

The City of Edinburgh Council, Culture, Wellbeing and Economy: Innovate Fund 2026/28

Overview

INNOVATE FUND 2026/28

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

Edinburgh is a world leading cultural capital, and home to an eclectic mix of diverse narratives, art forms, and creative practice.

This new cultural funding programme is an important action of the recently launched [Visitor Levy Scheme](https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/homepage/10559/edinburgh-visitor-levy) which aims to sustain Edinburgh's status as one of the world's greatest cultural and heritage cities and to ensure that the impacts of a successful visitor economy are managed effectively and in support of the priorities as set out in the [Council's Business Plan](https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/33125/council-business-plan-2023-2027). The scheme's main purpose is to **provide revenue grant funding to local cultural organisations to improve resilience, support programming innovation and enhance cultural output through short-to-medium term projects that deliver innovative approaches to supporting the city's cultural infrastructure.**

It also aligns with [Citywide Culture Strategy 2023-2030](https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/33125/citywide-culture-strategy-2023-2030) highlighting the importance of joint collaboration across the Creative Industries with the aim of facilitating access to cultural activities and practice and delivering a significant contribution to the city's success as an exceptional and creative place to live and work.

THE VISITOR LEVY SCHEME

The objectives of the Scheme are to Sustain, Support and Develop:

1. Public services, programmes and infrastructure that provide an enjoyable and safe visitor and resident experience.
2. Edinburgh's culture, heritage and events provision to ensure it remains world-leading and competitively attractive to visitors as well as residents.
3. The city's visitor economy, by fostering innovation in response to environmental and societal challenges, enhancing Edinburgh's global reputation while promoting responsible and sustainable tourism

THE CITYWIDE CULTURE STRATEGY

Aim 1

All Edinburgh residents can easily access cultural experiences that they find meaningful in their local area, and everyone has the opportunity to contribute to shaping local cultural provision.

Aim 2

Edinburgh is a welcoming and supportive city in which a broad spectrum of creative and cultural practitioners choose to develop their careers.

Aim 3

Edinburgh is a world leading cultural capital, an environmentally responsible host city where ideas are exchanged freely, and the diversity of its residents is celebrated.

The Vision for Edinburgh 2030 is to deliver the following outcomes as a Capital of Culture:

- a network of well run, ambitious and accessible local creative and cultural hubs throughout the city where all residents can feel safe, welcomed, able to participate in, develop and influence cultural activities that have meaning for them. These hubs will be connected to the city centre venues and organisations as respected and equal partners enlivening their programming and enhancing audience development.
- is internationally connected and a magnet for creative thinkers and practitioners from across the world who choose to live, work, visit and study here.
- has a range of accessible spaces where creative practitioners can experiment, develop, rehearse and produce their work.
- values culture and creativity as an essential element of individual and collective wellbeing, embedding this principle in city, community, and public health planning.
- facilitates opportunities for all young people to experience a range of cultural and creative experiences and encourages and nurtures creative talent and enthusiasm.
- ensures the diversity of the population is reflected in the planning and delivery of cultural provision and the way we interpret and experience our heritage.
- values creative workers and embeds the principles of fair work and good practice in volunteering in all its planning and contracting.

The Innovate fund will help us realise these ambitions.

APPLICATION MODEL

For the delivery of 2026/28 Innovate Fund programme, you are asked to identify focused, distinct **Project activities** to support both the delivery of the **Visitor Levy Scheme's three Objectives** and **2023-30 Citywide Culture Strategy's three Aims**. **This round of funding is intended to support projects implemented between 18 December 2026 and 31 March 2028 (possible extension until 31 December if required).**

The health and vibrancy of the culture and creative sectors in Edinburgh are fundamental to our success as a city; the following key performance indicators (KPIs) have been identified the following contributing factors which are:

- the way we ensure Edinburgh's culture, heritage and events provision remain world-leading and competitively attractive to visitors as well as residents
- the way we foster innovation in response to environmental and societal challenges while promoting responsible and sustainable tourism
- the way we celebrate the 80th Anniversary of the Edinburgh Festivals the way we provide an enjoyable and safe visitor and resident experience
- the way we contribute to the wellbeing of individual residents through cultural provision
- the way we treasure our past and support creativity in learning and across disciplines the way we continue our international reputation as a world festival city
- the way we generate the number of tourists who visit the way we contribute to securing the monetary value the creative sector generates
- the way we contribute to the number of people employed in the sector

