

# About Seasons of Culture 2026: Nature

## Summary

Seasons of Culture provides grants for one-off projects funded by West Yorkshire Combined Authority & Leeds City Council. The aim of the programme is to increase engagement in arts & culture, upskill participants, support local communities and organisations.

## Seasons of Culture: Leeds 2026 Programme

### The 2026 theme is Nature

Projects will be required to demonstrate thematic relevance to nature through their content, location, or intended outcomes. This includes promoting active travel, engaging audiences in nature recovery, and creating work in green and blue spaces.

We are looking to support activities that explicitly engage with themes of nature, sustainability and climate resilience.

Activities can include

- nature-themed performances, exhibitions, and participatory events in green and blue spaces such as parks, riversides and nature reserves.
- protecting nature and biodiversity through arts and culture
- environmental storytelling
- supporting communities to engage in their blue and green spaces and their natural surroundings
- encouraging more people to walk, cycle or use public transport

**Grants are available from £3,000 to £15,000**

**10% cash match required**

**Deadline: Tuesday 21 April 26 @ 12pm (Midday)**

## What is the Seasons of Culture 2026 Programme for?

- To create new non-profit cultural projects in Leeds.
- We define cultural projects as original, not-for-profit artistic activities in: Circus, Combined Arts, Crafts, Dance, Design, Digital Media, Music, Festival / Carnival, Film, Literature / Poetry / Spoken Word, Live Art, Photography, Theatre, Visual Art or any combination of these art forms
- To build on the legacies of LEEDS 2023 and the years of culture across West Yorkshire
- To promote active travel, engaging audiences in nature recovery, and supporting low-carbon delivery methods
- To integrate cultural engagement with environmental impact, aligning with the West Yorkshire & Leeds City Council Plan's on sustainability, inclusive growth, and access to green and blue spaces.
- To deliver activities that explicitly engage with themes of nature, sustainability and climate resilience. Activities can include nature-themed performances, exhibitions, and participatory events in green and blue spaces such as parks, riversides and nature reserves where possible.
- To develop projects that explore biodiversity, environmental storytelling and the relationship between communities and their natural surroundings
- To support new activity (this can be as part of a reoccurring event – e.g., an annual festival)
- To encourage Leeds artists, producers, co-producers, promoters, community groups and creative partners to deliver activities across the city
- To provide leverage to enable additional funding to be brought to a project and to Leeds
- To support activities that deliver opportunities and benefits across all areas of the city
- We are particularly keen to support activities that reflect the creative and cultural diversity of Leeds. This includes activities by, with or for those with protected characteristics and those living in the most disadvantaged areas of the city.

## Linking in Sustainability / Nature & LCC policies

- [Leeds Ambitions: Sustainable City](#)
- [Leeds Parks & Green Spaces Strategy 2022 - 2032](#)
- [WYCA Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)
- [WYCA: West Yorkshire Climate and Environment Plan](#)
- [WYCA: Net Zero](#)

## Leeds400 Programme

In 2026, Leeds will celebrate the 400th anniversary of the signing of the charter that made Leeds a city. As part of this milestone, we are aligning this programme to the Leeds400 programme. For more information: [Leeds400 - Google Drive](#) or contact: [Leeds400@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:Leeds400@leeds.gov.uk)

## Accessible Applications: What if my disability means I will struggle to use the application form?

To discuss your access needs, please contact us: [culturalgrants@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:culturalgrants@leeds.gov.uk) We will make whatever reasonable adjustments we can to help you to apply for funding.

### Who can apply?

- Individuals registered as living in Leeds
- Cultural and creative organisations registered in Leeds
- Community or voluntary groups registered in Leeds to run a non-profit cultural project
- Commercial (for-profit) organisations registered in Leeds to run a discreet non-profit free to access cultural project
- Leeds City Council projects teams
- Educational establishments registered in Leeds where they are delivering outward-facing activity for the wider community, not for their own students. Activity may take place on the organisation's premises, but it must be delivered outside of teaching hours and be open to the public. Projects that are educational in purpose or primarily benefit students will not be considered.
- Groups of organisations or individuals registered in Leeds working in partnership. One organisation or individual will need to take the lead and have the responsibility for managing the application and being accountable for any grant given. *We expect that a form of partnership agreement will be in place if your application is successful*

