

**Third Sector Community Support Fund 2023/24**

**Background**

The Third Sector Community Support Fund reopens in 9 January 2023 to provide one or two year funding to support a range of priorities set out below. The fund will be open for seven weeks with a closing date of 24 February 2023. **If you wish to apply for two year funding please be aware that any confirmation of year two awards will be conditional and dependent on performance (in terms of delivery of the project as detailed in your application), adherence to all monitoring requirements. All projects awarded two years funding will be allocated a link officer to work with and monitor the organisation throughout the period of funding.**

In a change to previous funding years, that linked directly to the April to March annual financial year, funding will still be for 12 months but will run from **1 July 2023** to **30 June 2024 and in the second year should you receive two year funding.**

You will be informed of the outcome of your application no later than 31 March 2023.

**What are the priorities that we are looking to address?**

The scheme is open to all properly constituted third sector organisations in West Lothian that can deliver work that supports the aims of the fund. The fund aims to support the Council to address one or more of the eight identified priorities. The eight priorities are:

* 1. Improving attainment and positive destinations for school children
  2. Minimising poverty, the cycle of deprivation and promoting equality
  3. Delivering positive outcomes and early interventions for early years
  4. Improving the quality of life for older people
  5. Delivering positive outcomes on health
  6. Improving the employment position in West Lothian
  7. Reducing crime and improving community safety
  8. Protecting the built and natural environment

Projects that **support communities through the cost of living crisis** will be a key consideration in any award.

The focus of the fund continues to emphasise supporting our most vulnerable communities, those in the bottom 20%, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zones (these are principally in the following areas: Addiewell, Armadale, Bathgate, Blackburn, Bridgend, Craigshill, Dedridge, Fauldhouse, Knightsridge, Ladywell, Polbeth, Stoneyburn and Whitburn plus two areas in Uphall and Deans & Carmondean). See the Scottish Government’s interactive map of the areas for more details (<https://simd.scot/#/simd2020/BTTTFTT/9/-4.0000/55.9000/> ) `

The fund will also support key thematic groups, for example young people, families, older people and people with protected characteristics.

West Lothian Council is keen to support applications that help develop/strengthen partnership working between public, third sector and business sectors. Evidence of this and how your work or project fits should be included in the application. For example, how it links with the Anti-Poverty Action Plan, the Economic Recovery Plan and local Regeneration Plans and partnership strategic groups.

**How much can I apply for?**

Whilst you will need to cost your application to suit your identified needs. You must clearly show why you are asking for the amount identified. However, you should be aware that applications in excess of **£50,000** will not be considered.

One caveat to this relates to consideration of innovative consortium bids. Such bids may apply for a higher amount. In such cases these will be considered on the specific merits and how this might affect the ability to support a range of applications. A maximum amount has not been specified to allow for applicants to make a value for money case. Consortium bids must have a lead partner.

**Balance of Funding**

Given the amount available and the likely high level of demand we are also looking for applications that maximise the funding being made available to support communities. It is unlikely that an applicant looking for 100% funding will be successful. Applicants will be expected to show how the funding will support delivery of a service or how it can enable projects that utilise other funding identified by the applicant thereby showing how the contribution of the Council through this fund helps to deliver that larger service provision. There is no specified percentage for this but this will be considered as part of the decision process.

Applicants should clearly show:

* Where it is a new project that’s funded through a mix of funding (external/self generated etc.) what the Council is being asked to contribute a percentage of the total cost: **OR**
* That the council is contributing a percentage to support the applicant’s ability to provide the service or project where those elements are vital but not supported or funded directly by other funders. This may involve some core costs for example.

You will need to evidence this in the application.

Thought should be given to proportionality when putting your application together to be clear that the amount being asked for is justified by the number of beneficiaries or level of support, and clearly shows value for money.

**What can the funding be used for?**

You can only use the funding to pay for costs associated with delivering what is set out in your application. This can be for a wide range of costs both to develop and run a new project or can also cover core costs to help the organisations deliver ongoing work as long as it delivers to the above priorities. It is essentially a revenue grant scheme but some capital costs can be considered. These costs can include the following items:

* Staffing
* Core costs such as office management and administration
* Volunteer costs e.g. travel expenses
* Equipment and materials where clearly evidenced as crucial to delivery of the

work as outlined in the application

* Hire of venues or rental of premises and related costs
* Other costs, including core costs

If you are including core costs you should itemise these to be clear what these are:

* how this is currently funded;
* why it is required;
* why it is important; and
* the difference it makes to your work.

**How to apply**

To ensure each organisation has an equal opportunity to demonstrate how the work it wants funded in 2023/24 and 2024/25 will impact on the priorities identified, applications for funding must be made using the application form which accompanies this guidance document.

**Completed applications and required documentation should be returned by email to the Community Wealth Building Team at the following email address:**

**RegenerationTeam@westlothian.gov.uk**

This should be no later than: **Friday, 24th February 2023.**

Any application received beyond that date will not be eligible for consideration.

All applicants will have to show what the funding will be used for. A maximum word count has been set per section. You **must** stick to this and be clear, concise and where possible, use bullet points. To be fair to all applicants any words over the word limit will **not be** considered. If your project comprises more than one discrete element please treat and describe them individually.

