



Art Fund\_  
Museum of  
the Year  
2025



# Application Guidance

## Key dates:

28 November 2024: applications open

27 January 2025: applications close at midday



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A school group explores the new National Portrait Gallery, Art Fund Museum of the Year 2024 finalist. Image courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery. © David Parry

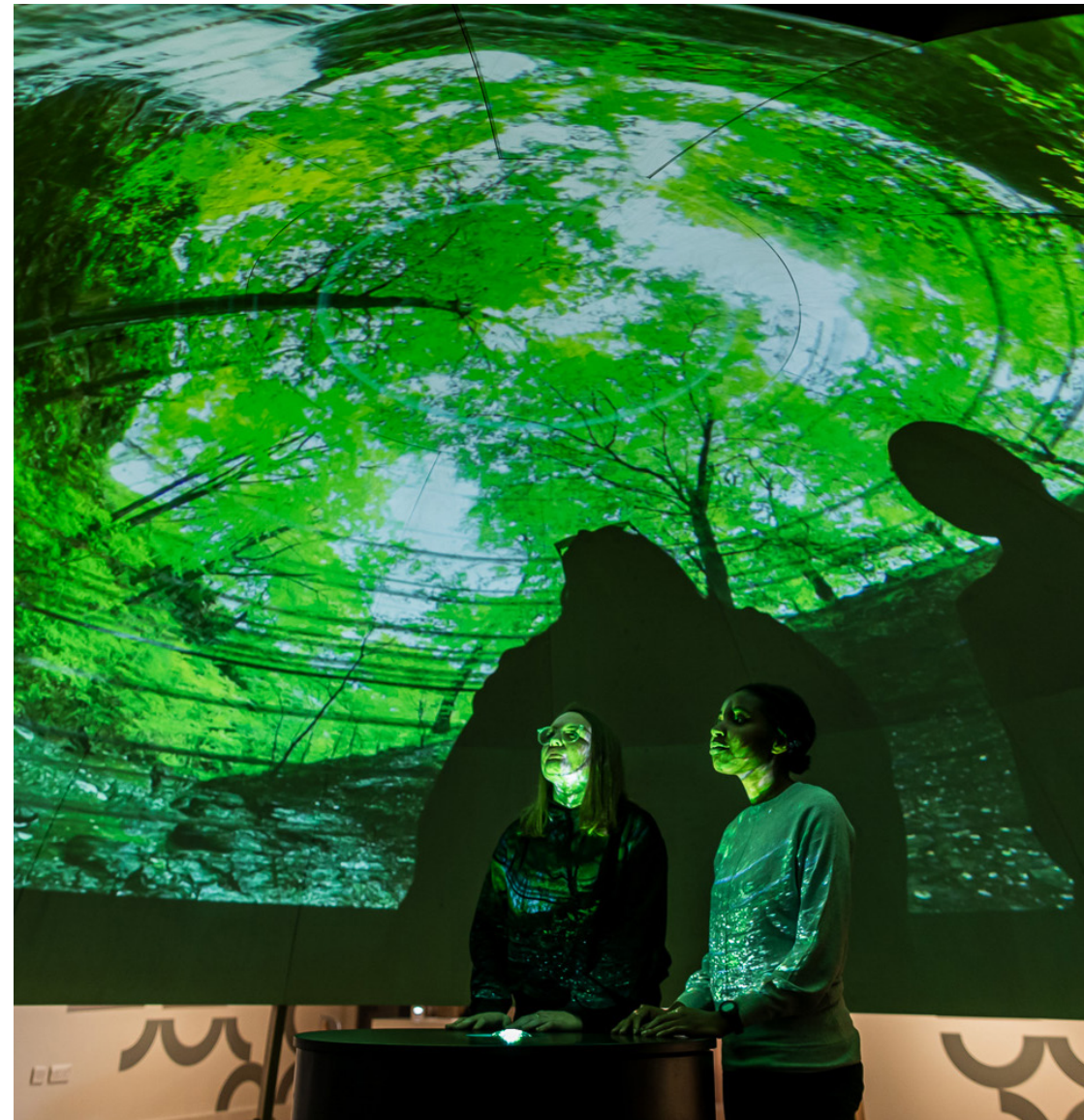
# About Art Fund Museum of the Year

Art Fund Museum of the Year is the world's biggest museum prize. It champions what museums do, encourages more people to visit, and gets to the heart of what makes a great museum. The prize recognises and celebrates outstanding work and projects across UK museums and provides a platform to encourage audiences to engage with museums far and wide.

Every year an independent judging panel will shortlist five exceptional organisations and decide one outstanding winner to take home the £120,000 prize. The remaining four finalists will each receive £15,000.

All shortlisted museums also receive the support of Art Fund throughout the campaign, which includes national press coverage opportunities, bespoke marketing support and other exciting collaborations and partnerships to help them reach more audiences.

**Do you think your museum is a worthy contender for the coveted prize? Read on to find out more.**



Visitors to Craven Museum, Art Fund Museum of the Year 2024 finalist. © Hydar Dewachi / Art Fund 2024



# Applications for 2025

## What are we looking for?

### **2025: The people who make you**

For the 2025 prize, in addition to looking at the overall achievements of your organisation, we are keen to hear about the wide range of people that make your achievements possible and bring your museum or gallery to life. How are you and your teams engaging and working alongside communities, families and younger visitors, artists and creatives, or those harder-to-reach visitors? What makes your approach impactful, inclusive and innovative?

We want to hear how you are doing this through the stories you and your teams tell across your exhibitions or displays, how you make your programme and buildings welcoming, and the role that your teams play in making great things happen.

**We are interested in what you are doing in terms of specific projects, as well as what you are doing as a whole – how this makes you unique, and the best at what you do.**

As part of the application process, you will be asked to provide some information about your organisation and answer these questions:

1. **Why are you applying for Museum of the Year 2025?** (This is your moment to tell us why the previous year, from autumn 2023 to winter 2024/25, was important for your organisation, and why you think this is your year to take part in the prize.)
