



Cultural Investment Programme 2023 - 27

**Making arts and culture  
accessible for all**



# What is Bristol City Council's Cultural Investment Programme?

The Cultural Investment Programme is the way in which Bristol City Council distributes public money to support arts and culture. The programme consists of three funds: Originators (1 year), Imagination (2 years) and Openness (4 years).

All three funds have a vision of making arts and culture accessible for all citizens.

To help us achieve this vision we have three aims for the Cultural Investment Programme 2023-27:

- 1** To advance diversity, equity and inclusion in arts and culture for all Bristol's citizens  
To support Bristol as a city of ideas,
- 2** Creativity and engagement
- 3** Invest in people, places and partnerships to respond creatively to need and support social change

Alongside these aims we have a guiding principle across all funds to help Bristol address the threat of the global climate and ecological emergency.

If your project or organisation can contribute to our aims and help us meet our vision please keep reading!

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*Top right:* Oh Europa Bristol, Action Hero Photograph © Bnar Sardar

*Bottom left:* Travelling Light Theatre Company, Youth Theatre Showcase, ©Camilla Adams

*Bottom right:* MAYK, SESSION by Still House, Steppaz and Empire Sounds at The Station. ©Paul Blakemore



BristolPride, PrideParade©ColinRaynerPhotography

# Introduction

**Hello! Thank you for taking the time to read our Cultural Investment Programme 2023-27 Overview.**

We are [Bristol City Council](#), the local authority of Bristol, England. We invest public money in people and organisations across the city.

This document is designed to help you understand more about the Cultural Investment Programme and what we will be looking to support.

We have used our learning from the last round of the Cultural Investment Programme, and feedback from Bristol's cultural sector (gathered through surveys, meetings and focus groups) to inform and improve how we distribute funding over the next four years.

## What is the Cultural Investment Programme?

The Cultural Investment Programme is the way in which Bristol City Council distributes public money to support arts and culture.

Through the Cultural Investment Programme 2023 – 27 we will provide grants for Bristol-based organisations and individuals to deliver arts and culture activities, events or festivals. We will offer both [project specific grants](#) and [unrestricted funding](#).

Our vision is to make arts and culture [accessible](#) for all citizens.

We know that [culture](#) means many different things to different people. When we use the word culture we are referring to creative culture such as music, art, history, heritage, and events where Bristol's diverse citizens can share, celebrate or learn.

By accessible, we mean we want everyone to be able to experience and/or participate in arts and culture. We also want to make it as easy as we can for everyone, whatever their access needs, to apply for funding.

The Cultural Investment Programme [vision](#) and [aims](#) relate directly to Bristol City Council's priorities and plans for the city of Bristol and its citizens for the next four years, particularly for actively improving [inclusivity](#) and growing a green and sustainable cultural economy.

These wider plans and priorities are explained in more detail in three important strategy documents for the city:

- [Bristol Council's Corporate Strategy \(2022 – 27\)](#)
- [Bristol's One City Plan \(to 2050\)](#)
- [Bristol's Cultural Strategy](#)

We do not expect all [grant seekers](#) to read and absorb these strategies. However, if you are seeking funding for 2 – 4 years it will be helpful for you to check these to see the bigger picture within which our motivations and priorities as a funder sit.

# Cultural Investment Programme 2023-27 Structure

## Vision, Aims, Objectives

Our [vision](#) is to make arts and culture accessible to all. Our [aims](#) are the changes we want to achieve to make that vision a reality. All three aims are of equal importance for the Cultural Investment Programme. These have been revised and refined for 2023 – 27 through consultation with Bristol’s arts and culture sector.

### **Aim 1: To advance [diversity](#), [equity](#) and [inclusion](#) in arts and culture for all Bristol’s citizens**

We will achieve this aim by supporting:

- Organisations and enterprises that are led by or creatively benefit individuals and groups with [protected characteristics](#).
- Projects and activities that are delivered by, for and with communities in Bristol City Council’s [priority areas](#).

### **Aim 2: To support Bristol as a city of ideas, creativity and engagement**

We will achieve this aim by supporting artists, creative practitioners and organisations to:

- Create innovative, accessible work and test out different ways to engage Bristol’s citizens.
- Work together, share knowledge, resources and create opportunities for collaboration.

