

Human-Nature: UK/ Malaysia – Alternative Narratives Creative Collaboration Grants Open Call Brief

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Introduction

Human-Nature is a collaborative programme aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of the human relationship to nature and each other, for a more inclusive and sustainable future. It supports UK and Malaysian arts practitioners, communities, scientists, and academics to exchange knowledge, collaborate, conduct research, and develop creative responses to climate action.

The programme aims to:

- Help us understand the narratives that have shaped our relationship with Nature and with each other.
- Foster partnerships between communities, arts practitioners, scientists, and academia to embed arts and creative responses.
- Support the development of research and insights on collaborative and creative responses for climate adaptation.
- Elevate local Malaysian voices to share insights, knowledge, and best practices around sustainable and alternative futures.

To date, we have produced the following:

- [**Community Engagement Guide - Aram Bekelala**](#): Developed through a consultative process, this guide offers insights and recommendations for working with communities in Malaysia, with a focus on Indigenous and marginalised groups. It is a resource for artists, researchers and cultural organisations that want to foster meaningful and ethical co-collaborative partnerships.
- [**Research Delegation**](#): in 2024, seven UK artists and creative professionals who work at the intersection of arts and climate immersed themselves in the Malaysian ecosystem, to foster collaborations with Malaysian counterparts on creative responses to climate adaptation.
- [**Storytelling Fellowship - Time of the Rivers**](#): A 6-month research fellowship for 2 UK and 2 Malaysian artists to understand climate narratives and community impact

- **Research - Human-Nature Relations, Resilience & Reciprocity:** To be published in 2025, the study will explore ethical principles of collaborations methodologies for international creative collaborations and research.

Opportunity brief

As we continue to raise awareness of the climate emergency and enable meaningful collaborations, we are pleased to announce the launch of an open call for **3 creative collaboration projects** (3 projects – each grant worth £20,000) between UK and Malaysian artists, arts organisations, arts tech creatives and or producers, curators, collectives, CSOs and academics to collaborate on new creative works. The 3 grants / creative projects should result in creative outputs that can be showcased / shared with physical and digital audiences, before the completion of the grant period.

The call is open to past delegates, fellows and stakeholders that have previously engaged with Human-Nature, as well as new grantees.

We hope that the supported projects will stimulate conversations and connections, bringing together people, cultures, and communities to understand each other's perspectives, climate narratives and collaborate on creative responses and solutions towards climate change.

This grant will be a unique chance for the selected participants to collaborate on a project that explores and addresses climate change through arts, science, and technology, to ignite conversations, inspire change and build cultural connections between the UK and Malaysian arts and creative sectors.

This opportunity is for candidates working across disciplinary boundaries, who want to make new connections and have special interest in **investigating and telling stories of Human-Nature relationships in Malaysia and the UK, explore alternative narratives, and imagine preferable futures**. We also hope the successful projects will help us raise awareness and demonstrate the role arts can play in addressing climate change issues. We are looking for projects that have the potential to create impact, present long term partnerships outcomes, and reach wide audiences both in the UK and Malaysia.

We welcome action-focused, interactive responses, which tackle climate challenges, explore possibilities and are a catalyst for real change. This means thinking how your project can exist and be relevant beyond a single artwork, event and/or digital moment, and instead focusing on mass participation and engagement, ideally leading to longer term movements and campaigns. We are interested in ideas that have high impact, sustainability, the potential to be scaled up, or those which can be shared globally using digital platforms and tools.

We are also interested in foregrounding the voices of individuals and communities already experiencing the consequences of climate change in different settings. We want to see ideas grounded in lived experience.

As part of our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, we actively invite groups and communities who are underrepresented in climate change discussions to respond to this brief. This includes taking an inclusive approach to the development of your idea, considering the audiences you want to reach.

Finally, we are looking to support low carbon solutions and environmentally friendly practices in project planning and delivery, as well as in your choice of partners and suppliers.

Objectives

The creative collaboration projects should:

- Help us understand how Human-Nature relationships and the narratives that shaped them have led us to the climate crisis.
- Help us develop new Human-Nature relationships' narratives that are preferable and more sustainable.
- Increase knowledge, understanding, and interest of UK/MY stakeholders about the importance and potential for creative responses to climate adaptation.
- Generate new climate related art works through cross border, cross discipline collaborations and generate long-term partnerships.
- Generate awareness, knowledge exchange, and dialogue opportunities.
- Foster innovation for sustainable futures.

