

# Culture Investment Programme 2025 Acorn Funding

## This document provides guidelines for Organisations and Individuals applying for Acorn funding from Aberdeen City Council's Culture Investment Programme.

It is structured into three sections:

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2. Completing your application Page 8
3. What happens after you submit your application Page 13

### Key information to consider before you decide to apply:

#### Contact

For further information or to speak with a member of staff, please contact us on:

**Website:** <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/culture-investment-programme-2025>

**Email:** [creativefunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:creativefunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk)

#### Available Support

In addition to these guidelines, we also provide advice sessions. Please visit the website or contact us to find out more.

#### How to apply

- Step 1:** Read these guidelines to ensure you meet the requirements and can develop an application which meets the criteria.
- Step 2:** Visit the website, or contact us, to find out about upcoming application deadlines and to download or request an application form. Also, printed applications or a version of the application form created in Word is available by contacting [creativefunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:creativefunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk)
- Step 3:** Consider if you require any additional support such as an advice session before submitting your application
- Step 4:** Submit an application via email [creativefunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:creativefunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk)

# 1. Application Guidelines for Organisations & Individuals

## (a). Who can apply for Acorn Funding?

Applications will be considered from organisations and individuals whose proposed activity will be with, or for the benefit of.

- Are based in Aberdeen city.
- An ability to deliver high quality creative activity within Aberdeen.
- Organisations with 'not-for-profit' status, such as being a registered charity, volunteer association, social enterprise or community interest company. Commercial/ for profit businesses are excluded.
- Organisations which have the appropriate policies and procedures in place to deliver the activity set out in their proposal safely and responsibly.
- Individual creative practitioners who are residents of Aberdeen City boundary.
- Individuals that have the appropriate insurance and registration to deliver the activity set out in their proposal safely and responsibly (i.e. PVG registration).
- Have relevant accounting procedures.
- Have a clear proposal that meets the criteria.
- Not in receipt of other Culture Investment funding (Catalyst, Cultivate, Cornerstone).

## b). How much Acorn Funding is available to apply for?

Organisations and individuals can submit one application for a maximum of up to **£2,500**. Match funding is not required, however, any evidence of Acorn funding being used to leverage in additional external funding will be considered favorably within the assessment.

## (c). What type of activity can I apply for?

**Delivering activity:** You can apply for support to deliver a cultural and creative activity within Aberdeen City. The activity must be completed before March 31st 2026. The proposal will not have started but is at a stage that the key arrangements are achievable subject to funding being confirmed. For example, the proposal could be to deliver a workshop, an exhibition, a performance or an event for a festival. If any professional development or training is required, it must relate to the activity proposed in the application.

**(d). What areas/fields can Acorn Funding support?**

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



Archives



Language and the Written Word



Computer Games



Music



Crafts



Photography



Cultural Education



Software/  
Electronic  
publishing



Dance



Theatre



Design



TV and Radio



Fashion and Textiles



Visual Arts



Film and Video



Writing and  
developing  
creative written  
material

**(e). What is the criteria?**

The Culture Investment Programmes Acorn Funding can support many diverse range of organisations and community groups as well as individuals 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 disadvantages 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

Acorn Funding is competitive, and all applicants are encouraged to consider how their application meets the 6 areas highlighted.

**Cultural and Creative Focus**

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

Check the list of activities on Page 4 of these guidelines to see if your proposed activity is on this list. 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.

**Your Proposal and alignment to Investment Priorities**

Question 2.1 in application.

Provide a brief description of your proposed activity, the following activities are eligible;

- New, one-off pilot culture projects in Aberdeen.
- Support and test new a culture activity (this can be as part of a recurring event – e.g. an annual festival).
- Support the retention of emerging talent and development of established organisations to pilot new projects.
- Activities that reflect the creative and cultural diversity of Aberdeen. This includes activities by, with or for those with protected characteristics or those living in the most disadvantaged areas of the city.

Please outline how the activity aligns to the Culture Investment Priorities (page 6 in the guidelines).

## Culture 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.

(f). **What activity does Acorn Funding not support?**

Acorn Funding is open to a wide range of proposals. However, we recommend before writing your application that you consider the areas and activities that this funding cannot support.



These are:



- **Activities** that take place out with Aberdeen City boundary.  
Exception: Unless a case is made within the proposal for professional development out with the city.



- **Applications from:**  
Aberdeen City Council departments and services.  
Individuals who are not Aberdeen City residents.  
Organisations not primarily based or headquartered in Aberdeen.  
Organisations already in receipt of Culture Investment Programme support.  
Organisations seeking funding to raise money for charity.  
Anyone directly involved in the Cultural Investment administration or selection process are excluded from applying to this scheme.  
Commercial businesses and educational establishments (schools, colleges, universities).



- **Projects already started**  
Backdated costs associated with your activity which takes place before the award notification date.



