



Local Museums Small Capital Grant Programme 2026/2027

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

Eligible museums can apply for **£500 - £10,000 per funding application.**

Application, Project Completion and Evaluation Forms are available at
www.nimc.co.uk

Please email completed applications to info@nimc.co.uk by 12pm on 30 October 2026

Decisions: November 2026

Please note that all purchases and minor works must be completed by Friday 12 March 2027. If you are unable to meet these conditions, you should NOT apply to this scheme as NIMC will not meet any costs incurred beyond this period.

Guidelines for Applicants

The Northern Ireland Museums Council's (NIMC) **Local Museums Small Capital Grant Programme** is funded through the Department for Communities and administered by NIMC. Please note, this programme is a Capital fund. You can apply for any equipment and/or minor works to help adapt your venue or working practice.

The programme is intended to provide maximum flexibility for eligible museums; however, we encourage applications which are aligned to the following priorities-

1. Collection Care, Preservation and Sustainability

Supporting capital improvements that enhance the protection, management and preservation of museum collections, including:

- Enhanced security and protection of collections.
- Improved storage equipment, materials and facilities
- Preventative conservation infrastructure and equipment.

2. Access and Inclusion

Supporting capital projects that improve accessibility and inclusion by:

- Enhancing access to buildings and services for people with disabilities.
- Creating more inclusive and welcoming environments for diverse audiences.

3. Learning and Community Engagement

Supporting infrastructure and facility improvements that:

- Enable delivery of early learning and educational programmes.
- Improve provision for children, young people and individuals with special educational needs.
- Enhance opportunities for community engagement and lifelong learning.

4. Climate Action and Environmental Sustainability

Supporting capital investment that contributes to:

- Improved energy efficiency and reduced environmental impact.
- Sustainable building, storage and collections care solutions.
- Climate adaptation measures that protect museum assets and collections.

5. Sustainable Public Services and Infrastructure

Supporting projects that strengthen the long-term viability of museums by:

- Improving public access to museum facilities and services.
- Upgrading infrastructure to enhance visitor experience and engagement.
- Increasing organisational resilience and sustainability.
- Ensuring museums can continue to deliver high-quality public services for their communities.

The entire £190,000 of the NIMC Small Capital Grants Programme budget will be available for allocation within the first application submission window. **Museums are permitted to make more than one application in the first round.** Subsequent application submission windows will only be used if budget remains un-committed. It is therefore advisable that eligible museums submit their applications by the **30 October 2026**.

Deadlines

Complete applications must be submitted by email to info@nimc.co.uk by **12pm on Friday 30 October 2026**

If a grant offer is made, you must return a signed Offer Acceptance within one calendar month of the date of the offer. NIMC cannot always honour offers where your Acceptance has been received after this date.

All purchases/minor works must be completed, and all paperwork, monitoring and grant drawdown finalised, by Friday 12 March 2027. The grant may be withdrawn after this date.

Am I Eligible?

The NIMC Local Museums Small Capital Grant Programme is open to all UK Accreditation Scheme Accredited (Full or Provisional) non-National museums in Northern Ireland.

NIMC supports non-Accredited museums and collections by providing training, advice and guidance. You should be a member to access these services. To join, please visit www.nimc.co.uk.

How Much Can I Apply For?

Eligible museums can apply for **£500 - £10,000 per funding application**.

Please keep in mind that the amount of money available is limited and demand for funds is likely to be extremely high. It is not usually possible to fund all applications which simply meet the criteria or to fund the entirety of any given request.

You should be realistic in your expectations and budgets and bear in mind that NIMC may choose to fund specific elements of your proposal rather than the full request.

Match Funding

10% of your overall cost is required. While it is preferred this funding is financial, other in-kind funding such as partnership funding or other resource contributions may be considered if detailed information is provided which shows it is demonstrably relevant to the proposed project (Museum 10% match funding does not need to be for capital costs and can include programming related to the project for example).

What You Can Apply For

As this programme is a Capital fund, you can apply for any equipment and / or minor works to help adapt your venue or working practice. This could be, but is not limited to, the following:

- Collection storage, conservation and environmental monitoring equipment
- Security systems, alarms and CCTV to protect collections
- Exhibition enhancements such as cases, panels
- Hearing loops, assistive listening technology
- Accessible seating and visitor facilities
- Minor adaptations to improve physical access for visitors with disabilities
- Equipment for learning spaces, education rooms, loan boxes
- Interactive and sensory equipment
- Furniture and equipment for community engagement areas
- LED lighting upgrades
- Environmental monitoring systems to improve energy management or mitigate climate change
- Infrastructure to support business continuity and organisational resilience

What You Cannot Apply For

- Staff/administration costs
- Non-capital project costs
- Second-hand equipment without a warranty / guarantee
- Equipment service costs
- Subscription costs
- Consumables
- Purchases started or made prior to an NIMC grant offer

Please note it might be possible to pay for specialist/contractor time if the correlation between their contribution and the grant outcome taking place is clear. Please contact NIMC to discuss this or any other questions you may have before you send in your application.

