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HS2



HS2 Community and Environment Fund/Business and Local Economy Fund

Guidance for arts based organisations and/or projects which focus on the arts

This guidance document has been written for organisations that are interested in applying for funding from the HS2 Community and Environment Fund (CEF) or Business and Local Economy Fund (BLEF) and their proposed project is focused on **the arts**.

Please note this has been designed to help with commonly asked questions and to support the application process. It is not a replacement document for the CEF Guidance document and organisations will need to read the full CEF Guidance and FAQs document before applying, in addition to this tailored guidance.

You can find the CEF Guidance & FAQs document containing important information for all applicants here: <https://hs2funds.org.uk/home/community-environment-fund/community-environment-fund-guidance/>

Application Criteria

Before applying for CEF or BLEF funding, arts based organisations or projects covering the arts need to fully consider the points below. The applicant must also manage its own funds and have its own bank account, which the grant funds will be paid into. Additionally, if the project is requesting funding towards a staff post, the applicant must be the employer.

Who can apply?

To be eligible for funding, your organisation must;

Be formally established for public benefit and is not for profit. For non-statutory bodies, you must have a governing document (e.g. constitution or memorandum and articles of association) which includes appropriate statements on members, Directors or Trustees not benefiting financially from the organisation or its dissolution, a minimum of 3 unrelated people on the committee and have your own bank account (which requires 2 signatories).

We will not directly fund individuals, limited liability partnerships, private sector company/business or any organisation that cannot demonstrate appropriate governance.

For BLEF, this funding programme is targeted at organisations which have formal objectives that support the development of local business/tourism. We look to local business support organisations, including Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Business Improvement Districts and Trade Associations, to identify appropriate projects which will help maintain business activity in local communities disrupted by the construction of HS2.

Assessment criteria

- **Need**
Why is the project needed in the local or wider community or by the local business community? How is the community or local businesses demonstrably disrupted by the construction of HS2? How have local people, community or civic organisations, and/or businesses been involved in the project's development? How have your audiences, beneficiaries, customers and/or service users been involved? What engagement and consultation work have you undertaken and how have external and internal views on the project's plans been included in its development? What support does the project have from the local community or local businesses?
- **Planning**
How have you planned your activity to be successful? We want to gain a full picture of what will happen and have assurance that everything has been planned thoroughly. Examples of things to consider for a revenue project include: who will take part, when and where will sessions take place, and how long will sessions last? For a capital project, examples of things to consider include: who will oversee the project, how long it will take, is planning permission required/in place? How will the risks be managed? How will you monitor the project and evaluate its success?
- **Disruption**
The application needs to demonstrate the level of disruption from construction of HS2 on the community or communities that will benefit from the project. For BLEF projects, how will local economic activity be maintained or enhanced through the project?

Please review the Environmental Statement relevant to your area.

London to the West Midlands Environmental Statement;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hs2-phase-one-environmental-statement-documents>

London to the West Midlands Additional Provisions;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/additional-provisions-for-the-high-speed-rail-london-to-west-midlands-bill>

There may also be additional information on what construction work is happening in your area can be found on the HS2 local community webpages <https://www.hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/local-community-webpages/> There is also an interactive map which shows what current and upcoming works are being carried which can be found here <https://www.hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/map/#7/52.4530/-1.4880/filter=hs2-stations,hs2-network>

- **Sustainability**

How will the project be sustainable or leave a sustainable legacy? If a capital project, will sufficient revenue be generated to keep the facility running and well-maintained for years to come (e.g. setting up a long term replacement fund) and who will be responsible for its long term operation and maintenance? If it is a revenue project, how will it continue post any investment? If the project itself doesn't continue, how will the outcomes be sustainable or leave a lasting legacy?

Project Beneficiaries

The project needs to focus on people, communities or businesses that will or are being disrupted by the construction of HS2. Have you considered reaching diverse audiences and communities for wide public benefit, and aimed to achieve equality, diversity and inclusion in your project plans and delivery?

