Clore School Choirs and Singing Programme

Frequently Asked Questions
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Eligibility

1. **Who can apply?**

   Organisations working on a not-for-profit basis with expertise and a track record in supporting choirs and group vocal work in schools. Most applicants will be professional music organisations working in schools: choirs with outreach programmes, community music organisations, music services and hubs. Most will be registered charities, and we can also accept CICs, companies limited by guarantee and local authority services. Experience of working in schools is essential. A choir that draws its members from local schools, without working in those schools, would need to show that experience and build its project around at least three state-funded schools. We fund the organisation that will deliver the work, on its own or with partners, not one that would pass the grant on to others.

2. **Can a school, a multi-academy trust or a Designated Lead School for Music apply?**

   Yes, as lead applicant. What we are looking for is choral expertise rather than reach across schools, and the ability to lead outward-facing work at a scale that represents a step-change in your context. Where the expertise sits outside your organisation, tell us who you intend to partner with.

3. **Can a fee-paying school apply?**

   Yes, as lead applicant, on the same terms. The schools you work with must all be state-funded, and your own pupils are not part of the project.

4. **Can a cathedral or choral foundation apply?**

   Yes, on the same terms as any other applicant. Where the lead applicant is a fee-paying cathedral school, the conditions in the previous answer apply. As with any application, we want to see how the schools and their pupils shape the offer, including the repertoire, so that it feels relevant and engaging to them.

5. **Can a fee-paying school be one of the schools in the project?**

   No. The schools in your project must all be state-funded.

6. **Would you support projects working with state-funded special schools or state-funded alternative provision?**

   These schools are not excluded from the programme. However, we are trying to build across the funded projects a spread of schools that reflects the national picture, so that what the programme learns is useful to as many schools as possible. A project made up largely of special schools or alternative provision would sit outside that, so we would expect them to be part of a wider group of schools rather than the whole of it.

7. **Can two organisations apply together?**

   One organisation must be the lead applicant, hold the grant and be accountable for it. Partnership delivery is welcome, and the form asks you to name delivery partners and describe the relationship. Several music services or hubs can

apply together in this way, with one of them as lead. Separate applications from organisations working in the same area are unlikely to be funded together, because we are aiming for a spread of projects across England. See also 8 below.

8. Can an organisation be involved in more than one application?

Yes. Each application is assessed on its own merits, so if you are involved in more than one, be confident you could deliver all of them if funded. Because we are building a balanced cohort, involvement in more than one application may affect which are funded.

9. Do delivery partners have to be not-for-profit?

No. Only the lead applicant must be a charity or operate on a not-for-profit basis. Delivery partners can include companies, sole traders and freelance practitioners. Where the choral expertise sits with a partner rather than the lead applicant, name the partner on the form and explain how the partnership works. The lead applicant holds the grant and is accountable for it.

The schools in your project

10. How many schools do we need?

At least three state-funded schools in England, primary, secondary or both. The form has space for seven; if your project involves more, describe them in your project summary. There is no maximum, although a project spread thinly across many schools will struggle against the criteria. We expect most projects to involve around five to seven schools. A project at a larger scale would need the same depth of work in every school, which is likely to mean other funding or in-kind support alongside this grant.

11. Does an all-through school count as one school or two?

One.

12. Can the project include early years?

A project with only early years, or based in early years settings outside a school would not be eligible. The project has to be built around at least three state-funded schools in England, primary, secondary or both. Work with the youngest children within those schools (i.e. reception classes), is acceptable, but shouldn't be the main focus age group of the project.

13. What is a lead partner school?

One or two schools you have talked to in depth, that have helped shape what you are proposing, and that will help drive the project across the group of schools rather than only within their own. You need at least one at application stage. You may know the other schools less well, and we ask only how far your conversations have got.

What that leadership looks like will differ. It might involve:

- Helping you work out what the schools in the group actually need, and which schools should be in it.
- Hosting shared activity — joint rehearsals, performances, teacher sessions — where they have the space to do it.
- Their music lead or another teacher supporting staff in the other schools, rather than only receiving support themselves.
- A senior leader talking to their counterparts in the other schools, which carries further than an approach from an outside organisation.
- Helping recruit the remaining schools if the group is not yet complete.
- Staying involved through the three years as the work changes, and helping judge what is working.

None of this is a checklist. What we are looking for is a school that has a stake in the project as a whole. A lead partner school does not necessarily need to have well-developed singing already – it can be on a journey too.

14. What does 'met, or substantively spoken with' mean?

A conversation, in person or online, with a headteacher or another senior leader, in which you have discussed what the project might involve and established that the school wants it. An email exchange or a phone enquiry is not enough, and nor is a conversation with the music lead alone. You will be asked for a named contact at the school, and we will approach them if your application reaches the second stage.

15. Do the schools have to be near each other?

There is no rule about distance. The schools should form a group that makes sense: able to work together, share practice and sustain something between them once the funding ends. Explain in your application why these schools are a coherent group.

