AHRC Creative Communities
Community Innovation Practitioner (CIP) Awards 2025-2026
Applicant Guide

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CIP Awards Overview

About the CIP Awards

The [AHRC Creative Communities programme](#) explores the transformative power of cross-sector collaboration for culture and inclusive innovation in the policy contexts of the three devolved nations and twelve Mayoral Combined Authorities of the UK. Hosted by Northumbria University, the programme is developing a new evidence base on how and why culture can address **growth**, **regional inequality**, enhance **belonging** and **equalise opportunity** using culture-led R&D.

The Community Innovation Practitioner (CIP) Awards will provide innovative funding for cross-sector research partnerships to host a Community Innovation Practitioner (CIP) from 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026.

The aim of the CIP Awards is to generate new knowledge on **how and why engaging cross-sector partners in research, and communities as research partners, can enhance the quality, resilience, and sustainability of our research ecosystem.**

Indicative areas of interest include the role of culture and cultural R&D in addressing key **UK government missions** including:

- **Belonging**
- **Equalising Opportunity**
- **Growth**
- **Regional Inequality**

Up to 10 Community Innovation Practitioners (CIPs) Awards of £75k (100% fEC) will be available.

CIPs will be required to work with communities, third and private sector partners to explore different collaborative models for co-inquiry through the co-designing, co-creating and co-evaluating of new culture. Their projects will generate evidence that will go on to inform policy recommendations for funders, central UK Government, devolved administrations and Mayoral Combined Authorities.

To apply for the CIP Awards, you must submit an initial expressions of interest (EoI). Your EoI application will outline your eligibility for the Awards and your outline project proposal. If your EoI application is successful, you will be invited to submit a full application in Spring 2025.

Eligibility

Those eligible to apply for this funding must:

- Be based at a UK higher education institution (HEI) or independent research organisation (IRO) that is **located in a devolved [region] or [nation] of the UK**;
- Already be **working in partnership** with diverse external partners, cross-sector collaborations and/or communities;
- Have planned projects of work featuring **collaborative/co-creation R&D;**
- Identify **a named individual** as CIP candidate on the application;
- Actively engage in the co-design and co-authoring of the application with **all partners**, including the CIP candidate;
- Outline a **distinct** piece of research activity to be led and completed by the CIP candidate;
- Commit to **providing a suitable package of support for the CIP**, including managing the hosting, allocation of mandatory budgets, and line management of the CIP within existing institutional frameworks and governance structures.

Project Budget

Funding of £75,000 (100% fEC) is available for each award. **From that amount:**

- **£4500 of the budget must be retained as a travel and public engagement fund for use by the CIP**
- **£500 must be retained for the procurement and/or use of podcast recording equipment**
- **The remaining CIP budget should not exceed £70,000**

Successful applicants will be required to engage in line management, reporting and governance relating to their CIP, working with the Creative Communities team on monitoring and evaluation.

Project Team

Each application must be led by either a UK higher education institution or an approved research organisation eligible to receive UKRI funding and be **located in a devolved [region] or [nation] of the UK**.

The CIP candidate must be known to the project team and be identified as a named individual on the CIP application.

Applications must name a CIP line manager (we expect this individual will be employed at the lead HEI/IRO), a CIP candidate, and an administrative contact for the lead HEI/IRO. There is also the option to name a CIP Co-lead, and project partners.

Project teams must demonstrate partnership between the lead institution and community, third and private sector individuals and/or organisations.

You must secure the consent of all individuals named on your application before you make a submission.

Cross-HEI/IRO Applications

Collaborative cross-HEI/IRO applications are welcomed. In the case of a collaborative bid between 2 or more HEI/IRO, one HEI/RO must be project lead, be responsible for the onboarding of the funding, and hold responsibility for the recruitment and management of the CIP.

If you choose to submit a cross- HEI/IRO application you must:

- Consult and gain approval to submit from **all participating HEI/IROs**
- Stipulate a lead HEI/IRO that will submit the application, be the central recipient of funding from AHRC, and reporting on the project, and be responsible for the employment and line management of the CIP (in most cases we expect the lead HEI/IRO to be the base of the CIP line manager)
- Include full details of how CIPs travel, communication, and project management will be structured and shared across HEI/IROs

Please be sure to indicate that your application is cross- HEI/IRO in the 'Research Team Information' section of the application form (see 'Application Process' below).

CIP Webinar

The Creative Communities programme team will hold a webinar to discuss this funding opportunity and answer questions.

The CIP webinar will be held on **13 November 2024 at 11am (UK time)** where there will be an introduction to the Creative Communities programme, the research to date, and the objectives of the CIP Awards. The webinar presentation will be recorded. This will be followed by a question and answer session, which will not be recorded. All questions and answers will be put into an FAQ document (providing consent is granted) which will be shared on the Creative Communities website.

You can register for the webinar via **Teams Events**.

Following the webinar, a recording of the event will be hosted on the **AHRC Creative Communities** website.

