

LibraryOn Grants Round 3 programme application guidance

Welcome to the LibraryOn grants round 3. This guidance document will take you through the aims of the fund, the application process and how to apply.

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Introduction to the British Library

The British Library is the national library of the UK. Based in London and Yorkshire, it is free to use and open to everyone for research, inspiration and enjoyment. We work closely with public libraries, and as a national library we were awarded £3.4m of capital funding from Arts Council England to develop a national digital platform, known as LibraryOn. This is our third round of grants to support the national and local digital presence of libraries.

Introduction to LibraryOn

LibraryOn celebrates everything public libraries have to offer to increase the number of people who use them both online and in person. LibraryOn connects people with libraries by enhancing their online presence and discoverability. The LibraryOn delivery team is based at the British Library in London and Boston Spa in Yorkshire.

What is the grant programme and how is it funded?

This is the third round of a grant programme that we are running to enhance the national LibraryOn platform and to support public libraries to develop their own online presence.

Previous grant programmes

In the first two rounds, we awarded just under £1.5m to 48 projects benefiting 81 library services including library consortia. Project ideas submitted to the first and second rounds have helped us identify the types of capital activity that would benefit from further funding.

This third grant programme

The programme is supported through capital funding from Arts Council England. We have c£400,000 available for capital projects to support libraries to collaborate further with LibraryOn and together create a stronger national offer and online presence. The overarching aim is to provide a way for more people to become active and engaged library users. We are particularly interested in attracting lapsed, new and younger audiences.

Timescale

The grant application and delivery period is relatively short, due to capital funding constraints. We recommend you only apply to this fund if you are confident of being able to deliver your proposed activity. The projects need to be delivered rapidly with the award drawn down and spent within the published timeframe. Applicants unable to do so may be at risk of having to return any unused or unallocated funds.

Aims of the grant programme

1. To support libraries to collaborate and align with LibraryOn.org to create a stronger shared offer, brand and presence that grows the national digital profile of libraries.
2. To create smoother user journeys between LibraryOn and library websites.

3. To enhance the online overall discoverability of libraries by making it easier for existing or new customers to find, access, and engage with services and offers libraries provide.

How much funding is available?

We have c. £400,000 that will be available over one funding round. We expect to make between 15 and 20 awards of between £10,000 and £30,000.

What are the timescales?

Due to the short delivery period on this fund, we particularly welcome projects that are ‘ready to go’ or have been reasonably scoped out at the point of application. Applicants should be ready to deliver activity within the set timescales. Successful applicants will have up to 15 weeks (excluding Christmas holidays) to deliver their projects between November 2025 and March 2026.

The programme launches and the application window is open for six weeks.	Tuesday 23 September
Deadline to submit an application.	9am on Tuesday 4 November
Decisions announced for applications.	By Friday 14 November
Final completion date for project activity.	9am on Monday 9 March 2026
Deadline to submit final monitoring/evaluation documents and financial reporting.	9am on Monday 23 March 2026

Given the quick turnaround, we expect to receive applications for activities that are ready to be delivered as soon as funding is confirmed. We anticipate this could include projects that are defined in scope or form a bespoke part of a larger project.

Eligibility

This is a capital grant programme, which means that all expenditure must be capitalised on the applicants’ balance sheet. We can cover 100% of the project costs but all revenue project expenditure must be covered by your own funding or alternative funding sources. Please tell us about this in the budget section of the application. Any additional funding must be confirmed at the point of submitting a full application.

Applicants can submit up to two applications and in addition, can also be part of a consortium bid.

Who can apply

- Local authority-operated library services, including all applicants who applied to the previous two rounds.
- Trusts, mutual and charities commissioned by local authorities to deliver library services.

- Consortia of library services. You must identify a lead service within your application. We particularly welcome applications that include Community Managed Libraries as part of consortia, although they cannot be the lead applicant.
- Archives that operate as part of a statutory library service.
- Applicants that were unsuccessful in the first and second funding rounds either at the Expression of Interest or Full Application stage.
- Applicants in receipt of LibraryOn grant funding from the first and second rounds.

