



# **Aberdeen Culture Investment Guidelines**



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## Introduction

We want Aberdeen to be a city in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where everyone, regardless of background, has access and opportunity to participate in a diverse range of high-quality culture experiences. We recognise that culture delivers a wide range of social, economic and cultural benefits and are integral to Aberdeen's prosperity.

The Aberdeen Culture Investment Programme has been designed to support organisations that want to contribute to that goal by delivering sustained programmes of creative or culture activity. It is intended for Aberdeen based organisations that seek to enter into a strategic partnership with Aberdeen City Council (The Council) to deliver culture activities which meet our outcome priorities.

## Summary

### At a glance

- The Aberdeen Culture Investment Programme will offer support to Aberdeen based culture organisations, supporting core costs and programmes of activities from April 2025 onwards.
- The Programme will replace The Council's current funding arrangements for culture activity and introduce a new application process.
- The programme is open to Aberdeen based not-for-profit culture organisations. Further information on criteria is provided in this document.
- Applications will be through a two-stage process, including a registered expression of interest to inform overall demand.
- Applicants will be required to meet 'Following the Public Pound' criteria, our code of practice requirements for grant giving of public monies to ensure financial sustainability. Applicants which cannot satisfy these requirements will not be eligible to progress to full application.
- Applicants will need to submit a business plan with their final application, applicants who fail to do so will be excluded (with exception to the Acorn programme).
- All applications will be assessed against the published criteria and priorities, the process will include an independent review panel assessment. Panel recommendations will be presented to Council Committee for final approval.
- Successful applicants will be notified following the March Council budget meeting in 2025.
- While the programme will be competitive, we will commit to ensuring the process is as consistent and transparent as possible by providing clear guidance about how we will assess applications and how final decisions will be made. It is therefore essential that applicants take the time to read and fully understand the detail of the guidance before committing to the process.

## Section A

### The Culture Investment Programme

We recognise that culture activity has the potential to deliver against a wide range of local priorities and public policy objectives. There is an increasing evidence base to show culture can have real impact on priorities for health and wellbeing, education, the economy and poverty reduction.

We also recognise that the culture sector has faced its own perfect storm of challenges, from the impacts of Covid-19 through to the Cost-of-Living Crisis and higher inflation, leading to changes in audiences and higher operating costs. Culture Investment Framework ambition is to empower better partnership working between The Council and the culture sector, providing clarity on objectives and clear funding terms, allowing recipients to focus on delivering real outcomes for Aberdeen.

Following an extensive review and consultation with both the cultural sector and the people of Aberdeen the following set of priorities and principles have been approved for the Culture Investment Framework, these will inform the criteria and funding decisions.

#### Our Aims

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- We will continue to offer a range of support including grants to support one-off projects as well as for longer programmes and core running costs;
- We propose that all our future investment will share a common set of priorities and principles for the next three years from April 2025–March 2028.
- We aim to use this investment to strategically leverage in more national funding to the city to support cultural delivery and diversification.

## Our Investment Principles

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**Ambition** – Encourage creative ambition and excellence in delivery.

**Public benefits** – Ensure Council investment is used for public benefit, demonstrating impacts to evidence that investment is delivering on our priorities.

**Local Impact** – to support the local culture economy to develop capacity and capability to be more sustainable and successful.

**Diversity** – Reflect the growing diversity of the city and foster creativity in every community.

**Collaboration** – Encourage organisations to work mutually and in collaboration and to support grass roots organisations and individual practitioners, ensuring fair pay and opportunities to develop their activities and careers in Aberdeen.

**Grow investment** – To foster the conditions for the culture sector to maximise opportunity and grow inward investment for culture and creativity in Aberdeen.

**Inclusive** – Make funding guidance clear, easy to understand, accessible and inclusive. To make monitoring consistent and proportionate to the levels of investment.

**Open** – Make decisions based on open applications, share data on decisions openly and use monitoring data collected to inform future investment choices.

## Our Programme

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The new Programme has been structured to reflect both the level of demand for investment as well as the Council's financial projections.

The new programmes provide more flexibility to provide different entry points based on organisations level of experience, capacity and capability. This is designed to give agency to culture organisations to access the right investment to enable them to deliver high quality activities for the people of Aberdeen. In total there are four programmes, all launching on the 10th September with the exception of Acorn which will go live in 2025. The programmes are as follows:

<b>Acorn</b>	£500 - £2500 – seed funding for pilots and small projects.
<b>Catalyst</b>	£5,000 - £15,000 – project and festival funding.
<b>Cultivate</b>	£15,000 - £100,000 – year round programmes of cultural activity.
<b>Cornerstone</b>	£100,000 plus – Large scale Aberdeen based organisations delivering culture programmes.

## Acorn

**Investment: £500 - £2,500**

**Match funding required: 10% match in cash exclusively for project activity**

**Period: Up to 1 year (annual grants)**

**Applications Open: April 2025**

**Who is it for: Aberdeen based Individuals, culture and creative organisations, community/voluntary groups and partnerships**

### What is it for:

- New, one-off pilot culture projects in Aberdeen.
- To support and test new culture activity (this can be as part of a reoccurring event – e.g. an annual festival).
- To support the retention of emerging talent and development of established organisations to pilot new projects.
- To provide leverage to enable you to draw in additional funding to your project and to Aberdeen.
- To support activities that, on balance for each funding round, deliver opportunities and benefits across all areas of the city.
- Activities that reflect the creative and culture diversity of Aberdeen. This includes activities by, with or for those with protected characteristics and those living in the most disadvantaged areas of the city. Data on applicants, audiences and participants will be captured through this programme to identify gaps in provision across the investment framework and inform future allocation.

