

Aberdeen Culture Investment Programme



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 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 which want to contribute to that goal by delivering sustained programmes of creative or culture activity. It is intended for Aberdeen based organisations which wish 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 the document.
- Application will be through a two-stage process, including a registered expression of interest to inform overall demand.
- Expression of interest process will open in June 2024; Application process will be open Autumn 2024.
- Applicants will be required to meet 'Following the Public Pound' criteria, our code of practice requirements for grant giving of public monies. 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.
- 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 early 2025 with funding approved at the March Council budget meeting.

- Unsuccessful applicants will be provided with support to identify alternative sources of funding and feedback to improve future applications.
- 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 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.

Culture Review

In 2023 the Council commissioned a review of its funding and delivery model for culture in order to inform future approaches. The review aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of current Council funding for the delivery of culture initiatives, examining the current funding structure to identify areas for improvement and strategies to optimise the allocation of resources and for more effective impact against Council priorities.

The review identified the current funding model was no longer fit for purpose in reflecting the challenges on public finances but also in respect to support the growth and resilience of the culture sector in Aberdeen.

This document provides guidance on the new framework and how the recommendations from the review have been implemented in the design and delivery of the programme.

Our case for change

The Council invests yearly through its revenue budget and the Common Good Fund on average £12m on culture and heritage, with around £1.5m on average allocated as grants to external organisations to deliver culture activity. The investment for externally delivered culture activity falls within 3 strands-

Core/ Development Funding: Investment in Aberdeen's core independent culture organisations. The list of beneficiaries is historic, and funding has remained flat or reducing on annual basis through Council budget meeting.

Creative Funding: Council open application grant programme to support culture projects delivered in Aberdeen by individuals, not for profit organisations and community groups.

Commissioned Events, festivals, services and activities: Investment in headline events as well as one-off activities and services to support the development of the culture sector.

The need for change was identified through a review of culture delivery and funding, analysis of feedback through the 2024/25 Budget Consultation and the most recent Aberdeen City Population Needs Assessment (PNA).

- Consultation has shown there remains significant differences in how 'culture' is defined, understood and valued. Many people are uncomfortable with the label 'the arts' and perceive it being for someone else while in reality they may in fact lead very active culture lives and value opportunities to experience and be creative.
- While culture is referenced in both Council and regional plans and strategies, currently there is no clear 'golden thread' linking objectives and measures, nor specific actions or budgets to support interconnectivity.

- The Review has Identified the need for a clearer decision-making framework or criteria for making investment decisions. Who the beneficiaries are off investment and the level received are based on historic arrangements and budget saving decisions over multiple years and not tied to specific measurable outcomes.
- The restriction on the public purse means that The Council must take an increasingly more strategic approach to ensures that resources are targeted to the area in which they make the most impact – at the prevention stage.
- That there are still widespread socio-economic and geographic variances in levels of engagement with publicly funded culture and the opportunities to experience creativity and culture are not always equal, in particular for children and young people.
- Recognise the increasing shift diversity within our society but that is shift is not always well represented across the creative opportunities our in the makeup of our publicly funded culture organisations.
- That the business models of publicly funded culture organisations are often fragile, and generally lack the flexibility to address emerging challenges and opportunities, especially around the decline of public funding and the growth of new technologies.
- As a city we are not leveraging in the level of national public funding which we should be achieving, leading to a higher dependency on Council support than is potentially the case in other areas.
- Current economic uncertainty is creating barriers to innovation, risk-taking and sustained talent development which ultimately impacts opportunities and pathways for growth and talent retention.
- Data collection and analysis continues to be a challenge for culture due to a variety of factors. However, as funding becomes less readily available there is need to improve the quality and robustness of data gathered long term as well as improving how we interpreted and used data to evidence impact, shape policy and inform new approaches and solutions.