What if I have Questions?

We recommend you speak to NIMC staff before you submit your application. To do so please contact NIMC by emailing info@nimc.co.uk and a member of staff will get back to you.

How will we evaluate your application?

Applications must be

- Deliverable within the required timescale
- Fully and appropriately costed
- Comply with relevant regulations and demonstrate that there are appropriate business planning, procurement, health and safety and workforce procedures in place
- Able to agree to the terms and conditions of the grant award.

There are five questions in your application that will be assessed and scored.

Assessment Scoring	Marks Available
Q2. What outcomes will this funding have for your museum?	20
Q3. How does your project meet the priorities of the NIMC Local Museums Small Capital Grants Programme?	30
Q4. How will you deliver your project?	20
Q5. What impact will this project have on your collections, audiences and participants?	20
Q6. Please describe any steps you will take to minimise the environmental impact of your project including procurement, energy use, reuse or recycling, use of sustainable materials.	10
TOTAL	100

Addressing the assessment Criteria

Q1. What is your project?
General Description of the project and what the outputs will be (No score applicable to this question).
Q2. What outcomes will this funding have for your museum?
Please tell us how the project will make a difference to your museum. You should provide a clear rationale for the project and how it will impact on the museum. This section is an opportunity to establish the need for the project and provide targets and outcomes. Projects which provide strong supporting evidence and good base line information will be assessed favourably.
Q3. Please outline how your project meets the priorities of the scheme
Please explain how the proposed capital project aligns with the relevant priorities of the programme. You do not need to address every priority, only those that are relevant to your project. For each priority selected, describe: 1) what aspect of the project relates to the priority; 2) what capital improvement, equipment or infrastructure will be delivered; and 3) how the investment supports your museum's strategic development. Programme priorities: <i>Collection Care, Preservation and Sustainability</i> • How will the project support the care, preservation, storage, security or management of collections? • Which collection(s) will benefit? <i>Access and Inclusion</i> • How will the project improve physical, intellectual or digital access to the museum, its collections, facilities or services?

• Which audiences or communities is the project designed to better serve? <i>Learning and Community Engagement</i> • How will the project support learning, interpretation, participation or community involvement? <i>Climate Action and Environmental Sustainability</i> • How will the project improve environmental sustainability, energy efficiency, climate resilience or resource management? <i>Sustainable Public Services and Infrastructure</i> • How will the project strengthen the museum's buildings, facilities, equipment or infrastructure and contribute to its long-term sustainability?
Q4. How will you deliver your project? Who will be responsible for delivering the project and managing the funding?
This section should provide a plan for delivery. Areas such as how the project will be managed, developed, promoted, and delivered. It should identify key personnel and outline the resources required. It may be helpful to identify key partners. Organisations should demonstrate that they have an appropriate range of policies and procedures in place to support project delivery and sustainability. This section should provide adequate information to demonstrate that the project can be delivered effectively and within the proposed budget and timescale.
Q5. What impact will this project have on your collections, audiences and participants?
This section should outline the proposed increase in engagement, detail your target audiences and outline any desired learning outcomes from activities. You should consider how you will evaluate the success of your project with your audiences.
Q6. Please describe any steps you will take to minimise the environmental impact of your project including procurement, energy use, reuse or recycling, use of sustainable materials.
We recognise that projects will vary in scale and that environmental sustainability may not be the primary focus of every application. However, applicants should demonstrate that they have considered how environmental impacts can be reduced wherever practicable. You may wish to describe: • How you will source goods, materials or services sustainably. • Whether locally sourced suppliers or products will be used where possible. • How you will minimise waste during the project. • Opportunities to reuse, refurbish or recycle existing equipment or materials.

Conditions of Funding

- NIMC will not pay VAT on any expenditure incurred by VAT registered organisations with the ability to reclaim VAT costs.
- Remember that the grant will be paid retrospectively on production of project completion form and invoices/receipts. Phased payment is an option but must be agreed with NIMC before the start of the project.
- The maximum amount NIMC will fund will not exceed £10,000. Once awarded, grants cannot be increased.

