

Application Form Guidance Notes

COVID Transition Fund

Applications are open from 12 noon, Monday 7th June

and close on 12 noon, Monday 5th July

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1. Overview

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council invite applications for financial assistance towards the community and voluntary sector.

This document sets out guidance for applicants applying to Newry, Mourne and Down District Council for financial assistance.

Council's purpose in providing financial assistance is to allow it to achieve its objectives in line with clearly identified local needs and within the parameters of Council's powers. Council will seek to ensure that any funding provided is:

- In line with Council's Corporate Strategy, Community Plan and other key strategic and policy documents.
- Consistent with Council's Financial Assistance Policy.
- In line with the specific requirements of the programme being applied for.
- Able to meet a clearly identified need.
- Likely to be used in an effective and efficient manner and to demonstrate value for money.

Funding will only be provided to organisations or individuals who have adequate skill and expertise and can ensure that Council's funding is utilised appropriately.

This manual sets out the process to be used in applying for funding and the processes Council will use in assessing eligibility, suitability, and level of funding available and how Council will review and monitor applications. Applicants should ensure that they have a sound understanding of the specific rationale for the programme to which they are applying and that their proposal responds to each of the criteria set out by Council. Council will only seek to obtain the minimum information necessary to assess an application. It remains applicants' responsibility to ensure that this information is provided in full.

2. Overarching Principles and Eligibility

Council's overall vision for Financial Assistance is to maximise the impact of its work across the Council area for the benefit of residents.

Council will use financial assistance in a way which is:

- Strategic and helps Council deliver its objectives in line with its statutory responsibilities.
- Transparent and accountable.
- Fair and equitable – funding allocation will be based on merit and no other factor.
- Needs based – funding will only be provided where there is a clearly demonstrated need.
- Efficient use of funding/value for money.
- Able to show tangible outcomes.
- Outcomes that can be measured.
- Able to engage the community.

3. COVID Transition Fund Criteria

COVID Transition Fund projects must complement the theme aims and objectives as outlined below.

The Council will only consider **one** application per organisation for the COVID Transition Fund theme.

Theme – COVID Transition Fund

Threshold: £500 - £2,000

Aim:

The priority of this theme is to assist local community organisations in alleviating the impacts of the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic within their local community.

Objectives:

The fund seeks to encourage local community-based organisations, either individually or in collaboration with other similar local organisations to address local issues through innovative and appropriate local solutions. Priority areas for the fund include:

- ❖ Food poverty - access to food (whether due to cost or availability) for those most in need.
- ❖ Financial hardship - for those on low income and at risk due to financial stress.
- ❖ Connectivity challenges - for those living alone or in rural and border areas that are likely to experience greater challenges in accessing services.
- ❖ Support for those identified as "Vulnerable Groups" under Public Health Agency guidance.

It should be noted that applications addressing other issues than the above, arising from the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic, will also be welcomed for consideration.

The COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Transition Fund applications will be assessed and scored against the fund criteria. Organisations must clearly demonstrate on their application form how they can support one or more of the following groups and outline the service they will deliver:

- ❖ Older People (aged 70 and over).
- ❖ Isolation, loneliness, well-being and mental health.
- ❖ Homeless people.
- ❖ People experiencing food poverty.
- ❖ People experiencing financial hardship.
- ❖ People experiencing connectivity challenges.
- ❖ Young people up to 26 years old.
- ❖ Those most vulnerable as advised by Public Health Agency (PHA). A full list of which can be found on their website <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net>.

All project activity MUST be completed by 31st March 2022.

Eligible and Ineligible Expenditure

Eligible:

The fund will only support activities related to the challenges emerging from the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic.

