



Association of  
Independent  
Museums



Department  
for Culture,  
Media & Sport



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**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

## CONNECTED COMMUNITIES PART OF THE KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD FUND SUPPORTED BY DCMS

### APPLICATION GUIDANCE

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Museums have unique abilities to bring people together around collections, treasured local sites, and interesting ideas. AIM's new programme seeks to harness these opportunities to increase wellbeing in twenty-seven specified deprived areas in England and give more people the chance to get involved in their local museum and build meaningful relationships.

Funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) [Know Your Neighbourhood Fund](#) through Arts Council England (ACE), Round Two of AIM's Connected Communities scheme offers grants of £15,000 - £80,000 to Accredited and non-Accredited museums delivering projects in the eligible areas that will improve community connections through high-quality volunteering opportunities and/or reducing loneliness and increasing social bonds. Alongside the grants museums will participate in a capacity-building programme that will support and upskill staff and volunteers, offer expert guidance through mentorship, help build partnerships with local organisations, and ensure the grant-funded projects have a legacy both organisationally and in the eligible areas.

This programme is part of Know Your Neighbourhood. Other elements delivered via the Arts Council are through [Creative Lives UK](#) and [Libraries Connected](#). The other strands of the project encompass [Heritage Action Zones](#), [UK Community Foundation projects](#), and [National Lottery Community Fund](#) projects.

Connected Communities is supported by the [What Works Centre for Wellbeing](#) and [Heritage Volunteering Group](#).

This guidance tells you more about the programme and the types of projects we will fund.

#### 2. WHO CAN APPLY?

The programme is open to Accredited and non-Accredited museums, and partnerships or consortia including an Accredited or non-Accredited museum or museums. Organisations do not need to be members of AIM to apply. Applicants will be asked to provide a constitution or governing document.

## 2.1 Eligible areas

This programme is for projects working in the following areas:

Large urban areas		Medium urban areas		Rural and small urban areas	
Local authority district	Region	Local authority district	Region	Local authority district	Region
Knowsley	North West	Hartlepool	North East	Tendring	East of England
Tameside	North West	Kingston upon Hull	Yorkshire and The Humber	Great Yarmouth	East of England
Wolverhampton	West Midlands	Halton	North West	Fenland	East of England
Sunderland	North East	Thanet	South East	County Durham	North East
Doncaster	Yorkshire and The Humber	Blackpool	North West	Torridge	South West
Barnsley	Yorkshire and The Humber	Middlesbrough	North East	Bolsover	East Midlands
South Tyneside	North East	Burnley	North West	Barrow-in-Furness	North West
Rochdale	North West	Stoke-on-Trent	West Midlands	King's Lynn and West Norfolk	East of England
Sandwell	West Midlands	Wakefield	Yorkshire	Cannock Chase	West Midlands

These areas have been decided by DCMS and ACE due to being areas with high levels of deprivation and low levels of social capital. Organisations do not need to be physically based in these areas, but will need to show that this is where work will be delivered and communities will benefit. Applications from partnerships or consortia will be accepted e.g. a museum outside the eligible areas managing a project in partnership with a smaller museum or other community organisation based in the eligible area.

We are particularly interested in seeing projects from or working within the following areas, from which we did not see any applications in Round One:



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Knowsley, Tameside, Sandwell, Kingston upon Hull, Halton, Tendring, Great Yarmouth, Bolsover, Barrow in Furness, King's Lynn and Cannock Chase

### 3. WHAT CAN WE FUND?

The goals of this programme are to:

- empower communities to take sustained action on tackling loneliness by supporting people suffering from or in groups at risk of suffering from chronic loneliness
- enrich lives by connecting communities and improving accessibility of volunteering in the eligible areas

One of the goals of the overarching programme is to strengthen the evidence base on what works and why on volunteering and tackling loneliness. Successful projects will need to take part in a central evaluation funded by ACE and commissioned by Libraries Connected, as well as an overarching KYN evaluation commissioned by DCMS.

We expect to fund a wide range of projects which deliver these outcomes. Applicants will need to show how the activity they plan to carry out with the funding will deliver the outcomes, with expert support and mentorship that will be available during the project. We are looking for applicants who understand the communities in which activities will take place and have based their ideas about making improvements on the needs and behaviours of these communities, as well as organisations that are enthusiastic about working with other bodies in the local area during and beyond the project to enable sustained change.

