



ENGAGEMENT FOR CHANGE FUND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Fund Specifics and Financial Information

Q: What are the key dates for the Engagement for Change Fund?

A: The competition process for the Engagement for Change Fund opened on 24 April 2026 and will close at 5pm on 22 May 2026. Interviews for the highest scoring applicants are expected to be held in early June 2026. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application in late June 2026.

The Engagement for Change Fund will run for three years; delivery of programming funded under the Engagement for Change Fund may not begin prior to 1 July 2026 and must be completed by 31 March 2029. The successful applicant will have the opportunity to use Year 1 of the Fund as a Development Year, to finalise and deepen their project plan.

Q: How many applicants will receive funding through the Engagement for Change Fund?

A: The Engagement for Change Fund will provide £100,000 over the course of 3 years to a single lead delivery organisation.

Q: How will the provision of funding be broken down across the 3 years of delivery?

A: Funding will be provided in line with the following schedule. Applicants should consider the funding breakdown in the design of their proposed programme:

- Year 1: 2026/2027 (Development Year) - £25,000
- Year 2: 2027/2028 - £25,000
- Year 3: 2028/2029 - £50,000



Funding cannot be carried across Financial Years. Funding received in Year 1 must be fully drawn down and spent during 2026/27 and so forth.

Q: On what schedule will funding be eligible for draw down?

A: The successful Grant Recipient will be eligible to draw down up to £12,500 per year up front, ahead of delivery. This is not a requirement. Remaining funding will be drawn down in arrears, following evidence of spend. Drawdown opportunities will be November and March for Year 1, and July, November and March for Years 2 and 3. Funding cannot be carried across Financial Years and Grant Recipients must ensure claims are submitted on schedule.

Applicants should indicate in their Engagement for Change Budget & Programme Plan Tool the drawdown schedule which best suits their organisation.

Applicant Eligibility

Q: Is my organisation eligible to apply?

Applications are welcome from the voluntary and community sector, civic society and national representative bodies in Northern Ireland.

Applicants must be formally established for public benefit and not-for-profit organisations. Applicant organisations must have a governing document (e.g. constitution or memorandum and articles of association) which includes appropriate statements on members, Directors or Trustees not benefiting financially from the organisation or its dissolution, a minimum of 3 unrelated people on the committee, this will be unrelated trustees for charities and unrelated directors for companies limited by guarantee, and have your own bank account (which requires 2 signatories).



Northern
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We cannot accept applications from: individuals or sole traders, organisations based outside of Northern Ireland, companies who pay profits to directors, shareholders or members, including companies limited by shares.

Please note this list is not exhaustive. If you are unsure whether your organisation is eligible, please contact: community.projects@nio.gov.uk. Please allow 5 working days for a response.

Q: Can social enterprises apply?

A: Yes, social enterprises can apply.

Q: Can my organisation partner with another organisation to deliver Engagement for Change Fund Programming?

A: The Engagement for Change Fund will provide funding to a single delivery organisation. Applicants are welcome to include in their application their intention to work with other organisations in the delivery of their programming, should this collaboration extend reach, depth or impact of delivery. Applicants intending to work with other organisations must ensure these organisations also meet organisational eligibility criteria.

Q: My organisation receives other UK Government Funding, can we still apply?

A: Yes, applicants in receipt of other UK Government Funding are still eligible to apply.



Q: My organisation already delivers programming similar to that which will be funded by the Engagement for Change Fund, can we still apply?

A: Yes, organisations already involved in the provision of programming or support to the community and voluntary sector in the areas of leadership and advocacy are eligible to apply. These organisations must demonstrate that funding will be specific to activities conducted for the purpose of the Engagement for Change Fund. Funding will not be provided for programming which is already resourced through alternative funding sources, though will be considered in circumstances where this support would be expanded in terms of reach, depth and/or impact.

Programme Eligibility and Requirements

Q: Does the Engagement For Change Fund require a specific methodology or programme design?

A: No, the Engagement for Change Fund has stipulated objectives which must be fulfilled by applicant proposals. Organisations are welcome to design programme delivery and the specific details of support which will be provided based on their expertise and experience.

Q: Does the Engagement For Change Fund have a target audience for support which will be funded?

