

The Bow Research Group

Open Call for Research Proposals: Exploring the Impact of the Creative Industries in the UK

Preamble

Bow Arts Trust, a leading London based arts charity, is launching a call for applications for up to 15 research residencies in central London to build a community of practice – the Bow Research Group – on the impact of the creative industries in the UK.

Applications are welcomed from PhD students, early career researchers and more established researchers to help develop knowledge and understanding of the creative sector and some of the challenges it faces.

Further information about the opportunity is provided in the sections below.

About Bow Arts

Bow Arts Trust is one of London's leading arts charities. Established 30 years ago, Bow Arts now provides affordable accommodation to over 1,000 artists and creatives, accommodated in approximately 800 studios and over 70 units of residential accommodation across 16 London Boroughs. Over the last three decades Bow Arts has also been one of the most affordable artist and creative studio providers in London, supporting the retention of emerging artists in the capital.

Bow Arts is not only a provider of work and live spaces for artists it has also developed arts education programmes supporting the curriculum. The resulting programmes enhance the confidence, skills and qualifications of children and young people and create pathways into creative employment. Last year over 10,000 pupils from 86 schools participated in Bow Arts creative learning programmes. In addition to its learning programmes, Bow Arts provides a number of galleries and arts-led community engagement and development activity and last year over 7,000 individuals either participated in Bow Arts community activity or exhibitions.

Creative and Cultural Sector Research

The creative / cultural sector faces a number of significant challenges, described in the Mayor of London's Cultural Infrastructure Plan as "*a 'perfect storm' of adverse underlying conditions*" (p.25). These underlying conditions include high land values, and much higher land values for residential development, squeezing out artists as sites are redeveloped. There is a general view that there is a lack of awareness of the existence of artists / creatives or the (social) value that a cluster of artists can create in a particular location. This general view extends to the belief that emerging artists are displaced from higher value areas as they cannot afford to live or rent studio space there. In turn this creates the dynamic that "*many creative practitioners and cultural workers, especially those from lower socio economic backgrounds.... continue to struggle to develop and sustain financially viable careers*" (Arts Council England 2021 p.41) particularly in London.

Bow Arts, in addition to its creative learning and community programmes, is committed to supporting emerging artists develop and sustain viable careers and is developing new sites and programmes against that commitment. However, in developing the thinking and understanding of some of the underlying issues, there is the challenge of what appears to be a fragmentary or underdeveloped research base which hinders the development of well thought through argument or proposition. Accordingly Bow Arts is keen to develop the research base in certain specific areas (see below). To do this Bow Arts is initiating a research programme through the engagement and funding of researchers who specialise in the arts, creative industries and the wider social impact of access to cultural activity. The concept is that researchers from various institutions might convene to create a loose network or grouping of researchers, investigating interlinked fields of inquiry which serve to increase knowledge and understanding of how the sector works and some of its challenges. It is envisaged that this research group would have as its a base, office space in central London managed by Bow Arts. It is also envisaged that this Bow research group would be supported in its work by appropriate staff and Trustees from Bow Arts.

A Call for Proposals

In the context of the above, Bow Arts is pleased to announce an open call for applications for up to 15 research residencies in central London to build a community of practice – the Bow Research Group – on the impact of the creative industries in the UK.

Bow Research Group residencies will provide:

- Access to central London office space for the duration of the residency (3-18 months), with the expectation that researchers will spend at least two days per week in this space.
- The space will provide, inter-alia, desk space in shared ‘research group’ space; internet access (but not pcs / laptops); quiet space and meeting spaces
- Funding from £1000 - £5000 depending on the research proposition and length of the residency. It is anticipated that higher awards will only be made for exceptional submissions.
- The opportunity to work with Bow Arts, including access to 900+ artists, industry leading staff and the archives / data from the past 30 years, and with other researchers with aligned interests, including through monthly meetings of the Bow Research Group Forum. (For information - Bow Arts conducts regular surveys of its artist licensees and from time to time has conducted focus groups with artists to consult on particular projects or initiatives).