See section 9.1 If your application is successful.

#### 3.1 Outcomes

Outcomes are changes, impacts, or benefits that happen as a direct result of your project.

We will fund projects which use museum and heritage assets (i.e. collections and heritage or cultural venues) with the following outcomes:

- Reduced risk of loneliness and increased levels of social connections for participants  
AND/OR
- Improved accessibility of high-quality volunteering opportunities  
AND
- Improved organisational relationships with local institutions and other partners engaged in similar work e.g. through increased partnerships between delivery bodies or improved use of local assets for communities. **(To note this outcome is mandatory.)**

#### 3.2 Types of projects

As an example, these are some of the kinds of projects we would envisage supporting:

- A ten-week social prescribing project, in which people took part in behind-the-scenes museum tours, object handling and discussion, and arts activities inspired by the heritage exhibits. It improved positive emotions and reduced stress and anxiety.
- A project co-creating new displays and interpretation of the collection with vulnerable or under-represented groups, creating social bonds.
- A project using museum spaces or buildings in new ways to benefit communities.
- A museum volunteering project aimed at unemployed adults, which focused on supporting people to become more confident and build their communications skills and creativity as



guides and handlers. It reduced loneliness, increased confidence and self-belief, and helped people find work.

- A project adding staff capacity to the museum so it can participate in programmes in the area with partners for example expanding volunteering in a number of domains.
- A project which brought together excluded communities to curate exhibitions telling the hidden stories of the area. It increased feelings of belonging and pride in place.
- A project aimed at women who had experienced domestic violence, using memory and storytelling approaches to reduce stigma and share their experience with the community.
- A project to make governance of the museum more representative of the local community and focus on helping people grow skills and confidence through volunteering as trustees.

You will need to show your understanding of what works to deliver the outcomes of the fund, as well as your understanding of the eligible area in which the project will work and the communities within it that will benefit from the project, and set out why you think your planned project is suitable and will be effective. During May and June AIM will be running online workshops on the subjects of the fund which may help you to develop an effective project.

Organisations can apply for amounts between £15,000 – £80,000. In Round Two £370,000 is available which we expect to spread between larger and smaller projects.

We want to maximise the long-term impact of this funding and so we will fund projects that:

- Either create new programming, services or activities or repeat, continue, expand or extend earlier or ongoing projects or programmes which can demonstrate evidence of effectiveness
  - AIM is particularly keen to see applications that demonstrate join up with other elements of Know Your Neighbourhood funding e.g. Heritage Action Zones, Community Foundation projects, library projects, Creative Lives/voluntary arts groups projects
- Have a clear plan for how to get started, how they will operate, and either how they will end or how they will be sustained within the organisation after this funding ends (see section 4 on eligible costs)
- May be locally, nationally or internationally innovative in how to tackle loneliness and volunteering issues – recognising that sometimes experiments do not produce the desired outcomes, and therefore projects can be flexed and redesigned during delivery by agreement with AIM where appropriate
- Build relationships between the host organisation(s) and partners
- Have a responsible owner or owners within the organisation who can participate in the capacity-building programme and take responsibility for project legacy in the organisation
- Run up to the end of January 2025, although they may end earlier

### 3.3 Chronic loneliness

Loneliness is the negative feeling we experience when the relationships we have do not match up to those we would like to have. This may be because we would like more people to talk to, or because our relationships are not as meaningful as we would like. Loneliness is not the same as social isolation. We can be isolated but not feel lonely, or feel lonely even when surrounded by other people. Feeling lonely sometimes is normal, but if people feel lonely often or always we call this chronic loneliness.

Around one in 20 adults in the UK are thought to be chronically lonely. Chronic loneliness can have a serious impact on people's wellbeing, and their ability to function in society. Loneliness has been linked to poor physical health, mental health, and low wellbeing, with potentially adverse effects on their communities. Some groups are at [higher risk of experiencing chronic loneliness](#), and Connected Communities proposals targeting this outcome should set out which group or groups they will be working with from:

- People who identify as LGBT
- Young people (16-34)
- People who recently moved to their current address
- People who live alone
- People in the lowest income quintile
- People with a mental health condition
- People with a disability or long term health condition
- New parents
- People who are unemployed
- People who are widowed
- Groups identified through local knowledge of chronic loneliness.

