



Mead Fellowships: general guidelines for Stage #1 applicants

This document contains general feedback and guidelines gathered from Mead award shortlisting panels in the past. We hope these notes will help you strengthen your application.

General:

Some proposals were generally confusing to read and evaluate, and did not present the project in the best light – for example, they did not answer the questions on the form, or did not stick to the word count. Some did not make it clear what the project was about or how it will unfold.

Always make sure to:

- Clearly articulate the **'what, how, who and why'** about your project. For arts funding applications, we recommend writing in Plain English rather than academic language (and briefly explain any technical or complex areas)
- Show you have conducted some basic research about who else has addressed, or is currently addressing, this theme/subject/area, and talk about other work you took inspiration from. This will significantly strengthen your proposal
- Proof-read your proposal and/or have other people proof-read it. Ask people who are unfamiliar with your idea to give feedback on whether they can understand it (ask an artist/creator for their feedback on the creative aspects, and ask a non-artist whether it all makes sense)
- Stick to the formatting and word count specified in the application form and/or guidelines
- Draft a fairly accurate budget at this stage – as you cannot ask for more later. Double check that your budget adds up! Tell us about funds you have already secured and, if applications are pending, say what date the results will be known
- **Engage with the questions asked in the bullet points, as answers are marked on these alone** (we suggest you write down the key words and check you have talked about them before submitting). Don't go off on a tangent
- Submit your application in good time, as late entries will not be considered.

Q1. Describing your project:

Some proposals were vague or lacked clarity when describing the project. A common mistake is not giving enough details on what the final project would actually look like – but talking at length about the theme and passions behind the project. Don't assume that the panel will read between the lines and imagine the end result.

It was not always clear who the 'audience' was, or who the project was trying to reach or engage. Applications are stronger if specific audience groups are identified, with some research to back up why they might be interested.

This award is for those who need funding to achieve all aspects of their project, so we always look for a strong case to be made. And also we want a clear idea of what the money would be spent on, within the project – with some figures given for specific areas.

Always make sure to:

- **Activities and outputs** – first describe all the elements that you will be making, and say exactly how this piece will be presented. Give the scale/ length of the piece, and itemise everyone and all elements involved.

Here is an example:

- o My project is an intimate performance of 20 minutes to an audience capacity of 40. It involves engaging a set/costume designer, an AV technician and three actors (two of which play 3 parts each). There will be film projections and a sound track – which I have already created.

My script (already written) is about an ancient man who lives in a bus station and the people he interacts with over one night. It is a study of aging and homelessness, and the varying reactions we have to this. It is sad, poignant and also humorous in parts, inspired by Charlie Chaplin's political silent movies of the 30s (e.g. *Modern Times*, 1936) and the drama of Bertolt Brecht. I am intrigued and passionate about these artists' work, because it makes the audience think deeply about the human condition.

There will be 10 shows in total. Based on reaching 70% of capacity, I aim for about 280 people to watch the show, including invited theatre venues (listed in Q4). I have started talks with the X Theatre in Camden, who have a suitable studio theatre space for hire in summer 2021. The audience will be made up of their mailing list (they will advertise my play in their programme/website/social media as part of the hire agreement) – and I have contacted four local secondary schools who are interested in bringing pupil drama groups to the matinees. I also want to engage with Cardboard Citizens, Shelter, Crisis, Help the Aged and other voluntary organisations whose members would be interested in the themes.

I estimate £xx in ticket income (to cover 50% of venue hire), and I am requesting £XXX, made up of: £xx for 50% venue hire, £xx for all staging/production costs, £xx for costumes, £xxx for designer, actors and technician, £xxx for publicity and marketing, £xxx for evaluation costs. Based on the success of this first run, I aim for the show to move to a bigger venue for a longer run.

*Reflection: Does this example tell you 'what, how, who and why'?
Is anything missing – how could you improve it?*

- Keep your focus – don't overload or over-complicate your project description. Try to do an 'elevator pitch' to other people – can you summarise what you are trying to do in a few minutes, or a few lines?
- If it's a performance/film, give a brief synopsis of the narrative/ story / plot, and explain where the script and sound will be coming from
- If yours is a team project, say what each role is, and tie this in with the skills in Q2
- Also be really clear what the project does, who is it for, and what you hope to achieve through it. Don't just say 'it's for everyone' (everyone does not engage with everything!). Do your research on who might find it especially interesting and how you will engage them with for your project.
- Give us a brief summary of how the money you have requested will be spent, breaking it down into different types of expenditure. Your estimates should be grounded in reality – so if you show us how you have got these figures it will strengthen your application.
- If income will be generated (e.g. through ticket sales) give a prudent estimate of what this will be (and deduct it from the total project costs you are requesting).

Q2. Creative Attributes Framework – your skills and experience:

Some proposals did not provide enough evidence that the applicant had enough or the right kind of experience/background to undertake their project. Not all applicants showed that they had read the Creative Attributes Framework (CAF), as required. It also was not always clear how the project would fit in with the applicant's longer-term ambitions.

Make sure to:

- Read the case studies on the CAF webpage, to help you deepen your answer
- Explain why you are the right person to complete this project, to a high standard
- Give actual examples of where you have used the skills listed in the CAF before – use different examples to show a range of learning
- Mention skills you bring in from outside your academic or professional life – for example volunteer work, hobbies, travels, life experience.

Q3. How does your project fit in with the wider industry / sector / community or the history of your area of practice?

Some of the statements given were just speculations. Do research and also ask others who may have a wider knowledge base than you (as the panel often knew of similar work, currently or historical).

Make sure to:

- Communicate what makes your project special. A project can have been done before and still be original, but what sets your idea apart? Are you offering a refreshing perspective or new take on a classic idea?

- Do your research to see what else is out there and explain what makes your project timely or relevant. Give examples of other work that is similar, or addresses the same themes.
- Why will people want to engage with your project? How is it innovative or important? Are there places that your project could be shown – or groups who would be interested in it? Have you contacted them?

Q4. What will be the impact of this project on yourself and others?

This question is asking what the take-aways are – for you and the audience. And also how you will measure and record these. It is important to show us where the project came from in your learning journey, and what it will lead you on to. Also how it will be judged as a success, in specific ways that can be reported back to us.

Make sure to:

- Demonstrate how your study and work experience has led to this project, and what you can use it for in the future. Where do you want this project to take you to next?
- Find relevant people and organisations, who you could connect with. Your application will be much more convincing if you can show how you will share it, and that you have identified one/more target audience/s. Even better, if you have started establishing a relationship with them (in person and/or through social media).
- What is the point/purpose of this project? Explain the **outcomes** you are hoping for, and how you will evaluate these. Outcomes may be changes in attitude, behaviour, skills, knowledge, motivation, feelings, and aspirations. How can you measure these things?
- What are the outcomes for yourself - **and** what are the outcomes for your audience? They may be different – if so, be clear.
- Be creative in choosing your methods of evaluation
- For example – if you think your audience will have certain reactions, you could record these by asking specific questions through surveys on social media or at the event. Or you could ask a sample of people to give vox pops after the event. For example:
 - o I think that this project will be uplifting for the audience and provoke further thought. As they leave the show, they are given some sticky dots to indicate their agreement on simple statements about how they feel right now.
- What wider **impact** might this project have? Impacts are the direct and indirect effects for industry, society, the economy and the environment. What do you wish for your project's part in this? How can you measure this?

And finally, if your application does not go through to the next stage of the Mead Awards, please do not be despondent. Arts fund raisers submit many applications for the same project, and not all are successful.

Remember: your application writing will improve with practice – so keep at it!