Being Human festival: 11–20 November 2021
Small Award application guidelines

Being Human festival 2021

Being Human festival returns in November 2021. Amidst continued uncertainty, we still aim to deliver a national celebration of the humanities that inspires people and shows the resilience, creativity and imagination in communities across the UK. To enable planning to begin, we are committing to a hybrid-delivery festival this November that combines the best of online engagement with safe in-person activities. Together we will build on the best elements of Being Human 2020 to offer a national festival of public engagement taking place both in-person and online.

Although digital delivery helped expand the festival's horizons, it will continue to champion its core principles: Being Human remains a place-based festival that emphasises interaction, working with communities outside academia and those less typically engaged with humanities culture (people who might not normally go to a public university event, or an exhibition in an art gallery, for example). Whether digital, or in-person (socially distanced), we will support innovative, participatory, and creative activities that foster genuine, two-way connections with people not usually engaged with academic research. As ever, events should be designed to facilitate mutual learning between researchers and publics.

Our festival theme in 2021 is ‘Renewal’, which can be used as broad inspiration for shaping events around research and will help promote connections within a very diverse programme. More on the theme can be found in the final section of this document.

We are especially interested in how humanities research might help us to ‘renew’ our understanding of what it means to be human in 2021, including our relationships with the places around us, how we work and play, how we understand identity and culture, and how we interact with the planet and nature.

Being Human festival is led by the School of Advanced Study at the University of London, in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the British Academy.
About Small Awards

Small Awards are designed to support ambitious, ‘best practice’ activities that would not run without financial support from the festival. These projects are usually led by individual researchers, unlike more institutionally led Hub Awards. Awards can be used to fund projects culminating in either a single event a small series of activities, or other interactive content that offer a very close fit with our ethos. Activities are typically built around a strong ‘hook’ - a simple but concrete idea that has potential for public appeal - and are ambitious and creative while still carefully thought through and achievable. Above all, Small Awards are intended to support excellent two-way public engagement with humanities research, reaching priority audiences, that would not take place without festival support.

Small Award funded projects can often incorporate elements of activity outside the festival dates, working directly with communities. For example, workshops or crowd-sourcing activities might run in the lead up to the festival, gathering material to feed into a festival performance, or further collaborative activity might happen after the festival. We are particularly keen to support this type of project, which integrate aspects of community collaboration and co-production and help embed and sustain civic engagement activities.

In 2021 we are especially keen to support projects that respond in innovative, creative ways to the challenges of planning public engagement in the era of Covid-19.

What support is available?

Funding is available to allow researchers at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and AHRC recognised Independent Research Organisations (IROs) to bid for support of up to £2,000 under this pathway. Grants are competitive as Being Human has only a limited amount of funding to distribute each year. Please note that funding is not available to independent researchers unless in collaboration with researchers at HEIs or IROs.

In addition to funding, recipients of Small Award grants will have access to the support and resources offered to all participants in the festival. This includes:

- a training “Masterclass” series run throughout the festival year for practical advice with designing, planning, promotion and delivery of your project;
- public engagement toolkits, resources and helpful advice from the festival team;
- guides to promoting your event that contain hints and tips about marketing and press;
- copies of Being Human print and digital materials geared towards promoting the national festival and access to other marketing materials (e.g. banners and badges) to promote your activity;
- templates you can use to produce your own marketing materials (posters, banners, digital and PowerPoint templates etc.);
- support from the central Being Human social media accounts.
You may also be invited to take part in centrally organised festival activities such as the festival launch.

**What does a Small Award project look like?**

Rather than a one-off event in November, the best Small Award initiatives take a project-type approach that combines different types of activities. For example, socially distanced workshops, postal packs or phone calls might take place in advance, feeding into a main activity during the festival. Projects might also extend post-festival, producing things like films, podcasts or online galleries. There’s no need to do just one thing, and some of our strongest projects have blended a few different types of activity to achieve different outputs and reach different audiences. This can be particularly important given Covid-19 planning contingencies.

Examples of activities funded under this pathway over the past five years have spanned numerous formats and approaches. Some successful formats have been interactive online performances, pop-up museums, as well as activities run via postal or door-to-door delivery to local communities (e.g. activity packs sent through the post). Topics have covered everything from investigating the sensory landscapes of the Black Country, to crowd-sourcing of musical memories of Merthyr Tydfil, to a postal pack series that created ‘The People’s Palace of Possibility’.

