

Cultural Action Areas - Round 2 Guidance

Q&A from webinars

1. Will successful grantee consortia in Round 2 be able to apply for further funding in future rounds? If so, is this only possible once the current funding is finished and reported?

Yes, successful round 2 applicants will be able to apply to future funding rounds. We would need to ensure that funding from different rounds does not overlap and would encourage any Cultural Action Areas with live round 2 funding to speak to a culture officer before applying to round 3.

2. What percentage of applications were funded in CAA Round 1 (Spring 2024) and what were the main weaknesses that meant applications in round 1 were not funded?

We had 14 applications and four were funded.

The main weaknesses were that [1] people felt it was all about the cultural activity, about running a programme just about culture but it's obviously broader than that. [2] Some applications added many cultural activities to their CAA without really thinking about what resources do they have locally? What expertise do they have? What people and experiences could they bring in without huge cost, i.e., what ingredients they might already have locally. [3] Some applications were just 'parachuting in' all the activities at huge cost without focusing on things that were more sustainable.

And [4], many applicants were focused just on them as lead applicant, their delivery, their decisions and their physical space, instead of the bigger picture of resources, assets and opportunities within the locality to collaboratively involve others, broaden the network and spread the resources.

3. What changes in the form/process from the previous round should we expect, and what learnings have prompted those changes?

We have tried to be clearer in our wording and guidance to further emphasise elements that were already in the Round One information documents, this includes the:

- Development of the whole ecosystem of a place, ensuring that opportunities and resources are maximised for the benefit of everybody
- Intention that Cultural Action Areas will play a major role in driving place-based economic recovery by reanimating high streets and local centres
- Importance of having or developing a jointly owned shared vision amongst consortium partners (local stakeholders and leaders) to re-animate local centres, drive footfall, economic growth and provide social benefits to citizens in the community
- fact that there is more capital funding available than revenue funding

These clarifications have been prompted by a much higher than expected revenue ask given the programme is two thirds capital and a number of applications not recognising the programme's intention to seed fund and invest in activities and assets that will contribute to longer-term economic and social benefit across local centres and high street.

4. Do you have an example of size range of the consortium and the kinds of organisations collaborating?

Each place is different and it's really recognising that., so there is no 'expectation' for partner size or mix. Indeed, three consortia partners is a minimum, you may well have more from the start, which is fine. Ideally, have a lead applicant who's got some track record in being able to oversee projects.

We expect consortiums to grow in their membership over time to encompass resources, assets and energy invested in developing and achieving the Cultural Action Area vision.

The consortium does not have to all be cultural organisations, indeed the CAZ pilot showed the importance of involving local business' early on. At least one of the consortia should be cultural in some way.

The lead applicant can be any type of organisation so long as they are not-for-profit and based in Birmingham. Other consortia members can be for profit and from further afield, see the guidance document for details.

[CAA Applicant information and guidance | Birmingham City Council](#)

The named consortia members need to be genuinely involved with establishing the CAA and its vision. We do not want names added 'for show only' or partners that are solely engaged through paid services. You should aim to involve key organisations from your locality (stakeholders and leaders) from day one; this could really help your CAA be successful.

5. If you are successful what does the evaluation consist of?

There will be ongoing delivery updates and tracking of outputs and outcomes through the funding period. The lead applicant will be required to submit a short evaluation report at the end of the 12-month funding period.

Awarded grants are to support activities that will establish a Cultural Action Area (CAA) which is founded on a long-term vision for a geographical area/locality therefore successful applicants will be required to report outputs and outcomes for at least 12 months beyond the end of the funded activities (grant delivery period) so that the impact of the CAA can be measured.

6. Do applicants need to own the assets they wish to spend the capital funding on improving?

We expect you to plan for the creation or improvement of assets or use of purchased assets to last at least 5 years. This is a general standard for public capital money however, the funding is flexible.

The applicant (consortium partners) do not need to own the asset they wish to improve but they must have permission from the landowner or lease holder for capital works or improvements. We can only support building works to leasehold property if the works to be carried out are the responsibility of the applicant as defined by the terms of their lease.