16. Can we work with schools we already have a relationship with?

Yes. Building on existing relationships is welcomed, including with schools where singing is struggling and your current work has not reached. What has to be different is the work itself: see ‘Does the work have to be new?’ below.

17. Do all our schools need to be confirmed when we apply?

No. You need to name at least three schools individually, but only your lead partner school needs a conversation with a headteacher or other senior leader. The others can be at an earlier stage, including schools you have identified but not yet approached, for example with your lead partner school’s help. The form asks how far you have got with each. Funded projects confirm their schools during the planning period in the summer term of 2027.

18. Do the schools have to meet a level of disadvantage?

There is no threshold. Levels of disadvantage will be part of how we assess need, and need takes other forms too. If the schools you name are relatively advantaged, tell us what the need is.

19. **Can a project focus on one group of young people?**

    Working with one phase is fine: projects can be primary, secondary or both. On a particular group of young people, it depends whether that group is the whole of what you offer in those schools or part of a wider picture. Identifying a gap and designing something specific for it is what we ask for under need and context. Under inclusion, we look for singing in the schools to end up open to everyone who wants it, with routes between what is on offer. A group aimed at one set of young people, alongside a broader offer, fits well. A project where the only singing on offer is closed to most of the school will struggle.

20. **Do you expect particular content, repertoire or curriculum?**

    No. There is no prescribed content or curriculum, and work shaped around what your schools want is what the programme is asking for. The application asks what schools have told you and how that has influenced your proposal. What needs to be useful nationally is what the cohort learns, not so much the content itself, so a project does not need to be designed to be identically copied elsewhere.

21. **Do the schools have to contribute money?**

    No. Money is not expected from schools, although if a school were able to put something towards the project that would be welcome. What we ask for at application is some indication of what your lead partner school would contribute, and that is more often staffing, time, space or help recruiting other schools.

22. **What if a school drops out?**

    Tell us. Schools change — circumstances, leadership, priorities — and a three-year project needs to be able to absorb that. Your project needs to keep at least three state-funded schools, and if a lead partner school withdraws we would want to talk with you about how it is replaced. A school leaving is not in itself a problem with the grant.

23. **What if the headteacher we speak to leaves?**

    Tell us. Senior leadership backing is central to the programme rather than a formality, so we would want to know that the school's commitment has survived the change.

24. **Should we involve link governors?**

    Not at application stage — governor approval is not expected then. As the project develops we would encourage you to involve a link governor. It strengthens support for the work and anchors it in the school's governance rather than in one person's enthusiasm, which matters for what happens after the funding ends.

The application process

25. **What is the deadline?**

Midday on Friday 30 October 2026. Applications are made through our online form at forms.cloud.microsoft/e/GB8EH7d96w.

26. What are the word limits and what happens if we go over?

Each question has a limit, shown with the question. The form counts characters rather than words, and both are given: the character limit is what the form enforces and the word figure is a guide for drafting. There are nine questions, around 2,300 words in all. The form will not let you go over, so draft your answers where you can see a count and check before pasting them in.

27. Can I save the form and come back to it?

No. The form cannot be saved part-way through and returned to, so please prepare your answers using the Word version of the form and paste them in when you are ready. If you are signed in to a Microsoft account you can save a copy of your response after you submit. We recommend you do not leave submitting to the morning of the deadline.

28. Where can we find out more before we apply?

Read the grant guidance first. We held an information webinar on Tuesday 29 September 2026, and the recording is available on the website. If you are unsure whether your idea fits, get in touch before you spend time on an application.

29. What makes a good application?

One that makes it easy for us to see how your proposal meets the programme's aims. Answer each question in turn, using the prompts listed under it. Before you start, read 'What is unlikely to succeed' on page 7 of the grant guidance and 'How applications are assessed' on page 11. We have given quite thorough detail, and a careful flow of questions to give you the best opportunity to write a strong application. If you find you are struggling to answer the questions, it may be that this isn't the right fund for your idea. We do expect to receive more applications than we can fund.

30. Will we get feedback if we are unsuccessful?

We are a small team and cannot offer feedback on unsuccessful Stage One applications. Organisations that reach Stage Two will receive a short written summary of the interview panel's view.

31. What happens after we submit, and when will we hear?

Applications are assessed in November against the published criteria, with moderation by an independent advisory group. Organisations invited to interview will meet a panel consisting of the Foundation's Director and programme consultant for around an hour in February 2027. More organisations will reach Stage Two than we can fund. Trustees make the final decisions in spring 2027.

32. Who reads our application?

Applications are read by the Foundation's Director and programme consultant, with moderation by an independent advisory group. Trustees make the final decision.

33. Do you use AI tools in assessment?

Applications are assessed by the Foundation's Director and programme consultant. We may use AI tools to support this, for example to organise application content, flag missing information and suggest initial scores, after removing personal contact details. Every flag and score is reviewed, and no decisions are made by automated means.

34. How do you choose between two strong applications in the same region?

We are funding a small national cohort, and the cohort as a whole matters as well as the individual projects. We will look at its spread across regions, school phases, types of organisation, and the kinds of need being addressed. A strong application may not be funded for reasons unconnected to its quality. We do not have priority areas, although we are unlikely to fund more than one project in the same place.

