

Finding Trusts, Foundations and Grant Income

A Guide for Music Charities

Gloucestershire, Swindon & Wiltshire Music Hub

This guide has been created by GSW Music Hub to help music organisations find and secure funding from trusts, foundations and grant-making bodies to deliver more music activities for children and young people across Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire.

Understanding the Current Funding Landscape

The trust and foundation sector is experiencing significant change. Many funders are pausing applications, restructuring their strategies, or even spending out completely. This means:

- **Quality over quantity:** Focus on 10 well-researched prospects rather than 20-30 weak applications
- **Strategic and tactical funding:** Move away from simply seeking unrestricted core funding to deeply researching funders for better alignment
- **Stay informed:** Regularly check funder websites as priorities and criteria change frequently

Key Funders for Music Organisations

National Music Funders

Arts Council England

The primary national funder for music and arts projects. Offers National Portfolio Organisation funding and project grants.

Website: www.artscouncil.org.uk

Key programmes: Project Grants, National Portfolio Organisations

Youth Music

CRITICAL: Regularly monitor Youth Music funding opportunities. They are a major funder specifically for music-making projects with children and young people, particularly those facing barriers to participation.

Website: www.youthmusic.org.uk

Focus: Children and young people aged 0-25, particularly those facing barriers

Typical grants: £2,000 to £50,000

PRS Foundation

Website: www.prsfoundation.com

Focus: New music creation, talent development, music education

Regional and Local Funders

Local Community Foundations

- **Gloucestershire Community Foundation** - www.gloucestershirecf.org.uk
- **Wiltshire Community Foundation** - www.wiltshirecf.org.uk
- **Swindon:** Check with Wiltshire Community Foundation as they often cover Swindon

Local Authority Grants

- Gloucestershire County Council
- Wiltshire Council
- Swindon Borough Council
- District and parish councils often have small grants available

Free Resources for Finding Funding

These free tools will help you identify suitable funders and stay up-to-date with funding opportunities:

Get Grants

Monthly newsletter featuring upcoming deadlines, funder showcases, and meet-the-funder events.

Website: www.getgrants.org.uk

Charity Excellence Framework (Ian McClintock)

Weekly newsletters with funding database searchable by region and cause. Features AI assistance tools.

Website: www.charityexcellence.co.uk

Grants Online

Daily news feature tracking sector changes and funding windows. Essential for staying current.

Website: www.grantsonline.org.uk

360 Giving

Free tool to download and analyse past grant-making patterns. See who funders have supported previously.

Website: www.threesixtygiving.org

Charity Commission / OSCR

Check charity accounts and annual reviews to research funders and see their grant-making patterns.

England & Wales: www.gov.uk/charity-commission

Scotland: www.oscr.org.uk

SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations)

UK-wide funding search with particular focus on new and recently opened funds.

Website: www.scvo.scot

Funding for All

Kent-based search engine with monthly newsletter, but covers national opportunities.

Website: www.fundingforall.org.uk

Affordable Subscription Services

GRIN (Grant Research Intelligence Network)

Affordable subscription model with fortnightly deadline reports. Good value for small organisations.

Website: Check online for current pricing

Strategic Approach to Funding Research

Quality Over Quantity

Focus on deeply researching 10 well-matched funders rather than sending out 20-30 weak applications. Take time to understand:

- What the funder cares about and why
- Who they have funded recently
- Whether they are currently accepting applications (many are paused)
- How your project aligns with their changing priorities

Competitive Analysis

Research who funds similar music organisations in your area or working with similar beneficiaries. Use 360 Giving and charity accounts to identify funders who already support comparable work.

Stay Organised

Use whatever system works for you:

- Sophisticated CRM systems
- Trello or other project management tools
- Simple spreadsheets
- Even post-it notes if that works better

Time Management

Set aside dedicated prospecting time each week (e.g., Friday afternoons). Treat it as essential work, not something to fit in around other tasks.

