

Culture Fund - Guidance for Applicants 2026/27



Education, Leisure and Housing

Arts, Museums and Heritage Service

Background

The Culture Fund is managed on behalf of Orkney Islands Council by the Arts, Museums and Heritage Service within Education, Leisure & Housing.

Cultural activity, including the delivery of festivals, museums, heritage centres and arts projects, brings significant publicity and additional visitors to Orkney, as well as enabling residents to access the highest quality cultural events and activities. Orkney Islands Council is committed to supporting the delivery of cultural activities within Orkney, and alongside providing financial support to a range of cultural and sporting organisations through other funding schemes, also aims through this fund to support organisations which deliver cultural activities.

Funding from the Culture Fund Open Pot is allocated by the Council on an annual basis, via an open application process. This fund will support cultural organisations for their general running costs as well as specific elements, e.g. educational or community-based activities. The fund will also support non-cultural organisations to deliver cultural elements of their programmes or activities.

If you already deliver cultural activities for which you would like to apply for Council funding, or if you have an idea for a new cultural project, these notes will explain how to apply to the Culture Fund.

What is considered eligible as a cultural activity?

The organisation must deliver or promote a cultural programme or have cultural elements in its programme to be considered. Culture, in this instance, is defined as being:

- Arts.
- Heritage.
- Language, i.e. Orkney dialect.

Which projects are eligible for assistance through this scheme?

- Applications will only be considered from properly constituted organisations which are not for profit and can satisfy the Charity Test. Applications will only be considered for non-commercial activities, i.e. projects which do not distribute a profit.

- The charity test is the legal set of requirements that an organisation must pass to become a charity and be entered in the Scottish Charity Register. The charity test is in two main parts:

1. An organisation has to show that it has only charitable purposes and
2. That it provides public benefit in achieving those purposes

Public benefit is what your organisation must provide to satisfy the Charity Test. We will need to be satisfied that your organisation will make a positive difference for the public.

The charity test also states that an organisation cannot become a charity, or continue to be one, if:

- It is set up to be or advance a political party
- Its governing document allows it to use its assets (cash or property) for non charitable purposes
- Its governing document allows Scottish Ministers to direct or control its activities. [Meeting the Charity Test full guidance](#) and [Being a Charity in Scotland guidance](#) provide further information on the charity test and what's required.
- The organisation must have clear financial procedures and produce the most recent *signed* audited accounts in keeping with the scale of their operation.
- Applicants must be able to demonstrate organisational track record and success, and/or success in delivering projects of a similar nature or scale to the proposed activities.
- The organisation must indicate that it is working within Fair Work principles. Orkney Islands Council also extends this to working with freelance practitioners and would expect creatives and other freelancers to be paid at industry standard rates e.g. for artists please refer to the Scottish Artists Union rates of pay: <https://www.artistsunion.scot/rates-pay>
- The cultural activity must take place in Orkney and be of benefit to Orkney.
- The organisation or project must support delivery of at least one of the Council's priorities or values. These are described in the Council Plan:

The Council's current values are:

- People
- Unity
- Trust
- Ownership
- Creativity

The Council's current key priorities are:

- Growing Our Economy
- Strengthening Our Communities
- Developing our Infrastructure

Which criteria will be prioritised against to receive funding?

It is essential that the organisation or cultural project supports delivery of one or more of the Council's priorities or values, listed above.

In addition, the organisation or project does not need to fulfil all of the criteria listed below, however, the more of the criteria you fulfil, the more likely it is that your organisation or project will receive funding.

- Activities which support delivery of a number of Council priorities and values.
- Organisations which can demonstrate confirmed funding from other funding bodies or their own funds, to the level required in order to deliver the project.
- Organisations which can demonstrate high quality in programming and/or service delivery.
- Organisations or projects which can demonstrate participation across all age ranges, including activities for young people.
- Organisations or projects which promote community participation and educational opportunities.
- Organisations or projects which address equalities and break down barriers to inclusion.
- This is a competitive scheme and applications will be determined on the basis of merit.