Larger amounts of capital funding present higher risks, this risk is minimised if the asset owner is a consortium member, or a long lease is held. With a much larger amount there would need to be more guarantees that it would last for a longer period.

The Northfield space from the CAZ pilot was 'meanwhile' space. No one knew how long it would last and it ended up being more than 2-years. So again, if it's a smaller amount of money, it's easier to do something with a risk that it might not last long. You can also look at flexible capital elements that can be moved elsewhere if necessary, perhaps partitions or seating.

We strongly recommend that any consideration of meanwhile or temporary space involves dialogue and collaboration with owners and leaseholders of existing spaces to explore longer-term sustainability.

The grant available is seed funding towards a much bigger vision and must be spent over 12 months. This means that capital works can't be huge and need to be simple to implement in the time frame with any necessary permissions ideally already agreed.

7. Is there separate funding for Access support for audiences/participants or is it within funding?

Please include any access support for audiences or participants within your funding request. You may be interested in the guides and modules provided by Accessibility Tourism Hub at www.visitbirmingham.com/accessible-tourism-hub.

Led by Birmingham City Council's Tourism Officer the Accessible Tourism Hub is part of our continued commitment to support Birmingham and the region's visitor economy businesses, large and small, in reaching their potential and to play an important role making the West Midlands a welcoming and inclusive destination for all.

The Guides and Modules will benefit all sort of organisations and not just those focused on Tourism.

8. Is the definition of culture very rigid or can it encompass wider cultural activities, i.e food and focus on community engagement and community improvement through appropriate engagement activities?

Cultural Action Areas can encompass wider cultural activities however we would expect Cultural Action Areas to involve or engage people working in the Cultural Sector this includes Creative Industries, Film, TV, Music, Radio, Heritage, Arts activities and Museum activities.

The programme is highly flexible, and we are interested to see innovative or unique combination of organisations piloting new approaches.

This grant funding programme allows your consortium to run a micro-grant programme within your CAA. For example, you could put out a simple call offering £500-£1000 grants for creative freelancers to run participatory events or for micro capital works to attract footfall. Micro-grants proved very effective in the pilot CAZ programme.

9. Can you describe two projects you have funded and what attracted the panel?

The scale of Cultural Action Area and nature of the grant ask amongst successful round 1 applications varies in response to the range of localities. We are currently in the grant agreement stage for Round 1, when these are contracted, we can publish details of the successful Round One CAA proposals.

The applications showed strengths in how they are driven by local stakeholders with a shared desire to encourage collaboration between local business, community and culture to improve the locality and offer.

Project examples from the pilot CAZ include: [1] a monthly street festival and market that created a focus and brought together a wide range of experiential activities. [2] repurposing a 'meanwhile retail space' within a shopping centre that enabled a wide range of community and cultural activities diversifying the offer within the locality with a minimal commitment of future costs.

10. Do you have a guideline minimum and maximum of geographical area?

The scale of the Cultural Action Area is to be defined by the consortium and their knowledge of the locality, the issues and the opportunities. The Cultural Action Area should focus on the identified high street or local centre being reimagined or revived.

11. Does a CAA have to be one area, or can it be multiple areas?

We anticipate applications to be to establish one cultural action area however the programme is highly flexible, and we are interested to see innovative or unique combination of organisations piloting new approaches.

It is possible that a very innovative Cultural Action area could embrace more than one point retaining a place-based focus. We highly recommend booking and one-2-one session if you would like to discuss this further.

12. Can you let us know the areas that were funded in the previous round?

We plan to share the Round One Cultural Action Areas as soon as the round one grant funding agreements are in place.

13. What is the CAA programme looking for in applications? For example artistic projects or community driven projects

The Cultural Action Area funding programme is an opportunity to use culture to reanimate, revive, give a fresh life to localities. It is this objective that should drive the different activities and developments you might want to test or undertake to establish a Cultural Action Area. The key thing is that the local stakeholder group associated with each CAA understands the full extent of what resources or cultural opportunities exist locally, to form the basis of their CAA's activities.

14. We're a newly formed registered charity wanting to enable access to music from different cultures across a wide number of districts in Birmingham, could this be supported?