Whatever you choose, it is important to remember that we are looking for ‘public engagement with research’ projects, not simply cultural activities or academic seminars/lectures. This means that audiences, communities and participants should have opportunities to contribute their own experiences and knowledge as part of the project. They should also come away having learnt something clear and understandable about humanities research.

Public talks and panel discussions are not fundable by Being Human. These tend to only appear in our programme if they feature a public engagement aspect (e.g. an innovative format or element of performance) and generally come via our unfunded, ‘Open Call’ pathway.

We strongly advise that you look at our planning toolkits that give tips on how to create a successful public engagement activity, including advice on building hybrid, Covid-secure activities. We encourage applicants to be creative with their proposals while anchoring activities based around tried and tested formats.

**What formats are suitable?**

Some examples of suitable formats, which can work in person, online, or in hybrid formats, include (but are by no means limited to):

- performances (theatre, music, comedy, storytelling);
- food and drink (cookery lessons, ‘cook-a-longs’, themed meals, tastings);

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• screenings and ‘watch together’ (film screenings with introductions, listening parties, DJ sessions);
• walks and tours (walks, audio walks, treasure hunts, behind the scenes tours);
• ‘have a go’ events (learn a skill, try an instrument, make something);
• (virtual) museum lates or museum takeovers;
• activities coordinated by post or other ways of connecting with people at home;
• exhibitions and installations (outdoor art, public art, online exhibitions, crowd-sourced activity);
• other interactive online or hybrid activities;
• interactive digital content (podcasts, films, animations).

What costs can a Small Award cover?

Small Award funding is intended to support activities that would not happen without it, rather than upscaling already planned activity. It is intended to cover expenditure that cannot be easily absorbed into existing institutional budgets. For example, eligible costs include:

• payments to performers/musicians/artists who are not salaried members of staff;
• production costs (filming, audio, streaming, web design (if essential to the activity);
• props, costumes, and materials;
• production costs for things like exhibition panels, work packs, pamphlets;
• postage costs (e.g. for mailing packs to attendees);
• reasonable promotional costs that will help you to reach your intended participants/audiences (e.g. flyers, local paid advertising);
• venue hire or essential transport (e.g. hiring a coach for a bus tour);
• catering/consumables that are essential to the activity (e.g. for themed meals, tasting sessions);
• documentation costs (e.g. filming, photography, captioning, transcribing).

Being Human cannot make any contribution to:

• existing staff members’ costs, whether academic or professional staff;
• catering unless it is essential to the format of the event (i.e. we may support food costs for a historic meal, but would not support a wine reception after an event, or tea and coffee to go with it);
• supporting academic conferences and symposia, or any event that has been designed primarily for the benefit of academics, students, stakeholders or others already engaged with the world of research;
• international travel or accommodation costs.

What criteria are Small Award applications judged against?

All activities featured in the festival programme must:

• demonstrate aspects of humanities research in ways that are inspiring, accessible and relevant for non-specialist audiences;
• have direct involvement from a humanities researcher in delivering (not just planning) the event, to ensure that research expertise informs the activity that audiences encounter;
• be held during the festival dates (with the ability to extend before and beyond);
• be free to attend (all associated activities need to be free, not just those funded by Being Human). This includes free access to venues where events are being held, such as heritage sites or museums that normally charge an entrance fee.

In addition to the eligibility criteria for taking part in the festival, to apply for Small Award funding, activities must:

1. be led by a UK Higher Education Institution (HEI), an AHRC recognised Independent Research Organisation (IRO), or cultural organisation in partnership with an HEI or IRO;
2. have direct involvement from a humanities researcher in delivering the event (see our FAQs for our definition of a professional researcher);
3. be held off-campus wherever possible (excluding campus-based theatres etc.);
4. respond to the interests and needs of a clearly defined non-specialist audience;
5. engage with a carefully chosen, named cultural or community partner (for example a school, a charity, an arts organisation).

Are there any priorities for funding?