2. **How are you engaging and serving your users and communities in a demonstrably impactful, inclusive and innovative way?** (For this section please carefully consider the 2025 theme and use this space to tell us how you meet this criteria.)
3. **Who makes your organisation special, and how have your people contributed to the work you have highlighted in question one?** (This is an opportunity to help the judging panel get to know a little bit more about your organisation, and why those involved make it a unique place to work and visit.)

You will also have the opportunity to share additional information to illustrate your application. This can include images, reports, supporting letters or short films.

# Why apply?

Previous applicants have told us how useful they found the process of applying for the prize. It helped them to reflect on their successes and articulate what makes their organisation special.

If you are successful and are shortlisted for Art Fund Museum of the Year your organisation will enjoy many benefits, in addition to the prize money.

Finalists and winners have noted a marked increase in visitor attendance and engagement, a strengthened profile and a boost in support from stakeholders. We also know that taking part in the prize has helped many organisations to develop fundraising and advocacy opportunities.

The prize has steadily grown in reputation since it was launched in 2013. To mark ten years in 2023 we conducted research with BOP Consulting to explore the impact of the prize in the sector. You can read more about their key findings [here](#).



Visitors to Manchester Museum, Art Fund Museum of the Year 2024 finalist.  
Image courtesy of Manchester Museum. Photo: © Jason Lock

# What happens if you are shortlisted?

## Application and shortlisting

Applications go through a two-part process before being shortlisted. Below is a brief outline of what to expect if your application is taken forward:

- Applications first go through a longlisting process. Your application will be reviewed by an Art Fund panel and benchmarked against other applications.
- If you are selected to join the longlist (of about 10 applications), two representatives of your organisation will be asked to attend a short online interview with the judges.
- Following the interviews, judges will agree on the shortlist of five organisations, and if you are successful, you will be contacted by the prize project manager to discuss next steps.
- If you are unsuccessful, you will be contacted by email and have the opportunity to request further feedback.
- Shortlisted organisations will be invited to attend a collaboration workshop held online in April, date TBC. This will be an opportunity to meet the Art Fund team and the rest of your cohort.
- The prize project manager will work closely with your key contact to get you ready for the shortlist announcement and campaign.