If your project will also benefit people, communities or businesses who are not disrupted by the construction of HS2, please note that the % of funding from CEF/BLEF towards your project total should be proportional to the % of beneficiaries/businesses experiencing disruption.

Project Funding

We will only fund direct project costs, that is, costs that relate clearly and directly to the delivery of the project. Please see section 3.5 of the CEF Guidance & FAQs document for further information on direct project costs.

Also, if you are requesting funding for items, such as equipment that will be used by the project but also for other work of the organisation then we cannot pay for the full cost of that item. We can only cover the amount that is proportionate to its use on the project.

For example: you are requesting funding for a kiln (cost of £5,000) which will be used in 100 project workshops over a 3 year period in disrupted areas. You will also be using the kiln to deliver a further 100 workshops outside the area of disruption during the same period. The kiln has a lifespan of 5 years.

You will only be able to request £1,500 towards the cost of the kiln.

- £5,000 divided by 2 (only half the delivery takes place in disrupted area) = £2,500.
- 60% (3/5ths) of £2,500 = £1,500

If you can evidence that the kiln will be used by disrupted communities after your project is complete, we may be able fund more towards the cost.

Section 3.3 of the CEF Guidance & FAQs document states the costs that are not eligible under this funding programme. With specific relation to arts projects, these include;

- Personal equipment and clothing
- Organisational overheads or running costs which the organisation would incur whether the project was running or not (although we will consider funding support costs incurred as a direct result of running the project)
- Campaigning or lobbying projects
- Feasibility studies
- Holidays (UK and Overseas)
- Overseas trips or any international activity

Funding requests should also provide value for money in terms of the amount being requested and the impact that it will have. We may not fund one off events or a series of events over a short space of time that do not result in a lasting legacy or meaningful impact for disrupted communities beyond their delivery.

Commissioning artworks or artists

The programme requirements state that you must obtain a minimum of three quotes for the provision of all goods and services with a cost of £250 or more and in some cases be expected to carry out a tender process. Occasionally, there will be overriding reasons why it is not possible to tender, eg; the art work is a continuation of a previous piece of work and the same artist is required for consistency, the type of artwork is exclusive to one artist with no one offering a comparative style in the region, or a public competition has been held to choose the artist or artwork. On these occasions, the group should put forward their case for not tendering and explain how it offers best value in their application form for consideration. This information would need to be provided at the time of application.

Applications for Capital Funding

Capital Projects – up to £20,000: Section 3.4 of the CEF Guidance & FAQs document states that if you are applying for capital funding of up to £20,000 you do not formally need security of tenure if the freeholder/landowner is a not-for-profit organisation. However, you will require permission from the freeholder/landowner which includes a statement guaranteeing public access to the project for a minimum of 2 years from when the capital work is completed. You will find the Funds permission form that will need to be completed by the freeholder/landowner and submitted with your application here <https://hs2funds.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/HS2-Landowner-Permission-Form.docx>

Capital Projects – over £20,000: Section 3.4 of the CEF Guidance & FAQs document states that to be eligible to apply for capital funding of over £20,000, the applicant must either own the freehold interest or have a sufficient leasehold interest in the land involved in the project. A copy of the leasehold or freehold document will need to be submitted with your application.

Applications for Revenue Funding

Sections 3.5 of the CEF Guidance & FAQs document highlights what revenue funding can be used for.

Example Case Studies for Guidance

The examples below provide some information about the key points we would look for when assessing these types of projects.

Improvements to a Local Museum – CEF Local (under £100,000)

A charity runs a museum in a large town which is close to the line of route of HS2. They own the building, but their permanent displays are outdated and are not engaging for the members of the local community. They wish to apply for funds towards a complete overhaul of their display space to make them more accessible and relevant to all.

During assessment we would check that they have carried out consultation to evidence the need for the project and this may include discussions with local schools, the general public and other local community groups, demonstrating a diversity of current or potential visitors. The project should take on board the feedback in order to ensure it is inclusive and responds to the needs of the community.

