

# Pre-application Q&A

12 May 2025, 2.00pm to 3.15pm

## Panel

- Hannah Lim, Funding Manager Lead – A Fairer Future
- Alison Holdom, Funding Manager Lead – Creative, Confident Communities
- Simon Wightman, Funding Manager Lead – Our Natural World
- Luna Dizon, Communications Manager (Q&A support)

# Welcome and plan for the session

- Quick introduction to Esmée
- What we don't fund and what we're looking for
- What we consider when making decisions
- Application process
- Q&A

# About Esmée

We aim to improve our natural world, secure a fairer future and strengthen the bonds in communities in the UK.

We want to play an active role ourselves, using our **range of tools** to effect change.

As well as **grants**, we also make **social and impact investments, convene and broker alliances, commission research**, and use our **influence** to achieve our goals.

# Strategic framework

## Funding priorities to the end of 2027

### Aims

Our Natural World



Peat

Space for nature

Nature-friendly farming

Fishing in tandem with nature

Freshwater

A Fairer Future



Art and creativity making change

Children and young people's rights

Racial justice

Gender justice

Migrant justice

Creative, Confident  
Communities



Communities working together for change

Community driven enterprise and regeneration

Community-led art and creativity

# Grants – in numbers

**£45m to £50m** yearly grant budget

**200** grants awarded a year (roughly) across **13** funding priorities

**41** Esmée staff including **17** in our funding team

**66%** grants awarded in 2024 for core or unrestricted costs

**3 to 5 years** term for the majority of grants (we have no minimum/maximum)

# What we don't fund

- Work that is not legally charitable – by this, we mean work that does not fall within one of [13 descriptions of charitable purposes](#). See our [FAQs](#) for more information about the [kinds of organisations we support](#).
- Work that does not have a direct benefit in the UK.
- Organisations with an annual turnover of less than £100,000 (see our [FAQs](#) on [how we assess turnover](#)).
- Organisations without at least three trustees or directors (the majority of whom should be non-executive).
- Organisations without an asset lock or other general term designed to ensure that the assets, including any profits generated, are used for the benefit of its community or to further its activities or mission (see our [FAQs](#) on [kinds of organisations we support](#)).
- Grants for less than £30,000.
- Grants to individuals.
- Capital costs including building work, renovations, and equipment (the exclusion applies to grants only, we may make social investments for these).
- Academic research – unless it can demonstrate real potential for practical outcomes.
- Healthcare with a clinical basis, including medical research, hospices, counselling and therapy, arts therapy, education about and treatment for drug and alcohol misuse.
- Independent education – by this, we mean work which takes place or is delivered by fee-paying schools.
- Work that is primarily the responsibility of statutory authorities.
- The advancement of religion.

# What we're looking for

Applicants must show that they are:

- **Leading the way** themselves, or as part of a collaborative movement or partnership.
- **Driving change for the future** by doing something new, or by using tried and tested models to push things forward.
- Aims to make a lasting difference, reaching beyond those directly engaged to **influence policy, practice and behaviour**.

# What we're looking for

We're also interested in:

- **Unusual collaborations and ambitious partnerships** – operating regionally or nationally, and involving or engaging a range of charity, public sector or corporate stakeholders
- Work which makes **connections across our aims**
- **Communities or people most affected involved in leading change**
- Work which uses a **preventative approach**
- Work that has practical plans to achieve and **sustain change over the long-term**

# When making decisions, we consider:

- **Track record:** we look at successes, but also what was learned when things don't go to plan.
- **Connections:** how could this link to and complement other work we support, and increase the combined impact?
- **Broader context:** what are the opportunities and barriers? Who are the allies, and collaborators? What influence or leverage will the work have?
- **The difference our support could make:** what value could our funding and extra support add to this work?

# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

To help us make progress towards diversity, equity, and inclusion, we gather DEI data from all applicants:

- **Expression of Interest:** applicants complete a DEI monitoring form about their organisation – using the [DEI data standard](#).
- **Proposal:** we ask applicants to tell us about their approach to DEI within their organisation and through their work.

## How we use the information:

- Helps us understand who our funding is reaching as well as identify and address structural inequity in our funding.
- Part of our assessment of applications.
- We're interested in how people and communities most impacted by the issues shape the work.

[Learn more about how we use your information](#)

# Watch a short video on how to apply

If you can't see the video, you can [watch the video on YouTube](#).



# Behind the scenes



## Expressions of Interest (EOI) reviewed

EOIs are reviewed against our criteria and the outcomes we're working to in our strategy.