The following activities will be a priority for this grant programme:

- ❖ Provision of direct and immediate practical support for vulnerable individuals and families.
- ❖ Initiatives that promote a sense of well-being in a time of isolation, whilst following the Public Health Agency (PHA) guidelines.
- ❖ Initiatives that directly support the most vulnerable and address a number of impacts such as, isolation, food delivery, financial hardship and connectivity.
- ❖ Project materials and operating costs for organisations will be supported, including project related staff costs, volunteer expenses and transport costs. Equipment costs are also eligible, providing the items of equipment are directly linked to the project being proposed and relate to supporting individuals and groups impacted by COVID-19 (Coronavirus).
- ❖ Funding will only be available to groups based in the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area who meet the above criteria or where the beneficiaries are from the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area.

As per Council regulations:

In most cases Council will not provide funding for any of the following elements:

- ❖ Any costs which clearly fall within another statutory agency's remit.
- ❖ Projects or activities which are delivered outside the Council area and do not meet needs within the area.
- ❖ Activities which specifically exist to raise funding.
- ❖ The purchase of alcohol.
- ❖ Salaries will not be funded – except those directly related to project delivery.
- ❖ Costs incurred prior to the funding application and letter of offer from Council.
- ❖ Costs that can be recovered elsewhere, for instance recoverable VAT.
- ❖ Payments to any members of the applicant group for services provided in relation to the project.

Organisations that are uncertain whether they are eligible for funding are advised to discuss this with the relevant Council officers before submitting application forms to minimise unnecessary effort.

4. Application Process

Financial Assistance Programmes will be operated through the online system. A paper alternative will only be offered in exceptional circumstances when an applicant is unable to use the online system.

Applications must be completed in full and returned along with any documentary evidence required for the funding programme by the closing date stipulated on the application form.

Incomplete or late applications will automatically be deemed ineligible whether online or by paper.

Any applications returned without the necessary undertakings, signatures or required attachments will also be rejected. There will be no opportunity to submit information at a later stage and therefore it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all requirements are met at the initial application stage.

5. Completing the Application Form

The online application form is the standard approach. However, Council may require specific information and therefore reserve the right to amend accordingly.

Applications will be available online for the full period of the application call, but applicants will not be able to submit applications after the closing date.

Applicants should assume that Council Officers have no prior knowledge of their organisation and should include all information necessary to adequately inform a completely new assessment panel.

The amount of information provided should be commensurate with the scale of funding and the nature of the programme.

The application will be a two-stage process, with Stage 1 - Basic Eligibility and Stage 2 - Scoring.

Stage 1 Basic Eligibility

Applicants can fail to pass Stage 1 due to the following reasons:

- An incomplete application.
- Failure to provide the application form and all the details required by the closing date/time (online will not allow this to be submitted).
- An application which has not been approved by two office bearers.
- An application which does not meet the Basic Eligibility criteria as outlined.

Projects must identify the theme for which they are applying and demonstrate that they fit this theme (as outlined above).

Application – Section A, Section B and Section C

Section A

Question 1.1 (a) - 1.1 (y) Lead Partner and Contact Information

The applicant must ensure the accuracy of the contact details are correct for the contact person as this will be the only person we will contact regarding your applications. If the contact person changes during the period of the application process, please provide alternative contact details.

The e-mail contact details will be used for future correspondence therefore it is vital this is up to date and correct.

1.2 - 1.4 Legal and Accounting

If an applicant fails to attach annual accounts or an income expenditure report they will not progress to Stage 2 scoring. **Please note:** New groups that have not been established for more than a year are exempt from providing this detail but must provide a rationale and outline the reason they are not submitting this information.

As per the Basic Eligibility checklist projects must also provide their relevant bank statement and list of Officer Bearers. This section forms part of the Basic Eligibility requirements.

1.5 Organisational Information

The applicant must ensure the organisational information provided is accurate; these details should be updated as and when required.

Section B

2.1. Project Title

This will be the project name used in all future correspondence.

2.2 (a) / 2.2 (b) Start and End Date

Please review theme guidance to ensure your project's delivery date is as per Guidance Notes. This section forms part of the Basic Eligibility requirements.

2.3 What is the Primary Area of Benefit.

The applicant must ensure the project is delivered within the eligible Council areas. An applicant must ensure they identify an eligible Council area. This section forms part of the Basic Eligibility requirements.

