

Guidance for applicants

Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund 2024

The Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund, run by the Museums Association (MA), supports museums and their community partners to develop together, using collections. Following a period of review, the Collections Fund has updated purpose, guidance and application criteria for 2024.

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

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Purpose and process of the Collections Fund

The Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund supports museums to improve their inclusive collections and participatory practice with, and sometimes led by, community partners. We are looking for museums that have established strategic aims for diversity, equity and inclusion; and that are ready to use their collections and our funding to support social and climate justice, in ways that are relevant to local contexts and relationships.

In a change to previous years, we will support core costs for the funding period. We want our support to accelerate your existing progress towards strategic objectives for inclusion, so that work is more embedded and community relationships can be more long-term. We also understand that genuine participation and coproduction means that topics, outputs, and workflows cannot be defined far in advance and so core funding is a more realistic and trusting approach to take. This means that we will agree a set of funding outcomes that reflect or incorporate a grantee's existing strategic plans and will only require a headline budget for the planned work so that we can assess its scale and feasibility.

The Collections Fund has a twin focus on inclusion and collections. We anticipate this will result in work that explores and influences key themes in social and climate justice, such as wellbeing, decolonisation, climate crisis, antiracism and others. Importantly, we will look for local relevance and holistic approaches from applicants, for example asking how you have decided who to work with.

We want to support a range of museums through the fund; from those that are starting out in their participatory practice, to those that are leading change on behalf of the sector and already handing over power to the communities they work with. Our requirement is that you know your direction of travel and that the work we support fits into a wider context at your organisation and in the place where you operate. We will use the MA's Power to the People framework as a measure of organisational change in the grants that we award. This means that we will ask you to briefly reflect on your museums' position in the framework in your expression of interest. If you are funded, we will then work with you to honestly explore the areas where you would like to progress, using Power to the People as the frame of reference, and review this at the end of the funding period.

Grants of up to £100k over around two years are available, and we are expecting to award around 12 grants per year in two funding rounds (see dates below). We want our funding to go to organisations where this size of investment can make the most difference, so we expect to fund museums where the grant is a relatively high proportion of turnover or where the museum has few other sources of core funding. We are also interested in other approaches where our support will make the most difference, for example through partnerships that share the benefit of funding or

where community partners will make budgetary decisions. We anticipate that relatively few museums are ready to make applications where the work is led by community partners, but are interested in working with organisations that are exploring this approach and will aim to share learning of this leading practice across the museum sector.

Museums that have previously received project funding are welcome to apply again to the Collections Fund for work that builds on their experience. In the future, core-funded Collections Fund grantees will also be welcome to reapply for the next stage of their work. However, our grants are intended to support a particular stage in a museum's strategic development so we don't expect to offer continuous funding. Once core grant funding periods begin to conclude (from 2025), the fund's selection committee expects to only award around two of the 12 grants per year to museums that have recently been funded.

As in previous years, we ask that applicants speak to a member of Collections Fund staff at the MA before submitting an EOI so that we can help determine if the fund is a good fit for you, and to help draw out the strengths in your applications. We will also offer coaching conversations to all second stage applicants and all grantees. All grantees are required to join our Collections Network as a means of sharing learning from projects and for peer support.

Essential requirements

It is an essential requirement of the Collections Fund that applicants use collections to further their aims for inclusion; and that community groups, partners and/or stakeholders have prominent roles in your work. We are keen to support museums that can place their work in a local, strategic context and that can bring together the needs of their collections with the needs and interests of their communities.

All applications to the fund must use or involve existing collections, and these should typically be held by an Accredited museum or partnerships of museums and other organisations. You do not need to have used the Power to the People framework previously, but we will work with you to assess your organisation's position in the framework at the start and end of the funding period.