Application Process

To apply for this funding opportunity, you must:

Stage 1. Complete an eligibility assessment to demonstrate meeting the eligibility criteria and submit a 500-word expression of interest that outlines your project proposal.
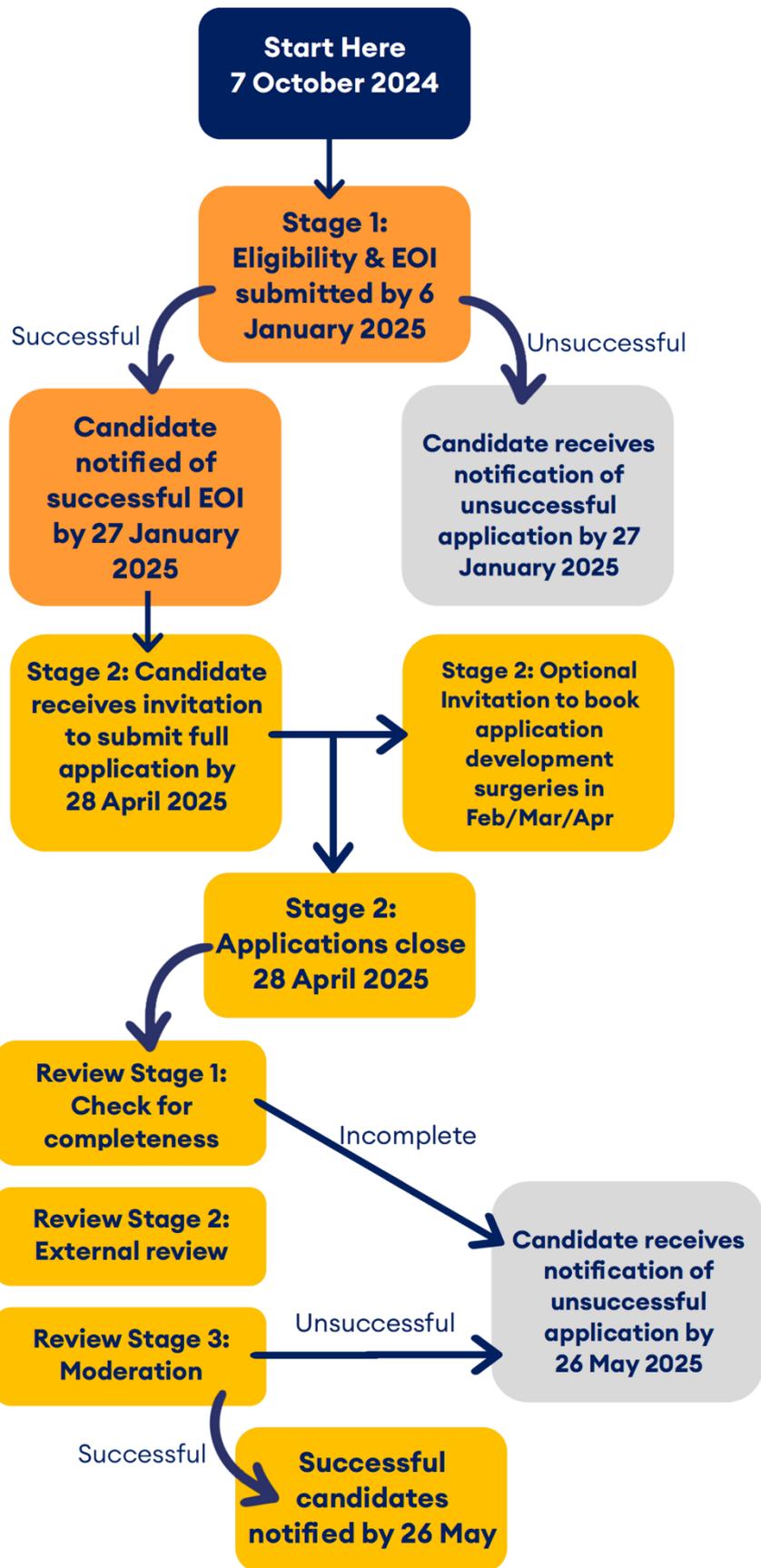
Should your eligibility assessment and expression of interest project proposal meet the minimum standard for the assessment criteria, you will be invited to:

Stage 2. Submit a full application, consisting of either:

a. Written application based on 4 x 250-word research questions (max 1000-words); **OR**
b. A video application based on 4 x 2-minute research questions (max 8 minutes)

Key Dates

Activity	Deadline
Stage 1: Eligibility & Expression of Interest	
CIP Awards Application Portal Opens	7 October 2024
CIP Showcase Webinar	23 October 2024, 11am (UK time)
CIP Awards Webinar	13 November 2024, 11am (UK time)
CIP Awards Application Portal Closes	6 January 2025, 4pm (UK time)
Outcome Notifications	27 January 2025
Stage 2: Full Awards Application	
CIP Awards Application Portal Opens	27 January 2025
Application Development Surgeries	February, March & April 2025
CIP Awards Application Portal Closes	28 April 2025, 4pm (UK time)
Outcome Notifications	Late May 2025
CIP Research Start	September 2025
CIP Research Close	September 2026

