Queen Mary University of London

Centre for Civic and Public Engagement

Engagement Fund: Application Guidance

Overview

The Engagement Fund is an internal funding programme funded from Queen Mary's Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) allocation, which has been awarded by Research England to support the development and delivery of knowledge exchange interactions between higher education and the wider world. For more information on how HEIF is allocated and the activities it supports, please refer to the UKRI website.

The Engagement Fund is designed to enable civic and public engagement activities to take place. The scheme is a competitive process with three tiers of funding available: £10,000 (Large), £5,000 (Medium), and £1,000 (Small).

The Fund is designed around four core strategic themes. Applications and projects must align with one of the themes:

1. **Skills and inclusive growth**
2. **Health equity, wellbeing and inclusion**
3. **Innovative and creative engagement**
4. **Technology and innovation for engaged futures**

Fund Tiers

There are **three** tiers of funding available through the Engagement Fund. You will need to select which tier of grant you are applying for.

- Small: <£1,000
    - To support small-scale engagement activities delivered over a short timeframe
        - e.g. a community/listening event, focus group and workshop, pop-up engagement session.
        - See some examples of previously funded small projects
- Medium: <£5,000
    - To support more developed engagement projects engaging with a larger audience
        - e.g. a series of workshops delivered across a local authority area
- Large: between £5,000 and £10,000
    - To support larger-scale engagement projects engaging with larger audiences, delivered in partnership with an external partner organisation, over several months
        - See some examples of previously funded large projects

The Fund has approximately £70,000 to distribute each year.

Application deadlines

The Engagement Fund will have two rounds in the 2026-27 academic year, with round deadlines as follows:

- 5pm, Friday 30th October 2026
- 5pm, Friday 29th January 2027

Any applications received after the round one deadline will automatically be considered for the second round. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application within four weeks of the application deadline.

Fund Themes

Your project must closely align to one of the Fund's strategic themes. You will be asked to select your chosen theme in the application form.

1. **Skills and inclusive growth***
    - For example, skills development, youth opportunity and social mobility, employability and careers, entrepreneurship and innovation
2. **Health equity, wellbeing and inclusion**
    - For example, health inequalities, social determinants of health, neighbourhood health, healthy ageing, disability inclusion and accessibility, women's health, digital health and health technology
3. **Innovative and creative engagement**
    - Novel and particularly creative approaches to engagement, including piloting new methods and formats
    - For example, hands-on creative workshops, collaborations with artists and practitioners, and performances. e.g. a walking tour with food tasting, comedy and cabaret nights, pottery workshop etc.
4. **Technology and innovation for engaged futures**
    - For example, digital inclusion, AI and society, data, information and trust, future skills and emerging technologies

**Inclusive growth means economic development that delivers benefits fairly across all communities, ensuring that people—regardless of background, place, or circumstance—can participate in, contribute to, and benefit from economic activity. It focuses on reducing inequalities, improving access to opportunities, and creating long term social, environmental and economic value for local residents, businesses, and organisations.*

Eligibility Criteria

Due to the nature of the funding and purpose of the scheme, all applications to the Engagement Fund **must** meet the following criteria:

- A well-defined **public audience** is the main focus of the activity
    - This means students, academic colleagues, industry collaborators, or professional practitioners should not be the primary beneficiary of the activity—though they may be involved in some capacity
- There is a **clear link to research, teaching or the core business** of Queen Mary University of London, and reference to how it contributes to meeting the institution's strategic priorities
    - For example, projects could be:
        - Developing and delivering hands-on activities based on your research during family fun days (research-linked);

        - Inviting community organisations to develop and co-deliver aspects of courses that you teach at the University (teaching-linked);
        - Working with local community groups on developing sustainability programmes like canal cleans (core business-linked).
- The activity clearly demonstrates **two-way engagement** which means:
    - The activity has opportunities for conversation and dialogue between the organisers and the participants
    - The activity demonstrates **mutual benefit** for both parties. This means that both organisers and participants are impacted by the activity in some way and take these benefits away with them. Benefits might include knowledge, skills, insights/ideas, and perspectives
- The activity produces clear **outcomes, outputs and impact**
- Project spend must be complete by **31st July 2027**
    - This is a requirement of HEIF spending. All associated financial administration will need to be completed by the end of June 2027, to allow enough time for payments to be processed.