### What will not be supported:

- Repeat activity – your project activity must be new.
- Activity that does not involve work by creative practitioners or can be considered culture (please refer to full criteria).
- Core costs, which are not directly related to the delivery of the project, including general running costs, which are already covered by other funding or that should be covered by your own resources.
- Ongoing overheads relating to equipment or buildings, such as salaries, insurance, building repairs and maintenance costs.
- Activities that provide no benefit or engagement opportunity to people in Aberdeen.

### What you will need to supply:

- Completed Application Form.
- An Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring form (download template).
- Budget for your project showing income and expenditure and balanced outcome (download template).
- Copy of Articles of Association (if applicable).
- Most recent set of end of year or audited accounts (if you are an organisation).
- Copies of relevant policies in respect to project/nature of work.
- Web links to examples of your creative work.

## Catalyst

**Investment: £5,000 - £15,000**

**Match funding required: 25% match in cash exclusively for project activity**

**Period: Projects that take place over 1 to 2 years**

**Applications Open: September 2024**

**Who is it for: Aberdeen based not for profit culture organisations, producers, festival and event organisers, collectives, consortiums and community groups**

**What is it for:**

### **Development and Project funding**

- New, one-off large scale ambitious non-profit culture projects in Aberdeen.
- To support and test new activity (this can be as part of a reoccurring event – e.g. an annual festival).
- To encourage and retain Aberdeen artists, producers, co-producers, promoters, and creative partners to deliver ambitious programmes of work.
- To provide leverage to enable you to draw in additional funding to your project and to Aberdeen.
- To support activities that, on balance for each funding round, deliver opportunities and benefits across all areas of the city.
- Activities that reflect the creative and culture diversity of Aberdeen. This includes activities by, with or for those with protected characteristics and those living in the most disadvantaged areas of the city. Data on applicants, audiences and participants will be captured through this programme to identify gaps in provision across the investment framework and inform future allocation.

**What will not be supported:**

- Repeat activity – your project activity must be new.
- Activity that does not involve work by creative practitioners or can be considered culture (further criteria available).
- Core costs, which are not directly related to the delivery of the project, including general running costs, which are already covered by other funding or that should be covered by your own resources.
- Ongoing overheads relating to equipment or buildings, such as salaries, insurance, building repairs and maintenance costs.
- Activities that provide no benefit or engagement opportunity to people in Aberdeen.

*Further criteria apply*

**What you will need to supply:**

- Completed Application Form.
- An Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring form (download template).
- Budget for your project showing income and expenditure and balanced outcome (download template).
- Copy of Articles of Association (if applicable).
- Most recent Business Plan (if you are an organisation).
- Most recent set of end of year or audited accounts (if you are an organisation).
- Child Protection Policy (if applicable).
- Risk Register.
- Environmental Sustainability Plan.
- Data Protection policy /GDPR compliance (if applicable).
- Web Links to examples of your creative work.

## Cultivate

Investment: £15,000 - £100,000

Match funding required: Investment must represent no more than 25% annual income

Period: Up to 3 years (In principle)

Applications Open: September 2024

**Who is it for: Aberdeen based organisations and venue operators who deliver year-round programmes of culture activity for the benefit of the people of Aberdeen. Organisations who have received Council culture support previously (revenue or project based)**

**What is it for:**

**To support organisations working year-round to deliver exceptional programmes of culture activity for, by and with the people of Aberdeen.**

- To contribute to ongoing core revenue costs and overheads where it directly enables delivery of the funded programme of activity.
- To act as leverage to support organisations to draw in additional funding for culture programmes.
- To support culture organisations which have the capacity to contribute and deliver against our key local strategic priorities.
- To support activities that, on balance for each funding round, deliver opportunities and benefits across all areas of the city.
- Increase access to culture activity within education and through outreach.
- Activities that reflect the creative and culture diversity of Aberdeen. This includes activities by, with or for those with protected characteristics and those living in the most disadvantaged areas of the city. Data on applicants, audiences and participants will be captured through this programme to identify gaps in provision across the investment framework and inform future allocation.

**What will not be supported:**

- Individuals.
- Educational establishments (schools, colleges, universities).
- Commercial (for-profit) organisations or the commercial wings of charity organisations.
- Activity that does not involve work by creative practitioners or can be considered culture (further criteria available).
- Activities that provide no benefit or engagement opportunity to people in Aberdeen.
- Capital costs.

*Further criteria applies*

**What you will need to supply:**

- Completed application form.
- Completed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring form (download template).
- Your current business plan, business plan must cover the period of Investment being proposed.
- A Financial Pro-Forma (based on a template we provide) to give us consistent financial information covering the period 2022-2028. The Financial Pro-Forma should align with the budget included in the Business Plan budgets.
- Governance documents e.g. - Articles of Association.
- Your most recent set of end of year or audited accounts. If your organisation does not publish its annual statutory accounts with Companies House, or OSCR the Scottish Charity Regulator, then you need to provide us with the latest document as one of your supporting documents.
- Your latest monthly management accounts.
- Child Protection Policy.
- Risk Register.
- Environmental Sustainability Plan.
- Data Protection policy /GDPR compliance.
- Web links to examples of your creative work.



