

Culture and Wellbeing Service - 2026/27 Flexible Funding - Diversity Inclusion Fund Application Form

Overview

THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

CULTURE, WELLBEING & ECONOMY SERVICE

2026/27 FLEXIBLE FUNDING

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION FUND: APPLICATION GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

'The Diversity and Inclusion Fund from Edinburgh City Council is one of the most progressive and inclusive funds in the country. It really sets a precedent for how funding can support diverse artistic output that truly resonates with the communities that they serve. This funding allowed me the opportunity to create a cultural statement as an artist, that has had a lasting impact for Black & Global majority musicians in Scotland.'

Matt Hickman (Brownbear), freelance singer-songwriter.

Since 2019 the Diversity and Inclusion Fund has supported the exceptional work of Creative and Cultural practitioners in Edinburgh. Now in its eighth edition, this 2026 round of funding will support self-employed creatives with protected characteristics to engage audiences in our city. Our mission is in line with the City of Edinburgh Council's [Citywide Culture Strategy 2023-2030](https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/documents/s52772/7.3%20Citywide%20Culture%20Strategy%202023-30.pdf) <<https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/documents/s52772/7.3%20Citywide%20Culture%20Strategy%202023-30.pdf>> and its strategic aim to develop actions that result in Edinburgh being a welcoming and supportive city for creative practitioners developing their careers. This fund allocation also aligns with the [Scottish Government's 2026 – 2031 strategic aim](https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2026/09/programme-government-2026-2031/documents/programme-government-2026-2031/programme-government-2026-2031/govscot%3Adocument/programme-government-2026-2031.pdf) <<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2026/09/programme-government-2026-2031/documents/programme-government-2026-2031/programme-government-2026-2031/govscot%3Adocument/programme-government-2026-2031.pdf>> to build community wealth "[by] harnessing the power of public sector procurement and collective budgets to strengthen local supply chains and create jobs in local communities."

Practitioners looking to develop their careers across all art forms and collaboration models are encouraged to apply.

OUR PURPOSE

'To be honest without this support we could not get our work off the ground. When trying to reach marginalised communities we need the support of this fund to ensure we reach the people who need to be reached and we provide them with opportunities they would not have had.'

Lubna Kerr, playwright and stand-up comedienne.

Most cultural funding in Scotland supports arts organisations and cultural venues directly, leaving independent freelancers without access to vital opportunities to innovate in their practices and share their work with the public independently.

This lack of opportunity is detrimental to the city as a whole; the immense contribution from local freelance creatives forms Edinburgh's distinctive artistic voice nationally as well as internationally. As pressures on freelancers grow our access to cultural experiences diminishes. The Design & Artists Copyright Society reports that freelancers form the backbone of the wider creative industries, driving innovation and international cultural reputation while facing high precarity, late payments, and unstable incomes. This funding opportunity will respond to the increasing needs of self-employed artists determining their own creative pathways that they may develop work in line with their ambitions (Source: [The Design & Artists Copyright Society - DACS](https://www.dacs.org.uk/) <<https://www.dacs.org.uk/>>). In 2025 Bectu, the Creative Sector Trade Union, reported that nearly half (48%) of all creative workers are freelancers, of which 82% described their work as precarious, and only 23% felt confident about their future. They also described the proportion of creatives with caring responsibilities, with 31% of freelancers being parents, and 5% being carers. Their report noted that "freelancing is often framed as a choice. But for many, it's the only option in a system built on short-term contracts... The creative industries cannot thrive while freelancers are left to absorb all the risks" (Source: [Bectu's Big Survey Report 2025](https://union.bectu.org.uk/resource/bectu-big-survey-report.html) <<https://union.bectu.org.uk/resource/bectu-big-survey-report.html>>). By offering funding directly to freelancers, we support local talent in the development of their work, allowing them to bypass barriers to success and recognising the value of their contribution.

BACKGROUND

'The Diversity and Inclusion fund has been invaluable in supporting my practice. My most successful project to date was funded by this grant!'

Flavia D'Avila, theatre director and producer.

This fund supports projects and activities, including development and delivery of creative work and cultural events in Edinburgh that utilise one or multiple art forms; such as visual and performing arts (music, dance, spoken word and theatre), film, digital arts, literature and poetry; to promote greater collaboration and partnerships between artists and creatives with protected characteristics. The impact of this funding will be of value to Edinburgh's wider community, including our diverse audiences and the arts organisations that serve them.

