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**Museum Development North Open Grants 2024-26**

**Issued June 2024**

**Museum Development North**

**Open Grants 2024-26**

**The following document outlines the Open Grant available from Museum Development North for the 2024-26 period.**

**If you are unsure about applying for funding, please contact your Museum Development Adviser who will be happy to discuss this with you.**

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**1. MD North Overview**

**Museum Development North** will enable strong, agile museums to contribute to the distinctive life, cultures and identity of the North of England and be widely valued for their transformational impact.

* We challenge museums in the North of England to be the best they can be, for everyone.
* We empower museums to be sustainable, inclusive and dynamic, agile, having a positive impact on people, communities and society.
* We create opportunities for museums to connect, collaborate and grow.

MD North Open Grants are a major part of the Museum Development North (MD North) programme using our core funding from Arts Council England (ACE).

**2. Grant Programme Summary**

There are three rounds of grants planned for 2024-2026:

* Round 1 opens on 15 April and closes on 7 June 2024
* Round 2 opens on 24 June and closes on 13 September 2024
* Round 3 opens on 13 January and closes on 4 April 2025

In Rounds 1 and 2, 2024-25, £68,000 is allocated to museums across the North region, with an emphasis on the quality of the proposed project.

The maximum amount an individual museum can apply for is **£5,000.**

Multisite organisations, partnerships and consortiums can apply for **£7,500** where the funding will benefit more than one Accredited museum, including those officially Working Towards Accreditation.

All projects funds must be spent and completed with final reports and invoices submitted to MD North by:

* + Round 1: 30 June 2025
  + Round 2: 30 September 2025
  + Round 3: 31 March 2026

We may release up to 90% of the grant value on signing the grant acceptance letter; with the remainder on completion of the project, submission of final report and proof of expenditure.

Project criteria is focused around ACE’s [Let's Create | Arts Council England](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/lets-create)[[1]](#footnote-2) strategy Investment Principles. See Appendix 1 for more details.

**3. Eligibility**

**Who can apply?**

The following museums are eligible to apply for an Open Grant:

* Museums in the north of England which are Accredited, hold provisional status, or are formally Working Towards Accreditation[[2]](#footnote-3).
* Museums that are not Accredited, or not formally Working Towards it, can be part of a project involving a partnership of museums, but an Accredited museum must be the lead partner.

The following museums are not eligible:

* National Portfolio Organisations and DCMS sponsored National Museums, English Heritage and National Trust sites and unaccredited museums.

**How much can you apply for?**

In Rounds 1 and 2, 2024-25, £68,00 is allocated to museums across North Region.

* A single Accredited museum or museum Working Towards Accreditation can apply for up to **£5,000**
* A museum service with multiple Accredited sites, a partnership or consortium can apply for up to **£7,500**; the project must involve a minimum of two Accredited sites.

Confirmed match funding will demonstrate a commitment to the project and will be considered when reviewing the applications, however you are not required to have match funding to be eligible to apply.

Please note that you may not be offered the full amount you apply for.

We may release up to 90% of the grant value on signing the grant acceptance letter; with the remainder on completion of the project, submission of final report and proof of expenditure.

**Deadline:** The deadline for Round 2 applications is **6 pm, 13 September 2024.** Applications received after this time will not be accepted.

**How long can projects last?**

Projects supported through Round 2 can start on return of the grant acceptance letter and must be completed by **30 September 2025.**

**4. Programme Criteria**

The MD North Open Grants are to support organisational development. All projects must help your organisation meet or go beyond the requirements of the Accreditation Standard (including Areas for Development and Required Actions).

If awarded, you will be asked to demonstrate how your project will deliver against ACE’s [Let's Create | Arts Council England](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/lets-create) Strategy 2020-2030, in particular how it delivers against the Investment Principles [Investment Principles Resource Hub | Arts Council England](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/lets-create/strategy-2020-2030/investment-principles/investment-principles-resource-hub) (Appendix 1):

1) Ambition & Quality

2) Dynamism

3) Environmental Responsibility

4) Inclusivity & Relevance

We encourage museums to submit grant applications that build on the advice and support of MD North. Our funding aims to help your organisation progress and develop.

**4.1 What will we fund?**

The MD North Open Grants scheme can assist museums to implement advice, test new ways of working and develop organisational practice linked to the ACE Investment Principles.

You must show that your project has been developed:

* through your consideration of how ACE’s *Let’s Create* strategy and the four Investment Principles impact on what your museum does and how it works

*and*

* in line with existing forward plans or other key policy and planning documents, including Accreditation Development Areas

Funding may support you to deliver on actions arising from your participation in current and past Museum Development programmes.

