

ENDANGERED ARCHIVES PROGRAMME GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

For Round 21 projects
2025/26

BRITISH
LIBRARY

1. THE ENDANGERED ARCHIVES PROGRAMME: OVERVIEW



The Endangered Archives Programme (EAP) aims to preserve cultural heritage and make it available to as wide an audience as possible. The Programme provides grants for digitisation and documentation of endangered archives, and facilitates capacity building in the country or region of the project. It is funded by Arcadia, a charitable foundation that works to protect nature, preserve cultural heritage and promote open access to knowledge. Since the Programme began in 2004, over 560 awards have been made, and over 15.5 million images and 35,000 sound files have been made available, via the British

Library's website, for research, as well as for inspiration and enjoyment.

This version of the Guide was updated in mid-2025 for potential applicants to Round 21, for projects starting in mid-2026. The English version is updated every year in the summer¹. Applicants should share it with other relevant stakeholders before the beginning of the application process and refer to it alongside the Grant Agreement text which can be found on the Grants pages of the EAP website.

2. GRANTS AND HOW TO APPLY



The EAP invites applications to identify, digitise and make available online material on any theme or aspect of culture from any part of the world outside the UK, Western Europe or North America. Grants are offered on the condition that the original material is not removed from the country of origin and the

¹ The working language of the Endangered Archives Programme is English. Selected documentation (the main text of this Guide, Appendix 3 and Appendix 5 Part A and part B) is provided in other languages; please check against the current version in English

digital materials created by the project are held and maintained by local Archival Partners. All EAP grants are awarded to a Host Institution, to the standard [Grant Agreement](#) which is reproduced in Appendix 7 and on the EAP website <https://eap.bl.uk>. Awards can cover the cost of salaries and professional fees, equipment, travel and training. All grant payments are made in GBP (Pounds Sterling). The following three grant types are currently available:

- **Pilot projects** can involve a survey to investigate the potential for a major project, or they may be small digitisation projects.
Maximum duration: 12 months.
Budget limit: £15,000.
- **Major projects** are intended for digitisation and cataloguing a collection. This type of grant may involve preservation necessary for digitisation, and it may also relocate the material to a more secure location/institution within the country. Where the amount, condition, status and exact locations of material contained in the archive are not known, applications should be made for a Pilot project to survey the material in the first instance.
Typical duration: 12 months, max: 24 months.
Budget limit: £60,000.
- **Area projects** are similar to major projects, but larger in scale and ambition. Applicants must demonstrate a track record of successful archival preservation work and be associated with an institution that has the capacity to facilitate a large-scale project. A maximum of two Area Grants are awarded in each funding round. Potential applicants must contact the EAP office before submitting an application for an Area Grant.
Maximum duration: 24 months
Budget limit: £150,000.

APPLICATIONS: ANNUAL CYCLE

The annual grants cycle begins in September. Applications are made online via the EAP portal (accessible from the web site), which goes live when the call is announced on the EAP [web page](#) and via social media channels. The application process is in two stages:

1. The **Preliminary Application** is an expression of interest. The deadline for this is early November. By this point, applicants should have already identified the main collaborators, including the senior representative of the Host Institution who is authorised to sign the Grant Agreement the following May or June.

Preliminary applications are assessed by the EAP team at the British Library. If applicants are successful at the preliminary stage, they will be invited (in late November) to submit a detailed application. The invitation to the detailed application stage includes feedback which it is essential to take on board. Sometimes the feedback is a recommendation to refine the proposal for a submission in a future round.

2. The **Detailed Application** requires direct input from the collaborators, namely the Host Institution, Archival Partner(s), any Co-applicants and a Recommendation. There is a short lead time between the invitation to submit a detailed application and the deadline (early February).

Detailed applications are assessed by the EAP International Advisory Panel, who also consult with external independent referees as well as British Library staff. Offers are made in April. All offers are made on condition of a satisfactory risk assessment. There may be up to two additional conditions and a request for clarifications. Applicants can provide an update on the initial

proposal, if required. Responses must be submitted via the portal within one month. The Grant Agreement is then created, and this must be returned, unchanged, signed by the senior representative of the Host Institution, and returned within the shortest time possible together with details of the beneficiary (institutional) bank account.