Who can't apply

- Libraries that are not part of a local authority offer.
- Individual branch libraries.
- Academic, voluntary or private libraries.
- Prison libraries.
- Libraries not based in England.

What you can apply for

Projects should align with the aims of the grant programme, as outlined above, by connecting with LibraryOn.org and improving the online presence and discoverability of libraries, making it easier for the public to discover, access and benefit from services and offers provided.

LibraryOn website development:

Alongside the grant programme, the LibraryOn team will undertake further website development to correspond with the strands that you can apply for:

1. **‘Join your library’ feature**, aimed to enable new website visitors to easily become library members. Our marketing campaigns target new and lapsed library users, and this creates a centralised access point for them to join any library in the country. Initially this will be through an onward link to your joining page, and later through an integrated process.

You can apply for grant funding to support this, including any of the following activity:

- A new or improved join online option on your library website
 - New authentication software
 - Significant LMS or software upgrades to enhance joining online.
2. **‘Self-service’ feature**, aimed at the library sector, to enable people who work in libraries to update their own library data and information for the [Library Finder map](#), integrate events to the [Events Listing pages](#), integrate catalogue searches or other feature enhancements for members of the public to access.

You can apply for grant funding to align with this and to enhance the listings for your service on the LibraryOn website, including any of the following activity:

- Additional software or platforms to enhance or create online events listings that can be integrated with LibraryOn website
- LMS upgrades to support catalogue integration with the LibraryOn website
- Virtual tours that can be linked to from the LibraryOn website
- Accessibility features that develop your site and improve your LibraryOn listing

3. **‘Innovative engagement’ offers** primarily targeted at new or lapsed library users or future library users from younger generations. These creative ideas will have national relevance and local resonance linked to services and offers from libraries, or improving national access to those. We are looking for ideas that benefit not just your library service and its users, but the wider library sector in attracting and retaining library users, and building offers and projects at scale.

You can apply for grant funding to support this, such as:

- Ideas for digital features / projects that we could build upon or incorporate on LibraryOn.org, scale up nationally and/or share with other library services.

What you can’t apply for

- Activity outside the above three categories.
- Activity that has already taken place.
- Activity that can’t be delivered within the published timeframe.
- Activity that isn’t capable of connecting to the LibraryOn website either immediately or in the future.
- Standalone staffing costs not directly related to project delivery.
- Costs associated with researching or feasibility studies of a capital asset.
- Purchase of e-books or e-stock.
- Photography or videography used in place of a virtual tour.
- Any activity covered by the grant that cannot be capitalised on your organisation’s balance sheet*.
- Funding for projects which seek to replace core activity covered by local authority funding.

* Unless this aspect of the activity is resourced by other funding confirmed at the point of application

How to apply

We are administering this fund through an online application platform, which is different to the one used in the previous two rounds. Your application must be made using this system and we will use it to communicate with you during the process. You can access the portal by visiting the grants page of the [LibraryOn website](#).

Our terms and conditions, a draft funding agreement and monitoring information is available on our website. We recommend you look at these during the application process to satisfy yourself that they can be met should funding be awarded.

If you have any access requirements, please contact us before making your application by emailing grants@libraryon.org

Submitting an application

Once you've created a user profile the system will give you access to the application questions (see below). The portal will open on Tuesday 23 September and will close six weeks later at 9am on Tuesday 4 November.

What needs to be included

We will ask for details on who is applying and how much you intend to apply for. We will ask you to confirm that expenditure can be capitalised on the balance sheet. You need to select which activity you are applying for. There are three questions to complete which require narrative answers. These are:

- A detailed summary of your project (up to 300 words)
- How does your project meet the aims of the LibraryOn grant programme? (up to 400 words)
- What's your timeframe for delivering the project and how will you ensure it is completed within the deadline for this fund? (up to 300 words).

We will ask you about the budget and how you will spend the grant money. Any costs you include must be capitalisable on your organisation's balance sheet, in line with your own accounting policies. Only costs related to the development/ purchasing of the asset can be capitalised, not initial research/ planning or running costs. If there are revenue costs as part of your project these must be covered by income or in-kind support from other sources confirmed at the point of submitting your application.