## Shortlist announcement

The shortlist will be announced between late April and early May 2025. We will work closely with you and your communications team to maximise press opportunities during this time and provide you with a briefing pack in advance.

## The campaign

We want to make sure that museums get the most out of being shortlisted over the campaign period. We encourage shortlisted organisations to plan their own activity during this time, which Art Fund can help support.

As part of this campaign, we would ask you to offer a special benefit for National Art Pass visitors from the date of the shortlist announcement to the announcement of the winner. This could be a further discount on admission or a special offer in your shop or café.

During this time, the judges will visit the five shortlisted organisations, which helps them to make their final decision on who the winner should be. This will take place across May and June; dates will be determined with the shortlist.

## Winner announcement

We are delighted to announce that for the first time in the prize's history the award ceremony and winner announcement will take place outside of London. We are grateful to the Museum of Liverpool, who will host the event in late June. More details about the announcement will be revealed closer to the time.

Shortlisted museums will be supplied with a briefing pack to help get ready for the event and announcement.



## National Art Pass

By taking part in Museum of the Year you will also join the 900+ strong National Art Pass network, which brings together museums, galleries, historic houses and other venues across the UK and includes wider marketing opportunities across Art Fund channels. In joining the National Art Pass network, you agree to offer a benefit to our members when they visit your museum. This could be 50% off admission or exhibitions if you charge, or a discount in your shop or café if you don't. Our National Art Pass network team are on hand to discuss this with you.

## What's the catch?

In return all we ask from shortlisted museums is a willingness to work with and collaborate with us, so that we can help you make the most of being shortlisted, no matter the size of your organisation.

We are aware that being shortlisted creates additional work, which begins swiftly after being shortlisted, and it can require more resources from your team. However, we want to assure prospective applicants that this should not be a barrier to applying for any size or type of organisation – we are committed to supporting you throughout the process and to exploring ways to make this achievable and worthwhile.

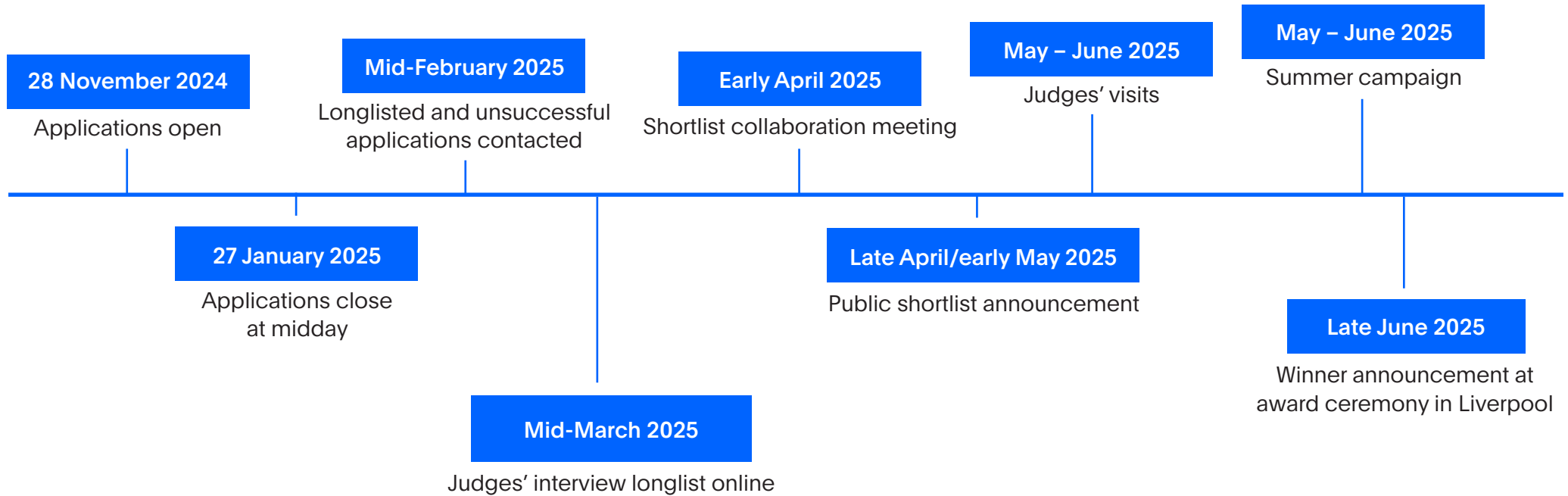
We also recognise that shortlisted museums incur some additional costs while taking part, like hosting the judges during their visit. Although Art Fund cannot cover these costs, we hope that part of the prize money – either for winning or for being shortlisted – can be used to cover them.

