

Q&A WEBINAR

16 July, 1.00pm to 2.00pm

- Naima Khan, Funding Manager – Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- Chelbi Hillan, Young Consultant – Involving Young People Collective
- Daniel Mapatac, Young Consultant – Involving Young People Collective
- Luna Dizon, Communications Manager – Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

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Welcome and plan for the session

- Introduction to Esmée and our Involving Young People Collective
- Why Youth-Led Creativity
- About the funding programme
- Application process
- Q&A



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About us

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation is an independent grantmaker in the UK.

We aim to improve our natural world, secure a fairer future and strengthen the bonds in communities in the UK.



The **Involving Young People Collective** is a group of young people, connected by their drive for social change.

We work closely with Esmée helping to design and test ways to involve young people more directly with Esmée's work, and improve their funding practice.

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Esmée's strategy



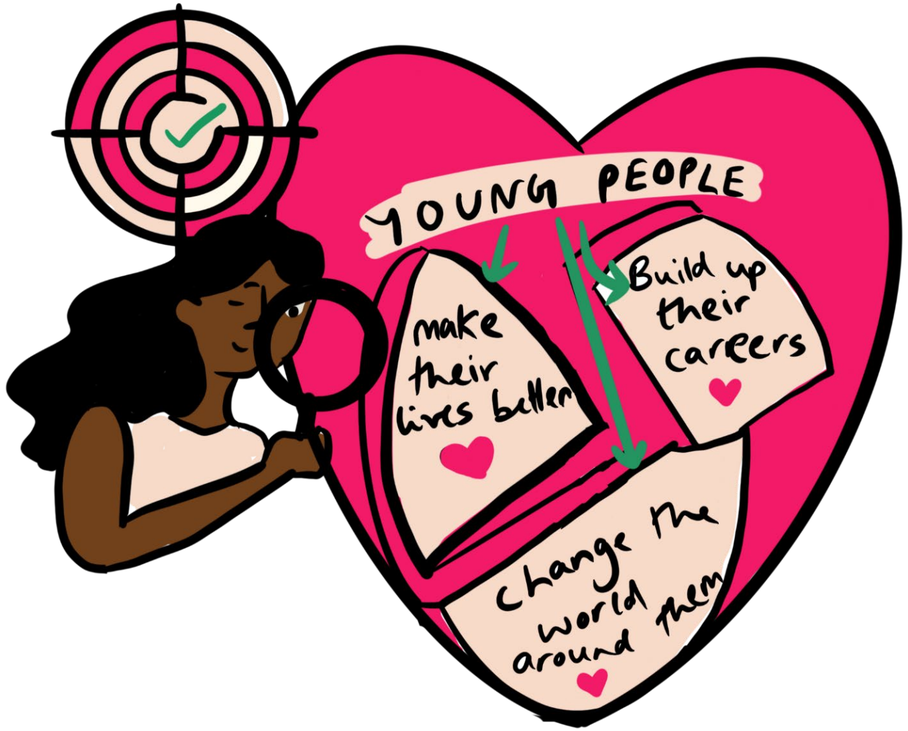
Aim:	A Fairer Future
Priority:	Arts and creativity making change
Long-term outcome:	Youth-led culture and creativity enhances young people's lives, and enables them to influence change in their communities or wider society.

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Why Youth-Led Creativity

- Building on young people's power to make change
- Using creativity to support young people to:
  - Make their lives better
  - Build up their careers
  - Change the world around them
- Focusing on work led by and for young people who are underrepresented in arts and culture.



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The funding and support available

12 to 16 grants over 2026 to 2027, totalling £2m

We'll fund

- Project and/or core costs
- Multi-year grants
- Maximum grant is £150k for the duration of the grant



Learning Programme

- Facilitated by a Learning Partner
- Runs alongside the funding to enable peer support and learning
- Support organisations to develop and share their models of practice
- Organisations will be compensated to support participation

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A manifesto

Youth Leadership happens when young people have space. To create. To make art. To express themselves. To connect. To exist.

