



Application Guidance

Key dates:

15 November 2023: applications open at midday
15 January 2024: applications close at midday

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The MAC, Art Fund Museum of the Year 2023 finalist © Janie Airey / Art Fund 2023

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 them far and wide.

Every year an independent judging panel will shortlist five exceptional organisations and decide one lucky 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 exciting collaborations and partnerships to help you reach more audiences.

Think your organisation is a worthy contender for the coveted prize? Read on to find out more.



Meet Me at the Museum podcast recording with Nabihah Iqbal at Leighton House, Art Fund Museum of the Year 2023 finalist. © Hydar Dewachi / Art Fund 2022

Applications for 2024

What are we looking for?

Leading in excellence, making an impact and demonstrating ambition.

We invite museums to apply for outstanding and inspiring projects and programmes, with audiences and communities at their heart. You need to tell us why your work makes your organisation unique and the best at what you do.

We are particularly interested to hear how you are working across these following areas:

- **Community engagement**, and how this is embedded across your collections or programming in an inclusive and accessible way,
- making an impact and preparing for a lasting legacy through **sustainable ways of working**,
- or **demonstrating ambition by reinventing** what it means to be ‘the best’ museum for the audiences of today and tomorrow.

You could apply with one or several projects that took place across the period of autumn 2022 through to winter 2023.

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

1. **Why do you think you are Art Fund Museum of the Year 2024?** This is your opportunity to tell us about your project/s, how you have worked with audiences and communities, and demonstrate your ambition to be the best at what you do.
2. **How has your activity, across the period autumn 2022 – winter 2023, made a positive impact and how will this shape your legacy?** It’s important here to illustrate the impact of your work across your organisation and audiences through examples, as well as share your ambitions for the activity’s legacy and future audiences.
3. **What would being shortlisted for Museum of the Year 2024 mean for your organisation?** We want to know why you are applying for the prize at this moment in time, what it would do for your organisation and how you would plan to make the most of the opportunity if you were shortlisted.

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

Why apply?

Previous applicants have told us how useful they find the process of applying for the prize. It helps to reflect on your successes and articulate what makes your organisation special.

If you are successful and are shortlisted for Art Fund Museum of the Year your organisation will enjoy many benefits.

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 develop future fundraising and advocacy opportunities.

And of course then there is the prize money - the winner will take home £120,000, while each of the other finalists receives £15,000.

The prize has steadily grown in reputation and in 2023 we conducted research with BOP Consulting to explore the impact of the prize in the sector over the last ten years. You can read more about their key findings [here](#).

Join our webinar

Attend a short webinar to hear more about the application process and what to expect if you are shortlisted.

Tuesday 5 December, 12-1pm

Sign up [here](#)



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 organisations) two representatives of your organisation will be asked to attend a short **online interview with the judges**.
- Following the interviews judges will agree 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 discuss further feedback if requested.
- Shortlisted organisations will be invited to attend an **in-person collaboration workshop** to be held at Art Fund's offices in late March/early April, date TBC. This will be an opportunity to meet the Art Fund team and your fellow cohort. A hybrid alternative will be available.
- 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 announcement will take place during early-mid May 2024. 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 across the campaign period. We encourage shortlisted museums to plan their own activity during this time (May-July 2023), 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 or shop or café.

Vitaly, 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 during May, dates will be determined with the shortlist.

Winner announcement

This year the award ceremony and winner announcement will take place at a London venue in early July 2023. More details about the announcement will be confirmed closer to the time.

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

National Art Pass

By taking part in Museum of the Year you will also join the 850+ 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. Our Museum Marketing 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, and it can require more resource 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.