We will ask for a budget breakdown against the following headings:

- Subscriptions and/or software costs (you can include costs covering up to 12 months)
- Internal staff working directly on the creation of the asset
- External professional services used to directly create the asset
- Asset purchases
- Other capital costs
- Other costs (if applicable and covered by other confirmed income).

You will also need to complete and upload the template from your finance team which is available as an appendix at the end of this guidance document.

How a decision is made

We will use the answers in your application to decide on a score against our published criteria. We will also consider balancing factors such as the range of applications across each strand, variety of projects and the geographic spread.

Decision criteria

The decision-making criteria are based on the questions we ask in the application. Panel members will use a RAG (red/amber/green) rating to score your project against the following points:

- Does the project meet one of the aims of grant programme?
- Does the project offer value for money and is deliverable within the timescale?
- Whether they recommend the project for funding.

Who is on the decision-making panel

The panel will be made up of LibraryOn team members and representatives from the library sector. An Arts Council England representative may also attend as an observer.

What happens next

If you are unsuccessful

You'll receive a brief feedback statement which will include a standard reason why funding hasn't been awarded. The reasons include:

- Didn't meet the criteria
- Competition for funds
- Other applications preferred.

If you are successful

You'll receive an offer letter and funding agreement which will allow you to accept the grant. We will also ask you to acknowledge and accept our terms and conditions.

We will ask for your bank details. Payments are split into two instalments with 80% of the grant released at the start of the project and the final 20% released when you submit your final monitoring report at the end of the activity.

You must acknowledge your award on all online resources and any printed or published material relating to the grant activity. This includes using the LibraryOn and Arts Council England logos. Details on how to use these are included as an appendix at the end of this guidance.

How to draw down payments

We will email you the offer letter and funding agreement via DocuSign. This will go to the contact named in your application who is authorised to sign the agreement.

The funding agreement should be electronically signed as soon as possible after receiving it. Instructions will be included in the email about how to sign. Once you've signed, the agreement is automatically sent back to us for our signature to be added. We will then add the funding agreement to the application portal from our side. The agreement will be visible for you to view in the portal, and you will also receive a copy once we have signed.

We will ask for your bank details. The bank details form will be available to download from the portal and will be on the LibraryOn website. We will also ask for evidence of your bank account, which could be a redacted bank statement or a blank paying-in slip or check. You must complete the bank details form then upload it to the portal along with your bank account evidence. To receive the final payment, you must complete and submit the final monitoring information on the online application platform.

You will be responsible for ring-fencing the funds you receive in an appropriate way.

Monitoring requirements

At the end of the project, we will ask you to complete a simple final monitoring report and provide a case study. Details of what we will ask are included as an appendix at the end of this guidance. The questions cover:

- What you have achieved
- Challenges and what you have learnt
- The impact on your online presence and access for users. This includes figures on how your project has led to an increase in digital engagement.
- How the activity has contributed towards the digital capacity of your service.
- How many users have engaged with your project.

The case study can be in a format you choose, although should include testimony from a library user/ users that benefitted from the outputs of the project.

If possible, we would also like you to submit images and/or any videography of the funded activity. Material may be used on the LibraryOn website or in marketing materials to promote libraries and we can supply permission forms.

We will also ask for details on your final income and expenditure and project accounts.

We want to create new features and functionality that responds to the needs of libraries and library users. The monitoring information forms an important part of how we continue to develop LibraryOn into the future.

We will ask applicants to help evaluate activity for up to 12 months after projects have been completed. This will be in the form of updated stats for user engagement, based on the questions asked in the monitoring report. We recognise that the full benefit may not be understood until sometime after the activity has ended, and we are interested in capturing

longer-term sector impact. We will be looking at the impact on individual library services and the wider library sector.