### What we cannot fund

- Activity that does not deliver on the annual theme
- Repeat or continuation of activity already being delivered – your project activity must be new
- Activity that does not involve work by artists
- Activity that is not cultural (defined as original not-for-profit artistic activities in: Circus, Combined Arts, Crafts, Dance, Design, Digital Media, Festival / Carnival, Film, Literature / Poetry / Spoken Word, Live Art, Music, Photography, Theatre, Visual Art or any combination of these art forms)
- Schools, Colleges and Universities requesting funding to deliver projects/activity as part of their curriculum solely aimed at their pupils and students
- Core costs, that are not directly related to the delivery of the project, including general running costs, which are already covered by other funding or that should be covered by your own resources
- Ongoing overheads relating to equipment or buildings, such as salaries, insurance, building repairs and maintenance costs
- Activities that provide no benefit or engagement opportunity to people in Leeds
- Individuals and organisations with a registered address outside Leeds
- Capital equipment
- Sports activity, kit or equipment
- Charity fund-raising events
- Competitions or lotteries
- Redistribution of funds as grants to other parties
- Activities that promote party political or religious views

### When is the deadline for applications?

**Deadline: Tuesday 21 April 26 at 12pm (noon)**

### How much can be applied for per application?

**Grants are available from £3,000 to £15,000**

**10% cash match required**

### How much funding is available?

**The budget is £250,000**

We anticipate that demand for funding will be higher than the funds available.

We expect to make between 20 - 30 project awards this round out of an estimated 70 - 80 applications.

### When must the activity take place?

**Activity must be delivered between 1 July – 18 November 26**

**We aim to notify you of the outcome of your application by Mid-June**

We cannot fund activity which has already started so please do not start your project until we have received your signed funding agreement and we have issued the first grant payment.

**Deadline: Tuesday 21 April 26 at 12pm (noon)**

### Is additional funding from other sources required?

**We do not provide 100% of the funding for any projects. You will require a minimum of 10% eligible additional cash funding (cash match) within your project proposal budget.**

You do not need to have additional funding confirmed at the time of applying, however the funding must be confirmed within 6 weeks from the offer letter and 4 weeks before the proposed date of the start of activity. If you are unsuccessful with the cash funding the grant may be reduced or withdrawn.

Additional funding can be:

- Additional funding from other sources such as earned income, sponsorships, trusts and foundations or other cultural funders e.g., Arts Council England or National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- Additional funding from Leeds City Council can only be used if funding has been agreed in writing and designated for this project, funding from the Leeds Cultural Investment Programme Grow:Revenue, Thrive, Activate or Cultural Anchors cannot be used as cash match.
- We welcome the inclusion of in-kind support in your application but in-kind cannot be counted as your additional funding requirement.

Evidence of additional funding must be provided in the form of an offer letter, redacted bank statement, or funding contract for it to be considered confirmed cash funding.

Applications that deliver a higher percentage of cash match or have it already confirmed might be considered stronger in assessment. You should consider this when planning your project.

### How do I apply?

1. Via online application which can be found here <https://leedscultureprogrammes.org.uk/apply-for-funding>
2. FAQs about the application process are here <https://leedscultureprogrammes.org.uk/seasons-culture-nature-application-process-frequently-asked-questions>
3. **Deadline: Tuesday 21 April 26 @ 12pm (Midday)**

### Other information you will need to supply as part of your application

To apply you will need to complete and attach the following documents with your application:

- The online application form
- Budget for your project showing income and expenditure and balanced outcome (template provided)
- An Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring form (template provided)
- Evidence of cash funding, if this is confirmed
- Any supporting materials you would like to accompany your application

### How will we make our decision?

- Completed applications will be assessed by a panel of Leeds City Council officers and/or external assessors
- Applications that are incomplete, ineligible, or submitted using an alternative form cannot be assessed, including the budget
- We may also take references from other relevant funders
- Following assessment, we will balance applications to ensure that there is a spread of investment across the city, a broad representation of the diversity of our city and a range of activity in different art forms. Balancing means that you may make a strong application but still not be successful
- It is possible that we will not invest in your project if you did not follow previous Leeds City Council funding requirements

### When will we make our decision?

We aim to notify applicants by Mid-June

### When will grants be issued and what are the reporting obligations?

If your application is successful, you will receive 75% of the award on receipt of a signed grant agreement and subject to you meeting any additional funding requirements that might be necessary. This process might take a further 2 - 3 weeks from the offer letter so please ensure you build this into your planning

All projects must contribute and adhere to all marketing and promotion in relation to this programme, this will include WYCA, LCC, Leeds400 etc

You will receive the final 25% of the grant award on completion of your project, confirmation of inclusion in comms and on the return of the Project Report.