- the way we embrace and celebrate our diversity the way we collaborate across the city to maximise engagement and impact
- the way we engage with audiences and participants from different socio-economic backgrounds in cultural provision

When designing and delivering your **Project**, relevant KPIs have to be included and monitored. A clear focus on measurable KPIs is recommended for each project.

Project proposals should also align with the named purpose of the Visitor Levy Scheme and thus deliver activities which:

1. **Support programming innovation** by adopting new art forms, digital tools, and community-centred business models by introducing/furthering interdisciplinary collaboration, immersive digital engagement, and co-created public programming respectively
2. **Enhance cultural output** by diversifying programming, adopting digital tools, and fostering inclusive leadership ensuring greater equality of access to culture for lower socio-economic groups through large-scale public celebrations/installations outwith the city centre.
3. **Improve resilience** by adapting business models, introducing new governance models, diversifying income, and fostering workforce well-being. Key strategies include financial diversification, operational flexibility, and strong community engagement

When considering your partnerships with artists, creative organisations, local community groups and third-party suppliers across the city, we would ask that you bear in the mind the following **Principles** that underpin the purpose of the Strategy:

- Everyone has the right to participate freely in the cultural life of the community.
- Culture and creativity are essential and fundamental to the wellbeing of the city, localities, communities, groups, and individuals.
- The cultural vibrancy of the city is a collective endeavour; power, responsibility and opportunity are shared.
- Diverse cultures, voices and stories are essential to cultural growth.
- Fairness, respect, environmental responsibility, and equity of opportunity are fundamental to a healthy cultural ecology.
- Local, national, and international connections are enriching and vital.
- Our shared and different heritages are important and provide inspiration for cultural expression today.
- The cultural and creative workforce should be supported to explore, innovate, and take creative risks.

Ineligible applicants/activities

- Pre-existing projects or those currently being delivered.
- Projects currently or previously supported by the City of Edinburgh Council via Third Party Cultural Grant Funding.

The application form template will further guide you through the required submission format.

APPLICATION FORM

Please use this **online form** to submit your proposals.

Please note you will be also asked to upload a budget spreadsheet with summary costings per Action along with your Company Articles of Association, latest Accounts, including projected reserves, Business Plan, Diversity and Inclusion Policy/Action Plan, Fair Work Policy, and Environmental Policy.

Before starting the application, please download a blank PDF application form for preview. Please also download the Council's Standard Conditions of Grant, and the Budget spreadsheet. Links to the Council's Citywide Culture Strategy, Business Plan and Privacy Notice are also available in the related documents section.

Please complete this application by 23:59 on 29 October 2026. Please note this deadline is fixed and no late applications will be considered.

If you have any queries about the application process, please contact culturaldevelopment@edinburgh.gov.uk

BUDGET NOTES

Applicants should apply for the exact amount needed for their Actions. There are no minimum or maximum award amounts recommended. Note that successful applicants will not automatically be awarded the full amount included in their submission.

Eligible costs:

- Additional staffing costs to deliver the proposed activity.
- All project costs directly related to the delivery of the proposed activity.
- Professional fees directly related to delivery.
- Project management and monitoring costs (capped).

Please note that all freelance creative practitioners involved in the progress and delivery of any Actions are expected to be remunerated as per industry rates. Links to industry rates, as recommended by industry bodies, are listed below:

BECTU <<https://bectu.org.uk/get-involved/ratecards/>> | **ITC** <<https://www.itc-arts.org/rates-of-pay/>> | **UK Theatre / Equity Commercial Theatre Rates** <[file:///c:/cap-nas-02/home%24/1666140/Downloads/UK%20Theatre%20Equity%20rates%20-%20Commercial%20Theatre%202019-2022%20\(1\).pdf](file:///c:/cap-nas-02/home%24/1666140/Downloads/UK%20Theatre%20Equity%20rates%20-%20Commercial%20Theatre%202019-2022%20(1).pdf)>

