



NCACE Future Icons of Culture Knowledge Exchange Awards

AWARDS OVERVIEW

1. About NCACE

The [National Centre for Arts and Cultural Exchange](#) (NCACE) was established with support from Research England in 2021. Our mission is to facilitate and support capacity for knowledge exchange between higher education and the arts and cultural sectors, with a particular focus on evidencing and showcasing the social, cultural, environmental as well as economic impacts of such activities.

2. About the Awards

NCACE is delighted to announce our new **Future Icons of Cultural Knowledge Exchange Awards** programme. We will be making up to 5 awards of £1,000 to incentivise and reward brilliant collaborations between researchers and the arts and culture sector. We are delighted to announce that nominations for this exciting new initiative are now open.

Over recent years we have seen an extraordinary range of collaborations between higher education and the arts and culture sectors emerging across the UK. These are partnerships that are imaginative, impactful, community-rooted, socially engaged, and often transformative for all involved. As a champion for academic-cultural collaboration, we are launching the **Future Icons of Culture Knowledge Exchange Awards** as a new pilot designed to spotlight, strengthen, and celebrate such collaboration.

The programme seeks to:

- **Recognise and reward** emergent, novel, and long-standing collaborations between universities and cultural organisations, including artists, creative practitioners, and smaller cultural actors.
- **Generate compelling case studies and evidence** that demonstrate the distinctive value of arts and humanities knowledge exchange, helping the sector advocate for its impact with clarity and confidence.

- **Inspire and inform fresh thinking** about the value, purpose, and future shape of cultural collaboration, encouraging new models, new relationships, and new forms of visibility for research and creativity.

These awards are being designed to: celebrate and elevate the work already happening across the sector, to champion the people and partnerships driving it, and to help imagine a more ambitious, inclusive, and sustainable future for cultural knowledge exchange.

3. What the awards will support

We aim to support work across five key **categories** and that connects to several key **themes**

Award Categories

- **Equitable Partnership Award:** Recognising collaborations that demonstrate fair, balanced and mutually beneficial partnership between universities and cultural organisations and or artists/cultural practitioners
- **Emerging Academic–Cultural Collaboration Award:** Celebrating new or pilot collaborations that show innovation and strong future potential.
- **Cultural Organisation Partner of the Year:** Recognising a cultural organisation that has shown exceptional leadership in working with universities and research partners.
- **Cultural Knowledge Exchange Project of the Year:** Awarded to a project that successfully translates academic research into cultural, creative or public outcomes.
- **Transformative Impact Through Cultural Knowledge Exchange Award:** Recognising collaborations that create meaningful social, environmental, educational or economic impact(s) through arts, culture or humanities research.

Themes

We are interested in supporting work that broadly thematically links to one or more of the following areas:

- **People and places: Building cultural partnerships**
- **Creative Practices in Science, Climate, Health & Social Change**
- **Developing innovative approaches to Cultural Knowledge Exchange**
- **Digital tools, technologies and AI in Cultural Knowledge Exchange**
- **Championing Social Justice through Co-Production and Creative Practice**

We are also open to nominations from areas that are not well captured in the themes above.

This is a pilot scheme so it may be that we award more than one award in any one category, depending on our nominations.

4. Eligibility Criteria

We encourage nominations from people working in Higher Education, the arts and culture sector, community and other contexts where brilliant cultural partnerships and/or cultural knowledge exchange is taking place.

Nominations should include both the researcher and the cultural organisation and/or individual practitioner.

They should be working on an exemplary collaboration that:

- Showcases **exemplary models of collaboration**
- Elevates the visibility of **arts and humanities-led knowledge exchange**
- Encourages **equitable and sustainable partnerships**
- Provides **case studies, new models and/or inspiration for the sector**

5. How to Nominate

Nominators will be required to **complete a brief Nominator Form**. This will include details about the team you wish to nominate, a description of the collaboration itself (500 words max plus relevant weblink) and how this work fits with the remit of the scheme.

All nominators must make their nominees aware that they are making a nomination, and nominees should sign to acknowledge their agreement with being nominated.

PLEASE NOTE: You cannot nominate your own project.

6. Expectations for Award Holders

We will actively encourage Awardees to work with the NCACE community over the course of the next year. A contribution could include any of the following:

- speak or chair a discussion at an NCACE event
- write a blog or produce another media asset
- contribute to an NCACE case-study
- contribute to the new NCACE Cultural Collaborations Conference (Summer 2027)
- contribute to our LightBox programme

Timescale for Nominations

Nominations must be received by midday on 4 **June 2026** and emailed to noshin.sultan@sas.ac.uk. All submissions will be assessed by a selection committee to

ensure they meet the criteria. Should we receive a particularly high volume of applications, a randomisation process will be used.

Successful projects will be notified by **late June 2026** and will be invited to join the NCACE team in a celebration and networking event in early Autumn.

Further information

Please note that awards are to be allocated between both the Higher education and the arts partner, unless the team together designates one recipient only.

If you have any further queries, please get in touch with the NCACE team by emailing Noshin Sultan in the first instance noshin.sultan@sas.ac.uk

Thank you

NCACE team