

ART CONNECTS US RESEARCH GRANTS SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Call for Expressions of Interest – April 2018

1. Introduction

The British Council is aiming to increase connections between the UK creative sectors and young creative professionals in Sub-Saharan Africa.

As well as building connections, we aim to expand knowledge of contemporary African art in the UK with a view to more work from Sub-Saharan Africa being seen and experienced by UK audiences.

With this in mind we are seeking expressions of interest from UK based arts organisations / curators / programmers working in any of the following art forms - Visual Arts, Literature, Music, Theatre, Dance, Architecture, Design, Fashion and Film to travel to Sub-Saharan Africa and conduct research through the 'Art Connects Us' grants. The trips should take place between June and Dec 2018.

Research may take the form of meeting with potential artists and partners; finding out more about your chosen art forms' ecosystem in a particular country or countries; gaining an understanding of art trends in Sub-Saharan Africa; meeting arts organisations and/or attending events and festivals with a view to programming or curating work in the UK.

The countries covered under the programme (in which the British Council operates) are: Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

2. Aims of the programme

This opportunity aims to:

- facilitate the UK creative sector's ambitions to connect with young, African creatives and art professionals who are 18 to 35-year-olds;
- increase opportunities for UK arts organisations and individuals to visit African cities and gain further insight into the chosen local art sector;
- encourage and support the development of networks that connect the UK and Sub-Saharan African arts sectors for the long term;
- widen the opportunities for art professionals in Sub-Saharan Africa to connect with UK arts organisations and arts professionals.

3. Art Connects Us

Our programme aims include these three core elements:

- Art, audiences and innovation – sharing the best of arts and culture in Sub-Saharan Africa and the UK is at the heart of our agenda. We bring partners together to bring new art to audiences.
- Skills and networking – we strive to expand audiences for the arts through developing new networks and skills for our partners.

- Brokering and communication – we communicate the work of the creative sectors where we work, enabling artists and audiences to connect with each other.

We aim to support the aims and ambitions of artists. Our work also recognises that supporting the development of cultural industries can enable more people to engage with creativity as artists and audiences and contribute to more prosperous, fulfilling and happy lives for us all. The following strands of work enable us to focus our work in areas we feel have relevance to audiences in the UK, Sub-Saharan Africa and globally:

- We look to improve the knowledge of the UK creative sector of contemporary African arts and increase the opportunity for UK artists and audiences to engage with young African art practitioners and their work through the partnerships we develop.
- Our work on festivals focuses on enabling these cultural platforms to be a convening point for artists to meet, forge new networks, share skills and connect their art directly with new audiences.
- Through our creative enterprise programme we look to enhance the livelihood potential for entrepreneurs, freelancers and other professionals in the creative economy. We do this by offering skills development opportunities often working through creative hubs and their communities. We also facilitate connections between UK and Sub-Saharan Africa hubs and their networks to stimulate learning, exchange and collaboration.
- Developing digital engagement across the Sub-Saharan Africa region through innovative projects, programmes and partnerships. By supporting artists to make digital content we aim to present a more diverse Africa to a global online audience.

We seek new and innovative ways to enable the people of the UK and Sub-Saharan Africa to see each other through art, gaining a rounded picture of our contemporary lives. The programmes are shaped by the artists we work with and our cultural relations agenda. We believe that supporting more art to be made and enabling it to reach new audiences has a positive impact on the lives of people in the countries in which we work. In doing so, we hope our arts programme makes a contribution to the challenges of the day.

4. Sub-Saharan Africa Region Structure:

The region is arranged in three clusters: East, West and Southern Africa. Each one of the clusters has its own Arts strategy that takes as a starting point the overarching strategy for the region, and responds to the needs of the local cultural context, its strengths, issues and potentials.

Expressions of interest will need to focus their research within a specific cluster. We welcome proposals that will aim to research in more than one country in their chosen cluster. Please find details of each cluster strategy and objectives in the Notes section at the end of this document (see page 4).