### **Aim 3: Invest in people, places and partnerships to respond creatively to need and support [social change](#)**

We will achieve this aim by supporting artists, creative practitioners and organisations that use arts and culture to:

- Create [community-led](#) events and activities that bring people together to build positive relationships.
- Help improve the health and wellbeing of people of all ages and backgrounds.

**Alongside our aims and objectives, for the Cultural Investment Programme 2023 – 27 we have a guiding principle across all funds to help Bristol address the threat of the global climate and ecological emergency.**

All Cultural Investment Programme [grantees](#) will demonstrate a commitment to raising awareness of the climate and ecological emergencies, and reducing/mitigating the environmental impact of their activities.

## Our motivations as a funder

Our aspiration is to be an inclusive, adaptive and collaborative funder. This is particularly important in the context of the challenges and priorities of our time; for a city emerging socially and economically from the impact of a pandemic, and at the same time needing to urgently address the threat of the global climate and ecological emergency.

We want to ensure that we are investing public money wisely and fairly on behalf of our citizens in the city's arts and culture, by monitoring and measuring impact.

Arts Council England has established a clear [Impact Framework for its Let's Create strategy](#). We are using this model to help monitor the impact of the Cultural Investment Programme over the next four years.

We will commission an independent researcher/evaluator to work with a small number of [grantees](#) supported through our Imagination and Openness Funds, to evaluate impact as a result of the funding.

We are committed to being transparent and accountable. We have published all our grants made since 2018 on the [council's website](#). For 2023-27 we will produce Cultural Investment Programme reports annually.

## Cultural Investment Programme funds

The Cultural Investment Programme 2023-27 consists of three funds: Originators (1 year), Imagination (2 years) and Openness (4 years). This structure is designed to be a ladder into funding, with the potential for [grant seekers](#) to grow and apply for wider support from the council and other grant makers as they develop.

The total Cultural Investment Programme 2023 – 27 grant budget is £2,442,240. This will be broadly allocated as follows:

	Cultural Investment Programme budget over 4 years	Annual Cultural Investment Programme budget	Percentage of total Cultural Investment Programme budget
<b>Openness</b>	£1,465,344	£366,336	60%
<b>Imagination</b>	£610,560 (Round 1 £305,280) (Round 2 £305,280)	£ 152,640 per year	25%
<b>Originators</b>	£366,336	£ 91,584 per year	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,442,240</b>	<b>£610,560</b>	

**Please note:** all three funds are subject to Bristol City Council's annual budget setting process and may change.

## Openness Fund

Openess	
Annual grant size	Up to £30,000
Maximum total grant	This is calculated as no more than 7% of your organisation's annual turnover (based on the organisation's last set of audited accounts), multiplied by four, with the maximum total grant capped at £120,000. The annual turnover amount that you use can be based on an average over the last 4 years if preferable.
Duration	April 2023 – March 2027, Four years
Who can apply	Bristol-based arts and cultural organisations with at least twelve months of accounts
What can I apply for	This fund supports established arts and cultural organisations that are best able to achieve our aims and objectives with unrestricted funding for up to four years
When can I apply	March 2022 – June 2022
Requirements	We will ask Openness grant seekers to explain how their activity will contribute to all of our aims, linked objectives and our guiding principle.



© acta

### Case Study 1

#### **acta - awarded an Openness grant in 2018**

acta is a community theatre based in Bedminster. They encourage communities to share their stories, make original and remarkable work, and engage audiences who rarely attend theatre.

‘The investment from the Cultural Investment Programme 2018-22 enabled us to deliver our intercultural and intergenerational participatory work across the City, both at our base in Bedminster, and with people in their own communities in St Pauls, Lockleaze and beyond. acta has become a real home for isolated people, especially through the Covid-19 pandemic. We engage people without privilege, and create a place where everyone’s story matters.’ Helen Tomlin, Finance & Evaluation Director



Undersong by Verity Standen at St George’s, Mayfest 2018

© Paul Blakemore

### Case Study 2

#### **MAYK – awarded an Openness grant in 2018**

MAYK is one of the country’s leading live performance producing organisations. Based in Bristol but working internationally, MAYK create dynamic meeting points for participation in world-class live performance both in and out of traditional art spaces. They also run Mayfest, Bristol’s biennial international festival of contemporary theatre that promotes the creative vitality of Bristol and explores the parameters of the city as a creative playground.

