

Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts Fellowship Application Guidance

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Application process and key dates

The application process consists of three complementary stages, which include:

Stage 1: Expression of interest

During the first stage of the application process, applicants submit a concise expression of interest. This step allows us to evaluate their eligibility and confirm that both their personal leadership and organisational experience are well-suited to the Fellowship.

Stage 2: Submission of full application

Candidates who are longlisted will be invited to submit a full application, providing more in-depth detail about their experience. This stage allows for a more thorough review to determine if both the applicant and their organisation are the right fit for the Fellowship.

Stage 3: Interview

For the final stage in the process, shortlisted candidates are invited to attend a final interview with the selection jury. The interview is an opportunity to expand on their application and to get to know candidates better. Following the interviews, candidates will be notified of the final outcome of their application, with 15 successful candidates invited to join as Fellows.

Selection process calendar

Stage 1: Expression of interest

Submission for expression of interest opens	23 January
Online information webinar	10 February, 13:00 CET
Application closes	24 February, 9:00 CET

Stage 2: Submission of full application

Submission of full application opens	21 March
Online information session	27 March, 13:00 CET
Application closes	14 April, 9:00 CET

Stage 3: Interviews

Interviews	13 to 22 May (in the morning)
Applicants informed of outcome	w/c 2 June

How to apply?

The application form includes both written responses and a video submission. Applications must be completed in English. You will also be required to provide additional supporting documents at the different stages in the application process.

Applications are completed and submitted using Optimy, an online portal which can be accessed [here](#). In order to begin, you must create a username and password, which you will use every time you login to the portal. Once you are logged in, please select the form titled Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts Fellowship and click 'submit an application' in order to begin completing your application. You can save a draft of your application and can keep returning to it, up until the deadline and before submission.

Please make sure that all the information included in your application is complete, as you will not be able to make any changes to your application once it is submitted.

After submission, you will receive an email confirming receipt of your application.

If you face any issues using the portal, please email contact@allianceforsociallyengagedarts.org.

Eligibility criteria

This Fellowship is for leaders of socially engaged arts organisations whose mission is rooted in community engagement and social change. If your organisation is committed to making and deepening real impact through art, this programme provides the resources, network, and support to help you achieve your vision.

We are looking for applicants who are:

- Visionary and ambitious: You are a driven leader with a clear vision, dedicated to personal growth and to strengthening your organisation's capacity to achieve lasting impact.
- Aligned with the Fellowship's mission: You see this programme as a chance for personal growth while advancing the wider impact of socially engaged arts across Europe.
- Advocates for social change: You believe in the power of the arts to address social challenges and are committed to meaningful change within and beyond your local context.
- Collaborative and open-minded: You thrive in working with others, welcome new ideas, and approach challenges with curiosity.
- Community-driven: Your organisation is focused on creating social change by responding to community needs through art.
- Organisationally stable: Your organisation is ready for growth and has a sustainable model to fully benefit from the Fellowship.

The Fellowship is open to non-profit organisations with legal status in a [Council of Europe](#) state or Kosovo, operating in the cultural and arts sector, and meeting the following requirements:

- Based and operating in one or more European countries.
- Established for at least five years, including time before formal registration.
- The majority of activities are focused on socially engaged arts.
- The Fellow has at least 3 years of senior leadership experience in socially engaged arts, with a minimum of one year in their current role.
- The Fellow is proficient in English to fully participate in all programme activities.

In addition to the above points, it is important that applicants can demonstrate the following as part of their application:

- Letter of endorsement from their governance level (e.g., Board of Trustees) formally endorsing their application.

- Financial documents showing that the organisation's debt does not exceed 1.5 times the amount of cash it holds.

We held an information session to answer questions about our Fellowship. You can watch the full webinar [here](#).

Application forms and questions

Stage 1 – Expression of Interest

The expression of interest application form is divided into five sections, as follows:

1. Eligibility questions

The questions in this section are used to determine both the applicant and organisation's eligibility for the Fellowship, to ensure that they meet all the eligibility criteria as set out above.