UK Theatre/ Equity Rates for Subsidised Managers (in receipt of public funding) <[file:///c:/cap-nas-02/home%24/1666140/Downloads/UK%20Theatre%20Equity%20rates%20-%20Subsidised%202019%20to%202022%20\(1\).pdf](file:///c:/cap-nas-02/home%24/1666140/Downloads/UK%20Theatre%20Equity%20rates%20-%20Subsidised%202019%20to%202022%20(1).pdf)>

UK Theatre/Musicians Union <[file:///c:/cap-nas-02/home%24/1666140/Downloads/UK%20MU%20Rates%20April%202018%20to%20April%202021%20\(2\).pdf](file:///c:/cap-nas-02/home%24/1666140/Downloads/UK%20MU%20Rates%20April%202018%20to%20April%202021%20(2).pdf)> | **UK Theatre / Writers Guild** <[file:///c:/cap-nas-02/home%24/1666140/Downloads/UK%20Theatre%20Writers%20Guild%20Rates%20-%202019%20\(1\).pdf](file:///c:/cap-nas-02/home%24/1666140/Downloads/UK%20Theatre%20Writers%20Guild%20Rates%20-%202019%20(1).pdf)> | **SSP** <<http://www.scottishsocietyofplaywrights.co.uk/commission-rates.html>> | **Musicians Union** <<https://musiciansunion.org.uk/rates>>

UK Theatre/ BECTU/Equity Choreographers: <[file:///c:/cap-nas-02/home%24/1666140/Downloads/UK%20Theatre%20Equity%20Choreographer%20rates%202019%20-%202021%20\(1\).pdf](file:///c:/cap-nas-02/home%24/1666140/Downloads/UK%20Theatre%20Equity%20Choreographer%20rates%202019%20-%202021%20(1).pdf)> | **UK Theatre/ BECTU/ Equity Designers/Resident Designers** <<file:///c:/cap-nas-02/home%24/1666140/Downloads/UK%20Theatre%20Equity%20BECTU%20Designers%20rates%20Resident%20Designers%202019-2021.pdf>> | **Set and Costume Designers** <<file:///c:/cap-nas-02/home%24/1666140/Downloads/UK%20Theatre%20Equity%20BECTU%20Designers%20rates%20Set%20and%20Costumes%202019-2021.pdf>> | **Lighting Designers** <<file:///c:/cap-nas-02/home%24/1666140/Downloads/UK%20Theatre%20Equity%20BECTU%20Designers%20rates%20Lighting%20Designers%202019-2021.pdf>>

[UK Theatre/ BECTU/ Equity Directors](#) <file:///c:/cap-nas-02/home%24/1666140/Downloads/UK%20Theatre%20Equity%20Directors%20rates%202018%20-%202022.pdf> | [Visual Artists \(Paying Artists\)](#) <http://www.payingartists.org.uk/2018/07/paying-artists-activity-update/> | [Exhibition Payment Guide](#) <http://www.payingartists.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Paying-Artists-Exhibition-Payment-Guide.pdf> | [The society of authors](#) <https://societyofauthors.org/Advice/Rates-Fees>

Any City of Edinburgh Council funding agreement also requires that any funded organisation must pay the real Living Wage and implement Fair Work principles for all staff.

Ineligible costs:

- General operations or 'core' business costs
- Any costs relating to the recovery of the Edinburgh Visitor Levy paid as part of an organisation's accommodation costs
- Capital projects or works

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

A fund assessment panel will meet to consider applications in w/c 16 November 2026.

Panel decisions will be recommended for approval by the Culture and Communities Committee meeting on 17/12/2026.

Please note that the funding awards over £10k for successful applications will be issued in two payments. 70% on receipt of a signed funding agreement, and 30% following receipt of an annual update report.

Funding agreements will be sent to successful applicants after 18/12/2026 and grant award payments made within one month of that date.

