

**West Lothian - Rural Community Local Led Development 2026-2027
Application Guidance**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Rural Community Led Local Development fund (RCLLD) is financed by the Scottish Government.

It is administered by a Local Action Group (LAG), made up of people from the local community, as well as public and third sector organisations. They work in partnership to agree local priorities and make decisions on grants.

The fund is supported by West Lothian Council who act as 'Lead Partner' to administer the grants on behalf of the LAG.

The points below are included in the guidance but are important to note:

- Due to the short-term nature of the funding we will only cover staff costs for time limited projects
- We do not pay costs upfront
- Projects must not start until you have returned your signed Offer of Grant
- All projects must be complete by 10th March 2027
- When submitting supporting documents please ensure you use the naming conventions outlined in [Annex A](#) and in the Cost Workbook

2. IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Dates and Deadlines

Round 1	Dates
Application deadline	29 th April 2026
Application assessment date	WC 11 th May 2026
Project Award notification by	25 th May 2026
Round 2	Dates
Application deadline	3 rd June 2026
Application assessment date	WC 15 th June 2026
Project Award notification by	26 th June 2026
Round 3	Dates
TBC if funds available	
Programme Closure	
All projects must be completed	10 th March 2027*
Financial claims must be submitted by	24 th March 2027

***Please note that you will need to provide evidence of payments, including bank statements, by 24th March. If this will not be possible you will need to complete your project sooner to ensure payment evidence is available.**

Eligible Areas

Projects based in, or benefitting, rural areas of West Lothian are eligible. We are currently using the National Records of Scotland population estimate for mid-2022.

List A: Towns and villages with population under 10,000 – **Eligible**

List B: Towns and villages with population under 10,000 but part of a larger conurbation - Eligible if part of a project that covers a wider area of places from List A or that can demonstrate a high level of fit with rural development

List C: Towns of over 10,000 - **Not eligible**

List A*		List B	List C
Addiewell	Loganlea	East Whitburn	Armadale
Blackburn	Longridge	Pumpherstoun	Bathgate
Blackridge	Mid Calder	Uphall	Broxburn
Breich	Philipstoun	Uphall Station	Linlithgow
Bridgehouse	Polbeth		Livingston
Bridgend	Seafield		Whitburn
Dechmont	Stoneyburn		
East Calder	Threemiletown		
Ecclesmachan	Torphichen		
Fauldhouse	West Calder		
Harburn	Westfield		
Kirknewton	Winchburgh		

*Please note that this list is taken from the census report and smaller villages may not be listed but are still eligible. If you are unsure about eligibility please contact the co-ordinator.

Eligible Applicants

Organisations and groups eligible to apply include, but are not limited to; CICs, SCIOs, development trusts, community groups, volunteer groups and social enterprises.

- We do not accept applications from unincorporated associations
- We do not accept applications from individuals
- We are not accepting applications from businesses at this time
- Your organisation must have a bank account

If you are unsure if your organisation/group qualifies please get in contact.

Funding Available

- For 2026-2027 we have circa £122,500 of revenue funding and £37,550 of capital funding available.
 - Capital expenditure is defined as money spent to acquire physical assets such as property, technology, or equipment
 - Revenue expenditure is defined as money used to cover operating costs, administration, services and consumables
- You may apply for up to 100% of costs but projects with match funding are encouraged
- Guideline minimum project size: £500*
- Guideline maximum project size: £20,000 unless covering a significant amount of the eligible West Lothian area*

*All project awards are at the LAGs discretion. Higher or lower amounts may be awarded where the LAG feels a project has demonstrated a need.

Funding Priorities

Projects must align with the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#), the [Scottish National Performance Framework](#) and achieve progress towards at least one of the Scottish Government's policy priorities which are:

- Eradicating child poverty
- Growing the economy
- Tackling the climate emergency
- High quality and sustainable Public Services

In addition:

- Projects should also seek to advance inclusion, equality and diversity
- Projects should have long term sustainability inbuilt, or have a clear exit plan when the RCLLD funding ceases

Full Cost Recovery

In accordance with the [Third Sector Fair Funding Charter](#) we support the Full Recovery Costs (FCR) model and will allow operational costs to be added to a project. If you wish to claim FCR costs you must discuss this with the co-ordinator at the time of application. Rates will be considered by the LAG and may not be awarded at the level requested.

Please see [Annex F](#) for further information.

Networking and Shared Learning

Introducing grant recipients to each other can have a hugely positive impact; therefore, we are allowing projects to add a small budget to enable them to visit or host other organisations to share what they have learnt or learn from others. If you wish take this opportunity you must provide

information on your plans within your application (in the Project Benefits section). You will be expected to write up a report on the visit/event.