A full list of terms and conditions for shortlisted museums are detailed at the end of this pack.



# Timeline

Below is an outline of the prize timeline. Please note key dates for your diaries – if your application is successful, we will require spokespeople and key team members from your organisation to attend the collaboration meeting, judges' visit and award ceremony.





# Applicant criteria

Before starting your application, please check that you meet the following criteria to be eligible to apply for Art Fund Museum of the Year:

- Your activity must have taken place from autumn 2023 through to winter 2024/25.
- You must be able to demonstrate the positive impact of the activity.
- You must be based in the UK and be either a public museum, gallery, historic house, library or archive which has spaces for the public to visit and experience the visual arts or other object-based collections.
- You must be able to demonstrate that you usually operate to best practice standards or have a good track record in delivering high-quality public activity.

If you are an organisation that is a visual arts agency or festival, we'd be happy to hear from you providing you can meet the criteria and have a strong visual arts focus.

We cannot accept applications from individuals, artists' groups, commercial organisations, hospitals, places of worship, schools or higher education institutions, or organisations with a focus on music, drama, dance or art forms outside the visual arts.



2023 Spring Holiday Pop-up at Dundee Contemporary Arts, Art Fund Museum of the Year 2024 finalist. Image courtesy of Dundee Contemporary Arts. © Erika Stevenson



# Judging criteria

This year's panel of judges will include sector experts, cultural leaders and artists, and will be chaired by Jenny Waldman, Art Fund's director. The panel will be announced in early 2025.

Each judge brings their own unique perspectives and experiences to the judging process. Applications are shortlisted based on the merits and strengths of their application, and how these are further brought to life in answer to the judges' questions during the online interview. Longlisted applicants invited to interview will be sent these questions in advance to help them prepare.

To help inform the judges' decision on who the winner should be, shortlisted organisations are requested to host the judges for a visit to demonstrate in person their museum offering; how they engage with audiences and communities; and how their people and activities have made an exceptional impact on the organisation and its visitors. The project manager will work closely with you to develop an itinerary for the visit that gives a clear impression of the whole operation and will help you to think about who should be involved on the day.

Finally, after the judges have visited each organisation, they will gather for a closed discussion to decide who will be the winner. Taking a holistic approach, and considering the initial application and their experience of the visit, the judges will make a decision based on the benefits of each museum's offer to its audiences and communities.



Members of the Young V&A team hearing the announcement of their win at the Art Fund Museum of the Year 2024 award ceremony. © Hydar Dewachi / Art Fund 2024



# How to apply

Before applying, please carefully read this pack and look at the application questions document. If you have any remaining questions, please contact the prize project manager, Emma Mills, for an informal chat by emailing [emills@artfund.org](mailto:emills@artfund.org).

