

British Academy Ideas Festival 2027 – guidelines for applicants

Please read these guidelines carefully before completing your application(s).

We are seeking creative proposals for exhibits, films, workshops/ drop-in activities, salons, screenings, performances, 10-Minute Talks, living libraries, and from researchers who have been funded by the British Academy and the British International Research Institutes (BIRIs) as well as our Fellows, members of our Early Career Researcher network to form the Ideas Festival programme, previously known as the Summer Showcase. This year, we are also inviting screening submissions, workshops/drop-in activities, performances and pop-up research from UK Young Academy members following last year's successful trial.

Researchers proposing exhibits and activities must be available on Thursday 17 – Saturday 19 June 2027 (those proposing exhibits must be available on Tuesday 15 and/or Wednesday 16 June to set up). Those proposing screenings are not required to come onsite.

If you need this document provided in a different format for accessibility, please contact: ideasfestival@thebritishacademy.ac.uk

Open call for applications: **Wednesday 16 September 2026**

Deadline for applications: **Tuesday 3 November 2026, 17:00 GMT**

Apply via our application forms:

- For Exhibits apply [here](#)
- For Workshop/Drop-in Activities apply [here](#)
- For Screenings apply [here](#)
- For Salons apply [here](#)
- For Pop-up Research apply [here](#)
- For Performances apply [here](#)
- For 10-Minute Talks apply [here](#)
- For Living Library apply [here](#)
- For Submit your Own Event Idea apply [here](#)
- For Fellows apply [here](#)

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Introduction

The Ideas Festival is the British Academy's flagship annual public engagement festival, taking place throughout our Grade I-listed home at Carlton House Terrace, near St James's Park in London.

Incorporating a Schools & Colleges day for 14-18 year olds, a public Friday Late and Saturday's relaxed event, this free festival engages a diverse and wide-ranging public audience with the social sciences and humanities research that is shaping our world, via a programme of interactive exhibits, workshops and activities, film screenings, salons, learning trails, performances and talks.

We are looking for dynamic proposals that will bring to life SHAPE research (Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy). We are looking for researchers who are passionate about their work and excited to share it with a range of audiences – from school groups and young people to senior stakeholders such as politicians and the media.

Based on our latest audience feedback, this year we are particularly looking for proposals which target different learning styles and are aimed at audiences 18-34.

[Here is a collection of videos which give you a flavour of the event.](#)

What are the British Academy's strategic objectives?

The British Academy Strategic Plan 2023-2027 supports the Academy's vision of putting the humanities and social sciences at the heart of understanding the world and shaping a brighter future. You can [read the plan in full on our website.](#)

Our three strategic priorities are:

- Strengthening and championing the humanities and social sciences
- Mobilising our disciplines for the benefit of everyone
- Opening up the Academy

Our five core objectives are:

- To invest in the very best researchers and research

- To celebrate and promote the humanities and social sciences
- To inform and enrich debate around society's greatest questions
- To ensure sustained international engagement and collaboration
- To make the most of our people, partnerships and resources to secure the Academy for the future

Who attends the Ideas Festival?

In 2026, we welcomed over 1,500 visitors to the Ideas Festival. In 2027 we hope to welcome even more people to Carlton House Terrace. We are looking to attract the following audiences:

- The public, particularly appealing to 18-34 year olds and engaged culture seekers. Therefore, **all applicants must demonstrate how they will engage a public audience who would hold no prior knowledge of their subject or research area.**
- VIPs and key stakeholders – researchers will showcase their research to an invited VIP audience, ranging from parliamentarians, journalists and university Vice-Chancellors to senior staff working for cultural organisations and leading figures in business.
- Young people – our annual Schools' Day welcomes 14-to-18-year-old students, each on the cusp of major decisions about their onward study and careers. This year we will be focusing on this next generation more than ever before and we are hoping to expand these numbers.

What are we looking for in 2027?

This year we are particularly keen to host exhibits that are interactive and hands-on, and which will resonate with our audiences. We want to hear from researchers who can clearly communicate their specialist knowledge to a range of non-specialist audiences, in a way which encourages two-way interaction and does not require any prior knowledge of your research or subject area.

Researchers can propose:

- **Exhibits**, which will run throughout the entire Festival. Exhibitors will be expected to produce their exhibits themselves in the months ahead of the Ideas Festival, with ideas and support from the British Academy team, so bear this in mind in your proposal.
- **Workshops** for up to 25 people, maximum 45 mins long, based around making activities.
- **Drop-in activities** which can range from five minutes to 1-2 hours (i.e. collaging, zine-making, walking tour)