UK SUBSIDY CONTROL

Please also note that grants will be issued as Minimum Financial Assistance under UK Subsidy Control regulations. It is the responsibility of the grant recipient to ensure that they comply with the wider requirements of these regulations. The City of Edinburgh Council may request additional information or amend, suspend, or withdraw any grants where the recipient does not meet the criteria. Applicants will be asked to accept The City of Edinburgh Council standard conditions for the award of grant funding.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND ACCESS

Once you have submitted your application form, please complete the [Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form](#). </sfc/4460d8d8>

If you require this application in Braille, large print, audiotape or need to be provided with other access support such as scribing, please contact the Cultural Development on Culturaldevelopment@edinburgh.gov.uk.

PRIVACY NOTICE

To deliver Council services we need to collect, store, use, share and dispose of personal information. This is known as data processing. When we collect personal data, we must tell you why we need it, and what we will do with it. This information is called a privacy notice. The Privacy Notice [link <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/managing-information/privacy/1>](https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/managing-information/privacy/1) takes you directly to the City of Edinburgh Council's privacy notice. Here we explain how we process your personal information as a Council.

Applicant Information

1 Applicant

Organisation's Name *(Required)*

E-mail address *(Required)*

Organisation's Registration Number (OSCR and/or Companies House) *(Required)*

Organisation's Postal Address *(Required)*

Organisation's Postcode *(Required)*

Your Aims

1 Please select ONE of the Aims from the Citywide Culture Strategy 2023-2030 and ONE of the Visitor Levy Scheme you wish to contribute to with a distinct, specific and relevant Action plan outlined in the next section of this application.

Citywide Culture Strategy Aims:

(Required)

Please select only one item

- ☐ 1. All Edinburgh residents can easily access cultural experiences that they find meaningful in their local area, and everyone has the opportunity to contribute to shaping local cultural provision.
- ☐ 2. Edinburgh is a welcoming and supportive city in which a broad spectrum of creative and cultural practitioners choose to develop their careers.
- ☐ 3. Edinburgh is a world leading cultural capital, an environmentally responsible host city where ideas are exchanged freely, and the diversity of its residents is celebrated.

Visitor Levy Scheme Aims:

(Required)

Please select only one item

- ☐ A Sustain, Support and Develop public services, programmes and infrastructure that provide an enjoyable and safe visitor and resident experience.
- ☐ B Sustain, Support and Develop Edinburgh's culture, heritage and events provision to ensure it remains world-leading and competitively attractive to visitors as well as residents.
- ☐ C Sustain, Support and Develop the city's visitor economy, by fostering innovation in response to environmental and societal challenges, enhancing Edinburgh's global reputation while promoting responsible and sustainable tourism

2 Please provide a brief rationale for your choice of Aims, including a summary of your projected principal achievements on conclusion of the funding period, 2026/27. (Word limit: 150 words/ca. 1,000 characters)

Rationale for your Choice of Aims *(Required)*

Project Outline

1 Project summary and primary objectives

Project Title *(Required)*

Project overview. Please describe discrete, relevant and deliverable activities you propose to undertake that align with the Visitor Levy Scheme and Citywide Culture Strategy 2023-30. Please take into consideration the rationale behind the action, existing and new partners you will engage to deliver the action, direct and indirect beneficiaries as well as intended measurable outcomes, both tangible and intangible via monitoring and feedback. Please include the projected delivery period. (Word limit: 1,000 words/ca. 7,000 characters) *(Required)*

2 Select up to 3 key performance indicators aligned with the Visitor Levy Scheme and Citywide Culture Strategy 2023-30 to which your project proposal contributes. Please only select the ones for which you have clear targets and which can be measured with your monitoring tools. Please specify the targets and monitoring tools against the relevant KPI.

