

XR Demonstrators

Museums, Galleries and Libraries

Music, Performing Arts and Visual Arts

Call Guidance

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What are the objectives for XR Stories for this call?

The Yorkshire and Humber **Museums, Galleries and Libraries** and **Music, Performing Arts and Visual Arts** sectors are of national significance. The region has a thriving cultural sector, with Leeds 2023, a year-long celebration of culture in Leeds and the recent award of Bradford as the UK City of Culture in 2025.

Digital technologies are dramatically transforming the ways stories can be told. We are increasingly seeing new forms of technology-mediated stories: Immersive museum interpretation using AR, spatial audio and projection mapping; immersive live theatre and VR cinema; and innovative use cases of real-time Virtual Production technologies beyond TV & film, in the arts, music and performing arts sector. The creative possibilities are endless and the audience appetite for these new stories is increasing.

The Museums, Galleries and Libraries and Music, Performing Arts and Visual Arts sectors were heavily hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. With growing audience demand for immersive content, the sector has seen widespread adoption of XR technologies to advance immersive storytelling capabilities, reach new audiences and to diversify their revenue stream.

This Demonstrators programme will support four projects from Museums, Galleries and Libraries, and Music, Performing Arts and Visual Arts sectors, to explore the challenges and opportunities of XR and related creative technologies for current and future audiences, led by relevant organisations from the XR Stories Yorkshire and Humber Creative Cluster.

The Demonstrators Programme has three main objectives:

1. To support businesses and organisations in the Museums, Galleries and Libraries, and Music, Performing Arts and Visual Arts sectors to explore the adoption of XR and related technologies for current and future audiences
2. To enable novel, innovative and commercial immersive and interactive story experiences
3. Explore the possibilities of XR for Museums, Galleries and Libraries, and Music, Performing Arts and Visual Arts sectors' growth

Example projects

XR Stories has supported a range of projects related to Museums, Galleries and Libraries, and Music, Performing Arts and Visual Arts sectors since 2019.

Museums, Galleries and Libraries

- [Space, Time and Streets in the Sky](#), by Human Studio
- [Responsive Interpretive Storytelling](#), by Bright White
- [Archive to AR Immersive storytelling](#), by HIVE IT and the National Railway Museum

Music, Performing Arts and Visual Arts

- [Surround Stories: Immersive Screens for Cultural Exhibition](#), by Live Cinema
- [The Invited](#), by Studio McGuire
- [Flood](#), by Megaverse
- [Monoliths](#), by Pilot Theatre and One to One Development
- [Northern Ballet & Backstage Academy](#)
- [Storycasting: BD Stories](#), by Freedom Studios and Carbon Imagineering

Who is eligible?

Any businesses working within the **Museums, Galleries and Libraries**, and **Music, Performing Arts and Visual Arts** creative industries sectors in **Yorkshire and Humber**.

Any businesses attached to the project who wish to draw down funding from XR Stories must be no larger than a Small to Medium Enterprise (SME) and must be eligible for receiving funding under the European Commission's State Aid Regulations under the De Minimis State Aid regulation (see further information below).

Cash and/or In-kind funding from project partners is required of at least 50% of the requested funding from XR Stories for all projects. So for example if you request £20,000 from XR Stories, you need to identify and list in the budget at least an additional £10,000 of cash or in-kind funding from other sources.

If you are unsure about whether you are eligible, please email us at enquiries@xrstories.co.uk, copying in john@xrstories.co.uk.

What funding is available?

Maximum number of projects	4
Maximum project grant	£20,000
Total funding available	£80,000

Cash and In-kind funding from project partners is expected to be at least 50% of the requested funding from XR Stories for all projects.

What information will I need to supply with my application?

Information about your company

XR Stories has overarching objectives to support the growth of the regions' screen industries through the companies we work with. We collect information about the SMEs to be involved in the project, to revisit later and see how we can evidence your growth and the impact of our funding.

Video Pitch

As part of your application you must submit a video pitch which is a maximum of 10 minutes long. We will accept pitch videos via a private Youtube link and password.

All video pitches must clearly respond to the following questions:

- What is your XR innovation?
- What problem are you solving, or what opportunity are you responding to?
- What is unique about your solution, and your approach to solving the problem / responding to the opportunity?
- How will your idea attract new audiences?
- What makes your company or team best placed to deliver this?
- What do you expect your story experience to look like?
- What will a successful outcome from this project look like for you and your company?
- What is the expected commercial benefit to your organisation or team from this idea?

Project Plan and Budget

- Please use the project plan template format provided in the application form.
- Please use the template provided for your project budget and upload with your application
- Cash and/or In-kind funding from project partners is required of at least 50% of the requested funding from XR Stories for all projects. So for example if you request £20,000 from XR Stories, you need to identify and list in the budget at least an additional £10,000 of cash or in-kind funding from other sources.

Diversity

XR Stories, equality, diversity and inclusion

XR Stories is committed to enabling content creators to innovate, develop and produce challenging, creative, diverse ideas through telling stories of an inclusive and diverse society, utilising the talent of all.

We will prioritise projects which are most strongly reflective of this commitment.

We require evidence in the application process that projects will aim to align with the BFI's Diversity Standards in their activities.

BFI Diversity Standards

The BFI Diversity Standards encourage equality of opportunity and address under-representation in the screen industries. The Standards are a flexible framework which can be used for feature films, online and broadcast television content and a range of audience-facing activities such as film festivals, distribution releases and ambitious film programmes.

The BFI's Diversity Standards aim to encourage behavioural change and inspire project leaders to use more inclusive practices in creative content and recruitment.

The standards focus on four key areas:

- A) on-screen representation, themes and narratives
- B) creative leadership and project team
- C) industry access and opportunities
- D) audience development

Full information about the BFI Diversity Standards can be found here: BFI Diversity Standards:

<https://www.bfi.org.uk/supporting-uk-film/diversity-inclusion/bfi-diversity-standards>

Key resources supplied by the BFI:

- [BFI Diversity Standards criteria \(PDF, 148 KB\)](#)
- [BFI Diversity Standards extended guidance notes \(PDF, 239 KB\)](#)

XR Stories and the Diversity Standards

XR Stories requires all project applicants to think carefully about how their projects can align with the the BFI Diversity Standards. We acknowledge that not all projects and project teams will be able to fully meet the standards, but **we require that you demonstrate commitment to inclusion, against two of the four Diversity Standards areas in your application.**

How will applications be evaluated?

Project applications will be evaluated in three stages:

1. XR Stories R&D team will confirm application meets core eligibility criteria
2. Applications will be assessed by a panel of assessors with broad experience of immersive and interactive storytelling. Assessors will be asked to provide an overall view of whether projects should be funded, and to provide comments against the following questions:

Fit and Scope

- Is there a story at the heart of the project?
- Is a clear R&D challenge specified?
- Is there evidence of the commercial opportunity and a clear benefit to the lead organisation?

Feasibility

- Could the project approach/plan deliver the intended outcomes?
- Is the outline budget well-justified and does it represent good use of resources?

Overall

- Would you recommend that this project be funded?
- What specific improvements would you like to see if this project were funded?

3. XR Stories Executive Board will ratify recommendations on projects to fund.

What is the timeline for applications and projects?

All projects will run to the same timeline, to maximise opportunities for sharing between projects and to ensure completion of projects by the end of November 2023.

Call Opens	27th April
Call Closes	31st May
Funding Decisions	21st June
Contract Award Agreements sent	21st June
Projects Start	28th July
Projects Finish	30th November

What outputs are required?

All projects must include the following minimum outputs:

- An advanced prototype story experience or story-telling tool or platform.
- Evidence of the R&D process followed including user testing and feedback (e.g. through an video R&D diary).
- An end of project report (which is required to release final payment).

How do funding agreements and payments work?

XR Stories distributes AHRC funds to support collaborative R&D partnerships. The funding is provided in the form of grants, through 'sub-award agreements'. These agreements formalise the approach proposed by project collaborators in their applications for funding, and include the specified deliverables and milestones. Sub-award agreements are not considered to be contracts for goods or services.

Payments to SMEs for their contributions to projects will be based on the following: 80% of grant at project start, 20% on project completion (project deliverables and report).

Do I need to find an academic project partner?

We are looking for a clear R&D project to be driven by the lead SME applicant, and a willingness to engage with University of York researchers during the project where there is clear potential for the research expertise to add value to the project and the outcomes for the SME's involved.

We will work with successful applicants to find University of York research partners.

The University of York's research strengths are broad and include the following areas:

Interactive Media

- Interactive Storytelling Design
- Digital Narrative Design
- Object-Based Media
- Game Design
- Cinematic VR
- User Experience Design
- Experience Evaluation
- Design Fictions
- Mobile Experiences
- Interaction with motion controllers and wearable motion sensors

- Spatial and 3D interaction in VR
- Motion Capture
- Data Visualisation

Film, TV and Theatre

- Directing
- Single Camera Production
- Editing
- VFX
- Multi-Camera Production and Live Mixing
- Script Writing for Linear Film
- Lighting
- Staging

Computer Science

- Computer Vision / Image Analysis
- Human-Computer Experience Evaluation
- Game Development
- Machine Learning (e.g. deep learning for style transfer)
- Artificial Intelligence (e.g. language processing)
- Data Analytics

Audio

- Immersive and Interactive Audio
- Environmental soundscapes
- Voice Science
- Health and Wellbeing