We seek innovative, exciting programming that has been designed with the needs of audiences firmly in mind. We are particularly keen to receive Small Award applications which demonstrate capacity to do one or more of the following things:

• explore innovative and realistic approaches to public engagement in the current challenging conditions;
• reach genuinely disengaged or under-served audiences (e.g. audiences in areas of high deprivation or low educational attainment, areas without a university or with a sharp ‘town/gown’ division). See The Office for Students’ map of youth participation areas;
• engage meaningfully with black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) audiences;
• engage meaningfully with families and younger audiences;
• give serious consideration to issues of accessibility in choice of venue/platform and format (including, importantly, accessibility for people with disabilities);
• are relevant to local communities (for example, place-based activity highlighting unexpected aspects of local history and/or contemporary culture, addressing topical debates with local communities);
• feature an element of co-production;
• have potential to make a small change happen locally and/or leave a legacy beyond the duration of the grant;
• respond in a topical way to our 2021 theme of ‘Renewal’.

We are also keen to see evidence of all funded activities considering diversity in the speakers and researchers represented at events within their programmes (e.g. in terms of gender, age, ethnic diversity).
What don’t we want?

You will significantly reduce your chance of being funded if proposed activities:

- have only a tenuous link to humanities research (see our FAQs for our definition);
- are unrepresentative, for example ‘about us without us’ activities that address issues without directly including perspectives from people impacted by them;
- feature non-diverse speaker line-ups such as ‘manels’;
- are not designed to appeal to a clearly defined non-specialist audience;
- make use of platforms, venues or formats that have not been carefully chosen, are inaccessible, or are unlikely to appeal to a public audience;
- may be unsuitable for a public festival context (i.e. highly sensitive or emotionally triggering topics);
- are not deemed by the review committee to be good value for money, or comprise standard activity that is being topped up with Being Human funding;
- are over-ambitious and thus at high risk of failure;
- are deemed to be unlikely to succeed in the context of ongoing restrictions/uncertainty around Covid-19.

Should I apply?

We only have a small amount of funding to give out, so awards are competitive. Before applying, it is worth exploring other possible funding avenues within your own institution which might enable your project to move forward. If funding is not necessarily needed, your activity might be better suited to our ‘Open Call’ pathway rather than Small Awards.

Please note that if an application for funding is made, and is unsuccessful, the festival team may ask whether it is possible for the activity to run in a less ambitious format on an unfunded basis as part of the ‘Open Call’ pathway.

Application process

The Small Award application form and activities grid is available on our website at www.beinghumanfestival.org/apply. Letters of support should be provided from any cultural and community partners named on your application. Applications should be made on the correct form and returned via email to: apply.beinghuman@sas.ac.uk.

- Tuesday 4 May (5pm) – Deadline for applications for funding
- By end June – Notification of outcome of applications

Further information about the festival and the level of support available when organising your activity can be found on the FAQs section of our website. If you have any questions please email beinghuman@sas.ac.uk.
2021 festival theme: ‘Renewal’

The past twelve months have brought enormous challenges across the globe. The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, in particular, have been world-changing and are far from over. Whilst we continue to live through a moment of unprecedented challenge, strain, and change, however, one thing is clear for many people: whatever follows on from Covid-19 must, if nothing else, be an opportunity to do things differently. Whether in relation to our political systems, the cities in which we live, the ways in which we work and spend our leisure time, our relationship with the planet and the natural world, the current historical moment offers an opportunity to rethink, to do things differently, to renew.

In 2020 Being Human festival imagined ‘New Worlds’. In 2021 it is time to renew our sense of Being Human.

This year’s Being Human festival will focus on ‘renewal’. Across the humanities we are interested in new ideas, new generations, new ways of doing things, new responses. This year sees a new president take office in America; Britain and Europe embark on a new relationship; and the COP26 Climate Conference in Glasgow will focus the attention of the world on finding new solutions to the climate emergency and ways to address it, from renewable energy to a renewed social contract between humans and the world that they inhabit. Cityscapes are being renewed, with monuments and public history being interrogated and interpreted in new ways. Different ways of living are being considered, different identities are being explored, and the pandemic has pushed people all over the world to invent new ways of being social, being professional, and being human.

Of course, ‘renewals’ don’t have to be only contemporary. Renewals can also revisit past times of change or disruption, discoveries that altered our world, or renew our ideas about the past. They can be about breakthroughs in art, literature, film. They can be moments in which national cultures and identities were reconsidered, reimagined, realigned.

Across all the disciplines of the humanities, we are keen to support projects that help us think of ways of renewing approaches to:

- Health
- Faith
- Work & play
- Identity
- Climate

These are just starting points to get you thinking though. Surprise us! The main thing that we are looking for are projects that help us to demonstrate why the humanities are relevant to people’s lives and how they help us understand what it means to be human.