ILLUMINE Commission Open Call

In autumn 2026, Light Up The North (LUTN) will launch ILLUMINE 2, an ambitious light art commissioning opportunity for Black and POC artists. This is a positive action that recognises and responds to the lack of artist diversity at festivals of light art.

The opportunity is to create a new, striking mid/large-scale light art installation that will tour to multiple light art festivals of LUTN members.

The Application Deadline: Friday, September 11 (5pm)

ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY

LUTN member festivals will work together to commission an artist or collective to develop a new light artwork for the 2027/8 season. The artwork would travel to a number of different festivals in the network between October 2027 and February 2028. ILLUMINE is for Black and POC artists with an established professional practice and a recognised, successful portfolio of work. It is an opportunity for an artist to realise a work at scale. If an artist has never worked with light before, LUTN will budget for technical specialists and a creative producer to help realise the work. The ILLUMINE programme aims to address the lack of diversity of artists within the light art sector to ensure that light festivals are more representative of the populations they serve.

WHAT

The ILLUMINE commissioning opportunity includes:

- an artist's bursary of £8,000 to research, create and present an original, exciting and captivating proposal for a new light art work
- a comprehensive induction to the partners and festivals
- support, training and mentoring from across the LUTN network including guidance in areas, if required, such as marketing, finance, production, risk assessments method statements (RAMS) and fundraising

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- a projected production/creative budget between £40k - £70k, subject to festivals funding the work
- invitations to LUTN member festivals and introductions to their teams during LUTN 27/28 season and with an opportunity to connect with a new group of artists, technologists, producers
- if required, support from the ILLUMINE Producer to help realise the work.

WHEN

Development phase:	October 26 - March 27
Concept sign off:	April 27
Prototyping and production	May / June - Sept 27
Installation	Oct 27- Feb 28

Delivery: The ILLUMINE programme will culminate in a new light artwork to be exhibited at up to 6 of our member festivals between October 2027 and February 2028.

PROPOSALS

The final artwork will need to be:

- SUITABLE for presentation at outdoor winter light festivals in the UK
- ARTISTICALLY challenging, aesthetically impressive and of high quality
- STRUCTURALLY resilient enough to withstand the winter weather at multiple festivals between October 2027 and February 2028, and to withstand transportation across the festival network
- ABLE to be seen by large crowds of people

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The successful ILLUMINE artist will also need to:

- DESIGN an artwork suitable to be repurposed – consider sustainable materials and equipment as well as what happens at the end of the presentations
- CREATE an artwork of mid / large scale – we are encouraging ambitious proposals
- DELIVER an experience for audiences to enjoy, be inspired by and engage with

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FINANCE

The artist (or collective) will receive a bursary of up to £8,000 (exclusive of VAT) to research, develop and produce a proposal for an achievable new work. This will be paid in three parts - £4,000 at the start of the research phase, £1,000 on presentation of the final proposal and £3,000 on delivery of the work at the first festival. We can be flexible with the schedule of these payments should it be necessary.

Reasonable travel, accommodation and subsistence costs will be covered separately by LUTN during this phase.

Artists will also receive a production/creative budget up to a maximum of £70,000 (exclusive of VAT) to deliver the new work. The production budget includes all materials and technical, installation and operational costs.

Reasonable travel, accommodation and subsistence costs at the delivery stage will be covered separately by LUTN. Transport of the artwork will be covered by the participating member LUTN festivals.

If needed, commissioned artists can apply for match funding from other sources.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible to apply to the ILLUMINE open call you must

- be UK-based
- aged 18 or over
- be Black and POC artists or collectives
- able to demonstrate a portfolio of previous work
- have the ability and experience to realise ideas to a high quality.

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The programme is intended to support and expand artists' practice in scale and technologies of production, therefore applicants who haven't already worked with light-based artforms are welcome to apply. Equally, unsuccessful applicants to the previous Illumine programme are welcome to apply again.

HOW TO APPLY

If you would like to be considered for this opportunity, please submit your application by date time according to the below instructions:

- **The deadline is Friday, September 11 (5pm)**
- Applications should be made through the LUTN website lightupthenorth.com/development/illumine/

We want to make things as simple as possible and are aware that applications can be both unnecessarily complex and time consuming for artists. To submit:

Please send a very short CV, examples of your work and covering letter (or video or audio equivalent), outlining your interest, your proposed idea, indicative budget and relevant artistic skills and experience. We actively encourage applications from artists whose enthusiasm for taking part may exceed their current experience in light art.