Strategic Context

At present a number of key long-term local, regional and national strategies and action plans for social and economic development are currently being refreshed and revised, taking into account the global shocks of the Pandemic, The Climate emergency and subsequent inflation pressure. Culture is no different in that respect, with Culture Aberdeen, the City’s ten-year culture strategy currently undergoing a refresh, following on the heels of the Events 365 which was refreshed last year.

Key Local Strategic Priorities	
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Culture Aberdeen 2018-2028 Action Plan Ambitions			Regional Economic Strategy Strong Communities and Culture Identity	LOIP 2024 refresh (2016-26)/Aberdeen City Council Delivery Plan priorities – Stretch Outcomes	“Working in Partnership for Aberdeen”
Releasing our Creativity - <i>Our vision for Aberdeen is a city opening doors, where everyone can be transformed and inspired through engagement in the arts and culture.</i>	Fostering a strong sense of culture identity and belonging in the region	2. Working towards a 74% employment rate for Aberdeen City by 2026. 4. 90% of children and young people report they feel listened to all of the time by 2026.	<p>Refresh our tourism and culture strategies for the city.</p> <p>Aim to make Aberdeen a premier destination for festivals, productions, conferences, bands and events.</p> <p>Support Aberdeen Performing Arts and other culture providers to offer the widest possible arts programme for all across our communities.</p> <p>Continued delivery of Events 365 and The Aberdeen City Centre and Beach Masterplan</p>	<p>10. Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026.</p> <p>13. Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate.</p> <p>15. 26% of Aberdeen's area will be protected for nature and 60% of citizens report they feel that spaces and buildings are well cared for by 2026.</p> <p>16. 50% of citizens report they feel able to participate in decisions that help change things for the better by 2026.</p>	
Becoming Scotland's Creative Lab - <i>Our vision for Aberdeen is a city to experiment in, a home, a place, a destination and testing ground for artists, creative enterprises and new ideas</i>	Increasing the number of jobs in the creative industries				
Making All the City a Stage - <i>Our vision for Aberdeen is a city which inspires, where exciting culture experiences are around each and every corner and where there are no creative boundaries.</i>	Increasing the number of assets held by communities across the region. Creating a clearer/stronger identity and culture narrative				
Connecting Us to the World - <i>Our vision for Aberdeen is a city like no other, where we celebrate and promote our culture and heritage, the things we make and create.</i>	Creating a clearer/stronger identity and culture narrative				
Shaping our Future - <i>Our vision for Aberdeen is a city whose culture sector is growing in ambition and confidence with a strong collective of culture leaders collaborating to realise the city's potential.</i>	Increasing the number of jobs in the creative industries				
External Strategies and Policies (National Context)					
A Culture Strategy for Scotland	Scotland Outlook 2030	Creative Scotland- Strategic Framework	The National Performance Framework		
Net Zero 2045	Scotland The Perfect Stage	Scotland's Museums and Galleries Strategy 2023 - 2030	2023 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan		
National Strategy for Economic Transformation	Levelling Up the UK	Our Past, Our Future: The Strategy for Scotland's Historic Environment			

Sitting behind the LOIP and Council Delivery Plan is the [Population Needs Assessment](#) (PNA), which brings together a very broad range of data covering the people, place and economy of Aberdeen and explores how this can be related to the services and interventions that are being provided by the Council and its partners. At a headline level the PNA tells us that life expectancy and healthy life expectancy in the city has either stalled or is in decline. It also tells us that whilst the long-term trend in many factors relating to the determinants of health and wellbeing has been positive, this should be viewed in context of two important issues:

1. that increasing poverty in the city is clearly shown in the data, but the impact of this on many related indicators is not yet fully evident, since these indicators have a time lag; and
- 2 where there are general positive trends, in many cases these mask very significant differences and inequalities across the city's geographical communities and communities of interest.

The challenges described in the Population Needs Assessment, and summarised above, make it imperative that the Council acts to prevent demand, where possible, and take targeted action to avoid the escalation of both harm and costs through preventative measures and early intervention.