2. Personal details

The questions in this section aim to capture details about the applicant and high-level information about their leadership experience, to ensure that their experience meets the requirements of the Fellowship.

3. Organisational information

The questions in this section aim to capture information about the organisation's scope of activities and operations, to ensure that the organisation's profile is suited to the Fellowship.

4. Application questions

Q1. Can you share one key achievement that reflects your impact as an advocate for change within your field of work or community? (video up to 2 minutes)

- Tell us about what you sought to achieve, the impact you had and how you went about achieving it.
- We want to get a sense of your experience in working towards meaningful and lasting change within your organisation and the wider field you work in.

For this question, you are required to submit a video response no longer than two minutes. Please ensure the video is clear and audible. We accept videos in MP4, MOV, AVI or MKV format.

Q2. What motivates you to apply for this Fellowship at this particular moment? (up to 150 words)

- Tell us why the prospect of the Fellowship excites you and why this is the right time for you and your organisation to embark on this journey.
- We want to find out about your ambitions and what drives you to apply.

Q3. Describe the impact you are setting out to achieve as an organisation. What specific issues do you address, and how do your methodologies and art forms tackle them? (up to 150 words)

- Tell us about the impact your organisation sets out to achieve and how it draws on socially engaged arts to deliver tangible social impact and change.
- We want to know the issue(s) your organisation explores and addresses through its activities.

Q4. How do social change and community engagement feature in your organisation's key strategic pillars and overall mission? (up to 150 words)

- Tell us about your organisation's strategic pillars and how social change and community engagement feature in them.
- We want to understand how social change and community engagement inform your organisation's strategy and overall mission and how they complement your other areas of focus.

5. Supporting documents and additional information

Q1. Your CV

- Please share an up-to-date CV that summarises your relevant leadership experience, no longer than two A4 pages. We accept CVs in PDF format.

Q2. Please share with us the contact details of a professional external reference who can provide an account of your leadership experience. We will only contact them if you are invited to submit a full application.

- You will be required to provide their full name, email address, contact number, organisation and job title.

- Your reference should be an individual who can speak to your leadership capabilities and impact within your current organisation. This could be anyone who has closely worked with you, such as a collaborator, partner, artist, community member, or funder—someone who can provide a meaningful account of your leadership qualities and contributions. Please note, references must be external to the organisation where you are currently employed.
- We will only contact your reference if you are successful in Stage 1 and are invited to submit a full application as part of Stage 2. It is important that your professional reference is informed that we may contact them to request a reference. If they fail to respond, we will not be able to consider your application.

Next steps

If your expression of interest is successful, you will be emailed further instructions inviting you to submit a full application. Please make sure that you keep an eye on your emails.

Stage 2 – Full application

Candidates that have been longlisted will be invited to submit a full application, including additional supporting documents. The full application form consists of four sections:

1. Application questions

Q1. How do you foresee the Fellowship supporting your leadership development? What difference do you hope to make within your organisation and across the wider arts and social impact sectors? (up to 400 words)

- Tell us about your leadership aspirations and how you foresee this Fellowship supporting you to become a more impactful changemaker.
- Here we want to understand where you want to grow as a leader and how your leadership development will contribute to your organisation and the wider arts and social impact context you are working in.

Q2. What do you hope to learn from the diverse expertise and backgrounds of others in the Fellowship cohort? In turn, what experiences, skills or insights would you bring to the Fellowship and the cohort? (up to 400 words)

- Tell us about some of your learning and development priorities as a leader and what experiences and skills you hope to gain from collaborating with your peers.
- We also want to get a sense of what you perceive to be your strengths and how you see yourself contributing to the cohort's overall learning experience.

