

Museum Development Midlands

Sense of Place Programme 2026–27



Call for Applications

Applications are now open for a new cohort of museums to join the Sense of Place Programme 2026–27.

This supported development programme helps museums explore how they connect with their communities, interpret place, and develop inclusive and sustainable ways of working.

We are inviting up to **3 more museums** to join an established cohort and take part in a year of shared learning, mentoring, and practical development.

About the Programme

The Sense of Place Programme supports museums to:

- Deepen their understanding of *place* and local identity
- Develop inclusive, community-led approaches
- Build confidence in engagement and participation
- Strengthen resilience through partnerships and collaboration

Participating museums will join an **amazing existing cohort of 5 organisations**, creating opportunities for peer learning, shared problem-solving, and sector support across the Midlands.

What You'll Receive

As part of the programme, selected museums will benefit from:

- A structured programme of **online and in-person sessions** (September 2026 – March 2027)
 - **1:1 mentoring support** from programme facilitators
 - Opportunities to learn from and collaborate with **peer museums**
 - Access to a series of **open workshops** with wider sector relevance
 - Practical tools, ideas, and approaches that can be applied directly to your work
-

Programme Highlights

The programme explores key themes shaping museum practice today, including:

- **Inclusive volunteering and community engagement**
- **Creativity, wellbeing, and participatory practice**
- **Place-based storytelling**
- **Working with young people as decision-makers**
- **Defining and working with ‘community’**
- **Positioning museums within wider cultural strategies**

Sessions combine expert input, peer exchange, discussion, and reflection, with an emphasis on practical application.

How the Programme Works

- A mix of **in-person and online sessions** across the year
 - Core sessions for the **cohort group**, alongside selected **open sessions**
 - Museum Development Midlands work directly with Culture Leicestershire for programme design and delivery. Culture Leicestershire bring extensive experience in supporting museums to engage meaningfully with their communities. As part of the Sense of Place Programme 2026–27, they will lead a series of sessions, sharing practical approaches to building resilient programmes that reflect and serve local communities. Their work focuses on harnessing community skills, strengthening connections, and developing inclusive models that support long-term sustainability.
 - 1:1 mentoring and peer support facilitated by experienced practitioners Laura Crossley and Rachel Crossley
-

Who Should Apply?

We are particularly interested in hearing from museums that:

- Are looking to **strengthen their connection with communities**
 - Want to develop more **inclusive or participatory approaches**
 - Are interested in exploring **new ways of working with audiences, volunteers, or partners**
 - Can commit to engaging with the full programme and peer cohort
-

Session Schedule

- **Inclusive Volunteering and Placemaking**
Online | 12 October 2026 | 1:30pm–4:00pm
- **Creativity and Wellbeing**
In person (Coffin Works, Birmingham) | 19 November 2026 | 10:00am–4:00pm
- **Place-Based Storytelling**
Online | 19 January 2027 | 9:30am–12:30pm
- **Young People as Ambassadors and Decision Makers**
Online | 9 February 2027 | 9:30am–12:30pm
- **Defining ‘Community’**
In person (Leicester City) | 24 February 2027 | 10:00am–4:00pm
- **Working Within a Wider Cultural Strategy (Programme Close)**
In person (Mansfield Museum) | 23 March 2027 | 10:00am–4:00pm

Cohort mentoring and reflection session schedule delivered by Laura Crossley and Rachel Crossley

Friday 23 October | 10am-11.30am

Thursday 3 December | 11am-12.30pm (Wear your best Christmas jumper!)

Thursday 28 January | 10am-11.30am

Wednesday 17 February | 10am-11.30am

How to Apply

To apply, please complete the expression of interest by 31 July 2026.

Application deadline:

Successful applicants to be notified by 14 August 2026.

Find Out More

If you would like to discuss the programme or check whether it's right for your organisation, please get in touch:

Helen Sharp

Museum Development Programme Officer

Museum Development Midlands

Helen.z.sharp@leics.gov.uk