West Lothian - Rural Community Local Led Development 2024-2025

Application Guidance

Contents

INTRODUCTION

The Rural, Community Led Local Development fund (RCLLD) is financed by the Scottish Government Agriculture and Rural Economy Directorate. It is administered by a Local Action Groups (LAG) and supported by a Lead Partner, in this case, West Lothian Council.

The LAG is made up of a group of people from local community and public sector organisations. They work in partnership to agree local priorities and make decisions on grants.

West Lothian Council administers the grants on behalf of the LAG and provide staff to support applicants and the grant process.

For the 2024-25 programme the West Lothian LAG are offering support to projects in, or benefitting, an eligible area that supports at least one of the Scottish Governments Priorities.

Please read this guidance in full before beginning your application. Please pay particular attention to the section on claims and reporting.

All applications will be processed using our online portal.

Funding Available
- The funding is a mix of revenue spend (e.g. staff and services) and capital (e.g. purchase of assets and of non-perishable goods). Please check with the co-ordinator to see what type of spend is still available.
- You may apply for up to 100% of costs but projects with match funding are encouraged (match funding must be awarded before the project starts).
- Minimum project size: £1,000
- Maximum project size: £20,000 unless covering a significant amount of the eligible West Lothian area.

Currently we are only able to offer funding up until the end of February 2025. All funds must be defrayed from your bank account by 28/02/2025. Please bear this in mind when planning your project. See the section on Dates and Deadlines for more detail.

Eligible Areas
Projects based in, or benefitting, rural areas of West Lothian are eligible. This includes Armadale, Whitburn, Pumpherston and Uphall Station.

Areas not eligible for funding are Livingston, Bathgate, Linlithgow and Broxburn (including Uphall).

Eligible Applicants
Organisation 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 individuals
- We are not accepting applications from businesses at his time
- If you are unsure if your organisation/group qualifies please get in contact

Funding Priorities

Projects must align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the Scottish National Performance Framework and achieve progress towards the Scottish Government's policy priorities which include;

- Eradicating child poverty
- Growing the economy
- Tackling the climate emergency
- Improving public services

Projects should also seek to advance inclusion, equality and diversity in your local area. The LAG will also prioritise projects that have long term sustainability inbuilt or that have a clear exit plan.

APPLICATIONS

Dates and Deadlines

Round 1	Dates
Application deadline	19th August 2024
Application assessment date	Week commencing 26th August 2024
Project Award notification by	4th September 2024
Round 2	**Dates**
Application deadline	29th September
Application assessment date	Week commencing 7th October
Project Award notification by	15th October 2024
Round 3	**Dates**
Application deadline	8th January 2025
Application assessment date	TBC
Project Award notification by	TBC
Programme Closure	
All projects must be completed	28th February 2025
Financial claims must be submitted by	10th March 2025

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 exit strategy
- Partnership/knowledge sharing
- Meeting a need or demand
- Reasonableness of costs/value for money
- 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

Supporting Documentation

Applicants will be required to submit:

1. Their most recent bank statement
   This must show:
   - organisation name and address
   - account number
   - sort code
   (Sensitive information may be redacted)
2. Their most recent management accounts
3. Their Constitution and/or Memorandum of Association
4. An up to date list of board members and positions held

For capital projects involving land or buildings applicants will also need:
5. Title deeds or valid lease and owners' permissions
6. Evidence they have met with any statutory requirements where relevant (e.g. planning permission, building warrant)

Where staffing is being funded applicants will also need to provide
7. A completed **Staff Cost Calculator***
8. Salary benchmarking or pay scale structure
9. Evidence of salary/hourly rate
10. Evidence pf employer pension contributions

*Provided on request

Use of existing staff must be discussed with the co-ordinator to avoid double funding. Due to difficulties evidencing costs we would not normally fund travel and subsistence. If this is vital for your project to procced please contact us.

All projects must adhere to the Scottish Governments Fair Work Policy:
https://www.gov.scot/policies/fair-and-inclusive-workplaces/public-sector-grants-and-funding/
More information on the fair work policy can be found in Annex C.

Applicants may also wish to submit
11. Evidence of need or demand
12. Evidence of local support for the project

INDICATIVE COSTS AND PROCUREMENT

Outline Costs

Applications must include indicative costs, an outline of how these costs were reached, and how the applicant intends to ensure value for money.

Indicative costs should be submitted under costs headings e.g.

Cost Heading	Outline Spend	Total Cost
Gardening Tools	Spades, hedge trimmer, wheelbarrow, lawn mower*	£500
Marketing Materials	200 x leaflets, 50 posters*	£200

*Example only, costs not indicative of actual prices.

Overheads
10% of project costs may be added where an organisation has property and management costs to cover.