Prioritising scarce financial resources inevitably means that some of the activity the Council has previously undertaken will have to stop in order to free up capacity to drive more impactful upstream activity and targeted support.

Investment in culture must therefore meet the prevention and early intervention objectives, providing measurable impacts to reduce demand and occurrence of harm within our economy, society and environment.

The role of Aberdeen City Council

Aberdeen City Council is responsible for providing political leadership and governance for a comprehensive range of services across the city. Local authorities are in many ways custodians of both national and local culture, supporting delivery of activity both directly and through fund distribution, maintaining heritage sites, local history and encouraging public celebrations and festivals as well as monitoring and ensuring activities are safely delivered, meets legislation and provide best value.

The Council has various roles, connections, and responsibilities across the cultural sector. In some cases, it is a venue owner and/or programmer (for example; Aberdeen Art Gallery, Maritime Museum and City Events programme); in some cases it is the landlord (for example; His Majesty's Theatre and Aberdeen Music Hall); sometimes it is a financial supporter or advocate.

Due to a range of factors the Council's role within the cultural ecology is shifting from that of primary funder to more of an advisor, facilitator, supporter and most importantly a partner.

Objectives of Culture Investment Framework

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.

Our Culture Impact 2023 report has highlighted some of these impacts as socioeconomic returns, but we recognise there is an opportunity to expand and refine these metrics to better demonstrate the transformative impacts culture can have on our City and its residents.

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.

Our Priorities

Theme	Description	Outcome
Experience	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.
Celebrate	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.
Our Economy	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
Our Children & Young People	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.
Our citizens	Increased healthy life expectancy through cultural engagement	Our citizens benefit from healthy life expectancy, mental wellbeing and positive life choices through cultural intervention.
Our Place	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 .
Our Community	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.

Our principles

Ambition - Encourage creative ambition and excellence in delivery.

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

Local Impact - to support the local culture economy to develop capacity and capability to be more sustainably 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.

Timeline

Stage 1 Development and Expression of Interest	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop with current recipients • Wider culture sector engagement • Public Consultation • Launch Expression of Interest Register 	May -June
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise Criteria and Application Process • Integrated Impact Assessment • Deadline for EOI (phase 1) 	July
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framework approved by Committee 	7 th August
Stage 2 Delivery	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register scheme for subsidy control • EOI reopened • Finalise application form and guidance design • Translation of grants guidance into a range of accessible formats, including 'easy read' and FAQ. • Finalise Monitoring Template 	August
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of Culture Investment Programme 	26 th August
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise sessions/ workshops 	September- October
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application Deadline 	4 th November

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application Panels/ Reviewed • Funding profile for budget process and Common Good request • Subsidy Control and FPHP assessment 	November-December
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee Report/recommendations for funding 	February 2025 (TBC)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Meeting/ Funding approved 	March 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture Investment begins 	April 2025

Our Investment Programmes

The Culture Investment Programme will replace the previous support for Core and Development organisations as well as our Creative Funding Awards. The new Programme will build on the strengths of these long running programmes, retaining support for project funded and for revenue funded activity but will open up opportunities to a more diverse range of organisations to support development and capacity building.

The independent culture sector in the city is an important part of what makes Aberdeen great and, alongside the Council's own directly delivered culture services, makes significant contribution to our City's social, economic and culture wellbeing.

Key to this will be clearer criteria priorities and outcome measures, challenging preconception on support for arts and culture, less dependency and more delivery, resilience not reliance, essential not luxury. Investment in culture is integral to the successful delivery of The Council's prevention objectives.

Our Programme

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 programme will provide more flexibility and agency to artists and arts organisations. Access to the investment funds will empowering greater equity and growth in the sector, promoting and improving the positive qualities of Aberdeen as a place to live, work, and visit.

