



# Activate Programme







# Section 1

## Access Support

If you require any access support before you apply or would like to request the application guidance or application form questions in a different format, please email [culture@wmca.org.uk](mailto:culture@wmca.org.uk)

Access support can include, but is not limited to: help with reading our guidance, support using our online grant system, a BSL interpreter, a support worker to help you make an application, etc. Access support is for people who may need support because they identify as disabled, D/deaf, neurodivergent, having a long-term health condition, and/or having a mental health condition.

We understand that our systems and processes can present barriers and we are committed to being open and accessible.

Please email [culture@wmca.org.uk](mailto:culture@wmca.org.uk) if we can help with access support, or if you would like to submit an application in another format (e.g audio/video).

We will work with you to find a practical alternative.

Our online application form has been designed, tested, and maintained with accessibility in mind, from colour contrast and video captions to keyboard navigation.

**Our applicant guidance is available in a variety of formats:**



**Screen  
Reader-friendly  
Large print**



**Easy read**



**Braille (on request)**

## Section 2



### Overview

**The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is a group of 18 local authorities working together to make our region a better place to live.**

The government gives combined authorities the money and power to make decisions for their regions. This is called devolution. It means that decisions are made by people who know their region best.

In 2023, the WMCA received funding from the UK Government to support the legacy of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. This funding is called **Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund**, CWGLEF for short. A total of £4.1m of this funding will support the **arts, culture and heritage sectors**.

This guidance is specifically for organisations or freelancers interested in enrolling onto the Activate Programme.

## Section 3



# What is the Activate Programme?

**The Activate Programme is a new programme established to support the skills development of the West Midlands' cultural and creative sector. The activities are funded through the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund (CWGLEF).**

The programme will empower freelancers and small organisations to advance their career through a series of tailored online workshops, mentoring, masterclasses, in-person networking opportunities, and wellbeing support.

Working with specialists and experts, participants will obtain essential skills and expertise in developing their practice through a series of bespoke workshops and masterclasses in a peer to peer, supportive learning environment. Networking and building connections within the wider sector and beyond will also form part of this programme, as will a range of other wraparound support.

# Activate Programme

## Timeline & Structure

**The Activate Programme will run for 14 weeks between September and December 2024.**

The programme will support 100 participants, made up of 50 freelancers and 50 organisations in five cohorts across the West Midlands region. Each of the five cohorts will be open to 10 freelancers and 10 organisations.

More details on eligibility and access to the Programme can be found in Section 4 of this guidance.

There will be:

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- » 2 cohorts in the Black Country area
  - » 1 cohort in Birmingham and Solihull
  - » 1 cohort in Coventry
  - » 1 cohort running flexibly across the West Midlands Combined Authority area based on demand, with potential participants from the wider non-constituent authorities.
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## Programme Offer and Support

The Activate Programme will draw upon experts to deliver a series of skills interventions for participants across multiple programme strands outlined below.

### 1. Workshops and Learning

Participants will be able to attend online workshops on a range of subjects addressing pathways to development and capacity-building in the cultural and creative sector. Workshops will be delivered interactively, with a focus on peer-to-peer learning and activities supporting practical learning and outcomes.

Participants will be able to choose the most relevant workshops for their experience and attend as many online workshops as desired from the full calendar of activity, typically, participants will be able to choose from up to three online workshops/masterclasses per week. The workshops will be relevant to freelancers and small organisations across a range of themes to provide a comprehensive learning journey. The main target group of this programme are small organisations and emerging talent working in culture, creative industries, and heritage with entry-to medium-level experience in the sector.

Subjects discussed in the workshops include, but are not limited to:

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- » Financial self-management
  - » Pricing and valuing your work
  - » Contract law and business terms and conditions
  - » Brand identity, social media, and avenues of marketing/content creation
  - » Intellectual Property Expertise
  - » Negotiation skills
  - » Futureproofing, business modelling, and succession planning
  - » Building a positive, sustainable work culture
  - » Embedding diversity in your practice and creating inclusive workplaces
  - » Raising finance and accessing grant funding.
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The full calendar of online workshops will be released to participants upon enrolment.