Please also sign up to our applicants' webinar to hear more about the prize, the application process and what happens if you are shortlisted.

The webinar will take place in mid-December (date TBC).

This year, we will be accepting all application forms and supporting documents via email. We will not be using the online portal.

To apply, you will need to download the application form using the template on our website, located at [artfund.org/museum-of-the-year](http://artfund.org/museum-of-the-year). Once complete, send your application to [programmes@artfund.org](mailto:programmes@artfund.org) (with [emills@artfund.org](mailto:emills@artfund.org) in the Cc line). Please ensure the application form remains as a Word file (not a PDF).

You will also need to have or create a professional account registered to your organisation with My Art Fund, located at [www.artfund.org/my-account/login](http://www.artfund.org/my-account/login).

To complete your application, you will also need:

- A letter of support from your director or chair confirming their wish for the organisation to be considered for Art Fund Museum of the Year 2025 and agreeing to our terms and conditions.
- Up to three pieces of additional supporting material to evidence your answers to the application questions. These could include:
  - visitor statistics/reports
  - case studies
  - evaluation report

- Up to eight pieces of supporting digital media (photographs, films, screenshots) that best illustrate your application. If you plan to include films, please do not send more than three, and they should have a total running length of no more than 10 minutes. If you plan to send PDFs, please limit this to two existing files.
- A high-res image selection (no more than five) showing the exterior and interior of your organisation. Please ensure these have the appropriate permissions as they may be used for Art Fund's promotional activity.

**The deadline to apply is noon, Monday 27 January 2025.**



Visitor to Manchester Museum, Art Fund Museum of the Year 2024 finalist. Image courtesy of Manchester Museum.  
© Jason Lock

# Terms & conditions

As with all our programme activity, we ask applicants to agree to certain terms and conditions as part of their application.

We ask longlisted organisations to:

- Be present at an online interview to meet with the judges to discuss your application.
- Take part in a short evaluation.

We ask shortlisted organisations to:

1. Work collaboratively with us as part of a joint initiative to celebrate and promote the shortlist. Art Fund can provide advice and press and marketing support as needed.
2. To sign a Memorandum of Understanding which outlines mutual areas of responsibility and expectations between Art Fund and all finalists.
3. Be represented at the judges' visits in May – June and winner announcement event in June 2025.
4. Support the audience engagement campaign with a special benefit for National Art Pass visitors, from the date of the shortlist announcement to after the announcement of the winner – the duration and details to be determined in conversation with Art Fund's marketing team. (This could be a free or discounted admission offer, for example, or a shop and/or café discount.)
5. Display Art Fund print and digital materials, such as posters and digital assets, onsite and online, at least for the duration of the campaign.
6. Work collaboratively with the other finalists to support each other and raise awareness of each other's work.
7. Work with Art Fund to evaluate and provide feedback at the end of the prize process to help us assess the impact of Art Fund Museum of the Year and make improvements for the future.



Visitors to Craven Museum, Art Fund Museum of the Year 2024 finalist. © Hydar Dewachi / Art Fund 2024





For any questions about about applying for Art Fund Museum of the Year, please contact the prize project manager, Emma Mills, at [emills@artfund.org](mailto:emills@artfund.org).

For more information about the prize, visit [artfund.org/museum-of-the-year](https://artfund.org/museum-of-the-year).

Find out more about our funding opportunities, and check which grants you are eligible to apply for, here: [artfund.org/professional/get-funding](https://artfund.org/professional/get-funding).

For more information about joining Art Fund's network of museums, please visit [artfund.org/professional/promote-your-venue](https://artfund.org/professional/promote-your-venue).

# Art Fund\_

The Young V&A team celebrating their win at the Art Fund Museum of the Year 2024 award ceremony, National Gallery, 10 July 2024. © Hydar Dewachi / Art Fund 2024