



OUR NATIONAL PORTFOLIO, 2018-22

Museums Narrative



The 2015-18 museums portfolio comprises 24 organisations holding 30 funding agreements and an investment of £27.3 million per annum (7 per cent of the total portfolio spend) and the proposed 2018-22 portfolio is 66 organisations holding 72 funding agreements and an investment of £36.6 million per annum (9 per cent of the total spend). This increase of 42 organisations represents a 140 per cent increase to the museums portfolio. This discipline now makes up 9 per cent of the overall portfolio, compared to 4 per cent in the 2015-18 portfolio.

England's 1,300 Accredited museums are rich and varied. They include the great encyclopaedic national museums, enterprising independents, civic and local museums and university museums with links to world-class scholarship. With their legacy of historic and contemporary collecting, they offer a wealth of stories, experiences and educational opportunities.

They are underpinned by deep engagement with their communities, supported by passionate volunteers and have a long history of sharing their collections, expertise, and creative ideas. Museums are especially strong in understanding their audiences and providing a range of experiences for people of all ages – from reminiscence workshops for people with dementia, to toddler sessions and formal learning for schools. They are rooted in their locality and have excellent opportunities to engage with communities, help build civic pride, and support the development of identity and citizenship.

Arts Council England currently supports England's regional museums by investing around £40 million a year in grants, as well as providing development support, specialist expertise and a range of services such as Accreditation.

The new National Portfolio marks a significant step in the integration of museums into Arts Council England's investment. There are now 57 museum organisations representing over 200 museums, from Truro to Carlisle, and Dudley to Canterbury. This substantial new investment furthers the development of museums in England and helps deliver the Arts Council's strategic goals.

There is a broad range of high-quality collections in the portfolio, including a significant percentage of designated collections. Collections include industrial, maritime (for example ss Great Britain) and military (for example the Tank Museum) as well as fine art. Joiners include those featuring recent capital developments such as the Lapworth Museum of Geology and the National Horseracing Museum (both of which are shortlisted for the national Museum of the Year Award).

The portfolio includes museums of different sizes, among them smaller museums such as The Watts Gallery. It also includes museums in places of traditional low engagement such as Doncaster and Preston, and those especially strong in supporting diversity, including the National Justice Museum, the People's History Museum, and the Manchester Jewish Museum. There are 12 Band 3 museums in receipt of more than £1 million a year, including an expanded museums and arts partnership in Plymouth.

Though there is more work to do on improving the skills and diversity of the workforce, there is some strong practice in Norfolk, Colchester and Ipswich, SHARE in the East of England, London Transport Museum, and the Sector Support Organisations.

Museums rely on a number of key Sector Support Organisations. Several feature in our new portfolio – from the Association of Independent Museums, which provides training and guidance on governance and business skills, to Collections Trust which supports good quality collections management. We continue to fund nine regional museum development providers to support all Accredited museums in England and those with ambitions to become Accredited.

Around two thirds of the museums in the portfolio have collections Designated by Arts Council England for their national significance and quality. Overall, collections range from dinosaurs to tanks, from horse racing to LGBT history, from the Pre-Raphaelites to insects.

This portfolio provides an excellent platform for development. Challenges over the next four years include: the need to develop more sustainable business models; investing in strategic collections management including the development of contemporary collecting; diversifying audiences; sharing expertise; developing a skilled and diverse workforce; and equipping museums to make use of digital opportunities. The new National Portfolio investment will play an important part in addressing these challenges.

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

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