

Weston Loan Programme

Guidance for applicants

Art Fund_



Updated September 2025

Contents

1.	About	2
2.	Before you apply	3
3.	Your application	6
4.	What happens next	8
5.	Further information and guidance	10
6	Terms and conditions	15

1. About

The Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund (WLP) empowers regional and smaller museums to borrow works of outstanding quality and significance from national and major lending institutions. It increases access to notable objects, shares resources across the UK and brings lasting benefits to borrowers, lenders and audiences. Complementing programmes such as the [Touring Exhibitions Group's](#) Preparing to Borrow initiative, the scheme covers the practical elements of strategic loans projects. It also funds activities to maximise the impact of the loaned items and to develop the skills of museum professionals. By selecting and displaying high-profile objects, a borrowing institution can elevate its own collection and status, enhance its spaces, engage different communities and draw out new stories of local relevance.

The programme is generously supported by the [Garfield Weston Foundation](#). Since its launch in 2017, we have delivered nine rounds of funding, awarding £1.9m to 106 museums and galleries. The impact of the programme has been deep and long-lasting, enabling museums across the UK to:

- Reach new and more diverse audiences
- Upskill staff teams and forge new connections with regional, national and international peers
- Raise their profile and build resilience for the future
- Increase their revenue and their fundraising capabilities

We are delighted to be delivering a third phase of support for the sector. We recognise the great value of our national collections being shared more widely across the UK, and trust that museum staff, collections and audiences nationwide will benefit from involvement with this programme over the next few years.

There is one more round of funding between now and 2027, representing 10 years of extraordinary partnership between Art Fund and the Garfield Weston Foundation.

‘Rather than just supporting a temporary exhibition, we have used [WLP] as a catalyst to accelerate the museum’s engagement, growth and sustainability. We are now one of the fastest growing museums in Wales, with revenue having increased 800% since 2017. In 2018, Nantgarw China Works had a small collection of mostly damaged low-end items of Nantgarw porcelain. By the end of 2023, we will have the largest public collection of Nantgarw porcelain in the world outside of the National Museum of Wales. Without doubt, since 2018, [WLP] has been the single most significant contributor to the museum’s success.’

– Charles Fountain, Director, Nantgarw China Works Museum

2. Before you apply

Aims of the programme

1. To support the costs of new short-term loans of works of art and artefacts to regional and smaller museums and galleries from the UK's major collections.
2. To help regional museums and galleries make the most of the opportunities associated with the loan and raise the profile of their own collections and/or institution. This could include but is not limited to:
 - increasing the infrastructure, capacity and confidence in regional museums to secure and manage significant and strategic loans
 - raising the profile of the museum and supporting advocacy amongst its community and stakeholders by, for example, redisplaying and/or reinterpreting items in the borrowing museum's collection, or bringing items from its collections out of store
 - encouraging new and/or repeat visitors
 - developing relationships with new and wider audiences or deepening relationships with existing ones
 - promoting the importance and value of loans and partnership at a local, regional and/or national level
3. To encourage new and/or stronger relationships between less experienced borrowers and major lending institutions across the UK.

What we'll fund

We'll consider applications that:

- Enhance or maximise the possibilities of already planned loans/exhibitions/programming
- Enable 'quick fire' and 'quick win' loan requests
- Support long-term relationship and display development

We're happy to fund projects at various stages, you'll just be asked to explain why funding is needed at the point at which you apply.

We'll support successful applicant museums with grants of up to 100% of the funding required to cover the costs associated with securing and displaying the loan. These could include, but are by no means restricted to:

- Security reviews
- Insurance (where the Government Indemnity Scheme does not apply)
- Transportation
- Conservation
- Installation
- Additional invigilation (related solely to the funded exhibition)
- Small-scale improvements to the fabric and security of the gallery
- Secure and climate-controlled display cases and/or mounting materials
- Travel and related costs of meetings, training and other relationship development with the lender and/or other relevant stakeholders (including for the collaboration day that Art Fund will convene for grant holders)
- Any other reasonable costs incurred by the lender

As you will see from the above list, we can provide some capital and infrastructure support. Given the number of challenges facing the sector, including rising costs and stretched budgets, we expect this type of support to be particularly valuable in this phase of the programme (phase three). We would encourage museums and galleries to think about capacity and how they could use a grant to facilitate the loans of other major works in the future. Ideally, projects will leave a legacy both in terms of physical infrastructure and professional skills.

