

WB-UK CREATIVE ECONOMY SECTOR DEVELOPMENT FUND:

APPLICATION TOOLKIT

16 JUNE 2025

1. ABOUT THE FUND

The British Council **WB-UK Creative Economy sector development fund** enables partnerships between Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia with the UK, to support the growth of the creative economy, skills and employment across the Western Balkans.

Applications are being sought from creative sector organisations in Western Balkans who are interested to partner with an organisation in the UK to implement a specific project which furthers the development of the creative economy in their country/sector. This pilot programme supports the creative industries as strategic economic sectors with transformative potential, and has a specific focus on empowering youth skills and employment.

Key dates

Applications open: by 18 June 2025

Information session: 25 June 2025 14:00 CET. Please register here:

<https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/65f9142c-0b4c-499d-8db1-ebeed7ced37f@ae6275c1-ccdd-4046-b2a1-6245a2cca3ec>

Circulation of any Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) resulting from Information Session: 30 June 2025

Application deadline: 18 July 2025 23:59 CET

Notification decision sent to applicants: By end of August 2025

Contracting of successful applicants: September 2025

Project delivery period: October 2025-June 2026

2. WHAT CAN THE FUND BE USED FOR?

We expect these projects will cover a wide range of topics which are relevant for the creative sectors in the 6 countries. These could include – but are not limited to – topics around employability, skills development, creating links between education and industry, entrepreneurship, sustainability, international market development and networking etc. We will not list these exhaustively here, but to illustrate the types of projects we envision, here are several examples:

- WB and UK film/screen agencies working together on a model for skills development / crew service that connects young talent to jobs in the industry
- WB and UK universities working together on new technology being applied to increase tourism and cultural sector growth within the cities they are based
- WB and UK technology clusters working together on advocacy strategy for how to support entrepreneurship or job creation in the digital/gaming sector
- WB and UK cities of culture working together on models for capturing and shaping sustainable impact for their project(s)

Projects can be digital, face to face or a hybrid of both.

2. WHO CAN APPLY?

We are seeking applications from creative sector organisations. We will not list these exhaustively, but to illustrate the types of organisations we envision, here are examples:

- Organisations which represent the interests of a specific creative sector – e.g. Film Centres or Development Agencies; Fashion Councils; Gaming Associations
- Organisations which focus on creative sector networking or support creative enterprise – e.g. creative hubs; organisations which represent and lobby for the needs of the creative industries
- Organisations which represent the creative sector in a specific city/region – e.g. organisations who run UNESCO cities of Music, Literature; a city Book Festival which represents and supports the growth of the publishing sector
- Educational institutions – e.g. universities or colleges; other institutions teaching technical skills within the creative industries

Each application must include at least 2 partners: 1) at least one partner from the 6 countries of the Western Balkans listed below, and 2) at least one UK partner. This must be a joint proposal in which the contribution of and benefits to both parties are clearly outlined.

Applications may include more than 2 partners, if additional partners from WB or UK are required to delivery project activities, and if there is clear rationale to do so.

We expect that the partner from the Western Balkans will be the lead partner. Both partners must declare that they have the capacity to deliver the grant.

Eligible countries in Western Balkans are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia

Organisations are eligible to apply. Individuals are not eligible to apply. We would expect organisations to have the necessary registration/s needed to comply with legal and/or tax provisions in the country in which they are based.

The objective of the fund is to benefit the development and growth of the wider creative sector in a country/city/context and to support increased skills and employment. The objective of the fund is not for individual companies to commercially benefit, and such applications which focus on this will not be eligible.

Eligible sectors

For the purposes of this fund we will use the UK definition of the creative industries. The 'creative industries' have been defined by successive UK governments as those industries which "have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property". The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has classified nine sub-sectors within the creative industries, and we will accept applications for projects which support the development of any of the following:

- advertising and marketing

- architecture
- crafts
- design: product, graphic and fashion design
- film, TV, video, radio and photography
- IT, software and computer services
- publishing
- museums, galleries and libraries
- music, performing and visual arts

3. GRANT AMOUNTS AND ELIGIBLE COSTS

Project grants up to £50,000 GBP are available.

We have a total pool of funding available of £300,000 GBP.

As such we expect to award a very limited number of grants (likely to be 6 grants in total, one each for each of the 6 countries in the Western Balkans) that can demonstrate how they will substantially contribute towards growth of the creative economy in their local context.

The grant will be disbursed directly to the WB lead institution according to the approved budget. An initial grant advance payment will be made on signature of the grant agreement in September 2025. The remainder will be paid in spring/summer 2026 based on a reporting timeline and procedure, which will be agreed with successful applicants.