There is no one-size-fits all approach to alleviating loneliness, but research shows that projects that have an impact on loneliness may have the following key ingredients:

- person-centred and tailored to people's needs and circumstances,
- supporting people to build trust and meaningful relationships,
- helping people get involved and feel belonging,
- developing approaches that reduce stigma.

The information in this section is from the [What Works Centre for Wellbeing](#). Other useful sources on loneliness include the [Arts Council](#), [Campaign to End Loneliness](#) and [Government reports and other resources](#) following the publication of the loneliness strategy in 2018.

### **3.4 High-quality volunteering opportunities**

Volunteering continues to be a mainstay of the museum sector, especially for small museums which have no or few paid staff. During and after the Covid-19 pandemic many volunteers have decided not to return to previous posts, while new volunteers have come forward and museums have found new ways to offer volunteering opportunities, for example through online projects. Regular volunteering in rewarding roles, including governance roles such as trusteeships, has benefits to the individual, organisation, and community.

The Investing in Volunteers Standard sets out six areas of high-quality volunteering opportunities:

- Volunteering is embedded within the overall vision, values, culture and aims of the organisation and its impact is recognised and communicated. Organisations understand why they involve volunteers
- People, policies and procedures have been put in place to ensure volunteering is well-managed
- There is a positive approach to inclusion, equity and diversity and a proactive approach to making volunteering accessible
- It is easy for people to find out about opportunities, explore whether they are right for them, and get involved



- Volunteers feel supported at all times, that they are a part of the organisation and that their contribution makes a difference
- Volunteers are valued and there are opportunities for volunteers to develop and grow through their experience

The information in this section is from [Volunteer Now](#). Other useful sources on volunteering include the [Arts Council](#), the [Heritage Volunteering Group](#), and AIM's [volunteering Success Guide](#).

### 3.5 Developing systems in local areas

An important part of this programme is that it has a medium- to long-term impact regarding how organisations in the eligible areas work together to identify and address social challenges. This may mean building partnerships, developing systems and processes to work together and with affected communities, and having plans in place to make this work sustainable beyond the durations of the project funding. For example, the museum might build partnerships with local authorities and statutory services, schools, other arts, culture and heritage organisations, or other charities.

While you do not need to have these relationships to apply, as you will be supported during the project to get involved in local systems, you will need to show that you have an understanding of the landscape of delivering the outcome(s) your project is focusing on in the eligible area, and some ideas about where you might build partnerships in order to develop and embed ways for the eligible area to keep addressing social challenges after the duration of the project.

Partnerships are likely to include other Know Your Neighbourhood funded projects. The local library services in each eligible area are likely to have KYN projects, as are local Community Foundations. Other local projects may include National Lottery Community Fund projects, local arts groups supported by Creative Lives UK, and Heritage Action Zones.

### 3.6 Understanding your communities

You will need to show you understand the communities in the eligible area(s) in which the project will operate and that will benefit from the project. This could include: demographics of the local area; information about local deprivation; communities such as ethnic or faith; information about groups experiencing loneliness locally; visitor data about the museum; or other ways of understanding the community.

You will need to set out how you will get these communities involved in your project, and say why you think it will help them and how they will benefit.

You may wish to gather letters of support from groups or organisations you already work with or propose to work with representing the communities your project will work with.

### 3.7 Capacity-building

An important element of taking part in this programme, alongside the grant element, is a capacity building programme. This is mandatory and your organisation or consortia will need to commit the time from staff or volunteers to take part. As well as supporting individuals and your organisation in delivering your project, the capacity building programme will help you build partnerships and develop



ways to tackle challenges in your community in the longer term and will build a peer support community which will help to share the benefits of the programme around the sector into the future.

The capacity building programme will require engagement in the following elements:

- Mentorship: you will be allocated one or two external experts who will provide advice and support during the delivery of the project, including where appropriate dedicated fundraising support towards the end of the project to help seek sources of funding to keep activity going
- Development of resources: you will be asked to provide a case study and take part in activities to provide the wider sector with support and examples of projects building community connections
- Peer support programme: for project leads within the organisation (staff or volunteers) to feel supported and build networks of skilled people for these kinds of projects within the sector, including action learning sets, facilitated cohort meetings, support to attend relevant training and development, and a mini-conference
- Legacy programme: representing the programme at a conference for the wider sector to share projects and other relevant sessions; participating in a community of practice; and support in developing both the local legacy and a national impact in the museums sector and with wider civil society