We will also or alternatively support you with funds to maximise the impact of the loan. For example:

- Marketing materials and/or other promotional costs (e.g. image rights and reproduction costs, advertisements, events, press and marketing consultants)
- Refreshing galleries and/or gallery displays related to the loaned object(s) and/or exhibition
- New labels, information panels, interpretation materials and/or catalogue
- Digital activity
- Audience/community engagement activity, including design and delivery
- Gallery talks from external curators and other experts
- In-house training

Applicants are able to borrow from a wide pool of eligible collections. In addition to national museums and galleries, you can also borrow from Arts Council England NPO band 3 museums and galleries, and from other UK collections that lend under GIS conditions. For further guidance please see section 5.

What we won't fund

Please note that we will not be able to support costs relating to long-term loans, even if they are part of a strategic plan to reimagine your collection, or for inclusion in a permanent display or exhibition.

Similarly, we are unlikely to support the presentation of fully formed touring exhibitions as these limit the opportunity for you to shape the project in relation to your organisation and collection.

We are unable to provide funding for private or international loans. These can be included in your application as part of your project, but the costs would need to be covered by other sources.

We are unlikely to award a grant if you are unable to articulate the need for Weston Loan Programme support - our funding shouldn't be used to plug a gap in a project budget. Our emphasis is on loans and the value of bringing in notable objects to your organisation.

Eligibility

Originally, all applicants to the Weston Loan Programme were required to be:

- a UK public museum, gallery, historic house, library or archive with permanent collections
- and a UK museum/gallery which is regional and/or run by a local authority, university, or has independent/charitable trust status

We expect the majority of applications to come from these organisations. However, for phase three, we have also developed the programme to ensure it is accessible to a wider and more diverse range of borrowing organisations. We know that small and contemporary arts spaces and other non-collecting institutions can be highly effective project leads. These dynamic organisations can also bring notable works of art to new and different audiences. As such, if you do not have a permanent collection, but you can demonstrate reach and impact, you would be eligible to apply for a grant.

It might be that you apply in partnership with another organisation, displaying important objects from their collection. However, you could also apply on your own, with a clear explanation of how the loans project will elevate your organisation and how it is significant to your community and audiences.

We welcome applications from museums, galleries and arts spaces who:

- do not have an ongoing relationship with a major lender and wish to use this funding to develop one
- may have existing relationship(s) but wish to use this funding to establish a new relationship with another major lender
- have an existing relationship with a major lender and wish to use this funding to substantially deepen that relationship or to trial a new way of working
- your organisation should also be open for at least half the week for at least six months of the year.

Non-national institutions that are also on the list of eligible lenders can apply, as long as you can demonstrate how the project will significantly enhance what you already do, and how it might benefit less experienced borrowers.

In phase three, we are particularly keen to receive applications from organisations in the East Midlands, Northern Ireland and Wales; these areas have been underrepresented in previous funding rounds.

Size of grants

Previously, we have awarded grants of £5,000 to £25,000 through this programme. In phase three, we have increased the upper grant limit to £35,000 to help mitigate the rising costs of loan projects. We hope it will encourage and support applicants to be more ambitious with their plans, too.

We will accept applications for 100% funding, but you can apply to this programme as part of a larger funding package of support from a variety of sources.

If your application is successful, we would anticipate paying the grant in two stages, the first at the start of the project and the second at its completion. In most cases, the grant will be split into 90% and 10% instalments.

We encourage you to get in touch with us for more information: programmes@artfund.org. In addition, please keep an eye on our website for advice sessions that can be booked using Calendly.

Support for developing your project

Art Fund will produce additional guidance documents that focus on developing your partnerships, sourcing additional funding, marketing your projects and widening access. You will also be able to find a list of past grant holders, who they borrowed from, and key advice they would pass on to any museum or gallery that intends to borrow from another collection.

These will be shared on the Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund webpage, so please keep an eye on our website.