Your selected KPI #1

(Required)

Please select only one item

- ☐ the way we ensure Edinburgh's culture, heritage and events provision remain world-leading and competitively attractive to visitors as well as residents
- ☐ the way we foster innovation in response to environmental and societal challenges while promoting responsible and sustainable tourism
- ☐ the way we celebrate the 80th Anniversary of the Edinburgh Festivals
- ☐ the way we provide an enjoyable and safe visitor and resident experience
- ☐ the way we contribute to the wellbeing of individual residents through cultural provision
- ☐ the way we treasure our past and support creativity in learning and across disciplines
- ☐ the way we continue our international reputation as a world festival city
- ☐ the way we generate the number of tourists who visit
- ☐ the way we contribute to securing the monetary value the creative sector generates
- ☐ the way we contribute to the number of people employed in the sector
- ☐ the way we embrace and celebrate our diversity
- ☐ the way we collaborate across the city to maximise engagement and impact,
- ☐ the way we engage with audiences and participants from different socio-economic backgrounds in cultural provision

KPI 1: Please describe your targets in line with the selected key performance indicators and how you would measure and evaluate success. Please describe your monitoring and analytics tool mix [e.g. attendance numbers, post code records, feedback forms] (Word limit: 150 words/ca. 1,000 characters) *(Required)*

Your selected KPI #2

Please select only one item

- ☐ the way we ensure Edinburgh's culture, heritage and events provision remain world-leading and competitively attractive to visitors as well as residents
- ☐ the way we foster innovation in response to environmental and societal challenges while promoting responsible and sustainable tourism
- ☐ the way we celebrate the 80th Anniversary of the Edinburgh Festivals
- ☐ the way we provide an enjoyable and safe visitor and resident experience
- ☐ the way we contribute to the wellbeing of individual residents through cultural provision
- ☐ the way we treasure our past and support creativity in learning and across disciplines
- ☐ the way we continue our international reputation as a world festival city
- ☐ the way we generate the number of tourists who visit
- ☐ the way we contribute to securing the monetary value the creative sector generates
- ☐ the way we contribute to the number of people employed in the sector
- ☐ the way we embrace and celebrate our diversity
- ☐ the way we collaborate across the city to maximise engagement and impact,
- ☐ the way we engage with audiences and participants from different socio-economic backgrounds in cultural provision

KPI 2: Please describe your targets in line with the selected key performance indicators and how you would measure and evaluate success. Please describe your monitoring and analytics tool mix [e.g. attendance numbers, post code records, feedback forms] (Word limit: 150 words/ca. 1,000 characters)

Your selected KPI #3

Please select only one item

- ☐ the way we ensure Edinburgh's culture, heritage and events provision remain world-leading and competitively attractive to visitors as well as residents
- ☐ the way we foster innovation in response to environmental and societal challenges while promoting responsible and sustainable tourism
- ☐ the way we celebrate the 80th Anniversary of the Edinburgh Festivals
- ☐ the way we provide an enjoyable and safe visitor and resident experience
- ☐ the way we contribute to the wellbeing of individual residents through cultural provision
- ☐ the way we treasure our past and support creativity in learning and across disciplines
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- ☐ the way we contribute to the number of people employed in the sector
- ☐ the way we embrace and celebrate our diversity
- ☐ the way we collaborate across the city to maximise engagement and impact,
- ☐ the way we engage with audiences and participants from different socio-economic backgrounds in cultural provision

KPI 3: Please describe your targets in line with the selected key performance indicators and how you would measure and evaluate success. Please describe your monitoring and analytics tool mix [e.g. attendance numbers, post code records, feedback forms] (Word limit: 150 words/ca. 1,000 characters)

3 Integrated Impact Assessment: please identify the groups for which your action and activities are designed (please select as many as apply)

(Required)

Please select all that apply

- ☐ Age: Older people and people in their middle years
- ☐ Age: Young people and children
- ☐ Disability: People with physical disability
- ☐ Disability: People with learning disability
- ☐ Disability: People with sensory impairment
- ☐ Disability: People with long-term medical conditions
- ☐ Disability: People with mental health problems
- ☐ Displacement: Refugees and asylum seekers
- ☐ Ethnicity: Minority ethnic people
- ☐ Gender: Men (including trans men)
- ☐ Gender: Women (including trans women)
- ☐ Gender: Non-binary
- ☐ Religion/Belief: People with different religions or beliefs
- ☐ Religion/Belief: People with no religion or belief
- ☐ Sexual orientation: Lesbian
- ☐ Sexual orientation: Gay
- ☐ Sexual orientation: Bisexual
- ☐ Sexual orientation: Heterosexual
- ☐ Socio-economic disadvantage: People experiencing poverty (due to low income, living in areas of deprivation, material deprivation or homelessness)
- ☐ All groups
- ☐ Not applicable

If applicable, please describe why and how your action and activities are to engage with the selected groups. (Word limit: 150 words/ca. 1,000 characters) (Required)

4 Actions and the City: please select which Council Ward(s) your action and activities are to take place in and/or engage with.