- **Capital costs and Long-term leases**  
Exception: You may apply for project specific hire costs or equipment hire. Also, in exceptional cases buying equipment can be supported if the case is made for buying over hire of equipment, and the panel consider that the costs can be supported.



- **Further Education costs**  
Exception: CPD and professional development for organisations that have not-for-profit status such as being a registered charity, social enterprise or community interest company



- **Refreshments costs**  
Are not considered a priority for support.  
Exception: Refreshments will only be funded if a case is made in the application and the panel consider that the costs can be supported.



- **Revenue cost or staff costs**  
Exception: You may apply for project specific staff on a self-employed basis.



- **Religious or Political projects**  
Exception: if your proposal tackles this theme from all aspects and does not promote only one aspect. Please contact Aberdeen City Council to discuss your proposal if you seek clarification, contact [creativefunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:creativefunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk)

## 2. 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.



- **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**

Word counts for each question is provided as a guide, 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.



- **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 your budget information and calculations, making 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 if the information is clear and easy to understand.



**The following section provides guidance about how to complete each area of your application.**

## **1. 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.

### **Application Summary**

#### **Level of Funding Requested**

Please state the total level of funding you are requesting from Aberdeen City Council. This must not exceed £2,500 within a single application. Also, check it is the same amount requested in your budget.

**Project Dates** - Please state when your project starts and the intended deadline.

## **2.1 Please provide a description of your proposal explaining the creative activity or idea you are seeking support for, including how your activities align to the Culture Investment Priorities. (Up to 500 words).**

Please note that this information will be summarised and included in an Aberdeen City Council report relating to all applications involved in the Culture Investment Programme.

**Video/Voice:** Your answer here can alternatively be submitted by sending in a video or voice recording (up to 6 mins in length). Please note, if submitting by video/voice please use an unlisted YouTube link as we may not be able to accept files as attachments or downloads from a file sharing site. Any questions please contact [creativefunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:creativefunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk)

## **2.2 Please tell us about your organisation/ yourself. (Up to 400 words).**

Please provide a brief summary about your organisation (or yourself if applying as an individual), outlining your key areas of work, your core aims and your track record for delivering high-quality creative and cultural activity. Highlight how this experience will help you to manage and execute your proposed project.

### **2.3 Please detail how the proposal will be managed.**

Include how you will manage and mitigate risks, describe a timeline for the activity you propose to undertake; this could include the research period and delivery of the project as well as key milestones. You can add a risk assessment relevant to your activities with your application, if you wish. (Up to 400 words).

### **2.4 Please explain how you will record and evaluate your project, this should be relevant to the scale of the activity.**

### **3.1 Please tick the creative areas which are relevant to your proposal.**

You may tick as many areas as applicable. This information is used to record which areas are supported through our funding programmes. All creative areas are given equal weighting when applications are assessed.

### **3.2 Please list the estimated number of activities in your proposal.**

This information is gathered to help us understand the amount of activities taking place in Aberdeen. For example, in your proposal you may be organising or attending a workshop, creating an exhibition or event and/or developing a performance. Include a number in each area relevant to your application.

### **3.3 If relevant, please tick any priority groups which your project will be seeking to make an impact on.**

That could mean working in collaboration with priority groups to remove barriers to participation or employment, as well as creating work to provide a voice to a particular community or group. If your work is targeted at certain groups, please outline any consultation undertaken to ensure activities are being developed with them rather than imposed.

### **3.4 Please list the estimated number of participants you will engage with in your proposal.**

This information is gathered to help us understand the amount participants, audiences and volunteers involved in your proposal and the reach of Acorn funding. Please include artist hours and volunteer hours also.

### **3.5 Please tick all the areas in the city where your activity will take place.**

You can include venues and/or public spaces in your proposal. This is the physical location of the activity, not where audiences or communities are from. This information helps us to understand any gaps in the spread of activity.

## 4. Financial Management - Budget

### 1. Income column

Please include all income; this includes all funding applied for, any ticket sales or organisational funding to support the proposal on separate budget lines.

### 2. Amount column

Amount of income for each income source, these figures can be combined to make a total \*on form.

### 3. Confirmed column

If you have applied for funding and have already notification of the funding, then write Y for Yes.

If you have applied for funding and have not received notification write N for No. In the case of the answer being No also write the date when you estimate you will be notified about the funding.

### 4. Expenditure column

Each item of expenditure should have a separate line in the table. Please also explain what each item is, what the funding is for and how you made your calculations. For example, freelance tutor hours; number of tutors multiplied by the hourly rate, then multiplied by the number of sessions = Total You can consult with the Scottish Artist, Musicians or Equity Union for their current rates of pay. Travel, number of journeys, multiplied by the amount of people, and cost depending on the type of travel = Total

### 5. Expenditure amount column

Each item of expenditure should have a separate line in the table. Please write in each line a calculated total amount, you can show how you have made the calculation in Number 4, the expenditure column.

