

SLICE® Fellowship

2026 - 2027

Programme Information and Person Specification

January 2026



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SLICE® Fellowship Programme

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Programme Information

Specialist Leaders in Cultural Education (SLICE®) fellowship is an 18-month leadership development programme for school senior leaders and cultural organisation educational leaders. It is designed to equip influential professionals with the requisite skills, knowledge and connections to become powerful advocates and expert commissioners for cultural education within their own setting and wider community, whether it's a school or an arts venue, museum or library.

In 2026, we are introducing a more collaborative model - bringing together the SLICE® Fellowship and its sister programme, [CASE](#), so that school and cultural leaders can embark on their leadership journey together. We have already seen the transformative impact of this approach through our [Rhyme & Reason](#) programme.

SLiCE will enable leaders to be at the forefront of system design and change, ready to embrace and lead the new implementation of arts and culture within the revised curriculum. As the recently launched International Teaching Artists Collaborative (ITAC) [England Hub](#), Curious Minds will also connect SLiCE Fellows to an international network of leading-edge practice.

What is included in the course?

The programme begins with an online induction and orientation, followed by self-directed reflective work to identify personal leadership goals.

Fellows participate in a two-day residential, where they will explore cultural education policy and practice, and reflect on themselves as leaders.

Teachers will spend 2 days in one or two cultural organisations or venues to understand how cultural organisations programme activity and develop their education programme work for schools. Cultural leaders from arts organisations will spend 2 days in one or two school

settings gaining insight into the policy drivers affecting schools, the day-to-day pressures and how schools plan their cultural offer.

A midpoint Fellowship Day brings Fellows together to reflect on placement learning and begin to design a bespoke action research project through commissioned cultural/creative activity. Projects will either address a specific challenge identified in the participating schools, or an education activity that a cultural organisation wants to develop and test with a school.

To support Fellows to create a sustainable approach to developing an exciting and high-quality cultural entitlement, participants will receive CPD on fundraising and commissioning. Fellows will be encouraged to identify suitable funding pots and to complete a bid supported by a fundraising mentor.

Fellows will participate in a leadership development workshop and will have access to 3 mentoring/coaching sessions to support them throughout their Fellowship journey.

To showcase the independent research that Fellows have completed, the programme will culminate in a SLICE® Symposium and certificate presentation.

As this reimagined iteration of SLICE® is a pilot, the cost of the course will be fully subsidised by Curious Minds (value £4000 approx. per person) and will run from May 2026 to October 2027. Successful applicants must be able to attend all the scheduled days and online sessions, and commit to undertaking the Action Research activity, placements and self-directed research and development, as well as the financial/time commitment.

Course Commitment

Cohort Composition: 12 Fellows

- 6 school senior leaders
- 6 cultural organisation leaders

Duration: 18 months

Delivery: Hybrid (in-person residencies, online modules, placements, coaching, self-directed research). This course is delivered through a combination of both in-person and online learning, specifically designed to offer more flexibility to busy leaders.

Organisation Contribution: Each Fellow's school/organisations will contribute release time,

travel costs and overnight accommodation (where necessary).

Schools will contribute a minimum £1000 to commission activity for their school.

Cultural Organisations will contribute the equivalent of a minimum 4 days (approx. £1000) of creative delivery into a school setting.

Staff travel costs are the responsibility of the Fellow's school or organisation.

If Fellows require overnight accommodation for project days (excluding the residential), it will be the responsibility of the school or organisation to cover these costs.

Successful candidates will be required to provide the following information prior to attending the induction session:

Schools:

- If the participating fellow is not the headteacher, an attendance agreement from the headteacher
- Commitment of a minimum of £1000 (there is no maximum) to commission art and cultural activity for staff or pupils within your school

Organisations:

- An attendance agreement from your line manager or CEO
- Commitment to equivalent of minimum 4 days of creative delivery in a school setting

Successful completion of this course requires delegates to attend all course sessions and complete associated gap tasks.