Eligible Costs

Eligible cost could include costs directly related to the implementation of the project, including:

- Professional fees e.g. fees for contracted consultants, artists, facilitators, designers, specialists relating to the project.
- Travel and accommodation
- Reasonable equipment and materials costs
- Venue hire and production costs
- Marketing and promotional activities

Ineligible criteria and costs

- Projects which are designed for the commercial benefit of individual companies
- Core staff salaries or ongoing operational costs
- Overhead expenses
- Costs incurred before the grant contract is signed
- Funding or co-funding artistic production or distribution as the key activity

The grant and any sub-grants must be demonstrably non-profit-making for the recipient. The British Council will not cover the cost of any corporate income tax on the grant.

To ensure value for money, the budget requested in your proposal should cover only costs that are essential, appropriate and relevant to the collaboration. Programme participants with

a disability or with particular travel requirements due to a health concern may need to select a different travel class. Exceptions to economy flights will be considered for disability, and other well-being and/or safety concerns.

The proposal should maximise cost share through institutional contributions (direct and indirect). Partnerships which can leverage additional funding will be looked upon favourably.

4. HOW TO APPLY

Applications must be submitted by email to apply.wbukfund@britishcouncil.org by 18 July 2025 23:59 CET

An application must be submitted by one lead applicant from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, or Serbia .

Key Application Steps:

- Please visit <https://www.britishcouncil.me/en/programmes/arts/wb-uk-creative-economy-sector-development-fund-grants> to download the WB-UK Creative Sector Development Fund application form which accompanies this application toolkit
- Attend Information Session on 25 June (optional - Please register here: <https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/65f9142c-0b4c-499d-8db1-ebeed7ced37f@ae6275c1-ccdd-4046-b2a1-6245a2cca3ec>) and review Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) which will be issued by 30 June.
- Complete the application form and email it to apply.wbukfund@britishcouncil.org before the deadline: 18 July 2025 23:59 CET

If you have any access needs in order to complete the application or other questions please contact enquiries.wbukfund@britishcouncil.org

5. SELECTION PROCESS

Selection begins by British Council programme staff with an eligibility check and then full assessment of all eligible applications against the eligibility criteria and assessment criteria (see below).

A quality review will be conducted by a panel of creative economy and geographical experts which will determine a panel score, rank applications and make recommendations for funding. The review panel will consider whether proposals are of high quality according to the requirements of the fund, well-focused and methodologically sound, and whether the activity has the potential to have a real impact on creative economy sector development, growth, and youth skills and employment in the WB country. They will also consider a number of factors including balance across all 6 eligible WB countries and across creative sectors, types of project activity etc.

Assessment criteria

The application form contains the following sections, which will be assessed based on the following criteria and weighting:

1. Partner details and experience (20%)

Please provide all required information, including the contact details of both teams, and the organisations' purpose and main activities, role it plays in supporting the creative sector in WB or UK, and relevant experience in managing international partnerships and projects (with links to past projects if possible).

2. Rationale and Strategic Vision (30%)

Rationale (2.1.): Please summarise why you are applying for the WB-UK Creative Economy sector development fund, what you would like to achieve out of the project. Please explain why both partners would like to work together and how they would both benefit from the relationship. We also ask that you clarify if you have any previous experience of collaborating together and provide context if so, or if it is a new relationship. It won't count against you if it's a new relationship, but it's helpful to know how more about how it started, and to confirm commitment from both sides on the rationale and alignment to work together.

Strategic Vision (2.2.): Please summarise the overall outcomes you are working towards with this project. How your project. How would this grant help strategically develop the overall creative economy, and/or the specific creative sector which you work in, in your country? How does the project help empower youth skills and employment?

3. Project Plan (30%)

Please indicate a clear plan for the project you would undertake with this grant, and how both partners would work together to deliver activities. We require further information on:

- 3.1. Project outputs - Describe tangible outputs that could result from the interventions/activities delivered through this project (e.g. creation of new skills, pilot of new schemes, research etc.)
- 3.2. Dissemination and Communication Plan – describe the plan to communicate the activities and project outcomes. Who are the beneficiary groups and audiences? Please indicate any translation/interpretation required for project delivery
- 3.3. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan – outline plan with a timescale and key milestones. How will you monitor and evaluate your project impact?
- 3.4. Equality Diversity and Inclusion – describe how your project considers equality, diversity and inclusion. How will you create opportunities for underrepresented groups of communities in the creative sector? How will you consider access requirements for participants?
- 3.5. Activity plan. Please provide an overview of the proposed activities (dates, activity, details) to deliver the project. These should take place from October 2025 to June 2026.
- 3.6. Risk management and safeguarding plan. What risks have you identified, and how will you manage them to ensure successful delivery? What measures do you plan to put in place to ensure safeguarding of participants?
- 3.7 Environmental sustainability. How will your project address this subject? What measures will you put in place to minimise its environmental impact throughout its lifecycle?