Areas of Research Interest Objectives

Research proposals are invited for current or new research that align with one or more of the following areas of research interest:

1. **Economic Impact:** the contribution made by the creative industries to the UK economy, including job creation, GDP contribution, and export potential.
2. **Impact of Clustering:** the impact made by artist clustering to the socio-economic well-being of a neighbourhood or district

3. **Social Well-being:** the role of creative industries in enhancing social inclusion, mental health, and community engagement.
4. **Artist Housing 1:** the challenge of retaining and supporting creative talent within the UK context of unaffordable housing and general phenomenon of demand for (affordable) housing outstripping supply?
5. **Artist Housing 2:** supply of affordable artist housing, forms, tenures, the success (or otherwise) of affordable artist housing interventions and impact on individual and community well being

Eligibility Criteria

- Applicants should be affiliated with a recognised Higher Education Institution or Independent Research Organisation in the UK.
- Proposals are welcome from researchers at any stage of their career, including doctoral candidates, early career researchers, and established academics. Applications from funded placement opportunities are similarly welcomed.
- Interdisciplinary approaches and collaborative projects are highly encouraged.
- Proposals do not have to constitute new research. Funding and resources support can be used to further existing research, if aligned with the areas of research interest above.
- It is expected that researchers will base themselves for at least 2 days a week working from the research offices in Central London. For non-London / South-East based researchers, the residency and funding may be used for more intense periods of research.
- Researchers will be required to engage with and participate in a monthly research group forum, to discuss research progress, barriers and issues arising. The forum will be facilitated and administered by Bow Arts.
- The support of the Bow Research Group would need to be acknowledged within publications and other outputs from the residency.

As part of this open call for research proposals, Bow Arts is interested in hearing from a wide range of researchers. Therefore, if you are an independent researcher or your current research project or academic interest doesn't directly align with the eligibility criteria presented, you are encouraged to discuss with Bow Arts any proposition so that it might be assessed against the wider objective of increasing the knowledge and understanding of the creative / cultural sector or the workings of the research grouping.

Application Process

Interested researchers are invited to submit the following:

1. **Research Proposal:** A proposal (up to 1,500 words) outlining the research objectives, methodology, expected outcomes, and how the study aligns with the call's areas of research interest.
2. **Statement of Benefit:** A statement (up to 1,000 words) outlining how you would use the potential resources available through the residency i.e. the central London location, co-location with other researchers, access to Bow Arts licensees / archives etc. and the specific benefits that Bow Research Group residency would bring to your research.

3. **Award Sought:** An indication of the financial award being requested.
4. **Statement of Support:** A statement of support from either an academic supervisor (if a PhD research student) or line manager or equivalent for other researchers.
5. **CV:** A current CV (up to 2 pages) for each researcher involved in the project. The CV should also provide details (including contact details) for two referees for each researcher involved in the project.
6. **Timeline:** An estimated timeline for the research, including key milestones and deliverables.

Key Dates

- **Issue of Call Out:** w/c 25.11.24
- **Application Deadline:** 20.12.24
- **Possible Interviews of Shortlisted Candidates:** w/c 13.01.25
- **Notification of Results:** w/c 20.01.25
- **Commencement:** w/c 27.01.25

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- **Relevance:** The potential of the research to make a meaningful contribution to the knowledge and understanding of the creative industries against the five areas of research interest outlined above.
- **Feasibility:** The practicality of plans to achieve the research outcomes within the given budget and timeline including potential for publication.
- **Academic Rigour:** The theoretical framework and methodological approach that frame the research proposal.

Submission Instructions

Please submit your application as a single PDF document to apallister@bowarts.com with the subject line "Creative Industries Research Proposal".

Please address any enquiries or requests for further information to Nick Smales, via apallister@bowarts.com

References

ACE (2021) Arts Council England – Let's Create Strategy 2020-2030. Arts Council England. Manchester, UK.

MoL (2019) Mayor of London – Cultural Infrastructure Plan. A Call to Action. March 2019