



Being Human Festival

Being Human Festival: 5–14 November 2026 Application Guidelines

About the Festival

Being Human Festival is the UK's national festival of the humanities and returns in November 2026, delivering a celebration of the humanities research that inspires people and showcases creativity and curiosity in communities across the UK.

Being Human is a place-based festival that emphasises interaction, collaboration and engaging with communities outside of higher education. We will support innovative, participatory, and creative activities that foster genuine, two-way connections with communities. Events are expected to take place off-campus (exceptions will only rarely be permitted) and should be designed to facilitate mutual learning between researchers and publics.

We welcome applications that show evidence of collaboration with internal colleagues or external partners, or that build on successful past partnerships. We encourage you to coordinate internally to develop collaborative applications, including with colleagues in public engagement or research offices. We value and are keen to support partnerships in which the external partners are providing substantial input to the application and activities, such as through co-producing and co-developing the activities.

More information about the festival's priorities and audiences can be found on our [website](#).

Being Human Festival is led by the School of Advanced Study, University of London, in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the British Academy.

2026 Festival Theme: 'Crossroads'

Our festival theme in 2026 is Crossroads: a place of decision, encounter, and consequence. From the streets of protest to the meeting points of cultures, from moments when society pivots to the choices we face today about climate, democracy, and technological change, we invite researchers to explore spaces of convergence and divergence, where paths meet, decisions will be made, and history turns. [Read more about the theme.](#)

How to take part in Being Human Festival

There are three different pathways to apply to take part in the festival:

1. Institutional Grant – run a Festival Hub

Institutional Grants are the largest funding awards made by Being Human. These awards are institutionally focused, supporting locally relevant programmes of activity involving multiple researchers from different disciplines researching different topics and subject areas. Festival Hubs must engage with carefully chosen cultural or community partners (e.g. a school, a charity, an arts organisation). In general, we would recommend that you partner with multiple partners across your programme of events.

Institutional Grants are intended to support the development of institutional capacity for public engagement activity in the humanities (e.g. by offering opportunities for public engagement teams to do something humanities-focused, to try something new or to work with new communities).

Festival Hubs offer clusters of best practice public engagement activities within the festival programme. They provide coherent, imaginative and eye-catching programmes of events that raise the festival's profile nationally as well as regionally. Festival Hub programmes should be made up of 4-8 separate events in a range of formats.

A key condition of Institutional Grants is that they are match-funded (to match the total amount of your application, or £5,000, whichever is higher) by the institution awarded them, providing scope for more ambitious programming.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) or AHRC-recognised Independent Research Organisations (IROs) can apply for Institutional Grants of £4,000 – £8,000.

More information about Institutional Grants and how to apply is available on our [website](#).

2. Festival Event Grant – run single or multiple festival events

Festival Event Grants are designed to support ambitious, 'best practice' activities that would not run without financial support from the festival. These projects are usually led by individual researchers, unlike Festival Hubs. Grants

can be used to fund projects culminating in either a single event or a small series of activities. Activities should be ambitious and creative while still carefully thought through and achievable. If running a small series of events, we encourage you to think about the events as a coherent series of related events, and to convey the relationship between the events in your application.

Festival events funded through this pathway must engage with carefully chosen cultural or community partners (e.g. a school, a charity, an arts organisation etc.), engage with our priority audiences (find out more on our [website](#)) and support excellent two-way public engagement with humanities research.

Whilst the main activity should take place within the festival dates, funded projects can incorporate elements of activity outside the festival dates, working directly with communities. For example, workshops or crowd-sourcing activities might run in the lead-up to the festival, gathering material to feed into a festival performance, or further collaborative activity might happen after the festival. We are keen to support projects which integrate aspects of community collaboration and co-production, and which help to embed and sustain civic engagement activities. We welcome projects which may leave a legacy beyond the duration of the festival.

Funding of up to £4,000 is available to researchers at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and [AHRC-recognised Independent Research Organisations \(IROs\)](#).

More information about Festival Event Grants and how to apply is available on our [website](#).

3. Festival Event pathway – run an event without festival funding

The Festival Event pathway offers a great way to get involved in the festival for anyone who is not seeking festival funding, and has a connection to humanities research, including universities, museums, archives, galleries, publishers, subject associations, societies, libraries and more.

Events should be carefully thought-through activities that are easy to organise. Activities in this category can make use of existing resources, formats and platforms, while giving them a ‘Being Human Festival’ twist. They run without a financial contribution from the festival (perhaps using institutional funding, resources from research grants, etc.) but benefit from the development, training, support and publicity that Being Human can offer.

Activities of this kind form an important part of the festival programme. By submitting an event to the national festival of the humanities, you are helping to make sure access to research continues to thrive and grow, as well as raising awareness about why the humanities are so important to our everyday lives. We

also hope taking part in the festival will be fun and rewarding, as well as offering the opportunity to engage with new audiences.

More information about the Festival Event pathway and how to apply is available on our [website](#).

What support is available?

Different levels of financial support are available through the Institutional Grant and Festival Event Grant pathways. For specific support relating to each pathway, please visit our [website](#). In addition to this specific support, all festival organisers will have access to the following support and resources:

- a training programme run throughout the festival year for practical advice on designing, planning, promotion and delivery of your project;
- public engagement toolkits, resources and helpful advice from the festival team;
- guides to promoting your event that contain hints and tips about marketing and press;
- copies of Being Human print and digital materials geared towards promoting the national festival and access to other marketing materials to promote your activity;
- templates you can use to produce your own marketing materials (posters, banners, digital and PowerPoint templates);
- support from the central Being Human social media accounts.

You may also be invited to take part in centrally organised festival activities such as the festival launch.

Application process

Application forms for all activities must be submitted online using [Survey Monkey Apply](#). Application guidance for all pathways can be found on our [website](#), including links to the application forms.

Word versions of the application forms are available on our website, which can be used for reference when preparing your application. However, please note that applications will only be accepted through Survey Monkey Apply, so please allow enough time to input your application to Survey Monkey Apply before the deadline.

Where applicable, please upload a completed activities grid (as provided), budget template (as provided), and letters of support from community and cultural partners and from PhD supervisors (as PDF files), when submitting your application.

We recognise the benefits of festival applicants and organisers being from diverse backgrounds and we welcome applications from all sections of the

community. For our evaluation purposes, we supply a demographic questionnaire as part of the application to monitor our effectiveness in this regard. This section of the application form will be detached from your application and will not be used as part of the selection process.

If you have any questions about the application process, please email beinghuman@sas.ac.uk.

Help to apply

We want to make the process of applying to Being Human Festival accessible and inclusive. If you need support in making an application, there are a number of ways we can help.

Application guidance is available in accessible formats, including formatted PDF, Plain Text and large print. If you require an alternative format, please get in touch.

The Being Human team is on hand to support applicants with questions about the guidance or making an application. You can email beinghuman@sas.ac.uk with questions or book in a 10-minute call.

We will be hosting an information webinar on 25 February – [please sign up here](#). The webinar will be recorded and uploaded to the Being Human website.

If you have any other requests for access support, please contact us on beinghuman@sas.ac.uk.

Application deadlines

Pathway	Application deadline
Institutional Grant	Thursday 16 April, 5pm
Festival Event Grant	Thursday 16 April, 5pm
Festival Event (unfunded)	Friday 5 July, 5pm

If you have any questions or would like to contact the Being Human team, please email beinghuman@sas.ac.uk.