LibraryOn Grants programme application guidance

Welcome to the LibraryOn grant programme and thank you for your interest. This guidance document will take you through the aims of the fund, the application process and how to apply.

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Introduction to the British Library

The British Library is the national library of the United Kingdom. We work closely with public libraries, and as a national organisation we have been

awarded £3.4m of capital funding from Arts Council England to develop a new national digital platform, known as LibraryOn and to provide local grants.

Introduction to LibraryOn

This programme of work celebrates everything public libraries have to offer and aims to increase the number of people who use them both online and in person. LibraryOn will connect people with libraries by enhancing the online presence and discoverability to users. The LibraryOn delivery team is based at the British Library in London and Boston Spa.

What is the grant programme and how is it funded?

To complement the national LibraryOn platform and to support public libraries develop their own online presence, we are administering a £1.1m grant programme to enhance local library websites and improve online discoverability. This has been shaped with the public library sector and is supported through capital funding from Arts Council England.

Aims of grant programme

The purpose of this grant programme is to improve the online presence of libraries through improvements made to local websites, digital offers and enhanced online discoverability. This will make it easier for existing or new users to find, access and engage with libraries. We also hope that the grants will support the overall digital capability of libraries through undertaking the grant activity, sharing learning and best practice.

A summary of the overall aims:

- To increase the online discoverability of libraries to existing and new users.
- To enable library services to improve their digital presence making it easier for customers to discover, engage and access services online.
- To support the wider digital transformation of the public library sector.
- To make it easier for library services to engage with LibraryOn and to develop seamless user journeys between it and local websites.

How much funding is available?

We have a total of £1.1m that will be available over one funding round. We expect to make between 20 and 50 awards of between £10,000 and £70,000.

What are the timescales?

Successful applicants have up to six months to deliver their projects between June and December 2023.

The programme launches and is open for Expressions of Interest (EOI) (open for 4 weeks).	Wednesday 1st March
Deadline to submit an EOI.	9am on Wednesday 29th March
Applicants receive a decision on their EOI (successful applicants have just over 4 weeks to submit a full application).	By Thursday 13th April
Deadline to submit full application.	9am on Monday 15th May
Decisions announced for full applications.	By Wednesday 31st May
Final completion date for project activity.	Friday 22nd December 2023
Deadline to submit final monitoring documents and final accounts.	Monday 29th January 2024

Eligibility

This is a capital grants programme, which means that all expenditure must be capitalised on the applicants' balance sheet. We can cover 100% of project costs. However, if some of your planned expenditure is not capital it can be supported from other confirmed sources of funding which you must tell us about in the budget section of the full application. Please note that any additional funding must be confirmed at the point of submitting a full application.

Applicants can submit up to two applications and in addition can also be part of a consortium bid.

Who can apply:

- Local authority operated library services.
- Trusts, mutual and charities commissioned by local authorities to deliver library services.
- Consortia of library services. You must identify a lead service within your application.
- Archives that operate as part of a statutory library service.

Who can't apply:

- Libraries that are not part of a local authority offer.*
- Individual branch libraries.
- Academic, voluntary or private libraries.

*Community Managed Libraries cannot apply in their own right; however, they can form part of a consortium where the lead applicant is a local authority offer (direct or commissioned).

What you can apply for

Projects should focus on improving the online presence and discoverability of libraries, making it easier for the public to discover, access and benefit from library services. We expect to fund a mix of projects including those looking to improve existing offers, as well as brand new initiatives, approaches and ideas. Applications could focus on projects such as (but not limited to):

- Creating a new standalone website to increase online visibility of your service.
- Upgrading your existing website to better promote services and to increase user traffic.
- Improving your online presence through upgrading technology, software or user experience resulting in better or more accessible service provision for library customers. For example, this could include a new room booking system, making your catalogue more visible to users or an email automation project.
- Testing out a new digital idea or initiative that will help to unlock your library resources and attract new users.
- Commissioning an external provider to create online material and/or resources to showcase what your library offers.
- Purchasing digital equipment in order to expand and transform digital access to your service.

