The Smiles Fund

by Walkers and Comic Relief

Frequently Asked Questions

August 2021

These frequently asked questions apply to The Smiles Fund, which is open for applications until 11am BST on Wednesday 15th September 2021.

Please also refer back to the key reading section for the Smiles Fund via the [funding opportunities](https://www.comicrelief.com/funding/funding-opportunities) page.

Eligibility

**What is the minimum annual income organisations need in order to apply for this funding?**

The minimum annual income is £75,000. Please note we have lowered the minimum income threshold for this programme from our general guidance of £250,000, but the maximum turnover remains £10 million. You can find out more about how much we will agree to fund [here](https://www.comicrelief.com/funding/application-process/#money).

**My organisation is in the process of becoming legally constituted, can we still apply?**

Comic Relief uses the last set of annual accounts submitted to the relevant authority as a basis for whether an organisation is eligible or not. So unfortunately, if you have no annual accounts, you are ineligible to apply.

**Can Local Authorities apply to be either the lead applicant or as a partner?**

Unfortunately, no. Comic Relief does not fund the delivery of services that are normally the responsibility of governments. You can find out more about this by visiting our eligibility criteria page [here](https://www.comicrelief.com/funding/eligibility-criteria/). This would also mean you would be unable to be officially considered as a partner under this funding call (a ‘partner’ in this context means an entity you would be working closely with to deliver the project and they would usually also be responsible for managing part of the budget).

**My organisation currently receives Comic Relief funding, can we still apply?**

Yes, if your organisation still meets eligibility criteria for this fund, we would welcome an application from you.

**Which countries does this funding apply to?**

The funding is for organisations working in the United Kingdom only.

**Can we send more than one proposal?**

To give as many organisations as fair a chance as possible, you can only submit one proposal to The Smiles Fund (though you can be named as a partner on any number of applications). Please be aware that we will never read more than one proposal per organisation.

**What is the difference between annual and management accounts?**

By annual accounts, we mean your organisation’s accounts for the most recent financial year, that have been subject to an audit or reviewed by an independent examiner. By management accounts, we mean your latest income and expenditure report showing your organisation’s current financial position (as annual accounts can often be out of date at the point of submitting a proposal). They are usually tracked against your planned budget for the current financial year. The management accounts should not be more than 3 months out of date.

**Could an application be made including more than one partner?**

Yes, if you believe this would provide the best ingredients for success. In the partnership section of the application form, we ask you to outline roles and responsibilities of each partner.

**We want to submit a partnership bid but the partner is not constituted, can we still apply?**

Comic Relief defines a ‘partner’ in this context as another entity you would be working closely with to deliver the project and they would usually also be responsible for managing part of the budget. If your partner is not constituted, they could still work in partnership with you but would be unable to manage the overall budget. Constituted organisations are legally required to have adequate financial systems in place to manage finances whereas for organisations that are not constituted, there is no standardised system to follow. There are other ways to work together such as applying as the lead organisation and contracting the organisation you wish to partner with as a consultant to support the delivery of your work. Whilst they would not technically be defined as a ‘partner’ for Comic Relief, you would still be working in partnership to deliver the work.

Proposals

**How do you define ‘the arts’ for this funding call?**

We haven’t adopted a singular definition of the arts for this call, but we include visual arts, photography, design and craft, creative writing, performing arts, theatre, dance, music, and singing, and digital or electronic arts, film-making and animation. For the purpose of this fund we are not including horticulture or cooking. The most important thing is that your proposal is clearly using this type of activity to have an *intentional* (rather than incidental) positive effect on outcomes for people’s mental wellbeing. Proposals for arts-based activities which make no reference to how your organisation understands the links between the arts and mental wellbeing are unlikely to be successful.