Dates

Spring grant round:

- November 2023 onwards: contact the MA to discuss your ideas
- 22 April 2024: Deadline for submission of the expression of interest form
- w/c 13 May 2024: confirmation of whether shortlisted for funding
- 19 June 2023: shortlisted applicants make a second stage application
- July 2023: grants awarded

Autumn grant round:

- July 2023 onwards: contact the MA to discuss your project ideas
- TBC September 2024: Deadline for submission of the expression of interest form
- TBC October 2024: confirmation of whether shortlisted for funding
- TBC November 2024: shortlisted applicants make a second stage application
- December 2023: grants awarded

Links

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

- [Power to the People: Participatory Practice Framework](#)
- [Measuring socially engaged practice: a toolkit for museums](#)
- [Museums Change Lives](#)
- [Empowering Collections](#)
- [Supporting Decolonisation in Museums](#)
- [Communicating Decolonisation](#)
- [Museums for Climate Justice](#)
- [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

Essential requirements

To be considered, applications must:

- Be for work that furthers the established strategic aims of the applicants in relation to diversity, equity and inclusion, and/or is community-led. Applicants will describe their local context and existing relationships with community and stakeholder groups and provide evidence of strategies and plans for inclusion.
- Work with an existing collection or collections to improve understanding of them and increase their use.
- Engage community groups, partners and/or stakeholders in prominent roles in the work.

Criteria for Success

Applications are assessed for:

1. The local relevance of your work, with reference to robust evidence and established strategic aims for the applying organisation/partnership.
2. The coherence of your plans in terms of a link between the people you wish to work with; the collections you will draw upon and the topics of themes you will explore.
3. The approach to working with community groups, partners and/or stakeholders, handing over power, and the sense of how this will enhance the lives of those taking part.
4. The beneficial impact on your organisation and individuals within it, and, where appropriate, the wider museums sector, or partners from other sectors.
5. The ambition, innovation, creativity and approach to risk of the work, in the context of the applying organisation/partnership.
6. Feasibility within the headline budget and timescale; and value for money
7. How you will manage the end of the funding period and sustain or build on the benefits of funding.

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:

- Grants of £40,000-£100,000 over a period of up to three years.
- If you are seeking funding as part of a wider programme or capital project, tell us about the wider context of the planned work and be clear about how our funding makes a difference.
- If the proposal includes recruiting staff or freelance support, applicants are asked to consider the MA's work on fair pay in museums, salary guidelines and inclusive recruitment practices. We expect museums to undertake open recruitment according to an agreed job specification and description.
- All applicants are asked to consider how they will use inclusive practices and create equitable relationships with community partners, groups and stakeholder. For example, payment for lived experience.
- All applicants are asked to consider how they will support the wellbeing of staff (paid or unpaid), freelancers, partners and participants. See the MA's online Wellbeing Hub for more guidance.
- Each grant will have a start date for the funding period that is usually when the grant agreement is signed. If a funding period needs to start at a particular point, this will be agreed on an individual basis and should be within six months of the funding decision.

Resubmissions and multiple projects:

- Resubmissions will not be accepted unless they have been specifically invited by the MA. We define a resubmission as an application with the same focus and using the same collection. If you are in any doubt, please contact the collections development officer at the MA to discuss what you are proposing.
- We will usually only award funds to an organisation as the sole grantee or lead partner for one grant at a time. Organisations that have received a Collections Fund project grant in the past are welcome to apply for a core grant to build on their experience.
- In future years, organisations that have received core funding may reapply when their funding period is ending, for a new phase of work. It is likely that the selection committee will only award two grants per year to recent grantees as this fund does not seek to offer continuous funding.

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 institutional members of the MA, in order to demonstrate commitment to sharing learning, to the social and climate justice agenda of Museums Change Lives, 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.
- We expect to fund smaller and medium sized organisations where funding of this size can make the most difference in the long term, for example as a higher proportion of turnover. National and larger museums may apply, but we expect their ideas to reflect their capacity to influence the sector more widely and to develop museum practice. National and larger museums are strongly advised to speak to Collections Fund staff at the MA prior to applying.
- 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 funding period. In year one, funding will be drawn down at a point to be agreed with grantees, for example, upon agreement of funding outcomes. 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 are required to join the Collections Network and should reserve resources to allow at least 1-2 people from to attend network meetings at least twice a year. Alongside informal peer support, the Collections Network includes coaching conversations and action learning sets to support planning, evaluation and legacy.
- 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 during the funding period 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 MA.
- We may wish to visit to see the work funded during the life of the grant.