4. Sustainability and Leverage (10%)

Please provide ideas for how project activities would be sustained beyond the timeline of the project? How might project partners maintain their relationship in the longer term? (next 2-5 years). Please include any suggestions on how to leverage additional investment from your organisations or external partners.

5. Project Budget (10%)

Based on the eligible costs identified, please provide a clear and realistic budget plan for the project delivery (up to £50,000 GBP) including breakdown of the spend in the WB country and in the UK. Please provide as much detail as possible. The headings are provided for guidance, but can be adjusted and added to.

Notification of results

Successful applicants will be notified by the end of August 2025.

Contracting and initial grant payment is expected in September 2025.

Project activities are expected to start from October 2025.

6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

All projects will be required to submit an interim report midway through project delivery (estimated to be January/February 2025) and a closing report (after June 2025, date TBC). Further guidance and details will be given to successful projects, and advice on tools which could be used, if needed.

7. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

As an international cultural relations organisation, British Council works towards mainstreaming of our EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion) principles and practices across all our work strands. This includes in how we engage with stakeholders, participants and partners. We ask our grantees to align with the British Council's inclusive approach. For more information, please read about the [British Council Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Strategy](#)

We will assess your application on how it demonstrates a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and how it creates opportunities for underrepresented groups or communities. Applications can include a short description of what diversity and/or inclusion means in the context of your project and countries and share more information on the underrepresented communities you intend to work with within the creative sector. Please calculate the necessary costs clearly in the budget section.

8. SAFEGUARDING

The British Council is a global organisation and safeguarding is one of our priorities when delivering programmes directly or through others. We aim to create a safe environment in which no child or adult will experience abuse or exploitation during their contact with us. We also require that clients, customers, partners and suppliers are made aware of our Safeguarding policy and operate within it, this includes ensuring that staff and volunteers are safely recruited and trained in their safeguarding duty of care, programmes and projects are promptly risk assessed and mitigation measures implemented, a safeguarding Lead and focal point(s) are appointed and a safer incident reporting mechanism is implemented and communicated to all stakeholders to ensure that incidents are promptly and accurately reported and managed. We expect organisations and individuals delivering our programmes to promptly report any safeguarding incident or concern to the British Council to ensure that we fulfil our statutory reporting obligations.

Please get acquainted with the [British Council Safeguarding Global Policy Statement](#).

If your project plans to work with those under 18, vulnerable adults, or people at risk (particularly those with protected characteristics) it is important that your budget, project plan and risk management include provisions for supporting participants' well-being and safety.

The British Council will run safeguarding workshops in autumn 2025 to support successfully funded projects on this subject.

9. DATA PROTECTION / PRIVACY STATEMENT

The British Council complies with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and Data Protection laws and regulations in other countries that follow internationally accepted best practice.

The British Council will use the information that you have provided in the application form to communicate with you about your application for WB-UK Creative Sector Development Fund and provide you with information about the delivery of this programme, such as participation in mandatory training workshops and in optional networking events. Your application will be received by email and may be transferred to other countries for processing under European Commission-approved Standard Contractual Clauses.

We will share your application with a panel of assessors who will be creative economy and geographic specialists. To ensure fairness the assessors must disclose any conflict of interest if they have any link to any of the applicants, in which case they will not be able to judge their applications. The British Council will also share information with potential monitoring and evaluation partners engaged to conduct research studies to monitor and evaluate outcomes.

The legal base for processing your information is your consent, which you must indicate by ticking the consent box in the application form. You also have the right to withdraw your consent for personal data processing at any time by contacting us via enquiries.wbukfund@britishcouncil.org. If you withdraw your consent, your application for WB-UK Creative Sector Development Fund cannot be considered further.

You have the right to ask for a copy of the information we hold on you, and the right to ask us to correct any inaccuracies in that information. If you have concerns about how we have

used your personal information you also have the right to complain to a privacy regulator.
For detailed information about your rights, please refer to the [privacy section of our website](#)
We will keep your information for a period of 7 years from the time of collection.