



Low-Cost R&D Commissioning Brief

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1 Commissioning brief

This Commissioning Brief was updated on 6 April 2020 as follows:

- *Postponing the application deadline until midday, Thursday 7 May 2020 and*
- *Removing the requirement for 25% matched funding*

These changes are to provide applicants with more flexibility in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. All changes are marked in blue italics.

Our Low-Cost Research & Development (R&D) commissioning strand is part of our ACE-funded Building Digital Capacity Programme. It aims to increase the digital reach of arts and cultural organisations and/or increase the impact of existing work or projects.

A Low-Cost R&D project is likely to focus on improved or wider use of an arts or cultural organisation's existing content, networks, social media or other digital platforms. It aims to give organisations the chance to experiment with new approaches using a relatively low-cost, sustainable approach. This could include creating new content for marketing purposes, contextualising your organisation's work or curating content about existing work.

The minimum amount of funding from The Space per project will be £3,000. The maximum amount of funding available is £7,000 for short form social content, and £11,000 for all other projects, though this could be higher in exceptional circumstances. *Organisations are encouraged to find matched funding, in cash or in kind, but there is no longer a mandatory requirement for this (see Section 8 for more detailed budget guidance).*

The example projects below are not exhaustive but suggest the sort of projects in scope for this strand of work.

1.1 Extending audiences through the creation or curation of material via digital platforms (short-form social content)

Projects focused on expanding the reach of an existing artwork or production using digital content. This may involve re-purposing existing material, or the creation of new content to market or widen the impact of a piece. This strand is ideal for organisations keen to build their existing online audience, increase engagement with their output and think creatively about content production and distribution opportunities for an existing project, exhibition or show.

Examples:

- *100 Masters* is a campaign by Creative Black Country in which the public were asked to nominate a creative person or crafter who is brilliant at what they do. The nominees represent an amazing array of people from Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley and Sandwell who have excelled in their field.

Creative Black Country applied to The Space for help to build their social media presence via a sustainable content plan focused on transforming nominee stories into social videos. The films not only succeeded in getting the commissioned organisation millions of views and followers worldwide, it was also winner of the European Youth Award for Digital Creativity 2018!

- Hospital Rooms (HR) is an award winning charity that commissions museum quality artists to work in partnership with patients and staff to create artworks and radical new versions of clinical spaces for locked and secure mental health units. To allow larger audiences to experience and engage with these artworks in a meaningful way, The Space supported HR to create a digital series of six short films which allowed viewers to explore the commissioned artworks via moving image and interviews with the artists.
- Silent Uprouar Productions worked with The Space to deliver social assets that marketed and extended the editorial impact of issues raised by its cabaret musical about depression: *'A Super Happy Story (About Feeling Super Sad)'*. Through content workshops and distribution support, the company created a series of videos to extend the audience and impact of the show – even entering into a successful partnership with social platform, Upworthy to raise awareness of the mental health issues explored by the production.

1.2 Low-cost capture

Using low cost digital technologies and production techniques to capture a piece of work or performance for online distribution:

- For audiences that cannot attend a physical venue for reasons of geography, time or cost
- To enhance the experience of people who are visiting/have visited the live work or event
- To build the organisation's brand amongst a wider audience, delivering longer-term benefits in terms of audience numbers, demand and advocacy

Examples:

- Spoken word artists Tongue Fu celebrated National Poetry Day with a special performance, broadcast live on social media from Arnolfini in Bristol. Some of the hottest UK poets and spoken word artists performed with the Tongue Fu Band. Shorter cut down films have subsequently been created to continue to engage online audiences via social media.
- Ex Cathedra is a leading UK choir and Early Music ensemble with a repertoire that stretches from the 12th to the 21st centuries. Each year, the company gives exceptional, atmospheric and visually stunning Christmas Music by Candlelight concerts. The organisation was keen to explore a broadcast option as part of its distribution activity and applied to The Space for support in capturing and distributing the 2019 concert. We worked alongside Ex Cathedra to capture the work which was broadcast on Facebook and shared by Classic FM, reaching a more mainstream audience, contributing heavily to the success of the project.

1.3 R&D/content innovation

Projects which act as low-cost scalable case studies for innovative use of new technologies and formats. This provides an opportunity for organisations to experiment with a new area of artistic practice in a way that up-skills individuals, creates learnings and addresses some of the challenges in engaging audiences for new or novel pieces of content.

