

Developing your Creative Practice Guidance for applicants

Arts Council England



Updated: March 2024

enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk
[artscouncil.org.uk](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

Access support

We are committed to being open and accessible to everyone.

We want everyone to be able to access our services or apply for funding.

If you experience barriers to applying for Arts Council funding, we can help.

This includes paying for a support worker to help you.

DYCP guidance in alternative formats (Easy Read, audio, BSL and Large Text) is available on our website:
artscouncil.org.uk/dycp

Our **Access support** page on our website explains the ways we can help: artscouncil.org.uk/access

Do you have any questions or need any support?

Email the Access Support Team on artscouncil.org.uk/access

- **Email:** enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk
- **Website:** artscouncil.org.uk
- **Post:** Arts Council England – DYCP, The Hive, 49 Lever Street Manchester, M1 1FN

You can also **call** us on 0161 934 4317 or use **Livechat** (10am - 4pm for both) by visiting our website.

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Welcome to Developing your Creative Practice

Developing your Creative Practice (DYCP) supports the development of independent cultural and creative practitioners working in any of **our supported disciplines**.

Individuals can apply for **£2,000 to £12,000**, to take a dedicated period of time to focus on their own cultural and creative development, and take them to the next stage in their practice.

For applicants with personal access costs, you can include these on top of the £12,000 maximum.

Developing your Creative Practice encourages development by allowing people to innovate and take creative risks, work in new ways and to eventually reach new audiences. We want to make sure that as an independent practitioner, you have the tools you need to build and sustain a successful practice.

You can find examples of the type of activity we can support in this guidance, along with who can apply and when.

It might be helpful to look at **our website** to read about some of the creative and cultural practitioners we've supported through the programme so far.

(<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/developing-your-creative-practice/dycp-case-studies>)

This is a competitive programme – we receive many more good applications than we can fund.

Strong applications are those that can demonstrate a real impact on people's cultural and creative development in England.

Your application must show a clear development opportunity, with a clear plan to support it.

Eligibility

The disciplines and individuals we support

Any development activity we support must focus on one or more of these disciplines:

- Music
- Theatre
- Dance
- Visual Arts
- Literature
- Libraries
- Combined Arts
- Museums practice

However we know that people work in all sorts of settings and ways. For example, you might use creative media and technology in your practice. You may be using virtual reality or augmented reality. You might work with sport or science. Maybe you are bringing creativity into care homes or heritage settings. We encourage this, as long as your activity also clearly focuses on one or more of the disciplines we support.

If you are not sure whether your activity is eligible, **contact us**.

Who can apply

We can support creative and cultural practitioners working in **our supported disciplines**.

Listed below are some examples of what we mean by creative or cultural practitioner. If you don't see yourself in this list, get in touch and we can let you know if your practice is something we can support.

Dancers, choreographers, writers, translators, producers, publishers, editors, musicians, conductors, composers, actors, directors, designers, artists, craft makers, curators, DJs, performer/creators, arts and cultural educators, community practitioners/ engagement specialists, movement directors, cultural conservators, creative enablers, creative technicians.

This programme cannot support performers whose existing or planned way of working is to perform someone else's work without providing creative input or leadership.

Anyone who applies to Developing your Creative Practice needs to:

- apply as an individual, or as a small group of practitioners who usually collaborate in their work. **Organisations cannot apply, and individuals cannot apply on behalf of an organisation**
- if you're a sole trader you need to make an application in your individual capacity, not on behalf of your business or company
- be based within (live in) England
- have a UK individual bank account in the exact name you're applying in. We cannot accept business bank accounts for this programme. (If you apply as a small group of

practitioners, one person should submit the application and take the lead on managing the grant, and should provide their bank details)

- be at least 18 years old
- have one years' creative practice experience outside a formal education context

Note 1: Or have a home address in England and defined by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs as 'resident in the UK' for tax – see <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/international/residence.htm#5>

What can I apply for?

