



Sustainable Improvement Fund 2020-2021

The Sustainable Improvement Fund (SIF) is a major part of the Museum Development North West Programme (MDNW). This Programme embraces Arts Council England's five strategic goals set out in *Great Art and Culture for Everyone* (<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/mission/>) to drive development and deliver sustainability, resilience and innovation in museums in the North West.

What can I apply for?

For 2020-21 we will support museums around these key areas:

- a) collections – development, care or management
- b) audiences – diversifying audiences or community engagement
- c) environmental sustainability – public facing work or operational/internal progress towards reducing carbon
- d) specific Accreditation areas for development (previously known as Areas for Improvement)
- e) seed funding to bring in extra capacity or knowledge to work up an application to Arts Council England's National Lottery Project Grants

The Fund reflects the North West's commitment to partnership working and will still be open to consortium applications.

We will support bids that complement and not duplicate other sources of museum development support, or other campaigns and initiatives funded by Arts Council England. If you have a project in mind to trial new ideas, develop complex plans and form long-term partnerships that extend beyond the life of the project, you might want to consider applying to Arts Council England's National Lottery Project Grants. For further information on this see Appendix 1 at the end of this guidance.

Other sources of funding you might consider are listed on our website <https://museumdevelopmentnorthwest.wordpress.com/funding-sources/>.

Eligibility

To be eligible for SIF funding, museums must be Accredited or formally working towards Accreditation. Museums that are not Accredited, or not formally working towards it, can be part of a project involving a consortium of museums but an Accredited museum must be the lead partner. National Portfolio Organisations, national museums, English Heritage and National Trust properties are ineligible to apply, although they can be part of consortium bids.

All museums meeting the criteria above are eligible to apply, but priority will be given to those museums that completed and submitted an annual benchmarking return for 2018-19.

Only bids that meet the stipulated criteria will be taken to the MDNW Sustainable Improvement Fund panel. A checklist of criteria is included in Appendix 2.

Programme criteria

For 2020-21 SIF will mainly support projects that are expected to be completed by February 2021, but consideration will be given to projects that could last up to two years, particularly bids from consortiums or museum services with multiple Accredited sites. These longer projects must be completed and final reports submitted by February 2022.

We will support museum activity against the list in the 'What can I apply for?' section, through funding projects that:

- Involve single museums, networks or partnerships
- Fit with the museum's (or consortium's) purpose, aims and objectives and future plans
- Demonstrate a need for the project to happen

Successful projects will also:

- Demonstrate benefits for the wider sector and potential to share the learning from the project
- Build on projects previously supported by other MDNW programmes e.g. to implement an action plan produced from participation in a programme

Even if your project is not about environmental sustainability, we expect you to show you have considered the environmental impact of your project. The principles of how we work to consider and reduce our carbon footprint and what we expect from projects we support is outlined in Appendix 3.

How much funding is available?

There is £50,000 available to be allocated in 2020-21.

A single Accredited museum can apply for up to £5,000 for a project; a partnership of museums or a museum service with multiple Accredited sites can apply for up to £10,000.

Projects must be completed (with invoices and final report submitted to MDNW) by the end of February 2021, unless we have agreed that the project can extend over two years.

When can I apply?

The SIF fund is now a single-stage process. You need to allow enough time for funding decisions to be made before you start your project.

2020-21	
By 5pm 14 th Feb 2020	Deadline for informal discussion with one of MDNW team if required
5pm 28 th February 2020	Final deadline for SIF applications
W/b 16 th or 30 th March 2020	SIF panel meets to consider proposals
6 th April 2020	Applicants informed of outcome
After 6 th April 2020	Projects can start, once funding agreements have been signed
26 th February 2021	Projects must have been completed (and final report and invoices submitted to MDNW) unless alternative arrangements have been agreed for longer projects

Museum Development North West contacts

If you would like to discuss your ideas with one of the MDNW Museum Development Officers before applying you can do so before 14th February 2020.

Alex Bird, Museum Development Officer (Workforce & Skills)
alexander.bird@manchester.ac.uk, 07748 932680

Kaye Hardyman, Museum Development Officer (North)
kaye.hardyman@manchester.ac.uk, 07748 147151

Lynsey Jones, Museum Development Officer (South)
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Who makes the decisions?

Bids are considered at a meeting of the MDNW Sustainable Improvement Fund panel, chaired by a Director from one of the major National Portfolio Organisation museums in the North West. Recommendations are made for approval and sign off by the MDNW Directors' Group that represents the major museum NPOs in the North West.

Appendix 1

National Lottery Project Grants

Your project may be a better fit with Arts Council England's National Lottery Project Grants, which are open on a rolling programme for applications for museum-based activity. Accredited museums can apply at any time for funding of £15,000 or under, for projects that can last up to three years, and will receive a decision within six weeks.