## Cornerstone

Investment: £100,000 plus per a year

Match Funding required: Investment must represent no more than 10% annual turnover

Period: Up to 3 years (in principle)

Application Open: September 2024

Who is it for: Large scale Aberdeen based culture organisations or consortiums with a track record of culture delivery

### What is it for:

Cornerstone Partnerships recognise organisations for their capacity to generate significant inward investment into the city and to facilitate them in creating original year-round programmes of work which deliver local and national impact.

- To contribute to ongoing core revenue costs and overheads where it directly enables delivery of the funded programme of activity.
- To act as leverage to support organisations to draw in additional funding for culture programmes.
- To support culture organisations which have the capacity to make significant contributions in delivering against our key local strategic priorities.
- To support organisations which have the structure and capacity to develop other Aberdeen established and emerging culture organisations and creative practitioners, through commissioning, mentoring, showcasing, hosting or other development programmes.
- Support the culture sector supply chain.
- Increase access to culture activity within education and through outreach.
- Capacity to develop training, apprenticeships, employability and work experience programmes to support more pathways into employment within the creative sector.
- Organisations who are already committed to improving the quality of evidence and data gathering around the value and impacts of Culture.
- Organisations who can make significant differences in increasing access to opportunities for activity that reflect the culture diversity of Aberdeen. This includes activities by, with or for those with protected characteristics and those living in the most disadvantaged areas of the city. Data on applicants, audiences and participants will be captured through this programme to identify gaps in provision across the investment framework and inform future allocation.

### What will not be supported:

- Individuals.
- Educational establishments (schools, colleges, universities).
- Commercial (for-profit) organisations or the commercial arms of a charity organisation.
- Activity that does not involve work by creative practitioners or can be considered culture (further criteria available).
- Activities that provide no benefit or engagement opportunity to people in Aberdeen.
- Capital costs.

Further criteria applies

### What you will need to supply:

- Completed application form.
- Completed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring form (download template).
- Your current business plan, business plan must cover the period of Investment being proposed.
- A Financial Pro-Forma (based on a template we provide) to give us consistent financial information covering the period 2022-2028. The totals should line up with those in the Business Plan budgets.
- Governance documents e.g. - Articles of Association.
- Your most recent set of end of year or audited accounts. If your organisation does not publish its annual statutory accounts with Companies House, or OSCR the Scottish Charity Regulator, then you need to provide us with the latest document as one of your supporting documents.
- Your latest monthly management accounts.
- Child Protection Policy.
- Risk Register.
- Environmental Sustainability Plan.
- Data Protection policy /GDPR compliance.
- Web links to examples of your creative work.

## **Section B**

### **How to Apply**

Culture Investment is a two stage process;

#### **Step 1. Expression of interest**

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Any organisation that wants to apply to Culture Investment must in the first instance complete an Expression of Interest (EOI) using the provided template. This is required as registration for submitting applications to the Cornerstone Partnership, Cultivate and Catalyst programmes.

This is because we recognise the amount of work that goes into application writing and planning a project. The EOI stage helps us to filter any projects or activities which are unlikely to meet eligibility and saves you time working on a full application unnecessarily.

The EOI word count is deliberately short (maximum 800 words) to minimise the time and effort for you to complete this stage.

Officers will review your EOI submission and advise if your organisation can proceed to the full application stage.

#### **Step 2. Application form**

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##### **Contact Details**

Please list your current contact details and please update us of any changes. Normally applicants are contacted via email, and we require an up-to-date email address.

##### **Organisation Capacity**

Please provide information on the current staff levels within your organisation, this can include board members, volunteers and freelancers.

##### **Previous Support**

Please complete if you have been in receipt of either revenue or project funding from Aberdeen City Council in the past, this will help to identify any subsidy implications.

## **Your Ambitions**

Please provide a brief summary about your organisation; outlining your key areas of work, your core aims and your track record for delivering high quality cultural and creative activity. You can write about key projects and achievements. Also, highlight how this experience will support you to manage and execute your proposed activities.

Please provide a concise summary on the proposed activities you would be seeking support towards, if it is revenue, project activity or a mix of both. If you are seeking to apply to the Programme as match funding for Creative Scotland Multi-Year support, please provide information on the activities which align to our investment focus.

Please indicate if your intended activities will fall under any of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) 4 themes and or targeted at underrepresented groups /those with protected characteristics. Information on the LOIP can be found at <https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk>

## **Beneficiaries and Impacts**

Please indicate the physical location of where your activity will take place, this can be both your main base of operations and any physical outreach activities such as performances or workshops in communities. (Audience and participant addresses should not be counted here).

## **Financial Management**

Please outline your indicative investment request up to a maximum of 3 years. Please include information on any match funding applied for or already secured as this will help to articulate both the level of demand for investment but also the amount of non-Council funding which could potentially be leveraged in. Please also articulate why Council investment is required for activities to happen.

## **Supporting Documents Checklist**

To support your application against the criteria a list of mandatory documents is specified that you will need to include alongside your application. This list is not exhaustive, you may wish to include additional documentation in support of your application, providing further context on your proposed activities and outcomes.

## **Declaration**

Please sign to confirm the information is correct and you are content for the information to be used in accordance with our data handling policy.

Completed applications and support materials are to be submitted to [creativefunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:creativefunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk)

## **Advice Sessions**

All applications to the Culture Investment Programme must arrange an advice session with the Culture Policy and Partnerships Team prior to application. Advice Session time and format will vary depending on level of investment being sought. Sessions will be available in person and online through Microsoft Teams.

