

External information sheet and Q&A:

Museum Accreditation and NPO eligibility for museums activity

If you require this information in an alternative format, like audio, Braille or BSL, [get in touch](#).

1. Museums who are not currently Working Towards Accreditation but potentially interested in applying as an NPO

Our organisation is not yet Accredited or formally Working Towards Accreditation. How do we find out whether Accreditation is right for us?

Eligibility has remained open in England for museums, galleries and heritage organisations considering new applications to the scheme.

Eligibility questionnaires can still be submitted and assessed during this period.

Please refer to the published Accreditation guidance. The Accreditation Standard and guidance are available to download on the Arts Council England website. We provide detailed guidance on governance and eligibility for Accreditation, available to download below. The '*Quick Reference Guide to Museum Constitutional Requirements 2018*' is a handy summary if you're unsure about whether you're eligible for Accreditation.

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/accreditation-scheme/accreditation-how-apply>

For non-Accredited museums or heritage organisations looking to find out more about the scheme, your relevant regional Museum Development team will be able to offer help and support. They will be able to advise you on what the scheme is, why it's important, what the benefits are, what's involved in applying for and maintaining Accreditation, why not all museums are suitable and where to find out more. Museum development provides Accreditation advice on behalf of Arts Council England.

Do talk to your regional Museum Development team for initial eligibility advice and to see if it is the right fit and timing for your organisation.

Find their contact details below:

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/museum-development-programme/museum-development-providers>

What's the eligibility criteria for joining Accreditation?

Accreditation is awarded to individual museum venues (a physical site/space/building) rather than to collections or services. Your organisation's governing body is not itself Accredited, the award is held by the relevant venue or site.

To apply for the Scheme for the first time or reapply after a period of non-participation, organisations must:

- Be based in the UK, Isle of Man or Channel Islands
- meet the Museums Association's 1998 definition of a museum: "Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society"
- Be a physical site/space/building which is open to the public regularly
- Enable the public to see and engage with your museum's collections
- Have an appropriate constitution which supports the long-term purpose of a public museum
- Be committed to making a full application for Accreditation within three years*

*A 12-month extension period applies for museums confirmed as Working Towards Accreditation between 2018 and 2021. This equates to 4 years from the date of the original eligibility confirmation. This was introduced as part of the Arts Council's Covid-19 response and will revert to 3 years from 1 January 2022 onwards.

How do we apply for eligibility to the Accreditation Scheme?

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/accreditation-scheme/accreditation-how-apply#section-1>

In England you'll need to complete the eligibility questionnaire, attach any supporting documents, and send to accreditation@artscouncil.org.uk. Eligibility for Accreditation is an offline process, not via Grantium, our online application portal.

The questionnaire asks for a target completion date for an application on the questionnaire and should be signed by a member of your governing body or by an individual authorised to sign on behalf of your governing body.

How long does it take to check eligibility?

The Arts Council has a six-week turnaround for an Accreditation eligibility decision from date of receipt of your eligibility questionnaire. The central Accreditation team at ACE liaises with the regional museum development team to support a review and draft recommendation.

Arts Council England makes final decisions on eligibility, working closely with the relevant Museum Development team.

You'll hear from the central Accreditation team within six weeks by email with confirmation of whether your organisation is eligible or not to apply for Accreditation.

When would we need to have eligibility for Accreditation confirmed by?

Please note there's a 6-week turnaround for eligibility requests so you are advised to complete an eligibility questionnaire asap.

Museums who are intending to apply as an NPO for museum activity and are not already Accredited or formally Working Towards Accreditation will need to complete and return an eligibility questionnaire by **w/c 14 February 2022 at the latest** when the application portal will be open.

This cut off is to ensure Accreditation eligibility is confirmed before you apply as an NPO for museums activity. You will also need your three digit 'T' number to enter on the form. This is a temporary number assigned to museums formally registered as Working Towards Accreditation.

When would we need to make a full application for Accreditation by?

A museum must have achieved Accredited status to become an NPO for museums activity.

