

John Ellerman Foundation

Museums and Galleries Fund: October 2024 – May 2025

Museums and galleries are a means by which people engage with arts and heritage. Many institutions outside London hold important collections which have the power to inspire creativity, motivate artistic expression and stimulate local regeneration. In recent years they have been affected by the impact of funding cuts and curatorial under-provision, reducing their scope to research, display and conserve collections and create new exhibitions. The pandemic and cost-of-living crisis have added further challenges while also presenting opportunities to engage in different ways with new and existing audiences.

John Ellerman Foundation has been distributing funds to museums and galleries through the Museums and Galleries Fund (the Fund) since 2014. In the next couple of years we will be looking to review the impact of our funding in this space and our continued role, if any, in distributing this kind of funding.

Aim

The Fund aims to help strengthen museums and galleries in the UK, celebrating the unique assets that our regions possess and their benefit to us nationally. We want to help organisations enhance and sustain curatorial development to attract a broader and more diverse public.

We have again earmarked circa 10 per cent of our overall grants budget to be awarded through the Fund, with final decisions to be made in May 2025. We generally expect to make no more than five or six grants for periods of two to three years. While the average grant size is circa £90,000 we will consider higher amounts for exceptional projects.

Our values

Relationships are important to us across every aspect of our grantmaking, and in the ways in which we work with others. Our values guide and reflect how we work. We are a responsive funder, listening and responding to what applicants and our wider stakeholder network judge is important.

We have well-developed and regularly reviewed funding guidelines, enabling us to be discerning in our decisions about whom and what to support.

We value all our stakeholder relationships, including organisations we fund and those applying to us, and seek to have a personal touch. Our Trustees are involved at every stage of an application, and we always meet an applicant before a grant is made.

We prefer to be connected and are in regular contact with relevant colleagues and partners in the charitable and investing worlds. We also like to keep in touch with organisations we fund, convening and linking with them and others from time to time.

We are willing to be flexible and may venture outside our funding criteria or our usual ways of working, if we believe a different approach would be more effective.

Our statement on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

We believe that the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) must guide all that we do, which can be summarised as: our recruitment, retention and progression of staff and Trustees; the management of our underlying endowment; our grantmaking; our internal and external communications; and our analysis of the origin of our wealth through our History Project.

We recognise that the failure to prioritise and improve DEI practices within institutional philanthropy and the wider charity and philanthropic sectors has led to the inequitable distribution of funding. We are committed to diverse, equitable and inclusive practices throughout our grantmaking, and are supported to consider how to do this through our own internal learning and reflection and external initiatives like the Foundation Practice Rating, and the DEI Data Standard (which includes a form that we ask organisations to complete when they apply), as well as the learning shared by organisations like the Association of Charitable Foundations and IVAR. Our DEI Accountability Plan is the joint responsibility of the Director and the Board of Trustees (which includes a lead Trustee on DEI) and is under continuous review, with the Board asked to approve the next phase of our work at least once a year. The Plan aims to deliver greater equity and improved funding practices through developing and embedding a shared organisation-wide understanding of DEI and applying this in all our work. You can read our DEI Policy in full on our website [here](#).

What we will fund

We are keen to fund work which has a legacy within and beyond the organisation. We prioritise applications that aspire to achieve outcomes for people working in curatorial roles, the collections they work with and care for, and the institutions in which they work. We are particularly interested in proposals which:

- enable innovation, partnership working, and fresh approaches, both for established curators and those just starting out
- **and/or**
- ensure organisations are able to safeguard and advance curatorial skills and conservation skills, and make the most of opportunities at a time of development or change.

We are aware of and understand the importance of supporting work that addresses the complexities and challenges in the operating context for museums and galleries, and the impact that this is having on curatorial practice, including through the lenses of climate, decolonisation and others.

We encourage applicants to plan ahead and factor uplifts into multi-year requests.

