

I Am Festival 2027

Expression of Interest for Artists and Organisations

Performance/procession piece

A New Direction (AND) is delighted to announce the 12th annual I Am Festival. Produced in partnership with the Tate London Schools and Teachers team, I Am 2027 will take place at Tate Modern between **17-19 March 2027**.

The theme of this year's festival is 'Time'. We invite Expressions of Interest (EOI) for artistic commissions that will contribute directly to both in-school student workshops and to the festival itself, exploring ideas around this theme. The festival week will be co-created with Tate and the brilliant I Am Network and fantastic cohort of Cultural Ambassadors.

The deadline for EOI submissions is **12pm on Wednesday 14th October**. If you have any questions regarding the process or would like to discuss your ideas further, please contact Deborah Hogan: deborah.hogan@anewdirection.org.uk

Thank you from the I Am and Tate London Schools & Teachers teams!

About the I Am Festival

The I Am Festival is an annual celebration empowering Deaf, disabled, and neurodivergent young people to explore their creativity. Over the past 11 years, the festival has provided an amazing platform for hundreds of young people to showcase their talents, leadership, ideas, and opinions.

Our primary festival audience has always been schools: the young people and those that teach and support them. In recent years, we have tried to make their creative work more visible and to engage greater public interest and participation in festival activity. We have made sensory banners, developed non-verbal 10-minute gallery talks, offered table-top making opportunities, shared performances and taken part in creative experiments.

In 2026, we enjoyed many original activations on our theme of 'Journeys'. Some were school/student-led, such as an installation created entirely with rolls of tin foil and torches. Others were artist-led and included puppet-making and a gallery visit.

Many festival activities were drop-in/out, allowing for sustained engagement or a more butterfly-like approach, testing out all the options and finding the right vibe. Our 2026 commissions exemplified this flexible approach and involved:

- workshops co-designed with a school and further built upon at the festival using rhythm and story-making - culminating in a crowd-stopping flashmob led by VOOT Collective;
- a growing installation of lantern planets, each reflecting the character and preferences of its maker, and appealing to those wanting a quieter environment led by Touretteshero.

The Cultural Ambassadors (see below) supported activations, led spontaneous warm-ups, greeted and directed festival visitors and exhibited artwork to inspire us.

For a flavour of the festival, you can read a [blog](#) by one of the production team and watch the video of the 2025 festival here: <https://www.anewdirection.org.uk/about-us/programmes/i-am/i-am-festival>

About Tate Modern:

The I Am Festival is located on level 0 of Tate Modern across both the Natalie Bell and Blavatnik buildings. Central to this activity, the Turbine Hall serves as the festival arrival point (Westend) and a key creative pivot for the event in the form of the next Hyundai Commission by Tarek Atoui (Eastend).

The Tate London Schools and Teachers programme supports young people to learn about themselves and others through spending time with art, advocating for the transformative possibilities of art and culture for all young people. Aligned to A New Direction's aspirations for the festival, we advocate for young people being present at Tate, seeing the museum as a place for them - their ideas, movements, artworks and experiences: a key aspect of the festival being its visibility within the public museum.

We encourage EOI to think about the specificity of Tate Modern as the festival site. We are particularly interested in how proposals might draw on the collection as prompt and influence to support young people to engage through their own creative response.

Production at Tate is complex, involving many departments and processes. Tate would like to meet regularly with festival contributors and with AND, to realise installation ideas as they evolve (in a way to suit your needs) and to help make creative connections across the two commissions. As per below, we would also require at least one onsite visit in the Autumn term and again in Spring prior to install.

At the Autumn site visit we can share more information about the various spaces, but it may take some time to confirm where activity will be located.

About the Cultural Ambassadors

This year will be our 6th year collaborating with charity AFK to provide a workplace skills programme for Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent young people. This iteration of the programme will involve up to 8 young people working collaboratively with A New Direction, artists and arts organisations over two terms. Alongside developing employability skills, they will meet with cultural sector

professionals, complete work experience days with creative and cultural organisations, plan and deliver a festival project, and support the delivery of events throughout the festival week.

The Cultural Ambassadors programme has 4 key aims:

- To develop skills in creativity, communication, teamwork, problem-solving and independence.
- To enable the Cultural Ambassadors to become leaders and role models.
- To support readiness for future work-experience opportunities and employment
- To enhance knowledge of the roles and opportunities available in the creative and cultural sector.

This year we will also be working with alumni from previous Cultural Ambassador cohorts to consult on various areas of the I Am Programme, including the artist commissions.

You can find out more about AFK on [their website](#).

About the I Am Network

A New Direction's I Am Network is a free professional development programme for educators working with Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent children and young people in London's schools and specialist settings. The network meets regularly throughout the academic year, working together to improve creative and cultural opportunities for children and young people who are Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent.

