



Centre for Public Engagement (CPE)

Participatory Research Fund

2025-26

Application Guidance

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Overview

The CPE Participatory Research Fund is an annual scheme 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 scheme is a competitive process with a maximum of £10,000 of funding available per grant. The Participatory Research Fund Grants are designed to support public engagement activities with a larger scope, scale, or legacy, than those funded in the [CPE Small Grants](#), and with a substantial participatory element where participants and community partners are involved in the co-design, implementation and/or dissemination of the research.

As an approach, participatory research emphasises the principles of inclusivity, respect, reflexivity, responsibility, and transparency, and involves a continuous cycle of reflection, action and learning. It “encompasses research designs, methods, and frameworks that use systematic inquiry in direct collaboration with those affected by an issue being studied for the purpose of action or change” (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020, p.1). In this way, applications to the scheme should involve those not necessarily trained in research but who have lived experience of the topic under study, to drive for change. For some good examples of participatory research projects and relevant literature, [visit the University of Oxford's Participatory Research web pages](#).

All applications will be subject to a panel review and will be judged against how well applications meet the criteria of the scheme (see [Application Criteria subsection](#)) and whether the proposal presents a robust, carefully considered participatory research project (see [Application Guidance subsection](#)).

We recommend that all projects that are considering applying to the scheme familiarise themselves with the Guidance Documentation and seek appropriate support from the CPE (see [Support for Applicants subsection](#)) before submitting their proposal.

Key Dates

- Friday 6th June 2025 09:00AM – Application deadline
- By Friday 27th June – All applicants informed of funding decisions
- Mid-Late September (Date, time and location TBD), kick off meeting for successful applicants
- Friday 31st July 2026 – Spending deadline, activities can carry on after this date, but all funds must be spent
- Friday 14th August 2026 – Deadline to submit evaluation forms to the CPE

Application Criteria

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

- The project enables participatory and/or co-produced research with stakeholders outside of the university. A clear approach to participatory research is adopted, in alignment with the aims of the project (e.g. - co-produced research, participatory action research, citizen science)
- The communities of the research have been well-defined, or there is a clear plan to better define this community, with a view to improving opportunities for involvement in the future.
 - 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 a participatory, community-based arts project based on a topic of concern (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 a participatory approach, which means:
 - The activity has opportunities for conversation, dialogue, collaboration, and/or co-creation between researchers and participants, thus breaking down the hierarchies associated with traditional research.
 - The activity demonstrates mutual benefit for all parties involved. This means that both researchers 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 demonstrates an innovative approach to participatory research: how is it new for you, or for your subject, or for the participatory research sector?
- There are some indications as to how learning from the project will be shared with others.

Project applications **should also**:

- Have well-defined communities of interest and target audiences for the project with details of what existing links have been developed and/or how these communities/audiences will be reached.
- Contain a detailed and feasible project plan that has clear objectives, and has considered how to manage potential risk.
- Contain a thorough evaluation plan that will appropriately enable projects to measure outcomes against their aims (the CPE have an [Evaluation Toolkit](#) which may support the development of this).
- Have considered what legacy the project could have and identify opportunities for future growth and/or sustainability.

Applicant Eligibility

Applicants must be current staff or students at Queen Mary, with a course or contract end date no sooner than 31 August 2026. We welcome applications from staff and students at all career stages—and this is not used as a criterion in the selection process.

Lead applicants must be the individuals who will be responsible for delivering the project and subsequent reporting. External applicants are able to 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 2026**. 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.

For the 2025-26 academic year the scheme has been brought earlier, to enable a full year of spending.

Funding Use

What can this funding be used for?

- Costs associated with developing and delivering public engagement projects which seek to engage public audiences and participants in active research, teaching or core business taking place at Queen Mary
- 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
- 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. Where catering is funded, this will need to align to the Queen Mary hospitality guidelines.
- 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.

What is this funding unable to cover?

- 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 a purely academic or industry audience (e.g. researchers, staff and students, industry collaborators).
- Projects where the primary goal is dissemination of research findings and do not include any participatory research elements. 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 do not include any participatory research elements. 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.
- 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 2026.

The Funding Process

Applicants can apply for a maximum of £10,000 of funding for their project. This is allocated competitively from our annual funding round in which approximately £60,000 will be available.

The deadline for this application round is 09:00AM Friday 6th June.

Applications received after the deadline will not be considered in the 2025-26 funding round.

Panel review

Each application received will be subject to a panel review process. The panel is composed of several individuals with public engagement and/or participatory research experience/responsibilities, with a mixture of academic and professional service staff. Each application will be reviewed by at least 5 members of the panel who will score applications against the following criteria:

- **Engagement/Participatory Research 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 engagement and co-creation with participants, there is adequate evidence of mutual benefit, and the engagement work will influence the work of Queen Mary either now or in the 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 projects will receive feedback on their applications.

Successful Projects

Successful projects will receive confirmation of their award of funding once panel reviews are completed. If successful, projects will receive a copy of the funding conditions that they will have to agree to, a draft promotional blurb to approve, and an invite to the Participatory Research Grant kick-off meeting. Projects will have to then contact their Finance team/Research Manager to have an appropriate budget code set up for funds to be transferred into.

(a) Reporting requirements:

Reporting for the Participatory Research Grants is intended to be light touch and encourage self-reflection to develop the engagement practices of those involved. At the mid-point of the funding period (January/February 2026), teams will be invited to a 1-2-1 meeting with the Centre for Public

Engagement to discuss their project. This session typically lasts for 30-45 minutes and focuses 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 which is designed to capture the outcomes of the project, as well as learning that has occurred as part of the process. There is also the opportunity to reflect on the scheme and the associated support, to enable the CPE to refine the Participatory Research Grants scheme for future applicants. Project teams will also be invited to a cohort wrap-up meeting to share experiences and learning with other teams.

(b) Support provision:

One of the aims of the Participatory Research Fund is to develop Queen Mary staff/student knowledge, skills, and experiences in participatory research. 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 the Participatory Research Grant kick-off meeting which will take place in-person in late September/early October (time and date to be confirmed). This session is designed to allow the cohort to meet and find out more about one another and find out more about the processes and teams across Queen Mary that can support various aspects of their work.

Participatory Research Fund projects are also welcome to access any of the other CPE [support programmes](#) listed on our website during their grant.

Support for Applicants

The CPE offers several mechanisms to support individuals who wish to apply to the Participatory Research Fund scheme. Projects that seek support from the CPE in the development of their applications are more successful at panel review and more likely to secure funding: in 2019-20, 85% of successful applications had accessed CPE support ahead of submission compared to 15% of unsuccessful applicants.

(a) Advice Surgeries

The CPE runs a series of online Large Grant and Participatory Research Fund Drop-In 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. Participatory Research Fund Drop-In Session dates are:

| Date | Link |
|----------------------------|---|
| Thursday 1 May, 4pm-5pm | Join the meeting now Meeting ID: 372 810 630 992 Passcode: gq3TK6uv |
| Wednesday 7 May, 3pm-4pm | Join the meeting now Meeting ID: 333 624 628 907 Passcode: nH72uz6w |
| Wednesday 21 May, 3pm-4pm | Join the meeting now Meeting ID: 392 759 481 731 Passcode: pf7iM9kf |
| Thursday 29 May, 11am-12pm | Join the meeting now |

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| | Meeting ID: 316 735 845 007 Passcode: C6tV2JT6 |
| Wednesday 4 June, 2pm-3pm | Join the meeting now Meeting ID: 355 305 401 139 Passcode: jr2LS3KD |

If none of these slots work for you, you can join one of the regular fortnightly Advice Surgeries to discuss the Participatory Research Fund. The dates of these are available [on our website](#) and can be booked there. However, we encourage you to attend one of the dedicated drop-in sessions where possible.

(b) Resources and Training

The CPE have a portfolio of support resources that you may wish to access as part of the application process. This includes a resources, such as the [Evaluation Toolkit](#), and some [training opportunities](#).

Application Guidance

Below is section-by-section guidance on how to fill out the application for the Participatory Research Grant scheme.

Section 1: Background and Aims

This section focuses on highlighting what applicants are looking to achieve over the duration of the project and why this engagement is appropriate.

Project Title:

Titles should accurately reflect the aims and/or activities of the project, **and should not contain jargon, specialist language, or acronyms**. Applicants should also consider their audience(s) when naming the project: use a title that would appeal to them.

1.1 Summary of Project:

This summary will be used in publicity material should the application be successful. What kinds of changes do you want to see because of the project? Applicants should give a clear and concise overview of the project without going into fine detail and should not use technical/specialist language. We recommend covering the following:

- What the proposed project/activity is
- Who this project will engage with
- What the intended outcomes of this engagement are
- Why this engagement is important

Please refer to the past Participatory Research Grants page on the CPE website pages for example summaries and the page featuring the [2023-2024 cohort](#).

1.2 Who you will engage with:

Applicants are encouraged to think carefully about who will engage with their activity. The more well-defined target public/participants/project partners are, the better. Applicants may want to consider identifying groups or individuals by either shared location, shared interest, or shared demographic. For example, “families with young children, who live and work in or around Tower Hamlets” or “wildlife enthusiasts across the UK” are both more realistic than attempting to appeal to “the general public”.

1.3 Project benefits:

Engagement is a two-way process that generates mutual benefit. Please use this space to highlight what the proposed benefits are for all parties that are involved in this participatory research activity: including yourself/your work.

1.4 How the project links to Queen Mary and its work:

Applicants should include details about how this project links to current Queen Mary research, teaching and/or core business. You may want to highlight how the project links to Queen Mary’s [Civic University Agreement](#) or [Strategy 2030](#).

Section 2: People

This section focuses on naming the individuals who will be significantly involved with the delivery of the project.

