

Somerset Council's Arts Engagement & Outreach Service: Open Grant Programme

Guidance for Applicants

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Introduction

Somerset Council's Arts Engagement & Outreach Service, are inviting applications to our open grant programme. We are seeking independent creatives, non-profit groups and charitable organisations to work in partnership with us to deliver the key aims of our Arts Engagement & Outreach Strategy.

We are going to do this through three funds:

1. Creative Commissions
2. Creative Ideas Grant
3. Support Grant

The Arts Engagement & Outreach Service based at Octagon Theatre & Westlands Entertainment Venue are distributing these funds on behalf of Somerset Council to support creative and cultural activities in South Somerset that engage and benefit residents and visitors to the area. South Somerset has been designated a [priority place](#) by Arts Council England and an area identified as one of the government's [Levelling Up for Culture Places](#), that aims to bring more cultural experiences to communities that have been underserved in the past.

What are we looking for?

We are looking to support innovative ideas and programmes that reach and engage Somerset residents as participants, audiences and artists.

We want to support ideas, projects and activity that will positively contribute to at least one of the following contextual factors in Somerset:

- Rurality & Rural Isolation
- Deprivation
- Poor Mental Health
- Ageing Population

These contextual factors are embedded in our Arts Engagement & Outreach Strategy. For more information on these significant challenges and to read our strategy [click here](#).

We want to support all forms of creative art whether that's art & craft, circus, dance, film, music, opera, photography, poetry, puppetry, sculpture, song, storytelling, theatre, or another art form.

South Somerset

We are looking to support activity delivered in the South of Somerset. Please refer to the map of South Somerset for an area definition. From the Chard in the West to Wincanton in the East, and from Somerton in the North and Yeovil in the South, and the surrounding villages and towns in between.

South Somerset has been designated a [priority place](#) by Arts Council England and an area identified as one of the government's [Levelling Up for Culture Places](#), that aims to bring more cultural experiences to communities that have been underserved in the past.



Why are we doing this?

We want to invest in local professional creatives, organisations & companies.

We want to nurture ideas that help develop Somerset's cultural resilience.

We want to make art & culture accessible to Somerset's residents, where they live.

Our Funding Programmes

There are three funds open to applications over the course of the year as funded by Somerset Council and distributed by the Arts Engagement & Outreach Service. Listed below is set information and eligibility guidance for each grant programme to help you decide which fund is right for you.

1. Creative Commissions

This fund is for independent creatives working in any discipline to develop new ideas that are at an early stage.

One-off grant of up to £500.

Project activity to be delivered within 6-months of awarded grant.

Each year we award six commissions with each commission also able to receive,

- Creative development space at Westlands Entertainment Venue in Yeovil, where needed, subject to availability.
- Help finding a platform for sharing the project with the public.
- Bespoke project support. This may include project development, project management, creative, marketing, fundraising, technical, programming consultation etc., according to the needs of the work.

Who's it for?

This fund is for emerging or established professional independent creatives actively working in Somerset, to deliver activity that benefits the county's residents and visitors.

Eligibility

To be eligible for this opportunity, applicants must be:

- Aged 18+
- An early-career or established professional independent creative working in circus, dance, film, music, opera, painting, photography, poetry, puppetry, sculpture, song, storytelling, theatre, or another art form.
- Living or actively working in Somerset, with proposed project activity to be delivered in Somerset.

Please note we are unable to support completed or concluded projects or programme delivery retrospectively.

We are unable to fund:

- Core costs, that 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.
- Completed or concluded projects or programme delivery retrospectively.
- Ongoing overheads relating to equipment or buildings, such as salaries, insurance, building repairs and maintenance costs.
- Activity being delivered outside of South Somerset.
- Activity that does not set out to benefit or engage Somerset's residents or visitors.
- Capital equipment.
- Charity fund-raising events.

- Competitions or lotteries.
- Redistribution of funds as grants to other parties.
- Activities that promote party political or religious views.

Applications for our Creative Commissions fund will reopen in Autumn 2024.

