submitting Your Application:

- You will receive an acknowledgement email upon submission
- Eligibility checks will be conducted within 10 working days of the application deadline
- If your application is ineligible, we will inform you.

The deadline is **midday on 30 May 2024**

Section Five: How we make our Decisions

Section Five: How we make our Decisions

We will assess your Business Plan, Activity Plan and Budget against the aims and objectives of the programme and against the Meeting the Brief, Management and Governance and Financial Viability Criteria outlined above. We will also consider your current programme's Risk Rating, as of 31 May 2024.

Assessments will then be reviewed by a balancing panel and recommendations made on who to fund.

We will make our assessment and decision based on:

- The information you provide in your Business Plan, Activity Plan and Budget
- Any further information that we request
- Where relevant, data and information from the Charity Commission and Companies House or other regulatory body websites
- We will also take in to account your current risk rating and information we already hold

Each criterion ('Meeting the brief', 'Management of the activity', and 'Financial viability') will be assessed using a five-point word scoring:

- Not met
The application does not meet the criteria
- Potential
The application does not meet the criteria but shows potential to do so

- Met
The application meets the criteria
- Met (strong)
The application meets the criteria and shows strong qualities
- Met (Outstanding)
The application meets the criteria and shows outstanding qualities

We aim to communicate the final decision on applications no later than 2 September 2024

Here is an overview of decision making for quick reference:

Application Portal Opens	1 April 2024
Deadline for Applications	Midday 30 May 2024
Eligibility check	3-7 June 2024
Assessment and balancing period	June – August 2024
Notification of outcome	2 September 2024
Funding agreement period	3 September 2024 – 14 February 2025
Activity Begins	1 April 2025

Section Six: If Your Application is successful

Section Six: If Your Application is successful

All applicants will be notified of final decisions, via Grantium on 2 September 2024. We will then negotiate a one-year funding agreement. Funding Agreements will be issued and accepted by 28 February 2025. Activity will then begin from 1 April 2025.

Terms and Conditions

If your application goes on to be successful, all grantholders must agree to our [Terms and conditions](#). These are subject to review and there may be changes between now and the date of the funding agreement.

Section Seven: Other things to be aware of

Section Seven: Other things to be aware of

Subsidy Control

The Subsidy Control regime regulates financial assistance given by public authorities (which includes Arts Council England) to organisations engaged in economic activity. As part of the application process, you will be asked to indicate whether (if you are awarded funding) the award meets the “flow through” model to comply with the Subsidy Control Act 2022. For the award to meet the “flow through” model, you must be able to demonstrate that by the end of the funding period all of the funding can be shown to have been used to deliver services for members of the public (the end beneficiaries).

If you are awarded funding, there will be additional specific conditions on the funding that require you:

- to ensure that the funding is efficiently run and you do not pay excessive sums for any goods, works or services using the funding;
- to hold the funding separate to all other funds and solely use the funding to deliver the agreed activities; and will keep records to demonstrate you applied the “flow through” model, in particular (but not limited to)
- recording the value of the support you provide to others as well as all costs you have incurred in delivering the support.

As part of the last specific condition, we may at any time during or after the project request such records to ensure that the “flow through” model has been applied. If some of the funding has not been used to deliver services to the end beneficiaries, then we may choose to recover that proportion of the funding.

Our FAQs set out more information on the Subsidy Control regime and you may choose to get your own advice on the compliance requirements.

Please note that if you are applying for a grant of £10 million or above (either cumulative in value or one-off awards for substantially the same project or purpose), your application will need to be referred to the Competition and Markets Authority for review (more information on this process is set out in the FAQs).

Counter fraud measures

Arts Council England has a Counter Fraud Strategy and Policy and appropriate measures will be taken to ensure that grant holders given funding through this programme use the funding appropriately. This will include random sampling checks on a proportion of grants made. All grant holders must retain their financial and other documentation relating to the grant, and Arts Council England reserves the right to request this at any time. In addition, Arts Council England will complete checks pre- and post-award against grant applicants for due diligence and counter fraud purposes.

Freedom of Information Act

Arts Council England is committed to openness and transparency. We believe that the public has a right to know how we spend public funds and how we make our funding decisions.

We are listed as a public authority under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the FOI Act). By law, we may have to provide your application documents and information about our assessment to any member of the public who asks for them under the FOI Act.

However, we may not release all or parts of the documents and information about our assessment which are covered by one or more of the exemptions under the FOI Act. For more information about how to make a Freedom of Information request from us, please see our website [here](#). For more information about the FOI Act and the exemptions, please see the Information Commissioner's Office website at www.ico.org.uk.

We will not release any information about applications during the assessment period, as this may interfere with the decision-making process.

Data Protection

Arts Council England is committed to using any personal information (or personal data) we collect on a lawful, fair and transparent basis, respecting your legal rights as an individual in accordance with the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation, the Data Protection Act 2018 and other applicable laws that regulate the use and privacy of personal data (together called the Data Protection Law).

As part of meeting this requirement, we have published our General Privacy Notice for you to refer to [here](#). This tells you more about the personal data the we collect; the different purposes that we use it for and on what legal basis; who we may share that personal data with; how long we keep it; and your legal rights, including your right to contact us and receive information regarding the personal data about you that we may hold from time to time.

For further information about our obligations and your rights under Data Protection Law, as well as how to report a concern if you believe that your personal data is being collected or used unlawfully, please see the General Privacy Notice and the Information Commissioner's Office website at www.ico.org.uk.

Making a complaint

Arts Council England will always listen to and respond to any concerns that you may have. If you would like to make a complaint about either the service you have received from us or the way we have handled your application, we have a process that you can use.

Please note that we do not have an appeals process and for this reason, we are unable to accept complaints that relate solely to the decision we have made rather than how we have made it.

For more information, please visit the 'Complaints' section of our website, under 'Contact us' (www.artscouncil.org.uk/contact). Additionally, you can email complaints@artscouncil.org.uk or call our Customer Services team for more information. You can find our contact details on our website, under 'Contact us'.

Contact us

Email: enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk

Web: artscouncil.org.uk

Post: Arts Council England
The Hive, 49 Lever Street
Manchester
M1 1FN

Telephone: 0161 934 4317

You can also **Livechat** with us by visiting our website: artscouncil.org.uk