Who can apply

The Fund is open to a wide variety of collection types. We have supported visual and decorative arts, social history and anthropology, science and technology, industrial, natural history collections. Accreditation is not required, but applicants are expected to demonstrate:

- high quality delivery in their field at a national level
- national significance, usually through a rare, unique, important or high-quality collection
- commitment to collaborative approaches, either as the focus of the request, or at a minimum with a strong track record of working in partnership and/or with communities.

In line with our general policy, we favour organisations with an income between £100,000 and £10m. We may fund a larger institution if it is uniquely placed to meet our aim and can demonstrate a funding need for the work applied for. Local Authority, independent museums and contemporary galleries without permanent collections are also eligible. While our priority is small to medium-sized museums and galleries outside of London, national and/or London-based institutions may also apply if their project brings significant benefits outside of the capital. Universities are eligible to apply but due to their size and funding model are less likely to be successful. We are particularly interested in receiving applications from those areas where we have made fewer grants, such as the East Midlands, Northern Ireland and Wales.

The organisation applying must be able to demonstrate the following:

- an emphasis on the value of curatorial skills
- a commitment to active collections management, care and review, including disposal
- a commitment to delivering high quality and innovation
- strong leadership and commitment from senior management, board or governing body
- effective financial management
- the difference a grant would make, to the organisation, the general public or other audiences.

What we do not fund:

- individual conservation projects (but we may consider conservation work as part of a wider request)
- capital development
- education and outreach work.

Applying to the Fund

The online application portal for the Museums and Galleries Fund will be open from Monday 7th October 2024. We have a two-stage process. First-stage applications must be received by **5pm on Monday 6th January 2025**. We expect to make decisions in Spring 2025, so you should plan for the work funded by a grant to start from or after June 2025.

If you have any queries in the meantime about eligibility criteria or the application process, please contact the Grants Team via museums@ellerman.org.uk. There will also be a series of one-hour online question and answer sessions on Zoom, where queries will be responded to from applicants – details about these can be found on the Museums and Galleries page on our website. A follow-up phone call with a member of the Grants Team can be arranged for more in-depth queries. If you have applied several times before to the Museums and Galleries Fund and have been unsuccessful, we ask that you get in touch using the Museums email address prior to applying.

Stage 1

Your first-stage application should include:

1. A description of what you are seeking funding for, on no more than two sides of A4. Please include:
 - a brief description of your organisation, relevant track record, and relevant external factors impacting your work that you think we should be aware of
 - the nature of your collection, and why it has national significance

- what you would like us to fund, including (where possible) a specific amount and number of years for which funding is sought
- how your proposal matches what we fund and are looking for (see above).

2. Financial information:

If you are a charity, a copy of your accounts for the previous year and the current year. You can submit draft or management accounts if published accounts are not yet available. If you are part of a larger organisation (such as a university or local authority) please provide an income and expenditure statement for the running costs of your department or unit.

If your accounts show a significant surplus or deficit, high or low reserves outside of your policy, please explain this briefly.

3. Create an online account and upload your first-stage proposal and financial information.

Please go to our online portal [here](#) to create an online account. You can then upload your first-stage proposal and financial information. This link will remain open from Monday 7th October 2024 until 5pm on Monday 6th January 2025.

Once you have created your online account and uploaded your first-stage application you will receive an instant confirmation.

Stage 2

If we invite you to apply for the second stage, we will ask for a more detailed application, and arrange to meet you virtually or in person, circumstances allowing, to find out more about you and your work.

Access Support

We ask that all applicants submit a two page written application, which can be in Word or PDF format. However, if you have a specific access requirement that makes submitting in this way difficult, please do contact us and we will be happy to discuss making reasonable adjustments to the process. This includes if you are having difficulty navigating the online portal. To support applicants, we have shared copies of the first and second stage application form [here](#). These aim to be compatible with accessibility tools, but if you would like to receive a version in a different format, please do get in touch. For all such enquiries, please reach out to beth@ellerman.org.uk.

We are actively seeking to improve our accessibility and welcome any feedback on this front. You can see more detail about our approach to accessibility in our [Accessibility Statement](#) and [blog](#).