

ART CONNECTS US RESEARCH GRANTS: SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

LITERATURE

Call for Expressions of Interest – January 2018

1. Introduction

The British Council is aiming to increase connections between the UK literature sector and young writers and literature professionals in Sub-Saharan Africa.

As well as building connections, we aim to expand knowledge of contemporary African writing in the UK with a view to more work from Sub-Saharan Africa being read and experienced by UK audiences.

With this in mind we are seeking expressions of interest from UK organisations working in literature to travel to Sub-Saharan Africa and conduct research through the 'Art Connects Us' grants. The trips should take place between April and July 2018.

Research may take the form of meeting with potential literature partners; finding out more about the literature ecosystem in a particular country or countries; gaining an understanding of trends in literature in Sub-Saharan Africa; meeting writers and/or attending events and festivals with a view to programming work in the UK.

The countries covered under the programme (in which the British Council operates) are: Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

2. Aims of the programme

This opportunity aims to:

- facilitate the UK literature sector's ambitions to connect with young, African writers and literature professionals, predominantly 18 to 35-year-olds;

- increase opportunities for UK organisations working in literature to visit African cities and gain further insight into the local literature sector;
- encourage and support the development of networks that connect the UK and Sub-Saharan African literature sectors for the long term;
- widen the opportunities for writers and literature professionals in Sub-Saharan Africa to connect with UK organisations.

3. Art Connects Us

Art Connects Us is the British Council Sub-Saharan Africa strategy that supports our vision to develop stronger creative sectors in Sub-Saharan Africa that are better connected to the UK. Through commissioning research, new work and programmes we will enable the UK to hear clearly the voices of young African creatives. We work through our partners in the creative sectors of the UK and Sub-Saharan Africa to ultimately grow and strengthen the following:

Art, audiences and innovation - Sharing the best of arts and culture in the UK and Sub-Saharan Africa will be at the heart of our agenda. We will be a catalyst for partners working to bring new art to audiences.

Skills and networking - We will continually strive to stretch audiences for the arts through developing new networks and skills for our partners.

Brokering and communication - We will help communicate the work of the creative sectors where we work enabling artists and audiences to connect with each other.

4. Sub-Saharan Africa Region Structure:

The region is arranged in three clusters: East, West and Southern Africa. Each one of the clusters has its own Arts strategy that takes as a starting point the overarching strategy for the region, and responds to the needs of the local cultural context, its strengths, issues and potentials.

Expressions of interest will need to focus their research within a specific cluster. We welcome proposals that will aim to research in more than one country in their chosen cluster. Please find details of each cluster strategy and objectives in the Notes section at the end of this document (see page 4).

5. The Grant

The British Council will award up to 3 individual research grants of £2,500 (each) to proposals to undertake research in the Sub-Saharan Region between April and July 2018.

5.1 The selected organisations will be expected to:

- Commit time before the visit for preparation and research, including a briefing session in advance (either in person or via video conference);
- Provide a plan of travel and study before departure for the research visit in the region;
- Document observations and keep a travelogue to be published periodically via the British Council Literature website;
- Provide a final report outlining main research finding and potential suggestions for future programmes. The report could take different formats (e.g. written, digital, film, photo-essay, interviews, podcast);

- Organise, in consultation with the British Council, a public event in the UK to share the research findings with the creative community.

5.2 Press and publicity

- The selected researchers are expected to agree to any reasonable requests for press or media, to discuss media coverage with the British Council and to assist in ensuring the British Council is credited in any press coverage sought independently.
- Press information will be agreed upon and released by the British Council.

6. Criteria

The successful applicant is likely to:

- be based at UK organisation working in the field of literature (this might include literature festivals, Literature Development Agencies, publishers, live literature producers, literary journals, podcast makers and others);
- have a minimum of 2 years professional experience in their sector;
- demonstrate how the research proposal aligns with (or addresses) at least one of the 'Three Key Objectives' of the cluster you have selected;
- demonstrate experience in working with partners to deliver collaborative literature programmes;
- have a basic knowledge of the literature sector in the region which is being visited (although the British Council will provide support in putting together a detailed programme);

In addition, applicants should

- commit to programme a UK public event to share/disseminate the research findings;
- be able to travel between April and July 2018.

7. How to apply

If you would like to apply for this research grant please submit a PDF Expression of Interest. This should comprise:

- Up to 3 examples of key projects and/or programmes (realised or speculative) that you feel represent your work
- A short statement (max 800 words) outlining why you are applying for this research grant and clearly state the following:
 - o State the cluster (and the countries in that cluster) you would like to focus and conduct your research
 - o State how your research proposal aligns with or addresses at least one of the 'Three Key Objectives' of the selected cluster (see Notes section on page 5).
 - o State what you hope to gain from the experience and outline some of the potential practical applications of the research into a tangible programme or project.

- Activity plan; identify the main stages of your activity during the research visit.
- CV (up to 2 pages)

Submissions should be in a single PDF file and not to exceed 2MB in size. These should be emailed to matt.beavers@britishcouncil.org **by 18:00 (GMT) on 11 February 2018**

8. Selection

Applications will be assessed against the criteria in point **6.** and against the project aims in point **2.** They will be reviewed by a selection panel, including representatives from the British Council Sub Saharan Africa and Literature teams.

Successful applicants will be notified by Friday 16 February 2018.