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│  Candidate   │                          │ Candidate receives│
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│  EOI by 27   │                          │ application by 27 │
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│ to submit    │                          │  surgeries in     │
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│ Review       │          │   unsuccessful    │
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│ External     │          │   26 May 2025     │
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Creative Communities

UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council

Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

Introduction

About Creative Communities

The [AHRC Creative Communities programme](#) explores the transformative power of cross-sector collaboration for culture and inclusive innovation in the policy contexts in of the three devolved nations and twelve Mayoral Combined Authorities of the UK. Hosted by Northumbria University, the programme is developing a new evidence base on how and why culture can address **growth**, **regional inequality**, enhance **belonging** and **equalise opportunity** using culture-led R&D.

Creative Communities aims to explore **how and why engaging cross-sector partners in research, and communities as research partners, can enhance the quality, resilience, and sustainability of our research ecosystem.**

The programme is shifting research funding and power back into devolved nations and regions by harnessing devolved culture policy and trailblazer deals to help cross-sector communities take back control of their own culture and innovation story.

It takes an integrated approach to contextualise and catalyse the co-creation of R&D with communities, government, and the third and private sector using a new evidence base to identify capacity, reach, best practice, and potential for scale up.

What is a Creative Community?

A Creative Community describes collaborative cross-sector R&D that brings together diverse partners from community, government, education, arm's length, third and private sector organisations in a place-based collaboration that delivers new culture, creates value and generates economic, social and cultural spill overs both for the partners and wider society. As a delivery mechanism for R&D, Creative Communities are characterised by the involvement of a diverse range of stakeholders and sectors. Together they work to build a cooperation network for skills exchange, spreading models of partnership working into other professional environments. Creative Communities can involve a combination of:

- Community groups/Citizen Researchers
- HEIs and IROs with academic experts and funded research e.g. UKRI
- Central Government (especially DCMS/DLUHC/BEIS/DfE) and Local Authorities and Combined Authorities and arm's length bodies (e.g. ACE)
- Third Sector (Trusts/Foundations/Charities)
- Private Sector

By placing communities at the heart of the design, implementation and evaluation of culture, the Creative Community model facilitates an adaptive and flexible framework within which public, private and civil society organisations can participate together. This formula frames an indicative example of partners in a creative community, but the specific types of activity within these formulas are diverse and fluid in practice. The delivery model focuses on the ways in which engaging communities and third and private sector partners in the entirety of the research cycle can bring new skills,

experience, knowledge and networks to R&D and maximise our resource by working more closely together around shared challenges.

Research So Far

Since 2022 the AHRC Creative Communities programme has generated evidence, shared learning and enabled new collaborations across sectors and with communities to create new cultural R&D in all four nations of the UK. In May 2023 we delivered 'By All, For All: The Power of Partnerships', a deep dive report drawing on more than a decade of AHRC-funded community and cross-sector collaborative R&D to explore how we can unlock the potential of engaging communities and partners as researchers.

This was followed by the Community Innovation Practitioner (CIP) Pilot 2023/2024, awarding £290k funding to five CIPs from across the four nations of the UK to capture co-creation processes in collaborative cross-sector research. AHRC Creative Communities also hosted a series Policy Labs across the UK, using experimental creative facilitation methodologies to harness co-creation processes to unite a diverse range of cross-sector stakeholders around a series of key challenge areas in RD&I with the aim of generating new policy solution suggestions.

Programme Aims

From the territorial grounding of its initial deep dive report (2023) to the innovation communities identified by its second phase case studies, through to the policy and strategy recommendations for making choices on future investment, the programme aims to identify priorities, growth potential and resources animation to examine how and why Creative Communities build new knowledge systems using culture in the twenty-first century.

By focusing on collaborative R&D, the programme puts people at the centre of the innovation system, identifying the needs of the community, empowering stakeholders to get involved, and building skills, capacity, and consensus. This method reflects the conceptualisation of Creative Communities as a change-making mechanism and provides space to establish a knowledge base, an opportunity to think, discuss and collaborate and then to share learning and network policy formation across the very different policy landscapes that comprise the devolved nations and regions of the UK today.

The programme phases are:

1. **Create 2022**: determining the position of, and understanding what brings Creative Communities together;

2. **Act 2023:** consulting and creating new knowledge through a process of shared ownership and dialogue with researchers, communities, and partners;

3. **Share 2024**: co-producing policy, communicating and consulting actions, interventions, solutions, and benefits with all stakeholders, regionally and nationally;

4. **Scale 2025-7:** grow and stretch the reach and impact of programme interventions through actioning the learning generated from the evidence base & generate new opportunities to connect cross-sector communities in devolved contexts.

