Weston Loan Programme
Advice from existing grantees on planning and delivering a loan project
Art Fund
1. Unforeseen overheads
2. Prepare early
3. Relationship with lenders
4. Clarify cost-benefit and intentions
5. Maximise the opportunity
6. Other
1. Unforeseen overheads

Research unforeseen costs (eg through talking to others) and expect overruns

“Talk to other museums or galleries who have borrowed from that institution to find out what the likely costs and administration elements are likely to be.”

“Build contingency into budgets, and into the time you’ve allocated to fulfil your project! We were right to the wire with both, particularly time. A lot of our budget contingency was spent on spiralling insurance costs.”

Build in staff time and resources for making funding applications

“Devote plenty of time to work on the project, it will take longer and be more involved than you will think. Involve and engage your team – the more the merrier to share the load and understand the process.”

“Visiting museums/galleries/historic houses and talking to other professionals who have had experience of delivering such an exhibition would be hugely valuable.”

Build in staff time and resources for running the more onerous project

“Accept that it’s going to be a huge amount of work, clear the decks with other projects and get buy in from other key staff members for help – particularly if a small team as you need all the support you can get!”

“Be aware of the huge workload involved, as it will be a large addition to the usual pulls on your time. It involves a great deal of hard work and effort from everyone, and should be shared across the team as much as possible to make this more manageable. Work/life balance must be considered alongside the current capacity of the team at your venue, where often most are part-time. Balancing the pressures and stresses to the team against realising your museum or collection’s potential can be a challenge. Bear in mind that for many it will be the first experience of putting on a major exhibition and there will be steep learning curves at various points in the process.”

Design-in training

“Design your project to include plenty of training for new staff and volunteers as this will increase the chances of desired outcomes and provide a solid legacy for future projects.”
2. Prepare early

Talk to the lending curator BEFORE putting in the loan request (and get to know them)

“If possible, talk to the curator at the lending institution about the work or works you would like to borrow.”

“Give plenty of lead in time to plan the exhibition, it takes a lot longer than you would think! The Nationals are busy and it does take time to get responses so factor this in in your planning.”

“Be honest with the national lender at every stage – they want to lend to you but need to know that you are able to meet their requirements. You may find that they help in some unexpected way to enable the loan to proceed. Example helping with advice or loan of equipment help meet and maintain environmental levels.”

“Planning. Set really clear deadlines with enough time to achieve goals in between.”

Plan even earlier – 18-24 months to start researching and making connections

“Work directly with the curators in the national collection if you are able to do so. It was really helpful to have their input into the initial loan request.”

“Plan early. Work with colleagues across the organisation (education, events, marketing, hosts, volunteers), plan all engagement activity at the earliest stage possible, including having detail of what the offer is for each target market. This affords time for meeting press and print deadlines, allowing for edits and any changes in practicalities for delivery, allowing colleagues to plan their workload in advance and inputting ways to improve the full visitor experience. Let schools know what the offer is as early as possible to allow for curriculum to incorporate the themes of your exhibition or workshop into their school year plan. Time is needed for staff learning and training to ensure that you really are the experts, which brings confidence in the exhibition subject area and allows you to really impress your visitors.”
Put in a loan request early – at least a year ahead

“Ensure long and adequate time-frames for borrowing works from National Gallery and equivalent historic, national collections.”

Arrange a visit from the National Security Advisor early

“Commission a National Security Advisor report in advance of starting any loan enquiry if you can. Implementing changes which incur costs can seem daunting and will take time to implement. Funding may be sought over more than one financial year.”

Prepare for robust evaluation

“Setting up your evaluation framework well is not enough – make sure you are monitoring that the data is being captured throughout the loan period, and that the data coming through is the data you need – change the process if not.”

Test-run security

“Do a test run of security systems to check everything is working correctly and that all subcontractors have agreed between themselves where responsibilities lie.”
3. Relationship with lenders

Don’t be afraid to stick to/push for what you want/don’t be intimidated

“Make the most of developing relationships with experts from Nationals during content development.”

“If there are any unexpected problems keep your lenders informed and make sure communication is frequent.”

“Don’t try to hide! We had lots of unexpected building work happening, lighting installation over-running, far-from-the-best environmental conditions etc that may have all compromised the loans. But, we were open and honest with the lenders, keeping them up to date with progress. This helped to build up trust and good working relationships.”

“Be brave! Don’t be afraid to approach the nationals with your idea but make sure that your idea is clear and simple but also exciting and ambitious.”

Talk to museums who have already worked with your intended lender

“Know, understand and have the capacity to respond to the requirements of loans from the [lending collection] and equivalent historic, national collections.”

Be flexible

“Be prepared for last minute changes to delivery/arrival schedules.”
4. Clarify cost-benefit and intentions

Go for it!

“We would strongly recommend to other museums/organisations to go through this process of borrowing from national collections because there are so many benefits – both expected and unexpected.”

“Benefits include the upgrade to infrastructure (particularly security and environmental control) and also include the upskilling of staff and volunteers. Unexpected advantages include improved team working and understanding each other’s job roles in a better way.”

