



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP FUND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Fund Specifics and Financial Information

Q: What are the key dates for the Community Partnership Fund?

A: The competition process for the Community Partnership Fund opened on 1 May 2026 and will close on 19 June 2026. Interviews for the highest scoring applicants are expected to be held in early July 2026. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their applications w/c 27 July 2026.

The Community Partnership Fund will run for three years; delivery of programming funded under the Fund may not begin prior to 1 August 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 Community Partnership Fund?

A: The Community Partnership Fund will award a grant of £1,000,000 over the course of three years to a single lead delivery organisation. While the funding goes to a single bid, the successful application must represent a partnership of a minimum of three organisations.

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) - £300,000
- Year 2: 2027/2028 - £300,000



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: Funding must be drawn down on a quarterly basis in arrears, following evidence of spend. Funding cannot be carried across Financial Years and Grant Recipients must ensure claims are submitted on schedule.

Applicants should indicate in their 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).



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

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: Is there a maximum number of partners who can join the forum?

A: Applicants must demonstrate that they have formed a strong partnership of at least **three** organisations to develop and deliver a unified offer of support. There is no maximum number of partners.

Q: Can I apply as an individual organisation and be assigned partner organisations by you?

A: No, forums must be agreed by you by point of application.

Q: Who applies?

A: The lead organisation should submit an application on behalf of the partnership.



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: Can partners be in receipt of other funding?

A: Yes, that is acceptable. You may be asked to demonstrate that your project is not in receipt of duplicate funding from another agency.

Q: Who holds the budget?

A: Payment will only be made to the lead organisation. Lead organisations are responsible for managing payments appropriately with partners.

Q: Is this fund accessible by for-profit partners / individuals?

A: For-profit individuals / organisations cannot be project partners in an application. Applicants can, however, include in their application their intention to hire for-profit individuals / organisations to support or facilitate their one-off activity or longer-term project. Details should be provided on the purpose for hiring for-profit individuals / organisations in the Activity Outline section of the application, with associated costs noted in the Resourcing and Costs section.

Q: Is it possible for eligible organisations to partner up with partners / individuals from outside of the UK?

A: All organisations and participants in projects funded through the Community Partnership Fund must be based in the UK. The UK refers to Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales, and includes the smaller linked islands e.g., Rathlin Island, the Hebrides, Orkney, Shetland, Isle of



Wight, and Anglesey. The UK does not include Crown Dependencies such as the Isle of Man or Channel Islands, nor the Overseas Territories e.g., Bermuda, Falklands.

Q: My organisation already delivers programming similar to that which will be funded by the Community Partnership 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 Community Partnership 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 Community Partnership Fund require a specific methodology or programme design?

A: No, the 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 Community Partnership 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 Community Partnership 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 Community Partnership Fund?

A: The Community Partnership 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 Community Partnership 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: How much detail are we expected to provide in the Budget & Programme Plan Tool?

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

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

A: The 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.

Decisions on Successful Applications

Q: What is required for a successful application?

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

Q: How do we submit our application and what documents are required?

A: Applications must be submitted via email to community.projects@nio.gov.uk. You must include your completed Application Form, the Budget & Programme Plan Tool, a copy of your most recent accounts/financial statements, and a governing document (if you are a non-statutory body).



Q: Is there a minimum level of experience required for the forum members?

A: Yes. The Lead Organisation (Head Recipient) must demonstrate a minimum of five years of operations and experience in the community and voluntary sector. The other partner groups within the forum must demonstrate a minimum of two years of experience.

Q: Do we need a safeguarding policy?

A: Yes, if your proposed programme involves working with children, young people, or vulnerable adults, you will need to have a safeguarding policy in place that explains how they will be kept safe.

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.