CIP Awards 2025-2026

Context

Across the last decade there has been an increased focus by funders and decision makers on bringing research and society closer together. Over the last few years this new emphasis has been demonstrated with a range of new strategies and funding calls, including:

- UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) Strategy 2022 to 2027: Transforming tomorrow together
- Engineering and Physical Science Research Council's (EPSRC) Framework for Responsible Research & Innovation and public engagement that is a two-way process
- Wellcome & British Science Association Ideas Fund is a grants programme enabling the UK public to develop and try out ideas that address problems related to mental wellbeing
- UKRI & The Young Foundation's Community Research Network programme supports neighbourhood-level engagement with research, building on UKRI's strategic objective to build collaborative and diverse knowledge
- DEMOS' Citizens' White Paper sets out why, when and how the government could embed citizen involvement in national policy making to tackle the complex and potentially divisive challenges facing our country

Structural changes to organisational models are needed for funders to adapt to this new landscape of devolution in the regions and nations. R&D continues to operate in a very centralised system for an increasingly devolved country. By committing to growing a more collaborative and inclusive R&D ecosystem we can embrace diverse voices to share new insights and generate knowledge and growth.

The CIP role uses this best practice as a model to create a new opportunity to generate deeper learning about how we can better devolve funding, empower communities to use their own knowledge to co-design R&D and in doing so create more equitable ways of working between communities, third and private sector partners to drive innovation within the UK. For potential hosts, the CIP role offers enhanced research capacity, allows for dedicated partner engagement, and can provide a valuable link to parallel research teams across the UK.

Missions

The CIPs will undertake new research addressing research questions informed by the Creative Communities programme evidence base and the UK Government missions. They will explore co-creation of R&D with communities and partners as a mechanism of change and consider short, intermediate and longer-term outcomes on how and why culture can address **growth**, **regional inequality,** enhance **belonging** and break down barriers to **equalising opportunity** in devolved settings using culture-led R&D.

By embedding CIPs in existing collaborative R&D, the programme will engage in sustained listening to identify opportunities for growth and scalable models of co-creation and community partnership working in R&D, as well as challenges and barriers.

Indicative CIP research questions may include **but will not be limited to:**

- What works in research co-design, co-delivery, co-evaluation? Where can they drive growth and investment?
- How, where, and with what effect can these be scaled, shared, or supported: **growth; regional inequality**; **belonging**; **equalising opportunity**
- What are the characteristics and criteria for successful Creative Communities?
- How can we make Creative Communities open and inclusive to all socio-economic backgrounds and enable capacity in communities to take part and value participation from everyone?
- How can Creative Communities create a new culture of co-production in R&D, and establish and spread new relationships between R&D and places?
- What WEI (wider economic impacts) and spill over benefits and values do Creative Communities generate and how can we best capture, understand, and grow these now and in the future?
- Can Creative Communities evolve a model for more inclusive impact?
- How can we help funders and partners to connect with communities?
- How can we reframe the public narrative around social investment by private donors and embrace diversity in giving by developing a new model of philanthropy that is embedded in society and contributing to social cohesion?
- How can we design funding systems that contribute to and benefit from the formation and activities of Creative Communities? What might a targeted funding approach look like? What might be potential design avenues highlighted by the policy considerations that need to be addressed to arrive to an optimal funding system? How can we create a framework that keeps data collection efforts and administrative burden at low level?
- What role can Creative Communities play in co-creating culture that contributes to challenge zones including belonging, equalising opportunity, growth, and regional inequality

- Can the Creative Community model mobilise opportunities and growth areas across the nation as a whole?

Policy Impact

The learning from the CIP roles and resultant case studies will inform the programme policy recommendations to regional local and combined authorities and to national governments and funders.

Required Outputs

Each CIP will deliver a case study and accompanying policy paper, each tailored for relevant audiences including recommendations for policymakers, and other actors as appropriate. The CIP will be supported in contributing to the co-production of a podcast series addressing the core Creative Communities thematics of belonging, equalising opportunity, growth, and regional inequality. The CIPs will be provided with in-kind professional support on podcasting via remote training from MIC Media.

A **minimum £500 for the procurement and use of specialist podcast recording equipment <u>must be incorporated in the proposed CIP project budget</u>**.

We expect the CIP to set aside a minimum of **5 days of time for communications work**, which might include activities such as blog writing, podcast recording and potential media activities. It might also include potential time after the delivery of outputs (circa 2 days) to participate in dissemination events to maximise the impact of the research. In addition, we expect the project team (e.g. CIP plus lead researcher and/or co-investigator and/or project partners) to set aside at least 2 days for CIP Network events (start and end-point activities).

The outputs will be created with regular consultation and feedback from the Creative Communities team, so there should be ample time included in the proposed project timeline for regular contact (detailed below), as well as the sharing of drafts to enable comments and feedback to be incorporated.

- The case study should be no more than 2,500 words (excluding references/appendices)
- The Policy Paper should be no more than 1,000 words (excluding references/appendices)

The Creative Communities website hosts the profiles of the [2023/24 CIP Cohort](#), including the [Creative Communities podcast](#), [CIP case studies](#) and [devolved policy papers](#).

