

Our new pilot funding initiative will support organisations to explore, test and grow ideas with the potential to shape the future of the heritage workforce.

Page updated *on 21 July 2022 to include links to future workshops.*

How we work, who is part of the heritage workforce and what skills we need are essential considerations for meeting future demands and ambitions for the UK's diverse heritage.

Through a combination of financial support, expert advice and cohort collaboration, our Heritage Innovation Fund will help organisations nurture experimental new ideas and solutions to these collective challenges.

> This is a timely moment to be launching the Heritage Innovation Fund... to explore the ideas, solutions and technologies that could effectively support heritage in the future.
>
> *Alexandra Roberts, Head of Innovation & New Business*

The initiative is intended to involve three phases:

- Explore: defining the problem and developing potential solutions.
- Test: putting promising prototypes into practice and gathering evidence of what works.
- Grow: implementing findings more widely within organisations and across the sector.

Applications are now open for the Explore phase only. Grants of up to £25,000 are available to cover your time and exploration activities for six months.

We want to hear from organisations that are committed to the innovation process, prepared to learn and experiment and willing to share their failures as well as their successes.

The pilot is open to not-for-profit and public sector organisations, local authorities, as well as private owners of heritage.

Fit for the future

Alexandra Roberts, our Head of Innovation & New Business, said: "This is a timely moment to be launching the Heritage Innovation Fund. The act of looking forward is a powerful one, particularly when we have been through such turbulent times.

"In our recent UK Heritage Pulse survey, support to innovate and test new approaches emerged as one of the top four priorities for action. This pilot initiative is just one of the ways we are responding to this identified need. It is an important part of our wider commitment to working alongside practitioners from across the UK and all parts of heritage to explore the ideas, solutions and technologies that could effectively support heritage in the future."

We are partnering with The Young Foundation to deliver the Heritage Innovation Fund. They will provide expert advice and help develop participants' innovation skills through a series of group and one-to-one sessions.

The Young Foundation's Chief Executive, Helen Goulden, said: "Through recent challenges – from the pandemic to other national and global crises – heritage sites have proved vital for people's health and wellbeing. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to those working to protect such spaces, supporting jobs and tourism as they do so. But the time is ripe to make progress on some of the stubborn and persistent workforce challenges, to ensure the heritage workforce is fully fit for the future.

"The Young Foundation has a long and proud history of supporting UK communities, people and organisations to innovate and take actions on the issues they care about. We know that the heritage sector can innovate, and the pandemic has shown us just how swiftly radical change can happen. We are delighted to support the Heritage Innovation Fund to provide the support, structure and collaborative learning environment for heritage organisations who want to experiment and learn to build new ways of working in a changed and changing world. And we're excited to see what emerges over the course of the fund and beyond."

Need more inspiration?

We'll be running a series of online events across July and August to help organisations understand the aims of the initiative and whether it's relevant to you:

- we hosted a webinar (see recording) introducing the Heritage Innovation Fund at 11am on Thursday 21 July 2022.
- Workshops to help you hone your idea (one event per organisation only, please – places are limited): Thursday 4 August, Wednesday 24 August and Tuesday 13 September.

You will then have until 12noon on Tuesday 27 September to submit your application.

Find out more

Explore our Heritage Innovation Fund application guidance for further information and eligibility criteria. The guidance includes:

- questions to consider as part of developing your application
- examples of topics you could explore as part of your workforce challenge

View the application guidance





Volunteers at Barnyards Marsh Wildlife Reserve. Credit: Alan Anderson, Scottish Wildlife Trust



ation and drive change



Help us shape the future of heritage funding and strategy