

Manchester's Cultural Ambition 2016 – 2026

1. A Coalition for Growth: Our Shared Principles

Our shared principles are:

1. We will act together to ensure that culture makes a bigger difference to more people in our communities – our litmus test of cultural growth – helping to realise the Our Manchester vision to be a thriving, creative, equitable city.
2. We believe that the greatest international art and culture brings the greatest local benefit.
3. Our ethos is to work with and for the people of Manchester, embodying the Our Manchester approach to seeing people, their talents and ideas as our greatest asset.

2. Our 2026 Priority Objectives:

1. Manchester will be known for distinctive work that could only have been made in this place.
2. Manchester will be the UK's most culturally democratic city, engaging with a much greater number and diversity of people across Greater Manchester.
3. Greater Manchester will be regarded as the city-region which values and nurtures creative talent, skills, diversity, and expression more inclusively and successively than any other.

3. How will we achieve these ambitions and measure our progress?

By honouring these shared principles and objectives we aim to create a step change in terms of our collective impact across Greater Manchester.

The questions we will keep asking each other, and all our partners and investors, are:

- 'What are the things we cannot achieve by working individually?'
- 'What can we do to deliver more growth and impact?'
- 'How can we work together differently to achieve ambitious shared outcomes?'

We aim to be a coalition for cultural growth based on generosity: more open to collaboration; more open to communities; and more open to data-sharing and insight. We are open to changing how we do business to make more impact across Greater Manchester.

Priority 1: Manchester will be known for distinctive work that could only have been made in this place

Manchester's distinctiveness is in producing great art and culture, which is consumed by the widest possible audiences.

We believe that the cultural dividend we can create by working differently together, at new scales and in new places, is aided by the arrival of Factory in the city. Our shared ambitions for new collaborative working combined with this new production capacity, makes all our other 2026 ambitions for growth possible. This collaborative work draws inspiration from the Our Manchester approach, unlocking our collective strengths for mutual benefit.

We will make more work that is internationally recognised for its quality and its impact – from international co-productions to socially engaged practice at all scales. This will help realise the overarching Our Manchester goal of creating a liveable city for the 21st century.

Measuring progress

We will measure our progress through:

- A benchmarked improvement in the quality and distinctiveness of the work and the cultural offer, using Quality Metrics – piloted in this city – and other quality measures
- The development of coordinated city-region-wide programming
- Tracking how much Manchester work is shown across the UK and the world through a world-wide map of Greater Manchester's cultural influence

Priority 2: Manchester will be the UK's most culturally democratic city, engaging with a much greater number and diversity of people across Greater Manchester

We will work together to transform the demographic of our audiences and participants to ensure that greater cultural impact for lower socio-economic groups becomes a reality across Greater Manchester. We will prioritise the needs of particular places across Greater Manchester to tackle lack of engagement in culture. Attention to the unique and special qualities of place is the foundation of creating greater cultural democracy.

To do this we will need to forge entirely new relationships and have different conversations with the population of Greater Manchester, rather than do more of the same. Building on the Our Manchester approach, widening and deepening engagement means different kinds of work; different kinds of access; and different kinds of invitation and engagement. We will ask others what our contribution can be – not make assumptions or lead with an offer – and then work out how to respond as a joined-up cultural ecology. We may have to stop doing some of the valuable things we already do in order to have a bigger scaled impact.

Measuring progress

We will develop a more accurate baseline for the percentage of the Greater Manchester population currently being reached by our work; we aim to reach 20% of the population through our work by 2022, and aim to double that again to 40% by 2026.

A series of Pathfinder project will be established that will help realise the key priorities set in the Our Manchester strategy toward becoming a progressive and equitable city, a highly skilled city and a connected place.

Pathfinder project: Ageing

Manchester cultural organisations have been responding powerfully to the pressing fact that Manchester has the second lowest male life expectancy in England by working to make Manchester an Age Friendly City. One of the flagship programmes is *'Culture Champions'*, a large-scale volunteer ambassador scheme for older people within Manchester's communities. This is *Our Manchester* in action celebrating the positive contribution older people can make to the life of Greater Manchester. Over 120 Culture Champions advocate, lead and programme cultural participation and activities for their peers and communities. We will explore how we can roll out this project across priority areas in Manchester and then the Combined Authority. We aim to double the number of Culture Champions by 2020.

Pathfinder project: Cultural Education

We also need to rethink our approach to cultural education provision so that all children in Greater Manchester receive a culturally rich education irrespective of background. We aim to work in new ways with schools and colleges across Greater Manchester so that we can enrich the quality of cultural education; enable more creative participation and training; and increase the identifiable routes into creative employment for young people not currently engaged by culture. Our aim will be to have developed and piloted a Manchester cultural and creative curriculum by 2020, with Factory's learning and training agenda driving innovation and with the support of the elected mayor's office, roll this out across the Combined Authority by 2022.

Pathfinder project: Health

The devolution of the health and social care budget for Greater Manchester provides a unique opportunity to embed culture as a tool for wellbeing in city region health plans, as a key part of service change. With pilot schemes exploring how 'culture on prescription' can be introduced in Manchester beginning in 2017, we will then work with health care commissioners and providers across the Combined Authority to make cultural participation a routine and key element of preventive healthcare by 2022.

Pathfinder project: Transport

The majority of cultural institutions in Greater Manchester are physically located in Manchester, so we need to make it easier both for visitors to Manchester to get to Greater Manchester venues, and crucially, for GM populations to get to venues in Manchester. So improved transport provision across Greater Manchester will be a vital enabler of our ambitions. We need to develop a package of 'cultural incentives', including discounts in venues, ideally via an 'Oyster-style' travelcard, to promote movement across the city region, so more people, especially from low income groups, benefit for our rich cultural infrastructure.

Priority 3: Manchester will be regarded as city which values and nurtures creative talent, skills, diversity, and expression more inclusively and successfully than any other

This priority helps meet three of the *Our Manchester* goals: to be a highly skilled, progressive and equitable city and a liveable city. We want Manchester to be a magnet for, and a nurturer of, the

next generation of creative producers and technicians all across the North and the city; a national exemplar for training, production and engagement. The Factory, working alongside others, will be a beacon for creative skills and training with local, national and international talent, creating new opportunities for Manchester and the wider North. But The Factory alone cannot be the only driver for new creative training and education. We would like to see a coalition of arts organisations, with further and higher education, working together to develop the creative workforce Greater Manchester needs.

Measuring progress

We will measure our progress through:

- An increase in the number and variety of creative training and employment opportunities in the next 5-year funding cycle, and the diversity of the people taking them up
- Greater Manchester becoming a 'net importer of artists, and a net exporter of art'
- Successfully attracting more artists to live and work in Greater Manchester, supported by more coordinated talent development strategies, and more art-making places and showcasing opportunities
- Piloting new models of how artists live and work across the city-region in a connected, supported, sustainable way
- Strengthening the whole cultural ecology by finding ways of ensuring that the small and specialist thrives alongside the core anchor institutions

4. A call to action and an invitation to participate

Our 2026 ambitions are of course a rallying call for ourselves. They represent an accountable public statement of what we are aiming to achieve together over the next ten years. But they are also an invitation to our communities, partners and investors to work with us to support cultural growth. We expect these conversations to lead to much bolder forms of collaboration, driven by our big ambitions for new work, talent development, and cultural democracy.