Creative Communities welcomes proposals that include innovative ideas for the collection and presentation of data, particularly those that reference the central theme of co-creation in arts and culture, e.g. development and delivery of creative workshops/exhibitions/knowledge exchange opportunities with collaborative partners.

The successful project teams will also be invited to present interim findings to Creative Communities and other relevant audiences at a suitable mid-point and end-point during the research, either virtually or in-person at a time agreed with the research team in the project timeline (see below). **Costs for travel and accommodation to participate in these activities should not exceed the £4500 ring fenced travel costs required by the proposed CIP project budget.**

Monitoring Evaluation & Learning (MEL)

Creative Communities and AHRC will work with the funded projects from the outset to co-create a light-touch monitoring and evaluation framework, underpinned by the existing standardised reporting activities for Creative Communities. Aligning with AHRC's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Strategy, we will agree objectives, establish priority benefits, and identify the most suitable qualitative and quantitative measures to capture progress towards projected benefits and impacts.

Applicants are encouraged to consider approaches to capturing and reporting on learning within the project. Innovative and creative approaches to data capture and analysis could form an interesting component of the structure and approach to both MEL and the delivery of required outputs.

Project Timeline

Phase 1: Project Set-up

Creative Communities will arrange an introductory meeting with your project team. Together we will review and agree a detailed project timeline with key milestones, deliverables, and budgets. This will also include working with your team to develop a plan for the required outputs of a case study, policy paper, podcast contributions, and the CIP Network. **Costs for the hire or purchase of specific audio recording equipment for delivery of the podcast (a minimum for £500) must be included in budgets**.

There will also be a 1-day CIP Welcome Event for CIPs, hosted at Northumbria University. The event is an opportunity for all ten CIPs to meet, share initial plans, and spark the on-going development of the CIP Network. **We expect applicants to have considered costs for this and all other event attendance and factor it into the use of the CIP funding. Costs for travel and accommodation to participate in these activities should not exceed the £4500 ring fenced travel costs required by the proposed CIP project budget.**

Phase 2: Project Activity & Research

Creative Communities will continue to work closely with you throughout your project. We will schedule a 12-week training programme running from September to December 2025. These bi-weekly sessions will cover key themes of the CIP Awards, including: Co-Creation; Creative Methodologies; Policy; Devolution; Communication & Podcasting,

and Impact & Evaluation. They will also be crucial opportunities for the CIP cohort to convene virtually to share progress, exchange knowledge and develop the CIP Network.

We will organise monthly check-in meetings between a member of the Creative Communities team and each CIP, and work with them to finalise research plans. **We expect the CIP Line manager to also attend the check-in sessions quarterly, to maintain clear lines of communication between Creative Communities and the CIP's management team.** Project findings should be communicated and discussed with the Creative Communities team at an early stage to enable early discussions of possible policy recommendations.

In addition, Creative Communities will work with the CIPs to jointly contribute to a podcast series, including plans for content and guests as well as offering support for relevant training.

We will collaborate on communicating about the project throughout the project's timeframe, including developing social media content and blogs as appropriate.

Phase 3: Project Evaluation

Creative Communities will work together with the CIPs project team to support the development of required outputs, including by providing feedback on case study drafts (with a particular lens on maximising policy impact). All projects funded by Creative Communities are required to produce, at a minimum, a case study (max 2500 words) and a policy paper (max 1000 words). Creative Communities will seek to facilitate appropriate engagement between your project team and relevant policy support to maximise the impact of your project.

You will be required to participate in monitoring and evaluation activities undertaken by Creative Communities. This will include a post-project survey for all research team members and interviews with a member of Creative Communities to reflect on your experiences on the project. As an AHRC-funded research team, you will also be required to report research outcomes to Researchfish. As this project was funded through Creative Communities, we will be collating and uploading responses via our Researchfish submission. There is a requirement that a Principal Investigator reports outcomes until at least five years after it ends, so we (or AHRC/UKRI) will contact you annually to update on any outcomes.

Activity	Deadline
Project Activity	
Project Start	September 2025
Phase 1: Project Set-up	
Confirm final project plan, methodologies, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), ethics in collaboration with the Creative Communities team	September 2025
CIP Network Introductory event for CIPs and project teams	Late September/early October 2025
Phase 2: Project Activity & Research	
CIP to participate in 12-week training programme	September to December 2025
CIP to participate in regular 1-1 catchups with a member of the Creative Communities team	Every 4 weeks
CIP case study and policy paper development (updates provided during CIP 1-1 sessions)	January – May 2026
CIP podcast development and delivery (participation in training and development sessions as necessary)	January – May 2026
Mid-point CIP Network event - CIP and project team to present interim findings to CIP Network	March 2025 (Date to be confirmed alongside project plan)
Phase 3: Project Evaluation	
Delivery of first full draft of case study and policy paper	May 2026
Collaboration with Creative Communities to finalise case study and policy paper	June-July 2026
Submission of final case study and policy paper	August 2026
Completion of CIP role	September 2026
Creative Communities launch of CIP outputs	October 2026
End-point CIP Network event – CIP and project team to present final findings to CIP Network	October 2026
Final monitoring and evaluation activities	October 2026 - January 2027
Annual Researchfish updates for five years post project completion	