## **Deadlines**

6th November – Cornerstone, Cultivate and Catalyst.

Acorn will be open from 2025 with deadlines to be confirmed.

## **Review and Decision Making**

- Completed applications will be assessed by a panel of Aberdeen City Council officers and/or external assessors.
- Incomplete applications cannot be assessed.
- While recommendations will be made based on the application received, we may also take references from other relevant funders and seek clarification in respect to any named partners.
- Following assessment, we will balance applications to ensure that there is a spread of investment across the city, a broad representation of the diversity of our city and a range of activity in different art forms. Balancing means that you may make a strong application but still not be successful.
- We will make recommendations and decisions based on the funds available. We anticipate that Culture Investment Programme will be heavily oversubscribed which means that organisations might receive a grant offer which is less than the amount applied for.
- It is possible that we will not invest in an organisation if you did not follow previous funding requirements or complete the monitoring within the agreed timescales or if your organisation does not meet the following the Public Pound guidelines for grant giving.
- Panel recommendations will be presented to the appropriate Council Committee who will have final say on the levels of investment granted.

## **Notification**

Recommendations for investment will go through the Council budget process 2025 but final decision on investment levels will be taken at the Council Budget setting meeting in March 2025.

Please note the recommendations will be published in a public report, in respect to those that are not recommended for support a short summary will provide narrative on the reasons why.

Once approved successful applicants will be notified through a funding letter and will be required to complete a declaration and monitoring agreement before any funds are released.

Unsuccessful applicants will be provided with advice and support to identify alternative support where applicable. In the event this applies to current funding recipients (2024/25) consideration will be given for transition support on a case-by-case basis.

## **Multi-Year Funding**

In the case of multi-year funding, investment will only be guaranteed for the first year of support on the basis all condition requirements are met. Funding beyond 2025/26 will be 'in-principle only' and the Council reserves the right to withdraw investment under written notice on the following basis:

- Insufficient funding available through the Council general revenue fund and Common Good Fund to maintain the Culture Investment Programme at the same budget level as the previous financial year.
- The applicant's financial situation significantly changes from what has been submitted through the application.
- Organisation becomes insolvent or subject to any criminal proceedings.
- Failure to meet deliverables set out in application form.
- Failure to meet your reporting and monitoring obligations.

The termination shall become effective within 30 days after the receipt of the notice, unless the organisation has remedied the identified default within this period or is able to demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Council, that any issues can be remedied within an agreed timescale.

Under these circumstances, the Council will require the return of all unused monies and retains the right to recover any debts due to the Council incurred prior to the termination date.

## **Who can Apply?**

### **Who and what we can fund.**

- Cultural activities and programmes delivered in Aberdeen for the benefit of its residents.
- Aberdeen based organisations and groups that have not for profit status, such as being a registered charity, social enterprise or community interest company (see below).
- An ability to deliver high quality creative activity within Aberdeen.
- Must have relevant safeguarding policies in place.
- An equal opportunities statement or policy. Applications are welcome from under-represented organisations.
- Must have relevant accounting procedures in respect to level of activity.
- Accurate revenue and project costs.

### **Aberdeen based Not-for-Profit organisations**

'Not-for-profit' is a broad term for organisations that do not generate profit for their owners. All money generated by a not-for-profit business must be reinvested back into running the organisation to meet its overall objectives. There are a wide range of legal structures which can constitute as 'not-for-profit' but we would anticipate most applying to the Culture Investment Programme will fall under one or more of the following:

- Companies Limited by Guarantee with no Share capitals registered at Companies House.
- Community Interest Companies (CICs) registered with the CIC regulator.
- Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs) registered with the Charity Commission.
- Charitable companies or charitable trusts registered with OSCR or the Charity Commission.
- Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs) registered at Companies House.
- Community benefit and co-operative societies regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).
- Groups of organisations (one group will need to take the lead and have the main responsibility for managing the application and being accountable for any grant given).
- Unincorporated Associations or constituted volunteer groups.

Aberdeen based means the organisations primary operating address is within the Aberdeen city boundary. Organisations which are not headquartered in Aberdeen and/or do not have a physical base in the City are not eligible. The Council may ask for evidence to confirm your eligibility, that might include a copy of a lease, licence to occupy, tenancy agreement or a non-domestic rates bill invoice as appropriate.

### **Individuals (Acorn funding only)**

Individual creative practitioners and artists who are residents of the City and registered on the Council Tax roll can apply for Acorn funding. Individuals are excluded from Cornerstone, Cultivate and Catalyst.

### What areas of cultural activity can Culture Investment support?

Culture Investment supports a range of areas/fields within arts, culture, heritage and the creative industries. This includes and is not limited to;

- Archives
- Video Games or interactive digital media
- Craft
- Cultural Education
- Dance
- Design
- Fashion and Textiles
- Heritage
- Language and Written Word
- Moving Image
- Music
- Software/Electronic Publishing
- Theatre
- Visual Arts

### What we cannot support

- Activities which take place outside the Aberdeen city boundary.
- Activities which are not cultural and /or provide no benefits for Aberdeen residents.
- Organisations not based in Aberdeen.
- Individuals with exception of Acorn (a separate process is being developed for individuals).
- Applicant organisations already in receipt of non-cultural grant funding from Aberdeen City Council which contributes to core running costs.
- Profit making companies/ commercial activities.
- Council services.
- Education establishments, including Universities, Colleges and Schools (activities can take place at education establishments but they cannot be the applicant lead).
- Capital costs.
- Promoting the causes or beliefs of political or faith organisations.
- Recoverable VAT.
- Costs for any activity that has taken place before investment is awarded (backdated expenditure).
- Refreshment costs, including food and alcohol for opening events.
- Living costs.

