



Film Exhibition Fund (FEF): Support for Independent Film Exhibition Funding Guidelines 2025/26

Film Hub Midlands, BFI Film Audience Network

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1. Introduction

The BFI Film Audience Network (FAN) reaches out across the UK to ensure people have the maximum possible opportunity to watch and enjoy a diverse range of films, regardless of geography or circumstance.

As part of FAN, Film Hub Midlands has been awarded funding from the BFI National Lottery to reach a broad range of audiences with independent UK and international film and deliver against the priorities set out in the BFI's Screen Culture 2033 [strategy](#):

The Film Exhibition Fund aims to help the independent film exhibition sector and support the development of cultural organisations across the Midlands. It will support exhibitors to carry out audience development activity in line with **one or more** of the BFI and FAN priority outcomes as follows:

- **Engaging with Children and Young People**

We recognise the important role early cinema visits have on the health of the exhibition sector both now and in the future. By engaging with children, families and young people, organisations can introduce new audiences to their work and foster future generations of cinemagoers. When looking at activity regarding young people we encourage organisations to think about how it represents audience development within their contexts and intersects with other priority areas.

- **Accessing a wider choice of film**

One of our key aims is to support everyone to be able to see the widest range of film and moving image, including classic and international cinema, documentaries, TV and screen heritage and games. We are keen to support programmes and projects that are inclusive and reflect a diversity of lived experiences to broaden horizons and bring people together for communal big screen experiences.

- **Tackle social, economic, and geographic barriers**

We want to improve access to screen culture for people across the Midlands by lowering barriers such as prohibitive costs, lack of cultural provision, lack of accessible screenings and threshold anxiety. We are particularly keen to support projects that engage audiences from working class backgrounds and projects engaging with disabled people, LGBTQAI+ people, Black, South Asian, South East and East Asian people and others of the global majority.

- **Engaging with heritage collections that better reflect the diversity of the UK**

Providing audience access to screen heritage is a key component of a diverse and rich screen culture and deepens our understanding of both the past and present. We can support activities that showcase various types of screen heritage material. If your proposal includes archival material, please ensure you have contacted the relevant collection before seeking support from us.

Underpinning our work are the following cross cutting principles that all supported activity will need to address.

- **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion**

FAN champions everyday inclusion. We would like to see how your project will meaningfully contribute to diversifying audiences for the widest range of cinema and how it will broaden the range of stories represented on screen. Where applicable we also seek opportunities to tackle under representation in the exhibition workforce.

- **Environmental Sustainability**

We are committed to minimising the negative environmental impact of the work we support and ask all members recipients to contribute to this aim. In your proposal, please summarise steps you are taking both to minimise the environmental impact of your activity and -where applicable - taking opportunities to improve audience awareness of the climate and biodiversity crises.

All activity supported by our funding should address the BFI Diversity Standards.

We will prioritise proposals that help us meet our priority outcomes and inclusion targets:

- Disabled (including those with a longstanding physical or mental condition and those identifying as D/deaf or neurodiverse)
- Black and Global Majority
- Gender balance – of those identifying within the gender binary (also monitoring trans and non-binary identities)
- Sexual identity – those identifying as LGBTQIA+
- Working class background
- Accessible screenings (closed captions, audio description, BSL interpretation, marketing materials, ticket incentives or discounts)
- Relaxed screenings (autism, neurodiverse, dementia or baby-friendly)

2. What is The Film Exhibition Fund?

The Film Exhibition Fund aims to bring a wider and more inclusive screen culture to communities across the Midlands. The fund is intended to support Film Hub Midlands Members to reach new and diverse audiences and to offer the best in independent British, international films that are outside the mainstream and broader screen experiences to their local communities in line with the outcomes above.

Support is available for new activity as well as for sustaining and expanding existing provision including time-limited, regularly occurring activity such as film festivals where they are able to demonstrate an especially strong fit with the priorities and outcomes outlined in this document and that any proposal adds value, reaches a new audience or expands the programme in distinctive

ways. Hub members seeking support must also be able to set out how they will respond to the [BFI Diversity Standards](#).