Scotland's draft National Performance Framework (2026) emphasises the role of local government in supporting community development of an inclusive, collaborative and prosperous economy (Source: [Scottish Parliament](https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/Session-6/session-6-finance-and-public-administration-committee/correspondence/2026/update-on-the-npf-letter-of-16-february-2026) <<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/Session-6/session-6-finance-and-public-administration-committee/correspondence/2026/update-on-the-npf-letter-of-16-february-2026>>) including the cultural sector. However, as advocacy group the Scottish Artists Union reports, 83% of freelance creatives face falling real incomes and 69% experience late payments while producing the core work seen in festivals, community projects, and galleries across the city (Source: [Freelance and Forgotten: A report on worker exploitation in Scotland's creative industries](https://www.stuc.org.uk/resources/freelance-and-forgotten-a-report-on-worker-exploitation-in-scotlands-creative-industries.pdf) <<https://www.stuc.org.uk/resources/freelance-and-forgotten-a-report-on-worker-exploitation-in-scotlands-creative-industries.pdf>>). This increasing economic pressure on vital cultural workers contrasts sharply with the enormous value of Edinburgh's cultural output, including Edinburgh's Festivals, to the Scottish economy. The net economic impact of our city's festivals was calculated to be worth over £2.79bn in Edinburgh over the next five years, and annually worth more than £558mn (Source: [Edinburgh Festivals Impact Report June 2026](https://www.edinburghfestivalcity.com/assets/000/000/937/Edinburgh_Festivals_Impact_Study_-_June_2026_original.pdf?1782491819) <https://www.edinburghfestivalcity.com/assets/000/000/937/Edinburgh_Festivals_Impact_Study_-_June_2026_original.pdf?1782491819>).

Facing decreasing performance fees, fewer opportunities to perform, and rising costs overall this fund introduces new grants towards live music events to remove or reduce the financial risks burdening Edinburgh performers. Encouragingly, the equality impact assessment of the National Events Strategy found "events of all sizes provide a growing opportunity to enhance equality, diversity and inclusion both for their audiences, performers, competitors and other participants, and for event

organisers, businesses and their workforce" (Source: [Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-events-strategy-2024-2035-eqia/documents/>](https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-events-strategy-2024-2035-eqia/documents/)). Working with the Edinburgh Freelance Musicians Focus Group, we recognise an urgent call for greater support for musicians, that our local talent can adapt to the changing landscape of the local live scene and better engage audiences across the city.

Scotland's National Events Strategy (2024 – 2031) identified the skilled, experienced, and diverse workforce of the Scottish cultural sector as a key national asset, requiring organisations to identify and address any systemic barriers to accessing work and opportunities for underrepresented groups (Source: [Scotland's National Events Strategy <https://www.visitscotland.org/tourism-events-industry/strategies/national-events#assessments>](https://www.visitscotland.org/tourism-events-industry/strategies/national-events#assessments)). When the Fairer Scotland Duty (FSD) Summary of the National Events Strategy surveyed culture sector workers they found "The most prevalent theme in responses was a desire for better regulation for the sector in terms of working hours, pay, and conditions" (Source: [Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-events-strategy-2024-2035-fsd-summary/documents/>](https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-events-strategy-2024-2035-fsd-summary/documents/)). The eighth edition of the Diversity and Inclusion fund; offering grants including £1k stipend to musicians, to £2.5k bursaries to individual artists, and £5k awards towards collaborative projects; will increase the number of individuals benefitting from public arts funding in 2026, and encourage Edinburgh freelance workers to continue making their work and progress in their careers.

FUND DETAILS

'Getting Diversity and Inclusion funding in the 2nd year of Queer Folks' Tales (LGBTQ+ storytelling show) enabled us to professionalise, to pay our storytellers a proper fee. It was also a stepping stone to getting Creative Scotland funding to take the show Scotland-wide.'

Turan Ali, producer and multidisciplinary artist.

Funding will be awarded to projects to support freelance practice and promote greater partnership and collaboration between artists and creative practitioners. Successful applicants will be artists/creative practitioners with protected characteristics based and/or working in Edinburgh proposing work that reaches, involves, benefits and engages audiences in Edinburgh.