Please ensure your covering, proposal letter is no longer than 2-3 sides of A4. Please feel free to attach images which you feel will be relevant to your outline proposal.

All applications will be treated in confidence.

If you prefer to upload video responses to your application, we advise that you keep these brief. As a guide, videos should be no longer than 5 minutes each

All applicants must complete our Equal Opportunities Monitoring form. The data is anonymised and will be held separately from applications. The data will be used for equal opportunities monitoring purposes only.

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There is no application fee.

We are committed to ensuring our opportunities are open for people who experience barriers to inclusion. We recognise that you might need additional support to participate in the application and/or interview, whether that is technical equipment, access support or adjustments to the process. If you require any support or adjustments, please let us know:

illumine@lightupthenorth.com

LUTN is offering a webinar on Monday, August 17 at 6pm. This will be an opportunity to hear more details about the ILLUMINE opportunity, and have your questions answered before finalising your application. To participate please email your details to: illumine@lightupthenorth.com

TIMELINE

Applications Open:	Monday July 20
ILLUMINE Webinar:	Monday August 17 at 6pm
Application Deadline:	Friday September 11 at 5pm
Shortlisting:	w/c Monday September 14
Interview:	w/c September 21
Development phase	October 2026 – March 2027
Delivery Phase:	October 2027 – February 2028 at 5/6 light art festivals in the north of England
Evaluation	March 2028

TERMS & CONDITIONS

By applying to be a ILLUMINE artist you agree:

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- To commit to participate actively in the programme
- To communicate regularly with LUTN, sharing any requested information in a timely manner
- Your project / activity will be ready for presentation at our 2027/28 festivals
- Your work is deliverable within the timescale of the programme and delivered within the budget.
- To attend an initial induction, production meetings and site visits where reasonably required.
- You must have, or be willing to arrange, your own relevant Public Liability Insurance for your activity, to a minimum £10 million cover.
- To supply copy and images for marketing purposes as and when required
- To provide evaluation feedback on completion of the commissioning fund, in line with the framework provided

USEFUL INFORMATION

What can you create?

We are specifically looking for artists with ambitious, captivating ideas. Proposals must be based on the creative use of light, possibly utilising digital technology. The artwork needs to be weather-proof, able to withstand strong winds, be structurally sound (if applicable) and must be suitable for presenting outdoors at our varied locations and timescales. We are interested in work which can cater for large audiences, especially projects with the potential for engagement in either the making or operation of the piece, and activities or events which are accessible to families.

The locations of the festivals are also varied with urban, parkland, industrial and city settings. You should consider the ideal type of location for your artwork.

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Our festival activities take place in the evenings during late autumn/winter months. You will also need to consider a realistic install / de-rig schedule.

Each festival will provide standard infrastructure support for your arriving artwork; however, all artists fees and artwork production costs must be factored into your commission award.

How we assess your application

We aim to ensure the selected commissions will be high-quality work and afford the best experience for artists, audience members and locations. A panel of LUTN partners involved with curating ILLUMINE, plus global majority independent advisors, will assess all applications based on 5 areas:

- Artistic quality – the strength & quality of the idea and the artist's previous work (if applicable).
- Public experience – who it is aimed at and how will the public engage with it?
- Financial viability – can all elements of the activity be delivered effectively within budget?
- Project management – can the piece be created within the time available? Is the work durable enough for the festival dates? What materials are you using when considering the environmental impact and outdoor display?
- Environmental sustainability – has this been considered in the design and proposed delivery of the artwork? Is there a plan for what happens after ILLUMINE?

Things to consider when completing your application:

- Artistic quality – Be clear about your project aims and the artistic idea behind the work. How can you demonstrate quality through examples of your previous work?

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- Public experience – Be specific about who your work is aimed at. Can the public engage with your work in an interesting way? What do you want the audience to get out of your work, and what impact will it have?

- Financial viability – Demonstrate how your project can be realised for the budget available. If you require match or additional finance for your project let us know which funding schemes or sponsorship you plan to apply for. (Please bear in mind that the festivals are partly funded through Arts Council England, and you therefore may not be eligible for additional funding through any of their schemes.)

- Project management – Give a clear indication of how your project will be managed from start to finish including the type of location(s) you would like to use and how work will be delivered on the night.

- Environmental sustainability – your approach and rationale

To find out more about the Light Up The North network please visit:

https://lightupthenorth.com/development/illumine/

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