Budget - Eligible Costs

Funding of £75,000 (100% fEC) is available for each award. **From that amount:**

- **£4500 of the budget must be retained as a travel and public engagement fund for use by the CIP**
- **£500 must be retained for the procurement and/or use of podcast recording equipment**
- **The remaining CIP budget should not exceed £70,000**

Creative Communities are willing to fund costs which are in line with AHRC's policies. Please note the following exceptions to eligible costs:

- Staff costs relate to the wage of the CIP only. Some staff costs to cover participation of community partners may be included, but unfortunately, we **cannot pay staff costs for any other HEI/IRO staff member as part of the project team.**
- Any costs for travel must be realistic under the current circumstances and we request that any activity involving travel has appropriate mitigations and alternatives suggested. **You must book in line with your host institution's travel policies and the Creative Communities programme at Northumbria University** <u>cannot</u> **manage travel directly.**
- Costs for the hire or purchase of specific audio recording equipment for delivery of the podcast (a minimum for £500) **must be included in budgets**, however we will not be awarding costs for any other equipment or capital infrastructure such as laptops.
- Creative Communities will cover the costs for the design of the case study and policy paper (in the Creative Communities branding), therefore design costs for reports are not eligible and will not be funded under this opportunity.
- Dissemination activities will be led by Creative Communities in collaboration with the project team. We expect the project team to set aside at least 2 days for CIP Network events (start and end-point activities). In addition, we expect the CIP to set aside a minimum of 5 days of time for communications work, which might include activities such as blog writing, podcast recording and potential media activities. It might also include potential time after the delivery of outputs (circa 2 days) to participate in policy labs or dissemination events to maximise the impact of the research.

All of the budget rules must be adhered to. If you are not sure if an item in your budget is eligible, email Samantha Peel (samantha.peel@northumbria.ac.uk) to check first.

Application Process - Stage 1: Eligibility Assessment & Expression of Interest

To apply for this funding opportunity, you must:

> Stage 1. Complete an eligibility assessment to demonstrate meeting the full eligibility criteria and submit a 500-word expression of interest that outlines your project proposal.

Joint applications from 2 or more eligible HEIs/IROs are welcomed, but applications must stipulate a lead HEI/IRO that will submit the application, be the central recipient of funding from Creative Communities, and be responsible for the employment and line management of the CIP and reporting on the project. All joint applications must include full details of how CIPs travel, communication, and project management will be structured and shared between the HEIs/IROs.

Submitting an Application

Eligibility Assessment & Expression of Interest

Eligibility assessments & Expression of Interest must be submitted through an online application portal hosted by Gecko Forms. Please secure the consent of all individuals named in the application, including external partners, before you make your submission. Where word limits are specified, these are the maximum word limits.

Please note there is no option to save and return to the form later. It is recommended you prepare all answers ahead of time in a Word document (or similar) and copy and paste the answers into the form at application stage. The eligibility assessment & expression of interest asks the following questions:

Eligibility Questions

- Are you based or do you work in partnership with a UK higher education institution (HEI) or independent research organisation (IRO) based in a devolved nation or region of the UK?
- Is the UK HEI or IRO you are based at or work in partnership with located in either a devolved region of England, or a devolved nation of the UK?
- Do you have planned projects of work featuring collaborative/co-creation R&D with funding until **at least September 2026**?
- Are you working in partnership with diverse external partners, cross-sector collaborations and/or communities?
- Can you identify a named individual as CIP candidate on the application?
- Are you and your partners dedicated to actively engaging in the co-design and co-authoring of the application with all partners, including the CIP candidate?
- Can you outline a distinct piece of research activity to be led and completed by the CIP candidate?
- Are you and your partners able to provide a suitable package of support for the CIP candidate, including managing the hosting and line management of the CIP within existing institutional frameworks and governance structures?

Research Team Information

- CIP Line Manager Name, HEI/IRO, Dept/Unit/Team, Email address
- Lead Administrative Contact Name, HEI/IRO, Dept/Unit/Team, Email address
- Is your application Cross-HEI/IRO?
- [If Yes] Co-lead Applicant Name, HEI/IRO, Dept/Unit/Team, Email address
- CIP Candidate Contact Name, Organisation/HEI/IRO, Dept/Unit/Team, Email address
- Partner Contact Name, Organisation, Dept/Unit/Team, Email address

Project Proposal

- Proposed Project Title
- Research topic being addressed: Belonging; Equalising Opportunity; Growth; Regional Inequality
- Project Proposal (Max. 500 words)
  - Proposals should outline:
    - Key themes or challenges intended to be addressed by CIP research
    - Brief CIP project plan, including the existing project research and the vision for integration of the CIP role
    - CIP activities, the research context, indication of methods, and the potential outputs and outcomes
    - Project potential, relating to benefits for the existing research and its partners, as well as the wider research stakeholders
    - How the research will respond to and/or create a new evidence base for the devolved policy contexts of your national government/Mayoral Combined Authority
    - The partners and collaborative relationships that are in place, and the role of these partners in the project plan

Deadline

Stage 1: Eligibility Assessment & Expression of Interest must be received by **Monday 6 January 2025 at 4pm** UK time. You will not be able to apply after this time.

