

London Borough of Culture

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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CONTEXT

Q. What is the London Borough of Culture?

Inspired by the UK City and European Capital of Culture Programmes, London Borough of Culture is an award that puts culture at the heart of the community, celebrating the unique and distinctive creativity, character and diversity of London's boroughs. It was launched in 2017 and has already directly benefited 12 London boroughs. This round will see awards to two title winning Boroughs (2025 and 2027) and three Cultural Impact Awards, to be announced in early 2024.

Q. What do you mean by culture?

In the Mayor's Culture Strategy, we use the term 'culture' in its broadest sense, whether led by professional artists or local people. It includes visual and performing arts, literature, museums, libraries and heritage – from historic buildings and sites to cultures and memories valued by communities. It covers 'popular' culture as well as everyday creativity in all sorts of settings.

ELIGIBILITY

Q. Who can apply?

Only London boroughs can apply. The application must be signed by the Chief Executive and endorsed by the Leader of the Council. A council service that has been outsourced or an organisation that has been contracted to deliver the borough's arts and cultural provision can (and should) be a partner in the application, but the applicant must be the borough.

Q. We applied to the first or second round of London Borough of Culture. Can we resubmit our bid?

Your bid needs to be relevant to your borough's current needs and reflective of its story now. Whilst some activities and programmes might be revisited, we would expect to see an approach that is relevant and timely to now.

Revisited applications would also need to clearly demonstrate that they have taken on board the feedback given on the previous application.

Q. We want to apply for a title award but not a Cultural Impact Award. Is that possible?

Yes. The Cultural Impact Award section on the form is optional.

Q. We want to apply for a Cultural Impact Award but not a title award. Is that possible?

No. We want to see boroughs hold the ambition and commitment to the higher level of award, so for that reason applying for a title award is mandatory.

Q. We received a Cultural Impact Award from the first or second round of London Borough of Culture. Can we apply for this round?

Yes, you can apply if you are a previous Cultural Impact Award recipient. You will need to clearly show how this programme is additional and how it adds value to these programmes. You may not use any other GLA funding you are currently in receipt of or have secured as a source of match funding towards your London Borough of Culture programme.

Q. We are a Creative Enterprise Zone. Can we still apply? If so, can the funding be used towards the match requirement?

Yes, you can apply if you are a Creative Enterprise Zone. You will need to clearly show how this programme is additional and how it adds value to these programmes. You may not use any other GLA funding you are currently in receipt of or have secured as a source of match funding towards your London Borough of Culture programme.

Q. My borough is already a recipient of Great Places, Cultural Destinations and/or Creative People and Places. Will this jeopardise our chances?

No. But you will need to clearly show how this programme is additional and how it adds value to these programmes.

Q. What will you not fund?

We will not fund bids that are not led by a London borough, or that are led by more than one borough, capital projects, sports programmes, bids that do not have a clear plan for involving local people or existing programmes of work (unless you can demonstrate additionality).

Q. Are there any specific governance structures / models we should have in place if we win?

No, the governance structure you have in place to deliver your programme will need to be appropriate to your borough. You will need to demonstrate that, whichever model you use, there is clear accountability for the borough and good project management systems in place. You will also need to demonstrate that there is senior management commitment, should you be successful.

BUDGET AND FUNDING

Q. What is the budget for London Borough of Culture?

The total investment by the GLA towards the London Borough of Culture award is £2.7m. The total award is £1.35m for each winning borough. In addition, £200k per borough will be awarded to up to three Cultural Impact Awards that are deemed to be of an outstanding nature but fall outside of the winning bids.

Boroughs must provide at least 30% cash match funding.

Q. Does all partnership funding need to be in place at the point of application?

You will need to demonstrate the borough's commitment and which budgets/departments will support the programme. You will also need to outline fundraising plans including co-commissioning, public subsidy, private sector support and local business partnerships.

Q. How much of the 30% match fund needs to be confirmed at the time of submitting the bid?

We expect to see a firm financial commitment from the borough at the time of submitting the bid. Provide as much detail as you can on any outstanding applications or other expected income. We will be assessing the likelihood of you being able to reach the target. If expected income becomes confirmed during the assessment process, do let us know.