On the website, you will also find a film that focuses on one of the projects funded in the first round of the programme. We hope that this will be a useful tool for you to advocate for your project to internal and external stakeholders; we would encourage you to show this to your senior managers so that they understand the benefits of working on this sort of project.

You will also have the opportunity to attend funding workshops/webinars or 1-1 advice giving sessions. Full details of these will be shared on our website.

‘The funding being linked to Art Fund helped me clearly explain the purpose [of the application] and gain support.’

3. Your application

Application process

Please do get in touch with the Programmes team at Art Fund to discuss any initial ideas before submitting an application. Don't worry if all the details haven't been worked out, this is just an opportunity to make sure that the project would be eligible before completing a full application: programmes@artfund.org

This year, we will be accepting all application forms and supporting documents via email. We will not be using the online form due to changes to our system. Please download the templates on our website, complete them, and send them to programmes@artfund.org (with klloyd@artfund.org in the Cc line). Please ensure the application form remains as a Word file (as opposed to PDF); this will enable us to process the information more easily.

We don't expect you to have confirmed approval of any loan request before you apply, but you'll be expected to demonstrate that you have discussed the details in depth with the relevant lending museum partner, and ascertained the conditions that will need to be met to receive the loan, as well as the likely costs.

We ask that you complete the object loan template as part of the application process to show us what objects you are considering as part of the project, and the status of your conversation with the lender. A blank template can be downloaded from the Weston Loan Programme page on the Art Fund website. An example of a completed template is available on page 14.

We also understand that there can be long lead times for borrowing, and if you're awarded funds we don't intend to impose a deadline by which the funds must be spent. We do however expect funded projects to be delivered as soon as is reasonably possible, and that we should be alerted to any unforeseen delays.

Application form

We expect all applicants to make a robust and convincing case as to how the funding requested will help them to meet the aims of the programme. In the application form you will be asked to:

- Tell us what you want to achieve with this project
- Describe the planned display and provide information on the objects to be included, both from your collection and the identified loan(s)
- Describe the additional activity you plan to carry out to maximise the value and impact of the loan, such as public engagement activities and/or events
- Include how the project meets any or all of the aims of the Weston Loan Programme (as detailed on page 3)
- Consider who will benefit from the project (both within and outside the organisation)
- Outline the timescales for all project work
- Detail the resources required to deliver the project

Please be aware that if you are awarded funding, you will be expected to work with our external evaluator to fully refine your aims and your plans for collecting data to support these aims.

You'll be asked to submit a full and realistically costed budget breakdown for the project as a separate document, following a template available to download from Art Fund's website. It will also be possible to include any images and/or additional documentation that you think will help to illustrate your plans. Please note, any additional documentation will need to be in Word, PDF, or JPEG format. We have found that strong, carefully selected images are very helpful when assessing applications.

When working on the application form, please back up your work by saving progress on a regular basis.

Previous applicants have found that getting the input of colleagues across the museum was very helpful, as it provided an opportunity to encourage cross-organisational engagement with the planned activity.

If you would like to receive the application in an alternative format, please contact programmes@artfund.org.

Please note, the information requested in the form is for the purposes of administering, monitoring and evaluating grants. Please ensure that you have relevant consent from any third parties to share any personal details with us. Our privacy policy is available online at the following link: www.artfund.org/pages/privacy-and-cookies

Budget breakdown

The budget breakdown template can be downloaded from www.artfund.org/my-art-fund or the programme page on the website.

Please include as much detail as you can in the template, so that the committee can clearly see what they're being asked to fund.

The majority of costs involved in planning, delivering, publicising and evaluating a loan project can be included. It would be particularly helpful to consider the following common unseen costs:

- image and reproduction fees charged by the lending institution
- training e.g. evaluation and data collection, borrowing best practice, object handling, promotion, social media, etc
- upskilling front of house or other staff so that they can support delivery of the project

An example of a completed template is provided on page 12.

Joint applications

You're welcome to submit a joint application with other regional partner museums. If you do submit a joint application we ask that a lead applicant completes the form, but with the input of the other regional partner(s) so that the committee can understand the impact of the project in each of the applicant settings. If successful we would award the grant to the lead applicant and ask them to distribute the funds as necessary.