“MAYK emerged from Bristol’s fertile and thriving independent performance scene, and we’re proud to be based here. Our Openness grant supports our work here in Bristol, from producing artists projects to our biennial festival Mayfest – shining a light nationally and internationally on the ridiculous talent of the artists making work in the city – and it’s a badge we wear with pride.” Matthew Austin, Co-Director

## Imagination Fund

Imagination	
Annual grant size	£5000-£15,000
Maximum total grant	£30,000
Duration	2 years
Who can apply	Bristol-based arts and cultural organisations with at least six months of accounts
What can I apply for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project funding (restricted) for medium- scale arts projects/ events/festivals, or organisational development</li> </ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unrestricted funding for up to two years</li> </ul>
When can I apply	October 2024 – December 2024 for May 2025 – April 2027
Requirements	We will ask Imagination grant seekers to explain how their project or activity will contribute to two of our aims, linked objectives and our guiding principle.



SMOOSH! © Paul Blakemore

### Case Study 1

#### Paraorchestra – awarded an Imagination grant in 2020

Paraorchestra is the world's only large-scale virtuoso ensemble of professional disabled and non-disabled musicians. Their mission is to redefine what an orchestra can be.

“Our Imagination grant has been a vital investment in Paraorchestra’s growth as a Bristol organisation and as a Bristol employer. It has enabled us to create artistic work showcasing exceptional musicianship that embeds disabled artists and creatives at the heart of the process. It has helped us shape events presented in a range of space and places across the city - not just in the city centre alongside, but out into the suburbs of Knowle West - presenting international quality work directly to audiences local to this area. The grant has also given us the capacity to re-think our working practice, developing new avenues of support and development for disabled musicians that have fallen through the gaps of mainstream assistance.” Jonathan Harper, Chief Executive



Many Minds, I've Been Waiting, © Jack Offord

## Case Study 2

### Many Minds – awarded an Imagination grant in 2020

Many Minds facilitate creative spaces and create performances with people that experience mental ill-health. Their performances and open-access workshops put people who identify with experiences of mental ill-health in the driver's seat, as a way to break down stigma and trigger generosity and equality.

“Our Imagination grant has given us the capacity to become more strategic and sustainable in the long term. We have seen the demand for our activity grow significantly since the pandemic and have been able to react flexibly to the needs of our members and audiences and create more opportunities for people with experiences of mental illness to have meaningful access to the arts. Over the past two years, we have developed partnerships and collaborations with venues, organisations and artists that have enhanced the quality of our artistic work and led to us working towards making a show for the main stage of the Bristol Old Vic.” Olivia Ware, Executive Director

## Originators Fund

### Originators

Grant size	£500 – £5,000
Duration	1 year
Who can apply	Bristol-based artists and creative practitioners, community groups and organisations
What can I apply for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• small scale arts and culture projects/events/festivals,</li> <li>• professional and organisational development,</li> <li>• testing new ideas approaches and partnerships</li> </ul>
When can I apply	Annual fund open for applications in 2023, 2024, 2025 & 2026
Requirements	We will ask Originators grant seekers to explain how their project will contribute to one of our aims, linked objectives and our guiding principle.



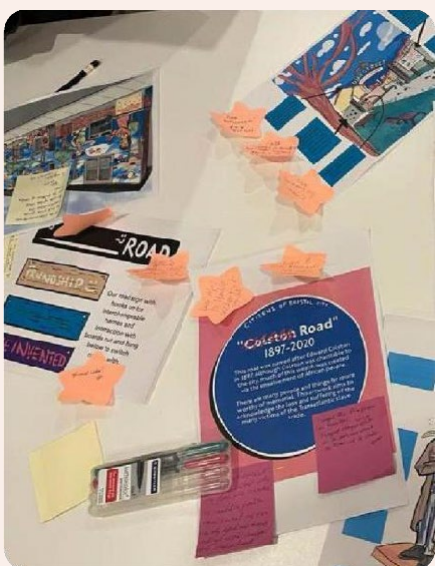
© Graft

## Case Study 1

### Graft – awarded an Originators grant in 2019

Graft is a husband and wife team of mural painters, Rob and Sophie Wheeler. In 2019, Graft were awarded an Originators grant to create a mural for a community mural project in Sea Mills. They wanted to celebrate the centenary of the Sea Mills ‘garden suburb’ and the unique history, heritage, flora and fauna of the area. The Originators funding enabled Graft to run a series of community workshops, as well as online engagement, which informed the design for a Sea Mills community pattern. They then secured permission to paint this pattern as a mural at Sea Mills Railway Station and created a mini exhibition in the Sea Mills phone box museum.