What you can't apply for

- Digitisation of collections unless it is linked to a wider discovery project.
- Standalone staffing costs not directly related to project delivery.
- Costs associated with researching or developing a website/ capital asset.
- Feasibility studies.
- Purchase of e-books or e-stock.
- Any activity covered by the grant that is not able to be capitalised on your organisation's balance sheet*
- Funding for projects which seeks to replace core activity covered by local authority funding.

* Unless this aspect of the activity is resourced by other funding confirmed at the point of application

How to apply

We are administering this fund through an online application platform. Your application must be made using this system and we will use it to communicate with you during the process. Before applying, you need to create a user profile on the portal. You can access the portal on the LibraryOn website.

If you have any access requirements, please contact us before making your application by emailing hello@libraryon.org

Submitting an Expression of Interest
Once you've created a user profile the system will give you access to the three EOI questions (see below). The portal will open on Wednesday 1st March and will close 4 weeks later at 9am on Wednesday 29th March.

What needs to be included
We will ask for details on who is applying and approximately how much you intend to apply for. We will ask you to confirm that expenditure can be capitalised on the balance sheet. There are also three sections to complete which require narrative answers. These are:

- A summary of your project (up to 300 words)
- How does your project meet the aims of the LibraryOn grant programme? (up to 400 words)
- What will be the impact of the activity on your service, users and the sector? (up to 500 words)

When we receive your EOI we will check to ensure your project is eligible. We will use the information within the EOI to decide on whether to invite you to submit a full application. The decision will be made using a simple scoring mechanism rating your answers to the above three questions, as well a consideration of how feasible your project is to deliver.

The decision-making panel is made up of LibraryOn team members, an Arts Council England representative and a library sector digital specialist. We will use a simple scoring mechanism against the published prompts to decide which projects should progress to full application.

We will contact you to let you know whether your EOI has been successful by mid-April.

If you've been successful, we'll invite you to submit a full application using the same submission portal. We may also provide some feedback on your EOI, which should be considered when completing the full application. The portal will be open for just over 4 weeks, closing at 9am on Monday 15th May.

If we decide not to invite you to submit a full application, you will receive a brief feedback statement detailing why your EOI was unsuccessful.

Full application questions

We will ask a series of short questions under each of these headings: Basic details, Activity, Reporting and Budget. Please use the questions to give us a detailed picture of your project. There is a maximum word count for each question, however, don't feel you need use the whole allocation.

Basic details

- Project title
- A brief outline of your project (up to 100 words)
- How much funding you are applying for
- Start and end dates for your project

Activity

- What activity will you undertake? (up to 300 words)
- Will you work with any partners to deliver your activity? (up to 200 words)
- Who will be managing the programme of activity, what are their roles and how will you manage it? (up to 300 words)
- What are the risks and how will you manage them? (up to 300 words)
- The activity needs to be completed by 31 December 2023, how will you ensure it is delivered effectively and on time? (up to 300 words)

Reporting

- How will your project deliver against the aims of the LibraryOn grant programme? (up to 400 words)
- What will be the impact of the activity on your service, users and the sector? How will you measure its success? (up to 500 words)

Budget

- What will you spend the money on? Please provide a budget breakdown for the full amount.* The budget headings are:
    - Asset purchases e.g. hardware
    - Creating/ purchasing initial content
    - Internal staff working directly on the creation of the asset
    - External professional services used to directly create the asset
    - Other capital costs
    - Other costs (If applicable and covered by other confirmed income)
- If applicable, please provide details of any other income that will contribute towards the project. (up to 200 words)

* Remember: Any costs you include must be capitalised on your organisation's balance sheet, in line with your own accounting policies. Only costs related to the development of asset can be capitalised, not initial research/planning or running costs. If there are non-capital costs as part of your project these must be covered by income or in-kind support from other sources confirmed at the point of application.

You will also need to complete and upload the template from your finance team that is available as an appendix at the end of this document.

How a decision is made

We will use the answers in your application to decide on a score against our published criteria. We will also consider factors such as the geographic spread of services, type of library authority and the mix of urban and rural libraries when deciding which projects to fund.

