



Guidance for applicants

Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund 2022

The Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund, run by the Museums Association (MA), supports projects that develop collections and connect them to people. Responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, we are changing the grants we will award in 2022.

Please read this guidance to determine if and how you can apply.

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Purpose and process of the 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.

In 2020 and 2021 we adapted our funding to respond to the changing needs of museums and their communities through the coronavirus pandemic. We awarded 23 grants for collections engagement of up to £90k over around two years; and 26 Covid-response Sustaining Engagement with Collections grants (up to £30k over one year). In 2022 we have simplified the grants we are offering, recognising the challenge of the pandemic and seeking ways to build on the great work undertaken in the last two years – notably online engagement and building relationships with audiences outside of the museum building despite ongoing and severe capacity problems.

This year we will offer grants of up to £90k over around two years for museums to **test new, ambitious, creative collections engagement that has a social impact.**

These grants are for museums to innovate, kick-start or develop their collections engagement practice where there is a strong link between a relevant collection and audience. We are particularly interested in projects that: build on relationships and learning from the pandemic; articulate the place-based context and evidence that has inspired the project; and tackle contemporary issues such as decolonisation, climate change and anti-racism. Expression of interest deadlines are in spring for grant awards in July, and autumn for awards in December, following a two-stage process (dates below). In total £1.3m will be awarded, anticipated to be 7-10 projects in each funding round.

Essential requirements

It is an essential requirement of the Collections Fund that projects use collections to engage, involve and inspire audiences. We are keen to support museums that can prioritise and develop their collections needs and meet the unique potential of museums to make a difference to people's lives.

This means we want to see a strong link between the collections and communities that you want to work with, and for you to demonstrate that you have thought about social impact as a core part of the project. More than ever this means we expect the people you want to work with to be involved in the development of the project so

that you can describe how you know who you want to engage; how you know that your project is relevant and feasible; and how the relationships in the projects are equitable and with mutual benefit. Power to the People, the MA's framework for participatory practice and Measuring socially engaged practice: a toolkit for museums (in the links below) can help you to think about this.

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?

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.

Applicants should think about the legacy and evaluation 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.

What we mean by ‘new, ambitious and creative’ work

These 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 creativity, social impact and ambition according to the situation of the museum or partnership. We understand that capacity problems are affecting the scale of project that many museums can commit to this year.

We look for projects from organisations that can describe why they want to do the work and the change that the work contributes to. We look for projects that are outward-looking and seek change in response to the needs of communities in 2022. 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 also look for projects that use learning from the pandemic, especially from the intense period of online and community engagement that took place during museum closures, to develop practice. We will look for the voice of the communities that you seek to engage in your application.

We anticipate that this will result in funding a range of projects that are place-based and that address contemporary social issues, for example decolonisation, anti-racism and climate crisis; as well as addressing issues relevant to the museum sector, for example disposal and sustainability of collections.

Dates

Spring grant round:

- January 2022 onwards: contact the MA to discuss your project ideas
- 21 March 2022: Deadline for submission of the expression of interest form
- w/c 04 April 2022: confirmation of whether shortlisted for funding
- 08 June 2022: shortlisted applicants make a second stage application
- July 2022: grants awarded

Autumn grant round:

- July 2022 onwards: contact the MA to discuss your project ideas
- 14 September 2022: Deadline for submission of the expression of interest form
- w/c 03 October 2022: confirmation of whether shortlisted for funding
- 07 November 2022: shortlisted applicants make a second stage application
- December 2022: grants awarded

Links

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

- Measuring socially engaged practice: a toolkit for museums
- Power to the People: Participatory Practice Framework
- Museums Change Lives
- Empowering Collections
- Supporting Decolonisation in Museums
- Projects that have already received funding (word)
- Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund webpage for case studies from previously funded projects.

Contacts

Please contact Sarah Briggs or Sally Colvin at the Museums Association to discuss your ideas for an application, or with any questions:

Sarah Briggs: sarah@museumsassociation.org, 020 7566 7834

Sally Colvin: sally@museumsassociation.org, 020 7566 7851

Application criteria

Testing new, ambitious, creative collections engagement

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, creativity 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.

Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund Terms and Conditions

What to apply for:

- Proposals must be for time-limited projects of up to three years and for between £20,000-£90,000.
- 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 or freelance support, applicants are asked to consider the MA's work on [fair pay in museums](#) and inclusive recruitment practices. We expect museums to undertake open recruitment according to an agreed job specification and description.
- Where the proposal includes community participation, applicants are asked to consider how they will use inclusive practices and create equitable relationships. For example, payment for lived experience.

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, with the exception of our Sustaining Engagement with Collections grants from 2020. It is highly unlikely that the same collection or project will be funded more than once, but we may fund the same organisation for different projects over time. We will look into exceptions to this where 'new models' grants from 2021 may develop into longer-term projects.

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.

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/scan 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 at least 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.