## 2. Facilitated Cohort Support

Each cohort of participants will be led by an experienced cultural sector facilitator. The facilitator will organise monthly meetings for each cohort of participants, promoting peer-to-peer conversation and discussion of challenges, growth opportunities, and navigating the sector. Cohort meetings will take place in-person in the relevant cohort areas to encourage knowledge-sharing for participants working in similar locations. Cohort meetings are mandatory for all participants to ensure a collective and supportive programme experience (unless there are extenuating circumstances).

Facilitators will also support participants by signposting to relevant opportunities and expanding the scope of their learning throughout the programme.

## 3. Mentoring Support

Participants enrolled in the programme will have access to up to four mentoring sessions with a dedicated mentor experienced in working in the West Midlands cultural sector. Participants can access the opportunity after attending three workshops, and they will be matched with a mentor suitable for their area of work, career interests and lived experience.

Mentoring will support participants to make use of the learning obtained across the programme in developing an individual approach to their growth and practice.

## 4. Masterclasses

An offer of bespoke masterclasses delivered by inspirational leaders will run throughout the programme, open to all participants. Throughout their communication with the facilitators, participants can provide ideas of masterclasses they would wish to attend, either approaching specific topics of interest, or learning from individuals and organisations who have modelled novel approaches to cultural work.

## 5. Wellbeing Support

Participants enrolled in the programme will have access to a wellbeing support offer delivered by trained professionals with experience relevant to the cultural sector. Participants who wish to benefit from this opportunity will be confidentially supported by a wellbeing support professional.





## Personal Access Costs

WMCA is committed to supporting programme participants with any access requirements not covered by the Access to Work scheme. Personal access costs are available for people who may need support because they identify as disabled, D/deaf, neurodivergent, having a long-term health condition, and/or having a mental health condition.

Personal Access Costs are costs related to removing barriers to your participation in the Activate Programme. Examples include a carer/personal assistant, BSL interpreter for workshops and cohort meetings, additional travel expenses related to access, costs related to helping you fully engage with the programme, and more.

We will contact all cohort members to discuss any personal access requirements at the beginning of the programme.

If you wish to discuss personal access requirements prior to applying, please contact [culture@wmca.org.uk](mailto:culture@wmca.org.uk)

### Freelancer Bursaries

All freelancers enrolled in the Activate Programme will also receive a £500 bursary to support with costs related to attending the activities of the programme. The bursary is additional to any support for personal access costs.

### A Wrap-Around Programme of Further Support

The Activate Programme also includes other separate opportunities for practitioners in the cultural sector, including grants and other skills development opportunities.

[Please find our other opportunities on the WMCA Culture website](#)



## Section 4

### Who can apply?

**We are looking to support freelancers and organisations working in arts and culture, creative industries, and heritage sectors across the West Midlands region through the Activate Programme.**

The aim of this programme is to support **smaller organisations** and **freelancers** who may have limited resources or may not have been eligible for support on previous business support programmes.

We are also keen to support individuals with, or organisations that are led by people with, lived experience across different protected characteristics and socio-economic backgrounds.



# Who can participate?

## Freelancers

If you are applying as a freelancer, you can attend all the workshops, cohort meetings, mentoring sessions, masterclasses, and access dedicated wellbeing support.

To be eligible to apply as a freelancer, you should:

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- » Be based in the West Midlands (please see Combined Authority area Eligible Locations);
  - » Be directly involved in the production of creative work or in supporting/producing creative work in the culture, creative industries, and heritage sector
  - » Have two forms of valid ID and a bank account in your name to be able to receive the bursary
  - » Be able to attend monthly cohort meetings, as well as a number of workshops, delivered throughout the duration of the programme from September to December 2024; cohort meetings will be organised according to participants' availability.
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# Organisations

We define organisation as a group of people working together.