## Reasons why applications are unsuccessful

With specific priorities, increasingly limited resources and greater demand we will not be able to support all applications we receive and for those that are supported they may receive less than requested. Submitting an application takes time and resources so we hope it's helpful to share feedback on the reasons applications are not successful.

- **Organisation structure or activity is not eligible (e.g. commercial business)**
- **It doesn't meet our minimum criteria**
- **It's not the best fit for our impact goals**

This is not a judgement on the value or quality of what applicants do. Competition for our funding is anticipated to be high and therefore we will need to focus on activities which make the most difference against our priorities.

- **Not delivering outcomes**

Organisations we support deliver high quality activities but with a focus on the longer-term impact and outcomes that culture can unlock. If your application is unable to articulate and evidence impact beyond the initial delivery of activity you will not be supported.

- **Not taking a preventative approach**

Council investment should support activity which contributes towards the prevention of social or health related issues for individuals or communities. The impact of your project or programme of activity in aiding positive social and health outcomes as part of a wider prevention approach should be evidenced and described within your application.

- **No community engagement /co-creation**

We want to see communities, or people with lived experience meaningfully engaged in your activities, from design through to delivery. Please ensure you outline clearly how this will be approached throughout your project/ programme of activity. Applications will be rejected if that is not evident in the approach.

- **No collaboration**

We are looking for organisations who are active collaborators, engaging not only the local cultural sector but involving or engaging a range of charity, public sector or corporate stakeholders. Organisations must be committed to creating opportunities to retain and support local creative practitioners and grassroots organisations.

## When making decisions, we consider:

**Track record:** We look at successes, but also how you have learned from challenge and evolved as an organisation.

**Connectivity:** We recognise funding decisions can impact the cultural ecosystem and support may have wider impact than just the organisation.

**Driving Change:** The opportunities and barriers, allies and collaborators that support could unlock; and what influence and impact could be realised.

**The difference our support could make:** The value our funding, and extra support, could add to your activity; the match funding it could bring into the City along with the contribution it could make to our priorities.



## Section C

### What is the Criteria?

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The Culture Investment programme can support many diverse organisations and community groups who can deliver a high quality creative and cultural activity, and who can make a significant difference, by increasing opportunities and access to activities that reflect the cultural diversity of Aberdeen. This includes activities by, with, or for those with protected characteristics, people who are marginalised, those living with disadvantage or from a lower social economic group.

The Panel reviewing your application will consider the 6 criteria below:

- **Cultural and creative ambition and quality of activity**
- **Alignment to our investment priorities**
- **Impact of activity and benefit to the community**
- **Financial management and sustainability**
- **Policy and risk management**
- **Evaluation and report planning**

The Creative Funding programme is competitive, and all applicants are encouraged to consider how their application meets the 6 areas highlighted, providing clear evidence and detail for your application to be properly assessed.

### Cultural and Creative Ambition

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Does your application have a focus on arts, culture, heritage and/or creative activity?

Check the list of creative areas and the eligible activities in the guidelines to see if your proposed activity can be supported. If your activity is not represented, then please contact [creativefunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:creativefunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk) to make sure that your proposal is eligible.

### Quality of Activity

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Is the quality and focus of the activity clear? Is the aim aspirational, is the applicant seeking to develop, to try new things or take risks to support development?

When considering this aspect, you can highlight the quality of your activity in clear and simple language and do not presume the review Panel will have prior knowledge of your organisation or your activities.

To support the application, you can provide support material which demonstrate your ability and track record in delivering quality activities (reflecting your area of work or planned level of activity). This can include a CV, a marketing plan, any stakeholder/ participant consultation, publications, reports, letters of support or evaluation of previous activities.

## Alignment to Investment Priorities

Through consultation with the cultural sector, a set of new priorities have been identified for the Culture Investment Programme. Applicants are encouraged to consider how their activities can deliver on these priorities for Aberdeen and provide real cultural and socioeconomic benefits for its citizens. While applicants are not expected to deliver against all the themes, there is a requirement to consider where they align and the impact they can have. For any themes that align to your application, please provide a clear explanation of how that work contributes to the outcome and how you plan to measure that in your project evaluation.

Theme	Description	Outcome
<b>Experience</b>	Recognising the intrinsic value of creativity and removing barriers to experiencing culture.	Everyone who calls Aberdeen home has the opportunity to engage in high quality creative and cultural activity.
<b>Celebrate</b>	Creating a clearer/ stronger identity and cultural narrative.	The creative diversity of our people and communities is celebrated, we use culture and creativity to share and celebrate our stories to the world.
<b>Our Economy</b>	Economic resilience and diversity through Increased creative industries employment, people in sustained fair employment and reduction in reported skills gaps.	Aberdeen's economy and workforce is resilient and diverse, through our skills support and cultural employment opportunities.
<b>Our Children &amp; Young People</b>	Increased sense of confidence, safety and wellbeing in children and young people, reducing need for Tier 3 services.	Our children and young people's physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing is improved and have access to cultural education experiences and post-school opportunities.
<b>Our citizens</b>	Increased healthy life expectancy through cultural engagement.	Our citizens benefit from healthy life expectancy, mental wellbeing and positive life choices through cultural intervention.
<b>Our Place</b>	Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions, protecting our natural and built environment.	Our cultural assets are well cared for and cultural sector is contributing to climate change resilience.
<b>Our Community</b>	Building strong personal and community resilience, enabling people to participate in decisions that help change things for the better.	Culture provides a voice for community capacity building and decision making.

