

Community Choices Place Based Capital Grant



What is Community Choices?

Community Choices is a [Participatory Budgeting](#) (PB) process. This way of allocating money gives groups and organisations an opportunity to show how their project can make a difference, and allows members of the community to make the decision on how the money is spent. Community Choices therefore provides a real opportunity for local people to have a direct input into how public funding is spent to address local issues or improve their communities. It aims to improve the overall wellbeing of individuals and families by addressing key issues facing the community.

This project is part of the wider Place Based Investment Programme in West Lothian. A budget of £189,000 has been allocated to be decided via Community Choices.

Place Based Investment Fund - Focus

Local community organisations are invited to submit a funding bid for a project that will:

'help to support place policy ambitions such as town centre revitalisation, community led regeneration, 20-minute neighbourhoods and community wealth building'

The following section provides an overview of these themes:

Town Centre Revitalisation

Town Centre Revitalisation aims to make improvements to your communities to create vibrant communal spaces that smarten up a location and help people feel safer.

Community Led Regeneration

Community Led Regeneration is about people identifying issues and opportunities in their local area, deciding what to do about them and making positive changes in their communities.

20-Minute Neighbourhoods

The 20-minute neighbourhoods concept aims to provide local communities access to the majority of their daily needs within a 20-minute walk, wheel or cycle.

Community Wealth Building

Community Wealth Building aims to tackle inequality by giving control and wealth to local people, communities, businesses and organisations, by focusing on inclusive strategies. It promotes communities working in partnership with businesses to build a strong local economy which supports fair work, encourages local spend, and uses land and property for the common good.

- **For applications to be eligible they must demonstrate how they will deliver on one of these priorities and how the project is focussing on delivering this.**
- **Please note that Community Choices will not fund the continuation of existing activity or ongoing running costs for your organisation.**

Who can apply?

In order to apply for funding, you must;

- be a constituted voluntary or community organisation or registered charity.
- have a bank account in the name of the group or organisation, with two signatories who are not related or live at the same address.
- demonstrate how your idea or project addresses at least one of the priorities stated in this guidance.
- discuss your application with the West Lothian Council Regeneration Officer who covers your ward area. Contact details for the officers can be found at the end of this document.

What can the funding be used for?

Only capital costs directly associated with the development and delivery of a new project will be funded.

What should your project address?

This fund is intended to deliver place-based investments shaped by the needs and aspirations of local communities throughout West Lothian. You must demonstrate that your project supports one or more of the following themes:

- **Town Centre Revitalisation**
- **Community Led Regeneration**
- **20-Minute Neighbourhoods**
- **Community Wealth Building**

and meets one or more of the criteria detailed below (we would encourage projects to address as many of the criteria as possible)

- **Accelerate ambitions for net zero**
- **Wellbeing and inclusive economic development**
- **Tackling inequality and disadvantage**
- **Community involvement and ownership**

How much can we apply for?

Your project must have a minimum value of £5000. The maximum amount that can be requested is £25,000.

How to apply

To apply for funding, you must complete and return an application form by **Sunday 5 November 2023**. The form is available on the Community Choices [website](#). Please email completed application forms to WestLothianCommunityChoices@westlothian.gov.uk. For more information or support please contact Laura Wilson (laura.wilson2@westlothian.gov.uk).

Please note that a summary of your project will be provided to local people, to give them information on which to base their vote. Please therefore ensure that you fully explain the positive impact your project will make.

Information sessions

Two information sessions will be held for groups and organisations that want to find out more about the application process and how to apply. These sessions will be advertised once dates and locations are confirmed.

Who decides how the funding is spent?

Projects will initially be reviewed by council officers to ensure they meet the application criteria outlined below. The information on the projects that meet the criteria will be posted on our webpage and publicised via social media and other channels. West Lothian residents will then be invited to vote on the projects they would like to see funded. Voting will take place over a set period via a variety of methods (in person event, online survey and ballot boxes in key community locations) and the projects with the most votes will be funded. It is anticipated that funds will be released to successful projects in December 2023.

Assessment Criteria

The following criteria will be used in checking eligibility of applications
Be a constituted voluntary or community organisation or registered charity
Have a bank account that has two signatories who are not related or live at the same address
Not already in receipt of monies from the Council for the project or idea; applications should be for new activity, not for the continuation of existing activity
Demonstrate how your idea or project meets one or more of the criteria above (also detailed on the application form)
Be able to have all funds committed by March 2024 and deliver the project by September 2024.

Monitoring of projects

Projects will be monitored to ensure that they achieve what they set out to. A final report will be required when the project is complete, which will include a financial report on the spend in relation to your application. All funds must be spent by 31 March 2024. Projects must be fully delivered by September 2024.

Next Steps

Once you have submitted your application, West Lothian Council will:

- ✓ confirm we have received your application
- ✓ assess your application against criteria; if we need to clarify anything about your application we may contact you by email
- ✓ inform you that your application meets the initial criteria
- ✓ publicise the webpage for online voting to encourage local people to vote
- ✓ count and verify the votes cast
- ✓ inform you if your project was successful in getting enough votes to receive funding. If so;
- ✓ send you a formal letter of award and release the funds

You will then:

- ✓ send a report on activity and spend at the end of the funding period.

For more information or support please contact Laura Wilson (laura.wilson2@westlothian.gov.uk).

Please discuss your application with the Regeneration Officer for your ward area before submitting:

Armadale and Blackridge - michelle.murray@westlothian.gov.uk

Blackburn and Whitburn - michelle.murray@westlothian.gov.uk

Linlithgow - douglas.grierson@westlothian.gov.uk

Livingston South – scott.mckillop@westlothian.gov.uk

Livingston North – scott.mckillop@westlothian.gov.uk

Fauldhouse and the Breich Valley – douglas.benson@westlothian.gov.uk

East Livingston and East Calder – Lesley.keirnan@westlothian.gov.uk

Bathgate – douglas.benson@westlothian.gov.uk

Broxburn, Uphall and Winchburgh – douglas.grierson@westlothian.gov.uk