**Examples of activity we could fund include (but are not limited to):**

**Ambition & Quality**

* Implementing recommendations from research and reports previously undertaken
* Commissioning new research or bringing in additional expertise for forward planning, including work to support an application for larger scale funding e.g. ACE’s National Lottery Project Grants (NLPG)
* Research and/or piloting of audience engagement programming or community co-production projects, including digital engagement
* Work to support collections management, such as environmental monitoring, cataloguing projects or disposal reviews

**Dynamism**

* Business planning, including exploring new models of income generation
* Investing in the health and wellbeing and development of your paid and volunteer workforce
* Governance development support to help make your organisation more sustainable
* Digital development projects to support new engagement and museum resource management

**Environmental Responsibility**

* Energy audits to find ways to reduce energy outgoings
* Initiatives to engage your audiences with issues of the climate crisis using collections
* Implement outcomes of energy audits

**Inclusivity & Relevance**

* Audience development, especially to reach new audiences and communities currently less likely to access your museum
* Equality and accessibility audits, planning and development
* Working with collections to tell new stories, or the preparatory work for this to happen
* Inclusivity and diversity in workforce management

**We can fund:**

* Materials and equipment
* Contracting freelancers or other specialists to increase expertise or capacity
* Research and development costs
* ICT equipment and digital infrastructure - please note the case for investment must include clear explanation of need and show you have considered ongoing costs of development and maintenance
* Promotional activities
* Event costs
* Minor building modifications to implement sector guidance on accessibility or carbon reduction
* Additional resourcing to enable staff/volunteers to develop new ways of working

**We will not fund:**

* Major building work
* Revenue costs, such as salaries and general running costs
* Ongoing capital or maintenance costs
* Any expenditure for which the museum cannot provide evidence (e.g. receipts)
* Costs incurred prior to the project start date
* Projects partially funded by ACE or as match funding for monies from ACE

**Alternative funding**

If you have a complex project in mind requiring a longer timescale, you might want to consider applying to ACE’s NLPG[[3]](#footnote-4) instead which can fund projects lasting up to three years. Applications for projects for funding between £1,000 and £30,000 are assessed within eight weeks. Within NLPG, ACE have a number of Time Limited Priority programmes some of which specifically target museums.

**4.2 What criteria will my application be assessed against?**

Your application will be assessed by the MD North team with support from an independent panel of museum professionals based in the north of England. We will be looking for evidence of the following:

* Project is viable, achievable and clearly planned
* There is a demonstrable need which is clearly evidenced
* Clear aims and objectives with outcomes that demonstrate the impact of funds
* Outputs and outcomes that respond to MD North’s funding priorities and ACE’s Strategy [Let's Create | Arts Council England](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/lets-create)
* Details outlining when and how the project will be implemented and how it responds to project need
* The project demonstrates value for money – costs are appropriate to the scale and nature of your project along with details of any match funding or contributions in kind
* The project will be completed on time with likely risks to delay identified and mitigated

**It is expected that applications be discussed with a Museum Development Adviser before submission.**

Applicants will also be asked to demonstrate how they have considered:

* Best practice when working with freelancers/consultants[[4]](#footnote-5)
* Environmental sustainability
* Issues around equity, diversity and inclusivity including digital and physical access

Appendix 2 contains links to resources to help you with these considerations.

**5. The Application Process**

**When can I apply?**

Each of the three rounds of funding will be a single-stage process. You need to allow enough time for funding decisions to be made before you start your project.

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| Round 2: 13 September 2024 | Deadline for applications |
| Round 2: Week of 23 September | Panel considers applications |
| Round 2: Week of 30 September | Final decisions made |
| Round 2: Week of 7 October | Applicants informed of outcome |
| Round 2: Week of 14 October | Projects can start, once funding agreements are signed |
| Round 2: 30 September 2025 | All project funds must be spent and completed with final evaluation report and invoices submitted |

**Do I need to submit anything with my application?**

You will need to provide clear evidence of your costs, this may include a detailed budget spreadsheet, screenshots or quotes. No additional further documentation is required.

**What are the grant conditions and reporting requirements?**

It is a condition that grant recipients do the following:

* Complete a short evaluation report which describes the impact of your project to enable us to report the value of investment through Museum Development including evidence of expenditure by 30 September 2025
* Complete the Annual Museum Survey for 2024-25 which will run summer 2025
* Acknowledge funding from ACE and MD North on all print and online marketing materials using the wording and logo we will provide

**Additional Requirements**

Every museum we support will be expected to share their learning with other museums. This could include:

* Providing a written case study or blog post
* Presenting a paper at our Celebrating Museums events
* Contributing to a Forum or online session

Though not mandatary, completion of an Organisational Health Check will help support the planning and delivery of your project. The Organisational Health Check is an assessment tool for museums which takes around an hour to complete. It is designed as an indicator to help you highlight your museum’s current best practice, understand where the museum has areas of development and to feed into your forward planning. This will help you prioritise areas of working over the next 12 months and provide you with a benchmark for future work. For more information about the Organisational Health Check visit [here](https://www.museumdevelopmentnorth.org.uk/get-support/organisational-health-check/).

**Who can I contact for advice?**

Museums can discuss their proposals with one of the MD North team before they submit a final application. You can find the team’s contact details [here](https://www.museumdevelopmentnorth.org.uk/?post_type=team).

**Who makes the decisions?**

The grant awards will follow a decision-making process as follows:

* Eligibility check by MD North team
* Assessment and recommendations by Grant panel made up of representatives of museums across the north of England
* Grant panel and MD North assessment meeting to discuss applications and recommendations for funding
* Final agreement by MD North team and Directors’ group representative

**Next Steps – Making an Application**

We recommend you consult the application guidance notes and expect you to discuss your application with a Museum Development Advisor before submission.