CAA is about reanimating, reviving, reimagining places that have struggled over the last couple of years in terms of economy and social impacts. This activity could be one of a number of elements contributing to establishing a CAA. The seed funding seen as an investment in approaches and sustainable ways of working as part of a longer-term bigger vision. Normally it would be focused in one locality, although there can be exceptions to this.

In terms of funding a specific music event, there are other grant funds that support time limited participatory activities and events. You can also book a guidance session with a culture officer to talk about other funding opportunities for specific project or event delivery.

15. Can reviving a community centre be considered as place-based?

The Cultural Action Area Programme **revolves around the development of the whole ecosystem of a place, ensuring that opportunities and resources are maximised for the benefit of everybody.**

Improvements to community centred buildings and spaces can contribute to establishing and developing a Cultural Action Area. However, there needs to be other things happening around it as this programme is about strengthening the economy of the area. The community centre would to be part of a local centre or a High Street or the application would need to clearly communicate how investing in the space will benefit the locality socially and economically.

An important part of this programme is collaboration between business, community, and culture.

16. Does this funding count as a subsidy?

We will follow the required steps to determine whether the grant funding support is a subsidy. We expect that in most or all instances support will not be considered to be a subsidy. For more information about subsidy control and a guide for beneficiaries please visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/subsidy-control-a-guide-for-beneficiaries/subsidy-control-a-guide-for-beneficiaries>

17. If an area is economically active but culturally poor, how do you expect us to measure the economic impact.

Through the Cultural Action Areas programme, we aim to achieve a broad range of outputs and outcomes for localities. Within the application form we ask you to indicate the ones that will be relevant to your Cultural Action Area.

Not every Cultural Action Area has to have a strong economic output, this will be achieved across the programme through a balance of Cultural Action Areas of different scale, in different localities undertaking a range of types of activity.

We want applicants to communicate their knowledge of the area and what will make a difference. The programme is highly flexible; some cultural action areas can be the start of a journey finding out what they could do. Others will more clearly know where they are starting. CAA projects are a balance of economic and social impacts.

18. Managing a number of partnership/org/groups across a locality takes more time potentially. What is the revenue percentage you're willing to fund?

We expect the consortium to oversee the management of the activities to establish the Cultural Action Area. The lead applicant will be responsible for making sure this happens. There are no set or recommended percentages for revenue funding; applicants can apply for a maximum of £30,000 revenue funding.

The Cultural Action Area funding is seed money towards establishing and achieving a longer-term shared vision for the locality. We understand that project management costs and revenue resources may support this.

It is important that the consortium members collaborate to establish the Cultural Action Area and consider how activities etc will continue beyond the seed funding. It will be helpful to understand what expertise the consortia already has, and what additional expertise if any it will bring in for the initiatives and activities specifically.

The ask for revenue funding in round one was far more competitive than the ask for capital funding. We appreciate that there may be a higher need for seed funding towards project management in localities with less infrastructure capacity. Larger organisations may already have staff and resources in place to support the management of activities including capital works.

In the CAZ pilot some projects had consortia members were already funded from other projects or could engage PAYE employees, which meant that project management costs were lower.

19. You emphasised a few times the impact on visitors to the locality - does that outweigh the impact on residents for your funding?

When we talk about visitors this also includes local residents. The Cultural Action Area's activities and assets may draw visitors from nearby and/or further afield. We expect the vision and planned engagement to be within the context of each Cultural Action Area's location.

20. Can a CAA provide support services for those people who are not in active employment? Such as by providing workshops and facilities for them to produce and sell something to improve their life chances?

The programme is about re-animating local places with a new and diverse mix of cultural, experiential, community activities and neighbourhood improvements to drive footfall, improve community and visitor experience and strengthen the economy of the area.

Targeting local needs through social enterprise activity can contribute to establishing and developing a Cultural Action Area especially in a place with less previous investment where higher social impact makes sense.

Like participatory activities and events this must be part of a broader CAA focused on leveraging the resources, assets, organisations and cultural expertise which exists locally to establish a shared vision. An important part of this programme is collaboration between business, community and culture.

The CAZ pilot showed that involving local business' and their contribution such as providing space, facilities or services was beneficial. Cultural Action Areas should be provide social and economic benefits in equal measure.

