



RSL Hawthornden Literature Matters Grants: Eligibility Criteria

The Grants

- a) A Hawthornden Literature Matters Grant (both through the operating and innovation routes) must result in a literary project or programme of an excellent standard which will reach a substantial readership or audience, or support a literary arts organisation whose core work does this. For example:
 - Events
 - Literary Festivals
 - Workshops
 - Publications
 - Productions
- b) We are especially interested in and will give priority to projects which:
 - Encourage engagement with literature and reading
 - Engage people who do not currently read for pleasure, or who read infrequently.
 - Contribute to the National Year of Reading's stated aim to create lasting change in reading habits across the UK.
 - For innovation grants: Enable new and innovative activity that would not otherwise be possible without funding. This can include activities that are innovative for a particular organisation or area, even if they have previously been delivered elsewhere.
- c) A total of up to £200,000 is available. This will be distributed across a number of projects, as determined by the RSL. Grants will be awarded within a range of (£5,000-£30,000).
- d) The Grants are administered in all respects by the Royal Society of Literature (RSL).
- e) Successful applicants will be notified in September 2026. The winners will be announced in October 2026.

Eligible Applicants

- a) Organisations must be UK-based and primarily focused on literature, reading, or writing. This may include (but is not limited to):
 - Registered charities
 - Community Interest Companies (CICs)
 - Arts organisations and collectives
 - Literary festivals
 - Independent publishers and not-for-profit presses
- b) Individuals (for Innovation Grants only) must be writers, freelancers, or literary practitioners able to demonstrate relevant experience and the partnerships required to deliver the proposed project.
- c) Applicants must be ordinarily resident in the UK and have the right to remain. Applications from UK citizens living abroad are not eligible.
- d) Applicants must be 18 or over at the time of applying.
- e) Projects must take place primarily within the UK. Projects may include an international element, provided the primary audience and impact are UK-based.
- f) There are two application routes:
 - Operating Grants: open to literary arts organisations to support the core costs of delivering their work, the delivery (or expansion) of established programmes, and ongoing work. Applications must be submitted by an authorised representative of the organisation.
 - Innovation Grants: open to both organisations and individuals for new, experimental, or one-off projects that test new approaches or reach new audiences. This can include activities that are innovative for a particular organisation or area, even if they have previously been delivered elsewhere.
- g) Applicants may submit one application per grant cycle. Organisations may apply to only one route (Operating or Innovation).
- h) Previous recipients of a Hawthornden Literature Matters Grant are not eligible to make another application to the open calls in subsequent years (but Literature Matters recipients prior to 2026 may apply). Previous unsuccessful applicants may reapply.
- i) Applicants must demonstrate a clear financial need for the grant. This includes showing that:
 - The organisation needs to fundraise for its core costs each year, or that the project could not proceed, or would be significantly limited, without this funding; and
 - how the requested funds will be allocated.

Projects may include additional funding sources, but these must be clearly stated.

- j) Funding will be awarded in Autumn 2026. Projects:
- may begin prior to this date, but grant funds may not be used retrospectively;
 - must be completed within 12 months of receiving funding.
- k) Projects and organisations should either be sustainable beyond the grant period or designed as a one-off activity.
- l) Projects must be feasible, well-planned, and safe to deliver. Applicants should demonstrate appropriate consideration of risk, safeguarding (where relevant), and contingency planning.
- m) The following are not eligible to apply:
- Current employees or trustees of the Royal Society of Literature
 - Current employees or trustees of Hawthornden Foundation.

Terms and Conditions

By submitting an application, you agree to the following:

- a) If shortlisted, individual applicants may be required to provide two professional references in support of their application
- b) Grant funds may be used to cover all or part of the proposed activity but cannot be used for retrospective costs.
- c) Applicants must not contact the Committee directly about the Grants or their application.
- d) The RSL reserves the right to:
- award a lesser amount than requested;
 - make no awards;
 - amend or withdraw the Grants programme at any time
 - withdraw a Grant if its conditions are not met
- e) All decisions are final, and no correspondence will be entered into.
- f) The Grants cannot be transferred to another organisation, person, or project and once awarded must be spent on the purpose set out in the Grant letter.
- g) Grant recipients must acknowledge support from the Royal Society of Literature and the Hawthornden Foundation in all project materials. The RSL and Hawthornden Foundation logos should be used where appropriate.
- h) Recipients will be required to support RSL communications activity, including providing photographs and information for use in publicity.

- i) A representative from the RSL should be invited to attend any launches, readings, performances or showcase events taking place as part of the project.
- j) Upon completion, recipients must submit a brief written report (approximately 500–1,000 words) outlining:
 - how the funding was used
 - project outcomes and audience reach
 - any key learnings or impact
 - where possible, images or photographs showing the project.

Entry Guidelines

- a) The closing date for the first round of applications is 9am on Wednesday 8th July. Applications will reopen for year 2 in Spring 2027.
- b) Applicants should ensure they have read and understood all eligibility criteria before submitting.
- c) The Royal Society of Literature cannot make corrections or additions to submitted applications.
- d) Submission of an application implies acceptance of these conditions as outlined. Any entries that do not meet the requirements outlined above will not be taken forward. No correspondence will be entered into regarding incorrect submissions.
- e) Complete all sections of the application form in full. Please only click submit when you have completed the form.
- f) Entries should be made via the online form; no email or postal applications will be considered without prior agreement and there is no need to submit any additional documents.

The RSL is committed to equality of opportunity and welcomes applicants from all backgrounds and experiences. To give us insights into who is applying, we would appreciate it if applicants could complete the Audience Monitoring section included at the end of the entry form. The information provided in this section will be treated in the strictest confidence and not linked to applications.