In addition, there are several cross-cutting funding priorities. Applications that clearly address one or more of the below will be prioritised for funding:

- Co-creation and co-design
- Creative, innovative and ambitious engagement formats and methods
- Enabling applicant to pilot a new idea or approach
- Enabling collaboration (projects engaging with external partners)
- Inclusion and reaching underserved audiences
- Place-based engagement in and around East London
- Potential for legacy, longer-term impact and projects that identify opportunities for future growth, development or sustainability

Applicant Eligibility

Lead applicants must be current staff or students at Queen Mary, with a course or contract end date no sooner than 31 July 2027. Applications are welcomed from staff at all career stages, and PhD students. Undergraduate and Masters students are **not eligible** to apply for this funding.

Lead applicants must be the individuals who will be responsible for delivering the project and subsequent reporting. External applicants can apply to the scheme (i.e. community groups) as co-applicants alongside Queen Mary staff or students on projects.

To ensure all applications engage external groups with Queen Mary research, teaching, or services, all submissions **must have at least one** applicant from within the University who will be held responsible for assisting the delivery of the projects and reporting on outcomes.

Activity Timings

All activities must be able to spend the funds before the end of the current financial year, which is **31 July 2027**. Please note that finance year-end procedures often mean that in practical terms, any final financial processes must be started **well before this date**.

If you'd like to discuss the feasibility of your timescales, or would like help with planning timelines, please talk to the CPE as soon as possible.

Funding Use

What can this funding be used for?

- Costs associated with developing and delivering engagement projects which seek to engage public audiences with research, teaching or core business taking place at Queen Mary
- Payment of specialist external expertise (e.g. freelance artists, patients, interpreters)
- Contributions to partner organisations who are integral to the success of the project and whose participation would otherwise be limited.
- Materials and equipment unable to be supplied through existing Queen Mary channels
- Catering costs, but only where this is integral to supporting engagement.
    - Applications requesting funds for catering must demonstrate clearly how these will improve the quality of engagement and why it is necessary and appropriate for the activity and target public.
- The funding may cover the costs of a Queen Mary member of staff to work on a project if new roles are being created as part of the proposed project, if existing contracts are due to be extended to deliver this project or if a staff member's current contract does not allow them to work on it in the time already paid for (i.e. staff members who are part-time). **Please note:** these costs should be approved by your Faculty HR Manager or the JRMO and your School/Institute Manager.
- Payments to Undergraduate, Masters or PhD students to enable their participation on the project (guidance on this should be sought from your School, including HR where appropriate)
- Internal staff costs for services related to the project such as out of hours charges or AV support

What is this funding unable to cover?

- Fundamental/novel research, and participatory research - HEIF funding cannot be used to enable research to take place.
- Buy-out costs for the Queen Mary staff lead or other applicants
- Activities that are funded under existing research or public engagement grants
- Activity which would happen without funding from the CPE. If the project, or aspect of the project that funding is requested for, has already been advertised or has already taken place, we are unable to fund the project as it will be judged to be going ahead without CPE funding.
- Projects aimed at an academic or industry audience (e.g. researchers, staff and students, industry collaborators) e.g. conferences
- Projects where the primary goal is dissemination of research findings and does not include an element of two-way engagement. If you wish to undertake communication activities, please contact the Queen Mary PR team in the first instance.
- Projects where the primary goal is outreach to schools/colleges and that do not include an element of two-way engagement. To undertake outreach activities that inspire and encourage individuals to come to University and/or study the subject area, please contact the Student Recruitment and Widening Participation team in the first instance.
- Any research proposals.
- Honoraria for speakers within Higher Education unless it is clearly specified why they have been selected instead of a Queen Mary representative and how publics will still be engaged with Queen Mary research.
- Activities where funding cannot be spent before 31 July 2027.

Panel review

All applications will be subject to a panel review and will be judged against how well applications meet the criteria of the scheme and whether the proposal presents a robust, carefully considered civic or public engagement project. The panel is composed of several individuals with civic and public engagement experience/responsibilities, with a mixture of academic and professional service staff. In addition to alignment to the fund strategic themes, and the priorities listed above, the review process will also take into consideration:

- **Engagement idea and approach**: the project has a clearly defined audience, an appropriate methodology, and social/ethical/cultural considerations have been made.
- **Potential impact of the project**: the project has clear opportunities for two-way engagement, there is adequate evidence of mutual benefit for all participants, and that the engagement work will influence the work of Queen Mary either now or in future.
- **Links to Queen Mary**: the project engages groups with the work of Queen Mary and will shape the future work of the University through connections, opportunities, or outcomes from the project.
- **Project value for money**: the project is appropriately and realistically costed.
- **Project feasibility**: the project has realistic and measurable aims that are achievable in the timeframe of the scheme, there is a well-thought-out project plan with defined milestones, and risks have been identified and mitigations suggested.
- **Evaluation and learning**: the project has an evaluation plan in place which measures against the proposed aims and thought has been given to the legacy of the work.