“Apply for funding! We couldn’t have afforded to loan any of the works without the generosity of our funders. Our gallery space needed significant improvements before loans could be agreed; transport and insurance costs were a big cost and having museum specific cases from previous funding was a necessity.”

“Go for it! Be proud of the gallery space that we have and the fantastic exhibitions team that we have, and not let lack of confidence or perceived lack of resources get in the way of us starting conversations with lenders/other cultural venues/partners.”

Decide realistic target audiences

“Who do you want to reach? Is it realistic? Do some advance thinking around who your target markets are and how you might reach them. This allows for strategic effective spending of your marketing budget in getting best value for money/return on investment. This will inform your engagement plans, particularly in where to invest time and resource, as well as how to bring the exhibition to life and deepen your audience’s knowledge and enthusiasm for the collections on show and for your venue.”
5. Maximise the opportunity

Make the most of the marketing

“Make the most of it with marketing! Using the national name and artwork as a lever for people to then discover more about your own collection is great — put it boldly in people’s faces.”

“Really leverage the opportunity for attention from the exhibition, by inviting all kinds of organisations — from the sector, colleges, local businesses or the council — to hold their events in the space.”

6. Other

If working with a living artist also, ensure good communication and manage expectations

“Ensuring a good understanding and agreement is in place with a contemporary exhibiting artist working on an exhibition that is reliant on significant loans from a national collection, highlighting that elements of the exhibition plan may need to change to accommodate the requirements of significant historic loans.”
Appendix: List of grant holders and lending partners

– Coming Home, Nantgarw China Works Museum, with loans from Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales
– What do we want? Worcester City Art Gallery and Museum, with loans from the Arts Council Collection
– Double Take, Danum Gallery, Library and Museum, Doncaster, with loans from the Arts Council Collection
– Rubens to Sickert: The study of drawing, Reading Museum jointly with the University of Reading, with loans from the Arts Council Collection and the British Museum
– The Society of the Blew and Orange, Regimental Museum of the Royal Welsh, Brecon, with loans from the British Library
– Local Treasures: British Museum comes to Kettering, Manor House Museum, Kettering, with loans from the British Museum
– Gateway to Eternity: Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt, Wakefield Museum, with loans from the British Museum
– Nordic by Nature, Kirkleatham Museum, Redcar, with loans from the British Museum
– Coming up to Standard, Hastings Museum and Art Gallery with loans from the British Museum
– Alfred Leete: The Man Behind the Icon, Weston Museum, Weston-Super-Mare, with loans from the Imperial War Museum
– Laura Knight – A Celebration, Penlee House and Gallery, Penzance, with loans from the Imperial War Museum, Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales and the National Portrait Gallery
– Dutch Masters, Cannon Hall Museum, Park and Gardens, Barnsley, with loans from the National Gallery
– Vanishing Point, Jerwood Gallery, Hastings, with loans from the National Gallery
– George Stubbs: ‘all done from nature’, MK Gallery, Milton Keynes, with loans from the National Gallery
– Warrington Art Treasures, Warrington Museum and Art Gallery, with loans from National Museums Liverpool
– Discovering Ancient Egypt, Hawick Museum, with loans from National Museums Scotland
– Discovering Ancient Egypt, Forfar Museum, with loans from National Museums Scotland
– At the Water’s Edge, Elgin Museum, with loans from National Museums Scotland
– About Face: The Rugby Collection 2018, Rugby Art Gallery & Museum, with loans from the National Portrait Gallery
- Richard III: Coming Home, Yorkshire Museum and Gardens with loans from the National Portrait Gallery
- Bracing Air, Abundant Amusements: The Travel Posters of Charles Pears, Pontefract Museum, with loans from the National Railway Museum and the V&A
- Royal Academy Takeover: The Exhibition, Salford Museum and Art Gallery & Ordsall Hall, with loans from the Royal Academy
- Sheep, Ceredigion Museum, Aberystwyth, with loans from Tate
- Painter Pilgrim: The Art and Life of Tristram Hillier, Museum of Somerset, with loans from Tate and the National Galleries of Scotland
- A Hostile Environment: The British in Russia 1918-1919, Green Howards Museum, Richmond, with loans from Tate, the Royal Armouries and National Museums Scotland
- Turner: Northern Exposure, The Granary Gallery, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Tullie House, Carlisle and Mercer Art Gallery, Harrogate, with loans from Tate and the V&A
- Beyond the Brotherhood: The Pre-Raphaelite Legacy, Southampton City Art Gallery and the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Bournemouth, with loans from Tate, the V&A and the Royal Academy
- Victoria: The age of the apple, Cider Museum, Hereford, with loans from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
- The Enchanted Interior, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle, with loans from Tate, V&A and National Museums Liverpool
- Philip Astley - His Life and Legacy, Brampton Museum, Newcastle-under-Lyme, with loans from the V&A
- The Paxton Style: Neat and Substantially Good, Paxton House, Berwick-upon-Tweed, with loans from the V&A
- Treasures, Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery, with loans from the V&A and British Museum