



BRITISH SCIENCE FESTIVAL: AI RESEARCH COLLABORATION

ARTIST APPLICATIONS OPEN

WHAT IS THIS?

British Science Festival 16 - 20 September 2026

The British Science Festival is Europe's longest standing science festival, travelling to a different place in the United Kingdom annually. The Festival has been the stage for many iconic moments in history – such as the famous debate on Darwin's controversial theory of evolution. It also saw the first use of the word 'scientist,' in 1834.

The British Science Association and the University of Southampton are bringing the British Science Festival for 2026 to Southampton. The Festival will be held over five days with events taking place in venues across the city between 16 – 20 September.

The programme will feature roughly 100 free events, exhibitions, performances and installations that celebrate the people, stories and ideas at the heart of science.

Mayflower & University of Southampton Collaboration

Mayflower are working with University of Southampton to create an evening of work to be showcased as part of the British Science Festival in September 2026. The selected artists will be invited to develop a creative response to a piece of research on Artificial Intelligence. In conversation with a researcher from University of Southampton, artists will develop a 15 minute piece.

The works will be performed at Mayflower Studios as part of British Science Festival on Saturday 19th September 2026.

WHAT CAN WE OFFER?

There are up to four micro-commissions of £1,250 available for this project. Each artist will be supported through two facilitated meetings with the researcher they are paired with, and up to five days of rehearsal space to complete the project. The performances on Saturday 19th September will be an opportunity to showcase the work developed to a public audience as part of the British Science Festival.

Subject to the work created during the project, Mayflower may offer a commission of £5,000 for one of the pieces to be developed further, with a view to programming it as a one act piece within our Autumn 2027 SHOUT season. Additional rehearsal space and mentoring support would also be offered as part of this second commission.

WHAT IS INVOLVED?

The collaboration will involve an initial facilitated workshop attended by the selected artists and researchers. This will be held in person at Mayflower Studios on Tuesday 19th May 2026.

This will be followed by two facilitated online/in person meetings between the researcher and artist, held across May and June, arranged subject to individuals' availability and the needs of the project.

Artists will perform in an informal sharing on Friday 21st August 2026 where they will have the opportunity to share the work with a small invited audience ahead of the public performance on Saturday 19th September 2026.

The project will be evaluated and researchers and artists will be required to participate in interviews and questionnaires throughout the project and after the September sharing.

HOW TO APPLY

Tuesday 14th April 2026 – deadline to complete the application form.

In the application form, we'd like to:

- Hear about your previous/existing work as an artist/company.
- See examples of your previous work (there is opportunity to upload videos, images, websites or script extracts).
- Hear about your interest in this project, specifically why working with researchers and exploring themes around Artificial Intelligence interests you.

APPLICATION TIMELINE

Tuesday 14th April 2026	Application deadline
Week commencing 27th April 2026	Informal Interviews
Week commencing 4th May 2026	Candidates advised of outcome

PROJECT KEY DATES

Tuesday 19th May	Facilitated workshops (all researchers & artists)
TBA with researchers & artists	x2 researcher/artist meetings
Monday 20th – Wednesday 23rd July	Rehearsal week (TBC – other dates may be agreed)
Friday 21st August	Informal sharing with researchers and artists
Friday 18th September	Technical rehearsal (TBC)
Saturday 19th September	Performance during British Science Festival