Q. Will you support costs for equipment (e.g. dance mats, digital software/hardware) or minor capital repairs to buildings (e.g. for meanwhile use/pop up shops)?

Small capital costs as part of the production costs of a cultural activity are permitted. However, this funding is for revenue programmes.

Q. Do you have guidance on artists' and freelancer pay?

It is essential that artists and freelancers are paid properly for their contribution to London Borough of Culture. We will not support programmes that do not pay their creative practitioners appropriately. We recommend using artform industry guidance to calculate fair pay, such as from the Artists' Union England, Equity or relevant trade union.

You must ensure that any fees that fall outside of industry standard adhere to the London Living Wage.

Q. Will the 2025 and 2027 winners be able to draw down funds in advance of 2025/2026?

Once the programme and budgets are agreed with GLA and a funding agreement has been put in place, you will be able to start drawing on funds.

Q. Can funding be used for a one-off or time-limited project?

Yes, but one-off projects must demonstrate long-term impact.

Q. Does the match funding constitute 30% of the Mayor's £1.35m investment or 30% of the full project costs?

Match funding should be calculated as a minimum of 30% of the Mayor's £1.35m investment.

Q. Can we provide more than 30% match funding? Is there an optimum % of match funding that you expect?

You may provide more than 30%. There is no optimum level of match funding; it simply needs to be at least 30%.

Q. How much does the borough need to contribute towards the 30%? If the borough says it will underwrite the budget (if there is a shortfall) will they be held to this or can borough investment increase or decrease, depending on additional funding secured?

There is no set amount that we expect the borough to commit, as every borough will be in a different financial position. We encourage boroughs to bring in income from other sources, so will not penalise boroughs for doing this. However, we do expect to see a firm financial commitment from the borough.

Q. Can the Good Growth Fund or other capital funds/investment be used as match funding?

Capital funds/investment can be used to provide additional resources to the London Borough of Culture bid, but, as this is a revenue programme, capital funds cannot be used as part of the 30% match.

Q. We are in receipt of funding from other Greater London Authority funded projects. Can this be used towards our match requirement?

You may not use any other GLA funding you are currently in receipt of or have secured as a source of match funding towards your London Borough of Culture programme.

Q. What is the forecast of funding over 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027 and 2028 in terms of cash flow? Can we include development activity before the year?

Winning boroughs will be able to draw down funds once the funding agreement is signed. If you win the title for 2025, you can expect to draw down approximately one quarter of the award in 2024/25, half of the award in 2025/2026 and the final quarter before the end of 2026/2027.

Q. What will the grant conditions look like?

Each grant award is composed of a series of grant conditions which set out the programme objectives, milestones and funding schedule alongside a detailed description of the proposal. As part of grant agreement, all successful applicants will be required to monitor progress on a regular basis and evaluate their project at the end of the programme to assess its impact and offer learning for future activity. Please refer to the funding agreement template on the website.

<https://intranet.london.gov.uk/node/7548>

ASSESSMENT AND DECISION-MAKING

Q. Who selects the winning bids?

A panel of senior GLA Officers will evaluate applications. Following the evaluation, a moderation panel will review scores to ensure consistency of approach. GLA representatives across different policy areas and the Strategic Partners' Board (made up of strategic partners including major funders) will also comment on the applications. A shortlist of applicants will then be invited to interview. The Mayor will make the final decision.

Q. Which organisations are represented on the Strategic Partners' Board?

The Strategic Partners' Board includes Arts Council England, City Bridge Trust, City of London Corporation, Historic England, Libraries Connected, London Councils, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Paul Hamlyn Foundation and The Linbury Trust.

Q. How will you assess our bid? Are you reserving the right to bring boroughs in for an interview? Will there be any negotiation?

The bids will be assessed and scored by GLA officers, against the application criteria, which is outlined in the guidance notes. GLA representatives across different policy areas and the Strategic Partners' Board will have an opportunity to read and comment on all the applications.

