# Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund

**Budgeting FAQs**

November 2016

This Frequently Asked Questions document is to help you think about what you should budget for when making an application to the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund, and to clarify what you can’t apply for. Please also see the ‘Guidance for applicants’ document for the round of the fund to which you are applying with its full list of exclusions. If you have any further questions, please get in touch with the Museums Association.

### What activity will the grant pay for?

A whole range of activity is eligible within the fund from co-curation and engagement to conservation, travel and digitisation. However, we find that the majority of expenditure goes on people – for example a project officer or specialist consultancy support.

**What do you mean when you say you won’t fund capital expenditure?**

One of the things we won’t fund is expenditure on capital and equipment costs. This means physical assets like computer equipment, storage racks or exhibition display cases. Look out for trusts which might make small grants for capital items, or consider whether you can find resource from other budgets. We make an exception in the case of small items for conservation, (eg acid-free archive boxes), small amounts of signage, banners and pop-ups etc. If in doubt contact us for further guidance.

**What costs should I consider?**

The experience of grantees so far confirms how vitally important it is to plan projects early. This helps avoid problems, and maximises impact and sustainability. We actively encourage you to think about a planning and set-up stage within your project, and the costs of that. For example, at the beginning you may not yet have your project staff in place. It may help for you to budget for a freelancer to backfill your time for e.g. a day a week for the first three months to enable you to get things set up before they arrive. Or perhaps you need to factor in a fact-finding mission to that museum on the other side of the country which has an excellent track record in the type of work you want to do. Do remember, however, that the Fund will not fund costs you have already incurred before funding is granted.

Successful applicants will be required to attend a one-off one-day induction and planning event in the first 3-6 months of their grant, and also to attend one-day Collections Network events around the UK at least twice a year for as long as their project runs. They should reserve resources to allow 1-2 people to attend those events. These costs can be put into the project budget or you may use other sources.

**Will you fund core costs / overheads?**

The Esmee Fairbairn Collections Fund is for “time-limited work on collections which has clear social benefit, outside the scope of an organisation’s core resources”. We will therefore not fund you to deliver core activities, or make grants which would in effect substitute for the work you are already doing.

However, we recognise that in the current tight climate for museums and other organisations, especially smaller and civic museums, taking on a new project does have cost implications; and doing it without the right resources can weaken the organisation and the project. You can therefore ask for moderate core costs likely to be incurred by the organisation in delivering the new work. We prefer you to justify this with reference to actual costs – e.g. line management of a new staff member, other specific contributions from existing staff towards project outcomes, office costs, etc – rather than just an overhead percentage. You can also recruit support staff to enable a permanent member of staff to participate in a project (i.e. backfill).

### How should I lay out my budget in the initial application form?

Please tell us what resources you need to do the project. This should be broken down to key headings of expenditure, such as salaries, travel, engagement expenses, specialist fees etc, followed by the sum total of what you are requesting from the Fund. You should be able to do this in 5-10 lines of expenditure maximum. It is helpful to add notes for any items which might seem large and/or need particular justification. Broad estimates are fine at this stage: exact costs only need to be calculated at the full application stage.

If you are providing match funding or the project is significantly larger than the grant you are requesting, also use this space to briefly tell us about other costs and income (confirmed or unconfirmed).

**Do I need to provide match funding?**

The Fund does not require you to provide match funding. What we want to see is what the full scale of the project is, and how realistic the resources are that you are putting into the project. So do tell us about any match funding or other funding you are putting in or seeking (confirmed or unconfirmed), including any resource your own organisation or partners are providing to the project outside the grant requested, such as the time of existing staff provided to the project. Only tell us about match which has a specific financial value – there is no need to tell us the value of in-kind contributions such as volunteering.

**What about the Fund acting as match funding for a bigger project?**

Applicants sometimes come to the Collections Fund when they are preparing for a larger project, perhaps a major redevelopment. In these cases, applicants should take care to frame the application in terms of the criteria specific to the Collections Fund to ensure the project is a good fit. One way of doing this is to describe the benefits of the project as a standalone piece of work, as well as how it can fit into wider plans.

Since the Collections Fund can support work at an early stage of development, we often find that work we support can later lever in additional funds. While this is a great outcome, we understand that this cannot usually be guaranteed and are happy to fund work that may be more risky, but has the potential to become a foundation for significant changes at the museum.

**How much should I apply for?**

We are keen to support ambitious projects that are developmental for the people and organisations involved, and we are willing to award grants across the £20,000-£120,000 range offered. Given the level of competition for funds, it is important to be interesting as well as good value in order to stand out – modest applications risk being lost in the crowd. Generally, the advice we give is: show value, but apply for the amount you need to create an excellent project. You have a better chance of funding than if you propose an average but lower-cost project.

**Can I apply for follow on funding?**

The level of competition also means that projects are not usually awarded follow-on funding. We prefer for applicants to put together feasible budgets for the whole of their projects when they apply for a grant. If you do come back to the fund for support to continue a project, it should be for new work rather than work not completed within the scope of the first application.