

Film Exhibition Fund

Funding Guidelines - February 2026

Film
Hub
North



Introduction

1. INTRODUCTION

The BFI Film Audience Network (FAN) reaches out across the UK to give people the best opportunity to watch and enjoy a diversity of films, regardless of geography or circumstance.

As part of FAN, Film Hub North has been awarded funding from the BFI National Lottery to reach a broad range of audiences with independent UK and international film and to deliver against the priorities set out in the [BFI's Screen Culture 2033 strategy](#).

The Film Exhibition Fund will help the independent film exhibition sector by supporting screening and audience development activity that meets the objectives of this strategy and in particular aims to reach underrepresented audiences across the North of England.



The Fund

2. THE FILM EXHIBITION FUND

The fund will support activity taking place from **April 2026 – March 2029**.

Organisations can request support of **up to £10,000 per project, per year**. Subject to available resources, we may support activity that runs over multiple years where this is in the best interests of the project and where it strongly addresses our outcomes.

- **The fund is open to the entire range of organisations in Film Hub North's exhibitor network.** This includes full-time cinema venues, mixed arts centres, community cinemas and film societies, film festivals and touring programmes.
- **You must be a Film Hub North Member to access Film Hub North funding opportunities. Membership is free.**
To become a member, [fill in our application form](#).

- **We particularly welcome and encourage proposals from organisations who are currently underrepresented in the exhibition sector.** These include organisations led by working class people, Black and global majority people, disabled people, and LGBTQIA+ people.
- **We are also looking to support ambitious screening programmes that are led by and for communities that prioritise and represent lived experiences, broadening representation on screen and where relevant, in the exhibition workforce.** If you have such a project in mind, you are welcome to get in touch with us for further guidance and advice.

The Fund

The primary focus of the Film Exhibition Fund is in-person events that bring audiences together for a communal viewing experience.

Projects which support audiences to experience broader screen activity such as television, digital media and extended reality (VR, AR) will be considered where this represents a valuable opportunity for audience development, in line with our priorities. Online activities are not a priority but will be considered where they add value and create meaningful engagement (for example, by removing barriers and improving access for disabled audiences).

We are unable to support core programmes; activity needs to target specific audience groups and show how our funds are necessary to reach those identified audiences.

Your activity should respond to at least one of the FAN and BFI Screen Culture 2033 outcomes set out below. The more funding you seek, the more outcomes we would expect you to address.

Additional advice and support may be available to projects with strong inclusion aims, that specifically address:

- Economic barriers and/or engagement of working-class audiences
- Children, families and young audiences aged 25 and under
- Black and Global Majority Audience
- Access for Deaf and Disabled Audiences.

Proposals that focus on one or more of these areas may be shared with specialist freelancers, who may be in touch to discuss what, if any, support might be of use.

Please note the Film Exhibition Fund is in high demand, and we expect to be oversubscribed. We advise members to consider carefully how their proposal meets this guidance, but we acknowledge that due to the competitive and limited nature of the fund, even proposals that meet the criteria may not be supported.

We are committed to making our funding accessible to all. If you have access requirements that mean you need assistance when applying for funds, you can request help through the [BFI Access Support Scheme](#).

Key Facts

KEY FACTS

Maximum amount per project: up to £10,000 per year*

Total funds available (1 April 2026 – 30 March 2029): £300,000

All activities need to have been completed and reported on by 31 March 2027 (for single-year awards) and 15 March 2029 (for multi-year awards). All activity should take place no sooner than 8 weeks after the call deadline. Activity that runs over multiple years will be considered.

*Please note: FEF awards vary based on scale of activity, with smaller FEF around £4,000-£5,000 and larger FEF around £7,000- £8,000.

Round 1

Call opens: Monday 16 February 2026

Call closes: Friday 20 March 2026 (noon)

Decisions notified w/c 30 March 2026

Round 2

Call opens: Monday 18 May 2026

Call closes: Friday 19 June 2026 (noon)

Decisions notified w/c 29 June 2026

Round 3

Call opens: Monday 21 September 2026

Call closes: Friday 23 October 2026 (noon)

Decisions notified w/c 2 November 2026



Priorities

3. BFI FAN PRIORITY OUTCOMES

Film Hub North is focused on increasing access to a diverse screen culture and growing audiences that are representative of the UK population. Audience development activity supported by the Film Exhibition Fund must deliver against at least one of the following BFI and FAN priority outcomes:

Engaging with children and young people

Early cinema visits are important for the health of the exhibition sector. We want to support organisations in engaging with children, families and young people to introduce them to their work, stimulate their appetite for a more diverse screen culture, and nurture future generations of cinemagoers. Activity focused on young audiences may target a segment of the audience or the group as a whole.

