

Community Empowerment NL (Challenge Fund)

Phase 2 – Frequently Asked Questions

Background to the Fund

1. Where does the Community Empowerment NL funds come from?

This Challenge Fund is funded by the UK Government through the Communities and Place investment theme of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025.

The overarching aims of the UKSPF is to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills.

2. Who administers the Community Empowerment NL Challenge Fund?

The fund is administered by North Lanarkshire Council's Community Partnership Team, which sits within the Chief Executive's Office.

3. What are Local Outcome Improvement Plans and what are their link to this fund?

Local Outcome Improvement Plans, or LOIPs, are strategic documents that explain how community planning partners are going to work together, with interested residents, businesses, and community and voluntary sector organisations, for a set geographical community to reduce inequalities and improve life chances for all.

In North Lanarkshire, there is a LOIP for each of our nine community board areas: Airdrie, Bellshill, Coatbridge, Cumbernauld, Kilsyth, Motherwell, Northern Corridor, Shotts, and Wishaw. They contain local priorities that have been identified through a range of engagement processes and are based on the needs of our local communities.

This challenge fund is one of a number of funding opportunities in North Lanarkshire supported through the UKSPF - People and Communities strand.

On the 21 August 2023, North Lanarkshire Council's Communities Committee approved a number of [Challenge Funds](#) aiming to provide additional financial support to the third sector across a range of priorities.

Linking the fund to the Local Outcome Improvement Plans by asking applicants how their proposed projects and activities will contribute to at least one local priority. Will help ensure these funds are spent in a way that reflects local need as identified by residents and other stakeholders. Likewise, it will enable us to focus on delivering relevant actions which will hopefully lead to positive outcomes and impacts for our communities.

Eligibility

4. Is my project idea eligible?

All project ideas should contribute to at least one Local Outcome Improvement Plan priority. The specific eligibility exclusions for this fund are:

- Statutory activities
- Core organisational operational costs
- Capital costs:
This includes: - any free-standing structure (including sheds, storage containers, extensions, buildings), IT equipment (including laptops, tablets, desktop computers), building improvements and accessibility improvements (including building repairs, kitchen and bathroom upgrades and flooring), war memorials and statues, playground developments and infrastructure projects
- Retrospective costs
- Alcohol
- Contingency costs, loans, endowments, or interest
- Electricity generation and feed-in tariff payments
- Political or religious activities
- Profit-making activities
- VAT you can reclaim
- Overseas travel
- Improvements to Council education establishment land (including playground improvements and school gardens)
- Costs that would be better align with another North Lanarkshire Council fund
- Proposals that conflict with any North Lanarkshire Council/Partnership policy

5. Can companies apply?

This depends on your governance structure. If you are a company limited by guarantee or a social enterprise with charitable or community objectives listed within your governing document, then you may be eligible. Please get in touch with us to discuss further.

Unfortunately, Community Interest Companies are not eligible to apply.

6. We have a great idea, but do not meet the current eligibility criteria. Is there anything that can be done?

Organisations that do not meet the eligibility criteria could apply in partnership with an organisation that does meet the criteria. The partnership organisation would however be the lead applicant contact and all terms and conditions relating to the grant would be applicable to the lead applicant. Agreeing to support a partnership bid is therefore a significant undertaking and lead organisations should consider any approaches made to them about supporting an ineligible organisation with their project idea carefully.

7. We only have one authorised signatory on our bank account at the moment. Can we still express an interest in the fund?

Yes. We understand that updating organisational bank details is currently taking some time and accessing banks for such updates is increasingly challenging for some. Please submit an Expression of Interest and begin the process of updating your signatories as soon as possible. As your project idea progresses through the fund, we will attach a condition to the award “Award subject to confirmation of two or more authorised signatories”. No funds will be released until this condition is met. If you are successful, you will still need to complete your project by the 31 March 2025.

8. Can religious organisations apply?

Yes, but only for non-religious purposes and for activities open to all sections of the community and it does not promote a particular faith or religious viewpoint.

Your governing document should also include aims and objectives that promote support to the community as a whole.

9. Can Educational Establishments apply?

The fund is not open to local authority Education Establishments including nurseries or schools. The fund also does not allow applications from Further Education and Higher Education establishments (i.e. colleges and universities).

10. Can Parents Council’s apply?

Yes, if they have a constitution and other required eligibility documents are in place. However, we unfortunately cannot support any activities taking place during school or nursery operating hours or any playground development on local authority estates grounds.

All potential projects must be open to the wider community.

Ward identification

11. How do I identify what ward I should apply to?

Applications should be submitted to the best fit ward: this could be the ward where activities physically take place or where the majority of beneficiaries reside.

Where activities take place in a set physical location, take the postcode of that location and input it to North Lanarkshire Council’s [Find My Councillor](#) tool, the locator will provide the ward number and name

12. Our organisation headquarters is outwith North Lanarkshire: can we apply to the fund?

Yes, but you must be able to demonstrate in your Expression of Interest that you have a local connection to the area, local people as service users and/or a delivery location within the ward.

13. We have a project idea that targets a specific geographic Locality, but the idea does not fit with that area’s Local Priorities. Should we Express an Interest anyway?

Yes, but you should be aware that other bids focusing of established priorities will most likely be prioritised. The strategic fit with existing priorities will be one of the main criteria upon

which we will be assessing Expressions of Interest before they proceed to the next step of this fund.

14. I am a member of a Community Board. Can my organisation express an interest?

Yes, however if there is a discussion regarding the fund at a Community Board meeting, you should declare an interest in this agenda item.

Amount of Funding and Award Levels:

15. How much funding is available?

A total of £420,000 is available for distribution to Community and Voluntary Sector Organisations.

16. How much funding is available to allocate in each ward?

Each of the 21 wards has an allocation of £20,000.

17. How many awards will be made

Three awards will be made in each ward. 1 award of £10,000 and 2 awards of £5,000 each.

Shortleeting of Expression of Interests:

18. How will Expressions of Interest be considered?

Organisations who submit an Expression of Interest will have their project idea considered by a group of community planning partners for strategic alignment and eligibility. Those project ideas that pass this initial screening will be invited to submit a full application along with any required supporting documents. These full applications will be reviewed by Council officers for eligibility.

Participatory Budgeting

19. What is Participatory Budgeting?

Participatory budgeting (PB) is a democratic process in which community members decide how to spend part of a public budget. It gives people real power over real money.

20. How will PB be used as part of this fund?

This fund will contribute towards North Lanarkshire Council's wider development of PB, responding to changes to voting techniques and community engagement processes in Scotland.

For each ward, if multiple applications are submitted for each of the three available awards a PB competition will be held.

The final format for this, will be dependent on the number of full applications up for consideration, but will likely include:

- Online voting.
- In person voting event, which will likely be held in a central location within the main town centre.
- Alternative options may be available for those who cannot vote using the above methods. You should contact us directly to discuss your personal circumstance.

Applicants will not be asked to participate in live voting events such as Dragon's Den type pitches or promotional stalls. However, you are encouraged to promote the voting events across your contacts.

The results of these votes will determine the final grants made. All voting data and the results will be shared on our website. Overall winners will also be promoted across our social media channels.

Wards that do not receive enough applications to justify running a public vote. Will have the applications reviewed by a panel consisting of a minimum of 3 community planning partners.

Awards

21. If my project idea is successful, what happens next?

You will receive a formal Award Pack from us, containing the following documents:

- Award Letter: this will inform you of your award amount and any specific condition attached to your award.
- North Lanarkshire Council Grant Terms and Conditions: you should review these.
- Grant Acceptance Form: If you accept both the award and Terms and Conditions, you should sign the Grant Acceptance letter using the electronic acceptance form.

Receipt of the acceptance form by the Council will trigger a BACs payment of your grant to your organisational bank account. The full amount awarded will be released as a single payment.

We aim to issue all Award Packs by the beginning of September 2024 and release all funds before 1st October 2024.

You should retain a copy of all project expenditure evidence (e.g. invoices, receipts) and maintain a record of your monitoring information as detailed in your full grant application.

Successful projects will receive an officer monitoring appointment in Winter 2024/25. This will be either a visit / or online video call to discuss how the project is progressing and to ensure expenditure is on track.

In March 2025, you will be issued with end of funding monitoring paperwork, this will ask you questions about the outcomes and impact of the activities and projects you delivered. You will also be issued with a case study template to complete, which will be used to share successes and examples of good or new practice with the wider community.

A sample of projects will be asked to submit evidence of grant expenditure for compliance and audit purposes.

At this stage, monies awarded from the grant should be full spent by 31st March 2025.

22. Is there any flexibility to the expenditure deadline of 31st March 2025?

At this time, the planned fund closure date is 31 March 2025. Please work towards finishing everything by this date. A notification will be issued should anything change.

Support and Accessibility

23. I need some help with my project idea, who can I approach?

The Expression of Interest process has been designed to be as simple as possible. Your project idea does not have to be fully developed at this stage; we are looking for the key

points of your idea and the general overview of the potential expenditure involved in delivery your proposal. Please use your own words and try to summarise your ideas.

There should however be enough information for local community planning partners to grasp what you want to do, who with, why it is needed, when you will do it and where. General dates and numbers are acceptable at this stage.

Whilst we don't anticipate much need for formal support at this stage, we will be happy to offer further advice if necessary. Please get in touch with us by email:

CommunityEmpowermentNL@northlan.gov.uk

If your idea is shortlisted and we invite you to submit a full application, you will be given a named contact, who can provide you with advice and support.

24. I'm struggling to access the online Expression of Interest Form.

Please contact CommunityEmpowermentNL@northlan.gov.uk if you require additional assistance with the form, or to request a paper copy of the form to be emailed or posted to you.

The form can also be downloaded from our website, and emailed back to us on the email listed above or you can post your proposal to the following address:

North Lanarkshire Council
Community Partnership Team (UKSPF)
Ground Floor
Civic Centre
Windmillhill Street
Motherwell
ML1 1AB