Examples:

- The Empathy Museum had gathered and toured a collection of personal stories through their art work *A Mile In My Shoes Project*. This is an immersive travelling pop-up 'shoebox' through which people can take a walk in someone else's shoes - literally wearing the footwear of one of the story contributors, while listening to their accompanying audio story. The Space supported the development and production of a podcast series that took this rich archive of stories and experiences and made them more widely available.
- Metro-Boulot-Dodo worked with The Space to deliver a series of social assets for their Heritage Storeys project. The team was supported to make a series of social assets designed to raise awareness and share the story of the piece, whilst the development of a VR experience used a more tech led approach to appeal to a younger audience who don't normally engage with traditional arts and heritage content.

2 Who is eligible to apply?

Low-Cost R&D projects are funded by Arts Council England (ACE). To be eligible to apply you must be an arts or cultural organisation whose registered office is in England. Organisations can include museums and libraries, if the project is arts focused.

We will commission across all art forms and will support projects from all sizes and types of organisation, as long as the proposal clearly has a strong artistic idea, digital content, techniques and platforms at its heart. It must also have significant potential to grow audiences for that organisation using online platforms and content.

The Low-Cost R&D strand is primarily geared to small to mid-sized organisations with limited internal capacity for digital work, however we welcome applications from organisations of any size. It aims to support the production of the type of work that can be sustainable without The Space's funding after the initial project.

We can support applications that include partnerships between organisations. However, one lead arts or cultural organisation must apply and take overall responsibility for the project. We actively encourage applications from non-London based organisations and from organisations forming cross-regional and other partnerships. London-based organisations will still be considered, particularly if they are part of regional collaborations.

The project must produce content made available to public audiences and must help build digital production and audience development skills in your organisation. Commissioned organisations are responsible for the delivery of work to their agreed publishing partners.

Commissioned organisations should be willing to share insights gained from the project with the arts and cultural sector via a case study published by The Space after project completion. Projects should have a measurable audience outcome.

2.1 You don't need to be an expert

Our role is to increase your skills and capacity to produce digital projects. We expect you may not have all the capabilities within your organisation to deliver your project. You might know that you need production, distribution or other partners but haven't yet found someone suitable. You might feel your plans would benefit from specialist advice on rights clearances, audience development, accessibility or other areas. This should not deter you from applying. Our application form allows you to flag where you feel you need support in developing your plans. The purpose of our application process is to identify projects that have a compelling creative core; a strong sense of the potential audience and an idea of your internal creative team.

We don't have the capacity to provide project-specific advice during the first stage application process. However, our team will work with all shortlisted 'amber lit' applicants to address any gaps in plans or skillset with the aim of getting projects 'green-lit' for commissioning (see Section 7.6 for more details on our 'amber' to 'green-lit' process).

3 Audience and distribution

A commission from The Space is an opportunity to develop new audiences and be ambitious. We expect an audience development approach to form part of your thinking. This should encompass insight around the audience(s) you are targeting, why the project is relevant to those audiences, how you propose reaching those audiences (distribution and marketing strategies), and what success looks like for your project in terms of audience objectives.

It is important that the projects we finance demonstrate value for money in terms of audience reach. As a rough benchmark, we expect projects to result in at least one audience session for every £1 invested. So, a project with a budget of £8,000 will need an audience development approach that shows a strong potential to generate at least 8,000 ten second plus video views, online sessions or an equivalent measure of audience engagement.

There can be exceptions to this rule of thumb. For example, if your project is aimed at under-represented or new audiences we recognise you may want to set your audience objectives at a lower level. Your application should specifically address why your audience is distinctive or underserved and how you intend to overcome the barriers to reaching them. Your case for lower audience KPIs will be strengthened by evidence of how the insights you gain from your project might be widely shared and provide significant value to the wider arts and cultural sector.

You should consider ways of reaching audiences that you already have available (e.g. social media accounts for you, your team and influencers you may know; email marketing; media coverage; your own website or YouTube channel). You should also consider how you might encourage your audience to share or recommend the experience.

Although we will assist shortlisted applicants to refine marketing and publication plans to ensure they have the widest possible reach amongst your target audience, we do expect proposals to include some forward thinking around proposed platform(s) and marketing approaches e.g. YouTube, Facebook/Facebook Live, Twitter, Instagram.