‘It has been a wonderful project to run, especially as it gave people an opportunity post-lockdown to come together, have some fun while learning new skills, and celebrate their local area.’ Sophie Wheeler



Play Disrupt, Create as a Community, Colston Road, illustrations by Conrico Steez

## Case Study 2

### Create as a Community: Colston Road, Easton – awarded an Originators grant in 2021

Over the last few years, local residents who live on Colston Road, Easton have been campaigning for the street to be renamed. Play:Disrupt, in collaboration with local artists and the League of Creative Interventionists (LOCI), are undertaking a community consultation, engaging local residents with the opportunity to creatively respond to the existing ‘Colston Road’ name and co-create something that is meaningful, thought-provoking and visual. The resulting work and the conversation will aim to encapsulate the residents’ diversity of thoughts and opinions, allowing for everyone’s voice to be heard.

“It’s been a wonderful process to be part of, bringing new voices to the table, visualising hyper local responses to an international conversation. The project has kick started an avid collection of historic research, fond memories of the street along with really constructive talks, new relationships and so many amazing ideas.”

Malcolm Hamilton, Creative Director

## Who can apply?

**You can apply to the Cultural Investment Programme 2023-27 if:**

**1** You are an artist or creative practitioner or [not-for-profit](#) organisation based within Bristol

- For individuals, this means you must have a home, studio or workspace address within the local authority area.
- For organisations, you need to be registered in Bristol – by which we mean that you have a main base or headquarters in Bristol City Council’s local authority area.
- You can check if you are within the area by typing your postcode into [www.gov.uk/find-local-council](http://www.gov.uk/find-local-council)

**2** Arts, events and cultural activities are the focus of your application

## Applying as an individual

Individuals who are 18 or over can apply for the Originators Fund to run events, arts and cultural activities that take place within one year. Individuals are not eligible to apply for our Imagination or Openness Funds.

## Applying as an organisation

Organisations can apply for any of the Cultural Investment Programme Funds if they are [not-for-profit](#) and are any of the following:

- Registered Charity
- Community Interest Company limited by Guarantee
- Community Interest Company limited by share (Schedule 2 with 100% asset lock only)
- Company limited by guarantee
- Registered Society (including Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies)
- Charitable Incorporated Organisation
- Unincorporated organisations (can only apply to the Originators Fund)

We would consider you to be a non-for-profit organisation if you don’t generate profit or if you reinvest any profits or revenues to help you achieve your objectives and/or keep your organisation running.

All organisations will be expected to meet our baseline standards, which are outlined in the Guidance Documents for each fund.

## Applying in partnership

You are welcome to apply in partnership for our Originators and Imagination Funds. We do not accept partnership applications for the Openness Fund. If you are applying in partnership you will need to choose a 'lead partner'. The lead partner will receive the grant payments if the funding application is successful.

## Repeat applications

The Cultural Investment Programme 2023 – 27 is open to previous [grantees](#) as well as new [grant seekers](#). However if you have been awarded Originators funding before, we would like to see an application for a different activity, or a specific area of development for a previously funded activity.

## Who can't apply?

- Organisations/individuals based outside Bristol (partners can be from outside Bristol but the lead partner must be Bristol based)
- Schools (though projects may include schools as partners and participants, a school cannot be the lead partner)
- Public sector organisations
- Private sector 'profit orientated' organisations
- Housing associations and Registered Social Landlords (may be included as partners and participants, but cannot be the lead partner)
- Students
- Organisations where any of the trustees or anyone on the management committee has any financial, property or other interests, which will benefit as a result of this application.

## We cannot fund:

- Activities which are not arts or culture related and which are not creative/do not develop creativity
- Activities, equipment or events that directly duplicate existing activities funded by Bristol City Council
- Capital projects such as building works or funding to support buying equipment
- Fundraising events such as charity galas or general appeals
- Social events
- Activities which do not provide public benefit
- Activities that result in personal financial gain, other than salaries
- Parties or fireworks

- Sports/food/hobby activities/festivals/events without a strong and clear arts or creative focus
- Purchase or use of alcohol/tobacco
- Political activity
- Organised acts of religious worship

Before you submit an application, please read the Guidance Documents for the fund you are applying to and complete the eligibility checklist.

