Museum projects

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

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Wendy Daws: The Value of Touch, 2016-17
Photo, Gary Weston
This information sheet relates to Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants. See our website for more information about Project Grants.

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Museums and Project Grants

We welcome applications to Project Grants from Accredited museums for projects focused on museum practice. This includes Museums with provisional Accreditation status. All types of museums are also eligible to apply for arts-focused projects.

Organisations who have an established role in supporting Accredited museums can also apply for museum projects that involve and benefit at least one Accredited museum, its work and its visitors. This type of organisation would include:

- a network or support organisation whose role primarily focuses on developing one or more aspect(s) of Accredited museums’ work; and/or
- a key funder of (an) Accredited museum(s); and/or
- an organisation with an established (over 2yrs) research relationship with an Accredited museum or group of Accredited museums.

Museums are eligible to apply to all strands of Project Grants: £15,000 and under, and over £15,000 (including National Activities). Before you apply, we recommend reading the relevant How to Apply document, in addition to this information sheet.

Museums applying for National Activities should also read the National Activities information sheet.

Museums that are National Portfolio Organisations or members of a consortium and Sector Support Organisations should also read the Funded Organisations information sheet.

Museum projects

Museum projects are focused on museum practice; in other words, a museum’s collections, or other activities linked to its core mission or on developing the museum and/or its workforce’s expertise. To be eligible for Project Grants, any museum project must have a long-term or short-term public engagement outcome as part of its project aims.

By funding museum activity by Accredited museums, we want to enable high quality public engagement with museums, their collections and their work. You may also want to think about how your project could align with the recommendations of the
Mendoza Review, which we are keen to support.

What you can apply for

**Museum-focused work** could include:

- public programming, including displays and exhibitions. This could include the hire or purchase costs of appropriate equipment or assets. For example, display cases
- commemorative projects around the museum’s core collections and objectives
- digital and creative media projects that encourage the public to interact with collections
- projects focusing on the conservation of objects, as long as there are associated public engagement outcomes
- projects focused on the touring or loans of objects or collections
- projects that engage the public in consultation on collecting or other museum activity. For example, community or youth panels, participatory practice or co-design
- outreach activity or community engagement projects linked to the museum’s core objectives
- projects focused on engaging people with historic art collections. We would view this as a museums project rather than arts activity because our remit for visual arts focuses on contemporary arts
- projects involving children, young people and learning in a museum context, including Arts Award. See the [Children, young people and learning](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk) information sheet on our website
- organisational resilience projects, such as consulting on new approaches to fundraising or commercial development where these will have a longer-term benefit for a museum’s ability to reach audiences and to develop the quality of its programme of work
- projects involving professional development for Accredited museum workforce, boards and volunteers where these will have a longer-term benefit for a museum’s ability to reach audiences and develop the quality of its programme of work. See [Character Matters 2016](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk)
What you cannot apply for

There are some types of museum projects that we can’t support through Project Grants. These are:

- any **building-based capital work** that is required to comply with statutory approvals such as building or planning regulations. For example, new buildings, refurbishing or adapting existing buildings, etc.
- funding purchase of collections/collection items (except new artistic commissions where the commission is part of the project)
- projects that deliver Subject Specialist Networks activity; either from existing Subject Specialist Networks or that aim to set up new Subject Specialist Networks
- archaeology or field work where this is the main focus of the application
- documentation projects as the main focus of the application without a strong public engagement outcome
- digitisation of collections where this is the main focus of the activity without a strong public engagement outcome
- **individuals** are not eligible to apply for projects such as museum-specific curation and display work (this means individuals who are self-employed outside of museum employment)

Key things to remember for museum projects

- We can only accept applications for museum projects from Accredited museums (or organisations who have an established role in supporting Accredited museums for projects that involve and benefit at least one Accredited museum, its work and its visitors).
- All applications, regardless of the type of activity, must include elements of public engagement, either in the short-term or the long-term.
- Support in kind can count towards the percentage of funding you need to provide from other sources. This means any materials or services that you would otherwise have to pay for but are being provided free of charge or at a reduced rate. This can include volunteers’ time, where appropriate. See our [Support in kind](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk) information sheet to learn more.
Museums and arts activity

All museums are still eligible to apply for (and be part of wider projects focusing on) arts activity in any of the artforms we support. We continue to encourage arts and cultural organisations to collaborate; museums do not need to be Accredited for this.