Activities can be up to one year in length.

Some examples of things you can apply for are:

- building new networks for future development or to present your work in the future
- creating new work
- experimenting with new collaborators or partners
- international travel to explore other practice or work with mentors
- professional development activities, such as training
- research and development time to explore your practice and take risks
- practical steps to support your work to be more sustainable in future

When can I apply?

There are restrictions on how many times you can apply to Developing your Creative Practice.

If you have recently made two unsuccessful or one successful application you won't be eligible to apply.

How do I know if this applies to me?

- Check on our online system, Grantium.
- Select to apply for Developing your Creative Practice.
- It will not let you start an application from your applicant profile if the restriction applies to you.
- It will also tell you when you last applied.

Look on our **DYCP webpage** to find out the eligibility timeframe and when you may be able to apply again.

(<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/dydp>)

If you have made any ineligible Developing your Creative Practice applications, these aren't counted as unsuccessful applications.

Open and closing dates for applications can be found on our website. We do our best to tell you these in plenty of time.

Please be aware that your project start date cannot be before the date we will announce decisions.

Ineligible applications

We will view your application as ineligible if:

- It does not focus on the disciplines we support.
- It does not clearly show how the activity will develop your practice.
- It does not include the level of detail we need to make a decision.
- You have recently made two unsuccessful or one successful application (Grantium will not allow you to apply if this is the case).
- It does not include the supporting documents or links we need, or if you haven't provided any passwords we need to access those documents or links.
- You've included costs for activities, goods or services that have already taken place, been bought, or been ordered before we can make a decision on your application.
- It includes costs (directly or indirectly) for statutory education, further education or higher education (undergraduate or postgraduate) for:
 - activities directly linked to formal courses of study
 - activities which contribute towards course assessment, tuition fees or living costs

There may be other, less common reasons an application is ineligible. If this is the case, we will let you know.

Film, video and audio work

We can consider applications from practitioners working with film if:

- You are working in our supported disciplines and,
- Film is the medium for your work.

The type of work we can support includes:

- development activities that involve the production of artists' film, video or audio work for galleries, cinemas, the public realm, publishing, broadcast or online exhibition or distribution
- applications that involve work in film, video and audio that is clearly related to practice development in our supported disciplines (eg visual artists' film, screen dance, poetry film, artists' creative podcasts, artist-led radio drama, sound art etc.)

-

We cannot support:

- film-making projects that do not engage creatively with the artforms and disciplines we support
- narrative feature films where film is the artform
- television drama

Developing your Creative Practice and Project Grants

Developing your Creative Practice is one of our two main programmes that supports individuals.

The other is National Lottery Project Grants (artscouncil.org.uk/projectgrants). Project Grants supports individuals and organisations to deliver projects which directly engage people and communities in England.

You cannot apply to both programmes at the same time. If you apply to one, you will need to wait for a decision from us before you are eligible to apply to the other programme.

Which programme should I apply to?

- Will your activity include opportunities for people to engage, become involved with or experience your work? If so, Project Grants may be best
- Is your activity mainly focused on developing your own practice? If so, Developing your Creative Practice may be best

Use the checklist below to see which programme might suit you best.

Developing your Creative Practice

- Only open to individuals
- You are at an early to mid-point stage in your practice and you need support to make a major change or carry out a period of focused development work
- The immediate benefit of the activity is to you, and people will be able to engage with your work at a later date as a result of your grant
- Grants of £2,000 to £12,000
- For activities up to one year in length
- There are up to four deadlines per year
- Decisions on applications usually take up to 10 weeks from the relevant deadline
- There are some restrictions on applying – see the ‘When You Can Apply’ **section** of this guidance

Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants

- Open to individuals and organisations
- For individuals, arts and cultural organisations, and other people and organisations who use the arts, creativity and culture in their work.
- The main benefit is usually the people engaging with the project
- Grants of £1,000 to £100,000
- For projects up to three years in length
- You can apply at any time. There are no deadlines
- Decisions on applications for £30,000 or less take eight weeks. Decisions on applications for over £30,000 take 12 weeks.
- You can apply at any time (unless you are waiting for a decision on a previous application)

Before you apply

Applications are made using our Grantium system. For more information on how to use Grantium, please visit our **website**. (<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/advice-and-guidance-library/grantium-support#section-1>)

- Has your applicant profile been validated by us, or is your existing applicant profile up to date?
- Have you successfully completed the Eligibility questionnaire in our online portal?

Demand for Developing your Creative Practice funding is high, and we are not able to fund all applications. Think about what you will do if your application is not funded.

Think carefully before applying, and only apply when you are at a point in your practice where you are ready to make the most of a period of development.

Applying for Developing your Creative Practice

You have had a great idea and you are eligible to apply. What next?

Read this guidance carefully – it will tell you what we can fund, as well as how to complete your application

[arrow leading to]

Make sure you have a user account for our online application system, that you have set up an applicant profile, and that the profile has been validated by us this can take up to 10 working days

[arrow leading to]

Fill in and submit the application form. This guidance will help you. If you need any additional support then you can get in touch with our Customer Services team

Developing your application

To help you to develop your application, think about the following points:

- What will your activity be, and how long will it take?
- Can you give a one line summary of your development activities?
- What are the main things you want to achieve? How will you know whether you achieved these things?
- Why do you want to take this period of development, and why now?

- How much will your development activity cost overall, and how much do you need from us?
- What are the key milestones for your development and when do you expect them to be?

These questions can help you to decide whether you are at the right point in your practice to submit an application to Developing your Creative Practice – if you do not have the answers yet then you may need more time to plan.

The application form

We will use the information you give us in your application form to decide whether we will offer you a grant.

Before you start

- Have we checked and validated your applicant profile, or is your existing profile up to date?
artscouncil.org.uk/welcome-grantium
- Have you successfully completed the eligibility questionnaire on our online portal?

In the next section of this guidance will go through the questions in the application form one by one to help you with your answers.

Your work

› **Please tell us about yourself and your creative practice**
(up to 1,800 characters including spaces (see note 1))

Think about:

- the main focus of your artistic, cultural or creative activities
- your main creative achievements to date – for example, exhibitions, productions, publications etc.
- any important commissions you've received
- important pieces of work you've completed
- if you've worked with any established creative or cultural partners
- any other information relevant to your track record; and
- whether you've shown that you are ready to benefit from a development opportunity

Note 1: All character counts given include spaces

Your development

› **Tell us about the developmental opportunity you want to undertake, what you hope to get out of it, and how you will go about it.**

(up to 1,500 characters)

Think about:

- how you will seek out opportunities that will benefit your development
- how ambitious your activity is. We can fund small, one-off opportunities (such as a research trip), but we're more interested in supporting extended periods of development which give you the time to really explore and work in new ways
- if the application shows that you can manage the activity successfully, and whether what you want to do is realistic and well-planned
- if you have plans in place to access the networks you want to work with

If your application includes taking part in a residency, please note we would only expect to fund residencies if the experience is tailored to your development, and not off the shelf residencies

› **Why is this important for your practice at this point, and how will this help create future opportunities?**

(up to 1,500 characters)

Think about:

- what your main aims for the activity are
- why this is the right point to take some development time
- what you want this development to lead to; and
- what will be different about your practice as a result of this development

Your work – attachments

› **We'd like to see an example of your work to give us a sense of your practice.**

You can either provide a web link or attach a document. For example, this could be an image, a music file, a sample of your writing, a video, a link to an online portfolio, or anything you think demonstrates your work.

› **We also need one supporting document, written by someone other than you, that supports the quality of your practice.**

This can be a review, external views of your work or a letter of support from an organisation or partner you have worked with.

