



Being Human Festival

Being Human Festival: 6–15 November 2025

Institutional Grant – run a Festival Hub

Institutional Grants are the largest funding pathway to apply to Being Human Festival and enable institutions to run a Festival Hub. These must be institutionally focused and involve multiple researchers from different disciplines. Institutional Grants are intended to support the development of institutional capacity for public engagement activity in the humanities (e.g. to try something new or to work with new communities).

Applications should showcase best practice and ambitious public engagement activities, demonstrating coherent, imaginative and eye-catching programmes of events.

More information about the festival and the different ways to take part is available on our [website](#).

The theme for Being Human Festival 2025 is *Between the Lines* —a space of hidden histories, shifting borders, and unspoken meanings. From migration routes that redraw the map to the traces of erased histories, to the margins of a poem, and the frontlines of protest, we invite researchers to explore boundaries, crossings, and intersections—and the spaces in between, where meaning is made and remade. [Read more about the theme](#).

What support is available?

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and [AHRC-recognised Independent Research Organisations](#) can apply for grants of £4,000–£8,000 to run a Festival Hub and there is no requirement to apply for the full amount.

Institutional Grants must be match-funded (to match the total amount of your application, or £5,000, whichever is higher) by the applying institution, providing scope for more ambitious programming.

All researchers and professional services staff involved in the planning and delivery must be named in the application. Hub coordinators will be expected to attend online meetings with the Being Human team at agreed points during the development of their activities. These meetings will provide opportunities to discuss and develop ideas for collaboration, such as around programming and communications strategies.

In addition to this Institutional Grant-specific support, organisers will have access to the support and resources offered to all participants in the festival. These include:

- a training programme throughout the festival year for practical advice on designing, planning, promotion and delivery of your project;
- public engagement toolkits, resources and helpful advice from the festival team;
- guides to promoting your event that contain hints and tips about marketing and press;
- copies of Being Human promotional materials geared towards promoting the national festival and access to other marketing materials (e.g. banners and badges etc.) to promote your activity;
- templates you can use to produce your own marketing materials (posters, banners, digital and PowerPoint templates);
- support from the central Being Human social media accounts.

You may also be invited to take part in centrally organised festival activities such as the festival launch.

What are the eligibility criteria?

Institutional Grant applications must:

1. be led by a UK Higher Education Institution (HEI) or an [AHRC recognised Independent Research Organisation \(IRO\)](#)
2. commit to support activities through match-funding (including in-kind support)
3. engage with carefully chosen cultural or community partners (e.g. a school, charity, or arts organisation etc.)
4. not include an event that is a public talk, panel discussion or seminar, which are not funded by Being Human unless they feature a very strong public engagement aspect (e.g. an element of performance)
5. include letters of support from all community or cultural partners
6. upload a completed activities grid (as provided) and budget template (as provided). Please note: you must use our templates for these documents.

Festival Hubs must:

1. be made up of 4-8 separate events or activities in a range of formats
2. include one large-capacity or particularly ambitious headline event

3. include one event led by a PhD researcher (with a letter of support from their supervisor)
4. include at least one activity aimed at families or young people
5. feature a range of humanities research from a range of disciplines, covering different topics and subject areas.

All activities must:

- **demonstrate aspects of humanities research** in ways that are entertaining, accessible and relevant for non-specialist audiences;
- **have direct involvement from a humanities researcher** in delivering (not just planning) the event, to ensure that research expertise informs the activity (see our [FAQs](#) for our definition of a professional researcher);
- **be based on the research of a professional researcher** (see our [FAQs](#) for our definition of a professional researcher);
- **be held during the festival dates** (6-15 November 2025, with the option to have lead-in and post-activity aspects to the project);
- **be free to attend** (all associated activities need to be free, not just those funded by Being Human – this includes free access to venues where events are being held, such as heritage sites or museums that normally charge an entrance fee);
- **be held off-campus wherever possible** (exceptions may be made for on-campus public spaces such as theatres, museums and galleries);
- **be representative and inclusive**, giving consideration to the diversity of speakers and researchers represented within their programmes;
- **give serious consideration to accessibility** in choice of venue, platform and format, with all activities taking place in accessible venues where possible (exceptions can be made for venues that are integral to the activity, but additional ways to engage with the activity must be included, and this must be explained in your application);
- **respond to the interests and needs of clearly defined non-specialist audiences;**
- **show evidence in the application that diversity, inclusion and accessibility** have been considered across programming, speakers/researchers, venues and platforms.

Please note that staff at the School of Advanced Study, University of London, are not eligible to apply for funding through this pathway. Staff members and PhD students from the School of Advanced Study should email beinghuman@sas.ac.uk for more information on how to take part in the festival.

Collaborative Institutional Grant applications from up to two eligible institutions (including the lead organisation) are possible, but the application and proposed Festival Hub must be led by one institution and only one institution can receive the grant. Collaborative Institutions should be HEIs or AHRC-recognised IROs. They should be named in the application and jointly involved in both the planning and delivery of the proposed activities.