Decision criteria

The decision-making criteria is based on the questions we ask in the application. Panel members will consider the following when scoring your project:

- Ability to manage the activity.
- Feasibility of delivering the project within the timeframe.
- How well will the project improve the discoverability of the library to existing and/or new users?
- How well will the project improve the existing digital presence?
- For this service(s), how innovative is the idea?
- What will be the likely impact on the service, users and the sector?
- Whether feedback from the EOI has been taken into consideration (if applicable).

Who is on the decision-making panel

The panel will be made up of LibraryOn team members and library sector specialists. An Arts Council England representative will also attend as an observer.

What happens next

If you are unsuccessful

You'll receive a brief feedback statement which will include a standard reason why funding hasn't been awarded. The reasons include:

- Didn't meet the criteria
- Competition for funds
- Other applications preferred

If you are successful

You'll receive an offer letter which will allow you to accept the grant. We will also ask you to acknowledge and accept our terms and conditions.

We will ask for your bank details. Payments are split into two instalments with 80% of the grant released at the start of the project and the final 20% released when you submit your final monitoring report at the end of the activity.

You must acknowledge your award on all online resources and any printed or published material relating to the grant activity. This includes using the LibraryOn and Arts Council England logos. Details on how to use these are included as an appendix at the end of this guidance.

How to draw down payments

Upon receiving and accepting your offer, you should upload any required documentation relating to the grant activity. We will ask for your bank details and account evidence, which could be a redacted bank statement or a blank paying in slip or check.

You will be responsible for ringfencing the funds you receive in an appropriate way.

In order to receive the final payment, you must complete and submit the final monitoring information on the online application platform.

Monitoring requirements

We will ask you to provide a monitoring report halfway through your project to let us know how your activity is going. Details of what we will ask are included as an appendix at the end of this guidance. The questions cover progress made so far, challenges, what you've learnt, how activity has contributed towards the digital capacity of your service and partnership developments (if applicable). We will also ask for progress on your budget.

At the end of the project, we'll ask you to complete a final monitoring report; the questions will be based on those asked at the midway point of your project. We will also ask for project accounts giving final details on income and expenditure.

If your award is for £50,000 or over, we will also ask for certified project accounts. If your organisation is a local authority, these can be certified by a qualified accountant from your internal audit function.

Community of practice

We are keen to develop a community of practice for projects to learn from one another and help support learning. During the project delivery period, we will hold open monthly informal drop-in sessions for applicants to come together to

talk about how their projects are progressing. These are optional to join, and we don't expect everyone to join every session, however we hope these will offer a valuable opportunity to share learning and network with library colleagues.

We may also ask applicants to be part of a peer group to help evaluate activity for up to 12 months after projects have completed. We recognise that the full benefit may not be understood until sometime after activity has ended, and we are interested in capturing longer-term sector impact. We'll be looking at the impact on individual services and the wider library sector.

Other sources of funding

National Lottery Project Grants

Arts Council England supports arts and cultural activity through its open access funding scheme, National Lottery Project Grants.

It may also be useful to refer to the library information sheet available on Arts Council's website.

Libraries Improvement Fund

Administered by Arts Council England, the Libraries Improvement Fund will support library services to upgrade buildings and technology so they are better placed to support people who use them.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions about your application.

Email us on hello@libraryon.org

Our website is LibraryOn - Grants programme

Appendices

Template for finance teams



Template for finance teams to confirm expenditure can be capitalised.

Please complete and sign the below declaration to confirm your finance team is aware of the project and is able to capitalise expenditure on the balance sheet.

The finance team agree that the expenditure detailed in this LibraryOn grant application can be capitalised on our balance sheet. Signed [Finance officer]…… Name…… Library service…… Date……

EOI and full application template

*The information below is for your reference, please input answers into the application portal available at libraryon.org/grants.