You should give us:

- one document to demonstrate your work (either as a web link or an attachment)
- one supporting document (an attachment)

Think carefully about the attachments or link that you give us. They should add value to your application. Think about how to demonstrate the quality of your work, and show that you're ready to take a step up in your practice.

A document can be a maximum of five pages, and we can only look at a single web page.

If your document or web page requires a password, please provide this somewhere in your application. Please don't use a link to a site that requires payment details or membership to view (such as LinkedIn) as we won't be able to access it. If we can't access your document or web page then we may view your application as ineligible.

Activity focus

› What do you want to focus on?

Pick as many as you feel are relevant to your activity:

- building new networks for future development/presentation of work
- creating new work
- experimenting with new collaborators
- international travel to explore other practice or work with mentors
- professional development activities
- research and development time to explore practice and take risks

Public engagement

Developing Your Creative Practice helps Arts Council England further our charitable purposes of improving the knowledge, practice, accessibility and understanding of arts and culture by supporting the development of independent creative practitioners. Supporting individuals to get to the next stage in their practice will benefit audiences in England in the longer term.

We don't expect you to use your grant to make public facing work, but you should think about how a grant will help you reach audiences in the future.

› If you receive a grant to develop your creative practice, how will this benefit the public (either now or in the future)? Pick as many as you feel are relevant to your development activity.

- Making work to present/show to the public
- Reaching new audiences through exploring new ways of working
- Developing networks to increase opportunities to present work
- Other (please specify)

Our Outcomes

› Our 10-year strategy, Let's Create, has three Outcomes. Tell us which of our Outcomes, listed below, you think your development activity will contribute to:

- Creative People: Everyone can develop and express creativity throughout their life
- Cultural Communities: Villages, towns and cities thrive through a collaborative approach to culture
- A Creative and Cultural Country: England's cultural sector is innovative, collaborative and international

Expenditure budget

› We'll ask you to break down your spending for the activity, and show us how you have worked out your figures in the table.

You don't need to have any income from other sources to apply to this programme. We just want you to tell us how you will spend the funds you're applying to us for.

When entering your expenditure think about:

- whether you have included a fee for your own time, this is something we want you to include
- whether your costs have been clearly broken down. You should make sure that you show how all your figures have been calculated in the **description** field. For example, show the number of days and the daily rate for any fees (eg 'specialist mentoring, 2 days @ £200 per day = £400')
- if your costs are appropriate

Artistic and creative costs

In this section, include any of the artistic or creative costs you need to pay for, and show how you have reached your figures. You should include:

- **The fees for artists or creatives involved in the activity, including yourself**

We are committed to making sure that artists and creatives are paid appropriately for activities we support. The amount is likely to depend on a number of factors, including experience and skills, the type of work and the length of the activity. You should include your own fees here, as well as any artists or creatives you need to work with.

- **Other artistic or creative costs**

For example, the cost of events, commissions, research and development, preparation, conservation, productions and residencies, including any materials or equipment you hire to carry out these things.

Overheads

You can apply for overhead costs that are directly related to the activity you are asking us to support. For example: payments to staff, phone bills, postage and insurance. You can apply for a contribution to your ongoing overheads if these are not covered by other funding. Explain how you have worked out the cost.

Assets – materials, equipment, instruments

If you need to buy any materials, equipment or instruments you should include the costs in this section of the budget and tell us about them in the description field. You should get competitive quotes from more than one business or supplier. Buying assets is not the main purpose of the programme, but we understand that you may need to make some purchases to be able to carry out your development. As part of our eligibility checks we will decide if any proposed asset purchases are appropriate. You may be asked to send invoices for any purchases.

Other spending

Include any other spending for your activity that is not included elsewhere. This can include an amount for unexpected costs (contingency spending).