You can check out [BFI FAN's guide to working with Young People](#) and [BFI FAN's Young Audiences resource](#).

Accessing a wider choice of film

We want to give everyone the chance to see the greatest possible choice of film and moving image on the big screen, be it classic films, international cinema, documentaries, screen heritage, new works by emerging

talents, TV or immersive and interactive content. We want to support ambitious and inclusive programmes that reflect a diversity of lived experiences and perspectives, to broaden audiences' horizons and allow them to develop personal and meaningful relations with film.

Tackling social, economic and geographic barriers

We want to improve access to screen culture for people across the North of England by lowering barriers such as prohibitive costs, lack of cultural provision, lack of accessible screenings, and threshold anxiety. We are particularly keen to support projects that engage working class, disabled, LGBTQAI+, Black, South Asian, South East and East Asian audiences and others of the global majority.

We recommend you consult the [BFI FAN website](#) and the [Inclusive Cinema website](#) for resources, case studies, how-to guides, training opportunities, and data around diverse audience groups.

We are also interested in projects that engage with heritage collections in creative, relevant ways through screenings of work that reflect the diversity of the UK and the North of England in particular. We expect organisations to have relevant partnerships with screen heritage collections in place. A best practice programming guide for archive screenings is available [here](#).

Priorities

All supported activity will need to address the following cross cutting principles:

Equity, diversity and inclusion

FAN champions everyday inclusion. We would like to see how your project will meaningfully contribute to diversifying audiences for the widest range of cinema and how it will broaden the range of stories represented on screen. Where applicable we also seek opportunities to tackle under representation in the exhibition workforce.

Environmental Sustainability

We are committed to minimising the negative environmental impact of the work we support and ask all recipients to contribute to this aim. In your proposal you will be asked to set out the steps you are taking both to minimise the environmental impact of your activity and to improve audience awareness of the climate and biodiversity crises.

The BFI and [Julie's Bicycle](#) have a number of [recommended resources](#) that may be useful when planning around sustainability, including the [BFI Sustainable Screen Hub](#) and the [Creative Climate Tool](#).



Diversity Standards

4. BFI DIVERSITY STANDARDS

In line with the [BFI Diversity Standards](#), **we encourage activity aimed at, and/or co-produced with, underrepresented groups**. The Standards focus on underrepresentation in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, sex, sexual orientation, and religion and belief ([Equality Act 2010](#)), as well as socio-economic background, caring responsibilities and geographical location.

We are particularly committed to ensuring disproportionately affected audiences, such as disabled people, those with longstanding physical or mental conditions, and those identifying as D/deaf or neurodiverse, can experience independent film and be welcomed into cinema spaces.

All Film Exhibition Fund proposals will be asked to show how the intended activity promotes inclusivity among audiences, on screen and, where applicable, in the workforce.

We ask all proposals to positively respond to the Standards. Priority will be given to proposals that do this in a clear and convincing way. You should particularly focus on **Standard D** – how your proposal provides inclusive audience development opportunities, and **Standard E** – showing conscious commitment and tangible actions to improve overall accessibility.

If your project requires additional accessibility requirements, these are eligible to be added to your budget.

Responding to the Standards

We have provided a brief guide of the sort of information you should provide in relation to each Standard below. If you need support to interpret the Standards further, please [get in touch](#).

Diversity Standards

Standard A - On screen representation

This standard relates to how the programme will address underrepresentation. Where the project is a programme or a suite of films/broader screen content (e.g. a festival or venue), the applicant will need to provide a range of different examples that reflect the diversity and breadth of how the selected films/broader screen content address underrepresented groups differently. If your programme is not yet confirmed, you should provide examples from your latest project alongside as much detail as you can about the future programme.

Standard B - Project team

This standard relates to how the project will address underrepresentation throughout its team, from Creative Leadership and Senior Management to secondary and junior roles across the board, including the volunteers and advisory groups who feed into programme decisions.

Standard C - Industry access

This standard relates to how the project addresses underrepresentation with certain roles, as well as how opportunities are presented and followed through with paid employment, career advancement and other opportunities.

Standard D - Audience development

This standard relates to the promotional and marketing strategies that enable the project to reach underrepresented audiences. It is important to detail strategies, access plans and interventions that go beyond your current standard provision. A real commitment to making a project accessible to as wide an audience as possible should be demonstrated.

Standard E - Accessibility

This standard emphasises the importance of taking intentional and proactive action to increase accessibility across every aspect of the project's life cycle. Going beyond Standard D, this standard requires evidence of conscious commitment and tangible actions to improve overall accessibility. Examples include, but are not limited to: project team recruitment and onboarding processes; fully accessible sites/venues; accessible promotional marketing materials; accessible events; awareness raising.