Organisations wishing to make an NPO application for museums activity, who do not currently hold the Accreditation award and are confirmed as eligible (formally Working Towards Accreditation), will need to meet a deadline of **1 August 2022** to submit an Accreditation application.

This means an Accreditation award decision can be made within the usual 6-month turnaround, so by end January 2023 at the latest.

The longer Working Towards Accreditation period (see published list for deadlines <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/accreditation-scheme/about-accreditation#section-4>) still applies for organisations who do not wish to apply as an NPO for museums activity.

2. Museums who are formally Working Towards Accreditation and potentially interested in applying as an NPO

Where can we check if our museum/gallery is formally Working Towards Accreditation?

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/accreditation-scheme/about-accreditation#section-4>

You can use this list to check which sites are Accredited and what your Working Towards Accreditation numbers are (usually a three digit number, your 'T' number xxx).

What does Working Towards Accreditation mean?

Museums who are formally confirmed as Working Towards Accreditation (i.e. on the published list) have completed the formal eligibility process for the Accreditation Scheme.

Working Towards Accreditation is not a separate award status. It confirms eligibility to apply for Accreditation only.

When do Working Towards Accreditation museums need to make a full Accreditation application?

A museum must have achieved Accredited status to become an NPO for museums activity.

Organisations wishing to make an NPO application for museums activity, who are already confirmed as eligible (formally Working Towards Accreditation), will need to meet a deadline of **1 August 2022** to submit an Accreditation application.

This means an Accreditation award decision can be made within the usual 6-month turnaround, so by end January 2023 at the latest.

The longer Working Towards Accreditation period (see published list for deadlines <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/accreditation-scheme/about-accreditation#section-4>) still applies for organisations who do not wish to apply as an NPO for museums activity.

Our organisation has already applied, and is under assessment and awaiting a decision on our Accreditation application. What next?

There is a standard 6-month turnaround for an award decision.

Where this timescale has been disrupted by Covid-19 and the temporary pause to the Scheme individual organisations have already been contacted and Accreditation assessments are underway again. Your applications are a priority for us so we can progress with the aim of scheduling to an awards Panel and confirming an Accreditation award decision asap.

3. Museums who are Accredited

Where can we check if our museum/gallery is Accredited?

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/accreditation-scheme/about-accreditation#section-4>

You can use this list to check which sites are Accredited and what their Accreditation numbers are (usually a three or four digit number ANxxxx)

Can we apply as a NPO for museums activity if our museum/gallery holds a Provisional Accreditation award?

Yes, whether the site holds a full or provisional award it is still Accredited.

What's the current position with awards?

For all Accredited museums in the UK, the current Accreditation award status is being **further extended for an additional 12 months to 1 April 2022**. That applies whether an organisation is expecting to be invited to make a return or has already submitted a return and are awaiting assessment and an award decision.

There's no risk of a cut off in April 2022. An award of full Accreditation is valid for approximately five years, at which point the museum will be invited to provide a return to demonstrate continuing compliance with the Accreditation Standard. Organisations already holding the full award can expect this to roll over automatically until their next return and confirmation of an award decision at panel. Even if your last return was over five years ago, this will roll over automatically and you don't need to send us anything until we give you a new invitation date and deadline for your next return.

If your museum holds the provisional award, you'll have already been contacted and advised that your provisional review is due by 31 March 2022. That means any outstanding required actions must be reported on by that deadline at the latest.

What if the pandemic has meant an Accredited museum will close permanently?

We recognise that sadly some museums may close permanently due to the impact of COVID-19, and if this happens, they cannot maintain their Accreditation status. If an Accredited museum has closed to the public indefinitely and does not have a plan for reopening, it cannot meet the eligibility criteria for the Scheme or Section 3 User and Experiences of the Standard (museums, galleries and historic sites must be a physical site/space/building, which is open regularly with access to the collection for a minimum of least 20 days per year).

Museums experiencing difficulties should already be talking to their regional museum development team and their Relationship Manager.

If the organisation does close permanently, please let the central Accreditation team know and we will arrange removal from the scheme.

Contact accreditation@artscouncil.org.uk