

Covid Recovery Programme for Heritage Organisations (Northern Ireland)

Department for Communities funding will support heritage organisations in Northern Ireland as they continue to confront the financial impact of the pandemic.

Important

This programme is now closed to new applications. [Explore our available funding.](#)

Guidance updates

- **21 January 2022:** guidance was updated to show that the funding programme had closed.
- **19 January 2022:** Information about the Department of Finance Omicron Hospitality Payment Scheme was added in the Alternative Funding section of the guidance.

Introduction

The aim of the Covid Recovery Programme for Heritage Organisations is to reduce or remove operating deficits in eligible organisations which have arisen in the 2021/22 financial year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department for Communities has appointed the Heritage Fund to deliver this programme. We will invite eligible applications from organisations that have been negatively affected by the pandemic in the financial year 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, and that can demonstrate an operating deficit during that period which is attributable in full or in part to COVID-19.

The Executive and the Minister for Communities, Deirdre Hargey MLA, have provided this Covid recovery funding for heritage organisations and a range of other not-for-profit organisations.

Available funding

The maximum amount of funding available to an eligible organisation under this programme is £50,000.

Exceptionally, a greater amount of funding may be available to eligible organisations that can demonstrate that the **deficit attributable to COVID-19** in the financial year is greater than £50,000 and that the organisation requires funding in excess of that sum to stabilise financially. Organisations seeking an amount in excess of £50,000 must contact The Heritage Fund before making an application.

Key dates

- open for applications between 17 December 2021 and noon on 21 January 2022
- open to enquiries for grants of over £50,000 until noon on 5 January 2022
- decisions will be announced by 31 March 2022
- funds operating deficits for the financial period from 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022
- completion reports must be submitted by 30 June 2022

Support webinar and FAQs

An applicant support webinar took place on Tuesday 21 December. [FAQs from the webinar are now available to download from our supporting documents page.](#)

Please note

We have developed this funding programme quickly in order to respond to the immediate needs of the heritage sector.

We are not offering one-to-one pre-application advice, so please make sure you read the guidance carefully and check that you are eligible to apply.

Application portal

[When you are ready, apply on our application portal](#)

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Overview

This fund is for heritage organisations operating in Northern Ireland

Heritage can mean different things to different people. It can be anything from the past that you value and want to pass on to future generations.

As a guide, this could include:

- people's memories and experiences (often recorded as 'oral history')
- cultural traditions (for example, stories, festivals, crafts, music and dance)
- community archaeology
- historic buildings, monuments and environments
- designed landscapes, such as parks and gardens
- collections of objects, books or documents in libraries or archives
- histories of people and communities or places and events
- the heritage of languages and dialects
- places and objects linked to our industrial, maritime and transport history.

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Who can apply?

We are accepting applications from heritage organisations operating in Northern Ireland.

It isn't possible to list every type of organisation that makes up our broad and varied heritage sector. If you don't see your organisation in the list below, we still encourage you to make an application.

Organisations must be:

- Not for profit organisations that manage heritage sites, venues, collections or attractions.
- OR not for profit organisations that provide significant support to the heritage sector.
- If your organisation is based in England, Scotland, Wales or the Republic of Ireland and you manage heritage in Northern Ireland, you are eligible to apply provided that you are a not for profit organisation and able to provide separate financial information relating solely to heritage activity in Northern Ireland.

If you manage more than one heritage site, please submit **one** application for your organisation as a whole. We ask you to do this so you can demonstrate the financial risk to your organisation and to ensure that your business planning needs are considered in the round.

Organisations who received funding during the last round of emergency grants from the Department of Communities but have not yet submitted a completion report are still eligible to apply for this fund. However, these applicants will not be given priority for support until they have met all their contractual requirements under any previous emergency grant.

Under this fund we are not accepting applications from:

- organisations that manage heritage that is not in Northern Ireland

- organisations that were not operating sustainably before March 2020
- organisations whose primary purpose is sport, culture, languages, arts, charities or social enterprise. These organisations should apply to the equivalent Covid Recovery Programme for Organisations from the relevant delivery partner (detailed in the Alternative Funding section of this guidance)
- private owners of heritage sites, venues or attractions
- for profit businesses. This includes conservators, contractors, specialists, suppliers and cooperatives
- universities and other public sector bodies that manage heritage sites, venues or attractions
- local authorities

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What can you apply for?