Project Grants can support a range of arts activity associated with museums, such as artists’ and creatives’ residencies. This includes exhibitions (including touring), workshops, international exchanges and projects that interpret arts collections or non-arts collections through art.

We can also support Arts Award-related activity in a museum context; see the Children, young people and learning information sheet on our website.

We can support building-based capital work, such as refurbishing or adapting existing buildings, if it specifically relates to long-term use for arts purposes. Contact us if you’re considering this kind of project.

Key things to remember for arts activity in museums

- Partnership with arts organisations/specialists is strongly encouraged.
- Projects should have a clear artistic rationale, with clear description of artistic aims and how they would be achieved and evaluated.
- Show how quality of the artistic outcome and process will be ensured.
- Be clear about the artists you are working with, their track record, and what the idea behind the project is.
- Consider all artforms, from literature to theatre, visual arts to dance, combined arts and festivals to creative media and digital projects.
Museums and National Activities

Accredited museums (and National Museums¹) can also apply for the strand of Project Grants called National Activities for museum focused activity. This strand can support activities focused either on:

- **national touring** - for example, touring exhibitions or collections nationally; or

- **nationally significant** activities - for example national moments and celebrations, significant sector development activities or major innovation projects

There is an information sheet focusing on National Activities that all prospective applicants should read.

National activities and building-based capital work

Museums should note that the same restrictions apply to National Activities as to wider Projects Grants in relation to building-based capital work (work that is required to comply with statutory approvals such as building or planning regulations). Museums cannot apply for expenditure associated with building-based capital work, and this should not form part of the project budget. Any match funding specifically related to capital costs should not be included in a National Activities (or any other Project Grants) project budget.

If a nationally significant project is closely linked to a wider building-based capital programme of work, we suggest viewing the programme as one with several phases. Phase 1 might be the capital project, which we cannot support. Phase 2 might be the nationally significant project to come out of that capital work, for which Arts Council support is requested through National Activities.

**For example:**

An Accredited museum wants to apply for support to relaunch a newly-refurbished gallery with an international-standard, innovative re-display of its collection and some high profile international loans.

¹National museums are governed by national legislation and directly receive funding from central Government or from UK devolved Governments. They are usually governed by an Act of Parliament or Royal Charter and constituted as charities.
Phase 1 would be the refurbishment work itself. In this example, this work might have been majority funded by a private foundation. This phase is not eligible for Project Grants (including National Activities).

Phase 2 would be the launch re-display programme and the activity associated with securing and showing the international loans. The Museum would be able to apply to National Activities for this phase of the activity. As context, they could refer in brief to what has happened (or is happening) as part of Phase 1 and how it was funded, but they shouldn’t include any income or expenditure from that phase. The entire project that they are applying to National Activities for support towards is phase 2, and the application should focus on phase 2 only.

The budget should only include phase 2 income and expenditure, and the applicant museum would need to show that they can meet the minimum partnership funding requirement on the total cost for phase 2.
Who is eligible to apply for what?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art projects</th>
<th>Museum projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accredited museums (non-National Portfolio Organisation)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisations that have an established role in supporting Accredited museums</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Activities £100,001 and above only, by invitation following an Expression of Interest; activity must be additional to NPO-funded programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-lead consortium members in National Portfolio</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>National museums¹</td>
<td>✓</td>
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See our National Activities information sheet for more detail on these types of project.

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Further information

The Museums Association is a professional membership organisation for museum, gallery and heritage professionals, museums, galleries and heritage organisations in the UK. They can provide recommended rates of pay as well as advice and news about the museums sector.

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