More resources are available on Film Hub North and BFI FAN websites, including [BFI FAN's Access Directory](#) and the quarterly [Access Cinema Bulletin](#). You can also refer to the [Women in Film and Television UK Disability and Accessibility resource page](#).

Other considerations

5. OTHER AREAS OF CONSIDERATION

Safeguarding

Projects involving children, young people or vulnerable adults should have appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies in place. Where relevant, you will be asked to confirm this in your proposal.

For more information on safeguarding, read the [Guide to Safeguarding for Film Exhibitors](#) published by Film Hub London.

Prevention of Bullying, Harassment and Racism

Bullying, harassment and racism have no place in our industry and we expect all organisations we fund to share our commitment to this principle.

The BFI and BAFTA have developed a set of principles and zero-tolerance guidance in consultation with organisations, unions and industry bodies across the film, television and games industry in response to urgent and systemic issues. These documents can be found in the [BFI's Bullying, Harassment and Racism Prevention Hub](#).

We ask all applicants to engage with these principles by, as a minimum, reading these documents and sharing them within your organisation.

BFI Preferred Terms Guidelines

Working alongside advisory groups, consultants, colleagues and collectives with lived experience, the [BFI has compiled a set of preferred terms surrounding disability, race and LGBTQIA+](#).

Fund details

6. FUND DETAILS

Am I eligible?

You must be a Film Hub North Member in order to access Film Hub North funding opportunities. The Hub's Lead Organisations (HOME and Showroom Cinema) are not eligible to apply to the Film Exhibition Fund even if they meet the fund criteria.

Eligible expenses and submission instructions are outlined below. If you think your project would work best over multiple years and have a clear reason for this, please get in touch to discuss prior to submitting your proposal.

If your project requires less financial support (up to £3,000), you should consider applying to our [Film Exhibition Fund - Pitch Pot scheme](#).

Please note that we are unable to fund 100% of project costs. While we do not have a set percentage requirement for match funding, we expect to see box office income and other support whether in cash, volunteer time or other in-kind contributions, included in the budget.



Use of support

7. USE OF SUPPORT

Eligible expenses

Each project will have its individual needs however, broadly speaking, the Film Exhibition Fund can support the following costs:

- Film rights and print transport
- Project-specific staffing costs e.g. curation, project management, audience development
- Venue hire and project-specific technical costs
- Marketing costs*
- Event costs for enhanced screenings e.g. guest speakers, live scores
- Volunteer and evaluation expenses**
- Accessibility costs e.g. creating accessible supporting materials, subtitling fees

- Outreach and community inclusion costs
- Audience development expenses e.g. young programmers workshops
- Rights clearances and curation fees for screen heritage materials
- Costs related to online activity e.g. web platforms, hosting fees.

This list is not exhaustive and other items may be considered eligible.

*You can also consult BFI FAN's [simple guide to Digital Marketing](#) and [simple guide to Augmenting Film Screenings](#) for tips and inspiration.

**The National Council for Voluntary Organisations website has useful resources and guidance to help you manage volunteers and the process of volunteering [here](#).

Use of support

Ineligible expenses

All proposed expenditure should go towards the activity detailed in your proposal. Beyond this, there are some things we can't support. These include:

- Filmmaking costs, support for filmmakers to develop, screen or distribute their work, or for programmes that primarily engage filmmaker audiences
- Capital costs including building repairs, purchasing equipment or additional health and safety measures required due to Covid-19
- General organisational running costs not specifically related to the proposed activity
- Activity that should be covered by statutory education, including events taking place on school grounds/in school hours
- Events not primarily focused on film exhibition or screen culture
- Fundraising events

- Distribution of your own films/works
- Activity covered by existing funding arrangements
- Programmes that duplicate provision in the same area
- Events taking place in a venue not open to the public e.g. members-only venues
- Events taking place outside of the North (see the BFI's definition).

This list is not exhaustive and other items may be considered ineligible.

Submissions

8. SUBMITTING YOUR PROPOSAL

To seek support for your project, please complete and submit the documents listed below.

The Proposal Form is for you to tell us more about your project, its target audiences, how your activity meets the funding objectives, and the motivations behind your activity; why it's important and what it will provide to audiences locally.

More information on how your proposal will be assessed is provided below.

Please note that your proposal may be reviewed by an external assessor unfamiliar with your organisation or its work, so you should aim to describe your plans and relevant experience clearly and concisely.

[Proposal form \[.docx\]](#)

[Budget template \[.xlsx\]](#)

If you have access requirements that mean you need assistance when applying for funds, you can request help through the [BFI Access Support Scheme](#).

Completed documents should be submitted via email to our Finance and Data Officer, Andrew Beadling: info@filmhubnorth.org.uk.