4 Rights clearances

We don't look to own any of the intellectual property in the work you create. One of our key objectives is to put the interests of artists and arts organisations first. This means that ownership of works will remain with the organisations that have created them and that you are responsible for clearing the rights needed for the online publication of your project. This normally means that you are in a position to clear all copyright in the work for worldwide non-commercial online publication. Ideally, this should be for a minimum period of five years, but it could be shorter if you have specific constraints.

The details of required rights clearances and the appropriate budgets are something we will discuss with shortlisted applicants. They can vary depending on the distribution plan, so we don't expect you to have rights clearance and costs fully finalised in advance of your application. What we want to know is that you have considered the feasibility and potential cost for rights clearances in your planning and budgeting process.

We will also want to be sure that The Space has the rights we need to promote your work and to share learnings from your project with the UK arts and cultural sector.

5 Accessibility

We want to ensure that the projects we are financing are as accessible as possible to the audiences who wish to experience them. In its widest sense, this means thinking about how your work might be experienced by audiences using a range of devices (e.g. desktop/laptop computer, tablet, mobile phone). This tends to be fairly straightforward for projects using established video formats. We are committed to promoting the use, where possible, of closed captions that can be turned on/off across both short and long-form content.

Interactive experiences should ideally be navigable by keyboard for people who cannot easily use a mouse. They should also be designed in a way that considers users with visual impairments. The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) provides a useful summary of its Web Content Accessibility Guidelines here: <http://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG20/glance/>. The BBC's Accessibility Standards and Guidelines are another good reference:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/futuremedia/accessibility/>

6 Building skills and sharing insights

We are focused on helping you to develop skills and experience around the use of digital technologies and online platforms to build and engage audiences and ultimately provide insights that can be shared with others in the sector.

To judge success, we will need to jointly measure the audience that your work is reaching. We will usually work with you to track reach and engagement levels and some audience profile information using low-cost or free tools, such as those available on social media platforms or Google Analytics.

We also want to measure progress against your other objectives and understand how we can improve the service we offer. We will therefore ask commissioned organisations to collaborate with us and our evaluation partners in reviewing the project and your experience of working with us.

Finally, we are keen to share lessons learned from each project with other arts and cultural organisations. We want as many people as possible to benefit from the insights gained from the

work we support. We may ask you to help us create an online case study about your project, but you might also be willing to participate in workshops or other events we run.

We recognise that your time is limited and that there will be information about your project that you may not want in the public domain. We will work with you to agree a flexible approach.

7 Commissioning process

7.1 Timeline

Thursday 27 Feb 2020	This brief published Online application system available
Thurs 27 Feb - <i>Wed 6 May 2020</i>	Factual email questions can be submitted
<i>Midday</i> <i>Thu 7 May 2020</i>	Deadline for applications
<i>Fri 8 May -</i> <i>Thu 11 June 2020</i>	Shortlisting process
<i>By Fri 12 June 2020</i>	All projects will be notified whether they have been shortlisted or not. We will then go through an 'amber light' scoping process with shortlisted organisations. The 'green light' confirmation will not be secured until projects have been scoped, relevant rights secured in principle and the final budget agreed.

7.2 Using the online application system

The online application system can be accessed via <http://www.thespace.org/commissioning> and will be open from Thursday 27 February 2020. Once registered, you can create one or more applications. Progress can be saved between sessions so that you do not have to complete the form in one go.

You must submit your application no later than ***midday BST on Thursday 7 May 2020***. Applications submitted after this time cannot be considered for this round. You can submit an application at any time prior to the deadline. Once submitted an application cannot be edited, but you can add to and edit your application as much as required before you submit the final version.

The online application form requires you to complete all required questions before moving on to the next page. If you wish to review all the questions before beginning to answer them, you can download a PDF copy of the application form from our website. You can also use placeholder text

for required questions to allow you to move on to subsequent pages. However, please remember to replace this placeholder text before your final submission.

If you are unable to use the online application system because of a disability or impairment, please contact our team by emailing commissioning@thespace.org or by calling 0121 663 1488 and we can discuss alternative arrangements for you to submit your application.

7.3 Emailing questions

If you have a question about the brief or the application process, please email our team: commissioning@thespace.org. Out of fairness to other applicants, we are unable to give detailed advice about your project, whether by email, telephone or face-to-face. However, we can answer brief, factual questions regarding the commissioning brief and process by email.

