



Dorset County Museum, Natural Dorset  
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## NATIONAL LOTTERY PROJECT GRANTS INFORMATION SHEET

# Unlocking Collections

Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants is our funding programme for arts, museums and libraries projects.

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Awarding funds from  
**THE NATIONAL LOTTERY®**

# What's Inside

This Information Sheet provides **additional information** for your Arts Council England's National Lottery Project Grants application.

Make sure that you have also read the main **Guidance for Applicants**. See our [website](#) for more information about Project Grants.

In this information sheet, we will talk about the following:

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# What is a Time limited priority?

From time to time, we may ask for specific types of applications through Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants to help us achieve our strategy [Let's Create](#).

The opportunity to respond to any priority is part of Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants and is not a separate programme. Any application must meet the criteria for Project Grants, as well as respond to the specific characteristics of any priority.

**This information sheet relates to the Unlocking Collections Time limited priority.**

## Unlocking Collections

Museums in England are a vital aspect of cultural life, caring for and displaying collections which help us to understand who we are, and where we come from. Museums are the custodians of our past and provide numerous opportunities for people to engage with their collections through interpretation, community engagement, public programming, contemporary collecting and other events and activities.

As part of the Arts Council's commitment to funding museums and their collections, Unlocking Collections campaign is a Time Limited Priority within National Lottery Project Grants, aimed at enabling museums to develop their collections-based work and increase public engagement with, and use of, their collections.

# What you can apply for

We welcome applications from museums looking to develop their work with the collections they manage and care for.

We fund projects which highlight the use of collections, whether that is for community-based engagement, the development of interpretation or providing opportunities for museums to develop their digital skills and knowledge.

## **We are keen to see applications which consider the following areas of museum practice:**

- Re-interpretation of collections:
  - We are committed to working with a wider range of people to better understand and reinterpret collections. We want them to be more inclusive, relevant, useful and engaging. This includes projects that enable a deeper understanding of collections' provenance.
- Digital tools and mechanisms within museums (to promote a shared understanding of the content and significance of collections across the sector, linking to Digital Champions Networks)
- Collections review: improving the standard of collections storage and display spaces

## **Types of Unlocking Collections activity we can fund include:**

- Documentation programmes which engage local communities in researching and understanding more about collections within their local museum/s
- Collections development programmes which enable museums to enhance their interpretation of the collections they hold
- **W**orkshop activity which places collections at its heart. This could mean workshops for communities and the staff working within the museum itself.
- Support programmes for museums to develop digital skills and knowledge linked to effective collections management and documentation

- Collections review projects which enable museums to better understand their holdings, and improve engagement with them

## What we are unlikely to fund

Generally we're unlikely to support:

- Applications which primarily support staffing or management costs, infrastructure or capital costs
- Projects that do not provide clear benefit to people and communities

## Key things to remember

**Before you apply, think about:**

- How you currently work with your collections, what this funding will do to help improve access to, and understanding of, the objects you care for
- Who you will work with to deliver your proposed programme of activities
  - Do your collections provide opportunities to engage local communities? Are there other museums or cultural organisations who might be partners in this project?
- Who your audiences are
  - How will you use your collections to engage your audiences?
  - What will the outcomes be?
- How will you manage potentially challenging conversations about the provenance/heritage of the objects you hold, and how will you safeguard the communities and partners you work with in these discussions?
- The environmental impact of your work
  - We encourage the projects we fund to be environmentally responsible. Within collections work, this might mean the use of sustainable and recyclable materials for packing or reductions in the use of vehicles for the transportation of objects.

# Contact us

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You can also Live Chat with our customer services team by clicking the icon  
our Project Grants page on our website.