3. INDICATIVE COSTS AND PROCUREMENT

Please note:

- We do not pay costs up front
 - All cost must be incurred and a claim submitted with relevant evidence before we make any payment
- All cost must be paid for from the bank account which you have supplied a statement at the time of application
 - Use of alternative accounts, credit cards and alternative payment systems (e.g. top up cards) must be discussed with the co-ordinator at the time of application and will not be considered without due justification. This includes where these methods have been used in previous projects/years
- Travel and subsistence costs must be discussed with the co-ordinator at the time of application
- The use of personal accounts **is not permitted** outside of travel and subsistence recovery

Please see the claim guidance in [Annex C](#) for more information on the above.

Expenditure

A Cost Workbook will need to be submitted with your application. This will be supplied along with the application form.

Indicative costs should be submitted using costs headings in the Expenditure section of the workbook. The Outline Spend section of the workbook should be used to give more detail on what will be included with each cost heading.

For example:

Cost heading: Arts Activity Equipment

Cost: £500

Outline Spend: Paint, paper, brushes

Grouping spend into cost headings will allow you more freedom for minor changes in expenditure and avoid numerous [change requests](#).

In most instances, cost over £1000, or for which you are getting separate quotes, should be listed on separate lines. If you are unsure how to set out your expenditure please contact the co-ordinator.

Value for Money

In most circumstances we would normally expect the cheapest option to be purchased. Should you wish to proceed with a supplier that is not the cheapest in a 'like for like' comparison (see below) you will need outline the reasons you wish to go with a more expensive option. This will need to be approved by the LAG prior to any purchase. Please also consider the section on 'fit for purpose' below.

The following value for money (VFM) evidence must be supplied for all project costs in the VFM tab of the Costs Workbook.

Cost	VFM
Item costing £0 - £999	Provide evidence of how you sought best value
Item(s)* or works costing £1000 - £4,999	2 quotes or price comparisons
Item(s)* or works costing £5,000 - £49,999	3 quotes or price comparisons

*Items from the same supplier

For example:

Cost heading: Arts Activity Equipment

Cost: £500

Evidence of Best Value (Costs Workbook, VFM tab, Column J) 'We compared cost of items across Amazon, Hobbycraft and a local supplier. The local supplier is best value as we have agreed discounts for bulk purchases.'

Please note: To evidence prices from websites please take a screen shot. Web links will not be accepted as prices may change.

Use of local suppliers are encouraged but fair an open competition, as well as conflicts of interest, must be considered.

Fit for Purpose

Price comparisons for capital items should be made on a like for like basis and it should be noted that the cheapest option may not always represent value for money. For example, office chairs bought from low cost retailers tend to have a limited life span. Specialist retailers of office and hospitality equipment sell chairs made from more robust materials that are built to be used every day and have a much longer lifespan, and often a guarantee. These would therefore be considered better value for money, as well as more sustainable. A 'like for like' comparison would therefore be between specialist retailers in this instance.

Staff Costs

Due to the short-term nature we can only fund staff for time limited projects. This may be existing staff taking on additional hours or new staff. Please discuss this with the co-ordinator before submitting your application.

Where staff costs are agreed you will be asked to submit a 'Fair Work First' Policy and provide evidence that you pay at least the real living wage. For more information please see [Annex E](#). Evidence of employers NI, pension contributions and hours worked will be required. A staff cost calculator can be supplied.

Ineligible Expenditure

Cost that are ineligible for funding include, but are not limited to:

- Expenditure defrayed out with the project period*
- Any Value Added Tax (VAT) reclaimable by the Grantee**
- Statutory pay e.g. maternity or sick pay
- Payments for unfunded pensions
- Bonus or commission payments
- Gifts and hospitality
- Costs to meet a statutory requirement
- Cost reclaimable by the Grantee elsewhere

*Your project cannot start before your signed offer of grant has been returned to, and acknowledged by, the co-ordinator.

**Value Added Tax is only claimable by organisations that are not VAT registered. Where a partial exemption exists, and you are unable to reclaim VAT on this project, you will be required to submit a letter from your accountants outlining the organisations VAT status.

Match Funding

Match funding is not a requirement but applicants are encouraged to pursue other funds and it may help your request in the event of a high level of applications.

Match funding must be awarded prior to your project start date.

Please note: If your other funder is paying for an item/cost in full then it is not considered match funding and it should not be counted as part of the project you are applying to RCLLD for. If you are unsure please discuss with the co-ordinator prior to submitting your application.

