

## Creative Estuary Co-Commission Programme Fund

Thames Estuary (Essex and Kent, the coasts, towns and villages) is an extraordinarily inspiring place. Every local area is a unique place full of potential, and where every individual and community have a right to develop their creativity.

Creative Estuary is seeking applications for creative projects as part of our **Co-Commission Programme Fund**. This initiative aims to put creativity at the heart of local towns across the Thames Estuary area.

Successful applicants will deliver creative, locally led, projects to activate town centres (see list below) in the boroughs of Medway, Swale, Gravesham, Thurrock, Castle Point, and Basildon. The successful applicants will work in partnership with Creative Estuary to achieve their best, for and with local people.

These projects will respond creatively to these town centres (see list below) and will involve diverse communities and young people in the planning and delivery.

### Where?

Projects must make a creative response to one or more of the towns listed below.

1. Gray's town, Thurrock borough;
2. Canvey Island or Benfleet, Castle Point borough;
3. Basildon town Centre, Basildon borough;
4. Gillingham town or Chatham town, Medway borough;
5. Sheerness town and seafront, Isle of Sheppey, Swale borough;
6. Gravesend town and waterfront, Gravesham borough.

The 6 boroughs are designated by Arts Council England as Levelling Up for Culture priority areas. Creative Estuary is working in all these local authority areas, listed above, to develop and sustain the Creative & Cultural Industries.

Creative Estuary would like to see applications from across the area to work in any of the towns listed.

### Why?

The 6 towns listed above contribute to the unique quality of the Thames Estuary area. We believe creativity should and does play a central role in the health, wellbeing, and regeneration of local places where people live, work and study.

We will work with successful applicants to make sure that the important role of creativity is recognised in these local towns and across the Thames Estuary area.

Every local place has unique physical characteristics and diverse creative communities. We will select applicants that are committed to work in partnership with us to support local creativity. We will prioritise projects that show a clear commitment to working with young people and with diverse communities to devise and deliver the projects.

We want to work in partnership with local organisations and, provide funding, for projects that are focused on the towns listed above. The projects that result from this Fund will be promoted and supported, by Creative Estuary, as a portfolio of excellent creative initiatives in the Estuary. The projects will reach into diverse communities and engage local people in high quality creative activities and experiences.

### **What's on offer and what we expect?**

Grant funding for creative projects to work in partnership with Creative Estuary and to be part of our Estuary-wide movement to support the Creative & Cultural Industries.

All projects must respond creatively to one or more of the towns listed above. Projects may take place physically in the chosen town(s) for instance, a performance, exhibition, or events. Projects may also be tours of work to more than one town. Projects may also broadcast or published. We would expect there to be some form of event or sharing in the town(s) chosen e.g. there may be a film showing or a sharing of online resources at a physical event in the town(s).

Applicants must include a practical plan for the involvement of young people (see below our advice section called - 'How should projects include work with young people?').

Successful applicants will receive **grants of £5,000 - £25,000** for their project which will include the involvement of young people.

Successful applicants will work with Creative Estuary as a partner, and they will receive a tailor-made package of partnership support.

The package of partnership support will include some or all of the following: advice and guidance on planning and delivery of your project; communication and promotions of your project; advice and support for engagement strategies; advice and assistance with marketing through social media; advice on recruitment and retention of young people as part of your project plan; advice and assistance in negotiating for the use of indoor and outdoor spaces including liaison with local authorities or other building owners or landowners.

Our local authority partners in the six boroughs have pledged to support these projects. Creative Estuary will work with the successful applicants to assess the needs of their projects and will support any negotiations with our local authority partners.

Successful applicants, applying to the Creative Estuary Co-Commission Programme Fund, have until the end of October 2025 to complete their projects.

In addition, all applicants should also consider being a part of the Estuary Anthology programme, a showcase for independently produced activities taking place across the Thames Estuary during [Estuary 2025](#) from 21-29 June 2025. [EstuaryFestival.com](#)

## The inspiration!

Creative Estuary is interested in receiving applications that propose creative responses to the towns listed above.

We have listed some questions here that may help you to decide on your response to the town(s). Maybe one of these questions rings true for you, and as a starting point for your creativity:

- What's important about the town(s) you have chosen?
- What would you like to change in the town(s)?
- How can you make a creative response to the town that might make other people look at things differently?
- What would you like to contribute to the town(s)?
- Is there something about the town(s) or the way people use the town that inspires you?
- What's important in the town(s)?
- How could you draw attention to an attribute of your town?
- Can you influence the environment of the town, or the way people use the environment of the town(s)?
- What are the unique characteristics of your town(s)?

## What are we looking to fund?

Any creative practice, content, or form of creativity within the Creative & Cultural industries, for example: from film to drama, writing to photography, gaming to social media, performances to dance, music to song, and heritage to painting.

Creative projects should propose the presentation of creative work physically in at least one of the towns. Projects must be able to be shown to, shared with, an audience, physically, virtually, and online. Use of social media platforms as a distribution method is also encouraged to reach a wider audience, although it cannot be the only method of sharing the creative project. Touring a creative project to more than one town is also acceptable and encouraged under this Fund.

Creative projects may be reflective, narrative, realistic, abstract, documentary, fantasy, performance, installation, and or a statement of activism.

Applicants may want to devise a creative project that allows them to test out new ideas or initiatives; or build on previous project work or tours.

Projects will engage diverse communities and will be led by diverse communities.

