

Cultural Commissioning Funding 2026–27: Challenge and Innovation Fund

Funding available: up to £5,000 for small-scale cultural projects that bring challenge, innovation and wider participation to cultural activity in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.

Application deadline: 11.59pm on 6 September 2026.

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1. Cultural Commissioning and the Challenge and Innovation Fund

Cultural Commissioning is the Council's programme for funding culture in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.

The funding supports a broad range of creative and cultural projects that benefit people living in the Borough.

Projects may include creative activity delivered with local communities, organisational development, research and development, sector support or partnership activity. The fund supports the delivery of Culture Richmond, the borough's cultural framework.

The Challenge and Innovation Fund is a strand of Cultural Commissioning Funding. It supports small-scale projects that diversify cultural activity in the borough and help test new approaches.

We are particularly interested in projects that do one or more of the following:

- engage underrepresented communities;
- focus on children and young people;
- test new ways of working or new cultural partnerships.

2. Who can apply

We will only fund organisations that meet the requirements below.

- Providing services or activities that benefit the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and its residents. We primarily fund organisations that are based in the Borough, but we can consider applications from organisations that have a regional or national remit, as long as the proposed work benefits Richmond Borough and cannot be delivered by other organisations based in the Borough.
- Not for profit - We cannot fund organisations that make a profit. However, we can fund social enterprises and other organisations that generate surpluses, as long as the organisation's governing documents show that the surplus is reinvested into the organisation for charitable purposes. This must be reflected in the accounts the organisation gives us. Companies Limited by Shares are not eligible.

- **Constituted** - Organisations we fund must have a constitution, governing document or set of rules that is signed and dated and defines how the organisation will operate.
- **Trustees/Directors/Management Committee** - The organisation must have at least three unrelated and non-cohabiting Trustees, Directors or Management Committee who are legally responsible for the governance of the organisation. (Note: This is separate from any management committee that sits below a board of Trustees/Directors).
- **Financially solvent** - Organisations funded by us must not have liabilities that are more than their current assets. Please note organisations must have a bank account in the group's name authorised by at least two non-related signatories, who live at different addresses.
- **We will accept applications from organisations working as a consortium, partnership, network or group.** For non-constituted consortiums or groups, one organisation must act as the lead organisation and send us the application. If the application goes on to be successful, this organisation would then be accountable for the grant.
- **Funded partners must commit to the terms of funding, including attending three partnership meetings each year.**

We do not fund:

- Community Interest Companies (CICs) that have been in operation for less than two years.
- Schools or Parent Teacher Associations
- Churches or other organisations where the monies will be used for religious purposes.
- Projects where the monies will be used for political purposes.
- Recoverable VAT.
- Any work or activities that any other person/organisation has a statutory duty to provide or undertake (i.e. are delivered by other public funding).
- Organisations that are already funded through the Cultural Commissioning main fund.
- Organisations that have previously been funded by Challenge and Innovation but have not submitted their final project report.

3. What you can apply for

We support activity that fits within one or more of the following cultural areas:

- Visual arts, theatre, dance and music
- Combined arts, including outdoor arts, festivals and carnivals
- Literature and spoken word
- Film, video and digital activity
- Place-based public realm activity
- Museums, collections development and community history
- Cultural activity in parks and green and blue spaces
- Cultural activity relating to sports, health and wellbeing

We want to support new ideas and understand what organisations need. Your application should explain how the funding will help your organisation develop work that supports Culture Richmond and benefits people in Richmond upon Thames.

Above all we want people to be involved in the cultural life of Richmond upon Thames.

4. How applications will be assessed

The application form asks for key information about your organisation and a statement about the project you want to deliver. Your statement should use the headings below.

Explain how your project will benefit people in the borough.

- Are you clear about the people you plan to work with and reach?
- Is the planned work inclusive and relevant?
- Does the work complement your existing programme?
- Are you aware of the risks involved?

Explain how the project will innovate in one or more of the following areas:

- Reaching underrepresented communities
- Engaging young people
- Testing new ways of working

Explain how the project will contribute to the cultural life of the Borough

- How could the work contribute to Richmond Arts and Ideas Festival?
- Which objectives from Culture Richmond will your work support?
- How is your organisation connected to the Borough and its people?

Applications will be assessed against the criteria above, their overall quality and fit with local priorities, and the funding available.

5. Project delivery, monitoring and reporting

Projects must start and all funding must be drawn down before March 2027.

At the end of the project, you must submit a short evaluation report in the form of a case study. This should describe what the project achieved, who benefited, what your organisation learned and any next steps.

6. How to apply

Download application form from https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/arts/arts_development

The application form is a Word document and can be read and completed using assistive technology.

You do not need to discuss your project with us but If you would like to talk to someone about your project, please email artsinfo@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk.

Send completed form to artsinfo@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk by 11.59pm 6 September 2026.

Cultural Commissioning is administered by Culture and Leisure at the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.