

Information For Applicants

Purpose of the Fund

The V&A Purchase Grant Fund is a government fund operated by the V&A with a grants budget provided by Arts Council England (ACE). It contributes to the purchase of objects relating to the arts, literature and history by museums, galleries, record repositories and specialist libraries in England and Wales. Through the acquisitions it supports, the Purchase Grant Fund helps to develop and strengthen the quality and standards of regional collections for the understanding and enjoyment of the public.

Criteria

Who is eligible to apply?

Museums, galleries, record repositories and specialist libraries which

- exist for the benefit of the public
- maintain a permanent collection housed and cared for to professional standards
- have an acceptable constitution and financial basis
- are staffed by suitably qualified personnel
- provide a high degree of regular public access and an appropriate range of visitor services
- are not funded by central government.

As a **basic** requirement, museums and galleries should be accredited or registered under the ACE scheme and record repositories and libraries have adopted the **Standard for Record Repositories** (The National Archives, 2004). Eligibility is assessed on the first application and continues to be monitored.

What is eligible for support?

- Objects, collections or archives of any date relating to the arts, literature or history. This includes archaeological and ethnographical material; objects illustrating social and popular culture, decorative and fine art; rare books; documents and letters with good historical content, maps, writers' manuscripts and archival photographs.
- The minimum purchase price is **£500** and the maximum **£500,000**.
- If buying at auction, buyer's premium and agent's commission are considered part of the eligible costs.

Ineligible

- Applications from nationally-funded organisations, friends' organisations or other third parties
- Objects which have already been purchased. There must be no financial commitment to buy until an offer has been made.

- Artificial grouping of objects individually priced at less than £500
- Items intended for circulating exhibition services, loan schemes or handling collections
- Reproductions, facsimiles, current publications, museum or library equipment
- Conservation costs
- Associated costs such as delivery, framing or valuation charges
- Value added tax.

How much money is available?

- The budget for 2011-12 is £600,000.
- The exact level of grant is subject to a number of factors such as the availability of funds, the comparative strength of the argument made for the acquisition, whether the object is considered to be reasonably priced and the level of support from other sources.
- The maximum grant is normally 50% of the purchase price. In exceptional circumstances grants of more than 50% may be considered, subject to available funds.
- No applicant is likely to receive more than £40,000 in any one financial year.
- Local financial commitment is essential. Grants are calculated on the level of local contribution. **Up to £5** of grant aid may be given for each **£1** of locally-raised funding. Local sources might include the applicant's own funds, special appeals, contributions by friends' organisations, local business or private donations. The balance may be sought from other nationally-administered grant giving bodies such as the Art Fund, the Friends of the National Libraries, the Beecroft Bequest, the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund. Applicants should contact the Purchase Grant Fund office if unsure as to the exact nature of any potential fund source.

Making an application

- Applicants contact the Purchase Grant Fund office by telephone, email or letter for an application form and for an initial discussion on the potential purchase, timing and funding, as necessary. The application form is not available online but is sent by e-mail or post, if preferred.
- The eligibility of new applicants will be established and existing applicants asked for details of any changes or organisational developments at this stage.
- Competition is very strong and not all deserving cases will be successful. Applicants must, therefore, argue the case as strongly as possible, establishing the significance of the proposed purchase in the context of their collections and how it will help to further the organisation's activities and objectives.
- Good quality photographs of the item(s) or a representative sample of a collection are essential. JPG, TIF, PSD or EPS formats with a minimum resolution of 150dpi are acceptable. These may be emailed or be supplied on a disk; if the latter, please include a printed version of the images. Please note that the V&A email system has a maximum capacity of 10MB. It may, therefore, be necessary to send the application and images separately.
- Images are not returnable and may be used freely by the Purchase Grant Fund for record, reporting and publicity purposes. Applicants must therefore ensure that the appropriate copyright clearance has been obtained. Images are not normally required for manuscript purchases, where a listing with condition report may suffice but this should be cleared with the Purchase Grant Fund office before submitting the application.

- Items must have been seen and verified by the applicant and not merely, for example, chosen from a catalogue.
- Applicants are expected to have checked the possible interest of other relevant organisations in accordance with their declared collecting policy.
- It is not usually necessary for items to be brought to the Purchase Grant Fund for assessment but should the Fund's advisers need to examine the object, it is the responsibility of the applicant to make it available for inspection and to meet associated costs.
- Applicants are expected to have established that the price is reasonable and are responsible for providing valuations and condition reports when required. It is Purchase Grant Fund policy not to encourage the purchase of unduly expensive material. A museum discount should be sought wherever possible. A reduction in price through any tax exemption scheme should be investigated. Further details are available from the Capital Taxes Office (0115 974 2631) or the Acquisitions, Export and Loans Unit, Arts Council England (020 7973 5108).
- Grants are normally allocated weekly apart from purchases costing over £60,000 which are considered monthly. Decisions are usually given within four weeks of receipt of all necessary information. Failure to supply the required details will result in delay.