5. The Grant

The British Council will award up to **12** research grants of **£2,500** (each) to proposals to undertake research in the Sub-Saharan Region between **June** and **Dec 2018**. There will be a maximum of **4** proposals selected per Cluster.

5.1 The selected applicants will be expected to:

- Commit time before the visit for preparation and research, including a briefing session in advance (either in person or via video conference);
- Provide a plan of travel and study before departure for the research visit in the region;
- Document observations and keep a travelogue which could be published via the British Council;
- Provide a final report outlining main research finding and potential suggestions for future programmes. The report could take different formats (e.g. written, digital, film, photo-essay, interviews, podcast);
- Organise, in consultation with the British Council, a public forum in the UK to share the research findings with the creative community.
- Be UK based

5.2 Press and publicity

- The selected grantees are expected to agree to any reasonable requests for press or media, to discuss media coverage with the British Council and to assist in ensuring the British Council is credited in any press coverage sought independently.
- Press information will be agreed upon and released by the British Council.

6. Criteria

The successful applicant is likely to:

- be based at UK arts organisation or individual with a proven track record of working internationally;
- have a minimum of 5 years professional experience in their sector;
- demonstrate how the research proposal aligns with (or addresses) at least one of the 'Three Key Objectives' of the cluster you have selected;
- demonstrate experience in working with international partners to deliver collaborative arts programmes;
- have a basic knowledge of their chosen art sector in the region which is being visited (although the British Council will provide support in putting together a detailed programme);

In addition, applicants should:

- commit to programme a UK public forum to share/disseminate the research findings;
- be able to travel between June and December 2018.

7. How to apply

If you would like to apply for this Art Connects Us grant please submit a PDF Expression of Interest. This should comprise:

- Up to 3 examples of key projects and/or programmes (realised or speculative) that you feel represent your work
- A short statement (max 800 words) outlining why you are applying for this research grant and clearly state the following:
 - State the cluster (and the countries in that cluster) you would like to focus and conduct your research
 - State how your research proposal aligns with or addresses at least one of the 'Three Key Objectives' of the selected cluster (see Notes section on page 5).
 - State what you hope to gain from the experience and outline some of the potential practical applications of the research into a tangible programme or project.
- Activity plan; identify the main stages of your activity during the research visit.
- CV (up to 2 pages)

Submissions should be in a single PDF file and not to exceed 2MB in size. These should be emailed to nadine.patel@britishcouncil.org **by 18:00 (GMT) on 11 May 2018**

8. Selection

Applications will be assessed against the criteria in point **6.** and against the project aims in point **2.** They will be reviewed by a selection panel, including representatives from the British Council Art team, previous Arts Connects Us grant recipients and the Royal African Society.

Successful applicants will be notified by Monday 28th May 2018.

For further information or enquiries please contact Nadine Patel

nadine.patel@britishcouncil.org

NOTES

a. The Sub-Saharan Africa Clusters (overview and key objectives)

West Africa (WA):

(Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Sierra Leone)

The West Africa context is one with democratic governments but unstable transition / election cycles, relatively small middle class with high levels of inequality, significant national and international migration, large youth population, a weak skills base and high unemployment, low broadband penetration but growing fast, and rapid mobile phone penetration. The arts and creative industries in Nigeria and Ghana are rapidly growing and increasingly recognised as economic powerhouses and job creators for young people across music, film, fashion, and the performing and visual arts, leading to increasing public and private support for the sector. In Sierra Leone, influenced by Ghana and Nigeria, and due to a lack of cultural infrastructure for performative arts, there is growing interest in

video and film and the music industry is also growing. Street art is also a significant part of the arts scene. In Senegal, historical public support for arts means a strong focus on artistic practice in dance, literature, music and film particularly but less developed creative economy but this is changing quickly. In the UK, there is interest in the West Africa creative sector particularly in Nigeria by diaspora and non-diaspora players especially in film, music, fashion and technology sectors.