- **Salons** connect 3-4 speakers on seemingly disparate areas of funded research under one theme to a public audience in an accessible and conversational setting.
- **Short films & feature documentaries.** Short films will run continuously, and we have space for 1-2 feature documentary screenings with the neighbouring ICA. All video content must already exist – we will not commission new work. Researchers are responsible for providing or securing a licence. All films must be captioned, and if researchers will be responsible for doing so. This year we are trialling allowing applications for screenings from the British Academy's ECR network as well as UK Young Academy members.
- **Pop-up Research** allows you to take an active role in cultivating research with members of the public. You may gather quantitative data, qualitative data, or both but data gathering should be limited to an activity that takes 1-2 minutes maximum.
- **The Living Library** is an interactive event where Researchers become 'living books' whom visitors can engage with for a series of informal five-minute conversations. Visitors will be able to ask questions about your research, explore your specialist subject, and look at an object from your work or take part in a simple hands-on activity that helps bring research work to life.
- **Performances** invites you to explore how performance can bring research and ideas to life. We welcome applications for a wide range of performance-based experiences, including theatre, music, dance, spoken word, live art, immersive experiences, participatory works, and experimental formats.
- **Submit your Own Event Idea** this application strand is those who have an exciting event concept that does not fit within our existing formats. We welcome proposals that bring audiences closer to research through participation, discussion, creativity, play, storytelling, collaboration, or other innovative approaches. Your event could be interactive, immersive, conversational, hands-on, reflective, or something entirely new.
- **Fellows** this application is for Fellows who have an exciting area of research they want to share with the public in an engaging, interactive way. This could take place in the form of an exhibit, a panel talk, salon, or any other event format you would like to propose.

Previous visitors particularly enjoyed:

- **Interactive and hands-on activities**, either within an exhibit or workshop
- **Engagement with researchers**, including high quality conversations with specialists who are passionate about sharing their research with the public
- Research relating to **current social or global issues**, as well as to people's **lived experiences**
- **Research related to subjects beyond the curriculum** – we will curate a programme which represents the full range of our disciplines

- **Interactive elements** which could provide insights that may inform your future research, while bearing in mind the need be accessible and appealing to public audiences

We are also particularly interested in applications geared towards under-18s for Schools & Colleges Day and our Friday Late/ Saturday programme which targets 18-34 year olds.

Exhibits

Successful exhibit proposers will be expected to ensure at least three people can staff their displays throughout, who must all be able explain the research to visitors in accessible terms. Hands-on or interactive activities to accompany displays are encouraged.

With lots to see throughout the building, visitors may only spend three or four minutes at your exhibit, and might not speak with you directly, so it is helpful to consider a range of ways that the audience can engage with your exhibit.

Recent exhibits have included:

- **Seeking Dignity: Menstrual Health & Homelessness:** Periods don't stop when housing disappears. Through lived experiences and tangible materials, discover what it means to experience periods without privacy, safety or security.
- **Fashioning Fancy Dress Through the Ages:** explore fancy dress and reconsider its wider cultural significance to class, gender, and race throughout the centuries.
- **The Taste of Memory:** go on an immersive journey of food, migration and memory which connects generations within British-Chinese communities.

The [2026 British Academy Ideas Festival programme can be found on our website](#).

Selection criteria

We are looking for British Academy funded researchers, Fellows, members of BIRI or members of the ECRN whose work is sufficiently advanced, especially those that can demonstrate real-world impact or that link to other organisations within their research sector. Additionally, we are inviting applications from UK Young Academy members for workshops, pop-up research, performances and film screening submissions this year.

We will select ideas based on the following:

How well has the event or exhibit been conceived? Will it engage our target audiences? Will it be interesting and entertaining? Is it feasible to produce within budget?

How interactive is the proposal? We are particularly looking for activities and exhibits which engage a range of audiences in creative ways and we welcome

proposals which feature opportunities for the public to feed back into the research through two-way public engagement.

How accessible is the research featured? Will the subject matter be of interest to broad audiences? Is there potential for interactive elements, which are favoured by audiences? Will researchers be able to present their work accessibly to a young audience?

How well will the proposal potentially generate interest? Do you have unique, new, newsworthy or quirky findings; or innovative research methods? Is your research engaging with an important topic that no-one else is, or that others are getting wrong? Do you have human-interest case studies from people who have participated or benefitted from your research?

Subject spread and diversity. We are looking to provide a platform for engaging and diverse examples of excellence in research from researchers at different career stages, from universities across the UK, from different funding streams, and which span our subject areas. We also want to platform a community of scholars that is representative of the diversity of humanities and social sciences academic staff at UK universities.

Please note: Data provided in the 'About You' section of the application form may be factored in alongside other subject spread and diversity criteria (career stage, university location, funding stream, subject area) to ensure the final selection is representative of a diverse community of scholars. However, this data is not shared with the selection panel at the stage of scoring and reviewing applications.

How well does the proposal align with the British Academy and our key themes/messages? Does it align with any Policy/International/Research programmes? Does it align with the [British Academy's strategic priorities](#) – particularly Opening Up and Mobilising the Disciplines?

How responsible/sustainable is the proposal? In the case of exhibit and workshop proposals, have you considered sustainability and the circular economy?

What does the British Academy provide?