Q3. Provide us with an example of when you, as a leader in socially engaged arts, collaborated with others and mobilised your networks to advocate for a cause and to bring about change. (up to 400 words)

- Tell us about a time when you worked collaboratively with others to advocate for something important for your organisation, your communities, or the wider sector.
- We want to understand the specific role you played, what you achieved, and how you addressed any challenges that arose.

Q4. How do you engage communities in the development of your activities? How do you ensure they are relevant to those communities? (up to 400 words)

- Tell us about how you ensure that your organisation's work remains relevant to the communities you work with and that you deliver the impact that you set out to achieve.
- We want to see the role communities play in the creation and development of your organisation's activities.

Q5. Fellows will bring one 'leading question' to explore during the Fellowship – something that could unlock significant change within their organisation or community.

Please share one or two possible questions you are considering. Why are these questions important for your leadership and your organisation? (up to 400 words)

- Share with us the 'leading question(s)' you would like to explore during the Fellowship and that you believe will help to unlock significant change within your organisation, the communities you work with or the wider sector.
- Here we want to understand why these questions are significant to you in this particular moment and within the wider context that you are working in.

Q6. Each organisation will receive a €60,000 grant: half for organisational development (including core costs) and half for actions addressing a 'leading question.'

How do you envision this grant could support you to address your organisational development needs and your 'leading question'? (up to 250 words)

- Here we want to see how the first €30,000 can contribute towards capacity building and covering your organisation's overhead and core costs to enable your organisation to make any necessary adjustments to commit to the Fellowship. We also want you to tell us how the second €30,000 instalment can support you to develop pilot actions to address your 'leading question(s)'.
- We don't require a formal budget. Instead, we would like you to provide us with a high-level overview of how you envision spending the grant.

2. Information about organisational sustainability

Q1. Please present us with a summary of your organisation's sustainability over the next two financial years. This should include a financial forecast for 2025 and 2026 reflecting any confirmed and forecasted income, as well as planned fundraising efforts during this period. You can also provide a description of any other non-financial resources that ensure the stability of your organisation (e.g. owned infrastructure, team of volunteers, etc.)

- Here we want you to tell us how your organisation will sustain its activities and programmes for the duration of the 18-month Fellowship by sharing any confirmed and planned income during this period. We want to see that both the applicant and the organisation can fully commit to the programme.
- Tell us about any other non-financial resources that contribute towards the stability of your organisation, (e.g. owned infrastructure, team of volunteers, etc.)

Q2. Describe your organisation's team structure, and the governance-level support structures that are in place. (up to 150 words)

- Here we want to understand how responsibilities are distributed across the team and how decision-making is shared within your organisation.
- Tell us who you are accountable to and how you are supported by your organisation's governance-level structures.

3. Additional information

Q1. Successful applicants will be invited for an interview taking place between 13 May and 22 May 2025. Interview slots will be pre-assigned, so please share any dates and timings (in CET) during this period when you are unavailable.

- We will be assigning interview slots to successful candidates, and so it is important to let us know at this stage if there are any dates or times when you are unavailable, as it will not be possible to change the time once a slot has been assigned. Please make sure that any times you share are in CET.

Q2. Is there anything else you would like to share with us at this stage? (up to 50 words)

- Here you can tell us about anything important that we need to know. For example, if you have any access needs that you would like us to be aware of at this stage, if you have any specific concerns about your application or around your potential participation in the Fellowship.

4. Supporting documents (to be uploaded)

Q1. Please upload the following financial documents:

1. Income statements for 2023 and 2024, detailing income and expenses
 2. Balance sheets for 2023 and 2024, detailing assets and liabilities: if not available, please submit a year-end bank statement
 3. Audit report: if available
- These financial documents will be reviewed as part of our due diligence process.
 - Here we want to make sure that your organisation can demonstrate its ability to maintain a level of financial stability, ensuring that its debt does not exceed 1.5 times the amount of cash it holds.
 - In case your organisation's statements for 2024 are not ready by the time you are required to provide them, we can accept statements for 2022 and 2023 instead along with a year-end bank statement for 2024.
 - If a balance sheet is unavailable, a year-end bank statement showing your organisation's balance, along with a list of receivables and debts, may be submitted instead, along with an explanation as to whether these amounts have been resolved by the date of submission. This is important to ensure the organisation's financial stability to participate fully in the Fellowship.