I Am Network members are supported to share good practice with other teachers working across a huge range of settings in London. The network also provides an opportunity to meet and share strategies and ideas for bringing the curriculum to life in ways that meet students' needs as well as connecting with various cultural organisations across the city:

<https://www.anewdirection.org.uk/peer-support-networks/i-am-network>

Budget:

Up to £6,500 including VAT (to include all resources, facilitator costs and any other materials needed to fulfil the scope of this work). An additional budget for access costs is also available. Please outline all your anticipated costs in Appendix 2 Costs Log. You will also find guidance on how to itemise costs.

Timescale:

The deadline for Expression of Interest applications is 12pm on Wednesday 14th October 2026.

- Optional phone calls/online meetings providing opportunity to ask any questions and chat through ideas: 29th September between 12.00-13.00; 6th October between 12.00-13.00; 7th October between 10.00-11.00; 13th October between 12.00-13.00;
- Shortlisted artists notified: **Week of the 26th October;**

- Selection conversations with AND and Tate with shortlisted artists via Teams (30 minutes in length) choose from: 3rd November between 10.30-13.00 and 4th November between 10.00-11.30;
- Confirmation of commission with successful artist: **Friday 6th November;**
- Site visit to Tate Modern: **Mid November, date TBC**
- EOI sent to schools inviting them to take part in the in-school workshops: **Week of the 9th November**
- Initial planning meeting with school takes place: **Between 30th November 11th and December;**
- Development and delivery period for in-school workshops (timetable agreed in advance between school and commissioned artist): **11th January-12th March 2027;**
- Set-up and installation of any artwork: **between 15th-16th March 2027;**
- I Am Festival delivery on site at Tate: **17th-19th March 2027;**
- Post-event evaluation phone call: **Week of 22nd March 2027;**

Expression of Interest Detail

We are looking for Expression of Interest from artists and organisations interested in creating a performance/procession piece for the festival. This would involve developing and delivering the following:

In-school workshops:

- Plan and deliver in-school workshops at 1x I Am Network school during the Spring term - working towards activity that can be showcased at the festival by the students. This activity will be co-curated through planning sessions with teachers;

I Am Festival 2027 at Tate:

- Plan and host 1 x activity or engagement piece that would run during the 3 days of the festival exploring the theme of 'Time';
- Support the young people from the partner school to co-create the festival offer for other young people;
- Lead the delivery of workshops during the festival for participating schools.

Meetings:

- Take part in regular planning and production meetings with AND/Tate and attend 1 site visit to Tate Modern during the Autumn term and 1 in the Spring term with the opportunity also to meet with other commissioned artists;
- Take part in a post-festival project evaluation phone call with A New Direction.

You will commit to working in collaboration with AND and Tate throughout the project. Please see Appendix 1 outlining the scope of the work in more detail.

We are particularly interested in hearing from those who identify as Deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent, from disabled-led arts organisations and those from the Global Majority.

We are looking for artists/organisations who consider their practice as a lens through which to enable young people to engage with the collection, art, ideas and their creativity. Their practice might include immersive/interactive arts; dance or movement; theatre or performance; music; storytelling.

Artists/organisations are not required to be London-based but will be required to work within a school that could be located anywhere within the Greater London area. There is also a commitment needed for delivery across all 3 dates of the festival at Tate Modern in Central London.

Criteria for selection:

We would like to see evidenced in the EOI:

- Your organisation's ethos and approach to working with Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent young people;
- An outline of your exciting idea/innovation for I Am Festival 2027 that explores the theme of time;
- How you would make connections with the Tate collection and building, and consider:
 - What would this look like being delivered within a school setting?
 - What would delivery look like during the I Am Festival week? How might a workshop effectively use the physical spaces available at Tate and make connections with the collection through a selection of prompts and materials?
- An idea that is adaptable for a broad range of student needs;
- Confirmation of availability for all 3 days of the I Am Festival;
- An estimated, outline budget (e.g. practitioner fees, materials and applicable VAT).

Safeguarding

Please note that any organisations that work with us need to complete an Organisation Declaration Form stating that they will adhere to the AND and Tate safeguarding policies and procedures.

All individuals/freelancers will need to undertake an Enhanced DBS check or be on the DBS update service with an Enhanced DBS check. They must also be eligible to work in the UK and registered to pay their own taxes.

Access

It is really important to AND and Tate that there are no barriers to anyone applying for this opportunity. All access needs will be considered and supported by both organisations throughout planning and delivery.

Please let us know if you have any particular access requirements that you would like to discuss with us, and/or would like to submit your application in a different format to those listed below, by contacting iam@anewdirection.org.uk.

If there is any additional support, we could offer to enable you to participate in either the selection process or potentially working with A New Direction, please include this in your application.

EOIs can be sent to iam@anewdirection.org.uk in any format, e.g.

- Up to 2 sides of an A4 Word document
- Up to 5-minute video or audio

Deadline: 12pm on Wednesday 14th October 2026.

Thank you so much for your time.