#### 4. ELIGIBLE COSTS

We can cover a wide range of direct project costs. As an example, your project could include:

- Staff costs (including supporting existing or new posts, or freelancers)
- Other internal administrative or project management costs (up to 10% maximum of overall funding award)
- Volunteer expenses
- Training costs
- Event costs (including room hire, refreshments and equipment)
- Small capital works (including purchase of equipment, digitisation and minor building work)
- Costs to improve access
- Professional fees
- Interpretation and display costs
- Costs associated with delivering activities

We cannot cover the following:

- Statutory and legal responsibilities
- Promoting the cause or beliefs of political or faith organisations
- Recoverable VAT
- Costs for any activity that has taken place before a grant is awarded
- Purchasing heritage items or collections
- Conservation

While the programme does not offer Total Cost Recovery, as admin costs are capped at 10% of the total project cost, staff and overheads can be covered.





You may apply for the full costs of a project or programme, or for a partial contribution to a bigger programme.

Applications should be rounded to the nearest £100.

It is important that you think about the costs of meaningful engagement and co-creation work, if this is part of your project. It is important that your budget includes costs to support this such as:

- A community partner's staff time
- Participation costs such as transport, refreshments, translation and interpretation
- External training for your staff and volunteers to ensure they are prepared for this work
- Recognising and paying for expertise from community members

You may also wish to apply for a small amount of funding, a maximum of 10% of overall project costs (i.e. the maximum grant could be a project of £80,000 or a project of £72,000 plus £8,000), which can be drawn down as match or seed funding for follow-on funding applications to continue the same or similar activity. This funding will be released on proof of success with another funder by February 28<sup>th</sup> 2025 at the latest.

## 5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

You will need to consider how to make your project more sustainable by increasing positive environmental impacts and reducing negative impacts and should embed this into your project from the beginning.

The measures that you implement should be appropriate for the scale of your project. Measures could include:

- Demonstrating Carbon Literacy (training on this is available through Museums Development)
- Using recycled materials and products e.g. paper
- Encouraging sustainable travel e.g. bus or train, walking and cycling
- Telling visitors how the organisation is adapting to climate change and environmental measures used on the site
- Reducing energy use (more efficient heating, LED lighting, better control systems) and using renewable energy or energy generated on site
- Reducing use of plastics, especially single use plastics
- Reducing waste produced on site/having an effective recycling policy

## 6. PROMOTION OF YOUR CONNECTED COMMUNITIES GRANT

All grant holders must acknowledge the support of AIM, DCMS and ACE publicly. They must do this for the duration of the grant contract. Full guidelines and the correct logos will be supplied to successful projects.

## 7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

You will be required to take part in an ACE-commissioned evaluation throughout the project and to contribute as needed to an overarching KYN evaluation. You will also need to provide regular reports to AIM on activity and impact to support onward monitoring to ACE and DCMS.



[ERS](#) have been commissioned to gather data and deliver evaluation of the funded projects, that aims to track the journey of organisations and beneficiaries. Evidence will be gathered to demonstrate the impact of projects, through interviews, questionnaires and the formation of focus groups.

Full information will be provided to successful applicants these will cover quantitative and qualitative information such as:

- Summary project update
- Target number of participants/beneficiaries
- Actual number of participants/beneficiaries
- Demographic information of beneficiaries
- Impact measures around the outcomes of the fund

Full details of the evaluation process will be provided to all successful applicants.

## 8. APPLICATION PROCESS

### 8.1 Timetable

- Grant scheme opens Friday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2023
- Complete Expression of Interest due **noon Monday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023**
- Organisations notified of result of EoI w/c 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023
- Full applications due **noon Monday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024**
- Grant panel meets and grants awarded 30<sup>th</sup> January 2024
- Notification of successful projects and formal offer letters February 2024
- Projects to be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025

### 8.2 How we assess your application

The Expressions of Interest will be scored by correspondence by the panel on the main criterion below on how likely it is that your project will create the outcomes set out above on loneliness/social connections AND/OR volunteering opportunities AND local partnerships (50%). This is a change from Round One, when EoIs were only assessed for eligibility. This is because Round One was highly competitive (over £1.2m application value for £325,000 available) and we recognise the time and effort required for a full application and do not wish to ask this of organisations with lower likelihood of being successful at final decision.

