

Health and Wellbeing in Museums Fund

Guidance for applicants

The Museums Association, funded by the Julia Rausing Trust, is providing a programme of grant-making, networking and learning dissemination for health and wellbeing programmes in museums. Grants will enable the development and continuation of groundbreaking health and wellbeing programming in UK museums during a time of financial crisis and increasing demand for services.

We'll make around 20 grants of £50,000 to £75,000 over two rounds in 2025 and 2026. Please read this guidance to determine if and how you can apply.

Purpose and process

The fund is designed to enable museums to develop and embed their leading health and wellbeing work. We will not fund brand new initiatives but will support museums to continue and build on existing programmes which demonstrate excellence to further develop practices and impact.

This means you should have a proven track record for the work you are doing and a clear idea of the direction you would like to take it in. We can fund a “next stage” of work you have undertaken but we will ask you how you will use what you have learned and what the legacy of our funding period will be. We will also ask you to share evidence such as evaluation measures and strategic plans in support of your application.

We acknowledge that resources are stretched in UK museums and that even simple application forms take time to complete. Therefore, we have designed our application process to ensure that only those who have real potential to be funded are asked to complete an application form. There are three stages to this process:

1. Potential applicants must complete a [brief online quiz](#) to check eligibility.
2. Those who successfully complete this will be able to book a conversation with our team to talk through your idea. During this conversation we will guide and assess your idea further.
3. Those who meet all the essential criteria and demonstrate excellence across the criteria for success (see selection criteria below) will be invited to complete an application form. The form will include data about your museum

and any partners, and a series of qualitative questions resulting in around 6-8 pages of content.

In 2026, we expect to invite no more than 30 organisations to apply through this process and expect to fund around 10 of these.

Successful applicants will join a network run by the MA to help embed learning and good practices from funded work, developing legacy at your museums and sharing learning across the UK museum sector.

Timeline

2026 round:

- **12 January 2026:** application process opens. Interested museums should complete the [application quiz](#) to check eligibility before getting in touch with us via the link provided at the end of the quiz.
- **20 May 2026:** support call deadline and final invitations to apply sent. The final submission deadline will be shared with invited applicants and will be no less than two weeks from the date of being invited to apply.
- **Late September 2026:** applicants advised of the outcome.
- **2-5 November 2025:** first meeting of successful grantees takes place at the [Museums Association's annual conference](#) in Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Birmingham. Bursaries are available to cover a conference place and provide limited travel and accommodation expenses. You should ensure that someone from your organisation is able to attend in person unless an access need means that you need to attend virtually.

What to apply for

- Grants of between £50-75k over a period of around 2 years (36 months maximum).
- The grant can make up any proportion of the overall budget, including the entire budget with no requirement for match funding.
- Proven health and wellbeing programmes that have potential to develop and embed excellent practice at your museum and/or are at risk.

Who can apply

- In the [online eligibility quiz](#), applicants will be asked a series of questions. To progress, you must be able to answer yes to all the questions and you will then be invited to book a call with our team to discuss your idea further.
- **Is your museum an institutional member of the Museums Association?**
We are seeking to fund organisations with a demonstrable commitment to the [Museums Change Lives](#) campaign and [Code of Ethics](#). Membership also provides access to resources and support to enable leading work in health and wellbeing.
- **Is your museum a) Accredited; b) formally Working Towards Accreditation; or c) can make a strong case for meeting equivalent standards when Accreditation is not appropriate?**
We use Accreditation as a marker of good practice in terms of public benefit, access, governance and collections care so expect applicants to be part of the Accreditation scheme. In rare cases, we understand that Accreditation may not be possible, for example if you are a digital-only museum. In these instances, we will require evidence of why you cannot be Accredited but meet equivalent relevant standards.
- **Does your proposal seek to develop and embed existing health and wellbeing work?**
We are looking for excellent health and wellbeing work that builds on a proven track record; that may be at risk due to financial difficulties in the sector; and where applicants have coherent plans for how they can develop, improve or embed elements of their work.
- **Can you evidence a strategic commitment to health and wellbeing work?**
Even if current finances put this work at risk, we want to see that your organisation recognises the social value of this work.
- **Are you able to provide evidence of organisational support for protecting the wellbeing of staff, volunteers, freelancers, partners and participants?**
This could be in the form of a safeguarding policy and staff policies that support wellbeing. We are looking for organisations that can evidence a culture of care being supported at governance level.

