



UK Research
and Innovation



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

Towards a National Collection: Opening UK Heritage to the World COVID-19 Urgency Call.

Introduction

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) welcomes applications to an Urgency Call under *Towards a National Collection* for projects that respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

With our collections and heritage sites beyond the physical reach of the public thanks to lockdown, digital access to our cultural assets has never been more important.

AHRC/*Towards a National Collection* welcome applications for research on digital capacity and digital engagement with cultural assets during the COVID-19 lockdown, during the period of emergence from lockdown, and on lessons to be learned from these for future patterns of cultural engagement.

Applications should be made using the form listed on the UKRI Coronavirus hub, following the [Call Guidance](#) there. The application form and accompanying documents must be sent as a single PDF to CV19researchinnovation@ukri.org. Proposals will be accepted from anyone [eligible to apply for AHRC funding](#). The call is open with no deadline but NB **early applications are encouraged**.

Please note – museums, galleries, libraries, collections and other cultural heritage organisations that do not have Independent Research Organisation (IRO) or Higher Education Institution (HEI) status can be funded as a ‘Collaborating Organisation’ in proposals that are led by a HEI or IRO.

Projects that involve collaborations between IROs and HEIs are welcomed, and projects that involve collaboration with local, regional or national collection organisations, third sector organisations and/or stakeholders (e.g. user groups, schools, Subject Specialist Networks, related initiatives etc) are also encouraged.

Such partners should be detailed in the application form. Where it is necessary to charge for a substantial amount of that partner’s involvement in the project as part of the full economic cost (fEC), then these partners may be included as ‘Collaborating Organisations’ (please detail their involvement in sections 4.1 and 4.2 of the form) and their costs can be included in proposals. These costs must be fully justified as to why the expertise or service provided is needed for the successful delivery of the project.

Towards a National Collection

Towards a National Collection is a £19m research investment in collaboration with the UK’s world-leading cultural and heritage sector, funded from UKRI’s Strategic Priorities Fund. The programme addresses the lack of coordination between different online collections and catalogues, which constitutes a major barrier to research and public access. Forging new and deeper partnerships between Independent Research Organisations (IROs) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and using the catalytic potential of new technology, the programme will begin to dissolve barriers between different collections, opening them up to new cross-disciplinary and cross-collection lines of research,

and at the same time diversifying both their visitor base and the ways in which the public can access them. The aim is to begin to realise the full, combined potential of the collections not only for research but for the heritage economy and the wider social good, and to take the first important steps towards creating a virtual 'national collection'.

What we're looking for in this urgency call.

While contributing to the long-term aims of *Towards a National Collection*, proposals must demonstrate their appropriateness to this urgency call, by e.g. demonstrating the need to conduct the research in the very near future.

Topics on which proposals would be welcome include, but are not restricted to:

- Time-sensitive data capture on how organisations are making collections digitally available, including through packaged content, during the lockdown.
- Capacity assessment on what organisations can currently offer digitally, where gaps are and where future funding or support would be needed to bring culture online, contributing towards building a virtual 'national collection'.
- Data capture and audience analysis on how people are engaging with culture during the lockdown. Proposals here might focus on trends, how the lockdown has changed people's behaviour, whether online content has drawn new audiences, and on what bringing culture online can and cannot achieve.
- Audience preferences in terms of digital access to culture, that could inform the long-term development of a virtual 'national collection'.
- Long-term impact of lockdown on digital access to culture, to inform digital strategies (including digital infrastructure strategies, and future collecting and digitisation) once the lockdown is over.
- Comparative assessment or evaluation of international approaches to digital culture during the lockdown, and how these might inform the future development of a 'national collection'.

Funding and Duration

Proposals are welcomed for projects of **up to 18 months duration, though proposals of a much shorter duration are also welcome**. While there is no formal upper or lower limit on funding, **£100,000 for a project lasting 6 months is an indicative guideline figure**.

Questions

Any queries relating to this call should be sent to AHRCcv19@ahrc.ukri.org.