Personal access costs

If you, or any of the core team of people you are delivering the project with, experience barriers because you identify as::

- D/deaf or disabled
- neurodivergent
- experiencing learning difficulties
- having a mental health condition
- having a long term health condition

there may be extra costs relating to your or their access needs. These would be to:

- help you deliver your project; or
- for the online management of your grant.
- Some examples are: a BSL interpreter, a notetaker or specialist tutor for admin support, counselling costs.

Costs can only be for the project period (between your project start date and end date) and must be specific to your activity. We are not able to cover costs for support that is unrelated to the activity. Costs for caring responsibilities can be included as part of your project budget but should not be included as personal access costs.

Only include personal access costs that you will have if your application is successful. This does not include costs relating to preparing, planning and submitting your application. You will have told us about the expected costs of your personal access costs, as part of the eligibility questionnaire on Grantium. The figure you provided will appear in your application form under the 'Amount requested' section and in the expenditure table. If you need to change the amount, you will need to edit the figure in the 'Amount requested' section. When you do this the budget

line for personal access costs in your expenditure table will automatically update. You cannot edit the budget line for personal access costs from the expenditure table page. To find out more about personal access costs, see **our website:** **artscouncil.org.uk/DYCP**

Activity plan

› We'll ask you to use the table to list the main stages and tasks of the development period you're applying for, from your start date onwards, to plan out your time and identify the key milestones.

You can add as many lines to this table as you need to identify the main stages of the activity. For example: planning, developing partnerships, research, attending events, evaluation, and so on.

We want to see that you have thought about how you will plan your time, and that you are able to manage your activity in the time you've allowed for it.

We understand that you might not know exact dates at the time you apply. We want to see that you have considered how best to use your time.

Helping us to evaluate the programme

After you have completed the application we will ask you some additional questions to help us evaluate the programme in the future. We'll ask you about your income in the last 12 months, and about how much of your income in this period came from your practice.

We will also ask you what the occupation of the highest income earner in your household was when you were 14.

We'll use this data in an anonymised way to better understand socio-economic background, and to inform future work to remove barriers to application.

This information will not be used in deciding whether to offer you a grant.

No-one involved in processing or making a decision on your application will see your answers to these questions.

We ask these questions because we want to be able to understand the impact of the Developing your Creative Practice programme.

We hope this programme will support individuals to develop in their practice, and when we evaluate the programme in the future we will use this data in an anonymised way – alongside other data – to help us understand some of the ways our grants may have had an effect.

You can choose not to answer these questions if you prefer.

What happens next

- 1 Submit your application using our online system, Grantium.
- 2 We aim to complete our **eligibility check** within 15 working days of the application deadline.
 - X If your application is **ineligible** then it will not go to the decision panel, and we will let you know this via our online system.
- 3 If your application is **eligible** it will go to a **decision panel** in your Area, who will decide whether or not we will fund the project.
 - X If your application is **unsuccessful** and not awarded funding by the decision panel we will contact you via our online system to let you know usually within 10 weeks of the application deadline.
- 4 If your application is **successful** and awarded funding by the decision panel we will contact you via our online system to let you know usually within 10 weeks of the application deadline.

More information on each of these steps can be found in the sections that follow.

Eligibility check

When we get your application we first check to see if it is eligible.

We aim to complete our eligibility check within **15 working days** of the application deadline for each round.

- If your application is **eligible**, it will move on to the decision-making stage. You will hear the outcome of your application by the decision announced date listed on our website: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/dycp> In the unlikely event we need to query something with you, we will be in touch via the email on your Grantium user account.
- If your application is **not eligible**, this means that we cannot process it any further and it will not be considered for funding. We will notify you via our online system, Grantium and will explain our decision.

Decision making

What we consider

- We will look at the strength of your application alongside other applications we receive.
- We will think about the **range and balance** of different activities we're supporting. The activities we fund must cover a broad range of **activity types, disciplines, individuals and geographical areas**. We need to think about our investment in **areas of least engagement with arts and culture**.
- We will review our internal data on our spending so far and look at applications in the light of future demand on our budget.
- We will also think about how applications contribute to our Strategy and our Outcomes: artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate

We receive many more good applications than we are able to fund, and we choose to support the ones that help us achieve a balanced spread of activities. We sometimes have to make difficult decisions about what we can support.

