

## Architectural Heritage Fund Statement on Flexible Funding

The AHF has signed up to the [Eight Commitments](#) from Flexible Funders being led by the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR). In making these commitments, we must acknowledge that our own grants and loans are often funded by external funders – both public and philanthropic – which may limit how far we can be flexible.

Below we have sketched out our responses to the eight commitments:

<p>1. <b>We will not waste their time</b> – we will explain our funding priorities clearly; we will be open and transparent about all our requirements and exclusions</p>	<p>Our team is available to respond to enquiries, assess essential eligibility and provide application guidance and support for all our programmes. We operate a two-stage application process, with our initial Expression of Interest stage focused on determining essential eligibility and fit with our programmes and funds. Only projects with a strong chance of being successful are invited to complete a full application.</p> <p>We publish programme guides and application documents that are independently reviewed for clarity and consistency.</p>
<p>2. <b>We will only ask relevant questions</b> – we will only collect information that we must have to make funding decisions; we will test our application forms rigorously to make sure our questions are clear and do not overlap</p>	<p>Almost all the questions we ask of applicants are necessary to help us to ascertain the heritage value, potential local economic and social benefits (including environmental impact and understanding the diversity of project teams supported by our funding), organisational capacity and financial/commercial position (where relevant) of projects. These answers help us to make funding decisions, to understand any barriers to accessing our support or additional support required to access our funding, and to ensure we are acting in concert with our strategic objectives.</p> <p>See also commitment at 8 below.</p>
<p>3. <b>We will accept our share of risk</b> – we will be realistic about how much assurance applicants can reasonably give us; we will explain clearly how we assess risk when we make our funding decisions</p>	<p>As a primarily early-stage grant funder and responsible lender, we have for many years operated an explicit policy of embracing a responsible degree of risk. We seek, through providing advice and specialists programmes, such as our RePlan capacity building programme, to help mitigate the key risks we perceive in projects we support, and plan within our own projections for a degree of failure.</p>

	<p>We are committed to learning from projects that don't work out as planned, within our sector and more broadly.</p>
<p>4. <b>We will act with urgency</b> – we will seek to work at a pace that meets the needs of applicants; we will publish and stick to our time tables; we will make our decisions as quickly as possible</p>	<p>Our grant application deadlines, and decision and payment timetables are published on our website, and we are committed to sticking to both decision-making and payment time tables as far as possible.</p> <p>In line with our own Scheme of Delegation, we consider smaller grant applications on a monthly rolling basis, which allows us to confirm a grant decision within six weeks of application deadlines. Larger grants and loans are awarded on a rolling quarterly basis. Where essential to capitalise on limited-term opportunities, we will aim to expedite decisions.</p> <p>Additional funding opportunities that may arise will be communicated and decided on as rapidly as possible.</p>
<p>5. <b>We will be open about our decisions</b> – we will give feedback; we will analyse and publish success rates; we will share our data</p>	<p>We aim to provide honest, thoughtful and pragmatic feedback to unsuccessful applicants, and offer follow-up conversations in the hope that projects will find greater success in future funding rounds or with other funders.</p> <p>We participate in <a href="#">360 Giving</a> and also publish lists of <a href="#">awards</a> on our website.</p>
<p>6. <b>We will enable them to respond flexibly to changing priorities and needs</b> – we will make our funding as flexible as possible</p>	<p>We are primarily a project-level funder – this is inherent in the nature of funding we receive from our funders – but we appreciate that organisations need stability to deliver on complex multi-year projects. We will therefore be responsive to changing project needs and flexible about amendments to Approved Purposes and terms, in the spirit of the grants and loans we award. This includes considering extending grant periods or negotiating loan terms. We are able to maximise our flexibility when organisations communicate clearly and openly with us at all stages.</p> <p>Where appropriate and agreed with our funders, we can contribute funding towards</p>

	operating costs, capacity building and external fees for sector memberships.
<p><b>7. We will be clear about our relationship from the start</b> – we will be realistic about time commitments; we will ensure that our contact is positive and purposeful</p>	<p>We are transparent and open to discussion from the start around expectations on timescales and commitment involved. Where applicants or projects we support feel we have been insufficiently clear or responsive to need, the contact details of our Senior Management Team are available <a href="#">online</a>.</p> <p>We are in the final stages of updating our Grant Offer letter to improve clarity and transparency around our reporting expectations.</p>
<p><b>8. We will use light-touch reporting</b> – we will ensure that our formal reporting requirements are well understood, proportionate and meaningful</p>	<p>We revised our <a href="#">Evaluation Framework</a> in 2024, which has added some new elements of capacity building support and some additional survey questions for our loan and grant recipients, but we have also revised our grant claiming process to lessen that burden on projects. We hope these changes will result in better evidence for us to use in making requests to our funders while minimising the additional time-burden placed on projects we support.</p>