2.4 Give a brief description of your project, outlining specific aims and objectives, and how the project will complement the specific programme applied under?

This question allows the applicant to provide details on what your project is about and what you will do. This may include:

- Outline of what the project is.
- Details of project delivery and specific actions that will be delivered.
- The target group and numbers involved.
- The duration of the project.
- The location of the project.
- The direct and indirect benefits of the project.
- How the project complements the Let's Grow Newry, Mourne & Down theme; the aims and objectives of which, are outlined above.

The applicant should provide as much detail as possible on how the project links to the theme applied under and detail the indicators that will help identify how project delivery will achieve this. Applicants must also ensure that activities link to the budget.

2.5 Clearly identify how the proposed project will complement the Council Corporate plan

This question allows the applicant to explain how the project complements the Council Corporate plan, projects that fail to show how the project complements this are unlikely to be funded.

For further details on Council Strategic Plan please download the full document from www.newrymournedown.org

2.6 (a) Key Activities – Please add Detail of Key Activities and Events (include participants)

2.6 (b) – Number of beneficiaries and number of participants

Please note: Anticipated outcomes and project participation is how success will be measured; applicants should take care not to double count beneficiaries and participants. Council will also use this information to evaluate and monitor the project and process claims, for instance, by determining whether the anticipated number of beneficiaries/participants was achieved, description of project beneficiaries/participants, including number and nature of benefit/involvement.

Participants are individuals directly participating in a project e.g. event attendees or football players and referees at a match, whereas beneficiaries are individuals who are gaining some form of benefit from the event taking places e.g. stall holders at an event, a nearby café or the spectators of a football match.

This question allows the applicant to provide further details on the project activity. It is important to provide clear information on the participants that will be involved in the proposed project.

The applicant must also provide information on the outcomes and benefits of the project; these may include direct and indirect benefits.

2.7 What need is being met by this project and how did you establish this need?

This question allows the applicant to outline why the project is needed in the local area, the applicant should outline the specific needs that will be met and clearly link these to the project's activities. There should also be a rationale explaining how the need was identified and why existing provision does not address this.

The applicant should provide as much detail as possible and, where possible, provide numbers, evaluation reports or research results.

2.8 How will the project improve equality of opportunity and good relations? Please detail what actions will be undertaken which will contribute to improvement of equality of opportunity and good relations?

This question allows the applicant to identify how the project will promote good relations and equality. The applicant should refer to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and detail what actions the project will undertake to promote equality and accessibility of services to all. The applicant should be specific in outlining the actions that will be taken through project delivery which will ensure the project is open and inclusive to all people.

2.9 How will the project be sustained beyond the period over which the funding is being sought? Please outline any likely sustainable benefits which will occur through the delivery of this project?

This question allows the applicant to identify how the project will create positive impacts beyond the lifetime of the project and detail any direct and indirect sustainable benefits that have been created through project delivery.

2.10 - 2.12 Project Budget

The applicant should include 100% of costs associated with the project.

The applicant must indicate the amount of funding required from Council ensuring they do not exceed the lower and upper thresholds as identified in the Guidance Notes. Applicants must also be aware that Council may fund less than the amount requested.

Costs should be outlined for every item of expenditure even where Council is not providing the funding. Applicants should ensure costs are realistic and should get quotes.

It is vital that the amount requested is within the eligible items of expenditure as highlighted for each theme and does not exceed the upper or lower thresholds and should provide evidence of any additional funding being received for the project and if not requesting 100% of total cost of the project.

The applicant must inform Council if they are planning to charge people to attend the event or to take part in an activity. If this is the case Council should know how much is expected to be raised through charging.

The applicant must ensure the bank account details are correct and used by the organisation making the application.

The Council must be informed of any changes made to an organisation's bank account details during the application process.

Submission – Final Application Submission

- Data Protection

A copy of our privacy notice is available on request or via the following link: http://www.newrymournedown.org/media/uploads/privacy_notice.pdf

- Declaration

Please ensure all relevant sections are complete and signee details are inputted as this section forms part of the Basic Eligibility requirements.