Overall, priority will be given to those Hub members with a demonstrable track record of work that meets FAN's objectives and to projects based on screening independent British and international films that are outside of mainstream, and which help audiences experience a rich diversity of stories on screen.

If you are not able to meet this requirement, please look at our Pitch Pot programme which is designed for smaller or more experimental projects.

Activity supported by The Film Exhibition Fund can vary in length, scale and format - all delivery, however, should take place between **September 2025 and February 2026**.

Members can apply for £2,000 - £10,000 per year to support audience-facing screening projects. Please note that projects seeking the maximum sum will be expected to respond most strongly to these guidelines.

We are looking for projects that respond creatively to the priority areas and specialist advice may be available to projects that focus on disability, breaking down economic barriers and engaging working-class audiences.

3. Key info at a glance:

Total amount available: £40,000

Financial support: £2,000 to £10,000

Open for proposals: Monday 30 June 2025

Deadline for proposals: Monday 28 July 2025, 5pm

Financial support confirmed from: Week beginning 1 September 2025

Activity window: From September 2025 to February 2026

4. Our commitment to inclusion

BFI Diversity Standards

In line with the [BFI Diversity Standards](#), we encourage activity aimed at, and/or co-produced with, under-represented groups. The Standards focus on under-representation in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, sex, sexual orientation, and religion and belief (as they pertain to the [Equality Act 2010](#)), as well as socio-economic background, caring responsibilities and geographical location.

We are particularly committed to ensuring disproportionately affected audiences, such as disabled, those with a longstanding physical or mental condition, and those identifying as D/deaf or neurodiverse, can experience independent film and be welcomed into cinema spaces.

All Film Exhibition Fund proposals will be asked to demonstrate how their activity promotes inclusivity among audiences, on-screen and – where applicable - in the workforce.

We will prioritise proposals that help us meet our priority outcomes and inclusion targets:

- Disabled (including those with a longstanding physical or mental condition and those identifying as D/deaf or neurodiverse)
- Black and Global Majority
- Gender balance – of those identifying within the gender binary (also monitoring trans and non-binary identities)
- Sexual identity – those identifying as LGBTQIA+
- Working class background
- Accessible screenings (closed captions, audio description, BSL interpretation, marketing materials, ticket incentives or discounts)
- Relaxed screenings (autism, neurodiverse, dementia or baby-friendly)

We ask that all proposals positively respond to the Standards, and priority will be given to proposals that do this in a clear and convincing way. Applicants should particularly focus on Standard D and how their proposal provides inclusive audience development opportunities and Standard E requires evidence of conscious commitment and tangible actions to improve overall accessibility.

If your project requires additional accessibility requirements these are eligible to be added to your budget.

The Hub team is on hand to help Hub members engage with the Standards, please get in touch for more information.

Responding to the Standards

Standard A - On-screen representation: Tell us about your film programme; does it feature meaningful representations of lead characters and supporting characters from under-represented groups? Do the films feature themes, stories or locations not often seen in cinema?

Standard B - Project team: Tell us about your team; are key personnel representative of your local area and/or the project's intentions? If your project involves recruitment or partnership working, are processes in place to ensure these opportunities are inclusive? Smaller project teams may wish to discuss volunteer/community participants and/or the filmmaking teams represented in their programme.

Standard C - Industry Access: Tell us about any professional or informal development opportunities; will the project team take part in training or mentoring programmes? Will your activity provide new employment opportunities or career progression for team members from under-represented groups? Will you be engaging community groups or participants?

Standard D - Audience Development: Tell us about your audiences; are you planning to engage under-represented groups? How will you do this - do you have a community engagement strategy or appropriate partnerships in place?

Standard E – Accessibility: Tell us about your accessibility plans; Is your website / venue accessible? Do you programme new release captioned films? What steps are you taking to make your events accessible and welcoming to disabled audiences?

5. Additional areas of focus

- **Prevention of Bullying, Harassment and Racism**

Bullying, harassment and racism have no place in our industries, and we expect all organisations we fund to share our commitment to this principle.

The BFI and BAFTA have developed a set of principles and zero-tolerance guidance in consultation with organisations, unions and industry bodies across the film, television and games industry in response to urgent and systemic issues.