Terms and conditions

Once you're ready to submit your application, you'll be asked to confirm that the person with relevant authority in your organisation and any partner organisations has read and understood our terms and conditions before submitting your application. You'll then be asked to sign an agreement confirming that all regional partners accept the terms and conditions if you're awarded a grant.

In particular, please note that the contribution of Art Fund and the Garfield Weston Foundation through the Weston Loan Programme must be acknowledged on any related materials, and the lock-up logo must be used wherever is possible/practical. Art Fund must approve in advance any display panels, print material, press releases and/or related publicity.

We'll also ask you to discuss joining Art Fund's museum network and taking advantage of the opportunities that this has to offer if you're not already a partner. This is free, and it means we can connect your museum with our 135,000 members and the hundreds of thousands of art lovers and museum-goers that access our communications channels.

Please see page 15 below for all terms and conditions.

4. What happens next

Decision making

The final decision on all applications will be made by members of a committee convened by Art Fund, and you will be advised of the outcome within 10 working days of the committee meeting.

Please bear this in mind when thinking about project start dates. We can't fund any retrospective costs, so your exhibition shouldn't start before you receive a decision from us. You will also need to factor in time for paperwork, grant payments and attendance at Art Fund workshops.

At recent committee meetings, Garfield Weston Foundation has been particularly interested in supporting organisations that have not applied to the programme before. Similarly, we will consider who will benefit most from a grant and we will look for opportunities to support smaller organisations or less experienced curators. We are keen for our grants to have maximum impact.

Confirmation of outcome and claiming the grant

Art Fund will contact all applicants to advise them of the outcome of the decision-making process.

We're expecting to pay grants in two stages, but we can discuss alternative options if your project is awarded a grant.

We'd expect to release the first tranche of funding at the start of the project; in order to draw down the funds, you would need to have returned a signed copy of our offer letter, along with an invoice for the agreed amount. The final balance would be paid on receipt of an evaluation report, full and final financial statement and invoice for the balance of funds.

Acknowledging support from the Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund

We'd like to work collaboratively with you in order to celebrate and promote the projects funded through this programme. Art Fund would be very happy to provide advice and press and marketing support as needed. We will share a Next Steps document with you when we send the offer paperwork.

The support of the Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund must be credited on all materials related to the project, and successful applicants will be sent branding and crediting guidelines with the offer paperwork. These are also available to download [here](#).

If your project is awarded funding, you'll need to contact us in advance with any press and marketing materials so that these can be reviewed and approved. We would advise sending us any materials for approval at least 10 working days before they're due to be published or go to print, so that the materials can be reviewed and edited if needs be.

Collaboration events and ongoing support

All awardees will be invited to attend collaboration events, either in person or online, throughout the process of the grant award. These will be an important opportunity to meet the other awardees, hear from existing grant holders, and plan for key elements, such as data collection, marketing and press. We would expect somebody from each museum to attend, accompanied by the person who will be managing the press and marketing for the project. If this takes place in person, we'll be happy to cover any related travel costs through your application budget.

Following the collaboration day, Art Fund staff will be happy to offer advice and support throughout your project. We expect to be kept up-to-date with any key developments, such as dates for related press releases and any opening or other key events.

Evaluation

Evaluation is an important feature of this programme, but we want it to be as useful as it possibly can be.

We are working with independent evaluation consultants to help grant holders as they plan and carry out their evaluation.

Promoting your exhibition

We would also like to make sure that grant holders are able to promote their funded exhibitions and activity as widely as possible. Art Fund is therefore working with a PR and marketing expert to offer one-to-one support around communications, social media, writing press releases and other related skills.



Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery, London, December 2020 taken during COVID-19 face-mask restrictions [Weston Loan Programme]. © Andy Smith

5. Further information and guidance

Key dates and deadlines

(Please note, these may be subject to change; always check our website for the most accurate information)

Round 10	
Monday 13 October 2025	Programme opens for applications
Friday 12 December 2025	Application deadline
Friday 6 March 2026	Applicants contacted with the committee's decision
March/April 2026	Collaboration day for all awardees
April 2027	Celebration event

Contact

For further information and to discuss a potential project please contact Katie Lloyd, Programme Manager: klloyd@artfund.org

If you have a general enquiry you can also contact programmes@artfund.org, 020 8225 4865, to speak to another member of the Programmes team.