Assessment Process

Stage 1 Applications will be subject to an internal review process where they will be assessed by the Creative Communities team for eligibility, completeness and fit to the opportunity. **Applicants should make sure language is clear and that any technical terms and acronyms are clearly explained.**

Should any applications be deemed ineligible or incomplete, the submission will be rejected. Each shortlisted application will be assessed by at least two panel members and scores will be collated. The panel's principal task is to recommend a ranked list of applications forming a shortlist of applicants which meet the core requirements of the

opportunity based on the quality of the application. Those shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full application for the CIP Award 2025/26.

Application Process Stage 2: Full Awards Application

Should your Stage 1 expression of interest project proposal meet the minimum standard for the assessment criteria, you will be invited to submit a full application, consisting of either:

a. Written application based on 4 x 250-word research questions (max 1000-words); *OR*
b. A video application based on 4 x 2 minute research questions (max 8 minutes).

Joint applications from 2 or more eligible HEIs/IROs are welcomed, but applications must stipulate a lead HEI/IRO that will submit the application, be the central recipient of funding from Creative Communities, and be responsible for the employment and line management of the CIP and reporting on the project. All joint applications must include full details of how CIPs travel, communication, and project management will be structured and shared between the HEIs/IROs.

Submitting an Application

Written applications must be submitted through an online application portal hosted by Gecko Forms. Full Application forms will only be accessible after the submission and approval of an EOI. All shortlisted applicants will receive a link to the Full Application form. Please secure the consent of **all** individuals named in the application, including external partners, before you make your submission. If you choose to submit a video application, please use the Project Details questions below to structure the recording.

Video applications will be judged on content, not production quality.

The form includes the questions below. Where word limits are specified, these are the maximum word limits. The form will cut you off at the word limit. **Please note there is no option to save and return to the form later.** It is recommended you prepare all answers ahead of time in a Word document (or similar) and copy and paste the answers into the form at application stage.

Research Team Information:

- CIP Line Manager Name, HEI/IRO, Dept/Unit/Team, Email address
- Administrative Lead Contact Name, HEI/IRO, Dept/Unit/Team, Email address
- Is your application Cross-HEI/IRO?
- [If Yes] Co-lead Applicant Name, HEI/IRO, Dept/Unit/Team, Email address
- CIP Candidate Contact Name, Organisation/HEI/IRO, Dept/Unit/Team, Email address
- Partner Contact Name, HEI/IRO, Dept/Unit/Team, Email address

Project Theme:

- Project title

- Research topic being addressed: Belonging; Equalising Opportunity; Growth; Regional Inequality

Project Details:

- Indicate if the submission is a written application or video application.

  [if a written application]

- **Project Overview** (Max. 250 words) Give an overview of the CIP project plan, including project team, and the vision for integration of the CIP role, detailing lines of management, responsibility, and accountability. If this is a Cross-HEI/IRO application indicate how the CIP role will be integrated across HEI/IRO sites.
- **Project Activities** (Max. 250 words) Detail potential CIP activities, including alignment to the scope of the opportunity, an outline of the research context, indication of methods, and the potential outputs and outcomes, including how you will evaluate the project.
- **Project Potential** (Max. 250 words) How will the proposed CIP project plan relate to and benefit the existing research project(s) and its partners? Detail the expected benefits to the wider research stakeholders, including specific beneficiaries (e.g. partners, CIPs, AHRC Creative Communities, etc).
- **Project Partners** (Max. 250 words) What partners and collaborative relationships are in place, and what is the role of these partners in the project plan? If partnerships are yet to be secured, share plans for expanding and strengthening partnerships and the approach to be taken to welcome and include new partners and sectors through equitable partnership working.

  [if a video application]

- **Video Upload** (max 8 minutes) There is an option to submit a video application. If applying via video, **please use the 4 questions above to inform the structure and timing of your video application**.
- **All additional sections of the application form (Research Team Information, Project Theme, and Project Planning) must be completed via the written portion of the application form.**
- Video applications must be an MP4 file. The size limit for video applications is 2GB. Please title the video file with the project title. You can only upload one video, and it must address all 4 of the above questions.

Project Planning:

- **Risk, Ethics, and Safeguarding.** Do you have risk assessments, ethics and safeguarding plan for managing the health, safety and wellbeing of CIPs and project partners?

- **Project Timeline** (Max. 250 words) Provide an estimated end-to-end timeline, including recruitment and evaluation, any key milestones, and an approximate start and end date.
- **Project Budget**. Upload a budget document, including direct staff costs, and details regarding the use of the £5,000 ringfenced CIP funds to be dedicated to travel, public engagement, and podcasting technical needs.