6. Assessment Criteria, Project Appraisal and Scoring - Stage 2 Scoring

All applications passing Stage 1 Basic Eligibility check, will proceed to a "Full Project Appraisal and Scoring" carried out using the following criteria, process and scoring system. The assessment panel then makes a recommendation to the Council for consideration/approval.

All eligible applications will be assessed against the pre-set criteria agreed by Council. All applications will be scored out of 100 (weighted final score). An application must score a minimum of 50% under Programme and Priority Criteria and, Efficiency and Effectiveness criteria as well as under the cross-cutting themes, before it can be considered for funding. Projects under 50% will not be recommended for support.

However, a score equivalent to 50% or above will not necessarily guarantee funding as applications will be scored and ranked with funding available awarded to the highest ranked projects. Thereafter a project may be reconsidered, and allocated funding should it become available at a later date.

For consistency and to facilitate efficient assessment the following approach has been adopted to scoring against the following criteria:

Question (as per application)	Criterion	Maximum	Weighting	Weighted Final Score
	Council & Programme or Service Area.			
Clearly identify how the proposed project will complement the specific programme applied under?	Fit with the programme or service area being applied for.	5	x 3	15
Clearly identify how the proposed project will complement Newry, Mourne and Down Council's Strategic Priorities?	Fit with the Council's overall Strategic priorities.	5	x 2	10
Outline the outcomes and benefits of your project for the local community. Provide targets e.g. numbers participating, number of events etc?	Impact on the local community	5	x 3	15
	Efficiency / Effectiveness / Need			
Outcomes and Benefit and project budget are considered.	Value for money	5	x 2	10
What need is being met by this project?	Need	5	x 2	10
How did you establish this need?	Establishment of Need	5	X2	10
	Cross-cutting themes			
How will the project improve equality of opportunity and good relations? Please detail what actions will be undertaken which will contribute to improvement of equality of opportunity and good relations?	Equality of opportunity / Good relations	5	x 3	15
How will the project be sustained, if necessary, beyond the period over which the funding is being sought? Please outline any likely sustainable benefits which will occur through the delivery of this project?	Sustainability	5	x 3	15

In addition, the following scoring system will be used by the panel to ascertain the scores for the criteria above:

Link at project level	Link to Criterion	How evident	Score
The project proposal does not demonstrate that it has the capacity to deliver basic project outcomes that would be expected in order to be awarded funding.	The application does not meet the basic standard under this criterion	No evidence provided	0
The project proposal demonstrates some ability to deliver key outcomes in some areas but overall, it is below the standard expected in order to be awarded funding.	The application met some of the basic requirements of this criterion.	Not sufficient evidence	1
The project proposal demonstrates an ability to deliver project outcomes to an acceptable standard and it may be considered suitable for funding.	The application met the requirements of this criterion.	Less Evident	2
The project proposal is evident in the way it describes a range of activities that will result in good outputs and the achievement of outcomes.	The application is evident in the requirements of this criterion.	Evident	3
The project proposal is strong as the activities described will result in good outputs and the achievement of outcomes.	The application was very evident with strong fit with the requirement of this criterion.	Strongly evident	4
The project proposal fully complies with the outputs and achievement of the outcomes.	The project is excellent and fully met the requirements of this criterion.	Highly Evident	5

7. What Happens Next?

Once your application is submitted it will enter the Council's assessment process. The system will not allow applications to be submitted after the closing time. There will be no right of appeal.

The system will not allow an application to proceed if it does not meet the eligibility criteria. An application not meeting the eligibility criteria at this stage will automatically be rejected and will not be subject to appeal.