If you have any questions about the fund or the process or would like to discuss submitting a proposal in a different way, please get in touch.

Feedback

9. FEEDBACK

Assessment criteria

Your proposal will be assessed by the Film Hub North team. External assessors may also be brought in to review your proposal. Please note that we expect this fund to be oversubscribed and may not be able to support your activity even if it meets the criteria. When making funding decisions, we need to balance a range of factors such as project type/size, geographic spread, diversity of organisations and diversity of targeted audiences.

Please note: when appropriate, previous project performance may be considered when making a funding decision on proposals by organisations who have already received Film Hub North funding.

The panel will consider the following assessment criteria:

Organisational capacity

Are the proposed activities and timescales achievable? What are the long-term plans to reach audiences? Does the organisation have the required staff, partnerships and venue buy-in to deliver the project? Is there evidence of successful previous project delivery? Does the proposed programme demonstrate curatorial care and knowledge?

Fund objectives

Which of the fund outcomes as set out in this document does this project address and how effectively? Does the activity respond to any of the fund's other key focus areas? Are all eligibility criteria met? Is there a proactive response to environmental issues?

Audiences

Are projected admissions realistic? Is there a clear need for the activity - does it provide audiences with access to films otherwise unavailable locally? Is this project specifically targeted at underrepresented and/or underserved audiences? Does it actively contribute to reducing barriers to audience engagement?

Marketing and Evaluation

Who are the target audiences and how will they be reached? Have you connected with relevant community groups and leaders/identified postcode areas to target/best communication platforms to use? Does the applicant have experience of reaching audiences in this way? What does success look like and what will the organisation learn from the project?

Assessment

BFI Diversity Standards

Does the proposal respond meaningfully to the BFI Diversity Standards? Will activity address underrepresentation among audiences, on screen or, if appropriate, in the workforce? For larger requests we would expect a more detailed response to this area.

Budget

Have all costs been considered and are they reasonable/eligible? Does the budget balance? Does the project represent value for money? Have details of income been provided? Have access costs been included? Have appropriate staffing costs been included?

Legacy

Will the proposed project serve to develop audiences and programmes beyond the life of the funding?

Proposals will be scored using the [Film Exhibition Fund Assessment Form](#). We strongly encourage you to refer to this form when writing your proposal to ensure that you're providing all the information the assessment panel will be looking for.

Successful proposals

If your proposal is successful, the assessment panel may discuss amendments and wish to see a revised plan before confirming funding. Project timelines will need to accommodate this process.

If there are no recommendations or amendments to be made, you will be sent an email approving your funding.

Prior to contracting, Film Hub North may undertake an ID check on the lead applicant as part of our due diligence processes.

You will then be sent a contract setting out the terms and conditions attached to the funding. These will cover payment information, crediting guidelines, audience surveying, and monitoring and reporting requirements.

Please note that final confirmation of support will be subject to the availability of Lottery Funding.

Feedback

Unsuccessful proposals

If your proposal is unsuccessful, you will be contacted by email and offered feedback.

Please note you will not be able to resubmit a declined proposal to the Film Exhibition Fund in the 2026-27 financial year.

You may seek funding for a new and different proposal in 2026-27 but you should contact the Film Hub North team in advance to discuss this. You may also submit proposals to other Hub opportunities including other open funds and bursaries.

Please note that these guidelines are subject to change. Film Hub North reserves the right to review and alter its policies, procedures and assessment criteria.

The Film Hub North team is committed to supporting our membership and we strive to offer a high standard of service, including through our communications. If you have any questions about these guidelines or our work more generally, please get in touch on info@filmhubnorth.org.uk.

For more information on how to feedback formally, please consult our [Feedback and Complaints Policy](#).



Film Hub North is a sector development organisation supporting film culture in the North of England. The Hub works with a range of organisations and individuals to help great films get made, screened and seen in the region. The Hub is supported by, and proud to award, National Lottery funding as part of the BFI Film Audience Network and BFI NETWORK.

E: info@filmhubnorth.org.uk

W: filmhubnorth.org.uk

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Supported by National Lottery funding, the BFI Film Audience Network (FAN) is central to the BFI's aim to ensure the greatest choice of film is available for everyone. Established in 2012 to build wider and more diverse UK cinema audiences for British and international film, FAN is a unique, UK-wide collaboration made up of eight Hubs managed by leading film organisations. FAN also supports talent development with BFI NETWORK Talent Executives in each of the English Hubs, with a mission to discover and support talented writers, directors and producers at the start of their careers.

Images: FACT Cinema in the City; Imagine Futures Cinema; Penistone Film Festival (Gary Sidebotham); The Bay International Film Festival (Anna Henderson); Bolton Film Festival