Applications to Connected Communities will be assessed against the following criteria:

- The practicality of your project – whether you will be able to deliver the activities you’ve outlined well with the amount of money you have asked for (20%)
- Your understanding of the community or communities in the eligible area and how your project will benefit them (20%)
- How likely it is that your project will create the outcomes set out above on loneliness/social connections AND/OR volunteering opportunities AND local partnerships (50%)
- Your commitment to capacity-building in your organisation or consortium and to the wider sector through your project and its legacy (10%)

### 8.3 Supporting documents

You will need to submit the following supporting documents:

#### At EoI stage: Governing document (for example, constitution)

We do not need to see your governing document if you are a public organisation (for example, a local authority).

#### At full application stage: Accounts

- Include your most recent audited or accountant verified accounts.
- If you are a newly formed organisation and do not have a set of audited accounts, please submit your last three bank statements or a letter from your bank confirming that you have opened an account.
- We do not need your accounts if you are a public organisation (or example, a local authority)

#### At full application stage: Briefs for externally commissioned work over £10,000

- Briefs describe any work you plan to commission during your project. If you are commissioning work (for example from an artist or architect) then you should submit a brief.
- The brief should describe the works, how long they will take, how much they will cost, and the skills required.

#### At full application stage: Letters of support (no more than six, if applicable)

Letters of support are a good way of showing us that you have spoken to other people and that they are interested and committed to your project. Please send us letters of support from the people involved in your project, rather than general supportive statements.

#### At full application stage: Safeguarding policy (if applicable)

If your project proposes to work with vulnerable groups we will need to see your safeguarding policy.

## 9. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOU APPLY?

### 9.1 If your application is successful

We will contact you within a week of the grant panel meeting. We will send you a formal grant offer letter with terms and conditions of the grant. You will need to sign this and return it to us with your bank details. When these have been returned the first payment can be made.

#### Payment terms

Your will receive 80% of your grant up front and the remaining 20% on completion of your project, on receipt of proof of expenditure.

#### Reporting

We will ask you to provide a mid-term and an end of project report with a brief summary of expenditure and corresponding invoices.

You will also need to provide reports on request in order for AIM to comply with our reporting requirements to ACE and DCMS. Reporting is an important part of our grant funding programmes and by accepting a grant offer you are committing to providing reports in a timely and complete manner.



As described above, we are open to projects evolving to fit the needs of project participants in order better to meet the outcomes – this will need to be supported by a brief change report outlining the reasons for flexibility and the new plans.

### Terms of grant

We will ask you to sign up to our terms of grant (separate document).

## 9.2 If your application is unsuccessful

If your project was not awarded a grant, we will give you feedback on the reason for this.

## 10. HELP WITH DEVELOPING YOUR PROJECT

Please talk to us while you are developing your project (before submitting your EoI), so we know you have understood the eligibility criteria and thought about how your project helps deliver them.

Contact us on [tonia.collett@aim-museums.co.uk](mailto:tonia.collett@aim-museums.co.uk) to arrange a chat.

You can also sign up for one of our online Hallmarks at Home workshops on Connected Communities themes. We will provide information on all aspects of the scheme and there will be an opportunity to ask questions about your application.

## 11. LEGAL AND POLICY REQUIREMENTS

### 11.1 Ownership requirements

We expect you to own any property (land, buildings, heritage items or intellectual property) on which you spend the grant.

If you do not own the property, we will consider support for projects where a minimum of 10 years tenure or loan has been agreed. In these cases, it may be necessary for the landlord to be contracted in as a party to the agreement.

### 11.2 Digital outputs

We have specific requirements, which are set out in our Standard terms of grant, for ‘digital outputs’ produced as part of any project.

We are using the term ‘digital output’ to cover anything you create in your project in a digital format that is designed to give access to heritage or to help people engage with and learn about heritage.

For example, this could be digital images, sound files or data, a website with heritage material, an app, virtual reality, or a film made using digital technology.

The requirements do not apply to digital outputs that have no heritage content or do not engage people with heritage, for example, a website that contains only information about your organisation/project or events listings.

All digital outputs must be:



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- 'Usable' (the output functions as intended and is kept up-to-date) and 'available' (the output is available to the public as intended; all the digital files are held securely; you can give access to the digital files on demand) for five years from project completion.
- Free of charge for non-commercial uses for five years from the Project Completion Date.
- Licensed for use by others under the Creative Commons licence 'Attribution Non-commercial' (CC BY-NC) for five years from the Project Completion Date, unless we have agreed otherwise