Frequently asked questions
What is Art Happens

Art Happens is Art Fund’s crowdfunding platform and is completely free for museums and not-for-profit visual arts organisations to use.

In a way Art Fund has been ‘crowdfunding’ since 1903, bringing together groups of people to achieve something they couldn’t do on their own, i.e. buying a work of art for a public collection. Digital technology now makes it much easier to bring people together and share projects with them to harness financial support. We see our crowdfunding platform within artfund.org as a natural evolution of what Art Fund already does – raise money to support museums.

Further to this, research we commissioned in 2013 to look at why only 40% of museum visitors claimed to ‘give’ to museums showed that visitors did not understand why museums needed their support or what it was needed for. We believe the use of reward-based crowdfunding techniques could, over time, open a new funding source for museums.

How much money can we raise through Art Happens?

We need to be realistic about what’s achievable through crowdfunding. Our experience suggests that it is suitable for projects of between £10,000 and £25,000. Although we have seen campaigns exceed their targets through stretch targets and raise up to £40,000. Match funding can also be a good way to increase money raised. The amount being raised through crowdfunding should ideally be for a standalone project or a specific part of a larger project which is very tangible. The donors should be able to feel that their donations have enabled the project to happen in its entirety.
What type of projects are Art Fund looking for?

We are looking for projects with a strong art focus that create a compelling story for the public with a public-facing, visible outcome. We don’t want to be too prescriptive: the broader the range of projects we have on the platform, the more interesting and engaging it will be. A good question to ask yourself is: how would I tell a friend or family member about this project and would they find it interesting or compelling? If the answer is no, it’s probably not the right kind of project for crowdfunding.

What’s the time frame for an Art Happens project and how much time do we have to raise the funds?

We constantly go live with new projects, trying to work within our partner museums’ ideal time frames. The project you fundraise for should be completed within 12 months after the launch of the crowdfunding campaign, i.e., if it is posted on Art Happens in June 2019, it should be complete by June 2020. We strongly recommend attending one of our workshops which run several times throughout the year before submitting a proposal and allowing 6-8 weeks for planning once your proposal has been accepted and a launch date agreed.
How does Art Fund select the partner museums and their projects?

We want to work with museums and galleries who have an exciting arts project that they are passionate about. Organisations who participate should be flexible, committed to the project and willing to work in a collaborative manner. If you have an exciting arts project in mind that you would like to crowdfund for, get in touch. We will then invite you to an Art Happens workshop at our offices in London where we will take you through what’s involved in running a successful campaign and work with you to develop a strong proposition for your campaign. After the workshop we will ask you to develop this project further and submit a proposal and fully casted budget for our consideration. Attendance at the workshop does not automatically mean that your project will be selected.

How does Art Happens work and how do you expect the museums to get involved and contribute?

We invite all organisations interested in running an Art Happens campaign on the platform to attend one of our workshops. If your project is selected, we will work closely with you to plan all aspects of your campaign — from helping you to develop a strong proposition and marketing plan to providing advice on engaging existing supporters and creating your campaign film and rewards.

Museums are required to create the project, including giving an engaging and clear description and a properly casted budget as a target fundraising amount. We also require museum staff to be fully on board — from the director to the front of house team — as they are essential for the success of the fundraising effort; a marketing/communications person to collaborate on the promotion and pitching of the project; and a project owner to engage donors authentically in the project through updates (e.g. a curator, conservator, learning manager) as well as provide an initial ‘face’ for the project in telling its story, particularly in the campaign pitch film. The fundraising target can be only reached when the museum reaches out to new audiences and networks in addition to promoting the project to its existing audiences and locally to drive further support. Art Fund provides support in pitching the project and in developing the rewards, and we promote Art Happens projects to our 151,000 members and digital readership.

During the whole crowdfunding process we will work very closely with you and hope that all participating museums will make the most of this networking opportunity and share their experience and learning with each other.
What costs are museums expected to cover?

We want Art Happens to have a minimal impact on a participating museum’s financial resources and for 100% of the fund raised to go directly to making the project happen. Therefore, we only expect the museum to contribute staff resources and indirect costs. The funds we have raised for the Art Happens platform (from individuals and charitable trusts) cover all the direct costs, such as making the campaign film, transaction costs and the cost of producing and fulfilling the rewards as well as selected marketing materials for each campaign such as banners and posters. However, participating museums will be expected to waive any indirect costs, such as use of gallery space for an event or a curator talk to reward donors. We would only cover any direct hospitality costs, such as providing refreshments or goody bags. Museums will also need to provide all images and be creative in coming up with reward ideas.

Why should we use Art Happens instead of an alternative crowdfunding platform such as Kickstarter?

Unlike other crowdfunding platforms, Art Happens is completely free, has a 97% success rate (compared to 15 to 30 per cent of projects on open crowdfunding platforms), your organisation will receive support and advice from the team at Art Fund and your campaign will be promoted to our art loving audiences. 100 per cent of the funds raised through Art Happens will go toward making your project happen and you will also be able to claim Gift Aid on donations where the donor has not chosen a reward. All running costs, including the campaign film, production and fulfilment of rewards and selected marketing materials will be covered by Art Fund.
What happens if we don’t raise the full amount?

Art Fund is committed to making as many projects a success as possible and we will work with individual project owners to maximise the impact of their project and campaign. However, we have to recognise that not all projects will be successful. If you are a long way from reaching your target, we may close the campaign and will offer your project supporters the opportunity to transfer their donation to another campaign or a refund. If you are very close to reaching your target, we would discuss a strategy with you to help you close the gap, such as a small extension to the project or approaching a donor for match funding.

How can we communicate with the supporters of our project? Will we own the data?

You will be able to communicate directly with your community of supporters through the update functionality on the platform. Donors to your Art Happens campaign can receive these updates by email and/or by visiting the campaign page. These updates are important in letting your donors know how the campaign is going and once the money is raised, how the project is coming along. Donors are also given the opportunity to opt in to hear from the museum in the future and this data will be shared once the campaign is closed. Fulfilment data may also be shared if the museum needs to be in touch with a donor in order to fulfil a reward such as an invite to a private view.
Merrin Kalinowski
Museum marketing relationship manager
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0207 225 4888
Art Happens co-ordinator and your key contact, Merrin will work with you to develop reward ideas and your marketing and communications plan, help to guide you through running your campaign, and sign off your material with the Art Happens logo

Emma Phillips
Press relation manager
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0207 225 4804
Emma will help you develop a strong press strategy as part of your communications plan, identify key moments and messages that will make great stories and will need to sign off on the press release

Catriona Gallagher
Design and production co-ordinator
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0207 225 4869
Catriona will work with you and our suppliers to develop your reward ideas into products within budget