As part of the application process you will be asked to provide the following information:

**A general summary of your project which outlines and identifies:**

* Who will benefit (if a specific community you must be able to evidence that they live in that community (i.e. via post code for example);
* How it will clearly align with and contribute to the priorities that you have selected.
* How it links to other funding you have identified and/or other projects you will be delivering, and
* How you have considered the sustainability of the work

**Need for the Project**

* How do you know the project is needed? (For example, is it based on surveys of your community (local community based or thematic), engagement with users, links to partnership work, link to plans etc);
* Have you identified and existing gap in provision based on an understanding of other support that may be available to your beneficiaries. For example, if your project aims to address employment, wellbeing, older/young people you should show how you have identified this as a gap based on understanding of what may be being delivered by other local organisations including West Lothian Council.

**Outcomes for the project which outline:**

* What you want to achieve; what changes or difference will the funding we give you make to the people and communities that you are targeting?
* Your planned activities: What measurable programmes, projects or activities you will design, use and deliver to achieve your outcomes? (For example a training course is an activity; community engagement is also an activity. You should also show how the project is going to be advertised and promoted and beneficiaries recruited/targeted/accessed).

**Outcome indicators for the project which demonstrate:**

* How you will measure your success?
* How you will show you are achieving or will achieve your stated outcomes?
* You have robust systems in place to track your chosen indicators (so that, for example, we can clearly see you are targeting the right beneficiaries, no duplications, they are signposted to the right organisations as necessary, you can follow up on clients as they require)

**Costs which clearly show:**

Your application should clearly show how you have costed you project with a general breakdown of the resources you require e.g. staff, rent, equipment, training/course materials etc.

As the funding that you receive is public money you will be asked to report back on a quarterly basis and at the end of the funding period to show how the funding has been utilised and be able to provide supporting evidence (i.e. pay slips, timesheets, invoices, bank statements etc.).

**How will the application be assessed?**

All applications will be assessed by a panel made up of council officers and external representatives. That panel will draw on expert advice from officers from the Council and Community Planning partners to ensure that the application being considered addresses local strategic priorities, builds on or complements other provision and does not duplicate other provision already in place. The clearer you can be in your application on this will makes this easier for the panel to consider.

The panel will also consider the applicant’s financial health and governance arrangements.

Please be aware that you ***must*** submit all requested documentation by the deadline or your application will not be submitted to the panel for assessment.

Officers may contact you with supplementary questions for the purposes of clarification both before the panel meets and possibly after.

The panel will meet in late March and applicant will be informed of the outcome by 31 March 2023.

**What happens if the application is successful?**

If you are successful, you will receive an offer letter from us via email that will outline how much we are investing, the terms of the offer and the methods of monitoring our investment.

Please note that you may not be offered the full amount requested. However, where this is the case officers will detail the panel’s reasoning for this decision.

All funding is reliant on you signing a Conditions of Grant agreement. Funding will be paid directly into your bank account. Please note that no funding will be provided until the Conditions of Grant agreement is signed.

**Monitoring**

All organisations that receive funding will be required to complete a **quarterly monitoring** form. Details of which will be included with the award letter which must be completed and submitted each quarter with a full one of year report to be completed after 12 months.

Copies of the monitoring form will accompany your funding award letter and conditions of grant so you will be clear of the requirements before you sign the offer. **This will cover both your performance in relation to your outcomes and financial monitoring.**

If you have applied for two year funding year one monitoring will be used to assess whether year two funding should be provided and is therefore vital that these are returned timeously.

**Link Officer**

Each successful project will be allocated a Link Officer who will be your contact point for the duration of the funding. We will try to ensure that that officer is relevant to the work you are delivering. You will be responsible for keeping in touch with the officer and work with them to ensure the project/service is on track both in terms of actions and spend. They will also discuss any relevant areas identified in the section covering governance and health of the organisation and support as may be needed.

**What happens if the application is unsuccessful?**

If you are unsuccessful in your application, feedback will be provided as to the reasons why.

However, the decision that we make is final and there is no process for appeal. Council officers will offer support and provide advice on alternative sources of funding.

**Additional conditions**

Additional conditions that will apply to the offer will include:

* Right of access to organisation’s financial records to ensure the funding is being used for the purposes it is granted for
* The council can reclaim funding if it can be shown that it has not been used in accordance with the application and with conditions of funding agreement. We will not reclaim funding if it can be shown that there is no fault on the part of the organisation.

Other conditions appropriate to our investment may also be included in the Offer Letter and Funding Agreement.

**Help and Advice**

During January there will be general advice and workshops on offer to help you understand what West Lothian Council will be looking for and what will help you put an application together that will provide you with the tools to submit the best application you can in what will be a very competitive fund. This will include input from both West Lothian Council and the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian.

You can also get help and advice on your application by contacting the Community Wealth Building Team at (regenerationteam@westlothian.gov.uk) and we will get back to you.

Where your service is based on a specific geographical location it is likely to be your local Community Regeneration Officer who will contact you.