If you are applying as an organisation, it is expected that:

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- » A single member of your organisation can attend workshops and masterclasses as relevant to their role and area of expertise
  - » You will have to nominate one member of your organisation who is a key decision-maker or who can influence your organisation's direction. This member will attend all mentoring sessions and monthly cohort meetings
  - » Any member of your organisation participating in any of the programme elements (workshops, cohort meetings, mentoring, masterclasses) will be able to access dedicated wellbeing support.

To be eligible to apply as an organisation:

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- » Your organisation's postcode must be in the West Midlands (please see Combined Authority area Eligible Locations);
  - » Your organisation will have a governing document in place. An organisation could be a charity, limited company, community interest company (CIC), or a partnership. We will also consider heritage trusts or foundations, as long as there is a governing document in place
  - » Your organisation is delivering or is involved in supporting/producing the delivery of creative work in the culture, creative industries, and heritage sector in the West Midlands region;
  - » At least one member of your organisation, as explained above, will be able to attend monthly cohort meetings, as well as workshops, delivered throughout the duration of the programme from September to December 2024; cohort meetings will be organised according to participants' availability.



## Eligible Locations

To be able to apply, your postcode must be within the following local authority areas:

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- » [Birmingham City Council](#)
- » [Coventry City Council](#)
- » [Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council](#)
- » [Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council](#)
- » [Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council](#)
- » [Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council](#)
- » [City of Wolverhampton Council](#)

These areas are called the WMCA constituent Local Authority areas and will be given priority for onboarding onto the programme.

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In addition, the application is open to freelancers and organisations in our surrounding non-constituent areas; however, places will be limited.

- » [Cannock Chase District Council](#)
- » [North Warwickshire Borough Council](#)
- » [Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council](#)
- » [Redditch Borough Council](#)
- » [Rugby Borough Council](#)
- » [Shropshire Council](#)
- » [Stratford-on-Avon District Council](#)
- » [Tamworth Borough Council](#)
- » [Telford & Wrekin Council](#)
- » [Warwickshire County Council](#)
- » [Warwick District Council](#)

Please note we expect there to be a lot of applications for this Programme, which could mean that there are more applicants than places available. As a general rule, we are not able to provide feedback.

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## Section 5

# How do I apply?

**If you are interested in applying for the Activate Programme, the online application form can be found on our dedicated online platform**

**[www.wmca.org.uk/culture](http://www.wmca.org.uk/culture)**

### **Application Timeline:**


17 July 2024 – Guidance available on our website

17 July 2024, 12PM – Application portal open

12 August 2024, 12PM – Application portal closed

By 26 August 2024 – Successful applicants notified

Once the application form has been completed, a panel made up of individuals from the WMCA will review applications and notify successful applicants on or before 26 August 2024.



When reviewing your application, we will consider:

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- » Whether you or your organisation are resident in the West Midlands region;
  - » Whether you are currently delivering work in the West Midlands cultural sector;
  - » Whether you qualify as a freelancer or as a micro-/small organisation based on the eligibility guidelines above;
  - » Whether you are able to commit to a 14 week programme of business support including cohort meetings, workshops and mentoring;
  - » Whether the programme is a right fit for your work and level of experience within the sector;
  - » Whether you have considered the benefits of the programme in the development of your work.
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We aim to support people who are typically under-represented in the creative workforce and/or who face barriers to accessing support are encouraged to apply.

Additionally, we aim to ensure that the cohorts are representative of the region and geographies they are supporting. This will include encouraging a diverse range of applicants for the Activate Programme.

## Data Protection and Complaints Policy

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is committed to ensuring that your privacy is protected, and that any personal information you provide to us is used in accordance with the data protection legislation.

A copy of our Privacy Policy for this grant is available on our website on the page dedicated to this fund.

If you would like to refer to our complaints policy, a copy of it can also be found on this fund's page. Alternatively, you can contact us for a copy of either our Privacy Policy or our Complaints Policy.

**If you need any access support, please email [culture@wmca.org.uk](mailto:culture@wmca.org.uk)**



HM Government

**Commonwealth Games**  
Legacy Fund



**West Midlands**  
Combined Authority