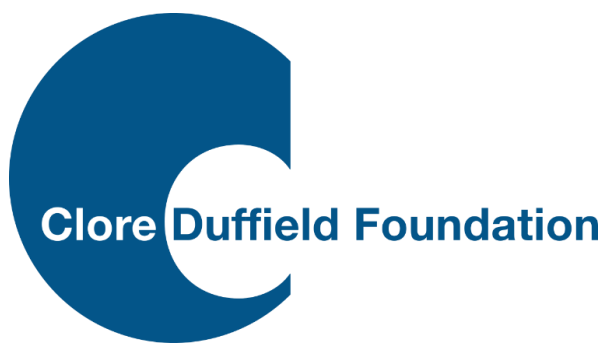




Clare School Choirs and Singing Programme

Frequently Asked Questions @ 21 September 2026

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Eligibility

1. Who can apply?

Organisations working on a not-for-profit basis with expertise and a track record in supporting choirs and group vocal work in schools. Most applicants will be professional music organisations working in schools: choirs with outreach programmes, community music organisations, music services and hubs. Most will be registered charities, and we can also accept CICs, companies limited by guarantee and local authority services.

2. Can a school, a multi-academy trust or a Designated Lead School for Music apply?

Yes, as lead applicant. What we are looking for is choral expertise rather than reach across schools, and the ability to lead outward-facing work at a scale that represents a step-change in your context. Where the expertise sits outside your organisation, tell us who you intend to partner with.

3. Can a fee-paying school apply?

Yes, as lead applicant, on the same terms. The schools you work with must all be state-funded, and your own pupils are not part of the project.

4. Can a fee-paying school be one of the schools in the project?

No. The schools in your project must all be state-funded.

5. Would you support projects working with state-funded special schools or state-funded alternative provision?

These schools are not excluded from the programme. However, we are trying to build across the funded projects a spread of schools that reflects the national picture, so that what the programme learns is useful to as many schools as possible. A project made up largely of special schools or alternative provision would sit outside that, so we would expect them to be part of a wider group of schools rather than the whole of it.

6. Can two organisations apply together?

One organisation must be the lead applicant, hold the grant and be accountable for it. Partnership delivery is welcome, and the form asks you to name delivery partners and describe the relationship.

The schools in your project

7. How many schools do we need?

At least three state-funded schools in England, primary, secondary or both. The form has space for seven; if your project involves more, describe them in your project summary. There is no maximum, although a project spread thinly across many schools will struggle against the criteria.

8. Does an all-through school count as one school or two?

One.

9. What is a lead partner school?

One or two schools you have talked to in depth, that have helped shape what you are proposing, and that will help drive the project across the group of schools rather than only within their own. You need at least one at application stage. You may know the other schools less well, and we ask only how far your conversations have got.

What that leadership looks like will differ. It might involve:

- Helping you work out what the schools in the group actually need, and which schools should be in it.
- Hosting shared activity — joint rehearsals, performances, teacher sessions — where they have the space to do it.
- Their music lead or another teacher supporting staff in the other schools, rather than only receiving support themselves.
- A senior leader talking to their counterparts in the other schools, which carries further than an approach from an outside organisation.
- Helping recruit the remaining schools if the group is not yet complete.
- Staying involved through the three years as the work changes, and helping judge what is working.

None of this is a checklist. What we are looking for is a school that has a stake in the project as a whole.

10. What does 'met, or substantively spoken with' mean?

A conversation, in person or online, with a headteacher or another senior leader, in which you have discussed what the project might involve and established that the school wants it. An email exchange or a phone enquiry is not enough, and nor is a conversation with the music lead alone. You will be asked for a named contact at the school, and we will approach them if your application reaches the second stage.

11. Do the schools have to be near each other?

There is no rule about distance. The schools should form a group that makes sense: able to work together, share practice and sustain something between them once the funding ends. Explain in your application why these schools are a coherent group.

12. Do the schools have to meet a level of disadvantage?

There is no threshold. Levels of disadvantage will be part of how we assess need, and need takes other forms too. If the schools you name are relatively advantaged, tell us what the need is.

13. Do the schools have to contribute money?

No. Money is not expected from schools, although if a school were able to put something towards the project that would be welcome. What we ask for at application is some indication of what your lead partner school would contribute, and that is more often staffing, time, space or help recruiting other schools.

14. What if a school drops out?

Tell us. Schools change — circumstances, leadership, priorities — and a three-year project needs to be able to absorb that. Your project needs to keep at least three state-funded schools, and if a lead partner school withdraws we would want to talk with you about how it is replaced. A school leaving is not in itself a problem with the grant.

15. What if the headteacher we speak to leaves?

Tell us. Senior leadership backing is central to the programme rather than a formality, so we would want to know that the school's commitment has survived the change.

16. Should we involve link governors?

Not at application stage — governor approval is not expected then. As the project develops we would encourage you to involve a link governor. It strengthens support for the work and anchors it in the school's governance rather than in one person's enthusiasm, which matters for what happens after the funding ends.

The application process

17. What is the deadline?

Midday on Friday 30 October 2026. Applications are made through our online form at forms.cloud.microsoft/e/GB8EH7d96w.

18. What are the word limits and what happens if we go over?

Each question has a limit, shown with the question. The form counts characters rather than words, and both are given: the character limit is what the form enforces and the word figure is a guide for drafting. There are nine questions, around 2,300 words in all. The form will not let you go over, so draft your answers where you can see a count and check before pasting them in.