Further information

Making a complaint

As an organisation, we will always listen to and respond to any concerns that you may have. If you would like to make a complaint about either the service you have received from Arts Council England or the way we have handled your application, we have a process that you can use.

Please note that Arts Council England does not have an appeals process and for this reason, we are unable to accept complaints that relate solely to the decision we have made rather than how we have made it. For more information, please visit the **Complaints** section of our website, under '**Contact us**'. (<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/contact-us>)

Additionally, you can email complaints@artscouncil.org.uk or contact our Customer Services team for more information.

Making records of your project available to us for audit

You should be aware that we carry out checks on a sample of applications every year to make sure that our funding is being used appropriately.

We reserve the right to ask successful applicants for access to all or part of their documentation relating to their activity. If you receive a grant, you must keep clear records of project management and financial records (including all invoices) for us to see when we ask.

Freedom of Information Act

We are committed to being as open as possible. We believe that the public has a right to know how we spend public funds and how we make our decisions.

We are also listed as a public authority under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. By law, we may have to provide your application documents and information about how we have reached our decision to any member of the public who asks for them under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

We may not release those parts of the documents which are covered by one or more of the exemptions under the Act. Please see the Freedom of Information website at **www.ico.org.uk** for information about freedom of information generally and the exemptions.

We will not release any information about applications while we are making a decision, as this may interfere with the decision making process. You can find out more on the Freedom of Information (**artscouncil.org.uk/freedom-information**) section of our website.

Public sector equalities duty

Your application form gives us information we may use to report to the Government or to monitor the different backgrounds of people who receive grants.

Under the Public Sector Equalities Duty we must research and monitor the different backgrounds of people who receive our grants.

Data protection

We will ask all applicants for their date of birth when they complete the declaration in their application form. This will be a mandatory requirement which will help reduce the possibility of fraud. Your Date of Birth will not be used in any decisionmaking processes or for any other purpose. For further information about how we process your data, please refer to our General privacy notice **here**. (<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/freedom-information/data-protection>)

We are committed to using any personal information (or personal data) we collect on a lawful, fair and transparent basis, respecting your legal rights as an individual in accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679), the UK Data Protection Act 2018 and other applicable laws that regulate the use and privacy of personal data (Data Protection Law).

As part of us meeting this requirement, we have published our General Privacy Notice for you to refer to **here** (<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/freedom-information/data-protection>). This tells you more about the personal data the Arts Council collects; the different purposes that we use it for and on what legal basis; who we may share that personal data with; how long we keep it; and your legal rights, including your right to contact us and receive information regarding the personal data about you that we may hold from time to time.

For further information about our obligations and your rights under Data Protection Law, as well as how to report a concern if you believe that your personal data is being collected or used illegally, please also see the Information Commissioner's Office website at **www.ico.org.uk**.

Further changes to the programme

We reserve the right to introduce new requirements and/or additional conditions based on any guidance given and/or announcements made by the UK Government and any changing circumstances in relation to COVID-19. We hope to keep the programme open, but we reserve the right to withdraw the programme at any time in response to changing external circumstances.

- **Email:** enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk
- **Website:** artscouncil.org.uk
- **Post:** Arts Council England, The Hive, 49 Lever Street, Manchester, M1 1FN

Questions?

Get in touch we're happy to help

Reach our **Customer Services** team here:

- **Email:** enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk
- **Website:** artscouncil.org.uk
- **Twitter:** [@ace_national](https://twitter.com/ace_national)
- **Facebook:** facebook.com/artscouncilofengland

You can also **Livechat** with us by visiting our website:
artscouncil.org.uk/DYCP