Additional guidance and support

Please see [Art Fund's website](#) for information that will support the development of your project and partnerships, and help you to advocate for the project to internal and external stakeholders.

Eligible lending institutions

For this third phase of funding, we will continue to use the widened the pool of museums and galleries that can be borrowed from. As in phase two, the list includes nationals, Arts Council England NPO band 3 organisations and other UK museums that lend under GIS conditions.

Possible lenders could include the following, but do get in touch if you're at all unsure:

- Arts Council Collection
- Birmingham Museums Trust
- Bristol Museum
- British Museum
- British Library
- Crafts Council Collection
- Courtauld Institute of Art
- Glasgow Museums
- Imperial War Museums
- Leeds Museums and Galleries
- Manchester City Galleries
- Museum of London
- National Archives
- National Army Museum
- National Galleries Scotland
- National Gallery
- National Library of Scotland
- National Museums of Scotland
- National Museums Liverpool
- National Museum of the Royal Navy
- National Museums Northern Ireland
- National Museums Wales
- National Portrait Gallery
- National Trust for Scotland
- Natural History Museum
- Norfolk Museums Service
- Plymouth museums, galleries and archives
- Royal Academy
- Royal Armouries
- Royal Collection
- Royal Museums Greenwich
- Royal Scottish Academy
- Science Museum Group
- Sir John Soane's Museum
- Tate
- Tullie House
- Tyne and Wear Museums Service
- University of Cambridge
- University of Oxford
- Victoria and Albert Museum

Example budget breakdown and funding package template

Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund

Heading	Item	Anticipated cost (excl. VAT if this can be reclaimed)	How have you arrived at this figure? Eg quote received, discussion with lender etc	Is this a cost that you would like Weston Loan Programme funding to cover? Yes/No
<u>Relationship Development</u> e.g. travel, project meetings, Art Fund collaboration day	Travel for x1 staff member to national museum lending partner to finalise project details/view objects	£100	As specified by trainline	Yes
	Travel to Art Fund offices for in-person meetings/collaboration events for x3 staff members	£300	As specified by trainline	Yes
<u>Loans and exhibition</u> e.g. security review, insurance, conservation, transportation, installation, additional invigilation, small-scale improvements to fabric and security of the gallery, new/improved display cases, mounts	Transporting the object from national museum lending partner to venue, and return, including all packaging	£3,500	Quote received from art handler/freight company	Yes
	Accompanying courier travelling with the object for install/pack-down, plus accommodation	£100	As advised by lender	Yes
	New display cases x2	£5000	Quote recieved	Yes
	Dehumidifier for gallery	£500	Quote received	No - internal funding
<u>Additional activity</u> e.g. marketing materials, image licensing fees, promotional costs, refreshed galleries/displays, new labels, information panels, interpretation materials, digital activity, audience engagement activity, staff training	Exhibition posters/fliers	£250	Quote received from printers	Yes
	Copyright fees for three images	£300	As advised by DACS	No - internal funding
	Associated educational events programme	£3000	X3 special events during the run of the exhibition, estimate includes staff time, any speaker fees, refreshments etc.	External sources
Total expected project cost		£13,050		

The Museum can/cannot reclaim VAT (please delete as appropriate)

Example funding package

Please include details of all sources of funding that you intend to apply for, have submitted an application for, or been awarded, though you can apply for 100% funding from the Weston Loan Programme. In the final row, please also provide details of any in-kind support that you'll be contributing to the project, and what the expected cash value would be.

Sources of Funding	Amount	Status (e.g. to apply for, applied for, awarded)
Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund request	£9,250	Applied for
Internal Funding	£800	Confirmed
External sources (e.g. HLF)	£3,000	Awarded by local council fund
Total funding package*	£13,050	
<u>In Kind Support</u> e.g. staff time that will be allocated to the project etc	▪ Exhibition curator's time for research, planning, install and de-install: x3 days per week x12 weeks ▪ Materials for educational events, £150, donated by local art materials shop ▪ Volunteer invigilators x3 @ £15 per hour for x22 days	

* Please note – this figure needs to match the total expected project cost

Example loan object template

Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund

Project title: XXX

Applicant: XXX

Please provide details of the objects that you intend to borrow as part of your Weston Loan Programme application. Feel free to include all objects on one template, regardless of who you intend to borrow the piece from, and what the status of the loan is.