Q2. Please upload your organisation's registration documents.

- Please provide your organisation's proof of registration / articles of association, which is the primary document issued by the relevant government authority, confirming that your organisation is legally registered.

Q3. Please upload a letter from governance-level demonstrating endorsement of your application.

- You must provide a letter from a representative at governance-level confirming their endorsement of your application to ensure that your organisation can support your participation with the necessary resources and time. Please ensure that they provide their contact details and a brief description of their position within your organisation.
- If your organisation does not have a governance body (e.g. Board of Trustees), we accept the endorsement of a co-director or senior colleague to whom you are accountable. Without this, we are unable to accept your application.

Q4. Please upload your latest annual report describing the overall activities of your organisation. If unavailable, you can upload a two-page document listing the projects you carried out in the last year or two, specifying which were focused on socially engaged arts, so we can get a sense of your overall work.

- You can upload either an annual report, or if unavailable, a two-page document that provides a summary of your organisation's activities and programmes. We want to get a sense of the scope of the socially engaged arts activities carried out by your organisation over the last year or two. The format of the document will not be assessed.

Alternative formats for applications

We are committed to ensuring the application process is accessible and may consider applications in alternative formats if necessary. If you require assistance or would like to submit your application in a different format, please get in touch with us at contact@allianceforsociallyengagedarts.org.

How do we assess applications?

Applications will be reviewed by a selection committee made up of staff from the Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts, representatives from the Alliance's partner foundations and external jury members.

Eligible applications will be assessed by at least two individual jury members against the following selection criteria, as described in more detail above:

- Visionary and ambitious
- Aligned with the fellowship's mission
- Advocates for social change
- Collaborative and open-minded
- Community-driven
- Organisationally stable

The selection of candidates will consider the group's diversity to ensure a rich and varied experience. We aim to create a cohort that represents a wide range of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences, fostering an inclusive environment that enriches the overall programme.

A number of places are reserved for organisations operating in France, Lombardy Region in Italy, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland.

Outcomes

Successful applicants offered a Fellowship

Successful candidates will be notified by email and will be required to sign a letter of engagement confirming their acceptance of their place on the Fellowship.

The Fellowship officially begins with two online orientation workshops on 24 and 26 June 2025.

Feedback to unsuccessful applicants

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by email.

Due to the large volume of applications we expect to receive, we are unable to offer feedback to applicants who are unsuccessful at Stages 1 and 2 in the application process. We are only able to provide feedback to candidates who have been invited for an interview in Stage 3 and are unsuccessful.

How is your data handled?

When you give us personal information, we take relevant steps to ensure that it is treated securely. All data you include in your application form will be used to inform the selection process. Your information will be shared with all reviewers and jury members involved in the assessment of your applications and as part of any due diligence checks. We may also use your data for monitoring and evaluation purposes. If we do so, your details will be anonymised and aggregated, unless you have consented to us handling your information differently.

We keep our retention periods for personal information under review. We are legally required to hold some types of information to fulfil our statutory obligations. We will hold your personal information on our systems for as long as is necessary for the relevant activity, or as long as is set out in any relevant contract or agreement you hold with us. We routinely update our data to ensure those who are not engaged in our work are removed. You can always contact us with the request to remove your data.

You can read our full privacy notice [here](#).

Help and support with your application

We will be hosting an [online webinar](#) on 10 February at 13:00 CET, which will be an opportunity for you to ask any questions you have. The webinar will be recorded and made available on our website.

You can also contact us by email at contact@allianceforsociallyengagedarts.org. Please note that we may not be able to respond to your email immediately, and it may take us up to 48 hours to respond.

We also welcome any feedback about the application process that could help us improve.