Community Arts Sessions – CEF Local (under £100,000)

A charity wishes to apply for funding for equipment, materials and sessional staff to provide 12 months of art sessions in a city centre.

During assessment we would check there is a clear activity plan that details the number of sessions and the length of each session. The applicant must also have consulted with potential attendees to evidence the need for the art sessions. In some city centres the majority of people frequenting and benefitting from this type of project may be from disrupted areas. However, there will also be other city centres areas where a large majority of people will be from areas that are not disrupted. This will need to be considered by the applicant, as the grant requested must be proportionate to the percentage of beneficiaries experiencing disruption from the construction of HS2. Match funding will need to cover the number of beneficiaries that would benefit from the project that are not from disrupted communities. If the equipment purchased has a lifespan longer than 12 months or will be used to provide additional sessions to people not disrupted, then we will also only pay a certain proportion of the total cost.

To run an arts festival to encourage tourism – BLEF

A business/trade partnership group wishes to apply for funding for a project to drive footfall and enhance tourism in a small historical rural town close to the line of route.

The project includes a series of interactive arts based events over a two week long festival which are designed to make people aware that the area is open for business and to attract new people to the area and the businesses that operate there.

During assessment we would check that they had consulted with local businesses on the need and the design of the project. The consultation and project plan need to evidence that disrupted businesses have identified that the project is needed and how it aims to support these business to maintain their services/activities during the HS2 construction period. We would also check how the project will deliver a measurable impact, primarily economic, though social impact is of interest, and that the project will provide an ongoing legacy from a short term intervention.

In this example, the majority of the people attending the events may be from outside of the disrupted area. If that is the case, we would expect a significant amount of match funding from other sources to contribute to the project.

We would also welcome additional summary information on how the business community is engaging with HS2 as a construction project, such as supply chain or contractor engagement, though this is not mandatory.

Capital Projects

An arts charity wishes to refurbish its current building, is planning to move to a new venue which requires refurbishment or is planning on building a new venue.

The group can apply for funding towards existing venue improvements, such as improving disabled access or upgrading older parts of building to bring into new use for the community.

It could also apply for funding towards a more substantial refurbishment of an existing venue or towards a new-build venue. In this case, CEF is unlikely to be the majority or highest percentage funder so evidencing match funding is vital, including identifying secured and pledge matched funding. It is also important to note that CEF focuses on providing benefits to communities that are disrupted by the construction of HS2.

Again, during assessment we would check that the applicant has carried out consultation to evidence the need for the project and this may include discussions with local schools, the general public and other local community groups, demonstrating a diversity of current or potential visitors and audiences. For large scale capital projects over £100,000, consultation would need to be undertaken with disrupted beneficiaries across multiple geographical areas, such as across local authority areas or an entire city region or county, primarily demonstrating consultation with current or potential beneficiaries in areas disrupted near to the HS2 line of route. CEF strategic applications should also give consideration to arts that will be provided from the facility, ensuring that they will encourage participation and engagement from all members of society.

For all projects involving capital work, you will need to ensure that you have the necessary permissions in place (such as planning permission) and that the project meets all current legislation and regulations (such as building regulations).

An important point to note here for arts organisations/projects is the location of your project compared to the location of the people who will access it. If beneficiaries travel from an area that is not disrupted by HS2 to access your facility or services that is/are in an area that is disrupted, they are beneficiaries but will not be classed as being disrupted beneficiaries for the purpose of this funding programme.

Further Information

If you need any further information please contact Groundwork UK by email (HS2FundsHS2funds@groundwork.org.uk) who can arrange a telephone call to speak to you about your project idea and the criteria of the Funds. You can also visit the Funds website (<https://hs2funds.org.uk/>) which includes an online map of projects that have been funded to date by the programme which can be found here: <https://hs2funds.org.uk/home/projects-funded-by-hs2-funds/>