A: No, whilst the Fund has a specific focus on supporting more women into the public forum, support provided through programming should be open to people of all genders. Applicants should consider the reach and depth of programming possible within the funding allocation, and identify



the target audience they feel is most in need of support through the Engagement for Change Fund. Proposals must demonstrate that the activities directly benefit Northern Ireland's community and voluntary sector. Activities must be delivered in the United Kingdom and should be flexible to support the access needs of the community and voluntary sector. Applicants should give consideration to accessibility, and the inclusion of individuals from both urban and rural settings.

Q: Does the Engagement For Change Fund have an expected minimum or target number of individuals or community and voluntary sector groups who should be supported through this Fund?

A: No, applicants should consider the reach and depth of programming possible within the funding allocation. Some applicants may feel that working with a larger cohort is appropriate for their delivery methodology and will deliver greater reach. Some applicants may feel working with a smaller cohort will deliver greater depth. The Engagement for Change Fund enables applicant organisations to use their expertise and experience to determine the number of individuals/organisations who will be supported.

Q: What funding items which will be considered and are any costs ineligible under the Engagement for Change Fund?

A: The Engagement for Change Fund seeks to allow the expertise of applicants to inform the specifics of funding provision. However, the following guidelines apply:

- Capital costs will not be eligible for funding.
- The purchase of alcohol will not be eligible for funding.
- A fixed cost of no more than 10% in Years 1 and 2 and 5% in Year 3 can be dedicated to core organisational operating costs including rent, electricity, heat, internet provision etc. Organisations wishing



to avail of funding for core operating costs must demonstrate that duplicate funding is not being received from other sources.

- Both Programme Management and Staffing Costs are eligible where directly ascribable to the delivery of the programme.
- Applicants should refer to the Travel & Subsistence Policy provided in the Application Guidance document if considering the inclusion of requests to cover travel and refreshments.
- Proposals can include requests for funding to hire subject matter experts as contractors to support the delivery of programming.

All costs must be inclusive of the maximum value of funding available per year.

Application Requirements and Submissions

Q: How much detail are applicants expected to provide in the application?

A: A Development Year has been included in the Engagement for Change Fund, allowing the successful Grant Recipient time to finalise and deepen their project plan. Maximum word counts have been included in the application form; applicants are not required to use all of the word count granted. Applicants who exceed the word count will have their answers limited to the content which falls within word count.

Q: Are applicants required to use the Development Year, or can delivery start in Year 1?

A: A Development Year has been included in the Engagement for Change Fund, allowing the successful Grant Recipient time to finalise and deepen their project plan. Applicants may also wish to use this time to recruit staff. The inclusion of the Development Year reduces the level



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of detail required from applicants at the application stage. Whilst it is not a requirement to utilise the Development Year, applicants will be required to share and discuss their finalised delivery plan with the Northern Ireland Office, ahead of programme delivery commencement.

Q: How much detail are we expected to provide in the Engagement for Change Budget & Programme Plan Tool?

A: You should refer to Example Engagement for Change Budget & Programme Plan Tool. Applicants should make use of the Notes section to provide information necessary to assess Value for Money, particularly where it concerns the Travel and Subsistence Policy.

Q: Do you provide a function where we can pitch ideas ahead of applying?

A: The Engagement for Change Team cannot provide specific feedback on proposed programming.

If you have specific questions which are not answered by this document or the Application Guidance, please contact:

community.projects@nio.gov.uk. Please allow 5 working days for a response. Please ensure all queries are submitted by 5pm on Friday 15 May 2026; the Engagement for Change Team cannot guarantee response after this date.

Decisions on Successful Applications

Q: What is required for a successful application to the Engagement for Change Fund?

A: The successful applicant to the Engagement for Change Fund must score a minimum of 50/75 to be eligible for funding and meet the



Northern
Ireland
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minimum scoring value set per criterion. Please refer to the Application Guidance for further information. Following application assessment, applicant organisations who achieve the required minimum score of 50/75 will be invited to participate in an interview. The highest scoring interview candidate will receive the final Grant Award.

Unsuccessful Applications

Q: Will you provide feedback for unsuccessful applicants?

A: If unsuccessful, applicants are welcome to apply for feedback on their application. Application scores will be provided to eligible applicants.

Other Questions

Q: I have another question, who do I reach out to?

A: If you require any further information for your application, please contact: community.projects@nio.gov.uk. Please allow 5 working days for a response. Please ensure all queries are submitted by 5pm on Friday 15 May 2026; the Engagement for Change Team cannot guarantee response after this date.