Budgets must be provided in pounds sterling (GBP), as all awards and reporting will be in GBP. Facsimiles of the Preliminary and Detailed Application forms and other application documentation can be found in the Appendices. It is vital to establish from the outset how a project will work in practice. The EAP team runs regular webinars for applicants, and it is advisable to attend these. A summary of the annual timetable can be found at the end of this Guide.

Applications are judged on three broad criteria: the archive itself; the applicant and collaborators; and the project plan including budget. The next three sections provide information on each of these criteria.

3. ARCHIVAL MATERIAL AND PERMISSIONS



EAP has no prescriptive 'collection policy' as such, but the material to be digitised must have a coherent theme. This might be an archive of an important individual or a set of records that cast light on a forgotten or under-explored aspect of history. If the archive does not offer a clear theme, a survey might be undertaken in order to refine it into an application for a future digitisation project.

FORMATS

Material can be in a wide variety of formats:

- rare printed sources (books, serials, newspapers, maps, ephemera, etc.)
- manuscripts in any language (on paper, palm leaf, etc.)
- visual materials (drawings, paintings, prints, posters, photographs, etc.)
- pre-existing audio recordings
- other objects and artefacts, normally only where they are part of a documentary archive.

EAP does not fund the creation of new artefacts such as oral histories, new audio or video recordings. Other Arcadia-funded programmes exist for these purposes: the [Endangered Languages Documentation Programme](#) (ELDP) and the [Endangered Material Knowledge Programme](#) (EMKP). Neither does EAP fund the digitisation of material dating from the mid-20th century onwards; this is covered by the [Modern Endangered Archives Programme](#) (MEAP).

RIGHTS AND PERMISSIONS

Applicants must demonstrate that the owners and/or custodians of the archive material have agreed to collaborate by granting access to the collection(s) and giving permission to put the digitised material online for research purposes. The Access, Permission and Copyright forms must be signed by each archive owner or custodian and submitted at the Detailed Application stage. This includes written

permission from the appropriate governmental department, if national or state records are to be digitised.

Materials digitised with EAP funding must be made available online on a non-commercial basis. Awards cannot be made if further restrictions are placed on the use of or access to the material.

The British Library will provide online access to the digitised material that is in copyright under a CC BY-NC licence. EAP may provide images for research publications, and asks that a copy of the publication be sent to the Archival Partner to facilitate knowledge exchange. EAP does not have the rights to supply images for commercial purposes.

EVALUATION CRITERIA: MATERIAL AND PERMISSIONS

The case for the material to be digitised must cover the following areas:

Endangerment Applicants must demonstrate that the material is vulnerable due to lack of resources or political and/or environmental threats, and that there is an urgent need to safeguard it.

Research value Applications must demonstrate the extent to which the archive is rare or unique, its cultural importance and its value for future research.

Location and date of material. The material must be located outside of Western Europe and North America, and date from before the middle of the 20th century.

Legal and ethical rights Applicants must have the permission of the collection's owners or custodians to digitise the materials and make them available online free of charge for research. As well as an awareness of the copyright status of the archival material in the country in which it resides, applicants must also consider any associated data-protection, privacy or other ethical issues.

4. PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS



Applications must be submitted by the Principal Applicant, but grants are administered and accounted for by a Host Institution to which the Principal Applicant is affiliated. Applications must therefore be approved by the institution and applicants must ensure *before* submitting a preliminary application that an appropriate representative of their institution agrees to the Terms and Conditions required to administer the grant.

PRINCIPAL APPLICANT

The Principal Applicant may be a member of teaching or research faculty, a registered post-graduate researcher at a recognised university or similar higher education institution, or an archivist/librarian with responsibilities for special collections in a recognised archive, research library or similar. PhD candidates will be considered only where the applicant has a proven track record of grant and project management. The PhD supervisor must provide a letter of support, giving approval for the candidate

to undertake the project and detailing how it relates to the PhD.