Theme(s) examples

The projects should focus on exploring our past, current, and future Human-Nature narratives, the power dynamics and forces that have shaped relationship(s) to the environment, and what alternative futures could look like.

Relevant projects could explore:

Climate themes

This includes biodiversity and nature, coastal erosion, land stewardship, climate justice, deforestation, pollution and waste, water rights or other climate-related impact areas addressed by your project.

Creative expression & Art Forms

This includes dance, digital innovation, film, land art, literature / writing, music, publishing, theatre, visual art, architecture and built cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage, other.

Sustainability

This includes decarbonisation, green infrastructure, new technologies, recycling, renewable energy, research and/or mapping, sustainable practices (including artistic), traditional knowledge, other sustainability impact of your project.

Multi-disciplinary Collaboration

This includes digital technology, science, climate science, traditional knowledge and practices.

International Collaboration

Impact of the collaboration between UK and partner(s) in region on your institution or organisation in terms of peer exchange and interdisciplinary ways of working, and impact of activities such as residencies and visits.

Working with Communities

This includes forms of community engagement, community led approaches, and collaboration with NGOs and CSOs that works with communities.

Awareness Raising

This includes public understanding of the climate emergency and biodiversity loss, campaigns and promotion, climate-based artworks, and public engagement events.

Examples of possible collaborations:

- Artworks across all artforms i.e. film, visual art, literature, music, theatre and dance, craft, creative tech etc., including creative use of archives.
- Artwork that focuses on climate change storytelling – including collaboration with science/academia and technology.
- Exhibitions, festivals, showcases, performances and screening programmes: Curation of art works that respond to the themes listed above.
- Residencies: Residency that provides artists the opportunity to create a tangible creative output that can be showcased.
- Exciting public art and performances that are large-scale, high profile, impactful, and that raise awareness of the climate emergency in cutting-edge ways.
- Situated projects: arts initiatives and residencies in natural environments and/or urban ones.

Eligibility & Project Criteria

- Individuals, organisations and/or collectives/networks are all eligible to apply but should have demonstrable experience of managing similar projects and grants.
- Applications must include at least one partner in the UK and one partner in Malaysia. A partner based either in the UK or in Malaysia can lead on the proposal.
 - be based/live inside of the United Kingdom during the duration of the project and be defined by His Majesty's Revenue & Customs as 'resident in the UK' for tax – see [here](#).
 - be Malaysian citizen/organisation and live in Malaysia during the duration of the project.
- Applicants can apply for up to £20,000 to realise their creative idea. Applications that demonstrate in-kind or matched support are welcome, and we will also accept applicants who are currently receiving other British Council grants, provided that the proposal is a new project or extension of the existing funded project.
- Project resources and responsibilities should be distributed fairly and equitably between the lead applicant and the co-partner.
- Applications should be jointly submitted and signed by all named collaborators, with a supporting letter from each partner stating their role in the project. A partner must be based either in the UK or in Malaysia to be able to lead on the proposal. Other participating partners from other countries are accepted as project partners but cannot be lead partners or co-applicants.
- Individuals, organisations and/or collectives/networks are all eligible to apply but should have demonstrable experience of managing similar projects and grants.
- Applicants will be expected to plan, design and realise their project within the contractual period.
- Applicants can use any platforms to showcase their project idea, but must provide detail on how this will be realised and confirm that agreements in principle are in place with host organisations, festivals, online sites, media partners, etc.
- Applicants from a range of different sectors are welcome and encouraged. All outputs and responses should be innovative in their nature, demonstrating creativity in working across disciplines, including arts and culture, education, science and digital technology.
- Applicants should demonstrate that they have experience in working with diverse cultural contexts, especially if the project involves indigenous or marginalised communities.
- Successful applicants will own the copyright of any work created but must grant the British Council as the commissioning partner, free and unequivocal use for non-commercial purposes of any arising outputs, which may include promotion of works through our digital channels or exhibiting works in the future. This would all be done in collaboration with the artists/creative producers of the work.

- Successful applicants may be invited to take part in additional showcase opportunities and British Council alumni programmes in the future.
- Successful applicants will be required to maintain regular communication with the British Council, offering project updates and supporting the project monitoring and evaluation.
- Successful candidates will be required to produce a narrative and financial report at the end of the project, including activities, reach, impact, outcomes and actual spend.
- Prior to contracting, and as part of the British Council's delivery standards, the successful partners will need to pass due diligence requirements, including ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) and financial screenings and comply with safeguarding standards <https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/how-we-work/policies/safeguarding>

What will the grant cover?

- The grant can support a new work or an existing project's new phase/ element/ extension.
- Professional fees e.g. artists, facilitators, designers, specialists relating to the project.
- Exhibition/space/ venue costs.
- Travel and accommodation.
- Production, equipment, and material costs.
- All relevant visa, taxes and bank fees (within the 2 countries) that the project is operating in).
- Marketing, promotional, and communication costs (including translation and access needs).
- Monitoring and evaluation costs.
- Contingency of up to 10% of total project costs.

What will the grant not cover?

- Employees' salaries and benefits.
- Overhead expenses/ ongoing operational costs.
- Purchase of assets.
- Costs incurred before the grant contract is signed.
- Commercial projects without artistic or cultural collaborative objectives.
- Funding or co-funding the production or distribution of feature films/ music album.

Selection Criteria

Applications will be reviewed by a diverse panel of representatives from the British Council representing a range of sectors, art forms and geographies. Our assessment of successful applicants will be based on the following criteria:

Criteria	Weightage %
Quality and Experience The project proposal should: - Demonstrate strong high artistic/ creative quality relevant to the themes and context in which it is delivering. - Demonstrate applicants' previous track record of delivering and developing high quality work, particularly experiences with environmental and rural/ indigenous communities.	25

Impact and Legacy The project proposal should: - Articulate its intended impact and how success will be achieved assessed, considering engagement, outcomes and relevance. - Clearly define its intended audience and/ or participants and outlines strategies to reach them effectively. - Considers the short-, medium-, and long-term communications and legacy of the project. - Demonstrate how learnings and experience will be applied into applicants' current and future work/ practice.	25
Feasibility and Project Management - The project is realistic, well-planned, and achievable within the given timeline. - The budget is clearly justified and equitably distributed between partners. - The project has considered risks and put in strong risk mitigation plans.	20
Partnerships and Collaboration - Applicants to share experience and approach towards international collaboration(s) and in particular, experience and approach methodology with rural/ indigenous communities. - The project fosters meaningful and equitable collaboration between UK and country partners. - There is clear evidence of long-term mutual benefit/ impact. - Roles and responsibilities between partners are clearly defined and shared equitably.	20
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Environmental Sustainability The project proposal should: - Demonstrate a commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion - considerations and approaches taken by the project. - Create opportunities for underrepresented groups or communities. - Consider environmental sustainability in its design and delivery.	10

Budget

- A project budget is the total projected costs needed to complete a project. It is not a static document and might change as your project progresses. A project budget helps you keep on track and be realistic with your project scale and spending.
- Creating a well-researched project budget for your project will enable you to clearly anticipate the needs of your proposed project and manage expectations of what is achievable with the time and resources you have available. It will also enable you to identify risks and prepare for changes as they arise. A strong project budget will help you to:
 - Communicate with stakeholders about when, and how much, money is needed.
 - Control and limit project costs.
 - Measure performance and unforeseen changes.
 - Predict and manage expenditure /cash flow; how much and when you are spending.

- Generate value for money statements. Comparing your spending with your project impact will help you communicate the effectiveness of your work.
- Effectively manage future projects with a replicable template.
- The first step is mapping out the headings shown in the table below. You may want to use a separate Excel for your budget as its formulas and other features which can be helpful before you transfer the information into the application form. Here are some examples of heading types you might consider when creating your project budget:

Heading types	Description
Item Reference Number	A reference number helps provide numerical reference to each cost heading
Partner responsible for the spend	Identify which partner is responsible for the correlated budget spending.
Item Details	Describes the cost in a few words; often we group costs that are related, for example: Venue for Venue for workshop can cover all costs associated with the space
Units	How many units are required? This is paired with Unit Type and Unit Cost
Unit Type	Here we categorise the units by definition (e.g. person, day, hours, pieces, grams) anything to specify the unit of measurement being used. At times, some costs are difficult to detail in units in such cases we use “lump-sum” as a unit type and use 1 unit lump-sum, which communicates a pre-determined amount that is not dependent on the unit
Unit Cost	The cost of individual units, which can then be multiplied by the number of units required to create a total cost for this budget line
Total Cost	This is the final column where we multiple the number in the Units column with the Unit Cost column to generate a total cost
Notes	You can always add a notes column to further describe the cost if necessary

- Your project may also benefit from additional income such as funding from other sources or in-kind support. This should also be reflected in your budget.

Special Considerations for an international collaboration budget

- Ensure you are paying artists fairly and equally across all the countries involved. It may be that the average pay for an artist working on a project is lower in some countries, but it is important to ensure any artists working on your project are paid equally, wherever they are based in the world
- Think about per diems if your project includes travel to different countries. If you’re asking artists/participants to travel abroad, have you ensured that their per diems are enough to ensure that they can participate according to the cost of living in each country they are asked to travel to? Discuss with your partners regarding what is reasonable in the contexts in which you are working
- Your budget needs to reflect how the project funding will be split, managed and spent across the organisations involved in the project in an equitable way
- You should ensure that your project budget directly addresses the costs associated with international collaboration. Have you considered the following:
 - i. Translation costs – if you are working across nations with different languages, have you factored in the cost to ensure that all participants and audiences can fully understand and engage with the work?

- ii. Flight / Travel / Visa costs – have you factored in the cost of artist/participant travel, and the possible impacts on costs to travel?
- iii. International Bank transfer fees – you may need to transfer funds between partners. This can cost more than expected and so make sure to discuss this with your partner and check with your bank to include this in your budget. International transfers can also take longer than expected to factor this into your timeline
- iv. The cost of safeguarding vulnerable participants, artists and audience members if you are working with people at risk or in contested spaces with limited freedom of expression

Diversity and Inclusion

As an international cultural relations organisation, British Council works towards mainstreaming of our EDI principles and practices across all our work strands. This includes in how we engage with stakeholders, participants and partners.

We ask our grantees to align with the British Council's inclusive approach, For more information, please read the following document [British Council Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Strategy](#).

We will assess your application on how it demonstrates a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and how it creates opportunities for underrepresented groups or communities.

Applications can include a short description of what diversity and/or inclusion means in the context of your project and countries and share more information on the underrepresented communities you intend to work with. You will need to share what EDI means for your context, partners and locations and tell us how that has informed the projects design and delivery.

We acknowledge that it is not always possible to have provision of accessible venues in different country contexts, but you can describe what access means in your country context, and what a good standard of access might mean in your country if this is the case.

Accessibility

If the collaboration requires travel to Malaysia, candidates should be aware that Malaysia's infrastructures, generally, do not provide much access to the disabled community: wheelchairs access is limited in most buildings, street sidewalks and public transport, and services and expertise to support disable people are not available in remote areas.

Can I include access costs needed to ensure my project is accessible for audiences and participants?

As an international cultural relations organisation, the British Council works towards mainstreaming our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) principles and practices across all our work strands. We ask all applicants to include any costs linked to supporting audience/participant accessibility in their project budget. You will also be asked more about your approaches to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Can I include any personal access support costs needed for the core project team members so they can develop and deliver the project? Any request to support additional personal access costs is not guaranteed, although we will do everything we can to support your needs. You can provide more information on any personal access costs needed in the application form. This is subject to approval and separate from the awarded grant amount.

We welcome applicants from all ethnic backgrounds and origins, and from all parts of the UK and 4 Nations.

Please check this link for Malaysian travel advisory: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/malaysia>.

We highly recommend minimum research be conducted to better understand the context, history and cultural diversity and sensitivities of Malaysian cultures and ethnic groups. To that effect, we recommend you read our community engagement guide here:

www.britishcouncil.my/programmes/arts/humannature/community-engagement-guide-aram-bekelala

Safeguarding

The British Council is a global organisation, and safeguarding is one of our priorities when delivering programmes directly or through others. We aim to create a safe environment in which no child or adult will experience abuse or exploitation during their contact with us.

We also require that clients, customers, partners and suppliers are made aware of our Safeguarding policy and operate within it, this includes ensuring that staff and volunteers are safely recruited and trained in their safeguarding duty of care, programmes and projects are promptly risk assessed and mitigation measures implemented, a safeguarding Lead and focal point(s) are appointed and a safer incident reporting mechanism is implemented and communicated to all stakeholders to ensure that incidents are promptly and accurately reported and managed.

We expect organisations and individuals delivering our programmes to promptly report any safeguarding incident or concern to the British Council to ensure that we fulfil our statutory reporting obligations.

We will provide adequate and appropriate resources to implement this global policy statement and will ensure it is communicated and understood.