## The application process

We expect to receive many great applications to the Cultural Investment Programme 2023 – 27. Sadly, we won't be able to fund them all.

For example:

- In 2020, we received 50 applications to our Imagination Fund, and 12 were awarded funding.
- In 2021, we received 144 applications to our Originators Fund, and 18 were awarded funding.

We don't want you to spend lots of time preparing an application for your project or organisation if it doesn't meet our [aims and objectives](#). Please make sure you read our aims and objectives and our Guidance Documents carefully to see if we are the right funder for you.

We will always let all grant seekers know if their application has been successful or unsuccessful. Grant seekers will have an opportunity to request feedback on unsuccessful applications.

## Key dates

### Imagination 2023 – 25 and Openness 2023 – 27

Applications open	Wednesday 30th March 2022 - 9am
Applications close	Tuesday 14th June 2022 - 5pm
Funding applications are assessed	June – August 2022
Grant seekers will be told if their application has been recommended for funding We will also let all grant seekers know if their application has not been recommended	September 2022
Cabinet will consider these recommendations	December 2022
Funding offers confirmed	December 2022
Funding agreements issued	January 2023
Grant period starts	April 2023

**Imagination 2025 – 2027**

Applications open	Monday 14 <sup>th</sup> October 2024
Applications close	Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> December 2024
Funding applications are assessed	December 2024 – January 2025
Grant seekers will be told if their application has been recommended for funding We will also let all grant seekers know if their application has not been recommended	January 2025
Committee will consider these recommendations	March 2025
Funding offers confirmed	March 2025
Funding agreements issued	April 2025
Grant period starts	May 2025

**Originators 2025 – 2026**

Applications open	Monday 14 <sup>th</sup> October 2024
Applications close	Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> December 2024
Funding applications are assessed	December 2024 – January 2025
Grant seekers notified of decisions	January 2025
Committee will consider these recommendations	March 2025
Funding offers confirmed	March 2025
Funding agreements issued	April 2025
Grant period starts	May 2025

## Our decision making process

There are several stages to our decision making process.

### Stage 1 – Assessment

Applications will be assessed by members of Bristol City Council's Arts and Events team and sometimes trained freelance assessors. Applications are assessed using a clear scoring system outlined in the Guidance Documents for each fund. Answers will be given a score between 0-3, based on how well the question has been answered. The scores are added together to give a total score. For larger grants we also share and discuss applications with Council officers who have relevant expertise in Community Engagement, Equalities, Legal and Finance.

### Stage 2 – Balancing the investment

A decision making panel will review and discuss the highest scoring applications. The panel members will vary depending on the fund. The panel includes members of the Arts and Events team and other council officers with relevant expertise in the areas of Community Engagement, Equalities, Legal and Business/Finance. We may also invite other people with relevant expertise to take part.

The panel will consider the highest scoring applications in relation to our balancing criteria. We do this in order to consider the spread of investment that we want to make. Our intention is that new grantees for each fund will be as representative as possible in terms of diversity, range of art forms, geographical location and the communities they serve.

We will consider applications against the following balancing criteria:

- Geographical location (with a particular focus on [Bristol City Council's priority areas](#))
- Range of art forms (visual art, music, dance, theatre, festivals etc.) • Opportunities for people from groups with [protected characteristics](#)

For the Originators Fund final decisions are made at Stage 2.

### Stage 3 – Committee

For all three funds, recommendations made by the panel at Stage 2 are presented to a cross-party group of Councillors. These recommendations are then also taken to the Council's Committee for a final Committee decision at the next available meeting. Committee members are Councillors with special responsibilities over an area of the council's activities, such as, culture, neighbourhoods or transport. The Committee decides the Council's key policies.



Spikelsland, Pacita Abad, Life in the Margins (2020) Works courtesy The Pacita Abad Art Estate. © Lisa Whiting

## **Glossary**

### **Extra information and useful links**

#### **Accessible**

Arts and culture being ‘accessible to all’ means that people are not excluded, as an artist, creative practitioner, participant, or audience member, because of their protected characteristics (including disability, sex, and race) or socio-economic background.

