Briefing document

Open call for
creative commissions, in response to climate change and COP26

Overview

The British Council is inviting applications for creative commissions which bring together art, science and digital technology and offer innovative, interdisciplinary and collaborative responses to climate change. The commissions will be part of the cultural programme in the build up to the United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), which the UK is hosting in November 2021.

About the British Council

The [British Council](https://www.britishcouncil.org/) is the UK’s international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. We work with more than 100 countries across the world in the fields of arts and culture, the English language, education and civil society.

Climate change and COP26

Looking after the planet requires understanding and empathy, collaboration and connections, imagination and innovation.

In our fourth survey of almost 40,000 young people across 36 countries, including the G20, climate change is perceived to be the most important issue to these young people (aged between 18 – 34).

The UK will host the 26th [United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties](https://www.ukcop26.org/) (COP26) in Glasgow on 1 – 12 November 2021. This will be the largest international climate change summit the UK has hosted, bringing together over 30,000 delegates - including heads of states, climate experts and campaigners - to agree coordinated action to tackle climate change. COP26 will be supported by a build-up events programme hosted by Italy, which will include a major Youth Event and the Pre-COP Summit in September 2021.

This creative commissions call is one of many activities the British Council is delivering in the run up to COP26. We are working with partners in the UK and worldwide to support the success and legacy of COP26 by using our global network to create opportunities for cooperation, dialogue and action which address the shared challenge of climate change.

Creative brief

We are inviting collaborative applications in response to this open call from individuals and organisations across the UK and overseas (see list of eligible countries and states below).

We want these commissions to stimulate truly global conversations, bringing together people from different countries, cultures and communities to understand each other’s perspectives and collaborate on creative responses and solutions towards climate change. We want to spark imagination and innovation, and inspire new ways of working, through a digital-first approach.

We want to see interdisciplinary and collaborative ways of working through these commissions – bringing together city planners, engineers, artists, technologists, thought leaders, activists, scientists and many others. We are particularly interested in collaborations between individuals and organisations of differing scales who may not traditionally work together, from across the world.

We welcome action-focused, interactive responses, which tackle difficult issues head on, push boundaries and are a catalyst for real change. This means thinking beyond a single artwork, event or digital moment, and instead focusing on mass participation and engagement, longer term movements and campaigns. We are interested in ideas that have longevity, the potential to be scaled up and those which can be shared globally using digital platforms and tools.

Climate change is everyone’s responsibility and we all have a role to play. But we are also mindful that children and young people are the custodians of our future planet. We particularly welcome ideas which specifically engage young people (aged 18 – 24), recognising the importance of sharing knowledge and ideas across different ages and generations.

We are also interested in foregrounding the voices of individuals and communities already experiencing the consequences of climate change in different settings around the world – such as ‘climate migrants’ who may have had to leave their homes due to changes in their natural environment, extreme weather and water scarcity. We want to see ideas grounded in lived experience, which connect with and draw upon credible scientific research.

As part of our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, we actively invite groups and communities who are underrepresented in climate change discussions to respond to this brief. This includes taking an inclusive approach to the development of your idea and when considering the audiences you want to reach. We expect to engage with individuals and organisations of different genders, ethnicities, sexualities, abilities and ages either directly through the commission – or indirectly through your project audiences. We are also interested in ideas that explore, interrogate, educate and respond to the connection between the environment and diversity, including gender equality and racial justice.

Finally, we are interested in supporting low carbon solutions and environmentally friendly practice in project planning and delivery, as well as your choice of partners and suppliers.

Eligibility for creative commissions

* We are inviting applications for creative responses to this open call. Applications must include at least one partner in the UK and one overseas partner from the eligible countries and states listed below. Applicants must be living in their respective country at the time of applying and for the duration of this project.
* Partners from countries outside of the list of eligible countries and states can be part of a collaboration but cannot receive any financial benefit from this grant.
* Applicants can apply for between £30,000 – £50,000 to realise their creative idea and we are looking to support between 12 – 20 projects. Applicants with in kind or matched support are welcome, although this is not essential. Match funding cannot be provided through other British Council funded programmes.
* Applications should be jointly submitted and signed by all named collaborators, with one lead UK partner who will be contracted and responsible for leading communications and disseminating the grant to all collaborators.
* Individuals, organisations and/or informal collectives/networks are all eligible to apply but should have demonstrable experience of managing similar projects and grants.
* Applicants must be able to demonstrate clear benefit to the overseas eligible country, which should be reflected through the project planning (including budget allocation), delivery and dissemination. This includes demonstrating how the overseas partners or their audiences may benefit from showcasing opportunities, new networks and/or capacity building. Mutuality must be a central component to the international collaboration.
* We expect applications to embed principles of equality, diversity and inclusion through their core proposal and idea (including costs relating to captioning videos or translating content). However, applicants requiring a financial contribution to support their own accessible needs (such as for interpreters or technology plug-ins to enable interaction with other partners through digital platforms) can apply for additional funding. Further details can be found in the application form.
* We are interested in new, original ideas in response to this brief. Existing projects and programmes will be ineligible. Exceptions apply for existing ideas which have reached a pilot or prototyping phase, but have not been realised publicly.
* Applicants will be expected to plan, design and realise their project from March 2021 with the main activity complete by the end of November 2021. Main activity can take place any time during the year, although we particularly welcome ideas which take place in the build up to COP26.
* Applicants can use any platforms to showcase their project idea, but must provide detail on how this will be realised and confirm that agreements in principle are in place with host organisations, festivals, online sites, media partners etc.
* Applicants from a range of different sectors are welcome and encouraged. All outputs and responses should be innovative in their nature, demonstrating creativity in working across disciplines, including arts, science and digital technology.
* Applicants should support the ethos and values of this commission and where appropriate, have a demonstrable history of supporting environmentally friendly and low carbon ideas and initiatives. Applicants who are to new sustainable practice and want to include this in their businesses or work moving forward are encouraged to submit joint applications with those who have more experience in this area.
* Successful applicants will own the copyright of any work created but must grant the British Council, as the commissioning partner, free and unequivocal use of any arising outputs, which may include promotion of works through our digital channels or exhibiting works in the future.
* Successful applicants may be invited to take part in additional showcase opportunities and British Council alumni programmes in the future.
* Successful applicants will be required to keep in regular communication with the British Council, offering project updates and support the project monitoring and evaluation.