FUNDS AVAILABLE

A total budget of £70,000 is available awarding the following 4 grant categories:

Amount	Description
£1,000	MUSICIAN STIPEND
	£1,000 stipend to freelance musicians to host events in Edinburgh. The stipend must be allocated to fees and other event costs. It can support one or more ticketed/paid or unticketed/free events. Please note: Up to a maximum of 10 successful applications for this grant may be awarded by the Awards Panel.
£2,500	PROJECT BURSARY
	£2,500 project bursary to artists and creatives with protected characteristics who wish to propose a visual arts project that culminates in creative outputs and public exhibition in early March 2027 at St Margaret's House in partnership with Scot-ART. The successful artists will be provided with free of charge access to Gallery 16 (St Margaret's House) to develop their project between January and March 2027. Artists may apply individually or as a collective. The budget should include both artists' fees and materials. Please note: Up to a maximum of 4 successful applications for this grant may be awarded by the Awards Panel.
£2,500	PROJECT BURSARY (Parents & Foster Carers)
	£2,500 project bursary to artists and creatives for parents and foster carers returning to their practice who wish to propose a creative project to be developed and delivered through a supported creative collective working model that offers bespoke networking, peer learning, and training opportunities. The successful artists will be also offered bespoke service support offered by The City of Edinburgh Council's Parental Employability Support (PES) team. The budget should include both artists' fees and materials. Artists must apply individually. Please note: Up to a maximum of 4 successful applications for this grant may be awarded by the Awards Panel.
£5,000	AWARD
	Up to £5,000 award to artists and creatives with protected characteristics working in collaboration with other artists for projects developed in financial year 2026/27 and completed by the end of December 2027. Cross-disciplinary collaboration and different models of collaborative working are encouraged as combining different talents or mediums leads to unexpected and innovative results. Please note: Up to a maximum of 8 successful applications for this grant may be awarded by the Awards Panel.

PROPOSAL CRITERIA

'Funding from the Diversity and Inclusion Fund forged a path for the sharing of a powerful intergenerational story through mixed-media art to redress harmful colonial misconceptions. Dedicated time and space to build my installation, Mervella's Shoe, was critical to the sensitive transformation of personal history into public archive for the greater good.'

Leilani Taneus-Miller; independent creative writer, artist, and researcher.

We invite applications from diverse artists and creatives with protected characteristics (and organisations) to submit proposals which meet TWO or more of the following criteria:

1. They recognise the need for greater representation and visibility of work and narratives in the arts, culture and heritage sector developed by artists and creatives with protected characteristics. (ESSENTIAL)

AND

2. They support and sustain independent practice.
3. They have a clear vision for the project, its outcomes and learning;
4. They present a mutually beneficial partnership / collaborative working model where applicable (collaboration grants only).
5. They commit to continuing and /or increasing engagement with groups and communities often underrepresented in the arts and culture sector;
6. They explain how this project is relevant to Edinburgh's cultural tapestry;
7. They consider how the project creates further opportunities for development and / or engagement.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

Individuals wishing to apply for a grant from the Diversity and Inclusion Fund must be able to demonstrate how their project meets TWO or more of the following funding priorities:

1. Meaningful artist/practitioner lead involvement and direction in project development and delivery;
2. Imaginative and/or experimental creative concept;
3. Use and promotion of languages as a means of expressing one's cultural background;
4. Use of multi art forms within projects;
5. Planned demonstrable learning and / or impact from the project activity;
6. Consideration for multiple characteristics and identities often underrepresented in the arts and culture sector.

FUNDING CRITERIA

We will be assessing the likely impact of the proposed activity on greater visibility and representation of diverse arts and culture and potential reach of outlined cultural activity across the city.

Our focus will be on what major difference this funding will make to the independent artist and their project (i.e. what wouldn't happen without this support) at the proposed stage of its development and delivery.

Please note that all project facilitators, artists, creatives, managers involved in the project delivery are expected to be remunerated as per industry rates. Please consider and refer to the relevant industry rates recommended by Creatives Industries Bodies in your project budget.

Broadcasting, Entertainment, Communications and Theatre Union's (Bectu's) Rate Cards <<https://bectu.org.uk/get-involved/ratecards/>>

Independent Theatre Council (ITC) Rates of Pay <<https://www.itc-arts.org/rates-of-pay/>>

Scottish Society of Playwrights <<http://www.scottishsocietyofplaywrights.co.uk/commission-rates.html>> | **UK Theatre Writers' Guild** <<https://uktheatre.org/writers-guild/>>

Musicians Union <<https://musiciansunion.org.uk/rates/>> | **DJ Hire Rates** <<https://www.motion-entertainment.co.uk/blog/how-much-does-a-dj-cost-in-the-uk>>

The Society of Authors <<https://societyofauthors.org/Advice/Rates-Fees>>

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>>

Theatre Choreographers, Designers & Directors <<https://uktheatre.org/choreographers-designers-directors/>> | **Opera & Dance** <<https://uktheatre.org/opera-dance/>> | **Performers & Stage Management** <<https://uktheatre.org/performers-stage-management/>>

Videographer Rates <<https://freelancerclub.net/videographer-salary>>

Only in special circumstances when project partners declare that they do not require to be paid for their work and their contribution towards the project delivery is in-kind they can be involved on a no-fee basis.