Calculation of grant amount

The amount of grant that can be requested will be determined as the projected deficit of the eligible organisation in the financial year 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, but only to the extent to which that deficit is attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The [financial template](#) must be used to calculate this figure.

Calculation of the projected deficit will require applicants to make projections of future income and expenditure in the period up to 31 March 2022. This can be a challenging process, particularly in times of uncertainty such as the present. However, applicant organisations, their Directors, Trustees and managers must use their best endeavours when completing the application to make realistic projections over the rest of the financial year based on the financial history and performance of the organisation.

In making their projections of future income and expenditure, applicants must assume that the relevant COVID-19 related restrictions in force on the day of application remain in force until 31 March 2022.

Partnership funding

There is no partnership funding requirement for this fund.

Treatment of reserves

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland defines reserves as the unspent resources or income of an organisation. These may or may not be governed by an explicit reserves policy.

The Department for Communities recognises that it is prudent for organisations to build up and maintain a level of reserves appropriate to the circumstances of the organisation. The Department's

policy is to recognise and encourage good governance such as the creation of appropriate reserves. For that reason, the cost of replenishing reserves run down to fund a COVID-19 related deficit will be eligible for support under this programme **up to the level equivalent to six months turnover** for the organisation or the organisation's reserves held at 1 April 2021, **whichever is less**.

This means that the maximum grant available to your organisation will normally be limited to the amount, which would restore six months of reserves. It also normally means that if your organisation has projected reserves at 31 March 2022 in excess of six months turnover you should not expect to receive a payment under this programme.

If you believe that your organisation has a valid need for holding reserves greater than six months turnover, you must include the reason for this need in your funding application.

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How to apply

Complete the [Eligibility Questionnaire](#) to ensure that you are eligible for the Covid Recovery Programme for Heritage Organisations. The Questionnaire will also help you to determine which partner organisation you should apply to.

Please note: the Heritage Fund uses the same forms across a variety of our programmes. Some questions need to be answered differently for the COVID-19 Recovery Programme for Heritage Organisations, so you must carefully read the relevant application help notes to understand what information is required where. Do not use the help icons embedded in the online form.

We have designed the application process to be as straightforward as possible and we are requesting only the information we need.

Webinar

We held a guidance webinar on 21 December 2021. [FAQs from the webinar are now available to download from our supporting documents page.](#)

Grants up to £50,000

If the [Eligibility Questionnaire](#) shows that you are an eligible organisation, and that your primary focus is Heritage, you may proceed with your application.

We are not offering one-to-one pre-application advice for this programme, so make sure you read the guidance carefully and check that you are eligible to apply. It should provide all the information you need to know to make an application.

Please also refer to the [Application Help Notes](#).

Grants over £50,000: Exceptional Circumstances

Only exceptionally should the value of an award under the programme exceed £50,000. In such circumstances, the onus is on the applicant to demonstrate how the organisation meets one or more of the criteria under which a higher award will be considered:

1. That it is in financial difficulty, with a risk of (a) closure (b) loss of jobs or (c) loss of services which would impact on community health or wellbeing;
2. That it is of significant strategic importance to the sector or locality and without financial support survival is threatened, and that the loss of the organisation could cause longer-term damage to sectoral growth and development;
3. That it is prudent to accept a single application on behalf of a number of smaller charitable entities that are an integral part of a larger established organisation, and where financial need is greater than £50,000.

Before large amounts of public funding may be committed, an application for more than £50,000 will be subject to a wider assessment to determine viability, financial resilience and strategic importance within a balanced sector and explore whether other financial levers are available to the organisation.

On behalf of The Heritage Fund, the Department for Communities may arrange to provide additional financial expertise to the assessment, to ensure sectoral consistency to larger awards.

To apply for a grant in excess of £50,000, you must submit a Project Enquiry Form through our portal to receive feedback. This Project Enquiry Form must be submitted by noon on **Wednesday 5 January 2022**. We strongly recommend you submit this as soon as possible so that you can proceed with your full application.

We will review your request and let you know whether and how to proceed as soon as possible, by Tuesday 11 January 2022.

