

Cultural Investment Programme 2023-2027: Consultation Report

1. Overview and purpose of consultation

‘The Cultural Investment Programme provides opportunities for people and communities across the city to take part in the cultural life of Bristol, whether that is by attending a world-class music performance, a cutting-edge theatre production or taking part in a workshop, festival or exhibition in their local community.’

Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol (Cultural Investment Programme Prospectus 2018-22)

Bristol City Council is proposing to deliver a second Cultural Investment Programme (CIP) in 2023 – 2027. The vision for the fund will continue to ‘make arts and culture accessible for all’. Bristol City Council want to ensure CIP 2023 – 2027 is fit for organisations/individuals and Bristol citizens alike, and helps achieve the Bristol City Council Corporate Strategy and the One City Plan vision and objectives.

Between the 13th September and the 1st October 2021, Bristol City Council consulted on the following elements of the Cultural Investment Programme 2023 – 2027:

- The revised aims of the fund
- The ‘building blocks’ of the objectives of the fund

2. Methodology

2.1 Online Surveys

Two online surveys were used to generate feedback.

One survey targeted artists, creative practitioners and arts organisations currently funded by the Cultural Investment Programme. A second survey was published online on the Council website and via social media, for the wider cultural and creative industries sector to engage with.

A total of 43 people responded to the online questions.

2.2 Consultation events

Three public consultation events targeted at Bristol’s creative and cultural industries were held between the 21st and 24th of September, one of which specifically welcomed input from artists, creative practitioners and arts organisations who are led by and/or work with equalities groups. Two of these sessions were held online, and one was held in person. Closed captioning was available during one online session; British Sign language was available during both online sessions. A Bursary of £50 was available to support freelancers to attend.

A total of 55 people attended the consultation events.

2.3 Meetings with current recipients of Openness and Imagination funding.

During the consultation period, officers attended one to one meetings with 6 current recipients of Openness and Imagination funding.

3. Online survey results

3.1 Aims of the Cultural Investment Programme

Respondents were asked ‘To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims of the Cultural Investment Programme 2023-2027?’

36 respondents (84%) stated they either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed aims.

1. 20 (47%) selected 'Strongly agree'
2. 16 (37%) selected 'Agree'
3. 0 (0%) selected 'Neither agree nor disagree'
4. 1 (2%) selected 'Disagree'
5. 6 (14%) selected 'Strongly Disagree'

4. Qualitative survey and event feedback

Qualitative feedback was gathered through 3 consultation events and 1 free text box in the surveys.

In the survey, respondents were asked if they would like to comment further on the proposed aims with regards to:

- Do you have anything further you would like to comment on with regards to the proposed aims of the Cultural Investment programme 2023-2027?

24 people responded to the open text sections on the online surveys.

During the consultation events, respondents were asked the following questions:

Questions relating to the aims:

- What are your thoughts/reflections on these aims?
- How well do they sit or align with your own/or organisations practice?
- How well do you think they align with issues currently facing Bristol and wider global issues as well?

Questions relating to the building blocks of our supporting objectives:

- Where do you feel the gaps are?

A total of 55 people attended the consultation events and fed back in breakout groups.

The feedback from the consultation events and free text from the surveys have been reviewed together, as both data gathering activities have generated recurring themes.

Where possible, comments have been grouped together by theme, with a range of examples presented below.

Not all comments received concerned the focus of the consultation, where relevant these have been included in section 7 as a potential basis for future consultation.

5. Comments on the aims of the fund

5.1 General positive feedback on the aims:

- 'We are very satisfied with the aims of the new fund'
- 'I think the aims are well considered and would provide a strong framework for allocating funding to a broad and diverse range of cultural projects and organisations'
- 'I think these aims sound excellent and a shift that is needed'
- 'I think they're brilliantly summed up!'

5.2 Scope of aims: respondents reflected on the scope and ambition of the aims, some of these were positive in nature, whereas others were concerned about the aims being too broad.

- 'General, broad reaching aims that I could see my organisation sitting comfortably under'
- 'Aims seems clear and broad and I know what they mean'
- 'Aims are very broad and open to interpretation'

- 'The aims of the programme have a broad reach which is very much needed. Addressing issues of equality and diversity has to be a key issue.'
- 'Aims are broadly what I'd expect. Align with my aims'
- 'The aims don't seem too dissimilar or scary'
- 'Because the funding is low, [the aims need to be] much more specific'
- 'Don't be too broad with aims because you also need to clearly exclude the people who might not work to the same principles'
- 'Hard to disagree with'

5.3 Language & terminology: the use and accessibility of language and terminology within the aims was frequently commented on.

- 'We would like to see the word equity used over equality, as we may need to address the inequality in the sector with positive action'
- 'Why equality rather than equity?'
- 'Consider use of term 'equity' rather than equality'
- 'We would like to propose a suggested change to the word equal to change it to equity.'
- 'You may wish to replace "diversity and equality" with "diversity, inclusion and equity" (equity is a social justice approach which recognises that not everyone starts from the same place so treating everyone equally does not always address disadvantage)'
- 'I would reiterate that being clear and consistent with terminology is important'
- 'The aims on their own don't give enough information about what is meant by equality & positive change'
- 'DIY culture and grass roots engagement feel like they may be a little bit like jargon, I'm not too clear what they mean'
- 'Not sure what is meant by new ideas'
- 'Supporting positive change feels ambiguous' – what kind of change and who for?'
- 'Is 'Bristol' just a physical location or a digital space too?'
- 'The language of people and partnerships was encouraging and more accessible'
- 'Language needs to be accessible for all'
- 'Supporting Bristol as a city OF new ideas- instead of as a city- FOR new ideas'

5.4 Connection to BCC corporate strategies: Respondents questioned how the aims connected to the wider Bristol City Council's corporate strategy.