At award, the Principal Applicant becomes the Project Lead, responsible for leading a team who digitises and catalogues the archive, using the equipment approved in the proposal and to standards set out by EAP. The [Guide for Project Teams](#) sets out the responsibilities.

The Principal Applicant / Project Lead is the central point of contact with the EAP team and works with the Host Institution to ensure all project documentation is in order and the grant monies are disbursed to the project according to the budget set out in the Grant Agreement. All communication with the EAP office must be in English.

Current employees of the British Library are not eligible to apply or be part of project teams. Applicants may only submit one application, or be named in any capacity in the application, for each round of funding. Current projects must be completed and signed off by EAP, and all outputs online, before the deadline for the detailed applications.

CO-APPLICANT(S)

If required, there can be up to three Co-applicants who help to shape, manage and/or direct the project. Team members who are involved in other aspects of the project (e.g. photography) should not be listed as co-applicants. Principal Applicants and Co-applicants are required to provide a brief, relevant CV. Where the Principal Applicant is a PhD student, the Supervisor should be a Co-applicant.

HOST INSTITUTION

Grants are awarded to a Host Institution, which oversees the financial and compliance aspects of the project. This should be a recognised non-commercial institution, such as an educational or research establishment, archive, library or similar. A senior representative from the Host Institution is responsible for completing a part of the Detailed Application form and signing the Grant Agreement.

The Host Institution is responsible for receiving and managing the funds and submitting budget accounts, via the Project Lead, to the EAP office according to the reporting schedule (Schedule 2 of the Grant Agreement). Host Institutions should offer some in-kind contribution as appropriate, such as the provision of staff time or training or waiving room-hire fees; institutional overheads are not paid as part of EAP grants and must not be included in the application. The Host Institution must provide proof of ability to receive grant payments in GBP over a period of up to two years. This is in the form of an Annual Report with financial statements showing that it has received incoming awards. Normally, the Principal Applicant is employed by the Host Institution.

ARCHIVAL PARTNER(S)

Applicants must identify an Archival Partner (max three) in the country in which the archive is located. This should be an archive, library or similar institution, based in the area in which the project is operating. It should have the ability to ensure long-term preservation of the digital material created by the project and, where appropriate, to facilitate access to the digital copies and originals.

Applications must include a list of all institutions that will receive copies of the digitised material, with a signature from a senior representative of each.

If the collection is to be re-housed with the Archival Partner, the application must include a statement of the institution's commitment to standards of storage, documentation, access and long-term preservation of the physical material. Digital copies must be deposited with the Archival Partner at the same time as a second digital copy is sent to the British Library (see below).

EVALUATION CRITERIA: PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS

Applications must include the following information about the proposed team:

Track record of Principal Applicant. Applicants must show that they have the experience necessary to manage and complete the project successfully. Applications at the detailed stage may include up to three Co-applicants who can provide any skills or experience that the Principal Applicant lacks.

Skills within the project team. Applicants must identify the skills the project will require, such as: project-management and financial skills; digitisation and cataloguing skills; technical skills for handling equipment and vulnerable material. Applicants must demonstrate how they will ensure that the team is composed of people who have these skills or will be trained in them.

Knowledge within the team. There must be evidence that the Principal Applicant and proposed team understand the material, its condition and its research and cultural value. The project team must include members with knowledge of the relevant languages and scripts of the materials in the archive.

5. PROJECT PLAN AND BUDGET



Applicants must consider the scope, budget, equipment and practical planning the project will require. The Endangered Archives Programme has published a book, *Remote Capture: Digitising Documentary Heritage in Challenging Locations*, which is [available as a free PDF](#) and it should be consulted prior to applying for a grant. Any questions may be discussed with the EAP team using the email address endangeredarchives@bl.uk. All applicants undertake to follow the Guidelines on the EAP website with regard to cataloguing standards.

The Endangered Archives Programme does not support systematic conservation work. Funding is intended to support the integrity of archives by removing them from a hazardous or neglected environment, relocating them into safer circumstances as necessary, and digitising them to preserve their contents and make them accessible.