Please refer to the [Project Enquiry and Application Help Notes](#).

Your project title

Please ensure that you use the following format for your project title: '**CRPHO: your organisation's name**'. If you do not use this prefix, we will not know that you are applying for the Covid Recovery Programme for Heritage Organisations and your application may be delayed.

Mandatory enclosures

You must include certain key financial and other documentation with your application. These must be submitted with your application by the application deadline. Any application which does not include all of the mandatory enclosures will not be considered.

The mandatory enclosures are:

1. Governing document

2. Accounts
3. Financial Template (using the template)
4. Eligibility Questionnaire (using the template)
5. Declaration Letter (using the template)
6. Business Plan/Action Plan (optional template supplied)

[Download the templates.](#)

Mandatory enclosures are also referred to as supporting documents throughout our application guidance.

The Application Form lists a number of other supporting documents which are not required for the Covid Recovery Programme for Heritage Organisations. Please only provide the mandatory enclosures listed above. Please upload these in the order given in the Application Help Notes.

Details of what to include in each document can be found in the Application Help Notes.

When to apply

We are accepting applications from 16 December 2021 to noon on 21 January 2022.

We are accepting Project Enquiry Forms for grants over £50,000 from 16 December 2021 to noon on 5 January 2022.

We will assess applications and make decisions by the end of March 2022.

Use our application portal

[When you are ready, apply on our application portal](#)

Technical support

For technical support or assistance with accessibility, please contact our customer service team by email: Heritage.RecoveryNI@heritagefund.org.uk.

Declaration

Applicants can apply only to one funding organisation under this programme and are required to declare and certify that this is the case on the application form.

Applicants are also required to declare that they do not know of other available sources of financial support, including external support or support from related organisations, which would enable them to manage recovery from COVID-19 without recourse to public funds.

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Application help notes, templates and FAQs

View all of the [application and project enquiry help-notes and supporting documents templates](#) . FAQs from our webinar held on 21 December are also available.

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How will we assess applications?

When assessing your application, we will consider whether you meet the essential criteria for the fund. If you do not meet the essential criteria, we will not assess your application further.

Due to the tight turn-around times of this funding, we are unable to get back to applicants for further information. Therefore it is important that you submit all mandatory enclosures, using the templates where required, and provide all information clearly for our assessment.

Essential criteria

You should only apply for this funding if you are able to meet all of the essential criteria:

- you are a not-for-profit constituted organisation whose primary purpose is heritage
- you were financially viable at 31 March 2021
- you continue to have no concerns regarding the viability of your organisation
- based on the financial calculations for the first 9 months of the financial year from 1 April 2021, the organisation anticipated that it would have an operating deficit at the end of March 2022 and they can confirm that this is COVID-19 related

Priority funding

In the event that the eligible awards exceed available funding, those organisations with the largest operating deficits will get priority. Operating deficits will be expressed as a percentage of income in the financial year 2021/22.

Decision-making

The Heritage Fund will make decisions and inform applicants as to whether they have been successful or not by 31 March 2022. We will send you a legal agreement which includes the amount you have been awarded and outlines the conditions of your grant.

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Receiving a grant

Receiving payment

You will need to submit additional forms on our system so that we can make a payment. We will let you know when you need to do this and guide you through the process.

If we award you a grant, we will send you a legal agreement, which includes the amount you have been awarded and outlines the conditions of the grant. You will need to confirm that you are accepting the grant and signing up to the terms in the letter. When you have completed this process, we will make your grant payment.

We will expect evidence of delivery and expenditure, such as reports, invoices and receipts. More detailed information will be provided at point of grant award.

Publicising your grant

Publicity for the Covid Recovery Programme for Heritage Organisations will be handled by us in partnership with Department for Communities and you may be asked to participate in the rollout of our plans.

Reporting on your progress and evaluation

All grantees will be required to participate in monitoring and evaluation of this programme and we will monitor the health of your organisation.

Department for Communities will be evaluating the impact of the whole fund and will require you to take part in some data collection to support this work. We will provide more information about this requirement as soon as it is available.