Please take note of the application dates included above. You should complete the quiz early enough to ensure you can schedule a call with us by 20 May 2026. The form will include data about your museum and any partners, and a series of qualitative questions resulting in around 6-8 pages of content.

Application criteria

During the call with our team, your idea will be further assessed for eligibility and suitability against the criteria outlined below. Tailored support and guidance prior to an assessment call will be made available to those that require it the most. This will be subject to availability, so we encourage organisations seeking additional support to get in touch at their earliest opportunity and with as much information as possible. You must still meet the baseline eligibility and essential criteria, and support will focus on framing your idea against the criteria for success.

Essential criteria

To be considered for a Health and Wellbeing in Museums Fund grant applicants must:

- **Have an existing, excellent health and wellbeing programme to develop and embed.**

We want to support health and wellbeing work in museums that already has demonstrable impact and is therefore leading, or excellent, in the context in which you work. We acknowledge that this work may be at risk due to financial pressure, and we see long term benefits in helping museums to embed and extend their work. For your application, this could mean improving the reach or impact of your work; embedding working practices for the benefit of your organisation or the wider sector; or raising the profile of your work for advocacy.

- **Build on an established and evidenced track record of health and wellbeing work.**

You should be able to refer to a strong background of health and wellbeing work at your museum, for example drawing on external evaluation and annual reports. We understand that the context in which you work will affect the evidence you are able to provide and will accept internal data and reporting where necessary.

- **Fit within a strategic commitment to future health and wellbeing work.**

Although we are offering funding to run programmes, we want our support to leave a good legacy at your museum – which requires a strategic framework that values and prioritises work in this area even when resources are stretched. You will need to reference governing documents such as business plans.

Criteria for success

Applications will be assessed on:

1. How well you can demonstrate a need or demand for the work, drawing on evidence from your research, partnerships and evaluation.
2. Coherence of your plans to develop and embed the work in terms of impact on participants, partners, your organisation and the wider sector.
3. How your organisation will create a culture of care, protecting the wellbeing of staff, volunteers, freelancers, partners and participants.
4. How you will manage the end of the funding period and the strength of the legacy the funding will enable you to build.
5. The feasibility of the work within the timescales and budget.

Exclusions

The Health and Wellbeing in Museums Fund will not support:

- Capital costs.
- Work that does not have a direct benefit in the UK.
- Work that has already taken place.
- Repeating a project without building on feedback, evaluations and strategic commitments to embed excellent working practices.
- General appeals and circulars.

Terms and Conditions

Grants awarded are for up to £75,000 (if VAT is payable any sums paid are deemed to be inclusive of VAT) to enable the development and continuation of groundbreaking health and wellbeing programming in UK museums during a time of financial crisis and increasing demand for services.

By submitting a signed Grant Agreement and Bank Details Form, You (the grantee) are agreeing to the following Terms and Conditions of the grant:

1. Funds will be drawn down annually in advance from the start of the funding period and within 90 days of the grant offer. In the first year this will be after the signed Grant Agreement and Bank Details Form has been received. In later years, grantees should supply a progress report, supported by a budget for the coming year in advance of their draw-down date. We may make occasional exceptions for this if you can provide a strong case for a need for a later start, for example to align with an academic year. The grant should be specifically acknowledged in annual accounts for each year in which it was received.
2. 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.
3. We reserve the right to share information you have provided with relevant parties where appropriate, e.g. the Charity Commission.
4. The grant should be acknowledged in all materials you produce about the work for which you receive funding. The Museums Association and the Julia Rausing Trust may also use details of your work in our publicity material. We will supply a media pack with logos for you to use. You should contact us if you are undertaking significant press work or other media coverage and productions to make us aware and to ensure appropriate acknowledgement is given to the grant.
5. You will join a series of network meetings with other grantees from your round of funding. You must nominate one individual to attend and contribute to 4 network meetings in the year after your grant is awarded. The first of these will take place at the Museums Association's annual conference at Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 6 Centenary Square, Birmingham, B1 2EP 2-