This commissioning fund is designed to support collaborations between the UK and the following eligible countries and states:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, China, Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, Ethiopia, Georgia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Malawi, Mauritius, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Wider context

The projects supported through this commission will be part of an overall partnerships, youth development and public engagement programme led by the British Council and delivered in collaboration with partners, funded through the FCDO.

Overall, these programmes will come together and help us work towards the following goals in the build up to COP26, where we:

* Work in collaboration on issues which really matter. This means learning, sharing and developing ideas with partners around the world which are centred around mutuality;
* Encourage the exploration and shaping of big ideas which inspire transformational change on a global stage through international collaboration;
* Platform credible ideas – founded in research and science – which improve public understanding of, and trust in, climate science;
* Develop sustainable climate related collaborations and consortia between the UK and the eligible countries (see list above), which will have longevity beyond COP26;
* Engage the current and next generation of young climate leaders in these conversations, giving them the understanding, skills (including language) and confidence to make the changes we need to see now and in the future;
* Grow the number of advocates and campaigners to raise greater awareness among policy makers and wider audiences of the role arts and culture can play in responding to climate change;
* Address our global responsibilities and share our commitment to environmentally responsible behaviour and innovation;
* Generate international awareness of and support for COP26 that leads to change on the ground; and
* Crucially, take a low carbon approach so we can deliver activities sustainability with measured and evidenced outcomes that show the reduction in our footprint.

Selection criteria

Applications will be reviewed by a diverse panel of representatives from the British Council, along with guest panellists, all of whom represent a range of sectors.

Our assessment of successful applicants will be based on the following criteria:

* Big ideas – the quality and creativity of the idea and approach, including opportunities which serve to ‘constructively disrupt’, reimagine possibilities for digital collaboration and enable meaningful audience interaction around these themes (25%)
* Collaboration – the partners involved and the nature of the collaboration, with a particular emphasis on the level of mutuality within the partnership (25%)
* Impact – the potential impact this commission will have on the partners and audiences involved, as well as potential for additional showcasing, scaling up or further development beyond the scope of this commission (20%)
* Quality – the experience of the applicants in delivering high quality work in their respective field(s) and the integrity of any scientific contributions or analysis (15%)
* Budget – the extent to which costings are appropriately calculated, reflect good value for money, are relevant to the proposed approach and are distributed amongst partners (15%)

The panel, comprising representatives from different sectors in the UK and overseas, will consider the overall curation of commissions to ensure a diverse selection of applicants are supported which meet the overall programme aims. This will include achieving a geographical spread across the UK and the overseas eligible countries, the type and format of the response, themes being explored, and the individuals and sectors represented. Weighting may be applied to achieve an overall balance across the successful applications.

Applicants may be approached with clarification questions or to attend an interview with the panel. Applicants must be available to respond and/or attend an interview (conducted digitally) in line with the schedule below.

Key dates

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| Milestone | Date |
| Application window opens | Monday 2 November 2020 |
| Information surgery 1 | Tuesday 10 November 2020 |
| Information surgery 2 | Wednesday 18 November 2020 |
| Information surgery 3 | Monday 23 November 2020 |
| Application deadline | Sunday 13 December 2020 |
| Clarification questions to applicants and interviews (as appropriate and if necessary) | w/c 18 January 2021 and w/c 25 January 2021 |
| Successful applicants informed and grant agreements issued | w/c 8 February 2021 |
| Project and activity window | March 2021 – November 2021 |
| Programme evaluation | November 2021 – January 2022 |

Information surgeries

Potential applicants are welcome to join one of three information surgeries where we will talk through the creative brief and answer any questions you may have about these creative commissions. Each session will cover the same content.

* [Information Surgery 1](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cop26-open-call-information-surgery-1-tickets-125919561799): Tuesday 10 November, 10.00 – 11.30 GMT
* [Information Surgery 2](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cop26-open-call-information-surgery-2-tickets-125926201659): Wednesday 18 November, 16.00 – 17.30 GMT
* [Information Surgery 3](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cop26-open-call-information-surgery-3-tickets-125926614895): Monday 23 November, 14.00 – 15.30 GMT

Advance registration is required using the links above. We expected places to be limited so please cancel your place if you are no longer able to attend. Kindly inform us of any access needs at least one week prior to your event, so we have ample time to put appropriate measures in place. All sessions will be run in English.

How to apply

Please complete and submit the accompanying application form. Due to the volume of applications expected through this open call, we are now welcoming submission of applications online. Please submit your application using the online form via [this website](https://gradcore.formstack.com/forms/creativecommissionscop26). If you have completed the Microsoft Word version of the application form, you will also have the opportunity to submit this using the application portal.

Applications should be submitted by **Sunday 13 December, 22.00 hours (GMT)**

Applications submitted after this date may not be considered by the reviewing panel.

If you have any questions about these commissions, please email creativecommissions@britishcouncil.org and allow at least five working days for a response.

Applications can be submitted through the form in either written or video format, with a written budget. Applicants who may have additional accessibility needs and would prefer to submit their application in another format should get in touch in advance. We will endeavour to do everything we can to accommodate any needs.

We look forward to receiving your application.