There is diaspora and non-diaspora interest in Ghana and Sierra Leone to varying degrees but at a much lower rate compared to Nigeria. There is also UK interest in francophone countries like Mali and Senegal particularly in music and dance. In light of this external context and bearing in mind country, corporate and regional arts priorities, our West Africa Arts vision for 2017 – 2020 is outlined as follows:

Three key objectives for West Africa:

Objective One - An increase in the number and quality of UK collaborations, exchanges and connections with artists and creative entrepreneurs in West Africa.

Objective Two - Stronger networks (informal or formal) and communities of (young) artists in West Africa will have a stronger voice in, and for their communities and can engage in more institutional UK– West Africa partnerships that are mutually beneficial and to scale.

Objective Three - More up to date and diverse awareness and representation of West Africa arts in the UK and vice versa.

East Africa (EA):

(Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan)

In East Africa, the British Council's arts work focuses on developing stronger creative sectors that are better connected to the UK. This enables the UK to hear the voices of young East Africans and supports the provision of new choices for individuals who wish to make a living through creative careers. East Africa Arts thus connects contemporaries in the UK and East Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda), engaging in mutually beneficial programmes which support individual, social and economic development.

It is through these new connections that innovative creative content is created, new audiences are reached, and perceptions between young East African and British creatives are shifted. In order to achieve this, East Africa Arts has **three changes** it wants to make by 2020 with **three correlating arts programmes**.

Three Changes:

1. 18-35 year old British and East African creatives have increased **access** to work with, and showcase each other's **art**.
2. 18-35 year old British and East African creatives have increased creative sector skills and increased **knowledge** and **understanding** of each other's **culture**.
3. 18-35 year old British and East African creatives have a changed **perception** of each other's **countries**.

The correlating East Africa Arts programmes are:

- **new Art new Audiences:** an annual open call grant for UK and East African artists to create new art together and share this art with new audiences;
- **Skills and Networking:** strategic events across East Africa, offering capacity building and access to the creative sector for UK and East African creatives;
- **Mobility:** networking grants creating opportunity and access across East Africa and the UK.

Southern Africa (SA):

(Botswana, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia)

The Southern Africa cluster countries range substantially in economic, social and political detail. From the stable, yet conservative Botswana with a fledging arts sector and keen interest from Government, to the challenged and dependent Malawi, and the economic challenges of Mozambique, all are vastly different. Artistically all the countries look as different, some with strong emerging markets and infrastructure (South Africa and Zimbabwe), to an energetic contemporary creative community (Mauritius), or a developmentally focused arts environment (Zambia and Mozambique). Whilst many of the countries are struggling for basic needs, the artistic and creative communities have much to offer, share and tell the stories of contemporary Southern Africa.

Three Key Objectives for Southern Africa:

Objective One - Creative Insight: Listening and Brokering By 2020 we will have built relevant and detailed insight in all 8 countries in the Cluster to better connect contemporary Britain and Southern Africa. We will do this through partnerships and brokering for mutual understanding and shared purpose.

Objective Two - Creative Opportunities: Art and Skills To strengthen the professionalization of the creative sector (Southern Africa cluster and UK) in artistic, digital and entrepreneurial means by 2020. We will do this through co-creation, collaboration, projects and experiential exchanges between the countries.

Objective Three - Creative Communities: Networks and perception change To deepen and build a greater understanding and connection between contemporary UK and cluster countries so they may work more effectively together artistically, socially and economically.

b. Useful links and resources:

For more information on our work in the Arts please visit: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts>

Previous Art Connects Us grantees: <https://www.tegaokiti.com/>

For more information about British Council Sub-Saharan Arts please visit:

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/history/sub-saharan-africa>

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/east-africa-arts/about>

<https://www.britishcouncil.org.ng/arts>

<https://connectza.tumblr.com/>