Please get acquainted with the [British Council Safeguarding Global Policy Statement](#).

What if the project plans to work with those under 18, or with vulnerable adults?

If your project is selected, we will run a safeguarding webinar to discuss our safeguarding policy and practice and what we expect from our programme delivery partners. You will provide further details on the safeguarding measures and to sign relevant documents to confirm you have understood your responsibilities. For further reading, please see the [British Council Safeguarding Global Policy Statement](#).

Working with people at risk

Some individuals – particularly those with protected characteristics – can be placed at significant risk by engaging in certain activities in certain social and political contexts. If your project involves working with vulnerable artists, partners, audience members or other participants, you need to ensure that your application addresses your approach to ensuring they are safe, protected and supported throughout the process. You may need to plan and budget for a specialist to advise or support and this may influence how you plan to deliver the project.

If you are planning to work in particularly sensitive socio-political contexts, or with artists who have protected characteristics – for example, members of marginalised communities – can you demonstrate that your project team has the expertise and experience to ensure the well-being and protection of everyone involved? If not, have you considered or factored in expert support, advice or 15 guidance, which is included in your budget?

Have you considered how you will approach sensitive subjects within different cultural and country contexts? For example, if your project deals with a subject or area which is sensitive within your country, or your partner countries, what steps might you take to ensure the safety of your partners, participants and audiences? It is important that your budget, project plan and risk management include provisions for supporting participants' well-being and safety.

Successful applications

You will be required to note that the contracting authority is the British Council which includes any subsidiary companies and other organisations that control or are controlled by the British Council from time to time (see: www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/structure/status).

- The contract will be signed by the Lead partner with the British Council and that the Lead Partner will share the terms of this contract with the partner(s) and report to the British Council on behalf of all partners.
- You are required to complete and return required information in order for the British Council to undertake due diligence, financial checks, and prepare contractual paperwork. Any grant award is conditional on these checks and on paperwork being returned by the communicated deadline.
- You are required to attend any mandatory training we offer, for example in orientation and safeguarding.
- An interim report is required in month 5 (July 2026) as well as a project completion report within 30 days of completion of the project; For projects less than 6 months, a project completion report is required within 30 days of completion of the project.
- Acknowledge British Council support with agreed credit.

How to apply?

To apply, carefully read this Open Call Briefing Document - Human-Nature Alternative Narratives Creative Collaboration Grant in its entirety, and [submit your application on GoodGrants](#) by **Sunday, 11 January 2026 23:59 GMT**.

Key dates

- Open call for applications: Friday, 7 November 2025
- Clarification question period: 7 to 21 November 2025, by completing the following form: <https://forms.office.com/e/khEy6wZhQR>
- Application deadline: Sunday, 11 January 2026, 23:59pm (GMT)
- Selection announcement: February 2026
- Contracting and first grant payment: March 2026
- Creative collaboration period: March to 31 October 2026
- Submission of interim reporting: 31 July 2026
- Public sharing: November 2026
- Submission of final reporting and M&E report: 31 December 2026

Submitting your application on Good Grants

Your application will need to be submitted in English using the Good Grants platform.

Good Grants is an online platform the British Council uses to manage its grant application rounds efficiently. The system is built by an external company and procured for use by the British Council.

To gain access, you will need to register on the system through [the programmes home page](#). Setting up an account is free and requires an email address and a password. We recommend that organisations use email addresses which are not tied to an individual in the eventuality that staff changes may occur.

Troubleshooting

Good Grants have their own Help Centre should you need help navigating the form or need troubleshooting assistance. To navigate to the Help Centre use the table of contents to the right of your screen whilst logged in or follow [this link](#). You can submit a request for support directly through the Help Centre.

If you have forgotten your password, click the 'Forgot Password' link on the login page and follow the instructions.

For any non-technical questions about the application form and the application process you can contact the British Council Malaysia Arts team using this [enquiry form](#).

We have provided supporting notes with further guidance on how to answer questions within the application form. Please make sure to read these hint notes that appear either above, below or to the right of each question.

Access support for writing your application

If you identify as disabled, you can submit a request for possible support we may offer to assist with making your application through this [enquiry form](#).

If you would like information contained in this Briefing document or Application form in any other format, please contact the British Council Malaysia Arts team:

- Florence.Lambert@britishcouncil.org
- Erica.Choong@britishcouncil.org
- Khadijah.Turner@britishcouncil.org
- or submit your query to the [enquiry form](#).