Overview

Acorn
Investment: £500 - £2,500
Match funding: 10% match in cash exclusively for project activity
Period – Up to 1 year (annual grants)
Applications Open: April 2025
Who is it for: Individuals, Culture and creative organisations, Community/voluntary groups and partnerships

<p>What is it for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New, one-off large scale ambitious non-profit 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.
<p>What will not be supported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <i>Further criteria apply.</i>
<p>What you will need to supply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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: 25% match in cash exclusively for project activity.
Period- projects that take place over 1 to 2 years.
Applications Open: Autumn 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: Investment must represent no more than 25% annual income
Period: Up to 3 years (In principle)
Applications Open: Autumn 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 apply

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

Cornerstone Partnership
Investment: £100,000 plus per a year
Match Funding: Investment must represent no more than 10% annual turnover
Period: Up to 3 years (in principle)
Application Open: Autumn 2024
Who is it for: Large scale Aberdeen based culture organisations or consortiums with a track record of culture delivery.
<p>What is it for:</p> <p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>What will not be supported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p><i>Further criteria apply</i></p>
<p>What you will need to supply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

How to Apply Process

Expression of interest

For Officers to gauge the level of demand and financial support for the Culture Investment Programme we will be undertaking an Expression of Interest exercise over the Summer of 2024. This information will be used as evidence of demand when seeking approval for the Framework and respective budget at Council Committee.

Completing an Expression of Interest will be a requirement as registration for submitting applications to the Cornerstone Partnership, Cultivate and Catalyst programmes.

Application form

Application form and guidelines will be published on the Council website, along with a financial proforma.

Completed applications and support materials are to be submitted to 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. Advise 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

4th November – Cornerstone, Cultivate and Catalyst

Acorn will be open from April 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 to Council Committee for approval early 2025 but final decision on investment levels will be taken at the Council Budget setting meeting in March 2025.

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 instance this applies to current funding recipients (2024/25) consideration will be given for transition support on case-by-case basis.

Multi-Year Funding

In the case of multiyear 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 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.
- 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.

Business Plan

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 requirement for the Acorn programme.

Not-for-Profit

'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 it 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 follow 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

Following the Public Pound

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

Aberdeen City Council has a responsibility 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

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.

If your application is successful, it may be awarded under the Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) exemption of the Act; the MFA exemption permits an organisation to receive up to £315,000 total MFA funding from all sources, within any three financial year period. In this case you will be sent a declaration form to notify us of any previous MFA funding you have received so far in the current financial year and the preceding two financial years, and to confirm that the proposed grant from Aberdeen City Council will not take you over your £315,000 MFA limit. If the grant would take you over the MFA limit, then Aberdeen City Council will have to carry out a further assessment of your eligibility under the Act to receive this funding.

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

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. organisation 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.

Protected Characteristic
Age – Addressing barriers and underrepresented in certain age groups i.e., over 74's, under 5s, Young people etc.
Disability
Gender Reassignment
Pregnancy and Maternity
Race
Religion or Belief
Sex
Sexual Orientation
Socio-Economic Impacts

Low income / income poverty – those who cannot afford regular bills, food, clothing payments.
Low and/or no wealth – those who can meet basic living costs but have no savings for unexpected spend or provision for the future
Material deprivation – those who cannot access basic goods and services, unable to repair/replace broken electrical goods, heat their homes or access to leisure or hobbies
Area deprivation – consider where people live and where they work (accessibility and cost of transport)
Socio-economic background – social class, parents’ education, employment, income.
Human Rights Impacts
The Human Rights Act 1998
Children and Young People’s Rights Impacts
The United Nations Convention has 54 articles that cover all aspects of a child’s life and set out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to

Environmental Sustainability Planning – Net Zero Aberdeen

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 route map 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 Invest in, 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 there plans and policies.
- The projects and initiatives being undertake 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.

- Sign 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

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](#)

[NSPCC](#)

[SCVO – safeguarding and privacy](#)

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