## Impact of Activity and Benefit to the Community

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For this point you should consider the difference this activity will make to the participants, community, audience and/or the city. If you intend to work with people with protected characteristics, or people who are marginalised, disadvantaged or from a lower socio-economic group, then you should explain this focus in your application. Also, consider how you know that there is a clear demand or need for the activity.

You may also use this section to detail the target audience for your activity and your planned approach to marketing and promotion. It is valuable to show consideration of how you plan to effectively reach your key audiences and ensure they are engaged in the project/programme.

The Culture Investment Programme is resourced through the Common Good Fund, allocation of this funding has two key principles;

- (1) That the Common Good must be applied for the benefit of the community; and
- (2) That the Council must in each case use reasonable judgement in allocating Common Good funding.

Proposals that cannot demonstrate benefit for the community will not be considered for support.

## Financial Management and Sustainability

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You must be able to demonstrate good financial management to meet the Council financial assurance checklist for grant giving, 'Following the Public Pound'. Applicants can demonstrate this through providing a clear budget summary, completed financial pro-forma, supplying the appropriate financial records for your organisation and copy of your most recent bank statement.

The budget included in your application should be realistic, informed by research, clearly outlining proposed spend across key areas such as staffing, marketing, venue hires, equipment costs, travel etc as well as any income streams you may have such as additional grant funding, sponsorship, earned income etc. Your budgets Income and Expenditure should balance.

You can also include in your application information on in-kind donations, including the value of artists or staff time being donated as part of your project/programme but please do not include it in your Financial Pro-forma, this should be restricted to cash income/expenditure only.

Where there is evidence an organisation is not financial sustainable (insolvency) or not meeting its legal obligations for financial reporting (overdue accounts for Companies House/OSCR), the Council reserves the right not to provide support.

## Policy and Risk Management

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To demonstrate good governance and operation management your organisation must have the appropriate policies in place to deliver the activity you set out in the application. We would expect all applications to supply a Equal Opportunities Policy, Environmental Sustainability Plan (either for organisation or specific project) and appropriate Safeguarding Policy depending on the level of potential interaction with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

In addition, if your organisation complies with or is working towards compliance with the Scottish Government Fair Work First policy please provide information on this. It is not mandatory for Cultural Investment but it is a condition for receiving funding from the Scottish Government including funds managed by Creative Scotland, Historic Scotland, Event Scotland and others.

## Risk Register

**Cornerstone and Cultivate** - This should be your day-to-day organisation risk register used by your Board and senior management to monitor risk.

**Catalyst** - This should be project specific, especially for any public events or festivals. Your risk register should detail how you will manage and mitigate any known risks over the lifetime of the project.

## Evaluation and Report Planning

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Strong evaluation is part of the learning cycle that is at the heart of all good management models, while it takes time and resource to do effectively it can have a significant impact on your organisation such as improved audience relationships, identifying your revenue streams, developing partnerships and informing best practice. Stages of the evaluation process are:

- understanding the scope and objectives of your activities.
- monitoring and reporting progress.
- capturing project issues.
- reporting on fulfilment of objectives.
- post-project review.
- reporting lessons learned and informing future work.

For the Culture Investment Programme we have set out a number of monitoring indicators aligned to the identified priorities in the 'Culture Investment Impact Framework' document. This list is by no means exhaustive, nor will all the indicators be relevant to your activity. At the application stage you should be clear on which indicators are appropriate for your proposal and the methodology you will apply to effectively monitor and evaluate your activity.

We also recommend viewing the Cultural Investment - Outputs spreadsheet that successful applicants will be asked to complete following the conclusion of their project or funding period. This will provide clarity on the information you should track during your project. You can find this on the Cultural Investment webpage. At a glance, this can appear to be a substantial amount of data to record and report on, however it should be noted that this is a universal return to be used across all funding levels and you should only track the data that is relevant to your project. The data gathered from this reporting will be used to report on key outcomes regarding the overall Cultural Investment Framework and will be collated and anonymised for further reporting. If you are in any doubt regarding the information you need to track and report on please check with Council officers who will be happy to offer advice.

In addition to the Outputs spreadsheet, successful applicants will be required to submit a written report detailing the project or programme of work undertaken following the funding award. This report adds valuable context to the quantitative data collated in the Outputs spreadsheet and should be considered as part of the evaluation planning process.

<b>Culture Investment 2025 Programme timeline</b>	
Launch of Culture Investment Programme	10th September
Advice sessions/ 1-2-1's/workshops	September- October
Application Deadline	6th November
Application Panels/ Reviewed Recommendations checked against Common Good requirements Funding profile for budget process and Common Good request Subsidy Control and FTTP assessment	November- December
Recommendations for Award submitted for budget approval	February 2025
Council Budget Meeting/ Awards approved for 2025/26	March 2025
Culture Investment begins	April 2025

## **Completing your application – General advice**

### **Seek support**

In addition to these guidelines we offer advice sessions. If you have any questions or require additional support, we advise all applicants to contact us as early as possible to arrange this. It's also recommended that you ask a peer, colleague or friend to look over your application before submitting and ask them to offer a fair critique.