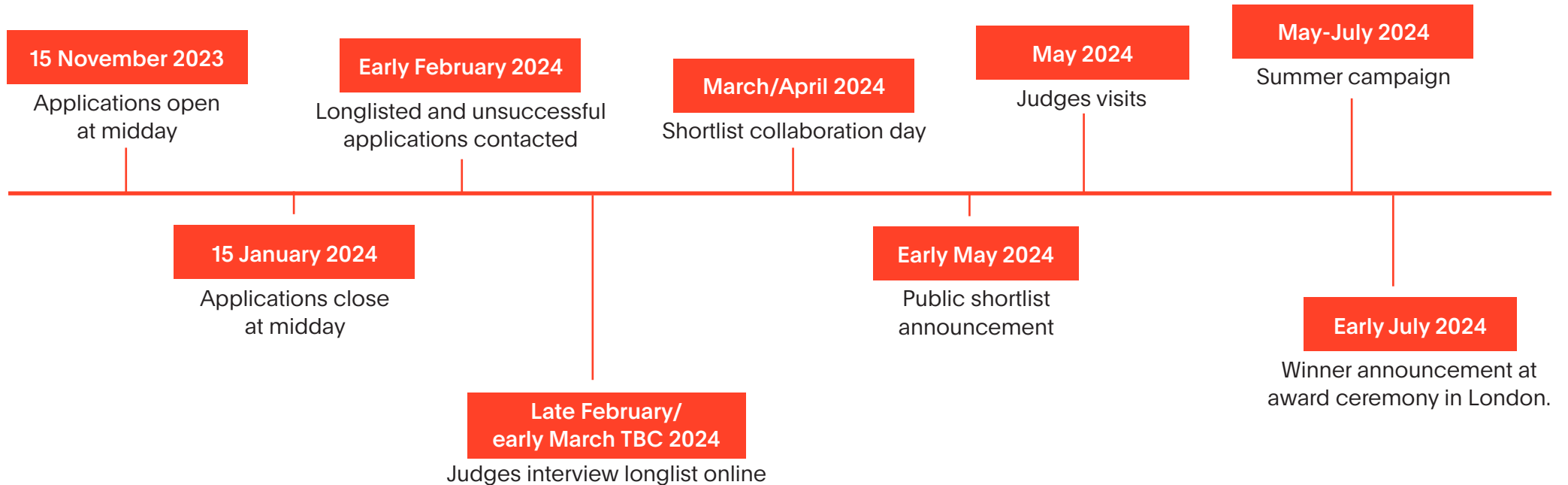
We also recognise that shortlisted museums incur some additional costs whilst taking part, like hosting the judges during their visit. Whilst Art Fund cannot cover these costs we hope that finalists in receipt of either the winning prize money or finalists prize money will use this to contribute towards their costs.

A full list of terms & 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 day, judges visit and award ceremony.



Applicant criteria

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

- Your activity must have taken place from autumn 2022 through to winter 2023.
- You must be able to demonstrate positive change and 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.

We would usually expect applicants to be accredited through schemes such as those managed by Arts Council England, or working towards accreditation.

If you are a non-accredited museum, we may seek advice from sector partners such as the Museum Development Network to better understand your organisation and your eligibility to be considered, particularly if you are an organisation we haven't worked with previously.

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 and art forms outside the visual arts.



Visitors to Scapa Flow, Art Fund Museum of the Year 2023 finalist © Janie Airey / Art Fund 2023

Judging criteria

This year's panel of judges will include sector experts, cultural leaders and artists, chaired once more by Jenny Waldman, Art Fund's director. The panel will be announced in early 2024.

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 this is 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 work with their audiences; and how the activity that they applied for has positively impacted on the organisation and their visitors. The project manager will work closely with you to develop the itinerary for the visit, and 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 should be the winner. Their conversation takes an holistic approach and is based on what they perceive to be the best museum and the benefit of its offer to its audiences and communities. The judges take into account the initial application and experience of the visit.



Judges of Art Fund Museum of the Year 2023 at the award ceremony, The British Museum. © Iona Wolff / Art Fund 2023

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 Emma Mills, project manager, Programmes, for an informal chat by emailing emills@artfund.org.

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

The webinar will take place on Tuesday 5 December 2023, 12-1pm.

RSVP [here](#).

To apply you will need to complete an application form through our online application portal by logging into or creating an account with My Art Fund, located at artfund.org/museum-of-the-year-apply.

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 2024, and agreeing to our terms and conditions.
- up to three (optional) pieces of additional supporting material to evidence your answers to the application questions. These could include:
 - visitor statistics/reports
 - case studies
 - evaluation reports

- 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 midday, Monday 15 January 2024



Visitor to Leighton House, Art Fund Museum of the Year 2023 finalist © Janie Airey / Art Fund 2023

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 and winner announcement event in July 2024.
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 shop and/or café discount.)
5. Display Art Fund print and digital materials, such as posters and digital assets, at least for the duration of the campaign onsite and online.
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.



The café at Scapa flow museum, Art Fund Museum of the Year 2023 finalist © Janie Airey / Art Fund 2023

Art Fund Museum of the Year 2023



For any questions about applying for Art Fund Museum of the Year, please contact the prize project manager, Emma Mills, on emills@artfund.org.

For more information about the prize visit 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

For more information about joining Art Fund's network of museums please visit artfund.org/professional/promote-your-venue

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Duncan Dornan, Head of Museums and Collections at Glasgow Life, receiving the award on behalf of the Burrell Collection from artist Sir Grayson Perry at the Art Fund Museum of the Year 2023 ceremony.
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