It happens best in organisations that are rooted in their communities. When adults and young people work together to build deep relationships. When power and responsibility are shared with care and transparency - not just held by the adults, but not imposed on young people either.

It comes from activism. Resistance. Connection to nature. Care. Cultural wisdom. Healing. Messiness. Exploration. Openness. Reflection. Anti-Capitalism. Anti-Colonialism. **JOY.**

Youth leadership is complex. It's not (just) about making a speech or going to a board meeting. It shows up in different ways for different people. It emerges slowly and unpredictably.

Its impact increases when the people who do it come together, to share stories and silence, to actively listen, celebrate and learn from each other.

It flourishes when it is well resourced and when the people who do it have a platform to articulate, share and advocate for their practice.

And when funders create space to learn alongside them.

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Work we want to support

1. **Creates change for young people using arts and creativity** as a tool for young people to use their voice and influence change in their own lives and the world around them.



What this could look like:

- Intentional about exploring and expanding what youth-led creativity looks like in a curious and open-minded way.
- Uses the arts and creative practice to create change, as identified and led by young people.
- Builds artistic and creative leadership in young people so they can be artists and change-makers.

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Work we want to support

2. **Is youth-led - where young people hold real and meaningful power** to shape decisions, resources, and direction at every stage of a project or organisation.



What this could look like:

- Considers who holds power over decisions, money, strategy, priorities, and direction. Goes beyond involving young people and is moving towards ownership by young people.
- Is experimental, imaginative, challenging and innovative in their approach to youth leadership in practice.
- Involves adults but only if they are willing to be challenged, let go of certainty and control, accept risk and discomfort, support rather than direct.

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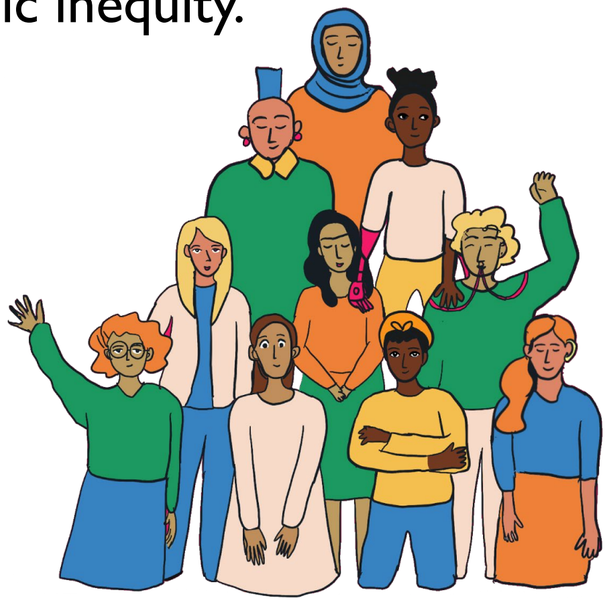
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Work we want to support – incl case study

3. **Centres the voices of young people underrepresented in arts and culture**:
    - D/deaf, disabled or neurodivergent
    - From communities experiencing racial inequity
    - Are economically disadvantaged
    - Identify as LGBT+
    - have migration or care experience.
    - Live outside a big city

What this could look like

- Committed to, representative of, and accountable to the community it serves – particularly those who face barriers due to systemic inequity.



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Work we want to support



4. **Prioritises the joy and care of young people,** taking an intentional and holistic approach that goes beyond safeguarding

What this could look like

- Shows a deep understanding of care and joy that is shaped by young people and this is at the centre of their approach
- Thinks about all aspects of wellbeing (physical, emotional, financial, spiritual)
- Young people are supported as whole people, not just by what they do
- Makes space for difficult conversations, shared and differing experiences, and real connection.
- Shows that fun and time together matter, without needing special aims or results
- Makes efforts to bring joy and positive energy into the environment and the work

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Work we want to support

5. **Collaborative and committed to learning with others to develop youth-led practice** – understands the importance of this for creating change more widely.