Following a panel review meeting to consolidate and discuss the scoring, the highest scoring projects will be awarded funding to support their work. All applicants will receive feedback on their applications.

Support for Applicants

Projects that seek advice and guidance from the CPE in the development of their applications are more successful at panel review and more likely to secure funding.

Webinar

The CPE will hold a webinar introducing the Engagement Fund on Thursday 24th September 2026, 12pm-1pm, which will talk through eligibility criteria for the fund, how to apply, and what we're looking for (including priorities for funding).

> **Join:** https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/380921280670180?p=ZTyXP69BGZoxh90zb3
> Meeting ID: 380 921 280 670 180
> Passcode: X5Rr7un7

If you miss this session or are unable to attend, a recording will be made available (please email engagement@qmul.ac.uk for a link).

Drop-In Advice Sessions

The CPE will run a series of Engagement Fund Drop-In Advice Sessions where applicants' questions will be addressed on a first come first served basis. The team will be able to help refine, shape, and strengthen proposals, as well as discussing practical considerations for project delivery. There is no

need to register for a specific session, just save the Teams link in your diary and show up. Drop-In Session dates are:

Date	Link
Tuesday 6 October 2026, 12pm-1pm	Join: https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/380177839092221?p=Y6qdZUPgQIMyKVCzlV Meeting ID: 380 177 839 092 221 Passcode: w3db6jx2
Wednesday 14 October 2026, 4pm-5pm	Join: https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/385739413057329?p=nW06NzQxOQRG8ypZKf Meeting ID: 385 739 413 057 329 Passcode: oX9fq3A7
Monday 26 October 2026, 3pm-4pm	Join: https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/323490966789620?p=K9bCKBNy0BX7D73mu8 Meeting ID: 323 490 966 789 620 Passcode: KV766SY7
Thursday 17 December 2026, 12pm-1pm	Join: https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/324172695093992?p=Hdk5FITvigtYIvhtqQ Meeting ID: 324 172 695 093 992 Passcode: Ry6cG9Kj
Wednesday 13 January 2027, 2pm-3pm	Join: https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/364489621400306?p=B6Fz1n4DtBpyoPIyzc Meeting ID: 364 489 621 400 306 Passcode: Y8Gn6Vp3
Monday 25 January 2027, 10am-11am	Join: https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/391250782394461?p=9p523cXPzGP82H3pDv Meeting ID: 391 250 782 394 461 Passcode: iH3ks26Q

If you cannot make any of the dates available, please email engagement@qmul.ac.uk with your questions, and if needed a call can be arranged to discuss your project. However, you are encouraged to attend one of the dedicated drop-in sessions where possible.

Feedback on draft applications

The CPE can provide one round of feedback and comments on your draft application. Drafts need to be received at least 2 weeks before the deadline. Please email your draft application to engagement@qmul.ac.uk.

Resources and Training

The CPE has a range of resources that you are encouraged to familiarise yourself with as you develop your application:

- Evaluation Toolkit

- Principles of Equitable Partnership in Public Engagement
- Equitable Partnerships for Civic Engagement toolkit
- Research with East London Communities: Place-based Guidance and Resources
- Youth Insights Participatory Research Toolkit

The CPE also provides Training sessions for staff and student. Browse sessions and upcoming dates on the website.

Successful Projects

If successful, projects will receive a copy of the funding conditions that they will have to agree to, and an invite to a Grant kick-off meeting that they must attend.

Support provision

One of the aims of the Engagement Fund is to develop Queen Mary staff/student knowledge, skills, and experiences in civic and public engagement. As such, the CPE are committed to providing support for projects throughout the duration of the funding award.

After awards are offered, all projects will need to attend a Grant kick-off meeting which will take place online. This session is designed to allow lead applicants of projects to meet and find out more about projects, and to find out more about the processes and teams across Queen Mary that can support various aspects of funded projects. For Large Grants (between £5,000 and £10,000), teams will be invited to an individual 1-2-1 meeting with the CPE team at the beginning of their project.

Reporting and Evaluation Requirements

Reporting for the Engagement Fund is designed to encourage self-reflection and to develop the engagement practice of those involved.

For Large Grants (between £5,000 and £10,000), teams will be invited to a mid-point review 1-2-1 meeting with the CPE team to discuss their project. This session typically lasts for 30-45 minutes and will focus on the progress of the project against proposed milestones. The dates and times of these sessions will be arranged around the availability of the project team.