Where a project has match funding, your award will be made based on a percentage of the total costs of the project. When making a claim you will need to submit and evidence the total costs. You will then be paid at the percentage outlined in your cost workbook.

Please see the example in the table below.

Total Project Costs	Match Funding	RCLLD Funding
£5,000.00 (100%)	£2,000.00 (40%)	£3,000.00 (60%)
Claim 1	Match Funding Contribution	RCLLD Payment
£1,500.00 (100%)	£600.00 (40%)	£900.00 (60%)

Please note: Unless evidence can be provided to demonstrate otherwise, we will assume that your match funding will be paid in full. Where your project spend is less than was originally anticipated your RCLLD payment will be reduced accordingly. This will be calculated at final payment stage. Please see the example in the table below.

Total Project Costs	Match Funding	RCLLD Funding
£5,000.00	£2,000.00	£3,000.00
Actual Cost	Total Match Funding Payment	RCLLD Payment
£4,500.00	£2,000.00	£2,500.00

Offer of Grant:

The information in your application, cost workbook and supporting documents form part of your grant agreement. Any changes to your project, costs or outcomes may need to be approved the LAG ahead of their implementation. Please consult [Annex C](#) for more information.

4. REPORTING

We are currently using the Social Value Engine to measure the social return on investment (SRI) each project contributes to their local community: <https://socialvalueengine.com/>

Please list as much detail about your expected outputs and outcomes, including quantitative and qualitative information, in the Benefits section of your application. The co-ordinator will contact you regarding reporting.

For more information please read [Annex C](#).

ANNEX A: Supporting Documents

All applicants must submit:

1. RCLLD Costs Workbook and value for money evidence
2. Your most recent bank statement showing:
 - a. organisation name and address
 - b. account number
 - c. sort code(Sensitive information may be redacted)
3. Your most recent management accounts
4. Constitution and/or Memorandum of Association
5. List of board members and positions held

Evidence for staff cost will depend on whether the role is an existing or new post. As a minimum you will need to submit:

6. Job descriptions
7. Staff costs calculators
8. Fair Work First policy (see Annex E)

Depending on the type of projects, you may also need to submit:

9. Insurance (e.g. public liability, building and contents)
10. Policies (e.g. child, risk, equal opportunities)
11. Written confirmation of match funding
12. Title deeds or valid lease and owners' permissions
13. Evidence of asset transfer
14. Evidence you have met with any statutory requirements (e.g. planning permission, building warrant)
15. Partnership agreement

You are also encouraged to submit the following to support your application:

16. Evidence of need or demand
17. Evidence of local support for the project

Please note: Dependant of your project, other documents may be requested.

Naming Convention:

Your supporting documents should be saved using the following naming conventions in order to ensure they are easily identifiable:

Organisation - Project Name – Type of document – document number (where applicable) - Date

E.G. West Lothian Forest Charity – Armadale Tree Planting – Quote - Digger Hire 2.B. – 01.05.2025

Please note: Failure to use the naming convention may mean your documents are rejected.

ANNEX B: Assessment Criteria

Applications will be assessed by the LAG against the following:

- Fit with Scottish Government priorities
- Contribution to the local community
- Community engagement and support
- Outcomes and outputs
- Inclusivity/equality
- Project management
- Legacy and/or exit strategy
- Partnership/knowledge sharing
- Meeting a need or demand
- Reasonableness of costs/value for money

and

- Our capital and revenue budgets

In the instance of high levels of applications, we may also use the following criteria:

- Ability to fund your project without our support
- Area distribution of projects
- Collaborative working

ANNEX C: Successful Applications

You will receive an email with your Offer of Grant which outlines what you need to do next. Please read these carefully noting the date the Offer of Grant needs to be returned by.

Please note: It is important that you continue to communicate with the co-ordinator especially if there are delays or issues with the delivery of your project.

Change Requests

The co-ordinator must be made aware of any changes to your project as soon as possible and *ahead of the change* (unless circumstances exclude this). Change requests made after the fact may not be approved or reimbursed:

- All changes between capital and revenue budgets must be agreed by the co-ordinator prior to spend
- Up to a 10% overspend will allowed per cost headings *without* a Change Request providing there is no change between capital and revenue budgets. Overspends must be offset by underspends in other cost headings
- Requests for additional funds will require a change request. Please note additional funds are not guaranteed and may not be available
- Purchase of items or activity not outlined in the application will require a Change Request (i.e. those that do not fit with an existing cost heading or activity)

Approval

- Financial Change Requests up to and including 25% of total project costs will be assessed by the RCLLD Co-ordinator
- Financial Change Requests of 26% or more than the of total project costs will be assessed by the LAG and will take a *minimum* of 1 week for approval
- Changes to project scope or beneficiaries will also require a Change Request. This will be assessed by the RCLLD Co-ordinator and may be passed to the LAG if deemed necessary

Please contact the co-ordinator for a change request form.