Key Dates

Date & Time	Session/Activity	Location
19/05/26 16:00 – 18:00	Course Induction and orientation	Online
May-June 26	Gap task: Personal SOAR	N/A
22/06/26 – 23/06/26	2 day Residential	Foxhill House Retreat, Frodsham, Cheshire

10/09/26 16:00 – 17:30	Fellow check-in	Online
Sep-Dec 26	School & Arts organisation placements	Allocated schools and organisations
19/11/26 09:30 – 16:00	Mid-point Fellowship Day	Venue TBC, NW England
Dec 26 – Apr 27	Schools and Arts organization action research projects	N/A
14/04/27 10:00 – 13:00	Action Research Feedback & SLICE Symposium Planning session	Online
Apr-Oct 27	1:1 mentoring sessions x 5	N/A
22/04/27 09:30 – 16:00	Fundraising & Commissioning CPD	Venue TBC, NW England
09/06/27 10:00 – 13:00	Leadership CPD Workshop	Online
23/09/27 09:30 – 16:00	SLICE Symposium	Venue TBC, NW England
08/10/27 10:00 – 13:00	Evaluation	Online

Who should apply?

- **Experienced school leaders** from any phase of education committed to arts-rich education and system influence. You could be a member of your school's senior leadership team, or if you are in a secondary school have additional responsibilities such as "Head or Director of Department". You should want to expand your influence beyond your setting to wider education and cultural community.
- **Cultural organisation leaders** who are ready to develop a strategic, collaborative and ambitious approach to take their education offer for schools and children and young people to the next level. We are keen to hear from cultural organisations who want to explore how they can develop and support their freelance teaching artists/creative practitioners to work effectively within schools.

Applications should be submitted via the following link: [Specialist Leaders in Cultural Education \(SLICE®\) Application Form](#)

The deadline for applications is **30/03/26** by 17:00.

If you have any questions please contact: hanna.lambert@curiousminds.org.uk

Person Specification

Leadership Experience

- A senior or strategic leadership role within a school, trust, cultural organisation, or cultural education setting (e.g. arts venue, museum, library, or related organisation).
- Experience of influencing decision-making, strategy, or programme development within their organisation.

Commitment to Cultural Education

- A clear passion for cultural education and its role in improving outcomes for children, young people, and communities.
- An understanding of the value of arts, culture, and creativity in education and lifelong learning.

Advocacy and Influence

- The ability, or strong potential, to act as an advocate for cultural education within their setting or organisation and across local or regional networks.
- Confidence in representing their setting or organisation and articulating the importance of cultural education to diverse stakeholders.

Collaboration and Partnership Working

- A willingness to be curious, and work collaboratively with leaders from different sectors, particularly across education and culture.
- Openness to shared learning, co-creation, and partnership-based approaches to leadership.

Strategic Thinking and Commissioning

- Capacity to think strategically about long-term impact rather than short-term delivery.
- Ready to shape policy and practice within and beyond their setting.
- Interest in developing skills as a commissioner of cultural education, including shaping, selecting, and evaluating high-quality cultural provision.

Professional Commitment

- The ability to commit time and energy to an 18-month experiential leadership programme.
- Motivation to apply learning within their own setting and to the wider community and reflect on their practice.

Desirable Criteria

Applicants may also be able to demonstrate:

- Experience of cross-sector work between education and cultural organisations.
- Experience of leading or contributing to cultural, creative, or arts-based programmes.
- An awareness of the changing education policy landscape.
- An understanding of local cultural ecosystems and community contexts.
- A desire to contribute to sector-wide learning and peer support networks beyond their own setting or organisation.

The 7C's Behaviours Specification

Attitude	Behaviour
We are curious .	I seek new ideas, connections and perspectives, and actively explore what's next for our field.
We are courageous .	I lead with integrity and confidence, take initiative and advocate for what matters.
We celebrate .	I champion success, colleagues, partners and the young people we serve.
We collaborate .	I build relationships across sectors and encourage others to work collectively and imaginatively
We care .	I lead with empathy, listen deeply and create space for others to flourish.
We are conscientious .	I plan ahead, deliver on promises and uphold the highest standards in everything I do.
We are credible .	I act with honesty, professionalism and deep knowledge of my field, always learning and growing