

## Guidance for applicants

### Application deadlines in 2020:

Collections innovation and engagement grant EOIs 16 March 2020 and 14 September 2020

Collections strategy and development grant EOIs 11 May 2020

The Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund, run by the Museums Association (MA), supports projects that develop collections and connect them to people. From 2020 our funding is changing, so please read the guidance below to help determine if and how you can apply.

### Contents

1. Purpose and process of the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund.....	2
2. Collections Innovation and Engagement Grants .....	3
3. Collections Strategy and Development Grants.....	4
4. Links .....	4
5. Grant Criteria for Collections Innovation and Engagement Grants .....	5
6. Grant Criteria for Collections Strategy and Development Grants .....	6
7. Terms and Conditions .....	7

## 1. Purpose and process of the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund

The Collections Fund supports museums to use their collections to become relevant and sustainable organisations that are connected to and valued by their communities. All applications to the Collections Fund must focus on existing collections, typically held by an Accredited museum or partnership of museums and other organisations, and the funded work must engage and involve audiences to achieve public benefit. We're interested in partnership projects where this shares the benefit of funding to aid delivery or the impact of your work.

We reviewed the Collections Fund during 2019 and considered how we can support collections work in museums that responds to the recommendations in Empowering Collections (linked below) and demonstrates how collections are central to museums making a difference to people's lives. We recognise the challenges that museums face from reduced core budgets; the impact of reliance on project funding on long term planning and sector development; and the need to make significant changes to how we work to affect the sustainability and relevance of collections. On this basis we have separated our funding into two types of grant:

- **Collections innovation and engagement grants** (up to £90k over around two years) are for outstanding ideas with collections where there is a strong link between the collection and the people you want to work with; and between the activities and the context of your organisation. This type is similar to grants we offered previously, but more tightly focused on projects with collections and engagement that have a good level of ambition, social impact, innovation or risk-taking.
- **Collections strategy and development grants** (up to £250k over up to five years) where collections work supports the established strategy of an organisation for longer term benefit. This type of grant is about accelerating the development of museums that are ready to use their collections more or differently with their audiences and communities; and helping organisations to get past some of the barriers of traditional project funding. The MA will offer additional coaching where our skills and network can add benefit.

We currently award £1.25m per year across both types of grant. Given that our funding is limited we choose projects carefully, looking for where our support might have the most impact in the context of our grant criteria. Both types of grant have a two-stage application process:

- For collections innovation and engagement grants we accept expressions of interest in March and September. In each round a shortlist of projects is invited to make a full application. The full application deadline is around 8 weeks after the EOI, and then decisions are made by our selection committee within 4-6 weeks. We strongly recommend you seek advice from staff at the Museums Association before applying to ensure the project is a good fit.
- To submit a collections strategy and development grant expression of interest you must first speak to staff at the Museums Association to discuss your project. As this process is more time consuming for applicants, EOIs are invited from only 6-10 suitable projects for submission in May. A shortlist will be invited by the Collections Fund selection committee to make a full application in September, with the support of MA staff in its development and decisions made by our selection committee in December.

Please contact Sally Colvin or Sarah Briggs for advice on eligibility for the fund and help to develop applications: Sally Colvin, programmes manager: [sally@museumsassociation.org](mailto:sally@museumsassociation.org), 020 7566 7851  
Sarah Briggs, collections development officer: [sarah@museumsassociation.org](mailto:sarah@museumsassociation.org), 020 7566 7834

## 2. Collections Innovation and Engagement Grants

### **Ambitious project work**

Collections innovation and engagement grants focus on outstanding ideas with collections where there is a strong link between the collection and the people you want to work with; and between the activities and the context of your organisation. We are realistic about what can be achieved with grants of this size and assess innovation and ambition according to the situation of the museum or partnership. We look for projects that are outward-looking and seek change, so we are open to projects that take risks or are at an early stage of development, where an applicant can articulate their ambitions for the work but may not yet be able to identify tangible outcomes. We are also interested in partnerships where it is appropriate to share the benefits of funding and to support delivery.

### **Which collections?**

We want to understand why the collection you choose merits development – for example, what is important, challenging, special, at risk, or appealing about the collection you want to work on? Another way of looking at this is considering what opportunity the collection presents – what story does the collection allow you to tell and for whom does the collection hold meaning?

Collections innovation and engagement grants tend to focus on a defined collection or theme to keep the project at a feasible scale and allow a good level of ambition, social impact, innovation or risk-taking in the project activities.

### **Which activities?**

Almost all collections and engagement activities are eligible to be included in Collections Fund projects, with some restrictions (see exclusions overleaf, for example we would not support exhibition fit out). We are also happy to fund 100% of projects and recognise the need to undertake basic, or back-of-house, collections work. Where it is the basis for sharing and using collections, we are realistic about supporting, for example, documentation, travel and project management time. However, all projects must progress beyond back-of-house and preparatory work to related participatory activities with audiences and communities.

The collections management needs of museums are as vast as the collections themselves. We are keen to support museums that can prioritise and develop their collections needs, to meet the unique potential of museums to make a difference to people's lives.