7.4 Assessment criteria

At all stages of the selection process we will use the following assessment criteria:

- Fit with the commissioning brief (Section 1)
- The quality, clarity and ambition of the proposal
- The audience potential of the project
- Whether you have the ability to deliver the commission with the correct level of support and resourcing
- What risks exist within the proposal - particularly in relation to delivery, rights clearance and compliance - and how they have been mitigated
- Value for money and financial viability
- We will also consider a number of balancing criteria across the total portfolio of The Space's commissions. These include diversity in relation to the artistic and production team and the target audience; geographic spread of commissioned organisations; scale and experience of commissioned organisations and types of art represented

7.5 Shortlisting process

All applications will initially be read and scored by The Space's commissioning panel. High scoring applications are then reviewed and discussed at table reads.

During the selection process, we may email you to request clarification or further information about your proposal in writing. Please make sure that the named contact in your application will be available to reply during the shortlisting period. Please also provide an alternative contact, in case your primary contact is unavailable.

Once the initial shortlisting process is completed, all projects will be notified whether they have been shortlisted or not. We will then go through an 'amber light' scoping process with shortlisted organisations.

We will contact all projects that have been shortlisted, and those that have not been successful, by *Friday 12 June 2020* at the latest. Please note that being shortlisted does not mean that your project is guaranteed to be commissioned. It means that we are interested and want to take your project forward. However, we need to take some more steps (outlined below) before we can move to a full commission.

7.6 'Amber light' to 'green light' process

If your project is shortlisted or 'amber lit', our commissioning team will engage with you to work through your proposal and help you to strengthen any areas where you may need additional expertise. The aim of this phase is to help you get your project 'green-lit' for commissioning. This may include:

- Ensuring that you have the right resources and expertise in place to deliver the project, and, if not, advising on what is required
- Making sure your budget is sufficient for the work and that clear and achievable targets are set

We aim to make this review process as quick and streamlined as possible. Where particular help is needed, we may appoint an expert associate to refine your plans. We will cover the cost for this work.

Our commissioning team will then make a recommendation whether your project should be green lit for commissioning. Recommended projects are submitted to The Space Editorial Panel for final approval and can then be contracted.

Once projects are commissioned, The Space will act as a supportive partner in the background of your project, ensuring the project team has what it needs to deliver the commission and that milestones are met.

8 Budgeting

8.1 What we can finance

The minimum amount of funding from The Space per project will be £3,000. Our normal maximum funding per project will be £7,000 for short form social content, and £11,000 for all other projects, but in exceptional circumstances additional funding may be made available. If you believe your project justifies an exceptional level of funding, you will need to provide strong evidence of the unique wider research value to the sector.

Please note, there is no longer a mandatory requirement for matched funding. However, we

encourage additional contributions to your project, whether in cash or in kind and you should itemise any of these in your budget in order to demonstrate the value being provided. The status of any third-party funding does not need to be confirmed at the time of applying to us.

We cannot finance capital expenditure and we cannot pay for staff salaries or other overhead costs that are not directly related to your project. All project costs should relate to digital activities that are additional to the live or 'real world' work.

We cannot finance activities that have happened prior to us making the decision to support your project. We can however participate in projects already in development, providing our investment is restricted to additional activities that have yet to begin.

8.2 VAT

Our commissioning agreements are contracts for services rather than grants. Ideally we would normally want to contract with a VAT registered entity. Being VAT registered means you can issue VAT invoices to us and recover the VAT element of any costs you incur from your suppliers. This can have a significant impact in making your project more cost-effective.

8.3 Completing the budget template

You need to download and complete the Microsoft Excel budget template from our website (there is also a link in the online application form). All amounts should be entered exclusive of VAT and in line with the guidance below:

8.3.1 Your application

Complete your project name and organisation name and the amount you are requesting from The Space. The maximum you can request is £7,000 for short form social content, or £11,000 for all other projects. We will only fund projects requesting above this in exceptional circumstances.

8.3.2 Other income

List any other sources of matched funding for your project (please note, there is no longer a requirement for matched funding). For each source of funding, give the name of the organisation (including your own organisation, if relevant). Then provide a brief description of what the funding is focused on or any restrictions on its use (there is additional space to add to this information in the online form). Also indicate whether the funding is cash or in-kind and whether it is confirmed or not. Then enter the total amount of income for each funding source.

8.3.3 Expenditure

For each item of expenditure, indicate the budget category (see list below) and briefly describe the item, the per item cost/daily rate and the quantity/no. days required. Please note, the categories below are for guidance only; some may not be relevant for your project.