- Applicants must be in a position to comply with any conditions attached to the grant that may be included in the Letter of Offer. NIMC must be notified immediately if the applicant encounters any problems in complying with the conditions.
- Applicants must be in a position to deliver the project within the agreed timescales. NIMC must be notified immediately of any delay or anticipated delay. Should NIMC consider any delay to be unacceptable, the grant may lapse, and any payments made may be recovered in whole or in part.
- Applicants must comply with the expenditure, receipting, evaluation and monitoring conditions stated in the contract for funding.
- Applicants must also comply with their own institutional procurement thresholds and procedures.
- Any person authorised by NIMC including the Department for Community's Internal Audit Unit and the Northern Ireland Audit Office shall have rights of access to asset and accounting records in respect of any assistance provided.

How do I apply?

Complete the NIMC Local Museums Small Capital Grant Application Form in full.

Email the application to info@nimc.co.uk by 12pm on Friday 30 October 2026.

What will happen next?

We will acknowledge your application by e-mail within three working days.

NIMC staff will write an Assessment of the application, based on the Small Capital Grants Fund Criteria listed on page 2. We may contact you to discuss the application in more detail or if you have requested the phased payment option during our assessment.

The Assessment will be approved by the NIMC Grants Committee and authorised by the NIMC Board. We will tell you by email of the decision as soon as possible thereafter.

What information will I need to submit to claim the grant?

The grant will only be paid against actual expenditure on the equipment/capital works described and itemised within the application.

The grant will only be paid once we have received:

- Invoice from your governing body to NIMC for the correct amount. The figure on this should be 100% of the actual expenditure or the total amount NIMC has offered, whichever is the lower amount.
- Receipts for expenditure from the vendor.

- Proof that you have paid for the item(s). Acceptable proof of payment will be bank or credit card statements, proof of online banking transfer, BACS payment records, and copies of cheques.
- Monitoring and Acknowledgement information – see below.

The financial paperwork should be sent to info@nimc.co.uk

Procurement

- You will need to provide at least two quotes for each requested item of equipment - more if the value of the item is above £5,000.
- If you are requesting more than one of any given item of equipment, only one set of quotes is necessary. For example, if you request three identical exhibition cases which each cost £1,000, you only need to upload two quotes in relation to this; you do not have to upload two separate quotes for each of the three cases.
- For minor works applications, you will need to provide a schedule of work, together with at least two quotes for each element of the work

Project Completion Form

Submitting project completion information is a condition to the offer of a grant and is required prior to payment. This will include:

- Completion of the NIMC Small Capital Grant Project Completion Form.
- Provision of at least one good quality image of 1MB or above that NIMC can use for publicity purposes and on www.nimc.co.uk

Please send the completed Project Completion Form, by email to info@nimc.co.uk.

Project Evaluation Form

A Project Evaluation Form must be submitted 3 months after the project's completion.

Please send the completed project evaluation form, by email to info@nimc.co.uk.

Case Studies

We may use your successful grant as a [Case Study](#) on our website to publicise your museum, NIMC and the sector overall.

Acknowledgement

NIMC expects that its support towards the grant purchase is acknowledged through the incorporation of the Council's logo on promotional material and any social media posts.

VAT and Safeguarding

Successful applicants must provide:

- Written confirmation of your VAT status i.e., whether or not the grant recipient is registered with HMRC and can/cannot reclaim VAT on expenditure relating to this project.
- Written confirmation that the grant recipient has an up-to-date safeguarding policy that has been approved by its governing body.

Data Protection Act 1998 and Freedom of Information Act 2000

NIMC values the right to personal privacy. We collect and hold personal data in order to successfully deliver our business and in order to comply with our statutory obligations. The personal data you provide on this form may be held by us electronically and in hard copy but will only be used in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy and the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

This information may be subject to release to others in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000. However, certain exemptions from release do exist, including where the information provided is protected under the Data Protection Act 2018.

Reports and summary information from the information you supply and from comments made on your application by staff members are likely to be held on both our paper and electronic systems and will be made available to those deciding upon this and any other grant applications you make.

By submitting your application, you waive any right to raise any type of proceedings against the Northern Ireland Museums Council as a consequence of, or in contemplation of, any disclosure of the contents of your application in response to an information request made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

We view your signature on your application form as acceptance of the use of your data as outlined above.

Information on NIMC's policy on data protection, its Publication Scheme, and on how to access information held by the Council is available through www.nimc.co.uk, or by contacting us directly.