19. Can I save the form and come back to it?

No. The form cannot be saved part-way through and returned to, so please prepare your answers using the Word version of the form and paste them in when you are ready. If you are signed in to a Microsoft account you can save a copy of your response after you submit. We recommend you do not leave submitting to the morning of the deadline.

20. Where can we find out more before we apply?

Read the grant guidance first. We are holding an information webinar on Tuesday 29 September 2026, 1.10 to 1.50pm. It is being recorded: if you cannot

make it, or you are reading this after the date, email us and we will send you the recording. If you are unsure whether your idea fits, get in touch before you spend time on an application.

21. Will we get feedback if we are unsuccessful?

We are a small team and cannot offer feedback on unsuccessful Stage One applications. Organisations that reach Stage Two will receive a short written summary of the interview panel's view.

22. What happens after we submit, and when will we hear?

Applications are assessed in November against the published criteria, with moderation by an independent advisory group. Organisations invited to interview will meet a panel consisting of the Foundation's Director and programme consultant for around an hour in February 2027. More organisations will reach Stage Two than we can fund. Trustees make the final decisions in spring 2027.

23. Who reads our application?

Applications are read by the Foundation's Director and programme consultant, with moderation by an independent advisory group. Trustees make the final decision.

24. How do you choose between two strong applications in the same region?

We are funding a small national cohort, and the cohort as a whole matters as well as the individual projects. We will look at its spread across regions, school phases, types of organisation, and the kinds of need being addressed. A strong application may not be funded for reasons unconnected to its quality.

The funding

25. How much can we apply for?

Between £50,000 and £100,000 a year, for three years. The amounts need not be equal across the three years.

26. What if our project would cost more than £100,000 a year?

The maximum is £100,000 a year. If your project is larger, you can apply for the part of it this grant would fund, and tell us about the other funding involved. No match funding is required, and funding from other sources is welcome.

27. Does the work have to be new?

It has to be different. We are interested in what you would do differently given three years and this level of funding, not in extending exactly what you already do to more schools. Building on existing relationships and existing work is expected; repeating an established model without adapting it to the area and the need is unlikely to succeed.

28. How different does it have to be?

Enough that you could not do it now. The test is whether three years of funding at this level makes possible something your organisation could not otherwise attempt, in schools where it would change what singing is like.

29. What can the grant be spent on?

Practitioner fees and expenses, teacher and practitioner development, teacher release and cover, project coordination and management up to 10% of the grant, resources and materials including essential equipment where justifiable, performance and sharing including venue hire, and travel and transport including travel to cohort meetings.

30. What is the difference between coordination costs and overheads?

The 10% covers your own staff time spent on the project: planning, managing school relationships, programme administration, and time spent on cohort activity. What the grant does not cover is the cost of running the organisation itself — rent, utilities, insurance, governance, fundraising and general marketing — whether or not a share of those is apportioned to the project.

31. How does VAT work?

Where you cannot recover VAT on project costs, include it in your budget figures; we can fund irrecoverable VAT. The grant itself is outside the scope of VAT, so do not add VAT to the total you request.

32. When is the money paid?

Annually in advance, at the start of each year of delivery. The second and third years are subject to satisfactory progress.

If your application is successful

33. When would the work start?

Delivery begins in autumn 2027, with a planning term in the summer term of 2027 involving your schools.

34. What happens between the award in spring 2027 and delivery in autumn 2027?

It's a working period rather than a wait. You would confirm your schools and agree with each of them what the first year looks like. You would develop the first-year budget with the Foundation, including fair rates of pay. You would plan the workforce development strand with the staff who will be part of it, rather than arriving in September with it already designed. You would confirm the practitioners who will do the work.

You would also work with the Foundation on the evaluation and on what the cohort will share, so that both are shaped with the funded projects rather than handed to them. This includes gathering a baseline picture of singing in your schools before the work starts, which is what later years are measured against. There will be an online session in the summer term for the funded projects to

meet, share initial plans and evaluation questions, and agree how the cohort will keep in touch between meetings.

Grant payments are made annually in advance of each year of delivery, so the first payment arrives as delivery begins rather than during the planning term. Planning and coordination are eligible costs within the grant, but you would be carrying them until then, so factor that into your first-year budget.

35. What does taking part in the national cohort involve?

Nominating two senior people closely involved in the work to take part throughout the three years. Meeting twice a year, once in person and once online at around six months, with school staff included in the online session. Taking part in an additional online session in the summer term of 2027, before delivery begins, where the funded projects meet for the first time. Hosting visits from the Foundation and its advisers. Sharing honestly what has and has not worked. Contributing to a published resource developed across the three years. Taking part is a requirement of the grant, and you should budget for travel and accommodation.

36. Is there funding after the three years?

No. This is a three-year programme and there is no fourth year. The point of funding three years rather than one is that the work should be able to continue in the schools without the grant, through the capability built in the school staff and the partnership you have established.

37. What reporting is required?

Annual reporting, and taking part in evaluation. Full requirements will be set out in the grant agreement. We know reporting can become burdensome, particularly for smaller organisations, and we will keep it proportionate to the size of the grant and useful to you as well as to us.

I still have a question

Read the grant guidance first. If you are unsure whether your idea fits, get in touch before you spend time on an application.

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