Budget category	What to include
Production	Time/costs involved in producing your work, excluding audience development costs which should be itemised separately. Within your production costs, don't forget to include any costs required to make your work accessible (see Section 5).
Marketing/distribution	<p>Creation of marketing assets (images, video trailers) and running a marketing campaign, e.g. social media, content marketing, media relations. Any costs involved in self-publishing and promoting your work.</p> <p>Online marketing requires a range of specialist skills. If you do not have these skills in your team, we can help shortlisted applicants with planning, budgeting and introducing you to relevant suppliers.</p>
Rights clearances	Clearing rights with all those relevant to your project e.g.: clearances for recorded music, writer, original artist, director, producer, cast, musicians, stage management, wardrobe, set, lighting and sound design.
Insurance/legal	Public liability and professional indemnity insurance where relevant, legal costs etc.
Evaluation	Monitoring audience engagement with your work and marketing activities across platform(s).
Other	Anything not covered by the above categories.

Once you have completed the expenditure lines, you will need to add any contingency budget separately, up to a maximum of 5%.

8.3.4 Final checks

Review the final checks at the bottom of the spreadsheet. Any errors will be flagged in red and must be fixed before you submit your budget. Any alert messages will highlight areas where you may wish to revise your budget.

9 Frequently asked questions

Q: What is the application deadline?

You can submit your online application up until [midday on Thursday 7 May 2020](#). The closing deadline will not be extended. You can save your work as you go along and come back to your application before final submission.

Q. Who can apply?

You must be an arts or cultural organisation whose registered office is in England. Organisations can include museums and libraries if the project is primarily arts focused

Individual artists should look to partner with an arts or cultural organisation as, in our experience, the assets required of projects, particularly low-cost capture projects, are better delivered by a team. Ideally the entity we contract with will be VAT registered.

Q: Why do applicants need to have a registered office in England?

A: The funding for this commissioning strand is from Arts Council England and therefore commissioned projects need to benefit organisations that are based in England.

Q: Does my project have to take place in England?

Not necessarily, but if activities are happening outside England, we would want to be sure that the published content will reach a substantial audience in England.

Q: Can you commission projects that are already underway?

Yes. The commissioned activity may form part of a project that is already in development. However, we can only finance activities that commence on or after the application deadline.

Q: Can we submit more than one proposal?

Yes, but we're very unlikely to commission more than one project from the same applicant.

Q. Can we apply again if we've applied before?

If you have already received a commission from The Space, you can apply for a further project, but you should be aware that we may prioritise applications from new organisations as we are trying to support the widest range of UK arts and cultural organisations.

If you are resubmitting a previously unsuccessful proposal, please make sure it meets the requirements of this brief.

Q: Do we need prior experience creating works of this kind?

No. However, ideally your application would include details of partners or suppliers you intend to work with to deliver the project, as necessary. The Space can provide advice and assist you in identifying suitable associates or suppliers/partners. However, we will not directly manage your project, so you need to be confident you have the ability to oversee all the elements you are

planning to deliver.

Q. Do I need to have any matched or third-party funding to submit an application?

No. There is no longer a mandatory requirement for matched funding. However, we encourage additional contributions to your project, whether in cash or in kind and you should itemise any of these in your budget in order to demonstrate the value being provided.

Q: Can I include in kind costs in my budget?

Yes. All legitimate expenses incurred by the commissioned organisation specifically towards the digital project can be factored into the budget as in-kind contributions.

Q: When do the projects have to start/finish by?

We will confirm shortlisted projects by Friday 12 June 2020. The amber-light process (see Section 7.6) can take several weeks and we give priority to those projects with earlier timelines. This means, if your project requires a final decision before Friday 12 June 2020 in order to meet your project timetable, you should mark it as **urgent** on the application form.

Please note - to maximise the opportunity for distributing work to your desired audience (including necessary approaches and set-up time with seeding partners) we advise organisations schedule a **minimum** of 2 weeks ahead of their intended publishing date for this process.

In order to allow necessary time for scoping, contracting and support, we anticipate projects will not typically be in a position to publish before August 2020.

All projects must publish before 31 March 2021.

Q: How do you select which projects to commission?

All applications are assessed against the criteria listed in Section 7.4.

Q: If you commission my idea, does this mean The Space owns it?

No. The intellectual property rights to the work will remain with the artist(s) and/or your organisation. You do need to ensure that rights can be licensed for the distribution you intend.

10 Our funders

We are grateful to Arts Council England for their funding of The Space:

