

Arts, Health, Wellbeing and Nature



National Lottery Funding Programme Toolkit

Advice for organisations
applying for the ‘nature’
strand of the National
Lottery funding programme



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About the arts, health and nature

The arts, nature and our wellbeing are intrinsically linked. Engaging with the arts or spending time in nature can spark creativity, boost wellbeing and improve our quality of life.

Recognising this connection, the Arts Council of Wales and Natural Resources Wales signed a creative nature memorandum of understanding (MoU). This MoU represents a commitment to collaborate on shared goals outlined in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 – of a healthier, resilient and more equal Wales, and of a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.

It also envisions “that accessing the natural environment and the arts in new ways and methods can benefit people’s health and wellbeing, particularly for people from under-represented groups.”

This partnership has led to the creation of a ‘nature’ strand within the Arts, Health and Wellbeing National Lottery funding programme for organisations.



Through this strand, we are specifically interested in:

- Innovative partnerships between nature, culture and health organisations.
- Testing new ideas that use nature in arts, health and wellbeing projects.
- Promoting the wellbeing benefits of stronger connections to nature.
- Developing a community of practice around nature, art, health and wellbeing.
- Gathering evidence related to the impact of integrating nature into arts and health work.

Innovative partnerships

This fund focuses on building and strengthening partnerships that bring the arts health and nature together.

We recognise the strong connections between arts and health, and health and nature organisations, and see great potential in creating more integrated partnerships across the three sectors. We want to nurture projects that explore wellbeing from this joint focus.

We will be looking for applications that show a strong commitment to developing or enhancing these three-way partnerships between organisations.

Projects should explore the benefits of combining the knowledge, skills and resources from each area. That is why, to apply, you'll need at least one partner from each of the three sectors: nature, the arts and health.

Examples of the types of nature organisations in Wales:

- **Public sector**
This may include the Welsh Government-sponsored bodies, local authorities or national parks.
- **Third sector**
Typically, larger charities and trusts that manage nature spaces or campaign for nature.
- **Community initiatives**
These tend to be smaller non-profits or charities that focus on improving local nature spaces or promoting wellbeing through nature.
- **Private sector**
These are limited companies (for-profit or not-for-profit) that work with or in nature.

Case study: A Space to Grow

A Space to Grow was a social prescribing and arts initiative that ran between May 2023 and April 2024.

The project's main goal was to enhance access and connectivity to improve health and wellbeing interventions for vulnerable, disadvantage, and marginalised people in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.



Through arts and green social prescribing, the project explored different art forms to communicate and express connections and relationships with food, the natural world and each other. To address inequality, better manage participants' health and wellbeing and build strong and resilient, creative green communities for the future.

It was led by Cardiff and Vale Health Charity (health partner), with support from the Down to Earth Project (nature partner) and arts partners Urban Vertical, Safer Wales, Duke Al Durham, Flossy and Boo, and Dewi Tannet.



You can read the final [Space to Grow report](#) online and find more details on the [Urban Vertical Space to Grow Exhibition](#) (Instagram @uvwales).

In this project, the nature partner was a not-for-profit social enterprise, and a company limited by guarantee.

Testing new ideas and approaches

Our Arts, Health and Wellbeing National Lottery Fund encourages creative and innovative projects that use the arts and nature to improve health and wellbeing.

We encourage applicants to bravely explore new project ideas using a 'test, invest and scale' approach.



There are no rules on how nature should be used as part of a project, but here are some examples of how others have approached this that you may find useful:

- **Creative activities in nature**
Exploring people's relationship with nature through creative experiences set in natural environments. For example, Oasis One World Choir's 'Singing Walks' project aims to test the impact of walks, that combine singing with nature, on the wellbeing of people seeking sanctuary. The project trains people with lived experience of seeking sanctuary in Wales to lead these walks. This has been done in collaboration with Ramblers Cymru, who provide guidance and training on the walking and safeguarding aspects of the project, as well as Cardiff and Vale Mental Health Forum.
- **Bringing nature into health care settings**
These could be projects that engage people with nature through sensory experiences or by sparking nature-related memories that improve their experience of healthcare settings.
- **Shaping spaces for nature and wellbeing**
Projects that enhance greenspaces in healthcare or community settings to make them more welcoming and healing or improve growing settings like allotments to support wellbeing.
- **Creative Practice directly inspired by the landscape**
Participants' experience and practice is deeply rooted in, stimulated by, and speaks to, the natural setting of the work and environment.
- **Using nature skills for wellbeing**
'Nature skills' refer to traditional crafts that connect people to nature while also promoting wellbeing. The focus can be the creative process but there must also be a nature and wellbeing consideration. For example, the Fathom Trust addresses life's challenges through creative participation in the arts, heritage crafts, nature conservation and soulful contemplation. Its wellbeing programme, Making Well: Soulful Health and Healing Through Green Arts, is a partnership between local artisans, healthcare services and nature conservationists. It offers an educational journey towards better mental and spiritual health, greater participation in culture, and a reconnection with the natural environment and local communities.