These documents can be found in the BFI's [Bullying and harassment prevention hub](#). We ask all applicants to engage with these principles by, as a minimum, reading these documents and sharing them within your organisation.

All our funding agreements include a warranty seeking compliance with all applicable legislation and codes of practice relating to this matter.

- **Safeguarding**

Projects involving children, young people or vulnerable adults should have appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies in place. Where relevant, you will be asked to confirm this in your proposal.

For more information on safeguarding, read the [Guide to Safeguarding for Film Exhibitors](#) published by our colleagues at Film Hub London.

6. Am I eligible?

You must be a Film Hub Midlands Member in order to access Film Hub Midlands funding opportunities. Our Membership includes organisations of various sizes and shapes - from community cinemas to festivals to multi-arts centres. Not yet a Film Hub Member? [Click here](#) to find out how to join the Hub and the eligibility criteria.

Your organisation must be legally constituted and centrally managed in the UK. This includes:

- Limited Liability Company or Partnership registered at Companies House;
- Community Interest Company registered at Companies House;
- Local authority or statutory body;
- Charity or trust registered with the Charity Commission (including UK universities);
- If not registered with the Charity Commission, universities principally regulated by one of the Higher Education Funding Bodies (being the Higher Education Funding Council for England);
- Unincorporated associations and clubs (an organisation set up through an agreement between a group of people who come together for a reason other than to make a profit. The

organisation must have 25 or more members, and has rules regulating who can be a member).

- Your organisation will be expected to have robust governance and management structures and processes in place.

Organisations who have received previous support from the Film Hub Midlands are eligible to apply. Proposals from these organisations should be for new work or a demonstrable expansion or development of current activity.

7. How much can I ask for?

Members can request up to £10,000 per proposal.

Please note that we are not able to fund 100% of activity costs. While we do not have a set percentage requirement for match funding, we expect to see box office income and other partnership support - whether in cash, volunteer time or other in-kind contributions - included in the budget.

If your project requires less financial support (up to £2,000), you might consider applying to our [Pitch Pot](#) Awards.

The deadline for final proposals is **Monday 28 July at 5pm**.

To help you complete your budget, we have created a [specific budget guidance](#) document.

8. Use of financial support

Each organisation will have its individual needs - however, broadly speaking, the Film Exhibition Fund can support the following costs.

Eligible expenses:

- Film rights and print transport
- Activity-specific staffing costs - for example curation, marketing or project management expenses
- Venue hire and activity-specific equipment costs
- Marketing, Advertising and PR campaigns
- Event costs for enhanced screenings - for example speaker, talent or artists fees
- Volunteer and evaluation expenses
- Accessibility costs - for example creating accessible supporting materials, subtitling fees
- Outreach and community inclusion costs - for example providing transport for isolated audiences,
- Audience development expenses - for example young programmers' workshops
- Rights clearances and curation fees for screen heritage materials
- Costs related to online activity such as web platform or hosting fees

This list is not exhaustive and other items may be considered.

Ineligible Expenses:

All proposed spend should contribute to the activity proposed. Beyond this, there are some areas not suitable for support from The Film Exhibition Fund. These include:

- Filmmaking costs (including workshops), support for filmmakers to develop or distribute their own work, or for programmes that exclusively engage filmmaker audiences
- Capital costs covering building repairs
- General running costs of organisations not specifically related to the activity
- Activity that should be covered by statutory education, including events taking place on school grounds/in school hours
- Events not primarily focused on film exhibition
- Activity covered by existing funding arrangements
- Programmes that duplicate provision in the same area
- Activity taking place in a venue not open to the public - for example members only venues
- The set-up of new film clubs and the opening of new cinema venues

9. How to seek financial support

You will be asked to submit a short [proposal form](#) and **budget**. The proposal form will give you the opportunity to describe your activity and how it contributes to Film Hub Midlands's priorities as outlined in this document. If you have any questions about the fund, the priorities, the submission process or would like to discuss your proposal, please get in touch. If you have not accessed funding from FHM in the past, we strongly recommend contacting us in advance of submitting your proposal.