21. How can we provide outputs and outcomes at the start of our CAA before we have fully established our CAA and its activities?

CAA outputs and outcomes are flexible because we realise many places will be uncertain at the beginning of what their shared vision will be and exactly what assets, resources and opportunities they may have at hand to put into it.

Within the application form we do ask you to indicate the outcomes and outputs that will be relevant to your Cultural Action Area, but we do not ask you to indicate any quantities against them. The outputs and outcomes you select give us a sense of the impact your CAA may have for the locality and some re-assurance that you understand the potential benefits of your project.

If your application is successful, we will then work with you to agree an opening set of measurable outputs and outcomes. The COGA (conditions of grant aide) will include these and when signed is the document that enables the project to start and you to get paid.

For some projects this opening set of outputs and outcomes may be reasonably accurate. This is because some places may well have run place-based cultural programmes before and may already have got a shared vision and good idea what cultural activities might be available. For others, as their CAA progresses, we will expect things to change and will work with you to agree revisions to your outputs and outcomes. Regular meeting reviews and updates will ensure progress can be tracked and changes discussed fully.

It is also worth saying here that some output and outcomes targets for your CAA will be achieved by the delivery of *other* relevant projects you or your locality may have, which are not funded at all from this grant programme. They being part of the match. For example, it is possible that a CAA is paying for capital asset development only, with the necessary cultural and heritage experiential offer that each CAA needs being funded and delivered from other sources, such as through Arts Council, community funds or Commonwealth Games legacy.

22. how does it all work with rent, for example, in High Street spaces?

We recognise the difficulties and the challenges around funding spaces of any type.

The Northfield space from the CAZ pilot was 'meanwhile' space. This tends to have much lower rent, but the duration is uncertain.

CAAs are encouraged to look closely at assets owned and leased by partners or how public open spaces can be used. For example, shops and cafes can run or host elements of the CAA or welfare units/shipping containers can reimagine open spaces and more.

CAAs need to be sustainable over time, and so long-term open-ended revenue commitments up-front based on the expectation of winning further grant funding to pay rent in the future are not feasible for CAAs.

The CAA Funding is seed money to get things happening. Considering how CAA activities might be sustained is a key part of the applicant and process of establishing the CAA.

23. Should the consortium already have some capital outside of the funding?

Consortiums do not need capital outside of the grant funding.

It is important that the local stakeholder group associated with each CAA understands the full extent of what resources or cultural opportunities exist locally this might include match support through in-kind spaces and places or activities/works enabled through other funding.

It might be that your consortium does have in-kind capital already, because you are, for example, joining your CAA to existing or other capital funding for asset development.

We are trying to support a range of localities including those with less previous investment or activity therefore match can be in-kind or cash support towards your CAA. For example, making a space you have available or providing some staff time to help support the project.

The grant available is seed funding towards a much bigger vision and must be spent over 12 months. This means that capital works can't be huge, and need to be simple to implement in the time frame with any necessary permissions ideally already agreed.

24. What do you mean by different 'economic upsides' between CAAs?

When we talk of 'economic upside' or 'upside potential' we are referring to an increase in spend within your locality because of visitors, so businesses, cultural organisations and others are receiving more money, potentially meaning they can hire more staff or invest in their offer to increase revenues still further. It is an important part of CAAs that there is measurable economic growth, which can lead to improved sustainability for local businesses and organisations within your locality. Cultural activity plays a part in driving footfall, economic growth and the re-animation of local centres and high streets.

Some Cultural Action Areas may be in a place where there has been little previous investment or cultural activity, so any 'economic upside' may be very low in pure monetary terms but still very significant to that locality. Whereas some larger places, perhaps those that are already seen as 'destinations' in their own right, will have had lots of previous investment and established cultural activity, and should expect their CAA to be leveraging a much larger 'economic upside', that is a much larger monetary benefit with more cash flowing into their locality.

Both CAA scenarios can be funded as CAA projects and the balancing factors panel will ensure we have a mix of smaller places with upside potential valuable to them versus a few larger centres with greater upside in pure economic terms.

End of Q&A for CAA R2.