### **Who benefits?**

Since the publication of *Museums Change Lives* in 2013, understanding of museums' roles in making a social difference has grown enormously. It is an essential requirement of the Collections Fund that projects use collections to engage, involve and inspire audiences. This means we want to see a strong link between the collections and audiences you want to work with, and for you to demonstrate that you have thought about social impact as a core part of the project. In addition to considering who the work is for, it may be useful to ask critically whether your target audience will be interested, and what they gain from participation. The MA's toolkit for measuring socially engaged practice, in the links below, can help you to think about this.

Applicants should think about the legacy of their project when funded activity ends. It may be useful to address how the project will end, for example in terms of managing relationships begun in the project, and how learning from the project will be retained and used in the future.

### 3. Collections Strategy and Development Grants

Collections strategy and development grants are larger and longer than collections innovation and engagement grants. They must contribute significantly to the long-term strategy or vision of an organisation or partnership; can access additional support from the MA; and only three or four collections strategy and development grants will be awarded each year. As part of the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund, both collections strategy and development grants, and innovation and engagement grants share many of the same criteria in terms of working on existing collections that have a strong link to relevant audiences, participants and communities. The range of eligible activities and exclusions are also the same.

We want collections strategy and development projects to show an understanding of the potential for museums to use their collections to make a difference to people's lives. We look for applicants that can describe the extent to which their collections support their organisation's sustainability, relevance and value to people; and use this to determine their future work. This means we look for projects that integrate collections, engagement and participation activities and relate this work to their purpose. Depending on the applicant, collections strategy and development projects may transform the way an organisation works with its collection and communities. In other cases, the project may solve a problem with collections that allows other work to happen or influence an area of practice across the sector. If you have an idea for a collections strategy and development grant, contact the MA at an early stage to discuss your eligibility. The questions below form the basis of the conversation you will have with staff at the MA and, where appropriate, a resulting expression of interest:

- What are your plans for the organisation/partnership over the next five, or more, years? Please tell us about your purpose, strategy, challenges you face and appetite for change.
- What outcomes are you working towards for your collections? Please tell us how your work with collections relates to your purpose, who will benefit, and the sustainability and relevance of your collections.
- What support would you like from the Collections Fund? Please tell us about the work you will undertake, the amount you want to apply for, and how the work will be managed. Think also about how support from the MA and its network can add value. Collections strategy and development grant recipients will have a close relationship with the MA to support change as the project progresses and learning dissemination within and beyond the organisations involved. Where it will help, we can enhance this relationship to include coaching or facilitation, and can use our network to access specific skills and training.
- What difference will a collections strategy and development grant make? Please tell us what you think you can achieve within the scope of the grant; the impact you hope the work will have for participants and communities, the organisation and the collection; and your plans for legacy from the project. As these projects can span five years, we're interested in your approach to maintaining the benefits of the work you undertake, how you hope to end the project and your plans to avoid dependency on the project funding. As a developmental grant we expect change over time, but your vision for the work gives us a sense of your ambition for the project and its feasibility.

### 4. Links

The resources linked below may be useful in developing your grant application:

- [Projects that have already received funding \(word\)](#)
- [Measuring socially engaged practice: a toolkit for museums](#)
- [Power to the People: Participatory Practice Framework](#)
- [Museums Change Lives 2017 \(pdf\)](#)
- [Empowering Collections 2019 \(pdf\)](#)

## 5. Grant Criteria for Collections Innovation and Engagement Grants

### Essential requirements

To be considered, applications must both:

- work with an existing collection or collections to improve understanding of them and increase their use; and
- through that collections work, involve, inspire and have value for people, communities and audiences.

### Criteria for success

Applications are assessed for:

1. the potential of the collection to inspire and interest your audiences, and the coherence of your plans to enhance its understanding and use
2. the approach to engage and involve local communities, communities of interest, or other audiences in the collection, and the sense of how this will enhance the lives of those taking part
3. the beneficial impact on your organisation and individuals within it, and, where appropriate, how the project benefits partner museums, the wider museums sector, or partners from other sectors
4. the ambition, innovation and approach to risk of the project, in the context of the applying organisation/partnership
5. the project's feasibility and value for money
6. plans to end the project and sustain or build on its benefits.

### Exclusions

The Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund will not support:

- Capital costs, including building work, renovations, and equipment
- Grants to individuals or to causes that will benefit only one person, including student grants or bursaries
- Work that does not have a direct benefit in the UK
- We will not normally replace or subsidise statutory income although we will make rare exceptions where the level of performance has been exceptional and where the potential impact of the work is substantial
- The promotion of religion
- Retrospective funding, meaning support for work that has already taken place
- General appeals or circulars.

## 6. Grant Criteria for Collections Strategy and Development Grants

### Essential requirements

To be considered, applications must:

- contribute to established plans or strategy for the applying organisation or partnership, that cover at least five years
- work with an existing collection or collections to improve understanding of them and increase their use; and
- through that collections work, involve, inspire and have value for people, communities and audiences.