Applicants must describe precisely how they will digitise and preserve the original material and safeguard the digitised copies. The expected costs, including any necessary equipment, should be included in the application. Applicants must show where the original material and the digital files will be stored after the project is completed, and demonstrate that the institutions involved are willing to host these materials.

REPORTING

Applicants must familiarise themselves with the EAP reporting processes before applying. Projects are reviewed regularly through the submission of sample digitised materials and sample metadata, followed by the submission of an Interim Report according to Schedule 2 of the Grant Agreement.

Grants are paid in instalments based on satisfactory reporting. Samples must be submitted prior to preparation of each interim progress report.

No later than three months after the end of the project, Project Leads must send the complete set of digital files, with supporting documentation, on hard drives securely packaged (by courier or registered mail) to the EAP office at the British Library. This should be preceded by a Submission Form with details of the contents of the drive.

The British Library will be responsible for accessioning all digital files and arranging for them to be stored safely. Details of all collections received will be posted on the EAP website and all digital images and recordings will be made available online.

BUDGET

Eligible costs include:

- **Fees and salaries** For project staff engaged with the tasks related to digitising and cataloguing the material. The amount requested must be in line with official or regional pay scales and include any statutory taxes and insurance. Fees and salaries may include teaching cover where an academic needs to spend considerable time away from official teaching duties, and contributions to salary costs where an applicant has no other form of income during the period of the project. Applicants must be prepared to justify all aspects of these costs.
- **Equipment and consumables** To cover the cost of cataloguing and digitising material, including purchasing equipment, and re-locating and installing the material in an archive, but not archival overheads or running costs. This can also include the cost of basic preservation measures for the original material, such as acid-free storage boxes, dehumidifiers, brushes, etc, where necessary. The EAP has a list of approved equipment for the capture of digital files at the approved standard. The application should include any relevant import-export and shipping costs. A list of approved equipment can be found in the *Remote Capture Costed Equipment List*.
- **Travel and subsistence** To cover essential travel to carry out the project. In view of the climate emergency, applicants must attempt to minimise the environmental impact of their projects. This includes favouring local activities over international travel.
- **Training costs** EAP aims to enhance the local capacity to preserve and manage collections in the long term. Applicants are therefore required to incorporate training and professional development for local staff in their grant proposal. This can be in areas such as collection management, technical training in digitisation, cataloguing, and so on.
- **Other costs** This can include the cost of shipping the hard drive containing the digitised material, or for disseminating the results from the project, such as conference talks or public/educational displays, especially where they are aimed at local people. However, costs for a project website or hosting digital content created by the project are not allowable.

Ineligible costs include institutional overheads, capital building and refurbishment projects, building work of any kind, routine infrastructure and staffing costs, systematic conservation of original materials, extensive cataloguing or archive management, and website development.

The Programme does not provide funds to purchase archival material. However, some notional recompense to owners of the material may be included in exceptional cases where culturally appropriate; this must be fully justified and costed at the application stage.

EVALUATION CRITERIA: PLAN AND BUDGET

The proposal must contain an outline of an effective plan showing how the following questions have been addressed:

Feasibility Applicants must demonstrate an understanding of the practicalities and logistics of the project: Is the time frame reasonable? Are the team available at the time specified? Have all risks been considered? Have all costs been taken into account? Who will oversee the finances?

Local capacity building Wherever possible, the project should create the opportunity for future archival and digitisation work to be carried out in the region where the archive is located. Applications should include a plan for the period after the project is completed, outlining what will happen to the equipment and the potential for the training and experience of the team to be applied in future activities.

Budget The budget must be within the limit for the project type (see above). Applicants must provide justification for the cost of all salaries, equipment and travel, and demonstrate that the budget represents good value for money. Host Institutions should make appropriate financial contributions to these costs.

6. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

CO-FUNDING AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Although EAP can co-fund projects with other organisations, EAP and its sister programme [MEAP](#) will not fund overlapping projects in the same funding year; applicants may apply to only one of the Arcadia-funded programmes per round. This includes: projects with the same Principal Applicant or Co-applicants; projects digitising materials from the same collection; and projects from the same institution that would rely on the same project team.

Applicants with collections including substantial material from before and after the mid-20th century can apply to both EAP and MEAP for projects to work on the same collection, but not in the same application year. Applicants may therefore choose to create related project plans for their applications to each programme. Projects funded by one programme must be completed before an application to the other programme will be considered. Applicants with this type of project should contact the staff of EAP or MEAP to discuss, and must note that the processes for the programmes are different.

TYPICAL TIMETABLE

September	Call for applications announced on EAP website and other channels. Application portal mid-September.
Sept/October	Webinars for applicants: details announced via the EAP website.
November	Deadline for preliminary applications early to mid November.
Nov/December	Feedback to applicants / invitations to submit full application.
Dec/January	Applicants assemble all elements of the application including collaborator signatures, recommendation, permission forms and supporting images.

February	Deadline for detailed applications mid February.
March/early April	EAP International Advisory Panel meets to discuss all detailed applications and make decisions on grant awards.
April/May	Feedback to applicants / grant offers sent with request for updated risk assessment and responses to conditional offers (to be met within one month).
May/June	Award letters sent to successful applicants. Host Institution contacts must be ready to sign and provide bank details. First batch of payments from BL in June.
July	All bank details must be finalised by the end of June. Remaining first payments go out. Some projects start in July.
August	Most of the projects should have started by August.

BEFORE APPLYING

- Ensure that all people and institutions involved with the project are aware of the application. This includes the Archival Partners, archive owners or custodians and other stakeholders.
- Ensure that a senior person from the Host Institution is familiar with the content of the Grant Agreement and is authorised to sign it, unchanged and in a timely fashion. No changes may be made to this agreement, as it arises out of the British Library's status as a UK public body and the re-granting agreement with the EAP's funders, Arcadia.
- Discuss your application with the EAP team and / or attend one of the webinars.
- If the project involves digitisation, read *Remote Capture* and the Costed Equipment List.
- Be prepared to mobilise everyone quickly if the grant is awarded.

CHECKLIST

This checklist should be referred to when completing the online application form.

Material

- Pre-1960s
- Endangered
- Has cultural or research value
- Not in Western Europe or North America
- No copyright restrictions or privacy concerns
- Will not need to be removed from the country in which it is located

People & Organisations

- Team includes project-management and financial skills
- Team members have knowledge of the language(s) of the material
- Knowledge of digitisation and cataloguing in the team (if appropriate) – or a training plan
- Host Institution is a recognised non-commercial institution that can receive payments in GBP
- Archival Partner(s) is/are in the same country as the archive to be digitised and can ensure long-term preservation of the archive

Project Plan & Budget

- No other applications to EAP or MEAP in the same round; no currently running project
- Fees and salaries are proportionate
- Travel is no more than strictly necessary
- Plan includes local capacity building
- Collection owners agree in writing to co-operate in the project

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This Guide for Applicants is updated annually in the summer. This document should be read in conjunction with the current [Grant Agreement](#) text. All enquiries about application procedures or any aspect of the Endangered Archives Programme should be addressed to endangeredarchives@bl.uk. All correspondence must have the EAP reference number, once allocated, in the subject field.



APPENDICES

These are annotated facsimiles of all forms and templates that are currently used on the applicant portal. All can be found as separate documents on the Grants pages of the EAP website.

- Appendix 1** – Preliminary Application
- Appendix 2** – Detailed Application
- Appendix 3** – Access, Permissions and Copyright form*
- Appendix 4** – Referee Report form
- Appendix 5** – Host Institution*, Archival Partner*, Co-Applicant forms
- Appendix 6** – Risk Assessment form
- Appendix 7** – Grant Agreement template

* Appendix 3 and Parts A and B of Appendix 5 have been translated, along with the text of this Guide, to help applicants to communicate the requirements of the Programme to key stakeholders.