Profile form

First name:	

Last name:	

Job title:	

Library service: *If applying as a consortium, please input the name of the library service you have chosen to be the lead applicant*	

Are you applying as a consortium?	Yes No

If yes, please provide the names of the other services and contact names:	

Name of your project: *Please add a short project title for identification purposes.*	

How much do you wish to apply for?	£10,000 - £30,000 £30,001 - £50,000 £50,001 - £70,000

Expression of Interest form

Project summary

Please provide a summary of your project: *Maximum 300 words*	

Aims

The LibraryOn grant programme aims to:

- Increase the online discoverability of libraries for existing and new users.
- Enable library services to improve their digital presence making it easier for customers to discover, engage and access services online.
- Support the wider digital transformation of the public library sector.
- Make it easier for library services to engage with LibraryOn and to develop seamless user journeys between it and local websites.

How does your project meet the aims of the LibraryOn grant programme? *Maximum 400 words*	

Impact

What will be the impact of the activity on your service, users and the sector? *Maximum 500 words*	

Financial check

I can confirm that the finance team has agreed this expenditure can be capitalised if I am awarded a grant.	

Full application form

Basic details

Project title:	
This will be published on the LibraryOn website if funding is awarded.	

Please give a brief outline of your project: *Maximum 100 words*	
This will be published on the LibraryOn website if funding is awarded.	

How much funding are you apply for?	£

Please provide a start and end date for your project:	
Projects cannot exceed six months in length and delivery should be complete by Friday 22nd December 2023.	

Activity

What activity will you undertake? *Maximum 300 words*	
Please tell us about the main stages and tasks of the activity.	

Will you work with any partners to deliver your activity? If so, please provide details here. *Maximum 200 words*	
If applicable, please tell us who the partners are and what their role will be.	

Who will be managing the programme of activity and how will you manage it? *Maximum 300 words*	
Please tell us who will be involved in managing your activity, what their role will be and how you will manage the different elements.	

What are the risks and how will you manage them? *Maximum 300 words*	

The activity needs to be completed by 22 December 2023, how will you ensure it is delivered effectively and on time? *Maximum 300 words*	

Reporting

How will your project deliver against the aims of the LibraryOn grants programme? *Maximum 400 words*	

What will be the impact of the activity on your service, users and the sector? How will you measure its success? *Maximum 500 words*	

Budget

What will you spend the money on? Please provide a budget breakdown for the full amount.

	Expenditure detail
Asset purchases e.g. hardware	
Creating/purchasing initial content	
Internal staff working directly on the creation of the asset	
External professional services used to directly create the asset	
Other capital costs	
If applicable, other costs	
We can fund 100% of the project. However, you are welcome to cover elements of the project with funding from elsewhere. For example, if some of your planned expenditure is not capital it can be supported from other sources. If any activity is covered from other sources, please indicate which elements of expenditure this will be allocated towards.	

I confirm that I have discussed the project activity with the finance team to ensure it and any procurement processes can be delivered within the published timeframe; and the finance team confirms that the expenditure can be capitalised on the balance sheet.	

Please complete and upload the template from the guidance document confirming your finance team is aware of the project and is able to capitalise any expenditure on the balance sheet.

Declaration

I confirm that:

- I have read the guidance for applicants and additional information.
- To the best of my knowledge, the details provided in this application are accurate.
- Expenditure can be capitalised on the balance sheet if funding is awarded.

Name:	

Logo guidance – This is downloadable from the LibraryOn website
LibraryOn - Grants programme guidance

Interim report template

Interim report template

Reporting must be completed using our online application platform. You may find it easier to complete this template first, then cut and paste your answers into the system.

What have you achieved so far and what progress on activity have you made? Up to 400 words

What have been the challenges so far? Up to 300 words

What have you learnt so far? Up to 300 words

How has the project contributed to the digital capability and/or provision of your service so far? Up to 400 words

If applicable, have there been any partnership developments? Up to 200 words

Income for this activity

	Original income	Income to date	Income notes
Grant programme award	£	£	
If applicable, any other income received for this project	£	£	

Expenditure for this activity

	Original expenditure	Expenditure to date	Expenditure notes
Asset purchases e.g. hardware	£	£	
Creating/purchasing initial content	£	£	
Internal staff working directly on the creation of the asset	£	£	
External professional services used to directly create the asset	£	£	
Other capital costs	£	£	



Final report template

Reporting must be completed online using our online application platform. You may find it easier to complete this template first, then cut and paste your answers into the system.