### Criteria for success

Applications are assessed for:

1. the potential of the collection to inspire and interest your audiences, and the coherence of your plans to enhance its understanding and use
2. the approach to engage and involve local communities, communities of interest, or other audiences in the collection, and the sense of how this will enhance the lives of those taking part
3. the beneficial impact on your organisation towards its long-term strategy; on individuals within the organisation, and, where appropriate, how the project benefits partner museums, the wider museums sector, or partners from other sectors
4. the ambition, innovation and approach to risk of the project, in the context of the applying organisation/partnership
5. the project's feasibility, management and position in the organisation
6. the legacy of the work and strength of your plans to sustain its benefits.

### Exclusions

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- General appeals or circulars.

## 7. Terms and Conditions

### What to apply for

- Proposals must be for time-limited projects of:
  - for collections innovation and engagement grants, up to three years and for between £20,000-£90,000
  - for collections strategy and development grants, up to five years and for between £90,000-£250,000
- Grant offers remain open for one year from the award date, but we work with museums to start their projects within six months of the grant being awarded
- Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund funding may form part or all of the funding for a single project. If you are seeking funding as part of a wider project, tell us what the overall budget of that wider project is, and what other funding sources (including your own resources) are in place or yet to be secured. It should be clear what we are funding, and how what we are funding makes for a coherent project in its own right
- If the proposal includes recruiting staff, applicants are asked to consider the MA's work on fair salaries in museums, <https://www.museumsassociation.org/workforce/salary-guidelines>. We expect museums to undertake open recruitment according to an agreed job specification and description
- Collections strategy and development grant applicants should include their relationship with the MA in their plans. Recipients of these grants will have a close relationship with the MA to support change and learning dissemination as the project progresses. This can also include coaching or facilitation, and/or access to specialist skills and training from our network where it will benefit your work.

### Resubmissions and multiple projects

- Resubmissions will not be accepted unless they have been specifically invited by the Museums Association. We define a resubmission as an application for the same collection with the same project focus.
- We will accept applications which are for the same collection but have a different project focus. If you are in any doubt, please contact the programmes manager at the Museums Association to discuss what you are proposing.
- We will usually only award funds to an organisation as the sole grantee or lead partner for one project at a time, whether this a collections innovation and engagement grant or collections strategy and development grant. It is highly unlikely that that the same collection or project will be funded more than once, but we may fund the same organisation for different projects over time.
- There is no funding relationship or progression between the collections innovation and engagement, and collections strategy and development grants.

### Eligibility

- The Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund is open to all museums and galleries in the United Kingdom.
- Applicants from within the museum sector must be members of the Museums Association, in order to demonstrate commitment to sharing learning, to the Museums Change Lives agenda, and to the museum sector's Code of Ethics
- We normally expect applicants, or one applicant in a partnership, to be Accredited (or formally working towards this). We may make occasional exceptions for organisations which are not Accredited museums, but whose activities are based on the care and interpretation of collections of historical, artistic or scientific interest, provided that they are in the public sector or have charitable status. The selection committee's decision on eligibility is final
- Applications from national museums must be in partnership with at least one non-national museum
- We expect applications from larger and national museums to reflect their capacity to influence the sector more widely and to develop museum practice
- Applicants must have a safeguarding policy to protect people with whom they work

- Collections strategy and development grant applicants must provide evidence of their plans for development covering at least five years. This should be a current strategic document approved by the organisation's governing body.

#### **Other Terms and Conditions**

- Successful applicants will complete and sign a Grant Acceptance and Bank Details form. This will provide us with your bank information, act as your acceptance of our grant conditions and as confirmation that the money will be spent on the purpose detailed in your application. The form should be accompanied by a photocopy of a recent bank statement or letter from your bank
- Funds will be drawn down annually from the start of the project. In year one, funding will be drawn down at a point to be agreed with grantees, for example, upon recruitment of a project post. In later years, projects should supply a progress report, supported by approved annual accounts for each financial year of the grant and a budget for the coming year in advance of their draw-down date. The grant should be specifically acknowledged in annual accounts for each year in which it was received
- Any part of the grant not required for the purposes approved should be refunded
- We reserve the right to withhold a grant or require repayment if:
  - We find that false information has been deliberately supplied
  - The work undertaken is not that which is approved (originally or via approved changes)
  - Your organisation becomes insolvent or goes into administration, receivership or liquidation, and if the grant has not already been spent on its intended purpose
- We reserve the right to share information you have provided with relevant parties where appropriate, e.g. the Charity Commission
- The grant should be acknowledged in all written materials you produce about the work for which you receive funding. We may also use details of your project in our publicity material. We can supply logos for you to use, and please contact us if you are undertaking significant press work or other media coverage
- Successful applicants will join the Collections Network and should reserve resources to allow at least 1-2 people from each project to attend network meetings twice a year. The group will share learning and discuss projects, and also develop ideas to be shared with a wider audience, for example through conferences and publications
- Any substantial changes to the project require the Museums Association's agreement. You must inform us of significant proposed changes to expenditure. Taking part in the Collections Network is also a useful way of maintaining communication with the Museums Association
- We may wish to visit to see the work funded during the life of the grant.