For further information or enquiries please contact Matt Beavers
matt.beavers@britishcouncil.org

NOTES

a. The Sub-Saharan Africa Clusters (overview and key objectives)

West Africa (WA):

(Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Sierra Leone)

The West Africa context is one with democratic governments but unstable transition / election cycles, relatively small middle class with high levels of inequality, significant national and international migration, large youth population, a weak skills base and high unemployment, low broadband penetration but growing fast, and rapid mobile phone penetration. The arts and creative industries in Nigeria and Ghana are rapidly growing and increasingly recognised as economic powerhouses and job creators for young people across music, film, fashion, and the performing and visual arts, leading to increasing public and private support for the sector. In Sierra Leone, influenced by Ghana and Nigeria, and due to a lack of cultural infrastructure for performative arts, there is growing interest in video and film and the music industry is also growing. Street art is also a significant part of the arts scene. In Senegal, historical public support for arts means a strong focus on artistic practice in dance, literature, music and film particularly but less developed creative economy but this is changing quickly. In the UK, there is interest in the West Africa creative sector particularly in Nigeria by diaspora and non-diaspora players especially in film, music, fashion and technology sectors.

There is diaspora and non-diaspora interest in Ghana and Sierra Leone to varying degrees but at a much lower rate compared to Nigeria. There is also UK interest in francophone countries like Mali and Senegal particularly in music and dance. In light of this external context and bearing in mind country, corporate and regional arts priorities, our West Africa Arts vision for 2017 – 2020 is outlined as follows:

Three key objectives for West Africa:

Objective One - An increase in the number and quality of UK collaborations, exchanges and connections with artists and creative entrepreneurs in West Africa.

Objective Two - Stronger networks (informal or formal) and communities of (young) artists in West Africa will have a stronger voice in, and for their communities and can engage in more institutional UK– West Africa partnerships that are mutually beneficial and to scale.

Objective Three - More up to date and diverse awareness and representation of West Africa arts in the UK and vice versa.

East Africa (EA):

(Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan)

We develop stronger creative sectors in East Africa that are better connected to the UK. This enables the UK to hear the voices of young East Africans and supports the provision of new choices for individuals who wish to make a living through creative careers. We work with future leaders of the creative sectors to create lasting impact, knowledge and understanding between East Africa and the UK. East Africa Arts connects contemporaries in the UK and East Africa, engaging them in mutually beneficial programmes which support individual, social and economic development. By 2020, British Council's East Africa Arts Programme will have created 20,000 (figure to be agreed on with East Africa Arts board) meaningful connections between East African and UK creatives. These new connections will bring mutual knowledge, insight and understanding of Contemporary British and Contemporary East African culture. It is through these new connections that innovative creative content is created; new audiences are reached; and positive engagements between British and East African 18 to 35-year-olds are created.

Three key objectives for East Africa:

Objective One - Greater Reciprocal Showcasing between the UK and Eastern Africa.

Objective Two - Increased Opportunities for Mutual Sustainability in UK and EA Arts Sectors. We will create a measurable increase in skills and networking opportunities to strengthen art scenes in BOTH the UK and Eastern Africa.

Objective Three - More collaborations are created across and between Eastern Africa and the UK. Through this change, we will ensure the UK sector has greater access to collaborative opportunities across Eastern Africa, and vice versa.

Southern Africa (SA):

(Botswana, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia)

The Southern Africa cluster countries range substantially in economic, social and political detail. From the stable, yet conservative Botswana with a fledging arts sector and keen interest from Government, to the challenged and dependent Malawi, and the economic challenges of Mozambique, all are vastly different. Artistically all the countries look as different, some with strong emerging markets and infrastructure (South Africa and Zimbabwe), to an energetic contemporary creative community (Mauritius), or a developmentally focused arts environment (Zambia and Mozambique). Whilst many of the countries are struggling for basic needs, the artistic and creative communities have much to offer, share and tell the stories of contemporary Southern Africa.

Three Key Objectives for Southern Africa:

Objective One - Creative Insight: Listening and Brokering By 2020 we will have built relevant and detailed insight in all 8 countries in the Cluster to better connect contemporary Britain and Southern Africa. We will do this through partnerships and brokering for mutual understanding and shared purpose.

Objective Two - Creative Opportunities: Art and Skills To strengthen the professionalization of the creative sector (Southern Africa cluster and UK) in artistic, digital and entrepreneurial means by 2020. We will do this through co-

creation, collaboration, projects and experiential exchanges between the countries.

Objective Three - Creative Communities: Networks and perception change

To deepen and build a greater understanding and connection between contemporary UK and cluster countries so they may work more effectively together artistically, socially and economically.

b. British Council Literature

At British Council Literature we work with hundreds of writers and literature partners to develop innovative projects and collaborations. Our work contributes to the British Council's aim to create 'a friendly knowledge and understanding' between the people of the UK and wider world.

The Literature team in the UK work together with the arts managers in British Council offices in more than 100 countries around the world to create programmes that help to build those important connections and increase mutual knowledge and understanding. We work with individuals and organisations from all parts of the UK literature sector and their international counterparts. Each programme is different, tailored to the cultural relations priorities of the country, but in all our programmes we focus on

- creating international opportunities for emerging and mid-list writers;
- building an international network for the next generation of literature producers; and
- raising awareness of UK literature areas of strength that are less well known abroad.

We form part of the British Council Arts Group, which works across 109 countries to build trust and opportunity for the UK through the exchange of knowledge, experience and ideas worldwide.

c. Useful links and resources:

For more information on our work in Literature please visit:

<https://literature.britishcouncil.org/>

For more information about British Council Arts and Sub-Saharan Arts please visit:

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts>

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/history/sub-saharan-africa>

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/east-africa-arts/about>