**When you say, ‘arts and comedy’, do proposals have to incorporate both the arts AND comedy or can we use the arts OR comedy?**

Your proposal doesn’t have to incorporate both the arts AND comedy, and provided you are clearly using the arts OR comedy to *intentionally* affect and learn about positive outcomes for mental wellbeing then please consider applying. By separating comedy from the arts, we want to ensure that projects using comedy know they are eligible to apply. Please note that the funding call prioritisation criteria includes that priority will be given to ensure we fund a balance of comedy based and arts-based projects, so we will be looking for a mixture of approaches across the final cohort.

**What do you mean by ‘early intervention’?**

The aim of this fund is to deliver and build learning around how arts and comedy- based activities can support people at an early stage, before long-term and acute symptoms of a mental illness occur. We recognise that there is also a need for services for people who are already experiencing prolonged and acute symptoms, but this fund is designed to build capacity for supporting people when signs and symptoms of poor mental wellbeing are emerging.

**What do you mean by ‘community-based’?**

We know that demand for mental wellbeing support is already high, and that it is challenging for people to find services to meet their needs in a timely way. One of the aims of this fund is to build or expand services which people can access in a community based rather than clinical setting. We therefore expect organisations with established relationships with the people they are trying to reach to apply to this fund. Please consider applying in partnership with other organisations in your network if you each bring specific expertise to a holistic community offer.

**Why can’t we apply for work with young people/children/adolescents when they are also at risk of experiencing poor mental wellbeing?**

We know that lots of people struggle with poor mental wellbeing, including children and adolescents, however this fund is designed to reach adults only, who we know are also affected.

Funding

**How much funding can we apply for?**

We will fund investments from £100,000- £300,000.

**If we ask for the maximum amount, will this be looked upon unfavourably?**

We recommend that you apply for the level of funding based on the need within the communities you are working in and your organisation’s ability to manage and distribute funds within the specified time frame. If you apply for the maximum amount, this would not be looked upon unfavourably. Comic Relief has guidelines around the maximum amount organisations can apply for. Please read more about this [here](https://www.comicrelief.com/funding/application-process/#money).

**What is the deadline for applications to this fund?**

11am BST on Wednesday 15th September. If you are experiencing a technical difficulty that is preventing you from submitting before the deadline please get in touch with us as soon as possible by emailing fundinginfo@comicrelief.com.

**If we are successful, when will the funding start?**

Funding decisions will be made by January 2022 and applicants will be notified no later than 7 days after the meeting. We expect projects to start building momentum in early 2022. There isn’t a predefined start date but we are unlikely to fund proposals for work which doesn’t start for a number of months.

**How long will the funding last?**

Funding is available for a minimum of 18 months to a maximum of 30 months. If projects start by spring 2022, they should be planned to finish by summer 2024.

**Do you fund capital costs?**

Comic Relief will not support capital costs over 25% of the total funding request, and capital costs will need to have a strong link to the changes you are aiming to achieve.

Q&A sessions 1-3

**Can charities from a health background apply to this as the lead organisation with partnerships to arts organisations?**

Yes, there’s no obligation for the lead applicant to be an arts organisation. Provided you’re confident about having the right expertise (perhaps you will work with partners or and that the proposal aligns with the mental wellbeing focus of the fund rather than on acute mental health, then a health-based charity can be the lead applicant.

**Do you look for traditional KPI style data in your monitoring and evaluation?**

We manage M&E through a start-up form where organisations identify a handful of outcomes that they would like to see as a result of the project. Organisations identify a number of indicators which will demonstrate progress against each outcome which are then tracked over the lifetime of the project. We will support you to finalise those outcomes and indicators but they are selected by organisations themselves rather than by Comic Relief.

**Will this fund be weighted towards organisations with lower income levels?**

No, income level isn’t one of our prioritisation criteria ([see fund page](https://www.comicrelief.com/funding/funding-opportunities/the-smiles-fund-by-walkers-and-comic-relief)) so we won’t be weighting towards organisations with lower or higher income levels.