(Required)

Please select all that apply

- ☐ North East: Craighentinn/Duddingston
- ☐ North East: Leith
- ☐ North East: Leith Walk
- ☐ North East: Portobello/Craigmillar
- ☐ North West: Almond
- ☐ North West: Drum Brae/Gyle
- ☐ North West: Corstorphine/Murrayfield
- ☐ North West: Inverleith
- ☐ North West: Forth
- ☐ South East: City Centre
- ☐ South East: Liberton/Gilmerton
- ☐ South East: Morningside
- ☐ South East: Southside/Newington
- ☐ South West: Colinton/Fairmilehead
- ☐ South West: Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart
- ☐ South West: Pentland Hills
- ☐ South West: Sighthill/Gorgie
- ☐ Not applicable (international activity)

Locations: please specify, where known, the locations of your planned activities (Required)

Revenue Budget

Please download the [detailed budget spreadsheet](#) <supporting_documents/innovate-fund_budget-templatexlsx-1> to be completed as per guidelines and submitted by uploading the file in this section. Please refer to the industry rates (listed in the fund guidelines) where fees are listed in the budget form.

1 Budget Overview

Total amount requested from the Innovate Fund (£) (Required)

Total project budget (£) (Required)

Total confirmed in-kind or cash project contributions to the overall budget (£) (Required)

2 Please download the Budget spreadsheet (available at the bottom of the Overview page), complete as per guidelines and submit by uploading the file in this section. Please refer to the industry rates (listed in the fund guidelines) where fees are listed in the budget form.

Please attach a copy of any documents you wish to include to this printout.

Please upload the project budget spreadsheet here.

Budget (Required)

Project Management Model

1 Please outline your governance model for project delivery (for example, named partners in specific localities & related relationship management) (Word limit: 200 words/ca. 1,300 characters):

Governance Model: *(Required)*

2 Please outline project key risk assessment and management points (i.e. technical, financial, schedule, resource/capacity, and external factors) (Word limit: 200 words/ca. 1,300 characters):

Risk Assessment and Management: *(Required)*

3 If applicable, please outline your communications model for working with residents, visitors, local sector and/or international partners (for example, model for developing partnership projects or programmes) (Word limit: 200 words/ca. 1,300 characters):

Working with Communities, Visitors, Practitioners and/or International Partners: *(Required)*

Grants Conditions: Additional Information

1 Grants Conditions: Please provide information regarding your company status, financial records, including specifying reserves; and current business plan as well as commitment to Equalities, Sustainability and Fair Work principles.

Please attach a copy of any documents you wish to include to this printout.

Please upload the organisation's Articles of Association / Constitution

Articles of Association / Constitution *(Required)*

Please attach a copy of any documents you wish to include to this printout.

Please upload the organisation's most recent annual independently examined/audited accounts

Accounts *(Required)*

Please confirm the total value of projected reserves held by your organisation for financial year 2025/26. Please include both restricted and unrestricted reserves with supporting information on the purpose of restricted reserves: *(Required)*

Please attach a copy of any documents you wish to include to this printout.

Please upload your most recent Business Plan.

Business Plan *(Required)*

Please attach a copy of any documents you wish to include to this printout.

Please upload your most recent Diversity and Inclusion Policy/Action Plan.

Diversity and Inclusion Policy/Action Plan *(Required)*

Please attach a copy of any documents you wish to include to this printout.

Please upload your Fair Work policy or an outline of your commitment to Fair Work practices.

Fair Work Policy / Practices *(Required)*

Please attach a copy of any documents you wish to include to this printout.

Please upload the organisation's Environmental Policy / outline of reducing environmental impacts.

Environmental Policy *(Required)*