Claims Guidance

A claim form and reporting template will be supplied by the co-ordinator.

You can make as many claims as you wish but your final claim must be submitted by the date outlined at the [beginning](#) of this guidance.

Costs must be paid by card or bank transfer from the bank account for which you have supplied a statement for at the time of application, unless agreed with the co-ordinator prior to your project's approval.

Please read the guidance on the claim form provided. In most circumstances, you should use one line per invoice.

You may use additional tabs on the claim form for breakdowns or calculations to support your claim.

Evidence

To make a claim for a purchase it must be evidenced by an:

- Invoice or receipt

To make a claim for staff costs they must be evidenced by:

- Payslips or payment system documents showing salary and employers NI and pension contributions
- Evidence salaries are part of wider BACs payment (where relevant)
- Timesheets (where relevant)
- Evidence for payment of employers NI and pension contributions (first claim only)

All claims must be supported by bank statements showing the funds have defrayed* from your bank account.

Bank Statements must show:

- organisation name
- organisation address
- account number
- sort code

*Defrayal means the funds have left your account, the statement must therefore show the balance after the payment had been made.

PDF Downloads and screenshots from online bank accounts are accepted as long as the above information is visible and clear. Excel download or other editable formats are not accepted.

In order for us to process your claim quickly and efficiently you will need to ensure that payments are easy to find on your statements:

- payments should be numbered on the bank statement to match the numbers on the claim form (column F)
- where payments have been combined, for example multiple Amazon purchases, you must ensure this is clear on the statement. Additional pages may be used on your claim form to tally costs
- If an invoice has purchases outwith your project, then the relevant items must be highlighted and summed on the invoice. E.g. If the total invoice amount is for £500 but only £250 worth of items are for this project then those items should be highlighted and the sum written on the invoice or included on an additional page on your claim form

You may redact personal or private payments from the bank statement that are not relevant to your claim.

Submission

Your claim, along with supporting evidence, should be submitted via the RCLLD mailbox.

All documents should be saved, prior to sending, using the naming convention outlined in the claim form and below. Failure to adhere to naming conventions adds a considerable amount of time to the processing of your claim and delays your payment and other claims being processed. We therefore reserve the right to reject your claim should naming conventions not be followed.

Naming Convention

Invoice/Receipt:

Organisation - Project Name – Claim number – Item – Item number - Date of purchase

E.G. West Lothian Forest Charity – Armadale Tree Planting – Claim 1 – Apples Trees – 1a – 01.05.2025

Bank statements:

Organisation - Project Name – Claim number – Item Type - Date of statement

E.G. West Lothian Forest Charity – Armadale Tree Planting - Claim 1 – Bank Statement - 15.04.2025

Payment

All reasonable endeavours will be made to pay your grant within 2 weeks of receipt. Please be aware that delays to payments are usually due by missing information or poorly notated invoices and banks statements. If the claim needs reworking the co-ordinator will email you to explain what needs doing. If you need help with your claim please contact the co-ordinator.

Payment will be made via the council’s payment system. If you are not registered with this system you will be required to complete a new supplier form prior to your first payment.

Please note the system is cleared periodically meaning even if you have previously had payment from the council, you may still need to complete a form.

Match Funding

If your project has match funding you will be paid a percentage of the total costs claimed as outlined in your cost workbook. For more information please see the Match Funding section in the main guidance.

Underspends

Please inform the co-ordinator of any underspends as soon as possible. This allows us to reallocate funds that you cannot use to other projects.

If you would like to use the funds for additional purchases you will need to contact the co-ordinator and complete a change request form. If we are nearing the end of the programme this may not be possible.

End of Project Reporting

Reporting methodology for the Social Value Engine will be agreed with the co-ordinator on receipt of your grant award.

Your claim form will include a report page to be completed at the end of your project. Supporting evidence should be supplied with your report, this may include, photographs, videos, feedback forms and diaries.

Reporting Terminology

- Outputs: activity taking place as a result of the project e.g. 4 mental health workshops
- Outcomes: results of the activity undertaken e.g. improved mental health in participants

- Quantitative: data that involve numerical information e.g. number of people participating in a workshop
- Qualitative: information that is descriptive and non-numerical e.g. feedback from those participating in the workshop

- Social Return on Investment: a principles-based method for measuring extra-financial value not otherwise reflected or involved in conventional financial accounts:
<https://socialvalueuk.org/about-us/>

Retention of Assets, Documentation and Monitoring Visits

Your award letter will outline retention schedules for assets and documentation relating to the projects. Please ensure you read this carefully.

