

AIM Museum Fundamentals Grant 2025-2027: Guidance Notes

Grant Background

AIM understands that our members need support, advice and funding to help with core museum activities, including caring for collections – the most fundamental part of being a museum. In 2025 with new support from the Julia Rausing Trust, alongside our existing invaluable support from the Pilgrim Trust, we created the new grant programme Museum Fundamentals.

The grant allows eligible member organisations to fund collections care and conservation work up to the value of £10,000, from the conservation and collection care funding received from the Pilgrim Trust and to combine the grant, if they would like to, with complimentary activity to the value of £10,000. The grant will enable members to include staffing, building maintenance and back of house projects to develop a project that, for example, enables you to conserve an object and fund the display costs in one. Member organisations are encouraged to develop projects based on their collection needs which improve knowledge, care and access to our nation's heritage.

Funding Fundamental Museum Activity

Museums use their collections to tell stories and connect with visitors: to discover meaning behind objects and heritage, educate and entertain, inform and inspire. To do this they must know what is in their collection to see what stories they can tell and to have well-looked-after objects they can research, conserve, interpret and display. Museum Fundamentals will support AIM members with these core activities. Successful applicants will be given the opportunity to work with mentors, who can offer up to 2-3 days of support, to help guide and support them to deliver their project successfully.

Eligibility Criteria

- Be an AIM member
- Be a UK registered charity or,
- An organisation with exempt charitable status or,
- A recognised public body i.e., Local Authority Museum
- Be a small or medium museum
- Have fewer than 50,000 visitors per annum
- Own the collections that are the focus of the project

Grant

AIM Museum Fundamentals – up to £20,000, *Supported by the Pilgrim Trust and Julia Rausing Trust.*

Project Length

Museum Fundamentals projects will need to be completed and claimed within twelve months of grant awards being made.

2026 Deadlines

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|----------------|---|
| Spring: | 6 February 2026 - Expression of Interest Form (EOI) due for Museum Fundamentals |
| | 27 March 2026 - Full application for Museum Fundamentals |
| Autumn: | 7 August 2026 - Expression of Interest Form (EOI) due for Museum Fundamentals |
| | 25 September 2026 - Full application for Museum Fundamentals |

Museum Fundamentals Project Activity

Your project can include elements up to the value of £10,000 from rows A and up to £10,000 from rows B, with a maximum overall total project budget of up to £20,000. Or your project may request funding from either funder A or B solely. Grantees will be asked to complete a progress report at eight months and to complete their project within twelve months of the grant award being made.

Funder	Project Focus	Activity	Tick	Total
A	Collections Care	Professional Expertise: Obtaining professional advice to compile conservation and implementation strategies. Conservator led training for staff and/or volunteers Environmental surveys Development of Emergency Plans Development of Collection Management Plans Collection Care Improvements/ Equipment: Environmental monitoring and control equipment Light Management; UV filters, solar film, blinds Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Storage containers and packaging materials		
A	Remedial Conservation	Professional Expertise: Employing an ICON accredited conservator to undertake remedial object conservation.		
A		Pilgrim Trust Total (up to £10,000)		£
B	Collections Care	Collection Care Improvements/ Equipment: Purchase of equipment Small scale building work to improve the condition of collections. Improvements to heating, lighting and other building services that lead to improvements in collections care. Professional Expertise: Specialist technical advice, for example conservation treatment proposals.		
B	Collections Documentation	Specialist advice and other activities to support collections review. Documentation materials and equipment Collections management software		
B	Access to Collections	Collections research Online access to collections Costs associated with the production of new displays and interpretation. Including, digitisation, photography, mounts and cases.		
B	Raising Capacity	Staff costs Volunteer recruitment and expenses		
B		Julia Rausing Trust Total (up to £10,000)		£
A+B		Project Budget (max £20,000)		£

How to Apply

Eligible museums are welcome to register their interest in the grants we offer by booking an informal discussion with Fiona Woolley, AIM's Grants and Programmes Officer. Please email programmes@aim-museums.co.uk to book an appointment.

Stage 1: Museum Fundamentals Expression of Interest Form

Submit an expression of interest form (EOI) prior to the spring deadline of Friday 6 February and autumn deadline of Friday 7 August 2026. Feedback following the panel meeting will be shared within 4-6 weeks of the EOI closing date.

Supporting Documents

- ☐ High Resolution Images (minimum 2)
- ☐ Conservation Treatment Proposals (where relevant to the project)

Stage 2: Museum Fundamentals Full Application

Successful applicants will be invited to submit a full project plan as part of the application form, with the supporting documents, prior to the spring deadline of Friday 27 March and autumn deadline of Friday 25 September 2026. We run an open grants process and like to talk to applicants. As part of the stage 2 process applicants will usually be invited to a ten minute meet the panel online meeting.

Supporting Documents

- ☐ Most recent annual report
- ☐ Most recent accounts
- ☐ Project budget spreadsheet (Template supplied)
- ☐ Treatment quotations and proposals
- ☐ Organisational diagram showing staff and volunteer roles

Grant Scoring Criteria

Applications will be scored up to three points each against the following criteria:

- 1) **Collection Significance.** Tell us about the object/collection that is the focus of the project and why it/they are important to your museum and your area.
- 2) **Urgency.** What is the problem you are seeking to address? Why is it a priority to undertake the project now?
- 3) **Improve.** Tell us how your project will achieve one or more of the following: improvements to collections care, improvement in the condition of collections, improved accountability for collections, improved physical or intellectual access to collections.
- 4) **Skills Development.** Tell us how your project will lead to the development of new skills and an increase in knowledge and confidence for staff and/or volunteers.
- 5) **Impact.** What will the long-term impact of the Museum Fundamentals project be on your organisation?

Application Outcome

The outcome of full applications will be shared within six weeks of the spring or autumn closing date.

Grant Evaluation and Payment

The Museum Fundamentals grant will be paid in three instalments. One at the beginning of your project, 25% at 8mths on receipt of the progress report and evidence of expenditure, and the balance due at the end alongside your grant claim form, budget, images and any additional evidence of expenditure.