### **Time**

Our experience in assessing applications is that it is often clear where they have been rushed and as a result do not fully reflect the quality of activity seeking support. Where possible, you should ensure you leave adequate time to draft and review your application prior to submission.

### **Word-count**

We have specified a maximum word count for each question in the application. However, as each application is different there is no right or wrong word-count and you may choose not to use the entire allocation. You should instead aim for focus and clarity, ensuring that all information included is relevant to your application.

### **Language**

Your application will be reviewed by an assessment panel which may include individuals who may not be familiar with specific terminology. Where possible, you should use plain and simple language within your application and avoid any jargon.

### **Proofreading & calculations**

We advise all applicants to proofread their applications thoroughly prior to submission. This will help ensure all relevant information is included and any potential errors are corrected. Equally important is checking over your budget information and calculations, make sure your expenditure and income column both add up to the same number. We also recommend asking someone external to proofread your application to check the information is clear and easy to understand.

## Section D

### Additional Information

This section is intended to give more information and background on some of the points referenced in guidance, providing clarity to support you in preparing your application.

#### Business Plan

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For the Business Plan, it is not necessary to create a new document specifically for the Culture Investment Programme. If you already have an existing document, you can use that, but it should cover the period of investment you be applying for, for example Cultivate would need a business plan covering 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2028.

When we refer to the 'Business Plan', we understand that organisations use different terms. Therefore, you should provide the main corporate plan or statement of organisational strategic objectives. We expect your Business Plans to be concise, clear and specific, demonstrating you understand the market/environment you operate within and have a clear understanding of your finances. While Business Plan structures will vary, we would anticipate the following points are covered within plans submitted to the Culture Investment Framework.

- Executive summary
- Company vision, objectives and strategy
- Company description
- Your programmes of activities and services
- Market analysis
- Equalities and sustainability plans and objectives
- Implementation plan
- Organisation and management team
- Financial plan and projections

Your Business Plan should align to the information presented in your application and financial pro-forma.

A Business Plan must be submitted for Cornerstone Partnership and Cultivate programmes and strongly encouraged for submissions to Catalyst. It is not a requirement for the Acorn programme.

## Following the Public Pound

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Following the Public Pound' means ensuring that there is proper accountability for public funds (both revenue and capital) used in delivering services, irrespective of the means of service delivery. This is the name of Aberdeen City Council's code of practice in respect to grant giving to external organisations.

When agreeing to transfer funds to an external body the Council must be clear about its reasons for doing so and proper consideration should always apply. The prime purpose of involvement with an external body should be the achievement of the Council's objectives in the most effective, efficient, and economic manner, not the avoidance of controls or legal restrictions, which are designed to secure probity and regularity in the use of public funds.

The concept of 'Following the Public Pound' applies when the Council decides to fund external organisations which deliver services that might otherwise be delivered by the Council itself. In these arrangements, the Council agrees to provide funds and other resources to companies and organisations for the delivery of specified services. The Council has a number of such arrangements, and these companies / charities are collectively defined as being Arm's Length External Organisations (ALEO's).

Governance of public funds does not end when the payment is made, it continues at a number of levels, including risks that may damage the Council's reputation, that statutory obligations are not met and that public funds are misused wasted or lost. The level of assurance that is therefore required about the organisations' ability to deliver the services the Council has funded must reflect the risks that exist. This Code follows the principle that different levels of scrutiny are required depending on the level of risk posed by each, the control exercised over the organisation by the Council and/or the level of funding given to each organisation. This approach is proportionate and will minimise the risks posed by organisations to our reputation, finances and statutory obligations and ensure that the requirements of small organisations are not too onerous.

## Good Governance: Financial and Organisational Checks

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Aberdeen City Council has a responsibility to protect public finances and therefore must ensure that all the organisations and individuals we support use our investment for the purposes it was intended. We also expect our grant recipients to use their grants efficiently and effectively to maximise benefits to the people of Aberdeen.

One of the characteristics of a 'well run' organisation is that it has a board or oversight group that is independent of the operational day-to-day management and can take responsibility for ensuring the efficient and effective delivery of the organisation's funding agreement with us. This responsibility will include ensuring that the organisation's executive is being held to account for progress against the targets and success measures that are mutually agreed as part of the funding agreement, and that Aberdeen City Council receives regular reports on that progress as per the monitoring agreement.

We recognise that not all organisations will have a board as per the case of Companies, Trusts and Charities, where that is not applicable then an 'oversight group' may be applicable. Oversight Groups can take the form of a small advisory group for a collective, or a steering committee for a project, or a subcommittee of the board of a parent company of a large venue group. We will be open to consider whatever suggestions you wish to make that you believe are appropriate for your organisation, but it must have independence from day-to-day management and meets regularly (at least 4 times a year).

### Key checks include:

- Organisation has a board or oversight group to oversee the direction, service delivery and financial stability of the organisation.
- Organisation holds a risk register to mitigate any strategic, operational or financial risks.
- If the organisation is a registered charity, they are complying with guidance from OSCR and filing on time.
- If the organisation a registered company, they are complying with their requirements under the Companies Act.
- The organisation has a clear statement of purpose and organisational objectives.
- The organisation is able to provide evidence or other support to demonstrate the achievement of its objectives and purpose.
- There are no known reasons that would result in a risk to the Council's reputation through association with an external body if financial or service delivery problems emerge.
- If financial statements are available then a copy of the most recent financial statements should be obtained, if not, the organisation must provide an annual income and expenditure account and statement of cash balance which has been approved by a person independent of the day-to-day operational running of the organisation.
- In the case of the organisation being recognised as a charity, the organisation will have to follow the guidance from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) to confirm if an audit or an independent examination is required.
- Organisation has adequate policies and procedures in place to govern the way their finances are handled.
- At time of application sufficient cash exists to enable the organisation to meet its financial obligations for the foreseeable future (at least 3 months).