During the assessment process a shortlist of applicants will be invited to an interview. The interview will take place at City Hall and will be an opportunity to present your programme in more detail. Following this, recommendations will be made to the Deputy Mayor for Culture and Creative Industries and then to the Mayor for final decision.

Q. Will there be a geographical spread as part of the selection process?

Geographical spread is not part of our assessment criteria. Successful applicants could be based in inner or outer, or north, south, east or west London.

We are looking for bids that understand the needs of the local area now and demonstrate how the programme will make an impact. Bids need to be authentic, showing how the proposed programme is relevant to and will tell the story of the local area.

Q. How can we compete with other boroughs that have a lot more / lot less cultural infrastructure?

We are assessing the journey a borough will take and where they want to get to, based on the starting point and ambition for the programme. For boroughs with a lot more cultural infrastructure, this might be about demonstrating additionality, extending their cultural offer and working in new ways. For boroughs with a lot less cultural infrastructure, this might be about thinking big, the opportunity to take some risks and trying something for the first time.

Either way, we will be assessing ambition and the potential for new partnerships. London Borough of Culture may be a catalyst for embedding culture in the local plan and/or exploring opportunities for cultural infrastructure in new developments in the future.

PROGRAMME AND PARTNERSHIPS

Q. Is it a stronger application if we're working across a range of local authority services?

Yes. The strongest bids will be those that demonstrate real potential to use culture to deliver against wider council objectives, to embed culture in local policy and make a lasting change in their boroughs.

Q. Is this an events programme only? What is the recommended balance between high-profile activities and more in-depth engagement?

We expect a balance between types and scales of activity. We want boroughs to shine a spotlight on the amazing creative work that is happening under the radar and in everyday settings, as well as to celebrate people's creativity through larger events.

We will expect to see a range of flagship or hero moments that will provide high-profile media impact – do consider what these might be when programming. For example, you may want to think about an opportunity to 'reveal' or launch your programme to the media, possibly a few months before your year as London Borough of Culture begins. This could be a chance to showcase what is to come and build interest and excitement in your borough, across London, nationally and internationally.

Q. Can we include existing activity in the bid?

Yes, you can include work you do currently. We would want to see how the proposed activity builds on previous work, and how it would increase in scale and/or impact through the London Borough of Culture award.

Q. Do I have to provide a year-round programme?

You will hold the title for one year, but you are not expected to provide year-round activity. It is up to you to decide how to shape activities in the year.

Q. How much definition does the programme need to have? How fixed should the programme be?

Provide as much information as you can about the proposed programme so that we can get a feel for artistic vision and ambition, confirmed artists and cultural partners. Remember that we will expect to see a range of flagship or hero moments that will provide high-profile media impact. Look at the wider cultural calendar across London and think about how your programme works within that context. However, the programme does not have to be fully defined and we would expect some elements to emerge or develop organically through the planning and delivery years and with the community.

Q. What is expected from a Cultural Impact Award programme? How do we select which activities to propose as a Cultural Impact Award?

Cultural Impact Awards should be projects/strands of activity that feature in your main London Borough of Culture bid, but can be delivered as a standalone project should you win a Cultural Impact Award. It is up to you which activities to propose. The strongest bids will be those that can clearly deliver an impact and speak to the local needs you have identified. The application form allows you to expand on the approach you would take to the Cultural Impact Award activity.

Q. Are you looking for artform spread? Can public art (artform) be the focus of the bid?

We are not prioritising a specific art form and we will welcome proposals which focus on a broad range of activity, rather than a single art form. However, if you do have a public art component within your bid, do consider the level of capital investment that might be required to deliver this. We will want you to demonstrate the level of public engagement.

Q. Can some of our activity happen outside of the borough / across borough boundaries?

We recognise that residents do not always identify with borough boundaries and that some communities / geographical locations exist across borough boundaries. We will consider some activities that happen on the borough boundaries and will welcome projects initiated by winning boroughs in partnership with other boroughs, though this should not be the whole focus of your bid.