What isn't eligible for funding?

The Culture Fund will not normally provide funding for the following:

- Organisations based outside Orkney.
- Organisations or activities of a commercial nature organised to make a distributable profit.
- Trade or professional conferences/conventions.
- Activities that are primarily fund-raising events, are heavily branded with charity branding or deploy potential sources of income from an event to a charity.
- Awards ceremonies or industry events;
- Activities that are social events for an organisation;
- Events that do not comply with the Council's Equality and Diversity Strategy (eg that are in inaccessible venues). The Strategy can be found at this link: <http://www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/COMMUNITYPLANNING/index.asp?pageid=591868>.

How much can you ask the Council for, through this scheme?

There is no upper or lower limit to the size of applications, but please note that the scheme has a very high level of demand, and organisations which are requesting a lower percentage of their total costs from the Council are more likely to be successful. As a guide, grant requests in the region of £500 - £3000 are invited.

The available funding is for a financial year – 1 April until 31 March. This means that all offers of grant assistance expire on 31 March each year. (Please note that funding can only be approved for projects taking place during the financial year applied for.)

It is a requirement to sign and return the terms and conditions of funding, which will be included with any offer of funding. The conditions of grant will also require organisations to submit regular reports on outcomes, as well as updated plans, programmes and budgets for the periods covered by the agreement.

Your budget

Please ensure that you submit a clearly detailed and balanced budget with your application. The amount of (projected or real) income should match the amount of (projected or real) expenditure. Your total project costs should include cash plus in-kind expenditure.

Note: for events within larger festivals or programmes of events, please submit a breakdown of costs for the specific event relevant to your application, rather than the wider costs of the whole festival or programme of events.

How do you claim the grant assistance?

All disbursements of grant assistance will be evidence based, in the form of vouched expenditure submitted by the organising body, and restricted by the maximum percentage of support awarded.

We understand that sometimes it can be difficult to deliver a project without having to make payments in advance for certain services, and therefore it may be possible to arrange for an element of the grant to be allocated in advance. This can be discussed and agreed between the organisation and the Council on an individual basis.

When should you apply?

All applications must be received no later than **17:00 on Sunday 26 October 2025**.

Application should be sent to:

Emma Gee (Arts Officer)

By email: emma.gee@orkney.gov.uk

Organisations will be informed of the results of their application in December and successful applicants will be made aware at that time of the level of funding allocated by the Council from the Culture Fund. It is hoped that this will allow organisations to plan with a level of comfort. A formal award letter will then confirm the grant as soon as possible following Council budget setting.

Are there any other requirements?

It is a requirement of this funding that a grant from the Council is acknowledged in all forthcoming literature and displays pertaining to your organisation or project, and in all press releases. It is also a requirement that, if a grant is allocated to your organisation, all expenditure is completed within the financial year, and that grant claims are processed in the same financial year in which the funded activities have taken place.

All projects and activities that receive funding must comply with the Council's Equality and Diversity Strategy.

<http://www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/COMMUNITYPLANNING/index.asp?pageid=591868>. Events must take place within an accessible venue, and there must be no unnecessary barriers to inclusion.

Privacy Notice

We need the information on this form in order to assess your application to the Culture Fund. The lawful basis for processing this information is to allow us to provide this public service. The information may be shared within the local authority.

The information relating to successful applicants will be retained by Orkney Islands Council a period of 7 years. Information relating to unsuccessful applicants will be retained for a period of 2 years. For more information about how we process information, please contact us or visit <http://www.orkney.gov.uk/Online-Services/privacy.htm>. Paper copies are available from the Council or the information can be accessed via the QR Code below.



Who is the contact within the Council?

For all enquiries relating to the Culture Fund, to discuss an idea or application please contact:

Emma Gee, Arts Officer

Email: emma.gee@orkney.gov.uk

Telephone: 01856 873535 Extension 2406.

Orkney Islands Council, School Place, Kirkwall, Orkney, KW15 1NY.