#### **Aim**

Our aims describe the changes we want to achieve.

#### **Bristol City Council**

Bristol City Council is the local authority of Bristol, England. The council is a unitary authority, and is unusual in the United Kingdom in that its executive function is controlled by a directly elected mayor of Bristol. Bristol has 35 wards, electing a total of 70 councillors.

#### **Co-creation**

Co-creation means creating together. It is a co-operative process in which people with different experiences; skills and knowledge come together and work in non-hierarchical ways to address a common idea or issue.

#### **Community**

People living in the same place or having a particular characteristic, interest or experience in common.

#### **Community-led**

People from a community coming together to address local need and/or achieve common goals or activities.

#### **Culture**

We know that culture means many different things to different people. When we use the word culture we are referring to creative culture such as music, art, history, heritage, and events where Bristol’s diverse citizens can share, celebrate or learn.

#### **Deprivation**

Deprivation is the extent to which a person or a community lacks what they really need to have a good quality of life. Access to work, money, housing and services can affect a person or community’s level of deprivation.

#### **Diversity**

‘Diversity’ is defined broadly to include various elements of human difference. We want to support arts and culture that removes barriers and increases access for individuals and communities that have been historically marginalised or underrepresented.

This is particularly for people with protected characteristics as detailed in the Equalities Act 2010.

### **Equity**

The term 'equity' refers to fairness and justice and is distinguished from equality. Whereas equality means providing the same to all, equity means recognizing that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances.

### **Grantees**

A 'grantee' is a person or organisation that receives funding as a grant.

### **Grant seeker**

A person or organisation who applies for funding from the Cultural Investment Programme.

### **Inclusion**

The practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised, such as people with protected characteristics.

### **Not-for-profit organisation**

Organisations or businesses that are operated for a public or social benefit rather than to make a profit for the owners, directors or members.

### **Project specific grants**

This means funds received as a grant that are only to be used for a specific project or defined set of activities. This is also known as restricted funding.

### **Protected characteristics**

Protected characteristics as detailed in the Equalities Act 2010 are: Age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

At Bristol City Council we also consider socio-economic inequality to be a protected characteristic, as well as sources of inequality that are not specifically covered by the Equality Act such as people in care, refugees and migrants and people with caring responsibilities.

Find out more in: [Bristol City Council's Equality and Inclusion Policy & Strategic Framework..](#)

### **Priority areas**

Bristol continues to have deprivation 'hot spots' and Bristol City Council has identified 27 areas that experience multiple deprivations. These are priority areas for funding from the Cultural Investment Programme 2023-27 and are shown in red on the map on page 4 of [this document](#).

### **Objectives**

Our objectives describe how we are going to achieve our aims.

### **Social change**

Changes to a society's culture, institutions and behaviours.

### **Unrestricted funding**

‘Unrestricted funding’ describes a grant / funding that an organisation can use in any way that they believe is appropriate to help them achieve their mission or aims.

### **Vision**

Our vision describes the long-term change and impact that we want the Cultural Investment Programme 2023-27 to have.

## **Wider council strategies relating to the Cultural Investment Programme**

### **Corporate Strategy 2022 – 27**

This is the council’s main strategic document for the next five years. It informs everything the council does, how we plan for the future, and sets out our priorities and contributions to the One City Plan.

[Corporate Strategy 2022-27 \(bristol.gov.uk\)](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/corporate-strategy-2022-27)

### **One City Plan**

The One City Plan takes the long view for the city and looks forward to 2050. It sets out a shared vision and goals for Bristol which have been agreed with many different partners including education, health, environment and communities. <https://www.bristolonecity.com/about-the-one-city-plan/>

### **Bristol Cultural Strategy**

This strategy was written in 2017 and looks at the role that culture can play in Bristol. It recognises the valuable contribution culture already makes to the city but also the potential for wider engagement.

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/policies-plans-strategies/arts-and-culture>

## **Contact the Arts and Events team**

If you have any challenges accessing the Cultural Investment Programme Guidance Documents or completing the Application Forms, please contact: [cityartsfunds@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:cityartsfunds@bristol.gov.uk).

Alternatively, you might find an answer to your question [in our FAQs](#). We will update this regularly with any questions we receive so that information is accessible to all. All questions will have personal identifying information removed.