Projects will provide a practical plan for how young people will be directly involved in the planning and delivery of the projects. Young people may also feature in the engagement activities and/or be a key audience for the activities/project. We are looking for applications that involve young people in the project development, i.e. they are not just the audience.

Creative Estuary has a commitment to environmental responsibility and sustainability, and we want to raise awareness of and embed targets and good practice with co-commission partners. Applicants should indicate a commitment to environmental responsibility and sustainability in the planning and delivery of their projects, including their intention to report relevant data from the project.

### **How should projects include work with young people?**

Creative Estuary believes that it is essential to develop and support emerging talent and future leaders in the Thames Estuary region. Therefore, all project applications must include opportunities for young people to work on, and to learn from, the creative projects. The assessment of project applications will include assessment of the applicant's commitment and evidence of a practical plan to engage young people within the project.

We expect all projects to include young people as active participants. Further to that, we would want to receive project applications that include one of the following:

1. Entry-level paid Young Producer work placement. (Costs must be itemised in the project budget). Part-time work placements enable more flexibility for young people so that they can fit work in around other work or study; allowing them to find their way into the Creative & Cultural Industries sector, and to experience freelance working.

Work placement eligibility criteria:

- Aged between 18 and 25
- Currently residing in one of the following districts of Essex or Kent: Basildon, Canterbury, Castle Point, Dartford, Gravesham, Medway, Southend, Swale, Thanet, or Thurrock.
- Not in full-time education or training at the point the work commences

- No previous experience within creative & cultural industries necessary.
  - Right to work status – proof will be required.
2. On the job learning and training programme for a group of young people e.g. helping to produce the project and or engaging in the creative activities. (Costs to be itemised in the project budget).

Training Programme eligibility criteria:

- Aged between 16 and 25
- Currently residing in one of the following districts of Essex or Kent: Basildon, Canterbury, Castle Point, Dartford, Gravesham, Medway, Southend, Swale, Thanet, or Thurrock.

NB. Current DBS certificates will be required for your project staff/workers /volunteers, and where appropriate, for the young people on work placements. Please ensure that you make provision for these costs in your project budget.

Your project should ensure that your project opportunities are marketed to young people, living in the local area, from a wide range of underrepresented groups. Paid work placements must be at least National Living Wage. Creative Estuary are happy to advise applicants prior to your application.

## Who can apply?

We encourage new applicants, and all previous applicants to our programme, to apply to this fund.

We are keen to receive applications from individuals, groups, and organisations who have received public funds in the past, and from those who have not received or applied to public funds before.

Creative Estuary encourages applications from and with all sections of the diverse communities of Thames Estuary area, including the boroughs of Medway, Swale, Gravesham, Thurrock, Castle Point, and Basildon.

Creative Estuary has worked in partnership with creative individuals and organisations from the diverse communities of the Thames Estuary over the past 5 years through our Estuary Producers programme, our work with young people called Re:Generation 2031, and our creative co-commissions. We encourage all those creatives, organisations, and young people to reconnect with our programme through this fund.

You can contact us for a pre-application chat and advice on how to connect to other organisations intending to apply in the area.

Contact: [info@creativeestuary.com](mailto:info@creativeestuary.com)

All of the following are eligible to apply to this fund: legally constituted groups, charities, CICs, CIOs, creative organisations, community groups; any creative or community group with a steering group or board and a bank account; individuals or groups of individuals who have come together to work on a project and are able to receive and manage a grant and provide full accounts of expenditure against an agreed project plan.

Any creative organisation or other organisation for whom creativity is a key part of their work. Any individual or collaboration of individuals, or community organisation for whom creativity is their vehicle of expression. Any partnership of interested groups and individuals who wish to collaborate on a creative project together. Any partnership of groups or individuals who wish to collaborate across borough areas to work in more than one town together for their creative project.

### **What is the total value of the Co-Commission Programme Fund?**

The total value of the Creative Estuary Co-Commission Fund is £150,000 for creative projects, including the involvement of young people in those projects. The grants will be between £5,000 and £25,000. We anticipate the total number of grants awarded will be between 6 and 12 projects across Medway, Swale, Gravesham, Thurrock, Castle Point, and Basildon.

### **How will applications be assessed?**

Creative Estuary team will convene a panel of stakeholders to assess applications against our criteria.

The criteria are:

1. Creative response to place and likely positive impact on the place.
2. Quality of planned involvement of young people.
3. Quality of project plan – practical and achievable.
4. Financial viability – practical and achievable.

### **What's the timeframe for project delivery?**

There will be two decision points by Creative Estuary team, when we will meet to review applications and invite shortlisted applicants to interview.

**1<sup>st</sup> Call-out opens:** Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June

**Deadline for applications:** 23.59pm 15<sup>th</sup> July

**Assessment & shortlisting of applications:** July/August 2024

**Shortlisted applicants attend an interview:** August/early Sept 2024

**Successful applicants informed:** w/c 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Successful applicants will then be called to a meeting with Creative Estuary to agree their package of support and discuss their plans for their projects.

Successful applicants will be given time to work up their proposals in more detail. Contracts will then be agreed and signed with successful applicants.

**NB. Projects must be completed and fully reported on or before 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025.**

### **Continuing to nurture talent in the Estuary**

Unsuccessful applicants will be offered a meeting with the Creative Estuary team to discuss their plans and other sources of funding. We will provide advice and support as appropriate.

Contact: [info@creativeestuary.com](mailto:info@creativeestuary.com)

Website: [www.creativeestuary.com](http://www.creativeestuary.com)