These are just a few examples. There are many other ways to combine art and nature to benefit wellbeing. We are particularly interested in project proposals that show artistic innovation.

Promoting the benefits of deeper connection

There is growing recognition that simply being in nature is different from truly connecting with it.

‘Nature connection’ is developed by actively noticing and appreciating nature, not just through time spent in it or knowledge about it.

We believe arts are the perfect tool to explore this.

Stronger nature connection offers two key benefits:

1. **Improved wellbeing:** People with a deeper connection to nature tend to be happier and more satisfied with their life. Nature connection is more closely linked to feeling good, functioning well and enjoying a sense of purpose (eudaimonic wellbeing) than socio-economic status or nature visits.
2. **Greater environmental action:** Those with a strong connection to nature are 3.5 times more likely to take action to protect it. Research shows that simple nature activities and nature connectedness are the greatest drivers of conservation behaviour.

Studies show nature connectedness can be measured using psychological scales (see examples below). Some people are more connected than others but that can change over time.

We believe art plays a crucial role in helping people reshape their relationship with nature. It is not about telling people to love nature, but about using creativity to explore Welsh cultural and linguistic links with nature and encouraging personal relationships with the world around us.

The Nature Connectedness Research Group at Derby University identifies pathways to help people build healthier, more sustainable relationships with nature. They have also produced [The Nature Connection Handbook](#), which outlines how to foster nature connection and why that matters.



Evidencing impact

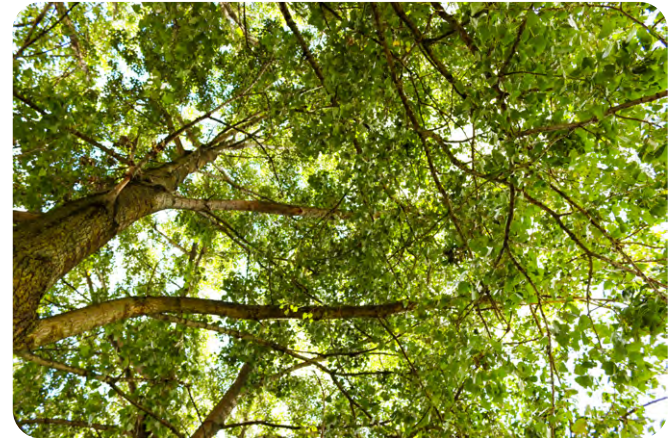
Effective monitoring and evaluation are key to the Arts, Health and Wellbeing Fund, and the nature strand is no exception. However, there are additional ways to assess participants' connection to nature and the wellbeing derived from it.

There are many tools and scales to measure nature connection. The North American Association for Environmental Education offers [a useful guide to navigating these tools and how best to use them](#). For this fund, we are particularly interested in projects that seek to monitor an intervention's impact on participants' connection to nature, alongside the usual monitoring of wellbeing benefits.

Case study Writing Tree

This project is named after the beech tree, also known as the 'writing tree,' because the Old English word *bōc* (meaning beech) gave us the word 'book'. It focused on supporting the partners of new mothers to improve their wellbeing and strengthen their connection with nature.

Participants took part in forest bathing sessions (immersive, mindful time in nature) and reflective creative writing workshops, using their experiences in nature as inspiration for their writing. The goal was to support participants in improving their wellbeing, so they could better support their families and nurture a connection to nature that could be passed onto the next generation.



The project was developed by Gwyn Lewis and Dr Sarah Douglass, in partnership with the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board's perinatal service. It used the Nature Connection Index (NCI) for part of its evaluation. You can [view the full project report online](#).

Creating a community of practice

There is a great deal of existing work that features the arts, health and nature. However, this has not yet been formalised into a community of practice in Wales.

Through the Arts, Health and Wellbeing Lottery fund, we are seeking to establish such a community of practice in collaboration with the Wales Arts, Health and Wellbeing Network (WAHWN). [WAHWN has developed a valuable resource of knowledge for the sector.](#)

We hope to build on this to support those arts, health and wellbeing practitioners and organisations working with and within nature.

If your application for funding is successful you will be invited to take part in peer learning groups hosted by WAHWN.

Such a community of practice would:

- Bring together organisations from different sectors to share ideas and explore partnerships.
- Help identify and enhance innovation and artistic quality in existing projects.
- Strengthen the evidence base for this work and deepen our understanding of the strengths of different evaluation methods for it.

Checklist

Before starting your application, consider asking yourself these questions:

- Have you read the [Lottery Guidelines](#) and [Arts, Health and Wellbeing Guidelines](#)?
- Do you have at least one organisation/ partner from each of the following: health, nature and art? While we welcome named individual artists as part of the application, lead partners all need to be organisations.
- Does your project have a strong health challenge or question?
- Is your project working with or in nature?
- Does your project consider our connection to nature in some way?
- How are you considering artistic quality and innovation?
- Does your project have a strong rationale for working with or in nature that connects with its target audience?
- Does your evaluation plan consider a nature connection?
- Are you interested in joining a wider community of practice to advance this field of work?