The funding

35. How much can we apply for?

Between £50,000 and £100,000 a year, for three years. The amounts need not be equal across the three years.

36. What if our project would cost more than £100,000 a year?

The maximum is £100,000 a year. If your project is larger, you can apply for the part of it this grant would fund, and tell us about the other funding involved. No match funding is required, and funding from other sources is welcome.

37. Does the work have to be new?

It has to be different. We are interested in what you would do differently given three years and this level of funding, not in extending exactly what you already do to more schools. Building on existing relationships and existing work is expected; repeating an established model without adapting it to the area and the need is unlikely to succeed. We are not asking you to set aside your expertise or your existing approach. But we expect few organisations will have been able to work as intensively with a group of schools over three years as this programme will allow, and doing so should stretch and develop your practice. Extending reach is welcome, but on its own it is not enough: we want to see a step change in how you work with schools, directed at identified need.

38. How different does it have to be?

Enough that you could not do it now. The test is whether three years of funding at this level makes possible something your organisation could not otherwise attempt, in schools where it would change what singing is like.

39. What can the grant be spent on?

Practitioner fees and expenses, teacher and practitioner development, teacher release and cover, project coordination and management up to 10% of the grant, resources and materials including essential equipment where justifiable, performance and sharing including venue hire, and travel and transport including travel to cohort meetings.

40. What is the difference between coordination costs and overheads?

The 10% covers your own staff time spent coordinating and managing the project: planning, managing school relationships, administering the grant and cohort activity. What the grant can't cover is the cost of running the organisation as a whole: rent, utilities, insurance, governance, fundraising and central functions, including any share of those you would normally add to a project budget. This is what the guidance means by running costs "not attributable to the programme". You don't need to show that share anywhere.

41. How does VAT work?

Where you cannot recover VAT on project costs, include it in your budget figures; we can fund irrecoverable VAT. The grant itself is outside the scope of VAT, so do not add VAT to the total you request.

42. When is the money paid?

Annually in advance, at the start of each year of delivery. The second and third years are subject to satisfactory progress.

If your application is successful

43. When would the work start?

Delivery begins in autumn 2027, with a planning term in the summer term of 2027 involving your schools.

44. What happens between the award in spring 2027 and delivery in autumn 2027?

It's a working period rather than a wait. You would confirm your schools and agree with each of them what the first year looks like. You would develop the first-year budget with the Foundation, including fair rates of pay. You would plan the workforce development strand with the staff who will be part of it, rather than arriving in September with it already designed. You would confirm the practitioners who will do the work.

You would also work with the Foundation on the evaluation and on what the cohort will share, so that both are shaped with the funded projects rather than handed to them. This includes gathering a baseline picture of singing in your schools before the work starts, which is what later years are measured against. There will be an online session in the summer term for the funded projects to meet, share initial plans and evaluation questions, and agree how the cohort will keep in touch between meetings.

Grant payments are made annually in advance of each year of delivery, so the first payment arrives as delivery begins rather than during the planning term.

Planning and coordination are eligible costs within the grant, but you would be carrying them until then, so factor that into your first-year budget.

45. What does taking part in the national cohort involve?

Nominating two senior people closely involved in the work to take part throughout the three years. Meeting twice a year, once in person and once online at around six months, with school staff included in the online session. Taking part in an additional online session in the summer term of 2027, before delivery begins, where the funded projects meet for the first time. Hosting visits from the Foundation and its advisers. Sharing honestly what has and has not worked. Contributing to a published resource developed across the three years. Taking part is a requirement of the grant, and you should budget for travel and accommodation. The location of the in-person meeting is not yet fixed. We will take account of where the funded projects are based, and it may be in London or another relatively easy-to-access location. We aim that, for most funded projects, overnights will not be required.

46. What is the published resource, and what will we contribute?

The resource is the cohort's answer to the programme's central question: what does it take to create school choirs and singing groups that are effective, inclusive and sustainable? The Foundation publishes it digitally, developed across the three years, with lighter sharing at the end of years one and two. It will capture the learning from the funded projects, which will in turn shape how it looks.

47. Is there funding after the three years?

No. This is a three-year programme and there is no fourth year. The point of funding three years rather than one is that the work should be able to continue in the schools without the grant, through the capability built in the school staff and the partnership you have established. The application asks how teachers, schools and practitioners will become more capable and how you will ensure the impact is sustained, and your answer forms part of the assessment. What we are looking for there is the capability built in the schools and the partnership that continues, rather than a plan for future funding. If a school chooses to invest in continuing the work after the three years, that is between you and the school, and we would be glad to see it.

48. What reporting is required?

Annual reporting, and taking part in evaluation. Full requirements will be set out in the grant agreement. We know reporting can become burdensome, particularly for smaller organisations, and we will keep it proportionate to the size of the grant and useful to you as well as to us.

I still have a question

Read the grant guidance first. If you are unsure whether your idea fits, get in touch before you spend time on an application. info@cloreduffield.org.uk