# Small Grants Scheme Application Information 2026 Round 14

The Museums Essex Small Grants Scheme is intended to help museums, galleries and heritage organisations whose collections are open to the public. The Small Grants Scheme will have at least one round per year and each round will be themed.

Since the scheme started in 2013 Museums Essex has awarded 79 grants, totalling more than £40,000 to more than 40 museums.

This round will accept applications for activities, equipment or resources relating to improving your **Collections Management**. Areas covered could include:

- Purchase of equipment or materials to improve collections care, e.g. boxes, acid free tissue, melinex sleeves, etc.
- Purchase of equipment or materials to improve storage infrastructure for your collections, e.g. shelving.
- Improvements to your Collections Management System.
- Collections management training for staff or volunteers.
- Consultancy or specialist costs towards condition reporting, conservation audits, assessments, or interventions.

The ideas listed above are not an exclusive list and other areas of activity may be considered by the Trustees if in their view they fit the criteria of the grant.

If you have an idea and you're not sure if it would fit the criteria, please contact the Museums Essex Chair or the Essex Museum Development Officer and we're happy to provide feedback.

**Award**
In this 14th round, 8 grants of up to £500 will be awarded.

**Contractors and Suppliers**
All applications should include information on contractors and suppliers as appropriate. The trustees would like to see full details of the chosen contractor / supplier (see below in Application Guidance).

**Eligibility**
To be eligible for a Museums Essex Small Grant the organisation must be a not-for-profit member of Museums Essex, located within the historic county of Essex and whose collections must be publicly accessible. Applicants may be asked for a copy of their governing document to verify their not-for-profit status.

Organisations that have applied for a grant before, whether successful or not, are eligible to apply, subject to having completed the required grant report where money has been previously awarded by Museums Essex.

**Application deadline**
The application deadline is **5.00pm on Monday 21st September 2026.**

**Assessment**
Receipt of all applications will be acknowledged. All applications will be verified for eligibility and you may be contacted if further information is required. Applications will be considered by the Small Grants Sub-Committee, which consists of three trustees from the Management Committee, and following advice from the Essex Museum Development Officer.

Applicants will be informed of the outcome in **November 2026**. Successful applicants will be asked to complete a grant agreement form and will then receive their grants via bank transfer. Unsuccessful applicants will be given feedback on their applications and an indication on whether to submit a similar bid at a subsequent round.

Please look at the Award Assessment Form at the end of this document to see how the sub-committee will review your application to ensure you meet all the areas fully.

**Project Report**
We expect the grants to be spent within six months of receipt. All recipients of grants must commit to providing a brief report within six months of completing the project. The report will be shared with other Museums Essex members via the Museums Essex website.

## APPLICATION GUIDANCE

Please ensure you read through the information below to ensure you fully understand what information the application is asking for and what supporting information should also be provided. For some answers it may be clearer to use bullet points rather than descriptive narrative.

**Costs - contractors, suppliers and equipment**
All applications **MUST** include information on the purchase of equipment or the hiring of contractors and suppliers as appropriate. The trustees would like to see a quote showing the costs for the elements of work the contractor or supplier will be delivering or the items to be purchased.

**Match Funding**
If your project costs are more than the £500 grant, please explain how the rest of the activity will be funded. Applications for part-funding larger projects will also be accepted.

**Glossary**

We've provided an explanation of some of the terms used in the application form to help you develop your submission.

**Aim**

Your aim is a broad statement of intent – what difference will the project make to this area of work or your museum. E.g. *This project will enable the Museum of Stuff to improve the standards of collections care within the whatsit collection by delivering staff and volunteer training.*

**Objectives**

What activities will your project undertake to deliver the aim? For a small project 2-4 objectives would typically cover the activities.
e.g.

- *Source new packing materials to create sustainable and better storage for our medals collections line with our Collections Care Policy. Decision made by February 2023.*
- *Create a repeatable training course for volunteers to increase their skills and understanding of preventative conservation in line with our collections care policy. First course to be delivered by March 2023.*

Consider using the SMART method to check your objectives are they…

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **S** | Specific | Targeting a specific area |
| **M** | Measurable | Can you indicate your projected success e.g. how many |
| **A** | Achievable | Is it realistic to deliver this given your resources, expertise, time pressures etc. |
| **R** | Relevant | Is this activity related to a strategic plan or other activity area |
| **T** | Time bound | When will results be achieved by |

**Outputs**

This is what will be generated by the project. Outputs tend to be quantitative meaning you can track them numerically *e.g. a training programme for volunteers, number of objects repacked, or a trackable number of hours of work delivered.*

**Outcomes**

Outcomes should measure the impact of your activities. Outcomes tend to be qualitative meaning they can be subjective and less easy to track numerically *e.g. someone learning a new skill, a better visitor experience, improving someone's understanding.*

The impact could be for an individual, particular team or area of work, your visitors or the wider organisation. They can be short term (up to a year), medium term (1-3 years) or long term (3-5 years) – these times are just suggestions and you may want to look at how this activity fits into your organisations plans.

**Resources**

In this context we are considering human resource whether they are staff, volunteers or external contractors. If someone is taking this project on in addition to their "normal" work have they got capacity or how will capacity be made available. Please ensure you talk to all involved before making the application.

**Measuring success**

These will be measured against the outputs and outcomes information you've set the project. How will you know you've achieved what you set out too?

Quantitative data could be drawn from statistics generated through ticket sales, entries on a collections database or number of items conserved.

Qualitative data can be collected through open answers on feedback forms or surveys, anecdotal feedback, 1-2-1 interviews, focus groups or observation. Question whether you need to collect personal data or can feedback be anonymous. If personal data is collected ensure it is stored in line with GDPR protocols.

# Grant Award Assessment Form

This form is to be used by the grant application assessment team to enable a transparent process for award decisions and enable useful feedback to applicants.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name of Museum:** | |
| **Name of project:** | |
| **Grant Round:** | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Has the application clearly met the aims of the grants fund?**<br>• Are the aims clearly demonstrated<br>• Do they correspond with the grant funds aims<br>• Do they identify a clear need within the organisation<br>• Do they match the organisational aims/strategy | | |
| Fully met | Partly met | Not met |
| Feedback: | | |
| **Does the application clearly list what activities the project will deliver?**<br>• Do they correspond with the grant area? | | |
| Fully met | Partly met | Not met |
| Feedback: | | |
| Does the application clearly show what will be generated through the project (outputs and outcomes) and impact this will have for the organisation? | | |
| Fully met | Partly met | Not met |
| Feedback: | | |

| **Has the application demonstrated how success will be measured?**<br>• Is the level of evaluation appropriate to the size of the project?<br>• Does it demonstrate how and what kinds of data will be collected? | | |
|---|---|---|
| Fully met | Partly met | Not met |
| Feedback: | | |
| **Do the timescales laid out in the project appear reasonable based on the resources the museum has available?**<br>• Is it clear what resources the museum will use to support the project – e.g. match funding, staff, volunteers | | |
| Yes | No | Needs clarification |
| Feedback: | | |
| **Has the application clearly demonstrated how the grant will be spent?**<br>• Is there a clear budget breakdown?<br>• Is the budget breakdown supported by quotes from service providers?<br>• Is there match funding, if so it is clearly demonstrated/evidenced where this will come from? | | |
| Fully met | Partly met | Not met |
| Feedback: | | |
| **Any additional feedback:** | | |
| | | |
| **Recommendation:** | | |
| Grant should be made | Grant should not be made | For discussion by panel |

| Name of assessor: | Date of assessment: |
|---|---|