In the meantime, should you wish to discuss an idea, a potential application or to find out more information about the fund, please contact our Arts Engagement & Outreach Officer, Nick White, nick.white@somerset.gov.uk

2. Creative Ideas Fund

This fund is for independent creatives, community groups, non-profit organisations or charitable companies to deliver creative art projects in South Somerset that will engage and benefit local residents and visitors to the area.

Grants of up to £1,000.

Project activity to be delivered within 12-months of awarded grant.

What is the Creative Ideas Fund for?

- Innovative non-profit creative and cultural projects in South Somerset.
- Project activity to be delivered within 12-months of awarded grant.
- Creative and cultural projects that engage residents and visitors in artistic activities such as, carnival, circus, combined arts, dance, festival, film, literature, live art, music, opera, painting, photography, poetry, puppetry, sculpture, song, storytelling, theatre, or another art form.
- To support new activity that engages residents and visitors in innovative ways (this can be as part of a reoccurring event e.g. annual festival)
- To support the delivery of the Arts Engagement & Outreach Strategy and positively contribute to at least one of the following contextual factors in Somerset: Rurality & Rural Isolation, Deprivation, Poor Mental Health, Ageing Population.

What support you will receive from us?

- In-kind creative development space at Westlands Entertainment Venue in Yeovil, where needed, subject to availability.
- In-kind bespoke project support. This may include project development, project management, creative, marketing, fundraising, technical, programming consultation etc., according to the needs of the work.

Who can apply?

This fund is for emerging or established professional independent creatives, community groups, not-for-profit & charitable arts organisations based and/or actively working in Somerset, to deliver activity in South Somerset that benefits the county's residents and visitors.

To be eligible for this opportunity, applicants must be:

- Individuals, aged 18+
- Creative and cultural organisations
- Community or voluntary groups to deliver a non-profit creative and cultural project.
- Educational establishments (schools, colleges, universities)
- Local authorities (town or parish councils)
- Non-profit or charitable organisations and/or companies delivering a non-profit creative and cultural project.
- An individual, community group, organisation or company, based or actively working in Somerset, with proposed project activity to be delivered in South Somerset.
- Delivering projects that engage residents and visitors in creative arts, i.e. circus, dance, film, music, opera, painting, photography, poetry, puppetry, sculpture, song, storytelling, theatre, or another art form.
- We expect you will be seeking, or will have secured, match-funding from other sources.

We are unable to fund:

- Core costs, that 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.
- Completed or concluded projects or programme delivery retrospectively.
- Ongoing overheads relating to equipment or buildings, such as salaries, insurance, building repairs and maintenance costs.
- Activity being delivered outside of South Somerset.
- Activity that does not set out to benefit or engage Somerset's residents or visitors.
- Capital equipment.
- Charity fund-raising events.
- Competitions or lotteries.
- Redistribution of funds as grants to other parties.
- Activities that promote party political or religious views.

Is match funding required?

Yes, we expect you will be seeking, or will have secured, match-funding from other sources.

At least 10% match funding is required for our Creative Ideas Fund.

This might be as earned income, support-in-kind, sponsorship, grants from trusts, foundations, local authority or national funding bodies.

You do not need to have match funding confirmed at the time of application, but applications that deliver more match funding or have match funding already confirmed might be considered stronger in assessment.

3. Support Grant

A two-year fund for independent creatives, community groups, non-profit companies or charitable organisations working in any cultural or creative discipline to deliver specific long-term activity, larger projects with multiple partners, or for operational costs. You'll have a business plan or strategy that guides your plans. You will be able to demonstrate clear connections with our own ambitions.

An annual grant of up to £10,000 for two years.

What is the Support Grant for?

- Independent creatives, community groups, non-profit creative and cultural organisations or companies delivering activity in South Somerset.
- Creative and cultural programmes that engage residents and visitors in artistic activities such as, carnival, circus, combined arts, dance, festival, film, literature, live art, music, opera, painting, photography, poetry, puppetry, sculpture, song, storytelling, theatre, or another art form.
- To support the delivery of the Octagon's Arts Engagement & Outreach Strategy and positively contribute to at least one of the following contextual factors in Somerset: Rurality & Rural Isolation, Deprivation, Poor Mental Health, Ageing Population.

