



INTERNATIONAL
DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION
FOUNDATION

BACKING INTERNATIONAL SMALL RESTAURANTS

2023 GRANT AWARDEE HIGHLIGHT

CANVAS AND CREAM

LONDON, UK

Just a stone's throw from Forest Hill Station in the heart of south London is [Canvas and Cream](#), a dynamic neighborhood restaurant that is also home to six working artist studios. This multi-use space provides more than local favorites for breakfast, brunch, and lunch; but also serves as a vital hub for community engagement, hosting an array of music, art, cultural, and family events.

At Canvas and Cream, the philosophy is simple yet profound: to unite people through nourishing food, inclusivity, and the celebration of creativity and expression. The bright and spacious artist studios, connected by a central gallery, offer a glimpse into the creative process and invite the public to explore during open studio events held two times a year.

Since opening in 2012, the all-in-one café, bar, restaurant and event venue has blossomed into a beloved fixture within the community, renowned for its immersive experiences created for all guests to enjoy. A community venture from the start, Canvas and Cream has exemplified the power of community collaboration, with local residents of Forest Hill rallying together to provide essential resources such as refrigerators, equipment, and physical improvements to bring the vision to life. A touching example of this is the mismatched crockery often gifted by families following the passing of a loved one, which is then used for tea, bringing a special sense of comfort and connection when someone finds themselves sipping from one of granny's cups.

In 2023, Canvas and Cream was one of six restaurants in London awarded £11,500 each through the "Backing International Small Restaurants" grant program. Utilizing this grant, Canvas and Cream embarked on essential upgrades, including a new awning, repairs to the roof and floors, strategic social media promotion, and refreshing their serving items.

Ojay McDonald, ATCM Chief Executive recognizes these efforts: "Hospitality plays an important role on our high streets, allowing people to come together around good food and drink. The entrepreneurial spirit and drive of business owners in this industry is excellent but the pandemic and inflationary pressures have dented their momentum. It's why this programme from American Express has been so well received, supporting innovation within a sector that needed a helping hand to get it moving again."



Cozy dining area



Service counter

"Backing International Small Restaurants" is an International Downtown Association Foundation grant program, supported by American Express, aimed at boosting business for small, independent restaurants that demonstrate a positive impact on their community, and are owned by individuals from underrepresented and/or economically vulnerable groups.