Applicants should apply for the exact amount needed for their project and will not automatically be awarded the full amount of their application submission. The awards panel reserves the right to award an amount different to the amount quoted in the application.

AWARDS RECIPIENTS

Please note that the funding award for successful applications will be issued in one payment (100%) on receipt of a signed funding agreement. You will be required to submit for approval, a project report on completion of project.

You will be advised by w/c 23 November 2026 if your application has been successful by email. Funding payments to successful applicants will to be made within 4 weeks from the date of notification of a successful funding application.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

The deadline for applications is Monday 2nd November 2026 (23:59 GMT). Late applications will not be accepted.

MAKING YOUR APPLICATION

WHO CAN APPLY?

- Projects must be submitted by lead artist / creatives with protected characteristics and take place within the City of Edinburgh boundary with Edinburgh-based partners.
- Partnership working is a City and Culture Plan funding priority therefore applicants will be expected to place an emphasis on this in any submission. This can be both in cash and/or in kind.
- Independent artists and creatives registered as self-employed or sole traders are eligible to apply individually for £1,000 musician stipend and for £2,500 bursaries and in partnership with other independent practitioners for awards of up to £5,000. The lead artists will be asked to provide their UTR number confirming their self-employment status.
- Only one application per project idea can be considered.
- Those in receipt of the Diversity and Inclusion 2025/26 are eligible to apply as long as they present, or are part of, a new partnership/project for consideration.

Applications cannot be considered:

- for projects already started or planned to start before the decision is made, unless it is the next stage of a previously completed phase of work;
- if received after the deadline date; and
- unless there is a suitable management/governance structure in place.

Funding cannot support:

- Revenue costs or permanent posts;
- Capital projects;
- International travel or accommodation costs;
- Projects which primarily take place outside Edinburgh.

BEFORE YOU APPLY

Before starting your application using the online form, it is recommended that you prepare your answers. We have provided a PDF Version of the Application Form, as well as the Application Guidelines, and the Budget Spreadsheet for this purpose. Links to the Council's Culture Plan, Business Plan and Privacy Notice are also available in the Related documents section.

APPLICATION PROCESS AND AWARDS PANEL

Submitted application forms will be acknowledged via email. Applications will be considered by members of the awards panel, comprising of specialist independent advisors. All project proposals will be reviewed regarding the outlined creative concept, envisaged learning/impact and budget planning.

The panel will meet within 2 weeks of the fund deadline, and you will be informed by email of the outcome no more than 4 weeks following the deadline.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

If successful, the project partners will be notified of the award recommendation for their acknowledgement. The funding award agreement reflecting the project proposal and any potential adjustment will be signed and the award release within 4 weeks from the date of the award notification.

The awardees will be expected to develop the project as indicated in their funding agreement and should any circumstances change, advise the Grant Officer of any major adjustments. All awardees are also expected to submit one final project delivery report as part of the terms and conditions of the funding award. The delivery report template will be sent along with the funding agreement.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND ACCESS

Once you have submitted your application form, please complete the [Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form](#). </sfc/3bda94eb>

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 team by email at 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.

LEVEL OF FUNDING REQUESTED

1 Please select which level of funding you are applying for?

(Required)

Please select only one item

- ☐ £1,000 (Musician Event Stipend)
- ☐ £2,500 (Visual Arts Residency at St Margaret's House)
- ☐ £2,500 (Supported Residency Programme for Creative Parents Returning to Practice)
- ☐ £5,000 (Artist-Artist Collaboration)

LEAD ARTIST

1 Contact information

Lead Artist's First Name *(Required)*

Lead Artist's Surname *(Required)*

Lead Artist's Email *(Required)*

Lead Artist's Phone number *(Required)*

Lead Artist's Profile. Tell us more about your creative practice [max 500 characters] *(Required)*

Lead Artist's Website/Social Media Links *(Required)*

Lead Artist's Unique Taxpayer Reference (UTR). Please note that we are only able to arrange for payments to sole traders or self-employed creatives. *(Required)*

STIPEND/BURSARY APPLICATION

Audio/Video Submission

If you are submitting your response to the application questions via an audio or video file, please paste the file link to the answer box.

1 STIPEND/BURSARY PROPOSAL

Project Title *(Required)*

Project Dates *(Required)*

Activity Location(s) *(Required)*

Project description. Please refer to the Guidelines for support to complete this section and limit answers to 500 words.
(Required)

What difference will this funding make to your practice? (maximum of 250 words) *(Required)*

2 Policies and Procedures: If your project involves working with children or vulnerable adults at risk, you must have relevant policies and procedures in place to prevent abuse and respond to actual or suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation.