What does a successful Institutional Grant application look like?

An Institutional Grant offers an institution an opportunity to plan a coherent and curated Festival Hub as part of Being Human Festival, bringing together a range of perspectives into a programme of activities that connects research to the histories, cultures and communities of an area. Successful programmes typically use aspects of a city, town or place's identity (local industries, the geography of an area, famous residents or locations etc.) as inspiration for an exciting programme of activities (although other inspirations are also possible).

Applications and Festival Hubs should demonstrate a high level of community partnership. In general, we would recommend that you partner with multiple partners across your programme of events. We value and are keen to support partnerships in which the external partners are providing substantial input to the application and activities, such as through co-producing and co-developing the activities. Applications should demonstrate how these partnerships are equitable and mutually beneficial. They might, for example, be based at a local museum or they might take place across a range of community venues and platforms. Hubs should maintain a strong focus on public engagement with research and should not just be a few good public engagement activities supplemented by less ambitious events. A programme should offer a range of exciting and engaging activities designed around the needs and interests of diverse local audiences.

We are unlikely to fund activities that have already been funded by the festival. However, if you are building upon an activity that has previously been funded by the festival, please detail the ways in which you have developed this.

What formats are suitable for a Festival Hub?

The best programmes feature a range of event and activity formats that have been designed to meet the needs of different participants and audiences. This might range from activities featuring partnerships with museums and theatres to programming with grassroots and community organisations.

Applications must include one 'headline' event that has a large capacity and is particularly creative and ambitious, providing a focus for the programme. For example, this could be a museum takeover involving multiple researchers or a large capacity performance event.

We do not want to include events within Festival Hubs that would not be accepted to the festival in their own right. Audiences, communities and participants should have opportunities to contribute their own experiences and knowledge as part of the project. They should also leave having learnt something clear and understandable about humanities research.

We expect all programmes to involve communities in their production, via 'co-curation' and 'co-production'. This might mean, for example, that activities and workshops may take place in advance, feeding into a main activity during the festival.

We expect applicants to be ambitious and creative; although we recommend activities based around tried-and-tested formats, we encourage innovation. Some examples of typically successful formats, which can work in-person, online, or in hybrid formats, include:

- **performances** (theatre, music, comedy, storytelling);
- **food and drink-based activities** (cooking lessons, cook-alongs, themed meals, tastings);
- **screenings and 'watch together' activities** (film screenings with interactive elements, listening parties, DJ sessions);
- **walks and tours** (walks, audio walks, street parades, behind the scenes tours);
- **'have a go' events** (learn a skill, try an instrument, make something);
- **museum lates** or museum takeovers;
- **activities coordinated by post** or other ways of connecting with people at home;
- **interactive exhibitions and installations** which allow for two-way engagement (outdoor art, public art, crowd-sourced activity)
- **game-based activities** (escape rooms, treasure hunts, quizzes).

We are open to programmes that feature interactive digital activities such as podcasts, a daily newspaper, films, radio stations and exhibitions. These activities would be supplements to a programme, rather than the heart of it. They would need to be interactive, feature aspects of co-production, and be firmly rooted in public engagement with research.

Public talks and panel discussions are not funded by Being Human and should not be included as part of Institutional Grant applications unless they feature a very strong public engagement aspect (e.g. an element of performance). Formats that are similar to an academic workshop or seminar will not be accepted into the festival.

Please use our [planning toolkits](#) that give tips on how to create a successful public engagement activity – including a toolkit on how to put together a successful programme of events. We also advise you to look at our [case studies](#) of previous festival events for inspiration.

Closed events (e.g. invitation only events for school groups or specific community groups etc.) are eligible, but we expect that the majority of the events in your programme should be open to public audiences.

What costs can an Institutional Grant cover?

Funding from Being Human is intended to support expenditure that cannot easily be absorbed into existing institutional budgets and the majority of the funding should go towards engagement activities during the festival dates.

Eligible Costs	Ineligible Costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payments to performers/musicians/artists who are not salaried members of staff • Food and drink that are essential to the activity (e.g. themed meals, tasting sessions) • Reasonable promotional costs that will help you to reach your intended participants/audiences (e.g. flyers, local paid advertising) • Postage costs (e.g. sending packs to attendees) • Props, costumes, and materials • Venue hire or essential transport/accommodation • Production costs (exhibition panels, printing, filming, audio, streaming, web design, if essential to the activity) • Reasonable documentation costs (e.g. filming, photography) • Accessibility costs (e.g. captioning, transcribing, BSL interpreter) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher time and existing staff members' costs, whether academic or professional staff • Catering for participants or attendees (i.e. we may support food costs for a themed meal, but not a wine reception after an event) • Supporting academic seminars, workshops, conferences and symposia • Supporting any event that has been designed primarily for the benefit of academics, students, stakeholders or others already engaged with the world of research • Evaluation costs (evaluation forms will be provided by Being Human Festival) • International travel or accommodation • Hardware (e.g. laptops, projectors, mobile phones)

Match-funding

Institutions are required to provide match-funding (to match the total amount of your application, or £5,000, whichever is higher), which should be provided from institutionally-held budgets (e.g. marketing/event or research grant budgets) to support and amplify programmes. Match-funding can include in-

kind support, but it must include some additional funding. Examples of costs that might be covered by match-funding include:

- the use of an off-campus space or venue, or use of digital platforms;
- documentation of activities (filming, photography);
- paid student internships;
- marketing and promotion costs;
- use of university studio space or other production costs for films, podcasts or streaming;
- catering costs.