What have you achieved and what progress on activity have you made? Up to 400 words

What have been the challenges? Up to 300 words

What have you learnt? Up to 300 words

How is the project contributing to the digital capability and/or provision of your service?

Up to 400 words

If applicable, have there been any partnership developments? Up to 200 words

How many people that work in your service have been engaged in and/or have benefitted from this project? Please feel free to provide detail explaining how this figure has been calculated.

If known, please provide figures for current service user engagement:	
On-line	
In-person	
Please feel free to provide any additional information about the above figures.	

If known, please provide figures for how many service users have engaged with your project:	
On-line	

In-person	
Please feel free to provide any additional information about the above figures.	

Income for this activity

	Original income	Revised income	Final income	Income notes
Grant programme award	£	£	£	
If applicable, any other income received for this project	£	£	£	

Expenditure for this activity

	Original expenditure	Revised expenditure	Final expenditure	Expenditure notes
Asset purchases e.g. hardware	£	£	£	
Creating/purchasing initial content	£	£	£	
Internal staff working directly on the creation of the asset	£	£	£	
External professional services used to directly create the asset	£	£	£	
Other capital costs	£	£	£	
If applicable, other costs	£	£	£	

(Please check the box) ☐

I confirm that expenditure for this project has been capitalised on our organisation's balance sheet	

If your award was for £50,000 or more, we also require you to upload a statement of income and expenditure for the activity that has been certified by an independent qualified accountant, including confirmation that all grant expenditure will be capitalised on your balance sheet. (If your organisation is a local authority a qualified accountant from your internal audit function can certify this).

Your feedback is important to the LibraryOn team. Please let us know how we did. Thinking about the grant you have received from us, how did we:

A. explain about eligibility to apply for funding?

Very well	
Well	
Neither well nor badly	
Badly	
Very badly	

B. explain the application process?

Very well	
Well	
Neither well nor badly	
Badly	
Very badly	

C. manage your application for funding?

Very well	
Well	
Neither well nor badly	
Badly	
Very badly	

D. respond if you contacted us for advice or information?

Very well	
Well	
Neither well nor badly	
Badly	
Very badly	

Please let us know if you have any other comments

Terms and conditions

Terms and conditions and draft funding agreement are available to download here.

Procedure for appeals / complaints

We understand that you might be disappointed with the decision on your application. The decisions on grant applications are made by a full decision-making panel (see Applicant Guidance document), comprising LibraryOn staff and sector representatives with a range of expertise. These decisions are made using professional judgement, which we withhold.
However, if you feel you have been treated unfairly or that we haven't followed our processes correctly (as outlined in Applicant Guidance), you are entitled to request a review. Please contact either the Digital Grants Manager Jill.Brown@bl.uk or email hello@libraryon.org to raise any concerns. You have up to 30 days to raise your concern, after which time we are unable to take any action.

We can consider the following instances:

- we have given incorrect information
- we have not followed or delayed our processes or made mistakes
- we have not been courteous and respectful
- we have been unlawfully discriminatory

What we will do if a concern is raised

We will record your details and the nature of the concern. We will appoint a British Library staff member (from outside the LibraryOn team), to investigate the concern raised and decide if further action needs to be taken. We will endeavour the staff member to be from the BL Assurance or Complaints team.

What are the timescales?

We will respond to you within 10 working days to confirm we have received your correspondence. We will endeavour to respond within 15 working days with details on whether your complaint will be upheld and if applicable, how it will be resolved.

How will complaints be resolved?

If a concern or complaint is upheld and we are found to be partially or fully at fault, we will act to resolve this. Resolution may include:

- taking your application back to members of the decision-making panel and reconsidering our decision.
- issuing a formal apology.

- ensuring that we avoid similar mistakes in the future by reforming processes. Given there is currently only one round of the grants programme planned, this will include sharing details with the BL team to ensure improvements are applied to future grants schemes. This includes contributing to the legal team's document on grant administration.

What other actions will we take?

In accordance with our funding agreement, we will inform Arts Council of any complaints received and actions taken to address them.