What this could look like

- Understands their role in their community as well as a wider ecosystem; and the importance of collaboration in creating change more widely.
- Is ambitious and committed to contributing to the development of youth-led practice beyond their organisation.
- Has examples of collaboration and/or learning with others about youth-led practice.

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Organisations we want to support

- **Constituted organisations**: e.g. charities, community interest companies (CICs), community benefit societies, social enterprises. If your organisation is not a registered charity, we will assess governance and the risk of disproportionate 'personal benefit' (see our FAQs on kinds of organisations we support).
- **Arts, creativity and culture is the main focus**: for example – music, film performance arts, literature and publishing, design and animation. We're interested in organisations whose primary activities sit within the creative sectors.
- Based and working in **Northern Ireland, Scotland, or Wales**
- **An annual turnover of more than £50,000**



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What we won't fund

These types of work:

- Work that is not legally charitable – defined as work that falls within one of 13 descriptions of charitable purposes.
- Academic research – unless it can demonstrate real potential for practical outcomes.
- Healthcare with a clinical basis, including medical research, hospices, counselling and therapy, arts therapy, education about and treatment for drug and alcohol misuse.
- Independent education – work that takes place or is delivered by fee-paying schools.
- Work that is primarily the responsibility of statutory authorities.
- The advancement of religion.

These types of costs:

- Capital costs including building work, renovations, and equipment (the exclusion applies to grants only, we may make social investments for these).
- Grants for less than £30,000.
- Grants to individuals.

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HOW TO APPLY

1 EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

You tell us what you want funding for and how your work meets the criteria

2 CONVERSATION

We'll have a conversation to learn more about you, your work, and your approach

3 MORE INFORMATION

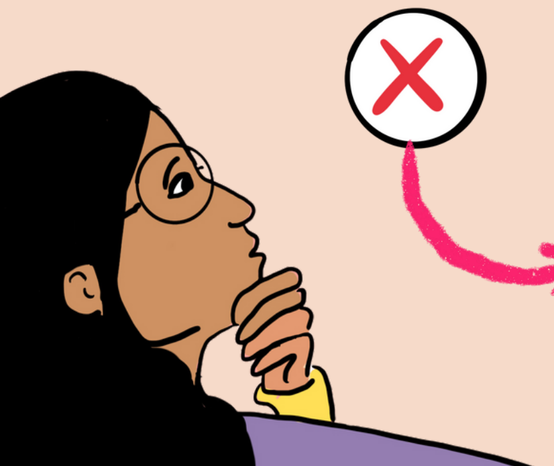
We'll ask for more information so we can do a detailed check, before writing a recommendation

ASSESSMENT

We'll get back to you within **4** weeks

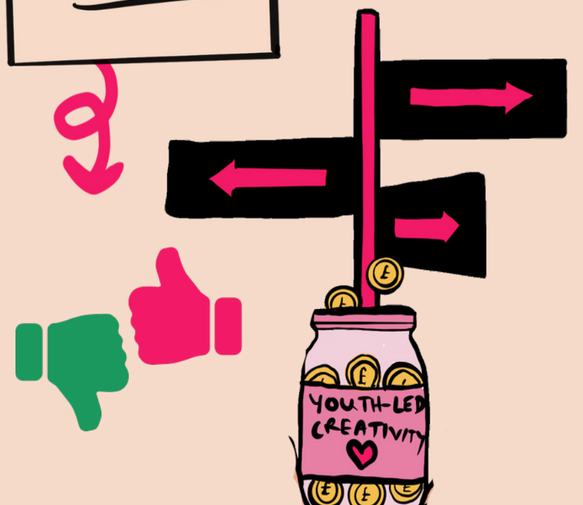
ASSESSMENT

We'll get back to you within **3** weeks









Support and other resources



- See the **full guidance**
- **Accessibility-related support**
- Our online **FAQs**
- Information on **other funding sources** including a comprehensive guide to fundraising for small organisations and links to funding directories.
- **Useful sector resources** on a range of topics including fundraising, legal, campaigning, digital and safeguarding.

Email us: **youthledcreativity@esmeefairbairn.org.uk**

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