Festival priorities

Funding for Institutional Grants is generally prioritised outside London. London-based institutions are welcome to apply, but it may be worth contacting the Being Human team for an informal chat about chances of success before submitting an application.

Applications will be reviewed both as a full programme and individually with regard to each proposed activity.

If your application has fulfilled the eligibility criteria, your application will be reviewed against the following priorities:

- alignment with the [festival's core aims and objectives](#);
- alignment with the [festival's priority audiences](#);
- the innovation, ambition and creativity of individual events and overall programme;
- evidence of fit between planned activities and specific intended audiences;
- evidence of best practice public engagement (e.g. two-way engagement, co-production, opportunity for legacies beyond the festival);
- evidence of achievability and team capacity to deliver the programme.

Please note that if an application for an Institutional Grant is unsuccessful, the panel may offer to fund a specific activity through a Festival Event Grant. There is a section on the application form to provide details of **one activity** that you'd like to be considered for a Festival Event Grant if your Institutional Grant application is unsuccessful.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

We actively welcome festival content which celebrates equity, diversity and inclusion. We are particularly keen to receive applications which engage with underrepresented groups in your community, and/or groups who share a particular protected characteristic (defined under the [Equality Act 2010](#)). Please

be specific about your intended audiences in your application. We will not knowingly accept applications for events which include speaker line-ups that lack appropriate diversity, including all-male or 'about us, without us' activities – where a subject is explored without representation from those affected by it.

If your proposal includes subject matter that is highly sensitive or emotionally triggering, appropriate handling of these topics must be considered and clearly evidenced in your application. Please note the review panel reserve the right not to accept such topics in the festival programme.

Organisers will be required to adhere to their institution's, partners' and venues' safeguarding policies for all activities involving vulnerable adults, young people or children. If these organisations do not have safeguarding policies and procedures in place, organisers will be required to adhere to the University of London's safeguarding policies and procedures. Applicants will be asked to name a safeguarding lead for the Festival Hub in the application form.

More information about the festival's work on equity, diversity and inclusion can be found on our [website](#). We endeavour to keep learning and improving our processes, so please contact us at beinghuman@sas.ac.uk if you have any feedback or would like to discuss this with us.

Should I apply?

It is essential to consider whether you will have the necessary support in place to deliver the Festival Hub should a grant application be successful. When completing your application, you should consider the following:

- Will you have the time, on top of existing commitments, to project manage the grant and oversee the planning and delivery of a programme of ambitious festival activities?
- Do you have previous experience of delivering public engagement activities? It is important to understand that this will involve a fair amount of administration, as well as work on coordinating, promoting and delivering the programme.
- Will you be able to draw on the support of marketing and other professional teams within your organisation in order to deliver a successful programme?
- Do you have existing and tested relationships with the cultural or community partners you would like to work with? Will they help you reach your intended audiences and communities?
- Have you spoken to these partners before putting in an application? Do they understand the project and their role?
- Why do you want to apply to run a Festival Hub? Successful applications in previous years have aligned Being Human programmes with broader strategic objectives and priorities, which offer a longer term pay-off for the amount of work involved.

All lead applicants to the Institutional Grant pathway must have professional events and public engagement support in place to see the project through to completion, and all team members must be listed in your application.

Application process

Application forms must be submitted online using [Survey Monkey Apply](#). [Application guidance](#) can be found on our website, including links to the application form.

A Word version of the application form is available on our website, which can be used for reference when preparing your application. However, please note that applications will only be accepted through Survey Monkey Apply.

Please upload a completed activities grid (as provided), budget template (as provided), letters of support from community and cultural partners (in PDF format), and from PhD supervisors (where applicable, and in PDF format) when submitting your application.

We have an equal opportunities monitoring form as part of our application process, which will help us to ensure that Being Human Festival opportunities are accessible to as many people as possible and to continue our commitment to fostering an inclusive environment. More information on how this data will be used is included on the form. The information provided will not be used as part of the application review process.

If you have any questions about the application process, please email beinghuman@sas.ac.uk.

Applicants to the Institutional Grant pathway may be invited to take part in a meeting with the festival team, to allow an opportunity to explore the application in greater depth and address any questions raised by the review panel.

- **Deadline for applications for funding – Thursday 10 April, 5pm**
- **Notification of outcome of applications – by Friday 6 June**

Further information about the festival and the level of support available when organising your activity can be found on the [FAQs section of our website](#). If you have any questions, please email beinghuman@sas.ac.uk.