

Performing Arts Grant Scheme

Community Arts

1. Introduction

The South Oxfordshire District Council Performing Arts Grant Fund aims to support community and voluntary sector performing arts groups within the district. This scheme is designed to enhance the cultural landscape by providing financial assistance to projects that demonstrate a significant community impact, meet identified needs, and ensure broad reach, engagement, and access to the performing arts in South Oxfordshire.

2. Objectives

The Performing Arts Grants Scheme aligns with the South Oxfordshire District Council Plan by fostering the following objectives:

- **Enhance community well-being:** Foster mental, emotional, and physical well-being through accessible performing arts initiatives that bring people together.
- **Support voluntary and community groups:** Strengthen local voluntary, non-profit, and grassroots organisations involved in the performing arts, empowering them to deliver impactful projects.
- **Promote sustainability:** Encourage environmentally sustainable practices within the performing arts, from production to performance, minimizing environmental impact.
- **Encourage inclusivity:** Provide opportunities for diverse groups to participate in and access the performing arts, ensuring inclusivity across all demographics, including marginalised or underrepresented communities.
- **Build local capacity:** Provide resources and support to develop skills, talent, and infrastructure within the local performing arts community.

3. Guidance notes for applicants

3.a. Funding Priorities

Funding will be awarded to projects that align with the following community values and priorities, fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable performing arts scene in South Oxfordshire:

- Increase the range of arts opportunities available to local communities.
- Support inclusive practice and celebrate diversity.
- Develop local artistic talent.
- Promote innovation and excellence.
- Develop new audiences and participants in performing arts initiatives.

3.b. What type of projects can we fund?

Projects must demonstrate a clear benefit to the community in South Oxfordshire and help us to deliver our arts objectives and priorities, could include but not limited to:

- Introducing new or improving performing arts projects and opportunities, like theatre, music or dance classes, offered for free or low cost to the community e.g., a Parish Council/ arts group can apply for funding to hire a hall, purchase equipment, pay the tutor and promote the activity.
- Introducing an established activity or performing arts opportunity at a **new** location.
- Funding to hire professional arts companies to deliver workshops or performances to audiences and participants.
- Start-up or hire fees for a new initiative that then become self-sustaining
- Costs associated with marketing and developing **new** audiences or **new** participants.
- Initiatives that teach or share performing arts skills, especially for young people, the elderly, or underrepresented groups.
- Performing Arts projects that focus on accessibility, ensuring participation from individuals with disabilities, low-income families, or address the issues of rural isolation, by offering activities in areas that lack opportunities locally.
- Capacity Building and projects that demonstrate sustainability with ongoing benefit
- Funding for skill development, leadership training, or the purchase of equipment that enhances the capacity of community arts groups.
- Partnership Projects: Collaborative arts projects that involve local schools, community centres, or other voluntary organisations to increase impact and reach.
- Cultural Diversity Programmes: Initiatives that celebrate cultural diversity through music, theatre, dance, or other performing arts forms.

We encourage all applicants to make their projects inclusive and accessible to all.

We encourage applicants to consider the climate and ecological implications of their project. This may include the use of sustainable materials or other climate-friendly options to reduce energy use where appropriate.

3.c. What will we not fund?

- Retrospective funding for goods/projects/activities that will complete before our decision is made (We will consider projects that have started; however, we will not be able to fund any retrospective costs.)
- Projects that are contrary to the Equality Act 2010.
- Private or Commercial Enterprises: Projects led by for-profit organisations or individuals seeking financial gain.

- Core Operational Costs: Routine expenses such as staff salaries, rent, utilities, or ongoing operational costs that are not directly related to a specific project.
- Projects Outside the District: Initiatives that take place outside the Council's district, unless there is clear and direct benefit to the local community.
- Political or Religious Activities: Activities that promote political or religious viewpoints, as opposed to inclusive or cultural artistic expression.
- Individuals (not part of a community group): Funding is generally not provided to individuals unless they are part of a larger community initiative and can demonstrate a wider impact of their work
- Regular or Long-Term Programs: Ongoing activities without a clear, one-time project outcome, unless they show significant community impact.
- Events solely intended to raise funds for a cause, rather than provide direct community benefits through performing arts.

3.d. Who is Eligible?

Projects should provide benefit to more than one individual engaged in the performing arts (namely, theatre, music and dance), to groups of residents in South Oxfordshire. The scheme is open to the following organisations:

- Not-for-profit groups and arts or community groups, voluntary, third sector, community organisation, any of whom must have a constitution and committee structure.
- Town/parish councils and parish meetings.
- Not-for-profit preschools, PTAs and local authority-run schools or Academies (for non-statutory elements of the education programme not funded through school budgets and are out of hours school provision)

3.e. Who is not eligible?