The overall expenditure total should be inserted at the bottom of the column \* on form.

Please provide details on projected income and expenditure for the project.				
Example Budget				
Income	Amount	Confirmed?	Expenditure	Amount
Creative Funding	£2498	N	Artist Fees £35.50 per hour for Graduate with 3 years' experience. <a href="#">Rates of Pay   Scottish Artist Union</a>	10 x 2.5 x £35.50 hours = £887.50
			Materials	15 people @ £28.50 per head = £427.50
			Room Hire	10 x 2.5 hours at £16 per hour = £400
			Photography	Half day rate = £250
			Room Hire for Exhibition.	8 hours x £16 = £128.00
			Frames	£15 x 20 = £300
			Evaluation	7 hours at £15.00 per hour £105
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£2498*</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£2498*</b>

## 5. Support Material

Please complete the subsidy control information below.

### Subsidy Control

The purpose of the subsidy control regime is to prevent public authorities from giving financial advantage to enterprises in a way that could distort competition both within the UK and between the UK and a country or territory outside the UK.

In September 2020, the UK Government announced its intent to design a new domestic subsidy control regime for the UK. The Act was introduced to Parliament as the Subsidy Control Bill in June 2021 and came into force on 4 January 2023. It is statutory legislation, meaning we have a legal duty to comply with the rules.

Provide a breakdown of all public funding received by the organisation in the last 3 years. This is to ensure the public subsidy threshold has not been exceeded.

For more information on subsidy control follow the link [Overview of the subsidy control regime – a flexible, principles-based approach for the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/overview-of-the-subsidy-control-regime-a-flexible-principles-based-approach-for-the-uk)

### Supporting Documents

The quality of your proposed activity is one of the criteria the independent panel will assess when reviewing your application. To aid this process, we require supporting documents.

#### Organisations

- Current business plan/constitution (as appropriate).
- Most recent statutory year-end accounts. These are required if you are a company or charity. You should state whether these have been audited or checked by an independent examiner.
- All applicant organisations should provide at least one of the following:  
The most up-to-date Management Accounts (for the period since their most recently completed financial year) or a recent bank statement covering 3 months trading bearing the name of the organisation.
- Child Protection Policy (or willing to adopt ACC's Child Protection Policy).
- Proof of any match funding stated in application form.
- Other supporting items i.e. A marketing plan, any consultation, stakeholders/partners information or evaluations of previous projects.

#### Individuals

- Evidence of Aberdeen City residence. This can be a Council tax bill or household utility bill.
- Up to date CV.
- Partnership Agreement/Letter of Support if applicable.
- Evidence of Public Liability Insurance Policy.
- Proof of any match funding stated in application form.
- Other supporting items i.e. A marketing plan, any consultation, stakeholders/partners information or evaluations of previous projects.

Each piece of support material should not exceed 5mb in size and can be shared by email or a file sharing service to [creativefunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:creativefunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk)

## 6. Declaration and Use of Information

To confirm that all information included in this application is accurate and that you have read and followed the application guidelines, please sign and date the application. If submitting by email an electronic signature or the typed name of the appropriate applicant should be inserted. **Please note that any applications that are not signed will not be considered.**

## 3. What happens after you submit your application?

Following submission, your application will be acknowledged by an email from [creativefunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:creativefunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk), within five working days. If you do not receive an acknowledgement within this time-frame, please contact us to make sure your application has been received.

All applications will be reviewed by an independent panel consisting of community representatives and at least two cultural sector professionals and/or individual artists. This panel is responsible for developing recommendations which are reported to the Chief Officer for decision. Grants are awarded through a Scheme of Delegation to Officers. All award decisions are reported to Committee and published online.

If you are successful, you will receive details relating to accepting the award including information about payment, the reporting requirements and the general terms and conditions associated with receiving public funds. Please note that awardees will receive funding in line with Aberdeen City Council standard payment terms.

If you are unsuccessful, you will receive written feedback about your application and the opportunity for an individual meeting with a Council officer to discuss the potential to reapply in future application rounds.

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

Aberdeen City Council does not have an appeals process for Culture Investment and for this reason, we are unable to accept complaints that relate solely to the decision we have made rather than how we have made it. For more information, please visit the [Make A Complaint](#) section on our website.

# Completing a Creative Funding Application



1. Read Creative Funding Application Guidelines & Criteria



2. Seek support such as an advice session especially if you are a new applicant.



4. Consider the time required to complete an application.



3. Research your proposal



5. Use plain and simple language.



6. Proof read and review your application. You can ask someone to help you with this.



7. Check the budget.



8. Complete your application.



9. Send before application deadline.



11. Your application will be reviewed by an independent panel.



10. You will receive an email notification that we have received your application.



12. We will notify you if your application has been successful (if unsuccessful feedback will be given).



13. Publicise & promote your activity & celebrate your award.



14. Aberdeen City Council will publish award recipients.



