Clore Learning Spaces – Schools Connect Programme

Frequently Asked Questions

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About the Grant

What is the Clore Learning Spaces – Schools Connect Programme?
This is a new grant programme from the Clore Duffield Foundation to support organisations with Clore Learning Spaces to develop, test and embed innovative approaches to engaging hard-to-reach state-funded primary and secondary schools.

What is the overall aim of the programme?
The programme aims to enable a significant step-change in how organisations engage with hard-to-reach schools, broaden access to cultural learning, build teacher confidence, and contribute to sector-wide learning about best practice.

How many organisations will be funded?
Up to five organisations with active Clore Learning Spaces will be funded as part of a cohort.

Is this a one-off project grant or a longer-term programme?
This is a multi-year programme. Funded organisations are expected to take part for up to three years.

Funding and Duration

How much funding can we apply for?
Organisations can apply for up to £50,000 per year, depending on the scale and ambition of their proposed programme and the direct delivery costs of the proposed programme. The maximum total award is £150,000 over three years.

Is funding guaranteed for all three years?
Funding is available for up to three years, subject to successful delivery, participation in evaluation and cohort activity, and satisfactory reporting each year.

What can the funding be used for?

Funding may be used for:

- A proportionate level of backfill for staff time for development and delivery
- Staffing costs for prep time and delivery
- Marketing to schools (a small proportion)
- Programme delivery costs (e.g. materials for sessions)
- Transport costs for schools (if necessary)
- Teacher-focused activity (e.g. CPD, co-design)
- Costs associated with internal evaluation of the programme (the Foundation will be carrying out evaluation into the cohort model and impact of the grant)
- Costs associated with cohort participation and knowledge sharing (e.g. travel expenses to attend in-person meeting)

What will the grant not fund?

The grant will not fund:

- Existing schools programmes. The funding is to be used to create new programmes of engagement to support hard-to-reach schools. However, the new programmes of engagement should complement existing programmes to ensure sustainability and legacy.
- Activity that does not prioritise hard-to-reach schools in areas of high need (areas with higher than national and regional average % Free School Meals and Pupil Premium.)
- Managerial staff time
- Capital projects
- General organisational running costs unrelated to the programme

Eligibility

Who can apply?
Applicants must be organisations with an active Clore Learning Space, an existing schools offer, and the ambition to significantly increase engagement with hard-to-reach schools.

Can organisations without a current schools programme apply?
Applicants must have an existing schools offer. The grant is intended to support innovation and development, rather than establishing a new schools programme from scratch.

Target audience for the programme – Hard-to-Reach Schools

How should we identify 'hard-to-reach' schools?
Applicants should clearly define the schools they intend to work with according to their context. Schools must be state-funded primary and/or secondary schools. This might include schools that:

- Would benefit from additional support to engage
- Haven't previously or recently (within the last 3 years) engaged with your organisation or have low levels of cultural engagement / low number of school trips
- Schools with high proportions of pupils experiencing disadvantage (schools with higher than national average % FSM, which is currently 25.7% - gov.uk)
- Schools in areas of high socio-economic disadvantage

Do schools need to meet specific data thresholds (e.g. FSM)?
Priority must be given to working with schools with higher than the national average percentage of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (currently 25.7%).

Can we work with both primary and secondary schools?
Yes. Projects can focus on state-funded primary schools, secondary schools, or a combination of both.

The Cohort Model

What is the cohort model?
Funded organisations will take part in a structured cohort model delivered by an external delivery partner designed to support peer learning, shared reflection, and dissemination of best practice.

What will cohort participation involve?
This will include a mix of in-person and online meetings, shared learning sessions, and collective evaluation and dissemination activity. The exact frequency may evolve over the course of the programme.

Can grant funding be used to cover cohort-related costs?
Yes. Organisations may use grant funding to support travel and other reasonable costs associated with attending in-person cohort meetings.

Who will deliver the cohort model?

The delivery of the cohort model and evaluation of the programme will be delivered by an external partner organisation with expertise in the cultural and education sectors.

Application Process

How do we apply?
Applications will be made through a two-stage process, starting with an online application form.

What information is required at Stage 1?
Stage 1 includes organisational information, recent schools engagement figures, budget and staffing details, and a written statement of 650-700 words responding to specific prompts. Please refer to the Grant Guidance for full details of what is required.

What happens after Stage 1?
Shortlisted organisations will be invited to interview. Following interviews,

selected organisations will move into a Second Stage planning phase to develop their first-year programme and budget in more detail.

Assessment and Decision-Making

How will applications be assessed?
Applications will be assessed against the grant criteria, including:

- alignment with the programme's aims and principles
- understanding of target schools
- buy-in from Directorate or Board level
- capacity to deliver and learn over three years
- capacity to contribute to the cohort

Will geographical spread be considered?
Yes. The Foundation aims to fund a cohort of organisations with a range of focus, size, and geographical locations.

Reporting, Evaluation and Learning

What reporting will be required?
Organisations will be expected to submit twice-yearly reports (including budget reporting) to the Foundation.

What are the evaluation requirements?
Organisations must commit to reflection, evaluation, and learning. This includes contributing to shared evaluation activity led by the delivery partner.

Will grantees be expected to share learning beyond the cohort?
Yes. Funded organisations will be expected to support the dissemination of learning to the wider Clore Learning Spaces network and the broader sector.

Timeline

When do applications open and close?
Applications open on 19 March 2026 and close on 29 April 2026.

When will funding start?
Programme onboarding and Second Stage planning will take place between July and September 2026. Funding agreements and the release of grants will take place once the Foundation has received the Second Stage plan and budget. Programme delivery is expected to begin in October 2026.

How long will the programme run?
Programme activity is expected to run from October 2026 to September 2029.

Contact

Who can we contact if we have further questions?
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