At the end of the project, teams will be required to submit an evaluation report (to be submitted by 13 August 2027) which is designed to capture the outcomes of the project, as well as learning that has occurred as part of the process.

A Partner survey will also be available for any external partners involved in your project, and you will be asked to share a link to the survey with them.

There is also the opportunity to reflect on the scheme and the associated support, to enable the CPE to refine the Engagement Fund for future applicants. Project teams may also be invited to a cohort wrap-up meeting to share experiences and learning with other teams, and invited to write a case study, or submit a blog.

Unsuccessful applications and reapplications

In some cases, applicants may be invited to reapply to the programme by the panel. This is often because the panel believes there is merit to the proposed project, but it requires further development. In these instances, you will be required to discuss this project further with the CPE before resubmitting to the fund. Reapplications for previously unfunded projects are only possible for those that have been told explicitly so after discussing the project with the CPE.

Multiple applications

The Engagement Fund is intended to initiate projects that have the potential to become self-sustaining or used as a pilot to then apply for further funds, rather than to continually sustain individual projects. This means that an applicant that has previously received CPE Grant funding may only reapply with a substantially different project to that previously applied for.

The only exception to this is in the event of unexpected project results from the original funded activity that would reach to different audiences, substantially increase project outcomes, or create different project outcomes from similar activity. In these incidences, it may be possible to reapply for further funding, but this must be discussed with one of the CPE team prior to submission.

Costings and budget

In the budget section of your application, you will need to outline all costs associated with running the project.

You should only apply for the funding you need, and you do not need to apply for upper tier limit. The panel will assess value for money as part of your application.

You should include:

- Accurate costs of all projected spend (where possible)
- Costs inclusive of VAT
- A short justification for each listed item (i.e. where this is being obtained from, precisely what this is being used for)

If asking for equipment, applicants are asked to consider if support from elsewhere in Queen Mary may be an option and if not, please explain why these items are unable to be sourced internally and must be purchased/hired (i.e. technology, specialist equipment).

For Large Grants (between £5,000 and £10,000) budgets should be signed off by Heads of School, and in some instances checked with the School Research Manager and/or Faculty HR Manager, we strongly advise that you seek advice when preparing this element of the application form.

Contingency budgets are not normally approved by the panel, unless in exceptional circumstances (where it is impossible to know true costs at the submission stage). If applications include a contingency budget, please give clear reasoning for including it.

If you are seeking—or have secured—match-funding, please provide details and make clear what project costs are being requested from the CPE and what is being covered by the match-funds.

Staff Costs

Staff costs should only be included if new roles are being created as part of the proposed project or existing contracts are due to be extended in order to deliver this project. Full costings details are essential for new Queen Mary roles and extensions of existing contracts where those staff are not full-time. Costings include salary and on-costs which can amount to 30 percent of the salary. On-costs include pensions, employer's NI, holiday pay and the apprenticeship levy.

Applicants **must speak to either the HR contact in their School or their School/Institute Research Manager or the JRMO** to approve these costs before submitting the final application.

For extensions of existing staff employed on university contracts where those staff are not full time, please provide details in the 'Details and Justification' on how this project role aligns with their existing/current role.

We strongly advise that if you are intending to cost in Queen Mary staff time as part of the application that you discuss this with the CPE prior to submitting your application.

Applicants can include costing for student time within this section in the 'Queen Mary Students' box. This cost should reflect involvement of students at hourly rates. Additionally, you should not employ students for hours in excess of their weekly limits (i.e. 20 hours per week for students on Tier 4 Visas and PhD students). Please follow guidance from the HR contact in your School to determine the appropriate hours and associated costs (including on-costs).

If students are making significant contributions to the work-- for example they are responsible for significant portions of development and/or delivery of the project—they should be named as collaborators and contribute to the development of the application form.

Applicants should also include costing for contributions to external partner organisations who are integral to the success of the project and whose participation would otherwise be limited, as well as freelancers who will be providing specialist services (e.g. translation, artists etc.). If the external partners and freelancers are not already Queen Mary suppliers, please ensure you adhere to Queen Mary financial and HR procedures in paying these individuals. You should not agree to work with an external partner before you know that you will be able to pay them via Queen Mary processes.

How to Apply

Application forms must be submitted online, using the Microsoft Form: Engagement Fund Application Form 2026-27 – Fill out form

When you have submitted the form, you can click 'Save my response' and a copy of your submission will be available in your Microsoft Forms list of 'filled forms'.

A **word document template** of the application form has been provided to enable you to prepare your answers for the online form, which is available to download from the Engagement Fund webpage: Engagement Fund - Queen Mary University of London

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- 5pm, Friday 29th January 2027