The application will then proceed to the assessment process. This will involve the following steps:

- An Assessment Panel consisting of Council officers will be set up to consider applications for each programme. Your application will go to the panel responsible for the programme for which you have applied for.
- The panel will consider the eligibility of the programme against the specific programme criteria. Failure to meet this requirement will result in rejection and will not be subject to appeal.
- Eligible applications will be assessed against the criteria for the programme concerned.
- If the application meets the minimum threshold it will pass to the next stage. If not, it will be rejected.
- Council will consider the scores of all the applications for the particular programme and will place these in order.
- Depending on the amount of funding available applicants will be funded in order of their score, with higher scoring applications funded first. On occasion, and at its discretion, Council may decide to fund more applications at a lower overall level, spreading the funding across a wider number of applications.
- The assessment process carried out by the Officer Panel will be checked and ratified by senior officers.
- Recommendations will be made to the Active and Healthy Communities Committee who will be responsible for ratifying the overall assessment. Applicants will be recommended for funding based on their score and a Score and Rank system will be implemented.
- The Committee will make recommendations to full Council.
- Applicants will be informed of the outcome of Council's decision.

You will receive one of four outcomes from the application and assessment process:

- **A Rejection** – Your application will automatically be rejected if:
 - It is incomplete.
 - It fails to provide the necessary detail.
 - It has not been signed appropriately/incomplete online declaration.
 - Or it has passed the online eligibility criteria due to incorrect completion but does not meet the Basic Eligibility criteria.
 - An application may also be rejected at the second stage if it fails to meet the eligibility criteria for the individual programme.
- **Unsuccessful** – if your application fails to meet the necessary threshold score for support under the individual programme you will be informed that you have been unsuccessful.
- **Score and Rank** – a score equivalent to 50% or above will not necessarily guarantee funding as applications will be scored and ranked with funding available awarded to the highest ranked projects. Thereafter a project may be reconsidered, and allocated funding should it become available at a later date.
- **A Letter of Offer** – if your application is successful you will receive a Letter of Offer. This will set out the specific requirements associated with financial assistance and any special conditions. It will describe the information you will have to submit with a claim for funding. It will not constitute a formal funding agreement until these

conditions have been agreed and the Letter of Offer accepted in full, in writing, by your organisation.

8. Appeals

Where an application has been rejected for reasons of incomplete information, failure to sign the application/complete the declaration, or ineligibility, there will be no right of appeal. However, where an application is unsuccessful after the full assessment process, appeals can be made to Council on the following basis:

- The outcome was a decision that no reasonable person would have made on the basis of information provided to the Financial Assistance Assessment Panel.
- That Council's stated policy or procedures had not been followed and led to a materially different decision.

Should you wish to submit an appeal this must be done as follows:

- An appeal must be lodged in writing within 10 working days of the date of the rejection letter.
- The appeal should be submitted to the Programmes Unit and proof of receipt obtained.
- The appeal letter must state:
 - The application details including programme applied for, title of project and contact details for the applicant.
 - The grounds on which an appeal is being made.
 - Any evidence the applicant believes the review process should consider which supports the view that one of the two bases for an appeal is justified.

The appeal will be reviewed by a designated senior officer who will decide on the appeal. This could result in several possible outcomes including:

- Reassessment of the application based on eligibility.
- Rescoring of the application.
- If the appeal is upheld an appropriate Letter of Offer will be issued as for a successful application.
- If the appeal is not successful, the applicant will be informed and the reasons for the rejection explained.

9. Useful Contacts and Links to Strategies

For Further information please contact:

Programmes Unit

Telephone: **0330 137 4040**

Email: programmesunit@nmandd.org

Newry, Mourne and Down Corporate Plan 2021 - 2023

Strategic Priorities (Strategic Objectives)

1. Invest in and support new and growing businesses, job creation and employment skills.
2. Continue to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the district and reduce health inequalities.
3. Enhance, protect, and promote our environment.
4. Support sustainable forms of tourism which value our environment and cultural heritage.
5. Enable and support people to engage in inclusive and diverse activities in their communities.
6. Promote the revitalisation of our city, towns, villages, and rural communities.
7. Provide accessible, high-quality, and integrated services through continuous improvement.
8. Advocate with others for the benefit of all people of the District.

For further details on Council Strategic Plan please download the full document from www.newrymournedown.org