- All projects receiving funds may be subject to monitoring and audit checks on capital items and claim evidence
- They must be produced on request for inspection by a LAG representative or delegate appointed by them or the Scottish Government
- Capital items will need to be used for the purpose for which they were bought for the life of the asset
- Evidence must be retained for 6 years from the date of expenditure

ANNEX D: Logos

All publicity for your project must include the West Lothian RCLLD, WLC and Scottish Government Logos and the text: '**Funded by the Rural Community Led Local Development Fund**'.

- You may include your own logos
- All logos should be of equitable size

If you require logos in a different format please contact the co-ordinator

Scottish Government logo:



West Lothian Council logo:



West Lothian RCLLD logo:



ANNEX E: Fair Work First

Fair Work First is the Scottish Government's flagship policy for driving high quality and fair work, and workforce diversity across the labour market.

For those receiving public sector grants the default position is that Fair Work First criteria for paying at least the real Living Wage and providing appropriate channels for effective workers' voice will be mandatory while the other criteria will be encouraged.

Fair Work First Criteria:

- payment of at least the real Living Wage;
- provide appropriate channels for effective workers' voice, such as trade union recognition;
- investment in workforce development;
- no inappropriate use of zero hours contracts;
- action to tackle the gender pay gap and create a more diverse and inclusive workplace;
- offer flexible and family friendly working practices for all workers from day one of employment; and,
- oppose the use of fire and rehire practice.

For more information please visit: [Fair Work First Guidance: Supporting the implementation of Fair Work First in workplaces across Scotland \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/policies/fair-work-first)

Evidencing payment of the real living wage:

Grants under £100k – Self certification and evidence of wages paid when making a claim.

Grants equal to or above £100k - Living wage accreditation and evidence of wages paid when making a claim.

Evidencing effective workers' voice:

Although it is to be encouraged in all organisations, the collective element of voice does not have to be evidenced by organisations with fewer than 21 workers. If your organisation has more than 21 workers please contact the co-ordinator.

Further support can be found here:

<https://www.gov.scot/policies/fair-and-inclusive-workplaces/>

ANNEX F: Full Cost Recovery

In accordance with the [Third Sector Fair Funding Charter](#) we support the Full Cost Recovery (FCR) model by allowing operational costs to be added to a project.

This means projects can add a sum to their project budget to cover operational costs for the agreed work, including legitimate overhead costs. This may include costs for management, premises and administration. As we are small funder we don't have the capacity to work through and accurately apportion operational costs with each project. We are therefore taking a pragmatic approach by allowing a percentage to be added to agreed project costs.

- You may only recover operational costs not elsewhere included in the project or paid for by another funder
- FCR costs will not need to be evidenced when making a claim but you will be asked to provide an outline of the operational costs your project is likely to incur in the Cost Workbook

If you wish to add FCR to your cost you must first discuss it with the co-ordinator to agree how and where it may be added, and at what rate. FCR added to your budget without prior discussion will be removed.

As a guide we will consider the following rates for FCR:

- Capital investment into buildings and infrastructure – up to 20% added to the investment to cover project management and associated costs where it has not otherwise been met
- Staff costs – up to 20% added to cover overheads associated with running your project where not otherwise met

Please note that FCR cost agreed with the co-ordinator are not guaranteed and are subject to the scrutiny of the LAG and the funds available.

ANNEX G: Queries, Complaints and Appeals

Applications must meet all eligibility requirements outlined in the West Lothian RCLLD Guidance. Applications will be awarded based on the criteria outlined in [Annex B](#).

If your project turned down you will be supplied with the reasons for its rejection. You may reapply in future rounds.

If your project was rejected you may appeal this decision if you believe there were administrative, governance or management failures e.g. issues with applying, undeclared conflicts of interest, mishandling or other organisational errors.

Appeals should be made in writing and submitted to the co-ordinator (or the head of Economic Development should the co-ordinator not be appropriate) within 30 days of receipt of the outcome letter. The request must contain the nature of the appeal and provide information and evidence as to demonstrate why the original decision should be reconsidered.

All unsuccessful applicants will be given feedback and the opportunity to reapply should time and funds permit.

Complaints will follow West Lothian Councils complaints procedures.

CONTACTS DETAILS

RCLLD Co-ordinator: Kat Purser
Email: RCLLD@westlothian.gov.uk