10. Access Support

If you have particular access requirements, would like to submit your proposal in another way or have queries about the process, get in touch with our team who will be happy to discuss this.

If you have access requirements that mean you need assistance when seeking support from Film Hub Midlands, you may be able to request this through the BFI Access Support Scheme. Find out [more information here](#).

11. Assessment criteria:

Your proposal will be assessed by the Film Hub Midlands team and (where applicable) external advisors who will specifically look at:

- Activity eligibility: Does the proposed activity meet the priorities and timescale of the fund?
- Audience reach: What are the audience targets, and will the planned activity deliver them? Subsidy per head will be a consideration. Whilst we appreciate predicting admissions can be difficult, please provide carefully considered estimates or ask us for guidance.
- Impact: What is the cultural ambition of the proposed programme? Are relevant partnerships in place to effectively deliver the activity?
- Organisational capability: Is the organisation demonstrably able to carry out the proposed activity? This will include consideration of project management, management oversight, risk management, marketing, audience development and evaluation plans.
- If you have previously had a project supported by Film Hub Midlands, the outcomes and effectiveness of that project will be taken into consideration when considering any new proposal

- Budget: Are all reasonable costs considered? Does the budget balance and are all costs eligible? Have access costs been included?
- Legacy: What are the longer-term plans to continue to reach audiences?
- BFI Diversity Standards: Does the proposal clearly address the BFI Diversity Standards?

Please note that we expect this fund to be oversubscribed and may not be able to fund your activity even if it meets the criteria. The larger the amount you are seeking, the higher we would expect your project to score in assessment.

Additional advice and support may be available to projects with strong inclusion aims, that specifically address:

- Economic barriers and / or engage working-class audiences
- Disability.

Proposals that meet these criteria may be shared with specialist freelancers, who will review a select number of projects, from across FAN, UK wide. Any eligible applicants will be contacted to discuss in more detail. If you require more information at application stage, please contact us.

12. Decisions and Feedback

Unsuccessful proposals

If you are unsuccessful in your proposal, you will be contacted by email. Being unsuccessful does not prevent you from accessing future Hub opportunities, however you will not be able to resubmit a declined proposal to the Film Exhibition Fund in the 2025-26 financial year.

Successful proposals

If your proposal is successful, the assessment panel and external advisors may discuss any required amendments and we may wish to see a revised plan before confirming financial support. This process can take additional time. Activity timelines will need to accommodate this.

You may also need to supply relevant supporting documents such as your most recent annual or semi-annual report and accounts (as submitted to Companies House), evidence of your organisation's bank account, or any other documents necessary for Film Hub Midlands to complete a financial health check.

If there are no recommendations or amendments to be made, you will be sent a confirmation email setting out the terms and conditions attached to the financial support.

Terms and conditions will include payment information, crediting guidelines and monitoring and reporting requirements. All funded activity will need to survey their audiences using our standard template / online survey tool- please bear this in mind when planning your evaluation strategies.

13. Complaints and Appeals

The funding decision is final. Inevitably some proposals will be unsuccessful and Members may be disappointed by this result. Formal appeals against the final decision will not be considered unless the proposing organisation has good cause to believe that the procedures for processing the

proposal were not adhered to, or applied in such a way as to prejudice the outcome of the process.

A copy of the Complaints and Appeals procedure can be found [here](#).

14.Contact us

Film Hub Midlands is a sector development organisation supporting film culture in the Midlands region. The Hub collaborates with a range of organisations and individuals to help great films get made, screened and seen in the region. Our work is supported by National Lottery funding, and we are proud to be a member of the BFI Film Audience Network and BFI NETWORK.

E: hello@filmhubmidlands.org

Supported by National Lottery funding, the BFI Film Audience Network (FAN) is central to the BFI's aim to ensure the greatest choice of film is available for everyone. Established in 2012 to build wider and more diverse UK cinema audiences for British and international film, FAN is a unique, UK-wide collaboration made up of eight Hubs managed by leading film organisations. FAN also supports talent development with BFI NETWORK Talent Executives in each of the English Hubs, with a mission to discover and support talented writers, directors and producers at the start of their careers.