What support you will receive from us?

- Partnership support including in-kind project planning and development with a member of our Arts Engagement & Outreach team.
- In-kind creative development space at Westlands Entertainment Venue, where needed, subject to availability.
- Quarterly progress meeting with a member of our Arts Engagement & Outreach team.

Who's it for?

This fund is for creatives, community groups, non-profit arts organisations and charitable companies operating and delivering work in Somerset, to support the delivery of activity and projects in South Somerset that will engage and benefit local residents and visitors to the area.

Our Support Fund can support core costs (directly related to the delivery of activity being delivered in South Somerset), including general running costs, ongoing overheads (relating to equipment or buildings, such as salaries, insurance, building repairs and maintenance costs to enable you to deliver activity in South Somerset).

To be eligible for this opportunity, applicants must be:

- Individuals, aged 18+
- Community or voluntary groups
- Educational establishments (schools, colleges, universities)
- Local authorities (town or parish councils)
- Non-profit or charitable organisations and/or companies
- Individuals, groups, organisations or companies based or actively working in Somerset, delivering non-profit creative and cultural activities with proposed activity to be delivered in South Somerset.

- Delivering projects that engage Somerset's residents and visitors in creative arts, i.e. circus, dance, film, music, opera, painting, photography, poetry, puppetry, sculpture, song, storytelling, theatre, or another art form.
- We expect you will be seeking, or will have secured, match-funding from other sources.

We are unable to fund:

- Completed or concluded projects or programme delivery retrospectively.
- Activity being delivered outside of South Somerset.
- Activity that does not set out to benefit or engage Somerset's residents or visitors.
- Capital equipment.
- Charity fund-raising events.
- Competitions or lotteries.
- Redistribution of funds as grants to other parties.
- Activities that promote party political or religious views.

Is match funding required?

Yes, we expect you will be seeking, or will have secured, match-funding from other sources.

At least 20% match funding is required for our Support Fund.

This might be as earned income, support-in-kind, sponsorship, grants from trusts, foundations, local authority or national funding bodies.

You do not need to have match funding confirmed at the time of application, but applications that deliver more match funding or have match funding already confirmed might be considered stronger in assessment.

The Application Form and Criteria

When we read your application we will think about how your activity will help make a difference and support Somerset's residents to access creative arts where they live. We will be looking to invest in local professional creatives, organisations and companies who have good governance, are financially stable, and will develop Somerset's cultural resilience.

The information you provide will help us decide which applications we will fund.

The guidance below lists the application form questions and gives you an idea of what we are looking for, for each question.

The Application Form:

1. About Your Organisation

Here we want to understand who is making the application. You may be applying to us as an individual, group or organisation, this is where you can let us know. If you are applying as a group or organisation please tell us the size of your organisation, how many people do you employ, how many people volunteer for your organisation and how many people are on your Board.

Tell us about your organisation, business or group and the creative and cultural provision you deliver in Somerset. 1000 words

We are interested in, where relevant:

- How you define and measure the quality of your work.
- What you seek to achieve, your vision, aims and main objectives.
- Your core activities.

2. Governance & Finance

Here we want to understand how your organisation is governed. We are looking to support organisations who can evidence good governance, organisational capacity and financial stability.

Budget: How much are you applying to us for?

Here we want to understand what level of income you require to deliver your activity and what you will spend it on. We understand budgets can change during a project, but we are looking to see a budget that is reflective of the projected level of activity, costs and additional income you are seeking to deliver the project. This information will allow us to see how you've planned your budget and how realistic it is.

- Your budget must balance – income must be equal to/the same as your expenditure figure.
- We cannot support projects or activity that make a profit.
- Your budget should be for the total costs of the activity or project as described in your application.
- We want to see how you've worked out your figures and if the projected income and expenditure figures are realistic – we will consider the strength of your budget using your calculations and your explanations.

