



Introduction to funding for artists



By Holly Ball, Creative Career Specialist

October 2025



Who this resource is for

This resource is for early career artists, who have little to no experience with finding funding for their work. Early career means someone who has started working the creative and cultural industries in the last two years. It doesn't matter how old you are - this is about helping you to move forward and develop the creative career you want for yourself. You might not yet identify as an artist and that's OK. This resource has been designed to help you see that arts funding is for you, whenever you are ready.

About this resource

Part one is designed to give you some information about the different types of funding available. Part two focusses on the different elements you need to consider when writing a funding bid. Use the prompts as you write funding bids, responses to commissions and artist callouts.

The information shared is correct at the time of publication. Signposting to external websites and resources does not constitute endorsement. Readers are expected to research further and seek professional expertise where needed.

About the author

I'm Holly Ball, a Creative Careers Specialist with over fifteen years of experience supporting artists to develop the creative career they want. A proud Salford creative, I build journeys that help artists get unstuck in their creative careers. Find out more my work at www.careerforward.uk.

What's out there

Below are explanations and examples of different types of funding. Funding can cover costs in full or in part. Any remaining costs could be covered by other funding, earned income (e.g., selling tickets) or support 'in-kind' (i.e., free space or support from others).

Grant Funding

This is non-repayable money to support projects or general activities. It is typically awarded for a defined purpose, and while the recipient doesn't have to pay it back, the funds are often restricted to that specific use. Grant funding is a common way to support charities, non-profits, and businesses. **Examples include:** National Lottery Grants (Arts Council England), Awards for All and local community voluntary sector organisations.

Artist commissions and callouts

Callouts are an open, public callout from organisations for artists to submit proposals for a particular opportunity. Commissions are where an artist is paid by a client or organisation to create a piece of work based on a pre-agreed brief or set of specifications.

Corporate schemes and sponsorship

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) or specific funding schemes can lead to funding from a larger corporate organisation like the Co-Op or Amazon. Before committing to this type of funding, consider how the brand aligns with your values and if you or your audience want to be associated with them.

Continuing your professional development

There are dedicated funding pots available for artists to improve their practice, attend training or buy equipment. These can be general or art form specific. **Examples include:** DCYP (Arts Council England), GMCA Inspire Fund.

Key Messages

- **What individuals can apply for can be limited.** A lot of funders will only fund a registered charity or a company. You can partner with an organisation who can make the application on your behalf.
- **Value of networking and collaborating:** Attending networking events and being open to collaboration will help you to find funding. It could make your ideas more impactful.
- **Be creative in where you look for opportunities:** Consider how AI can help with your funding search. Use social media to find opportunities. Subscribe to newsletters to stay up to date.

What does this mean for you as an artist?

Funders want to know who you are as an artist, not just what your project is. The clearer you can be about yourself and your practice, the easier it is to connect with the right funding.

Take some time to complete the sentence stems below. Try using them next time someone asks 'what do you do?'. Refine them as your practice develops and create new sentences for different audiences or situations.

- **I am...** (e.g. a visual artist, musician, community storyteller, multi-disciplinary creative). You decide what your job title is - be brave and own it. Make one up if it doesn't exist!
- **My work is about...** (what are your key themes? the values that you work to or inspire in others? what ideas does your work address?).
- **I create work for/with...** (who is your target audiences? Do you work with particular communities and/or participants? Why?)
- **What makes me different is...** (do you take a unique angle or approach? Are you using your lived experience in your creative practice?).
- **Right now, I'd love funding to...** (have one specific goal or idea in mind and be ready to share it in a succinct way).

Applying for funding

**Why - What - Evidencing Need - Where & When -
Working with others - Impact - Budget**

Each funder will have their own application process. Check and double check what you need to do and when you need to do it by. Read the terms and conditions carefully to check that you are definitely eligible for that particular funding.

The following section outlines the key things to think about when putting together a funding application.

Why

What is the ‘big picture’ problem that exists?

For example,

- Are people disconnected from the physical environment around them?
- Are young people experiencing mental health challenges?
- Are rural communities continuing to feel isolated and cut-off from creative opportunities?

What’s your solution? How are you going to solve it with your project?

For example, this project will....

- Connect communities with physical spaces through creative activities inspired by the natural environment around them.
- Support young people’s health and well-being through creative activities whilst waiting for talking therapies.
- Take performances, exhibitions and participatory arts activities to rural communities.

What

- What specifically are you going to do?
- Summarise your project in 150-200 words.
- What are your outputs and outcomes?

Outputs are the activities you are going to do, for example, the number of workshops, artists in an exhibition, etc.

Outcomes are the impact of those activities and the difference they make for your audience / participants.

The ghost metaphor be helpful here:

Output: Number of times you say 'boo'.



Outcomes: Number of times people feel scared.

Evidencing Need

How do you know your project is needed by your beneficiaries?



Get quotes from potential participants, partners and stakeholders.



If you do consultation activities take photos and videos - with permission of course.



Use examples, facts and figures from reports from reputable sources.

TOP TIP: Collect evidence as you go and keep a live document so you are prepared for any opportunities that come up.

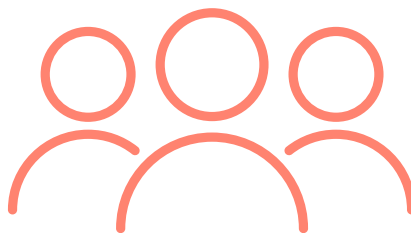
Where & When

- **Logistics** - where will you be delivering your project, who will be involved, resources needed, etc.
- **Why now?** Funding is competitive. Create a sense of urgency as to why you need the money in this round. Is that that the problem needs addressing now? Is it that the partnerships have aligned and are ready to do?



Working with others

- **Who can help you make this project happen?** This could be helping find participants and audience. This could be offering space or resources,
- **Who could make it even better?** Is there another Artist or organisation that could improve your ideas?
- **Collaboration and partnerships** are attractive to funders, don't skip this step!



Impact & Evaluation

- What difference will your project make?
- This could be skills developed, attitudes changed, etc.
- How will you measure success?

Signposting:

- Creative Evaluation (Women's Environmental Networks) Find [here](#)
- The Little Book of Evaluation Tools (University of Oxford Public Engagement) Find [here](#)
- Evaluation Toolkit for Community & Voluntary Arts (Annabelle Jackson Associates) Find [here](#)

Budget

- Check the Terms & Conditions carefully for what they will pay for - it varies! You don't want your application to be rejected on a technicality or error.
- When successful, use their reporting paperwork or submit an invoice for payment.
- Use union rates or guidance from Arts Council England if you are unsure how much to pay yourself or others.



Example Budget

Below is an example of things to include in your budget and notes on how to put a budget together. Your budget is likely to be different for each project you do.

ITEM	COST	NOTES
Workshop preparation		Prep time should be the equivalent of delivery time, e.g, to deliver a 1 hour session allow a minimum of 1 hour's prep time.
Workshop delivery		Consider if you need to include travel time. Is delivery at a time of day that means it's the only work a freelancer can do that day?
Materials		Items that you need to deliver your activities.
Room hire		Venues will have set rates they charge. These are often shown on their website.
Marketing		Designing posters, infographics, paid social media adverts, etc.
Participant Expenses		This could be travel costs, food, childcare, etc, depending on who your project is for.
Evaluation		This could be an external person or your time to collate the findings into a report.