Museum projects are focused on museum practice i.e. a museum's collections, or other activities linked to its core mission or on developing the museum or its staff's expertise.

To be eligible for National Lottery Project Grants, any museum project must have a long- or short-term public engagement outcome as part of its project aims.

Museum-focused work could include:

- public programming, including displays and exhibitions (which could include some purchase costs, e.g. display cases)
- commemorative learning projects around the museum's core collections and objectives
- digital and creative media projects that encourage the public to interact with collections
- projects focusing on the conservation of objects, as long as there are associated public engagement outcomes
- projects that engage the public in consultation on collecting or other museum activity (for example community or youth panels)
- outreach activity or community engagement projects linked to the museum's core objectives
- projects focused on engaging people with historic art collections
- organisational development work and professional development including:
 - organisational resilience-focused activities, where these will have a longer-term benefit for a museum's ability to reach audiences and the quality of its programme of work
 - projects involving professional development for Accredited museum staff and volunteers

Full details of the National Lottery Project Grants for £15,000 or under are at <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/projectgrants>.

Appendix 2 Criteria checklist

Each application received will be checked by the MDNW team against this criteria before being passed to the panel for assessment.

Is the museum (or lead museum for a consortium bid) an Accredited museum or formally working towards?	Yes – proceed to panel	No – not submitted to panel
Does it meet a minimum of one of the areas of funding areas as listed in 'What can I apply for?'	Yes – proceed to panel	No – not submitted to panel
Is it within budget?	Yes – proceed to panel	No – not submitted to panel
Have the figures in the budget been added up correctly?	Yes – proceed to panel	No – return to applicant for correction
Has the museum (or majority of museums in a consortium bid) completed the annual benchmarking survey 2018-19?	Yes – priority for panel	No – panel will consider as a lower priority

Appendix 3

Museum Development Green Principles

As passionate advocates and supporters of green and sustainable practices, we encourage all our partners to follow a set of principles we also strive to adhere to.

Work should be paperless as much as possible. This means:

- We do not print out emails or documents unless necessary
- We encourage speakers to make presentations available digitally
- Documents are shared and edited through digital tools

We should reduce our personal, and organisational, carbon emissions wherever possible. This means:

- Use public transport as much as possible. To encourage this, we will only reimburse travel at the level of the equivalent train fare

Events are one of the biggest sources of emissions for us. As such:

- We will encourage phone and video conferencing
- We will circulate presentations to delegates electronically wherever possible
- We will ensure any materials used on our events are recycled, and encourage partners to do the same
- We will use local suppliers for catering, and ask if their produce comes from local, sustainable sources
- We will ask caterers to use recycled cups for meetings

We can encourage adaptation of our Green Principles through funding agreements:

- Partner organisations will be asked to include 'Sustainability Measures' in funding bids
- Project reports will include a section on how these measures were enacted, and how successful they were
- Public-facing projects will be asked to include a statement of organisational green principles, and sustainability measures

As a group we will continue to support networks that promote and encourage sustainable practices and awareness.

As a group we know these principles are aspirational, and a statement of intent. We will not always be able to meet them, but we will always ask, and always look to do better.

Our own Sustainability Strategy for 2018-22 is available on our website, <https://museumdevelopmentnorthwest.wordpress.com>, under the 'About Us' tab.

Appendix 4

Frequently asked questions

How long can my SIF project last?

In 2020-21 you can apply for a project that can run from April 2020 to February 2021. We will also consider funding projects that could last up to two years, particularly bids from consortiums or museum services with multiple Accredited sites. You must indicate a realistic timescale for your project at the point of application. All funded projects must be completed by February 2021 unless we have agreed that they can extend into 2022.

Can I apply for more than one project at once?

You can be the lead applicant in only one project at any time but you could be involved as a partner in another project.

Who can I contact to discuss my ideas in advance?

Museums can discuss their proposals with one of the Museum Development Officers before they submit a final application.

If my application is rejected can I reapply?

If your application is rejected we will provide feedback, but the decisions of the MDNW Directors' Group are final.

Will the grant be paid in full or instalments?

80% of the grant will be paid on receipt of a signed funding agreement. The final instalment of 20% will be released once we have received your Final Evaluation report.

What do I have to submit at the end of the project?

We recommend that in planning your project you build in a structure for evaluating it and capturing the impact, and take images of your project. These will inform your final report.

Final Evaluation reports must be submitted by email using the MDNW template available on our blog as a requirement of the grant, with images and feedback as appropriate so we can use them as case studies for the Sustainable Improvement Fund.

Data collection

All museums in receipt of SIF funding must submit a return to MDNW's annual benchmarking survey.



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