- Evidence of fair pay.
- We expect you will be seeking, or will have secured, match-funding from other sources. This might be as earned income, support-in-kind, sponsorship, grants from trusts, foundations, local authority or national funding bodies. For applications to our Support Fund we expect you find at least 20% of your activity budget from other sources. For applications to our Creative Ideas Fund we expect you find at least 10% of your activity budget from other sources.

What is the total cost of your planned activity?

How much money are you applying to us for?

Please describe any other confirmed or expected income relating to this activity.

Please provide a simple breakdown of how the money would be spent, using the budget template provided.

Download the [Budget Template here](#).

For the Support Grant budget template, you only need to submit a budget for the 1st year of delivery.

3. Your Plans

Here we want to understand what you want to do, where you plan to deliver your activity and how your activity will benefit Somerset's residents and visitors. We also want to make sure you will be able to deliver the proposed activity within the timeframe provided.

Where will your activity take place?

We are looking to support creative and cultural activities being delivered in South Somerset that engage and benefit residents and visitors to the area. South Somerset has been designated a [priority place](#) by Arts Council England and an area identified as one of the government's [Levelling Up for Culture Places](#), that aims to bring more cultural experiences to communities that have been underserved in the past.

Please describe the creative and cultural activity or activities the Grant will enable you to deliver? Tell us about the type of event, activity, service or initiative you would like us to support? Explain how you know there is a need for your project or activity e.g. focus groups with potential participants or surveys. Tell us about how you will engage Somerset's residents and visitors as participants, audiences and/or artists. 1000 words

We're interested in, where relevant:

- What you want to do with the grant? (In the case of the Support Grant what you want to do over the next two-years)
- What artform(s) will you be working in i.e. circus, dance, film, music, opera, painting, photography, poetry, puppetry, sculpture, song, storytelling, theatre, or another art form?
- Who your intended audience(s) and/or participants are and how will residents and visitors to South Somerset be able to get involved.
- How you will involve and support local & regional artists.
- How you will promote your activity.

We want to support ideas, projects and activity that will positively contribute to at least one of the following contextual factors in Somerset.

- **Rurality & Rural Isolation**
- **Deprivation**
- **Poor Mental Health**
- **Ageing Population**

Please describe how your activity will positively contribute to one or more of the above contextual factors? 500 words

Please refer to our Arts Engagement & Outreach Strategy for more information on the contextual factors posing a challenge for our county. We want to understand how your activity supports and will make a positive difference one or more of the key contextual factors.

We're interested in, where relevant:

- Which key contextual factor(s) within Somerset your project will make a difference to?
- How do you see your project making a positive contribution and engaging residents as identified?

How do you define success, and how will you measure it? What are your intended outcomes? 500 words

We're interested in, where relevant:

- What do you hope will be the result of your project/activity?
- How will you know if you've been successful?
- How will you measure the difference your activity has made?

4. The People

Here we want to understand which communities your activity will seek to engage and how your activity will access Somerset's underserved residents. We want to know who will experience your activity or project and how the activity you wish to deliver is inclusive and relevant to the people you aim to engage.

How will your activity respond and improve access to take part and experience the creative arts for underrepresented communities in Somerset? 500 words

We're interested in, where relevant:

- How have you identified the communities, individuals or groups you wish to engage and benefit from your activity?
- How will you ensure the communities you want to reach are able to access your activity, and feel welcome and included?
- What might prevent people from accessing your activity and how will you remove barriers to taking part?

- How are the people you wish to reach involved in the design, planning and delivery of your project/activity?
- What steps will you take to make people aware of your project/activity?

How many people do you expect to benefit from your activity?

Tell us how many people you expect to engage. We understand that things may change, and activity may need to be delivered in alternative ways that originally planned for. From your plans as outlined in your application we are looking to understand how many people you plan to engage and benefit from your project. This information will allow us to understand the level of your activity and how realistic it is.

- As artists, in person
- As artists, online
- As audiences, in person
- As audiences, online
- As participants, in person
- As participants, online
- In other ways, in person
- In other ways, online

Is your project aimed at any of the groups below as audience or participants?

We will ask you to tick all the group(s) that your project is aimed at or group(s) you expect to be represented as audience or participants. You'll be able to tick as many as relevant.

Age
Gender
Ethnicity
Disability
Sexual Orientation

5. Additional Documents

We will also ask applicants to submit:

- Governing document or constitution
- Recent Accounts
- Budget to support your Creative Ideas Fund or Support Grant application showing income and expenditure and balanced outcome ([download template](#))
- An Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring form ([download template](#))
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

Pre-application Guidance

	Applications open	Applications close	Decision
Creative Ideas Grant	25 th March 2024	6 th May 2024(Midday)	Mid-late May
Support Grant	25 th March 2024	6 th May 2024 (Midday)	Mid-late May

Anyone interested in applying to the Creative Ideas Fund or the Support Grant Fund is invited to attend an Information Session, or to book a 30-minute one-to-one meeting to discuss your application. These will be held online.

These sessions are not mandatory and will not influence the outcome of your application. All sessions will be chaired by a member of our Arts Engagement & Outreach team.

Information session #1: Thursday 4 April, 11am-12pm

Information session #2: Monday 15 April, 11am-12pm

30-minute one-to-one sessions: on request

Please contact our Arts Engagement & Outreach Officer, Nick White, to book your space or request a one-to-one discussion on your application. Email: Nick.White@Somerset.gov.uk

Application Process

All applicants must complete our online application form. We recommend all applicants download and read our guidance before applying.

Please note the key dates below. We reserve the right to amend all dates as necessary.

All applicants will also need to provide the following attachments with your application:

1. An Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring form ([download template](#))
2. Budget for your project showing income and expenditure and balanced outcome ([download template](#))
3. Recent Accounts
4. A copy of your governing document or constitution
5. Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

Once you've submitted your application you'll receive an email from us to let you know we've received it. We will then assess your application and may contact you with further queries if needed.

Minimum Standards

The Octagon Theatre & Westlands Entertainment Venue will only award grants to individuals and organisations who meet our minimum standards:

1. Governance & Finance
2. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
3. Safeguarding

The application form provides opportunities for you to evidence these three standards. We've described what we mean a little more below.

Governance & Finance:

Who runs your group and how they run it are important. There are many ways to run your group well, but whatever your approach it must be appropriate for the work you do.

The **governance section** of the NCVO website provides more information.

When you make an application, we ask you to send us your governing document. You might call this your rules, constitution, or your memorandum and articles of association. This document needs to show us how your group is run.

If we don't think you are governed in an appropriate way, then we won't give you any money. Instead, we'll give you some suggestions to improve your governance arrangements.

How you are run will depend on what you do. We are happy to look at applications from different types of groups, and it doesn't matter if you have just been set up or if you have been around for many years.

Because you're asking us for a grant, we want to understand how your group manages its money. The **finance section** of the NCVO website provides more information.

When you apply, we ask you to send us a your most recent accounts or financial record. We use your accounts to understand how much money your group runs on, how much it spends, and how much money you have in reserve.

If your group has more than 12-months running costs in free reserves then we will not give you a grant, unless you have a reserve policy in your accounts that provides a good reason for doing so. When we talk about free reserves, we mean the unrestricted and undesignated funds available to your group. This does not include funds that are not available for spending such as assets tied up in property.

Likewise, if we think your group will need to close down during the period you want to spend a grant then we may not be able to support you.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion:

We are committed to ensuring full social, physical and cultural accessibility across all the opportunities we promote and support. We expect all groups that we support to work closely with local communities, and those with lived experience of specific barriers, to plan and promote their opportunities in order to achieve maximum inclusivity.

We recognise that we have a great responsibility to ensure the diversity of our region is represented throughout our programme, workforce and volunteer teams and all the opportunities we support. We will ask you to provide us with equality and diversity monitoring information for your workforce, volunteers, participants and audiences. We want to understand whether equality, diversity and inclusion is important to your group or not.

Safeguarding:

Keeping people safe is important. But it's nothing to worry about as long as you've given it some thought and taken some simple steps. The **safeguarding section** of the NCVO website provides more information.

When you ask us for money, we ask you to provide us with your safeguarding policy and procedures. These may be separate documents, or you may have combined them. Whatever format you use, we need to see how you recognise, address, record and refer safeguarding concerns. We read through this information to understand whether safeguarding is important to your group or not.

If we don't think that you've thought about your safeguarding responsibilities, then we won't give you any money. Instead, we'll give you some suggestions to improve your safeguarding arrangements.

We appreciate that if you are applying to us as individual, you may not have a safeguarding policy in place, where this is the case we expect successful applicants to adhere to Somerset Council's safeguarding procedures and will work with you to ensure activities delivered adhere to our safeguarding standards.

Our Decision Process

All eligible applications will be reviewed by Somerset Council's Arts Engagement & Outreach Service before our panel meeting to select the projects we can support. This panel will consist of Somerset Council's Director of Culture, The Octagon & Westlands Venues Manger, Arts Engagement & Outreach Manager and members of our Arts Engagement & Outreach Board. The panel will meet following the submission deadline and we will let you know your outcome within one month of the closing date for the grant programme.

Applications must be made online via the link provided. An offline form is available for drafting the answers to questions if required.

Applications will be assessed against the published criteria and risk checked. For each applicant we will consider how likely your activity or project is to achieve its aims.

All applications will be assessed on the following scale - **strong, good, potential** or **limited** – dependant on the level of ability demonstrated and thought given to delivery of activity against the criteria as set out in the guidance.

All applications will be assessed on the following risk scale:

Major risk – this means we have identified an issue that gives us concern the activity is not likely to be managed or delivered successfully. We will not fund your project if we consider any aspects of your project's management or finances to be major risk.

Moderate risk – this means that although an issue represents some risk to successfully delivering the activity, we have decided that this can be dealt with (mitigated).

Minor risk - this means that although we have noted an issue, we do not think it represents a risk to successfully delivering the activity, and we will take no action.

No risk – no risk identified.

If we make a conditional offer of investment, we may make an offer at a lower level than the amount applied for, based on our assessment of your application.

In our decision making we think carefully about people and organisations who are underrepresented as recipients and beneficiaries of creative and cultural activity, and we may choose to prioritise applications that help to address this.

Successful Applicants

Please note, if we make a conditional offer of investment, we may make an offer at a lower level than the amount applied for, based on our assessment of your application.

If your application is successful, you will receive 90% of the grant after we have received your signed grant agreement and subject to you meeting any additional funding requirements that might be necessary. Processing your first payment can take a further 2 - 3 weeks.

You will receive the final 10% of the grant on completion of your project and on return of our Monitoring & Evaluation Form.

The grant awarded must be spent within the grant period as agreed. Any unspent monies at the end of the grant period shall be returned.

You need to spend your grant within 1 year and send us a short report. You need to complete the report online and it will look like the application form.

Marketing / Publicity

We will require all successful applicants to acknowledge the grant on all published and printed material in the form of 'with thanks to support from Somerset Council, The Octagon Theatre & Westlands Entertainment Venue', as appropriate. Somerset Council's logo should be used on your external materials where our funding supports your activity as agreed.

Monitoring and Evaluation

At the end of the project or grant period we will ask you to complete a monitoring & evaluation form. We ask you to tell us how you got on, how the money was spent, how many people engaged with the project, what difference it made, and of any challenges you may have encountered along the way. We also ask you to send us stories and photos about the people you have supported, if you can.

If your project is unsuccessful

If we decide not to fund your project, we will communicate our decision to you with a letter explaining our decision. This letter contains the full level of feedback we can provide.

Our Creative Commissions and Creative Ideas grant programmes open once a year, with our Support Grant open to applications every two years. Unsuccessful applicants are welcome to reapply in future funding rounds. Keep an eye on our website and social media channels for information on when our open grant programmes will reopen.