Q. Will you fund something that we will be able to tour to other boroughs?

Yes, as we recognise the value in sharing and disseminating good practice and reaching more Londoners. However, we would not expect this to be the focus of your bid.

Q. How do I get involved if I'm not a local authority?

Strong partnerships will be fundamental to a successful bid. Borough applicants will be expected to work in partnership with a range of stakeholders to develop and deliver the programme. Partners could include artists, arts and cultural organisations, local businesses, education, voluntary sector and civic society organisations, and public sector agencies.

Local authorities should be actively developing these partnerships. Potential partners may want to get in touch with their borough's culture team to see how they might be involved and/or check their social media and newsletters for opportunities.

Q. How can members of the community get involved?

London Borough of Culture will show how culture can strengthen communities. We want to see local people involved in shaping the programmes, as well as taking part as participants and audience members. The winning boroughs will demonstrate that they will engage their communities in innovative ways.

Local authorities should be actively reaching out to community members. Residents who are interested in getting involved may want to get in touch with their borough's culture team to see how they might be involved and/or check their social media and newsletters for opportunities.

Q. How much community engagement / consultation should be completed by the time a bid is submitted?

We want to see that the community is at the heart of your bid and encourage you to engage communities at the earliest opportunity.

We will also expect to see an ongoing dialogue with the community during the year of culture, so that there is authentic engagement in the process, decision making and programme delivery.

TIMELINES

Q. When will we be able to access the online application portal?

The online application portal will open in July 2023. All the information you require to prepare a bid, including the guidance, assessment criteria and the questions you will be asked, are now available – please see www.london.gov.uk/lboc for these. This enables you to start preparing your bid now, in readiness to access the portal once it is open.

Q. Should we specify if we are going for either 2025 or 2027?

If you have a preference, do please specify and provide your reasons for this choice. If you do not have a preference, then let us know. Bids will not be assessed by “year”; the preference will help us once all the bids have been assessed, regardless of year, and once the top scoring bids have been identified.

Please bear in mind that you need to clearly demonstrate your borough’s readiness to deliver. For the title award winner in 2025, there will be one year between announcement and the start of the delivery year.

Q. When will the title award winners deliver their year of London Borough of Culture? Why has the delivery year changed from calendar year (Jan-Dec) to financial year (Apr-March)?

Title awards will be delivered April 2025 – March 2026, and April 2027 – March 2028.

We believe, based on previous experience, that running the delivery year April-March brings practical advantages, including more time to develop the programme between announcement and delivery.

Q. When will the Cultural Impact Award winners deliver their activity? Is there any flexibility with this?

It is envisioned that the Cultural Impact Awards will be delivered April 2026 – March 2027.

If there is a clear rationale to deliver at a different time – for example because it ties to an anniversary in 2025 or 2027 – then this will be considered in discussion with you after the winners have been announced, on a case by case basis.

SUPPORT FROM THE GLA

Q. How can I get advice on how to prepare my bid?

The GLA offers a number of ways to support bid development. If you haven't already, please inform us you are planning to apply (boroughofculture@london.gov.uk) so we can ensure you are able to access the full offer.

The London Borough of Culture team is available to support you and answer your queries. We will visit you in your borough and provide 1:1 advice. We can also provide feedback on draft bids.

Engagement events are regular in-person sessions to share best practice around essential elements of a bid, and of developing large-scale artistic programmes more widely. All London borough culture officers are invited to these.

We have appointed two independent consultants with relevant experience in developing bids and programmes, who will work with boroughs as a critical friend, mentor and facilitator.

Small development grants are available for you to access external expertise to support bid development. This will cover the costs of specialist consultancy in areas where you have identified a need, for example, governance or communications. Grants will be administered by London Council on behalf of the GLA. Details of how to apply will be available on the website www.london.gov.uk/lboc

Q. What support will GLA offer the winning borough around marketing and communications?

Having a high-level communications strategy that identifies your audiences, with key moments mapped out across the year, will help us and our partners to support you. We can then provide guidance on tactics and channels. Our support will focus on owned, shared and earned media – so via our social media channels, website and press coverage. You will need to budget for traditional advertising, direct mail, online advertising, search engine marketing, and paid social media amplification.