Managing Information Overload

Sign up for newsletters from the free resources listed above, but filter them to a separate folder so they don't overwhelm your inbox. Review them during your dedicated prospecting time.

Creating Your Case for Support

A strong case for support is essential for successful fundraising. Use this simple four-section structure to tell your story clearly and compellingly.

Section	What to Include
1. Why Needed	Describe the problem and who is affected: What musical opportunities are currently missing for children and young people in your area? Include statistics or evidence showing the need (e.g., percentage of children with no access to music education, local deprivation data, feedback from schools/young people). Explain why this matters for their development and wellbeing.
2. The Project	Explain your solution: What musical activities will you deliver? When will it happen? Where will it take place? What skills/experiences will young people gain?
3. Numbers & Impact	Quantify your reach and impact: How many children/young people will participate? How many sessions will you deliver? What measurable outcomes will you achieve? (e.g., X% will gain a music qualification, X young people will perform publicly for the first time).
4. Cost & Funding	Break down your budget: Total project cost with breakdown (e.g., tutor fees, instruments, venue hire). Amount you are requesting. Any match funding secured or in-kind contributions. Cost per participant and why this represents good value.

Example: Rock School for Young People

Why Needed	Young people in Swindon face significant barriers to music education. Only 15% of secondary schools offer rock/pop music tuition, and many families cannot afford private lessons. Local youth surveys show 68% of 13-18 year olds are interested in learning guitar, bass or drums but have no access. Rock and pop music engages young people who may not connect with classical music, building confidence, teamwork and creative skills.
The Project	We will run a 12-week rock school programme from January to March 2026 at Swindon Youth Centre. Young people will learn guitar, bass, drums and vocals in small groups, then form bands to rehearse together. Professional musicians will mentor participants, teaching technique, ensemble skills and songwriting. The programme culminates in a public showcase concert.

Numbers & Impact	We will work with 24 young people aged 13-18 from areas of high deprivation. Each participant receives 12 weekly instrument lessons plus 8 band rehearsals (480 total sessions). By the end, all participants will play at least 3 songs confidently, 75% will gain an Arts Award qualification, and all will perform publicly.
Cost & Funding	<p>Total cost: £8,500</p> <p>Tutor fees: £4,800</p> <p>Instrument hire: £1,500</p> <p>Venue and equipment: £1,200</p> <p>Showcase concert: £600</p> <p>Arts Award resources: £400</p> <p>Requesting £5,000 from Youth Music. We have £3,000 from Swindon Council and £500 from local business. Volunteers add £1,500 value. Cost per young person: £354.</p>

Top Tips for Success

Before You Apply

- **Check they are accepting applications** - many trusts have paused or closed temporarily
- Read guidelines thoroughly and only apply if you genuinely meet the criteria
- Research their recent grants using 360 Giving and charity accounts
- Contact the funder with questions - they usually want to help

Writing Your Application

- Use simple, clear language - avoid jargon
- Include specific numbers (how many people, sessions, weeks)
- Back up claims with evidence and beneficiary quotes
- Get someone else to read it before submitting

Building Relationships

- Keep funders updated on progress and impact
- Thank them and report outcomes, even if unsuccessful
- Many funders prefer to support organisations they already know

Key Reminders for Music Organisations

- **Monitor Arts Council England and Youth Music regularly** - sign up for their newsletters
- Emphasise how your project removes barriers to music education
- Demonstrate partnerships with schools, youth services and other organisations
- Include progression pathways - how will participants continue their musical journey?
- Collect and share evidence of impact - photos, videos, quotes and evaluation data

Need More Support?

GSW Music Hub is here to support music organisations across Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire. We can help with:

- Support with funding strategy
- Advice on suitable funders for your project
- Connecting you with other music organisations for partnership bids
- Sharing intelligence about funding opportunities

Get in touch to discuss how we can help you secure funding to deliver more music to children and young people in our region.

GSW Music Hub - Supporting music education across Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire