
British Museum Acceptance of Donations and Sponsorship Policy

UNRESTRICTED

This policy was approved by the Board of Trustees on 19 March 2020 and will be reviewed by the Board annually.

The British Museum was founded in 1753 to hold a collection representative of world cultures for the benefit and education of humanity, and to ensure that the collection is housed in safety, conserved, curated, researched and exhibited. Under the British Museum Act 1963, the Trustees of the British Museum are responsible for the safekeeping and care of the collection for current and future generations, and for making it available to those who wish to see it. To achieve this, Trustees ensure the long-term financial stability of the Museum by securing funding from a number of sources.

The Museum actively seeks philanthropic donations and sponsorship from individuals and organisations in keeping with its charitable status.¹ As a member of the Fundraising Regulator, The British Museum will carry out fundraising in compliance with the Code of Fundraising Practice. The Museum will comply with rules or guidance from the National Audit Office.

¹ The British Museum is an **exempt charity** under schedule 3 of the **Charities Act 2011**.

The principles followed by Trustees when taking decisions on the acceptance of donations are:

1. The Trustees' prime responsibility is to consider their duties under the British Museum Act 1963. If funding enables the Trustees to fulfil their fiduciary responsibilities, including the care of the collection, this should weigh considerably in the decision whether or not to accept funding.
2. Trustees should not have regard to their own personal preferences and dislikes, but should consider the matter exclusively on the basis of what is in the interests of the Museum.
3. Trustees should take the course of action which in their considered opinion is the best option for the Museum, balancing short and long term considerations.
4. Trustees must have regard to the needs of the Museum at the time and as then foreseeable.
5. Trustees must consider the intangibles, such as the reputation of the Museum (both with the general public and within the museum world) and impact on staff, other sponsors and visitors, as well as the tangibles, such as objects, facilities and endowments. Damage to a Trustee's reputation or embarrassment to them should not be taken into account. Intangibles must be measured carefully, with the economic benefits of accepting the money being weighed against the potential cost of reputational risks, and the decision taken must be the one which best enables the BM to fulfil its statutory duties.

The British Museum considers each donation or sponsorship on its own merits. It is not possible for the Museum to accept a donation or sponsorship if:

1. It would be unlawful to accept it, or acceptance could give rise to an inference of complicity with illegal activities.
2. There is a significant risk that acceptance may cause harm to the Museum, and any such harm is likely to be disproportionate to the benefit the Museum will derive from acceptance of the gift or sponsorship.
3. The conditions attached to accepting the gift or sponsorship outweigh its value to the Museum.
4. The identity of a donor is truly unknown. Aside from low level gifts collected in the Museum boxes, the identity of a donor who prefers to remain anonymous must be known to the Chair and Trustees, Directorate Group, Director of Development, Head of Development Operations and Regulation and where necessary, the Audit Committee.
5. There is evidence of a risk that a donor or sponsor may not be able to honour the gift in full or in part.

Related policies

Trustees and staff will also have regard to the following policies when taking decisions on the acceptance of funding:

British Museum Governance Principles and Procedures: sets out the Board's rules for ensuring that its statutory obligations are met and that high standards of governance are maintained, and includes the delegated authorities to the Director and the reserved powers of the Board.

Standards of Conduct Policy: sets the standards of conduct expected to protect the Museum's reputation for acting ethically, with integrity, and to the highest professional standards.

Acquisitions Policy: outlines the principles that are expected to be followed when objects are acquired for the Museum's collection by purchase or donation.

Anti-money Laundering and Refusal of Donations Policy: ensures that the Museum fulfils its legal obligations to help counter money laundering, and includes measures to be taken to be satisfied that donations (including objects) are from a credible and legal source.

Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Prevention Policy: sets out the principles which safeguard the public resources for which the Trustees are responsible, and the expectation that all Museum representative act with honesty and integrity.

Whistle-blowing Policy: protect individuals engaged by the Museum against victimisation or dismissal if they raise concerns about fraud, bribery or other malpractice at the Museum.

Loans Policy: sets out the principles for accepting loans of objects to the Museum.