**Can the project have multiple elements - so storytelling, comedy, creative writing, drama and filmmaking?**

Yes. You can either be really specific or use many different arts approaches, depending on the nature of your organisation. You don’t have to be using both comedy and the arts as approaches within one project, but we will be looking to fund a mixture of approaches across the final cohort.

**Is there a geographical preference?**

There’s no particular geographical location that would take preference. But we would like to fund a spread of projects across the UK, so it’s one of the prioritisation criteria we’ve outlined in order to help us make final decisions between equally good projects.

**Do partnerships already have to be in place at the time of applying?**

It wouldn’t make the proposal ineligible, but it would be more difficult for you to tell us about how the partnership and the project is going to work. If negotiations are still ongoing there is an element of increased delivery risk that would need to be considered.

**Will you definitely support organisations that may not have used arts as part of their service delivery before?**

We won’t automatically discount organisations that haven’t used the arts as part of their service delivery before. But prior experience is one of our prioritisation criteria that the panel can use when trying to decide between good projects. Whilst there’s no way to say that we will definitely end up funding organisations using arts for the first time, it wouldn’t automatically rule you out.

**We support women to improve and maintain health and well-being using Arts projects, this is not our sole focus, should we apply?**

You can apply with a particular strand of your work, and it doesn’t have to be your sole purpose.

**If preference is for local people to be involved in how provision is shaped – is it ok not to have all the details formed, but a structure for now?**Yes, we would welcome and expect to see time built in to respond to feedback from participants throughout the project and we are open to flexibility should proposals want to adapt slightly based on this as you go. We would expect to see the general structure defined at the start, but you can leave room to adapt and add detail.

**Lead in/development time – if you would like beneficiaries to be involved in programmes/planning – can there be a time at the beginning for this?**

Yes, although we would expect you have spoken with participants in advance of developing the general structure, so you know you’re on the right lines with developing the right response.

**Do you have to submit a partnership application to be eligible?**

No you can apply as a single applicant or in partnership and no preference is given to either approach provided the organisation(s) demonstrate(s) that they are well placed to deliver the work.

**Can we apply to develop existing work?**

Yes, new work or existing work is fine, but please underpin proposals with evidence from your own programming or elsewhere if this is new work.

**Are you funding 50% comedy work and 50% rest of arts, or how are you deciding on range of art forms?**

No, we haven’t got a predefined percentage, although we would ideally like to fund an even spread of approaches across the final cohort and will be using this to prioritise between good projects at the panel stage to ensure we can fund a mix of both arts and comedy approaches.

**Are there any costs you will not cover? Do you have a preference for fully funding or match funding?**

You can see our general restrictions on what we will fund [here](https://www.comicrelief.com/funding/eligibility-criteria) which cut across Comic Relief programmes generally. Other than these we can consider a range of costs. We have no preference for match funding or 100% requests for this fund.

**Please clarify how you are defining ‘prolonged or ongoing experience.’**

Prolonged or ongoing experience may relate to people facing unemployment, discrimination or isolation for example and we would prioritise investing in work where this need has been exacerbated by the length of time. We are still keen to fund early intervention work with people who fall into these groups, rather than support for people with long-term or acute mental health conditions.

**Can applicants sub-contract areas of work out to specialist agencies. Would this be looked at in the same way as partnership work?**

Partners for Comic Relief are defined as those who will be directly managing a part of the budget. You can sub-contract work without them being a formal partner. We would be looking to understand why you are still well placed to be the lead applicant if you are sub-contracting a significant proportion of your work.

**The guidance says you are looking for projects which raise awareness and challenge stigma around mental health (as well as improving mental wellbeing for our participants). Is the idea that the projects should raise awareness and challenge stigma amongst our participants, or amongst the general public?**

It can be either or both depending on the nature of your activities.

**We are a youth arts charity 14-35. We will be working with 18 plus but will that be an issue, for example with a contribution to core costs?**

No, that’s fine and you can still apply for a proportion of core costs.

**Can we include costs for external evaluation?**

Yes, we are happy to fund this and welcome the chance for organisations to contribute to learning in this space.