- Other local authorities/public sector bodies.
- Individuals who are the supplier of the service (artists and performers).
- Groups raising funds on behalf of or improving/creating facilities that will primarily benefit an ineligible organisation.
- Profit-based businesses (private businesses).
- Political and lobbying groups.
- Nationwide organisations (except with a local constitution and/or local bank account, or projects clearly related to a local hub/branch).

4. Funding Allocation

- A total of £60,000 is available in this funding round.
- Minimum of £500 up to a maximum of £5,000, per application and we are happy to receive multiple applications from the same organisation, but benefits must be for different groups/audiences.
- Projects must be completed within 12 months of the award decision.

5. Scoring and weighted evaluation

- a. Mandatory** Applicants will be asked mandatory eligibility questions such as;
- Must take place in or benefit the residents of South Oxfordshire
 - a formal governance structure
 - audited accounts
 - Public liability insurance
 - If the project is for building alterations planning permissions must in place

These will be assessed as a pass or fail. If all questions are deemed as a pass the project will then be assessed on value and impact of the project

- b. Project value** will be assessed based on
- Achieving community benefit and meeting genuine need
 - Demonstrates sustainability
 - Value for money
 - Collaborative approaches will be scored higher
 - Reach or breadth of work (ie number of participants or audience members that do not normally access the performing arts or value of work to achieve community impact).

6. Opening and closing dates

- The scheme will be open on the third Monday in July (Monday 20th July 2026) and close on the fifth Wednesday in September (Wednesday 30th September 2026).
- The deadline for applications is 12 noon on the fifth Wednesday in September (Wednesday 30th September 2026). Grants will be awarded and applicants will be notified in the fourth full week of November (after Monday 23th November 2026).
- We will publicise the dates on our website, in our newsletters and through our social media platforms.

7. Application and award process

- Applications will be assessed and awarded after 16th November 2026 and applicants notified after 23rd November 2026.
- Enquiries can be directed to the community arts team at performingartsgrants@southandvale.gov.uk.
- Council officers will check the eligibility of the application and liaise with the applicant, if necessary, to establish eligibility.
- If eligible, officers will assess the application and recommend the grant award. The application will then be approved by the relevant head of service or the service manager when authorised to act on behalf of the head of service, who will take into consideration any concerns and recommended payment terms and/or special conditions.
- Once the community arts team receive notification that the relevant head of service or service manager when authorised to act on behalf of the head of service, has made a decision on the award, officers will either;

- send a grant offer letter to the applicant that will include our standard (and any special) conditions. The applicant will then accept or decline the grant award confirming they will meet the conditions via the online grants system.
 - inform the applicant that they were unsuccessful.
- On receipt of the notification of online acceptance the community enablement team will release the grant payment in line with the offer letter. **All payments will be made by BACs (on confirmation of your bank account details) to an account in the name of the organisation making the grant application.**

8. Reporting and Monitoring

- The council's community arts team will monitor grant spending and ensure compliance with the terms and conditions.
- Grantees should submit a report on completion of their project with images, participant/ audience figures and an account of how the grant was spent.
- The community arts team will record all applications, decisions and remaining balances. We will publish grants awarded on the council's website.
- If the awarded project has not started by the expiry date (12 months from the award date) the relevant head of service or service manager, when authorised to act on behalf of the head of service, can at their discretion allow an extension to the grant term.
- All grant repayments will return to the council's general reserves.
- If repayments are necessary, the community arts team will liaise with the organisation to recover the funds.
- Future applications to any of the council grant schemes could be at risk if organisations have not completed and submitted the project monitoring form via our email address

9. Standard conditions

- The organisation must have all the necessary consents in place such as planning permission, listed building consent, Diocese faculty, landlord or Head lease consent, compliance with any restrictions on the property title, any other licences/insurance etc., and could provide these on request.
- The organisation must consult the community arts team before making significant changes to the project/work covered by the grant and officers will confirm with the service manager that they agree to these changes before responding to the applicant.
- The organisation must spend the grant on the project listed in their application and within 12 months from the decision to award a grant or they will return the funding, unless they have requested permission to change the project and/or an extension in writing.
- Any equipment purchased with the grant should be retained by the organisation and in community use for a minimum of 12 months from the purchase.
- If requested, the organisation will return a commensurate amount of the grant if the project costs less than expected or they receive additional funding towards the project.
- Confirmation the organisation has not received any Minimal Financial Assistance, in excess of £315,000 in the elapsed part of the current Financial

Year and in the two Financial Years immediately preceding the current Financial Year. 'Financial Year' means a period of twelve (12) months ending with 31 March. Providing relevant evidence if subsidy has been paid.

- The organisation will acknowledge the council's support in any press, publicity or promotion of the project.
- The applicant will submit photos of the project and a short monitoring form upon completion.
- The organisation acknowledges the council accepts no responsibility or liability for this project or the facilities it provides now or in the future.

10. Contact Information

- For more information about the scheme, advice on potential projects, and other possible funding sources, please contact the community arts team via performingartsgrants@southandvale.gov.uk.