5 November 2026. You should ensure that the nominated person from your organisation is able to attend in person unless a reasonable adjustment request to attend virtually is submitted to us and approved. The remaining meetings will be a combination of online and in person events and successful applicants should reserve resources to allow at least one person to attend these, with expected travel within the UK on at least one occasion.

6. Grantees will carry out evaluation of their funded activities from the outset and share ongoing learning with the MA and the network. Evaluation data and findings will also be shared for programme level evaluation and learning dissemination and have a focus on building a strong legacy from the funded period.
7. If the proposal includes recruiting or retaining staff or freelance support, all grantees must consider how they can apply 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.
8. All grantees are required to use inclusive practices and create equitable relationships with community partners, groups and stakeholders. For example, offering payment for lived experience. Grantees should refer to the MA's [Working Equitably toolkit](#) for guidance.
9. All grantees must consider how they will support and protect the wellbeing of staff (paid or unpaid), volunteers, freelancers, partners and participants with an organisational culture of care. See the MA's online [Wellbeing Hub](#) and our [Wellbeing Guidance](#) for support.
10. Grantees must have a safeguarding policy to protect people with whom they work.
11. Grantees shall comply with UK legislation (together with any policies and procedures notified to it from time to time) pertaining to Health and Safety; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Bullying and Harassment; and Whistleblowing. This includes, but is not limited to, relevant provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation, the Data Protection Act 2018, the Bribery Act 2010, the Fraud Act 2006, the Equality Act 2010 and the Modern Slavery Act 2015.
12. Any substantial changes to the work require the Museums Association's agreement. You must inform us of significant proposed changes to expenditure.
13. We may wish to visit to see the work funded during the life of the grant.

Frequently asked questions

My work isn't directly or imminently under threat from the ongoing financial crisis, can I still apply?

Yes, you'll need to make a case for the excellence of this work and how you will embed or develop it to improve impact. For example, will it help your governing body to make a case for the importance of your organisation to the community; or will it provide a sector-leading model for work that the funding will enable you to share?

My work is under imminent threat from financial pressures at my museum so I'm not sure we can commit to long-term work in this area. Can I still apply?

Perhaps. You'll need to be able to reference how health and wellbeing is a strategic priority for your museum that will continue at a reasonable baseline level. This might be a level that means core staff are retained and relationships are maintained, but programmes are reduced due to financial pressures, for example.

We'd like to work with a partner on this work, is this allowed?

Yes, community partners can provide valuable expertise in health and wellbeing work. Tell us what their role will be and how you will mutually support one another to achieve outcomes. Partners are welcome, but not required, for grant applications.

My museum is small, so our work doesn't seem as sector leading as some initiatives from larger museums – is it worth applying?

Yes, we are interested in work that is excellent in the context in which you work, considering your size, governance and location. Think about how our support can improve or extend your work in terms of practice or embedded ways of working; as well as what you may have to share with others in the UK museum sector who may find your example relatable.

We are applying for or have received other funding from the MA or elsewhere, can we still apply?

Yes, this is a standalone programme, and no other grants or funding affects your eligibility. You should let us know about other funding in your conversation with the project officer and within your application if it relates at all to your health and wellbeing work.

We enquired and/or submitted an application last round but were not successful, can we apply again?

Yes, you can enquire again this round through the normal application process. You are welcome to speak to us about the same idea or a different one, but in either case you must be able to show how your proposal responds to any feedback you received last round. If you did not receive any feedback, please get in touch with craig@museumsassociation.org to discuss.