## **Subsidy Control**

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The UK subsidy control regime began on 4 January 2023. It enables public authorities, including devolved administrations and local authorities, to give subsidies that are tailored to their local needs, and that drive economic growth while minimising distortion to UK competition and protecting our international obligations.

A subsidy is where a public authority provides support to a business in a way that gives them an advantage over a competitor. Without controls though, subsidies could give an unfair advantage to some businesses over their competitors.

Aberdeen City Council considers that some grant funding from its Culture Investment Programme will be a subsidy as defined under the Subsidy Control Act 2022 (“the Act”) and will be subject to the conditions in the Act. The application form will request confirmation of any previous subsidy over the past three financial years. The Culture Investment Programme will be registered as a scheme.

## **Equality, Inclusion and Diversity – Removing barriers and making Impacts.**

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We have a legal requirement as a public sector organisation to assess the impact of our work on equality groups and assess against human rights, children’s rights and socio-economic impacts, this extends to the Council’s approach to investment in culture.

People build a stronger sense of identity and wellbeing and have better education and career outcomes when their diverse strengths, abilities, interests and perspectives are understood and supported.

Organisations that make opportunities accessible to a broader range of people can only enrich our sense of cultural identity. Small, reasonable adjustments and an understanding that not everyone has the same resources can make a huge difference to the number of people who can access opportunities, and that can only be mutually beneficial.

Applicants will need to consider how their activities are open and encourages diversity, and how they remove potential barriers, allowing for equal opportunity. Organisations should consider and seek to improve the impact on the people connected with their activity. This could include employees, customers, suppliers, and the wider community.

## Environmental Sustainability Planning – Net Zero Aberdeen

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Aberdeen City Council, along with all other public sector organisations, have a statutory duty to:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Put in place measures to adapt to a changing climate.
- Work in a sustainable way.

To deliver on these duties The Council and its partners have developed The Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap, setting out a pathway towards Aberdeen becoming net zero by 2045. It is a collaborative piece which was developed by Net Zero Leadership Board and Net Zero Delivery Unit. Under the Routemap sit a number of enabling strategies with a focus on change, adaptation and resilience.

Delivery of the Routemap will require a collective citywide effort for all of Aberdeen. Partnership activity is now driving forward plans and actions, combining local knowledge, resources, and expertise for the most appropriate solutions for the city.

This approach will extend to the cultural organisations the Council invest in, as the arts and cultural sector has the power to amplify efforts in climate change adaption and mitigation, through its ability to engage communities, shape and influence trends, foster collaboration and innovations and share values with the wider public.

Applicants to the Cultural Investment Programme (excluding Acorn) will need to demonstrate:

- They have an environmental plan and policy that is specific to the organisation or practice.
- Sets targets that are appropriate to the scale of the organisation and their plans and policies.
- The projects and initiatives being undertaken highlight and contribute towards their environmental commitment.
- Demonstrate leadership and commitment through their actions.
- Commitment to environmental responsibilities runs through the presentation of work, practice, programming or plans.
- Signed up to The Aberdeen Climate and Nature Pledge.
- Relevant training or learning experiences for organisation staff, governing body, stakeholders and audiences.
- Profile and celebrate excellence in environmental practices.
- Committed to gathering and measuring carbon emissions and be transparent about our targets and performance.

## Safeguarding Policy – Protection of Children and vulnerable Adults

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Aberdeen City Council has a statutory duty to protect children and young people, and vulnerable adults from harm.

Safeguarding is the term for measures that are put in place to ensure that people such as participants or employees, are protected from harm, abuse and exploitation.

Organisations undertaking any work with children, young people or vulnerable adults (either in-person or online), should have a safeguarding policy in place. Further information, guidance and resources are available at the Aberdeen Protects site.

Organisations applying for activity involving children, young people or vulnerable adults should ensure all individuals involved are members of the PVG scheme run by Disclosure Scotland.

A Vulnerable Adult or 'adult at risk' is someone aged 16 or over who:

- can't look after their own well-being, property, rights or other interests.
- is at risk of harm from themselves or someone else.
- is disabled, or has a mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity that means they are more vulnerable to being harmed than other adults.

Being disabled or having a condition does not automatically mean that an adult is at risk. A person can be disabled but able to look after their own well-being. Their circumstances as a whole should be considered and all 3 elements of the definition must be met in order for them to be classed as an adult at risk.

### Safeguarding online

As interaction with audiences and participants moves online, it is essential that organisations processes and policies are kept up to date in relation to child protection and working with vulnerable adults.

The following websites can provide a range of safeguarding advice and resources for organisations or individuals who plan to use digital tools to deliver their work, livestream events, or deliver online workshops, lessons and courses.

- **CEOP**  
<https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk/>
- **NSPCC**  
<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/news/2020/march/undertaking-remote-teaching-safely>
- **SCVO safeguarding and privacy**  
<https://scvo.org.uk/p/37150/2020/04/02/new-world-same-rules-safeguarding-and-privacy>