Retention of documentation

All evidence used to support the eligibility of the organisation for the Programme and to evidence the amount of operating deficit in the financial year attributable to COVID-19 must be retained until March 2025. The Heritage Fund retains the right to carry out post payment audits to validate the accuracy of the information provided and, if appropriate, to claw back payments made in error or payments made in excess of the appropriate amount of funding.

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Subsidy control

It is an applicant's responsibility to confirm that their application has been considered and checked in relation to Subsidy Control rules.

At the point of publication of this guidance for applicants, public funding for organisations is no longer governed by the European Commission's State aid rules as set out in Article 107-109 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union and associated regulations and guidelines. Instead all grant decisions made after 11pm on the 31st December 2020 are subject to the new UK subsidy control regime, the principles of which are set out in Chapter 3 (Subsidies) of Title XI (Level Playing Field) of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

There is expected to be further guidance, a consultation and possibly new legislation in this area to build upon those principles. You will be expected to comply with the principles of the subsidy control regime and to satisfy any future requirements. Agreements that have been entered into will be reviewed and varied accordingly. We reserve the right to impose further requirements and additional conditions in relation to this matter.

It is an applicant's responsibility to check whether State aid or Subsidy Control clearance is required. Applicants should seek independent legal advice if they are unsure whether a project will require clearance.

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Managing your data

For more information about how your data will be processed under this grant programme please see our [privacy policy](#).

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Alternative funding

If your organisation's primary purpose falls into one of the following categories, please apply to the Covid Recovery Programme from the corresponding partner organisation:

- Arts – Arts Council for Northern Ireland
- Film – NI Screen
- Sport – Sport NI
- Irish Language – Foras Na Gaeilge or its nominated delivery partner
- Ulster-Scots language/culture – Ulster Scots Agency
- Charities/social enterprise – Community Finance Ireland

If you feel your organisation is not eligible for this funding but that you own a heritage asset of outstanding significance that is at risk of loss, we advise you look at the [funding options available](#) through the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF). Projects applying under the NHMF must be concerned with buying, maintaining or preserving objects, collections, buildings or land that are of particular importance because of rarity, quality, association with a historic figure or event or designations.

Department of Finance Omicron Hospitality Payment Scheme

Department of Finance will shortly launch the Omicron Hospitality Payment scheme. There are three amounts of funding available, £10k, £15k and £20k depending on Net Annual Value (NAV). Department of Finance will automatically issue payments to most eligible organisations. Some organisations that do not receive payment automatically, but consider themselves eligible, will be able to test entitlement through a separate application process.

Before applying to the Covid Recovery Programme for Heritage Organisations, you will first want to assess whether the Omicron Hospitality Payment is likely to be equal to or greater than any potential award under this programme. If you are likely to have a projected operating deficit greater than the Omicron Hospitality Payment, you should proceed with your application but make sure to include the Omicron Hospitality Payment in your income projections. If you have already lodged your application for the Covid Recovery Programme for Heritage Organisations, you must inform the delivery partner about your entitlement to the Omicron Hospitality Payment.

Department for Communities will carry out a data matching exercise before releasing payments to prevent double funding.

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Complaints

We understand that you may be disappointed with the outcome of your Covid Recovery Programme for Heritage Organisations application. We can only review our decision again if you make a complaint about how we have dealt with your application. We have a two stage complaint process for this fund.

We will only be able to consider and investigate the complaint if you can demonstrate that:

- we did not follow the published procedures for assessing your application
- you can show that we have misunderstood a significant part of your application
- you can show that we did not take notice of relevant information

A complaint must be made in writing by emailing enquire@heritagefund.org.uk within 10 working days of receiving your application decision. We aim to acknowledge your complaint within three working days.

Your complaint will initially be reviewed by an area or country director from The Heritage Fund. They will be independent of recommendation and decision panels for this fund.

We aim to communicate a decision within 15 working days from when you submitted your complaint.

For assistance, contact our Customer Services Team on 020 7591 6044 or email enquire@heritagefund.org.uk.

Funding comes from the Department for Communities and is being delivered by the Heritage Fund.

Changes to this guidance

We have developed this funding programme very quickly in order to respond to the immediate needs of the heritage sector. We will continue to review our processes to ensure we are able to provide support where it is needed. We reserve the right to make any changes needed to the guidance and programme. We will communicate any changes as quickly as possible via this webpage.