Community of practice

Through our first grants round, we established a Community of Practice for projects to learn from one another and help support learning. In the past this has included sessions where applicants come together online to share learning and expertise. We continue to offer sessions from digital experts on topics selected by the library sector. Recordings of past sessions and details of upcoming ones can be found on the [grant pages](#) of the LibraryOn website. The group uses Basecamp to share ideas, exchange information and chat about projects. The expert sessions and Basecamp are also open to anyone from the library sector. If you would like to join Basecamp, please email hello@libraryon.org and ask to be added.

Complaints

If you have concerns about the process or feel you want to make a complaint, we will respond to you swiftly and follow our complaints procedure. We don't have an appeals process for grant decisions, however if you feel you have been treated unfairly or we haven't followed our procedures correctly, you can email our Programme Manager on jill.brown@bl.uk or contact grants@libraryon.org

Other sources of funding

National Lottery Project Grants

Arts Council England supports arts and cultural activity through its open access funding scheme, [National Lottery Project Grants](#).

It may also be useful to refer to the [library information sheet](#) available on Arts Council England's website.

Heritage Fund

Funded through the National Lottery, [the Heritage Fund](#) supports projects related to 'the past that you value and want to pass onto future generations'. For libraries this could be about making collections more accessible and/or engaging people with interpreting new and existing collections.

National Lottery Community Fund

This fund has several different strands which focus on supporting work with and for communities. Read through the [open programmes](#) to find out more.

Resources

CILIP has produced an online learning course for [digital leadership in libraries](#) which may be helpful in planning project ideas.

Arts Council England's [Digital Culture Network](#) provides free resources and training opportunities across a range of technologies. They also produce a monthly newsletter and offer free one-to-one sessions with their Tech Champions who are experts in all things digital.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions about your application.

Email us on grants@libraryon.org

Our website is [LibraryOn - Grants programme](#)

Appendices

- Template for finance teams to complete
- Profile form and application templates
- Terms and conditions and draft funding agreement
- Branding and logo guidance
- Final report template.

Template for finance teams



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Template for finance teams to confirm expenditure can be capitalised.

Please complete and sign the below declaration to confirm your finance team is aware of the project and is able to capitalise expenditure on the balance sheet.

The finance team agree that the expenditure detailed in this LibraryOn grant application can be capitalised on our balance sheet.

Signed [Finance officer]

Name.....

Library service.....

Date.....

Copy of the application questions

*The information below is for your reference, please input answers into the application portal. The link is available on the [grants page](#) of the LibraryOn website.

Library service:	
<i>If applying as a consortium, please input the name of the library service you have chosen to be the lead applicant</i>	

First name:	
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Last name:	
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Job title:	
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Email address:	
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Postal address:	
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Name, job title and email address for contact authorised to sign the grant agreement if funding is awarded:	
<i>If the same as above, please leave blank.</i>	

What is the registered legal address?	
<i>If the same as above please leave blank.</i>	

What is the legal name of your organisation?	
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What name is your bank account registered in?	
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Are you applying as a consortium?	Yes No
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If yes, please provide the names of the other services and contact names:	
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Name of your project:	
<i>Please add a short project title for identification purposes.</i>	

Please give a brief outline of your project: <i>Maximum 100 words</i>	
<i>This will be published on the LibraryOn website if funding is awarded.</i>	

How much are you applying for?	
<i>Applications can be for between £10,000 and £30,000</i>	

Please provide a start and end date for your project:	
<i>Projects should not exceed 17 weeks in length and delivery should be complete by Monday 9 March 2026.</i>	

Please select which activity you are applying for:	Join your library feature	
	Self-service feature	
	Innovative engagement offers	

Please provide a detailed summary of your project activity <i>Maximum 300 words</i>	
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How does your project meet the aims of the LibraryOn grant programme? <i>Maximum 400 words</i>	
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What's your timeframe for delivering the project and how will you ensure it is completed within the deadline for this fund? <i>Maximum 300 words</i>	
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Type of expenditure	Expenditure detail
Software or subscription costs (you can include costs covering up to 12 months)	
Internal staff working directly on the creation of the asset	
External professional services used to directly create the asset	
Asset purchases e.g. hardware	
Other capital costs	
Other costs (if applicable and covered by other confirmed income)	
<i>We can cover 100% of the project costs but all revenue project expenditure must be covered by your own funding or alternative funding sources. If any activity is covered from other sources, please indicate which elements of expenditure this will be allocated towards.</i>	

How have you worked out the above figures? Please provide detail for each heading. <i>Maximum 400 words</i>	
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I confirm that I have discussed the project activity with the finance team to ensure it and any procurement processes can be delivered within the published timeframe; and the finance team confirms that the expenditure can be capitalised on the balance sheet.	
--	--

Please complete and upload the template from the guidance document confirming your finance team is aware of the project and is able to capitalise any expenditure on the balance sheet.

