Grantee Q&A: delivering a heritage-inspired



An activity in the community garden for Roots, part of Belfast 2024's Our Future Heritage programme.

We asked Christine Osborne from Belfast City Council to share what she's learned from the Council's Belfast 2024 project journey – from developing their application to building a legacy plan.

About the project

We awarded Belfast City Council £250,000 to bring to life projects exploring and preserving heritage as part of Belfast 2024, the city's largest cultural programme to date.

From green spaces, waterways and alleys, to film, textiles and an immersive light show, the projects of the Our Future Heritage portfolio were rooted in the city's story and focused on engaging local people with creative opportunities, building both knowledge of their shared heritage and pride in place.

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What did you find most challenging about your application and how did you overcome these challenges?

“We had to prepare our application at a time when our programme was still taking shape, as we were working with 10 different projects, each with different stakeholders and at different stages of development. As such, we focused on identifying central themes and objectives that gave each of the projects and our application a clear, abiding mission: to share and to celebrate people, place and planet in the context of heritage. This helped to demonstrate what we wanted to achieve and chimed well with the wider aims of the Belfast 2024 programme.”

What would you recommend future applicants spend more time on when developing their application?

“You should focus on outcomes and legacy – what you really want to get out of the project and what its worth will be beyond the funding period. Work backwards from these starting points to find the most efficient way to achieve them. For example, we really wanted to boost people’s knowledge of the city’s natural heritage, so we focused on Our Planet as one of the three themes artists and organisations were invited to respond to.

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The Belfast 2024 project team enjoy the festival.

What one piece of advice would you give to someone applying for funding for the first time?

“Leave lots of time to redraft, rethink and engage early and fully with partners – both delivery partners and strategic partners – to get the most out of the project or programme.

“To engage partners, we highlighted the wider and longer-term benefits of taking part, aligning our approach with the city’s broader heritage and regeneration priorities. This helped smaller organisations and artists to recognise their contribution within a bigger picture and fostered a culture of collaboration across the project.”

When delivering your project, what surprised you?

“The support we received from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The Northern Ireland team helped us to think about our me n touch v ds best p



Shadowdock, an immersive light show staged as part of Belfast 2024.

What’s been the most rewarding thing to come out of your project?

“Belfast 2024 has been a very meaningful time when we were supported to explore our identity, our past and our future, through cultural participation and some of that took me by surprise. The depth of reaction from participants showed the power of the heritage we celebrated, how some of the projects changed lives and how they impacted positively on people's regard of others.

“We’ve had great qualitative feedback, particularly from those who are perhaps not regularly engaging with the city’s history. We’ve also strengthened our understanding of Belfast’s heritage sector. Everything we’ve learned is already informing how we budget, plan and prioritise our work.”

Following this project, what are you most looking forward to in your organisation’s future?

“Applying the principles of the Heritage Fund to my wider work. Exploring the criteria and strategic priorities has helped me rethink our organisation's understanding of cultural heritage and our support for citizen participation in exploring identity.”

This is part of **a series of Q&As led by successful grantees**, aiming to demystify the project management process and share experience across the sector. Explore more stories below.



Recording a podcast episode with SWI members Maz Thorn, Janette McKirdy and Sandra MacArthur. Photo: Scottish Women's Institutes.



stage of your heritage project

Karen and the project team gather to celebrate the launch of the Maroon Mile at the Heart of Midlothian Memorial Clock, in the city's Haymarket.



the heart of Edinburgh

A community group build benches as part of the Lost Peatlands project. Photo: Neath Port Talbot Council.

Grantee Q&A: how to build a compelling project narrative