(Required)

Please select all that apply

- ☐ Child Protection policy / procedure
- ☐ Vulnerable Adult Protection policy / procedure
- ☐ Not applicable

STIPEND/BURSARY BUDGET

Please ensure that the project costs are equal to the amount of the grant you are applying for (either £1,000 Musician Stipend, oer £2,500 Bursary).

1 Stipend/Bursary project budget contribution requested from the Fund

Subtotals: Fees to Artists / Creatives (requested from this Fund) (£) *(Required)*

Subtotals: Direct delivery costs (e.g., space, equipment hire, access) (requested from this Fund) (£) *(Required)*

Subtotals: Marketing / Outreach costs incl. advertising and community / industry engagement (requested from this Fund) (£) *(Required)*

Subtotals: Admin / Overhead costs (requested from this Fund) (£) *(Required)*

Subtotals: Contingency (5% - 10% of the grant award) (requested from this Fund) (£) *(Required)*

2 Additional comments

Please add any comments regarding the proposed budget, incl. fee rates *(Required)*

STIPEND/BURSARY APPLICATION DECLARATION

1 You are being asked to declare that:

(Required)

Please select all that apply

- ☐ you have read and will comply with all Council funding conditions; and
- ☐ to the best of your knowledge the information contained in this application, and any accompanying documents, is accurate.

2 Signatory

Lead Artist (Full name) *(Required)*

Lead Artist's Email *(Required)*

LEAD ARTIST AND ASSOCIATE ARTIST'S CONTACT DETAILS

1 Contact information

Lead Artist's First Name

Lead Artist's Surname *(Required)*

Lead Artist's Email *(Required)*

Lead Artist's Phone number *(Required)*

Lead Artist's Profile. Tell us more about your creative practice (max 500 words) *(Required)*

Lead Artist's Website/Social Media Links *(Required)*

Lead Artist's Unique Taxpayer Reference (UTR). Please note that we are only able to arrange for payments to sole traders or self-employed creatives. *(Required)*

Associate Artist's First Name *(Required)*

Associate Artist's Surname *(Required)*

Associate Artist's Email *(Required)*

Associate Artist's Phone number *(Required)*

Associate Artist's Profile. Tell us more about your creative practice (max 500 words) *(Required)*

Associate Artist's Website / Social Media links *(Required)*

JOINT PROJECT APPLICATION

Audio/Video Submission

If you are submitting your response to the application questions via an audio or video file, please paste the file link to the answer box.

1 Project Title

Title *(Required)*

2 Project Dates

Start and Finishing Dates *(Required)*

3 Activity Location

List all locations and postcodes, where known *(Required)*

4 Project Roles

Please name all collaborators and describe project roles for each partner (maximum of 250 words) *(Required)*

5 Project Description

Please describe the project you are seeking funding for. Please refer to the Guidelines for support to complete this section and limit answers to 500 words. *(Required)*

6 Envisaged Learning or Impact

Tell us what outcomes (impact and/or learning) you envisage for your project activity in line with the Funding Priorities. Please consider direct/indirect beneficiaries, tangible and intangible outputs and next steps of the project delivery beyond this stage of the implementation period (maximum of 500 words). *(Required)*

7 Policies and Procedures: If your project involves working with children or vulnerable adults at risk, you must have relevant policies and procedures in place to prevent abuse and respond to actual or suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation.

(Required)

Please select all that apply

- ☐ Child Protection policy and procedure
- ☐ Vulnerable Adult Protection policy and procedure
- ☐ Not applicable

JOINT APPLICATION BUDGET

Please download the [Budget Form](#) <supporting_documents/2025-26-flexible-funding-diversity-and-inclusion-fund-joint-application-budgetxlsx> for completion and uploading. Failure to provide this information when completing your online application will result in it being rejected.

1 PROJECT BUDGET

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

Please upload the project budget spreadsheet here

Detailed Budget (Please use the template provided) *(Required)*

JOINT APPLICATION DECLARATION

All joint applications must be confirmed by two people submitting this application.

1 You are being asked to declare that:

(Required)

Please select all that apply

- ☐ (a) you have read and will comply with all Council funding conditions; and
- ☐ (b) to the best of your knowledge the information contained in this application, and any accompanying documents, is accurate.

2 Signatories:

Lead Artist (Full name): *(Required)*

Lead Artist's Email *(Required)*

Associate Artist (Full name): *(Required)*

Associate Artist's Email *(Required)*