Declaration

I confirm that:

- I have read the guidance for applicants and additional information.
- To the best of my knowledge, the details provided in this application are accurate.
- Expenditure can be capitalised on the balance sheet if funding is awarded.

Name:	
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Terms and conditions and draft funding agreement

Available on the Round 3 grants page of the LibraryOn website.

Branding and logo guidance

The LibraryOn grants programme is managed by the British Library and funded by Arts Council England using public money. To celebrate funding projects like these for public libraries we want to let people how your project has been supported. The Arts Council England and LibraryOn logos, should, therefore, be applied to all public-facing materials you create to promote your new digital presence including websites, films and any other media or assets you may create to talk about your new resource. You can download the logos on the [Arts Council England](#) and [LibraryOn](#) websites.

If you cannot apply the logos because space is restricted, please use this text credit: 'Supported by LibraryOn using public funding by Arts Council England'.

If you need help or have any queries on this guidance, please contact us at: grants@libraryon.org

Final report template



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Final report template

Reporting must be completed online using our online application platform. You may find it easier to complete this template first, then cut and paste your answers into the system.

Following the completion of your project, we will also ask for a case study in a format of your choosing. The case study should include testimony from a library user/ users that benefitted from the outputs of the project.

What have you achieved?
Up to 400 words

What have been the challenges?
Up to 300 words

What have you learnt?
Up to 300 words

What has been the impact on online presence and access for users?
Up to 400 words

How has the activity has contributed towards the digital capacity of your service?

Up to 400 words

How many people have engaged with this project? Please feel free to provide detail explaining how this figure has been calculated.

If your activity focused on join online, how many people joined the library using your new join online functionality?

Since the new functionality was implemented	
Overall online join ups in 2025/26	
Overall online join ups in 2024/25	
Please feel free to provide any additional information about the above figures.	
In terms of web stats, how many sessions has the join online pages on your website achieved since launching?	

If your activity focused on enhancing your library offer through virtual tours, events platform or other, how many people have viewed the feature?

Please feel free to provide any additional information about the above figures.

If your activity had a registration element e.g. event sign-ups, how many registrations have you received since the feature or platform launched? (please specify which feature or platform)

Please feel free to provide any additional information about the above figures.

If your activity focused on creating a new feature or offer how many impressions have you achieved since it launched?

Please feel free to provide any additional information about the above figures.

Income for this activity

	Original income	Final income	Income notes
Grant programme award	£	£	
If applicable, any other income received for this project	£	£	

Expenditure for this activity

	Original expenditure	Final expenditure	Expenditure notes
Subscription and/or software costs (up to 12 months)	£	£	
Internal staff working directly on the creation of the asset	£	£	
External professional services used to directly create the asset	£	£	
Asset purchases e.g. hardware	£	£	
Other capital costs	£	£	
If applicable, other costs	£	£	

I confirm that expenditure for this project has been capitalised on our organisation's balance sheet (Please check the ☐ box)

Your feedback is important to the LibraryOn team. Please let us know how we did.
Thinking about the grant you have received from us, how did we:

A. explain about eligibility to apply for funding?

Very well	
Well	
Neither well nor badly	
Badly	
Very badly	

B. explain the application process?

Very well	
Well	
Neither well nor badly	
Badly	
Very badly	

C. manage your application for funding?

Very well	
Well	
Neither well nor badly	
Badly	
Very badly	

D. respond if you contacted us for advice or information?

Very well	
Well	
Neither well nor badly	
Badly	
Very badly	

Please let us know if you have any other comments