You do not need to have received formal agreement for the loan object(s) from your museum or gallery lending partner in order to apply, but you do need to have had a detailed discussion with them to identify likely objects and costs.

For the status, please select one of the following:

- Object discussed with lender and agreed in principle
- Loan request ready for submission
- Loan requested submitted
- Loan approved

Add in as many rows as you need to, but don't feel you have to include several objects if you only plan to borrow one.

Object description	Lender	Status
Sunflowers by Vincent Van Gogh, 1888	National Gallery	Object discussed with lender and agreed in principle
Francis Bacon Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion 1944	Tate	Loan request submitted
Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio), The Bridgewater Madonna, About 1508	The Scottish National Gallery	Loan approved
Damien Hirst's Black Sheep with Golden Horns (2009)	Leeds Art Gallery	Loan request ready for submission

6. Terms and Conditions

If your application is successful, an appropriately authorised person in your organisation will be required to sign an agreement which will set out the terms and conditions of our grant offer. These are as follows:

1. the grant must be used solely for the project and cannot be put towards any other purpose or materials which have already been purchased or for which a contractual commitment to purchase has been made;
2. the payment is a freely given grant payment for your benefit and is outside the scope of VAT;
3. the grant will be paid in accordance with an agreed schedule and subject to the provision by you of certain information including invoices, a financial statement setting out how the grant has been utilised and an evaluation report;
4. the grant will be paid to the museum bank account or, where a joint application has been made, the lead museum bank account;
5. you will be required to work with an external evaluator appointed by us for the duration of the project, and you will be expected to provide us with a final evaluation report together with the financial statement mentioned above, within one month of completion of your project;
6. each of us will obtain the other's prior written approval in advance of publication of any publicity materials relating to the project. However, we and/or the Garfield Weston Foundation at our absolute discretion, may publicise details of the grant offer in any way we think fit;
7. you will provide us at regular intervals throughout the project with a representative selection of high-resolution digital images illustrating the project. These images must be suitable for publication and copyright cleared for use by us (where copyright is owned by a third party). Where copyright is owned by you, you agree to grant us a royalty free, irrevocable licence to use the images for all Art Fund purposes;
8. we will publish the cost of all projects unless you provide valid reasons as to why such information should be withheld;
9. you must ensure that the support of Art Fund and Garfield Weston Foundation is acknowledged and credited as specified by us on all materials related to the project. You must also obtain our approval in advance of the publication of any display or print materials related to the project. Successful applicants will be provided with our branding and crediting guidelines;
10. you will be required to link any websites owned or operated by you which provide information about the project to the homepage of Art Fund and Garfield Weston Foundation websites. However, such links must not be used to falsely portray any endorsement or affiliation between you and either Garfield Weston Foundation or Art Fund;
11. you will be expected to work with us in good faith to promote and showcase the project and the Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund;
12. you must not use our or Garfield Weston Foundation's name or logo in any way which causes either of us any negative publicity or damages our reputation;
13. your rights and obligations under the agreement must not be transferred in whole or in part in any manner without our prior written approval;
14. if your financial statement indicates that you have not spent the full amount of the grant, we may withhold all or part of the grant or demand repayment of grant monies already paid. We may also require you to provide receipts evidencing any expenditure claimed;
15. neither of us will be liable or responsible to the other for failure to fulfil our obligations under the agreement caused by events beyond our control. In these circumstances, the affected party's obligations under the agreement will be suspended for the duration of the event but both of us will work together during this period to find a way to enable that party to carry out its obligations under the agreement; and
16. we may demand repayment of all or part of the grant at our absolute discretion if you fail to comply with or contravene any of the terms and conditions of the agreement. Interest will be charged on any repayments which have not been made by the date notified to you.

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FOUNDATION



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