Offer and payment of grants

- An offer is made in writing stating the exact level of grant and the terms of grant offer and sent with the declaration (grant claim) form. (For auction sales see below.)
- The vendor may then be paid.
- Once the object has been safely received by the applicant, the grant may be claimed by returning the declaration form with a copy of the receipted invoice or alternative proof of payment showing the item(s) bought, breakdown of the price and the date paid. The grant is a reimbursement.
- The declaration form sets out the terms and conditions attached to the grant. Its return constitutes a formal contract. It should, therefore, be completed and signed by a member of the governing body or the officer with financial responsibility for museum purchases and the authority to enter into such agreements.

Acknowledgement

- The assistance of the **V&A Purchase Grant Fund** must be clearly acknowledged in all publicity surrounding the purchase and in all forms of documentation and display information **including online catalogues**. Details are available from the Purchase Grant Fund office.

Auction sales

- In the case of auction sales, it is essential to telephone Purchase Grant Fund staff **immediately** to discuss potential interest. **Do not wait** until the final decision to proceed or other details have been confirmed.
- At least 5 working days notice is normally required.
- The object(s) must be inspected by the applicant or their agent before the sale.
- The completed application must include a link to the catalogue entry (or a scan or photocopy of it), an independent note or report of condition and detailed images as necessary, particularly if the auction house is outside London.

- The result will be given by telephone before the sale.
- A grant offer will be expressed as a percentage up to an agreed maximum bid. If the lot is secured at less than £500 (the minimum eligible price level) it will no longer qualify for grant aid.
- The Purchase Grant Fund must be notified as soon as possible whether or not the bid was successful.
- If successful, the applicant will receive written confirmation of the exact level of grant aid together with the declaration form in the normal way.

Commissions

- Applications cannot be considered if the commission is already in progress or where the applicant is irrevocably committed to its acquisition.
- Applications in respect of commissioned work are considered in the same way as those for the purchase of existing works but the submission should also include:
 - A copy of the commission brief
 - Details or images of any preparatory work
 - Photographs of the artist's recent work
 - The expected completion date
 - A note of what is included in the cost. Preparatory work is expected to be part of the purchase.

Continuing interest in items acquired with grant aid

The Purchase Grant Fund retains an interest in the items it has helped to acquire and monitors compliance with the terms of grant aid. Should the applicant be unable, at any time, to meet the grant conditions or eligibility criteria, the Fund is entitled to reclaim any grants made.

Organisational change

The Fund must be notified of any change in constitution or status of the organisation, management arrangements for the collections (devolved to trust status, for example) or change in premises, staffing structure etc which might have an impact on collections care or public access.

Housing objects

- Items must be permanently housed by the applicant in secure and environmentally acceptable conditions. The permanent location should be as described in the grant offer letter as the eligibility of the location has been assessed.
- Venues for the short term loan of grant-aided material should be able to provide conditions comparable or superior to the applicant's own in terms of environment and security and be fully accessible to the public.

Disposing of objects

- In signing the declaration form, an institution undertakes not to dispose of the grant-aided acquisition without the Fund's prior approval. If the issue of disposal arises, the Fund should be contacted immediately to discuss the options and procedures.

- Deaccessioning in certain circumstances is a valid collections management tool, provided it is carried out within the terms of an acceptable collections management policy and recognised professional guidelines.
- Museums should abide by Accreditation guidelines with regard to the disposal of collections; libraries and record repositories would be expected to consult the Archives Sector Development Department at The National Archives.
- Transfer of items from core collections to handling collections (which are outside the Fund's remit) is deemed to be disposal.
- Organisations intending to sell objects purely to generate funds for revenue purposes will seriously prejudice their prospects of receiving grant aid in the future.
- In the event of disposal being permitted, the Purchase Grant Fund is entitled to repayment of the grant or, if greater, a sum equal to the percentage of the grant from any monies received
- Objects purchased with grant aid should not be mortgaged or pledged as security in any way.

Long term loan or transfer of ownership

Grants are awarded to those who have demonstrated how the acquisition complements the existing collection and helps meet the organisation's objectives. Should the situation change and a different home be considered more appropriate, the Fund should be consulted at an early stage. In the case of transfer of ownership, if the proposed recipient is an organisation which meets the Fund's eligibility criteria, transfer of the award may be considered; if not, the Purchase Grant Fund is entitled to repayment of the grant or, if greater, a sum equal to the percentage of the grant from any monies received.

Loss or damage to objects

- The Purchase Grant Fund office must be notified at once if an item acquired with grant aid is lost, stolen or irreparably damaged.
- In the event of a total loss, the Purchase Grant Fund is entitled to repayment of the grant or, if greater, a sum equal to the percentage of the grant from any insurance claim or compensation.