You can access the application form via this link. Only one application should be submitted from your organisation in each funding round.

We will want to see that you have support from senior management to apply by adding contact details of a project sponsor.

**Appendix 1: The four Investment Principles from ACE’s new *Let’s Create* strategy (2020-2030)**

Each Investment Principle has three pillars. These are core features providing detail to help museums apply them according to your own context.

**1) Ambition & Quality**

Cultural organisations are ambitious and committed to improving the quality of their work

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| **Pillar** | **Summary** |
| Understanding Perception | Museums understand how they are perceived by the public through consultation with participants, communities, partners, staff, peers, stakeholders. |
| Progression | Museums develop by adopting a culture of continuous improvement and progression and refine their creative practice through testing and piloting ideas; learning, adapting and advocating for themselves and the sector. |
| Measuring Performance | Museums become outcome focused regarding the quality of their service, through effective performance management, monitoring risk and embedding evaluation. |

**2) Dynamism**

Cultural organisations are dynamic and able to respond to the challenges of the next decade

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| **Pillar** | **Summary** |
| Business Model Innovation | Museums plan strategically, influenced by their environment, adopting new business models and developing partnerships to drive innovation, deliver value and diversify income. |
| People & Skills | Museums recognise and invest in developing the skills, diversity and resilience of their workforce. |
| Using Technology & Information | Museums develop strategies using evidence from data and technology to develop an outcome driven approach. |

**3) Environmental Responsibility**

Cultural organisations lead the way in their approach to environmental responsibility

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| **Pillar** | **Summary** |
| Understanding the Data | Museums use data to understand their environmental impacts and responsibilities as well as the wider local and global impacts of climate change. |
| Plan, Action & Change | Museums take organisation-wide action, developing plans to adapt, change, and mitigate their impacts. |
| Influence, Educate & Advocate | Museums become advocates of environmental action in their local communities and wider cultural sector, seeking to work in partnership to accelerate action. |

**4) Inclusivity & Relevance**

England's diversity is fully reflected in the individuals and organisations supported by ACE and the work they produce

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| **Pillar** | **Summary** |
| Communities | Museums develop their collections to tell new - and sometimes challenging - stories relevant to communities they serve; with a renewed focus on under-served communities. |
| Workforce, Leadership & Governance | Museums embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity within their governing, leadership and workforce practices. |
| The Creative Case for Diversity | Museums are community-centred in their approach to programming and service delivery; creating opportunities to work with a range of artists / practitioners / freelancers from different backgrounds and lived experiences to celebrate and present an inclusive and diverse programme. |

To find out more about the Investment Principles, ACE have published some ‘Essential Reads’ to help museums understand the foundations of each of them.[[5]](#footnote-6)

**Appendix 2: Useful resources to help with your application**

**Arts Council England**

Digital Culture Network

ACE’s Digital Culture Network provides practical guides, training and support to museums, helping you to explore and harness the benefits of technology to achieve your goals, find new ways to reach and engage audiences, and develop sustainable business models -

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/developing-digital-culture/digital-culture-network>

**Julie’s Bicycle**

ACE’s partner Julie’s Bicycle developed a Museums Framework to support museums in developing environmental practice and inspire them to use their unique role to foster environmental values, understanding and action with their audiences and communities - <https://juliesbicycle.com/resource-museums-framework-2017/>

**MDUK**

[https://mduk.org.uk](https://mduk.org.uk/)

The MDUK website hosts resources from programmes run across Museum Development, including from the Equity & Inclusion programme - <https://mduk.org.uk/equity-inclusion-programme/>

**MD North**

[Museum Development North](https://www.museumdevelopmentnorth.org.uk/)

**South West Museum Development**

<https://southwestmuseums.org.uk/resources/>

SWMD has a large bank of resources, including guidance on working with freelancers, and guides to digital access

**West Midlands Museum Development**

<https://mdwm.org.uk/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-resources/>

West Midlands Museum Development have a list of useful EDI resources

**Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Education Trust**

<http://www.racearchive.org.uk/download/if-nothing-changes-nothing-changes-september-2022/>

‘If Nothing Changes, Nothing Changes’ report on how heritage organisations are engaging with anti-racism and work on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI).



1. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Recognised as Working Towards Accreditation by Arts Council England through the allocation of a reference ‘T’ number [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [www.artscouncil.org.uk/projectgrants](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/projectgrants) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. More information on working with freelancers can be found [Contracts, Work Plans and Working Effectively with Freelancers - GEM,](https://gem.org.uk/resource/contracts-work-plans-and-working-with-freelancers/) [Calculating Day Rates For Freelancers - GEM,](https://gem.org.uk/resource/calculating-day-rates-for-freelancers/) [Working with freelancers - Museums Association.](https://www.museumsassociation.org/careers/freelancers-week/working-with-freelancers/) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/explore-investment-principles/applying-investment-principles#essential-reads> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)