2.1: Principal Applicant

Any project applying for a CPE Participatory Research Grant must be led by a Queen Mary staff member or student who will remain a staff member or student for the duration of the academic year 2024-25. The scheme welcomes applications from all career stages.

2.2: Co-Applicant(s)

Please ensure details of any colleagues or members of staff from external organisations who will play an integral part in the project you are proposing are provided as co-applicants. It is expected that if co-applicants are named, their contribution to the project is clearly demonstrated throughout the application.

Section 3: Methods

This section allows applicants to expand on their initial project summaries to outline how they plan to meet their project aims.

3.1: Project Plan

Applicants should use this space to set out the timeline of the project, as well as to go into more detail about the activity. This should be a realistic proposal of what will happen if funding is approved. It should cover the following:

- A timeline of major milestones and key dates
- Details of venue and content if events form a part of the project (if applicable at this stage)

- Details of how you plan to communicate to and reach the people you will engage with (this may include publicity or working with external organisations)
- Any partnerships that are already in place that will support the project
- Risk mitigation: Applicants should be aware that there are risks associated with all projects: from not being able to secure your intended venue to participants not turning up.
- Diversity and inclusion: Avoid activities where a topic is explored without representation from communities and individuals affected by it.
- Accessibility: Please use this space to set out how you will ensure events are accessible for the groups being engaged and minimise barriers for participation.

If any elements of the project are proposed to run beyond the funding period (including resources), applicants should describe in what capacity these will continue and highlight how it will be funded.

Project Completion Date:

Project spend must be completed by 31 July 2026 and reported on by 14 August 2026.

3.2: Ethical considerations

Please use this space to highlight any adjustments you have made to this project to ensure it is ethical (i.e. informed consent, data protection, paying people for their time and expertise, crediting partners, sharing knowledge and resources).

This also acts as your opportunity to highlight [if your project will need ethical approval](#) before commencement and/or whether it has already had approval from a Queen Mary ethics review. If you are not sure if ethical approval is required, [contact](#) the Queen Mary Ethics of Research Committee.

Section 4: Evaluation

This section focuses on how applicants intend to evaluate their project activities to determine the success, capture unintended outcomes, and highlight learning points from the Participatory Research Grant.

4.1: Indicators for success

Applicants should refer to the aims proposed in question 1.1 and consider how they will know if these have been achieved. This might include collecting monitoring information (e.g. n people engaged, x% increase in y), capturing qualitative measures (e.g. changes in behaviour or ideas), or detailing specific outputs (e.g. collaborative research paper published, future funding secured), as well as the methods and tools that applicants intend to use. The [Evaluation Toolkit](#) available on the CPE website may help you determine appropriate methodologies to measure the difference made by your project.

Section 5: Miscellaneous

This section allows applicants (and co-applicants) to highlight why they are the appropriate candidates for delivering the project. Applicants should consider what elements of their

backgrounds evidence their suitability for the project and highlight any participatory research experience of those working on the project—particularly focusing on articulating why, based on these experiences, you are the right person to deliver this activity.

Applicants are also asked to highlight whether they have previously applied for, or been a recipient of, CPE Small or Large Grant funding, and whether they have received any other internal funding from Queen Mary for this or a related project.

Section 6: Finances

Please refer to the [Funding Use subsection](#) above to determine what funds can be requested in a Participatory Research Grant application. Projects can request a maximum of £10,000 funding from the CPE’s Participatory Research Grant scheme. If project costs exceed this, applicants are welcome to seek match funding from alternative sources.

Applicants are asked to set out the costing for the total project (**inclusive of VAT**). Applicants should then break this total project cost down into amount requested from the CPE and amount from match funding sources. If projects are seeking funding from elsewhere and this is not yet confirmed, please indicate in the project plan and risk management sections (section 3.1 and 3.4) what implications this will have if the funding is not secured.

We recommend that all applicants seek advice from your Finance Managers/Research Managers and/or HR contact during the construction of your budget to ensure that you appropriately cost any items such as student support, freelancers, and staff time.

You can add additional rows to this section if needed.

Project Costs:

Please include all costs associated with running the project in the ‘Project Costs’ table and ensure that these are:

- Accurate costs of all projected spend (where possible)
- Costs inclusive of VAT
- Have 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).

As budgets have to 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.

A large contingency budget is 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, separate columns have been provided for applicants to highlight 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 your 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 may 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.) in the 'External expertise' box. 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.

Section 7: Signatures and Approval

There are a number of signatories required alongside the submission of your application form to ensure the projects are feasible, realistic, and supported by your department.

To ensure your sign-off is as easy as possible, we recommend seeking appropriate advice and support well in advance of the submission deadline—particularly around the formulation of your budget.

The CPE will accept emails of support as the equivalent of signatures. Ideally these should be submitted alongside the application. Any applications which have not been signed-off or submitted the appropriate emails of support by the submission deadline cannot be considered.