Our digicomms team can support via our social media channels (for example @LDN_Culture, @LDN_Gov and @MayorofLondon) and london.gov.uk. The

culture team has a newsletter which goes out to 6000+ culture lovers across the city every month – we can include your stories in that and also share them with other teams for their channels as appropriate. Our press team can provide quotes for press releases and forewords for publications, and we warmly welcome invitations to the Mayor and Deputy Mayors to attend key moments in your programme.

We also have a brilliant network of partners who will be able to help promote your programme. Communications colleagues from the GLA family, including Transport for London, London & Partners and others, will be able to offer support via their channels and networks.

Q. How should we approach evaluation and how do we measure long-term outcomes when the programme delivery is one year?

We will be appointing an external evaluation partner to develop an evaluation framework for London Borough of Culture. We strongly advise you to identify an independent evaluation partner to support you to develop your own evaluation framework and collect meaningful and robust data, and to resource this appropriately within your budget.

Q. What programme partnerships will the Mayor of London help to broker or provide?

We encourage partnerships with cultural organisations and will look at ways in which they might support London Borough of Culture. Any new partnership proposal will need to be shaped by and with the winning boroughs in the planning year.

APPLICATION CONTENT

Q. How much detail on baseline data should we include in the bid?

Provide as much detail as you can which is relevant to your bid, to give us a snapshot of your borough, to set the context for the approach you have taken, and to demonstrate need. If you do not yet have access to all the data you need, tell us about the gaps you have identified and how you will go about addressing these, and the rationale behind your approach to the bid.

Q. What is the expectation around legacy?

Please see our legacy framework at www.london.gov.uk/lboc which sets out the overarching long-term impacts we want London Borough of Culture to achieve. In short, our expectation is that culture will become more embedded in the borough as a result of the award.

This could be expressed in a number of ways, including (but not limited to) further financial commitment to culture, culture embedded in policy/strategy, new models for delivering culture, new partnerships, increased diversity in cultural activities, or specific long-term impacts for residents.

We recognise that specific legacy is different for each borough, since it is about the individual needs and intentions. The strongest bids will set out what the borough wants to achieve in the long-term and make a convincing case that the approach taken will deliver it.

Q. What is the expectation around archiving?

Archiving London Borough of Culture will ensure that the planning, delivery, legacy and experience of it is captured as part of the history of the borough. It will make the story of London Borough of Culture accessible for future research, community and creative projects, and for individual citizens.

You should involve your local authority archivist and archive service in the planning of London Borough of Culture, to identify processes and procedures that will ensure that appropriate records are identified and transferred to the archive service.

Guidance produced by The National Archives, to help those planning and delivering large-scale artistic programmes, is available at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/advice-and-guidance/running-your-organisation/large-cultural-infrastructure-projects

Q. Can we upload supporting information and promotional material?

If you would like to provide additional media to give us a flavour of your bid, you may include direct links to this content online. However, we will not be scoring or assessing these.

Q. How do we demonstrate cross-party political support through the bid?

Cross-party political support can be presented in the risk template, or as part of your supporting documentation e.g. in the letter from your leader.

Q. We want to mention all the partners that are supporting our bid, but we can only upload three supporting letters. How can we present the extent of our partnership?

Where relevant, you should mention the core partners within the narrative of your bid. Additional partners can be listed in the same document attachment that you upload with your partner letters.

Q. Can the declaration from our Chief Executive be the same as the letter of support?

The letter of support from your Chief Executive is the same as the declaration required on the online application system. There is no separate declaration that needs to be signed.

Please note that all your letters of support need to be uploaded as one document and not as individual documents.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Q: Are boroughs able to submit their bids in person?

No. All bids need to be submitted online, through the online application system. Neither the Mayor nor the Culture team will be available to accept printed bids in person.

Q. How do I use the online application system? / I have technical queries about the online application system.

The online application system will open in July 2023. At that time, full technical guidance and support for using the system will be made available.