We get many more requests than we can fund so the EOI is intended to be quick – to avoid people investing more time applying if it is unlikely we will fund the work.

[Learn more about the main reasons for turning down applications.](#)



## Applications considered at staff meetings

We invite applications we progress further for a conversation to learn more.

These applications are considered at regular staff meetings. The team consider potential opportunities in line with our strategy and other work we fund, and whether to progress the application and invite to full proposal. This is based on what we believe is the most effective use of our resources.

# Applications in 2024

## Applications through our website

**1403** eligible EOIs reviewed

**93** 7% of EOIs invited to full proposal

**78** 84% of proposals awarded a grant

**42** 54% of grants awarded to new organisations to Esmée

## Applications for follow-on grants and those we invited

**191** eligible EOIs reviewed

**174** 91% of EOIs invited to full proposal

**163** 94% of proposals awarded a grant

**52** 32% of grants awarded to new organisations to Esmée

# How do you get on our radar?

## We're being more proactive

- Attending sector and community events.
- Research into our areas of work: reports as well as what's in the news and social media.
- Recommendations from partners.

## We're staying open

- The EOI stage is open for you to tell us that you're interested in our funding and support.
- If we don't think your work is a strong fit for our strategy, we can let you know sooner and save you time working on a full application.

# What makes a good EOI – an example

## **What would you like Esmée to support?**

We will create a model of shared ownership of the Manningham Mills Community Hub - supported by a coaching approach to unlock the potential of people to transform communities. We are seeking funding for: Community Enterprise Coach, Hub Manager and running costs.

## **What's the change you are focused on achieving and how is your organisation well placed to deliver it?**

Local people will be at the heart of creating and running a unique space for community led enterprise - a catalyst for the development of ideas and approaches to tackle the challenges of place.

We will find individuals and groups with the ideas to change their community. We understand that people don't always have the resources, experience or networks to realise their ideas – so Participate and Equality Together will open the door to involvement and participation through coaching, welcome people into a creative space to develop ideas, and use their experience, influence and networks to help ideas become enterprises.

Community and local enterprises will flourish within the Manningham Ideas Hub space; growing and developing, taking additional space when needed and working together for mutual support; retaining and increasing wealth in the local community. The enterprises will have flexibility to be innovative and explore new ideas – building confidence and economic growth. We will explore shared approaches to resources, purchasing, local supply chains and creating a collaborative economy.

Manningham Mills is in one of the most disadvantaged places in the UK, home to a large Asian Muslim community. People here face additional barriers when it comes to being economically active and this project focuses on addressing these barriers. Equality Together has long term tenure of the Hub and Participate has delivered the Power to Change Empowering Places Catalyst for the past 3 years in Manningham.

Wider Impact will be achieved through sharing experience via the Power to Change network and NEF/CoopsUK/CLES/Participate Innovation in Business Community of Practice.

# What makes a good EOI: Tips

- **Be clear about what you're asking for funding for** – this could just be a line or two like in the example.
- Remember that we also look at your website – this helps us understand more about your organisation and track record. So, **use the EOI to focus on your work in relation to our strategy.**
- The example:
  - Gives a strong sense of what they're aiming for and shows an understanding of what the change will feel like and how they will get there – including why the work is needed in that specific place, and how this builds on previous work.
  - Good balance of who they are as an organisation, what they are trying to do, and the people and partnerships that will be involved.
  - Is clear that the local community will be at the heart of the change and there are clear links to our priorities in Creative, Confident Communities.
  - They give brief descriptions of the activities and also talk about the broader, systems and long-term change they're seeking.

# Support applying and further information

- Our [funding guidance](#) has more detail about the types of work we're looking to support for under each aim:



[Creative, Confident Communities](#)



[A Fairer Future](#)



[Our Natural World](#)

- [Accessibility-related support](#)
- Our online [FAQs](#)
- [Grant funding overview](#) broken down by funding priority. We also share stories of work we've funded on our website under the relevant funding priority.
- Search our [funding data on GrantNav](#) (you can also use the tool to find funding data for other funders – [tips for using GrantNav](#)).

# Other useful resources

- Information on [other funding sources](#) including a comprehensive guide to fundraising for small organisations and links to funding directories.
- [Useful sector resources](#) on a range of topics including fundraising, legal, campaigning, digital and safeguarding.

For more information:  
[www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk](http://www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk)

Email: [communications@esmeefairbairn.org.uk](mailto:communications@esmeefairbairn.org.uk)

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