- A venue within Grade I-listed 10-11 Carlton House Terrace during the Ideas Festival, including brand new, state-of-the-art event spaces
- British Academy Events team expertise – the dedicated Ideas Festival Project Manager and wider Events Team manage the project to ensure everything runs smoothly. They, along with wider Academy staff and external stewards, will be on hand at the Festival to support
- An extensive promotional campaign to attract visitors to promote the event, the research on show and the academics behind the projects will start in early 2027

- Opportunities to engage the media with your research, as well as training and tips for how to talk to the media, if required. The British Academy's PR team will be looking out for work that can resonate with the media
- AV staff will assist with the planning and will be available on each day of the Festival – though applicants should not be overly-reliant on AV
- Exhibitor briefings and public engagement training will be provided ahead of the Ideas Festival. This will include information on planning and logistics, how the Festival will be evaluated, how to engage audiences and communicate your research to a non-expert audience
- Expenses for UK travel, accommodation and childcare costs to those who qualify, with optional stipends for securing additional staff to deliver the exhibits onsite. Expenses are available for a maximum of three people per exhibit, Pop-up Research and per workshop/drop-in activity, while other strands will be taken on a case-by-case basis
- Onsite catering during the event

Why should you apply?

Share your research with different audiences, from younger audiences to lifelong learners. An invited audience will include influencers, funders, media, policy makers, senior staff working for cultural organisations, politicians and senior government and industry figures.

Raise your profile. The Festival will be promoted widely via a special marketing and PR campaign, reaching thousands of people. There may be interview opportunities with members of the media or to spotlight your work within the wider Academic sector.

Get public opinions. Find out what people think about your research and gain valuable feedback and potential insight and data that might inform your future research. We also share with you the results of our public evaluation, making it easy to see your impact.

Get lasting benefits. Build on your experience to develop your own public engagement activity in the future.

How to apply

Complete our online application form(s) before the deadline of Tuesday 3 November, 17:00 GMT:

- For Exhibits apply [here](#)
- For Workshop/Drop-in Activities apply [here](#)
- For Screenings apply [here](#)
- For Salons apply [here](#)

- For Pop-up Research apply [here](#)
- For Performances apply [here](#)
- For 10-Minute Talks apply [here](#)
- For Living Library apply [here](#)
- For Submit your Own Event Idea apply [here](#)
- For Fellows apply [here](#)

If you have any queries about your application or need further guidance not answered here or in the FAQs, email ideasfestival@thebritishacademy.ac.uk with the subject line 'Query about Ideas Festival 2027 Application'.

Regrettably we do not have the resources to offer individual feedback on unsuccessful applications.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. I am not funded by the British Academy or one of the British International Research Institutes (BIRI), a Fellow, or member of the Early Career Research Network (ECRN): can I apply?

A. No. All proposers must be part of one of these groups. The only exception to this is that we will accept Workshop, Performance, Screening and Pop-up Research submissions from UK Young Academy members.

Q. Can I apply for multiple parts of the programme?

A. Yes. You may submit one application for each area of the programme (screening, workshop, exhibit, etc), but please ensure your application is relevant to the requirements of each activity.

Q. My research doesn't lend itself to an interactive activity or exhibit. Should I still apply?

A. No. We appreciate that it is not possible for all research to be adapted to an interactive activity, but as this is the central premise of the programme, we require all applicants to demonstrate how their research can be engaged with

Q. Does the Ideas Festival have a theme?

A. No. The Festival evaluations have highlighted how much audiences enjoyed the eclectic nature of research. We are however keen for visitors to go away with a good sense of what the humanities and social sciences are and their value and the role of the Academy as a research funder and champion for the disciplines.

Q. I am not available for the dates of the Festival, can I still apply?

A. No. Researchers are expected to be available during some, or all, of the dates of

the Festival, Thursday 17 – Saturday 19 June 2026. Researchers proposing exhibits and supporting staff / colleagues must be available at some point during Tuesday 15 - Thursday 17 June to set up their exhibits.

The Academy is committed to supporting academics who may be unable to present across the whole three days due to medical reasons, childcare arrangements etc. and we can liaise with you to ensure that your event/activity is not scheduled for a time that you are not available. However, those who are unable to present due to reasons such as conflicting diary engagements will not be considered.

Q. I have exhibited in the Summer Showcase in-person / online before. Can I apply to the Ideas Festival?

A. Yes. The Ideas Festival will look at researchers who may have taken part previously in a different strand to your application this year (for example: if you delivered a 10-Minute Talk in the past, you could propose a screening this year).

Q. I have applied before but not been successful. Can I apply again?

A. Yes. However, we advise looking closely at ‘what we are looking for’ to ensure that your application meets the criteria.

Q. What should I do if I have a query about the application process which isn’t answered here?

A. Email your query to ideasfestival@thebritishacademy.ac.uk with the subject title ‘Query about Ideas Festival 2027 application’.

Q. If I am not successful, can the working group offer feedback?

A. No. Regrettably, given the number of applications received and our limited resources we do not have capacity to offer individual feedback on unsuccessful applications for the Ideas Festival, and the British Academy is unable to enter correspondence regarding the decisions of the selection panel.