- How do they relate back to the corporate strategy or climate strategy?
- How do they relate back to the Council's wider strategies?

5.5 Funding new activity: Respondents commented on whether funding for new activity should be prioritised over funding for long-established organisations

- 'Aim 1 needs to be enabled for existing, long-established organisations as well as the new ones'
- 'Is it that Bristol needs new or is it about sustaining and nurturing what's already there?'

6. Comments on the objectives of the fund

6.1 General comments that included positive feedback on the objectives:

- 'These are great. We wouldn't not want these.'

6.2 Language and terminology: the use of language and terminology within the objectives was also frequently commented on.

- 'What do we mean by 'new' and 'ambitious'?'

- 'Needs definition around what is meant by underrepresented groups'
- 'Would be helpful to clarify terms around who you are talking about with mention to diversity – specifics'
- 'If you want to encourage people/organisations to apply that normally wouldn't – then the building block language needs to be more open, less jargony, more accessible, people need to be able to clearly see themselves in the language'
- 'The language used doesn't make me think of Bristol or capture what is special about Bristol'

6.3 Missing 'gaps': a number of comments were made on where respondents felt 'gaps' were in the objectives for the funds.

- 'There's nothing about audiences under Aim 2 which I would expect if it's for people making it, watching it and taking part in it.'
- 'Harder to see freelancers, non-professional world represented within these objectives'
- 'How will these relate to an artist? Would they tick objectives.'
- 'Mention of innovation and experimentation was missing from these building blocks'
- 'Feel like missing inclusion from building blocks'
- 'Missing lasting impact, legacy of grant , what happens after the grant period ends'
- 'Health and wellbeing feels like an add on, all objectives should be linked to health and wellbeing'
- 'Should include reference to art supporting mental health specifically as well as gazing outside of Bristol because that isn't mentioned'

6.4 Grouping of objectives within aims: a number of comments were concerned with which objectives should be attached to certain aims.

- 'New voices and stories would fit better under aim 1.'
- 'I didn't expect Business resilience to be under aim 1. I think it may fit better under aim 3, invest in people, places and partnerships'
- 'Aim 3 feels like it should include business resilience'
- 'Business resilience' feels like it's in the wrong place, doesn't relate to ideas and creativity'

6.5 Business resilience + Living Wage: some comments were concerned with the topic of business resilience, and there was a mixed response to the inclusion of the Living Wage.

- 'Business resilience feels more about organisations than individuals'
- 'These are relatively small amounts of money for larger organisations – resilience seems like an ambitious ask considering grant size'
- 'Tension between encouraging business resilience and new work / ideas'
- 'Business resilience – does this include sole traders'
- 'Living wage: will there be uplift in the funding? (we need to acknowledge that prices etc are rising...)'
- 'Something I would really like to see is a commitment from the Arts Organisations that are given funding with regards Fair Pay - a commitment to the paying a real living wage and a cap on salaries, so that organisations which pay their highest paid member of staff more than 3 times that of their lowest paid member of staff are automatically disqualified from applying for funding'

7. Other comments that highlighted specific issues.

Not all comments received concerned the focus of the consultation, where relevant these have been included below, as a potential basis for future consultation.

7.1 Application process:

- 'Development of the application process should ideally consider how individuals/organisations that don't speak 'fundraising language' or haven't applied for funding before can access the process'
- 'Could the application process allow / create alternate ways of applying? Invite outline proposals that then are invited to 2nd stage? Video apps? Conversation?'
- 'It needs a much less intensive first step'
- 'Organisations in receipt of larger funding pots should be encouraged (as a grant t&c) to support individuals or smaller organisations – to share knowledge'

7.2 Decision making process: Comments suggested that applicants wanted greater clarity about the fund's decision making processes.

- 'Who are these objectives for - will they be for artists/organisations to meet or are they for BCC to meet?'
- 'Alongside aims, have a metric showing how projects will be judged'
- 'Are some aims prioritised over others?'
- 'Aim 2: Is a complicated mix of social and financial issues to address, so where would funds be targeted?'

7.3 Inequity of place & spaces

- 'There are areas of the city that are removed from the cultural core'
- 'Great deal happening in a compressed area of the city'
- 'Need more support for smaller spaces for exhibition'
- 'Need to think about the spaces where events can happen'

8. Learnings from consultation and next steps

Feedback shows that the revised aims were generally found to be clear, well understood and relatable to the wide range of organisations and individuals who took part in the consultation.

Following the consultation, we will implement the following amendments to the proposal:

- Language: we will refine the language used within the aims and objectives based on the feedback received, and clarify the terminology used to help ensure greater accessibility. For example, considering the use of the word 'equity' over 'equality'.
- Objectives of the fund: we will reconsider the grouping of objectives set against specific aims.
- Further consultation: We will seek to schedule additional public consultation sessions on the additional themes raised in the report, most notably the accessibility of the fund.