### UK Subsidy Control

Leeds City Council considers most grant funding from its Cultural Investment Programme will be a subsidy as defined under the Subsidy Control Act 2022 ("the Act") and will be subject to the conditions in the Act. If your application is successful, it may be awarded under the Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) exemption of the Act; the MFA exemption permits an organisation to receive up to £315,000 total MFA funding from all sources, within any three financial year period. In this case you will be sent a declaration form to notify us of any previous MFA funding you have received so far in the current financial year and the preceding two financial years, and to confirm that the proposed grant from Leeds City Council will not take you over your £315,000 MFA limit. If the grant would take you over the MFA limit, then Leeds City Council will have to carry out a further assessment of your eligibility under the Act to receive this funding.

**Please note at the time of launching this funding scheme the government are reviewing the Subsidy Control Act 2022 to streamline Arts & Culture and Community Regeneration routes and may impact on what is required.**

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## Other areas to consider when completing your application

### Leeds Ambitions

- **Healthy - Health and Wellbeing:** Creating a city where everyone can live healthier lives, with the poorest residents seeing the greatest health improvements. Reduce health inequalities across the city, support residents to live active, healthy and mentally healthy lives.
- **Growing - Inclusive Growth:** Fostering an inclusive economy that reduces poverty and inequality by ensuring access to education and supporting business innovation. Promoting culture, sport and major events Leeds's cultural offer makes a huge contribution to enriching people's lives, and it is also a major asset for the city's image and reputation nationally and internationally. Our strong and growing cultural offer makes Leeds an increasingly attractive place to live or do business and forms a key part of plans for growth and regeneration in the next decade.
- **Thriving - Strong Communities:** Building strong, safe, and clean communities where residents have the power to create positive change.
- **Resilient - Sustainable City:** Leeds will be the UK's first net zero and nature positive city, rapidly reducing carbon emissions and restoring nature, supporting people and businesses to make increasingly sustainable choices that improve their standard of living and create a regenerative thriving city.

### Leeds400 Programme

In 2026, Leeds will celebrate the 400th anniversary of the signing of the charter that made Leeds a city. As part of this milestone, we invite organisations to contribute to the Leeds400 programme. For more information: [Leeds400 - Google Drive](#) or contact: [Leeds400@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:Leeds400@leeds.gov.uk)

Examples of suitable activities include:

- Special performances or exhibitions themed around Leeds' history, heritage, or future
- Community engagement projects that explore Leeds' identity or involve residents
- Collaborations with other Leeds400 partners to create joint events or shared experiences
- Educational workshops or talks highlighting Leeds' cultural development over 400 years
- Digital or interactive content celebrating Leeds' story, ie archives, podcasts, or virtual tours
- Public art or installations that mark the anniversary in visible and inclusive ways

### Useful Links and Guidance

<b>SAIL: Sustainable Arts in Leeds</b>	<a href="#">SAIL</a>
<b>SAIL: Resource Hub</b>	<a href="#">Resource Hub - SAIL</a>
<b>Kirklees: Green Events Guide</b>	<a href="#">Green Guide</a> <a href="#">Green Music and Events</a> <a href="#">Green Music and Events – Sustainability Guidance &amp; Checklist</a>
<b>The Carbon Trust</b>	<a href="#">Green events guide   The Carbon Trust</a>
<b>The Purple Guide H&amp;S at events</b>	<a href="https://www.thepurpleguide.co.uk/">https://www.thepurpleguide.co.uk/</a>
<b>Organising a voluntary event</b>	<a href="#">-guide-to-organising-and-running-voluntary-and-community-events</a>
<b>Recycling and waste disposal</b>	<a href="https://www.leeds.gov.uk/a-to-z-of-reusing-recycling-and-waste-disposal">https://www.leeds.gov.uk/a-to-z-of-reusing-recycling-and-waste-disposal</a>
<b>Martyn's Law (Protect Duty)</b>	<a href="https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2022/12/19/martyns-law-factsheet/">https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2022/12/19/martyns-law-factsheet/</a>
<b>Protect UK web site</b>	<a href="#">  ProtectUK</a>
<b>Natasha's Law</b>	<a href="#">Prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) allergen labelling changes for event caterers   Food Standards Agency</a>
<b>Child Employment &amp; Entertainment</b>	<a href="#">Child performance licences (leeds.gov.uk)</a>
<b>Advertise your event on Leeds Inspired</b>	<a href="#">Leeds Inspired</a>