Application Development Surgeries

Application development surgeries will be available throughout February, March & April 2025 to support invited applicants in developing their Stage 2 submissions, particularly members of under-represented groups and for colleagues who feel themselves disadvantaged in making an application.

Each surgery will be a 20-minute session for you to **briefly** pitch your ideas for a full application to a panel of Creative Communities and AHRC team members. Panels will be a maximum of 3 people. You can present using any aids that you think might be useful, such as slides or video. The panel will then be able to address any questions you might have, as well as ask questions and offer insight that can help you to strengthen your application.

Please note that application development surgeries are not a part of the assessment process. Any discussions during these sessions are confidential and will not contribute to or influence the assessment process should you go on to make an application.

Applicants invited to make a full application for the CIP Awards will be sent a link to register to attend an application development surgery via email.

Deadline

Stage 2: Full Application invitations will be sent after 27 January 2025, followed by a submission deadline of 28 April 2025.

Assessment Process

Full applications for the CIP Awards will be subject to a rapid review single-stage process where they will be assessed and considered by a panel comprising of academic and non-academic experts with appropriate expertise. **Applicants should make sure language is clear and that any technical terms and acronyms are clearly explained.**

Each shortlisted application will be assessed by at least two panel members and scores will be collated. The panel's principal task is to recommend a ranked list of applications for AHRC to consider for funding, taking into consideration the intention to fund ten CIP opportunities which meet the core requirements of the opportunity based on the quality of the application.

The intention is to award funding to up to ten proposals, with funding allocation ringfenced as follows:

- The highest scoring proposals from each nation of the UK will be automatically awarded (4 awards).
- The 6 remaining awards will be allocated to the remaining highest scoring proposals.

In the case that one nation does not meet the threshold score for awarding, priority will be to allocate to the next devolved nation application with the highest score. Proposals that have received the same final score may be re-ranked to facilitate this. The final decision on portfolio coverage will be taken by UKRI.

Assessment Criteria

Applications will be assessed using the below equally weighted criteria:

Leadership & Capacity	Provide a CIP project plan, including project team, with a clear vision for integration of the CIP role, articulating effective and clear lines of management, responsibility, and accountability.
Co-Creation	Demonstrate how the proposed CIP project plan will benefit the existing research project(s) and its partners and deliver outputs and outcomes that are relevant to Creative Communities core themes, as well as the research context, regional place and impact agendas, and wider stakeholders.
Cross-Sector Collaboration and Partnerships	Define what partners and collaborative relationships are in place, and the role of these partners in the project plan. Where partnerships are yet to be secured, there must be detailed plans for expanding and strengthening partnerships, with information on the approach to be taken to welcome and include new partners and sectors through equitable partnership working.
Geographical Spread	Reflect the programme objective of delivering place-based activities and outputs that are contextually relevant and addresses regional inequalities in collaborative R&D opportunities. The highest scoring proposals from each nation of the UK will be automatically awarded (4 awards). The 6 remaining awards will be allocated to the remaining highest scoring proposals. In the case that one nation does not meet the threshold score for awarding, priority will be to allocate to the next devolved nation application with the highest score. Proposals that have received the same final score may be re-ranked to facilitate this. The final decision on portfolio coverage will be taken by UKRI.
Added Value and Strategic Delivery	Evidence that issues relating to equality, diversity, inclusion, risk, ethics and environmental sustainability have been considered throughout the proposal and in relation to each of the assessment criteria. CIPs must be in role 1st September 2025 to 31st August

	2026. Applicant project plans must present a clear delivery plan that is adaptable to the needs of the context, with outcomes that are achievable and measurable within budget and timeframe and demonstrate planning for ethics and safeguarding for managing the health, safety and wellbeing of CIPs and project partners.

Data

For the purpose of the Creative Communities CIP Pilot, both the **Creative Communities programme team at University of Northumbria at Newcastle** and UK Research and Innovation - **Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)** are considered Joint Data Controllers.

Joint Data Controllers are organisations that determine the purposes and means by which personal data are processed by jointly controlling processing for shared purposes. These shared purposes have been identified as:

- To facilitate the administration of the AHRC Creative Communities CIP Pilot as a joint programme, including the assessment and selection of applicants, and the delivery of funding for successful applicants.
- To have a record of activity proposed/agreed to be undertaken by successful applicants so that proper support may be given in the delivery of funding awards.
- Wider analysis of application data to identify appetite and scope for further funding activity, including development of possible future programming.

We are committed to processing personal data in accordance with our obligations under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and related UK data protection Act 2018. Full details of how we will use the data submitted as part of the application process can be found in our Privacy Notice on the Creative Communities website.

Contact Details

The Creative Communities team is led by Professor Katy Shaw, supported by Senior Research Fellows Dr. Lauren Baker Mitchell and Helen Apsey, and Project Co-ordinator, Samantha Peel. One member of the Creative Communities research team will work with each of the award holders and CIPs.

Questions relating to the opportunity can be sent to:
ad.ahrc.creative.communities@northumbria.ac.uk