Value for money
The following value for money (VFM) evidence must be carried out on all project costs:

Cost	VFM
Item costing £0 - £999	Provide evidence of how you sort 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

*Items from the same supplier

The requisite number of quotes/price comparisons must be submitted prior to, or when submitting your claims. You are encouraged to submit them at the earliest opportunity to avoid delays and allow resolution of any queries or issues that may arise.

Failure to provide adequate VFM evidence will result in your claim(s) being rejected.

Please Note: 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. On the application form please select 'not VAT registered'.

Please note West Lothian LAG does not make advance payments. If you feel your organisation would struggle to pay costs upfront please discuss this with the Co-ordinator.

Networking and Shared Learning
Introducing grant recipients to each other can have a hugely positive impact; This year we are permitting each project to add a small budget to enable them to visit or host other CLLD recipients (current or past including LEADER projects). If you wish take this opportunity you must provide information on your plans within your application (Project Plans section). You will also need to set out the cost of doing this in as much detail as possible in the Cost section of the application form. You will be expected to write up a report on the visit/event in your final claim.

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
- Staff not directly attributable to project delivery
- Payments for unfunded pensions
- Bonus or commission payments
- Gifts and hospitality
- Costs to meet a statutory requirement
- Cost reclaimable by the Grantee elsewhere

*the project cannot start before you have signed your your offer of grant via our online system.

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.
If you are awarded less than your full application amount you will be expected to supply and equitable amount of match funding. E.g. if you were to be awarded 50% of your total application amount you would be expected to supply 50% of the match funding towards the project.

Publicity
All publicity must include WLC and Scottish Government Logos and the text 'Funded by the Rural Community Led Local Development Fund'. Logos will be supplied by the co-ordinator once you project is approved.

Outcomes and Outputs
We are currently using the Social Value Engine to measure the 'social value' each project makes to their local community: **https://socialvalueengine.com/**
Once your application has been approved the co-ordinator will contact you regarding social value outputs.

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 and may cause expenditure to be ineligible.

- Up to a 10% overspend will allowed per cost headings without a Change Request. This must be offset by underspends in other categories
- 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)
- 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

CLAIMS AND REPORTS

All expenditure must be accounted for and evidenced through documentation as per the table below:

Expenditure Type	Evidence of Spend		Evidence of Defrayment
Purchase	Invoice or receipt		Bank Statement
Staff Salary	Payslips and timesheets where applicable		
Employers NI	Breakdown showing contribution by staff member	One submission to demonstrate costs only	
Employers Pension	Copy of pension contract and breakdown of contribution by staff member		

You may also be asked for evidence of meeting the Fair Work First standards when you submit a claim for staff costs. See Annex B for further detail.

Bank Statements
Claims must be made electronically via our online portal.
- All payments should be made from the bank account for which you have supplied a statement for at time of application
    - Statements must show the account number, sort code, and organisation name
    - Downloads and screenshots from online bank accounts are accepted
    - Payments should be made via debit cards or online payments from this account
    - Other payment methods will need to be agreed with the co-ordinator at the time of application
- More than one claim may be submitted but your final claim must be submitted by 10th March 2025
- Applicants will be required to submit a final report, including Social Value Engine outputs
    - Evidence of outputs and outcomes must be supplied, this may include, photographs, videos, feedback forms and diaries.

Claim Evidence and Retention of Assets
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
- Capital items will need to be used for the purpose for which they were bought for a minimum period of 5 years from the date of purchase
- Evidence must be retained for 6 years from the date of expenditure

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 above.
Project may only appeal on grounds of LAG 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 extra information and evidence which are the basis of the appeal and 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: Katherine.Purser@westlothian.gov.uk

ANNEX A: Supporting Documentation

Document	✔
1. Bank statement showing:	
a. organisation name and address	
b. account number	
c. sort code	
2. Management accounts	
3. Constitution and/or Memorandum of Association	
4. List of board members and positions held	
5. Title deeds or valid lease and owners' permissions	
6. Evidence you have met with any statutory requirements	
7. Staff Cost Calculator*	
8. Salary benchmarking or pay scale structure	
9. Evidence of salary/hourly rate	
10. Employer pension contributions	
11. Evidence of need or demand	
12. Evidence of local support for the project	

*Provided on request

ANNEX B: Fair Work First

Fair Work First guidance for organisations seeking and awarding public sector grants, contracts and other funding.

[Fair Work First Guidance: Supporting the implementation of Fair Work First in workplaces across Scotland (www.gov.scot)](#)

Key considerations to take into account are:

Evidence of appropriate channels for 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. This aligns with conditions for application for statutory union recognition and is therefore considered as a benchmark in terms of the size of workforce where collective representation would be expected. In all other cases, evidence must be provided to show that voice exists at both an individual and collective level in the organisation. The table below explains how the different channels of voice can be evidenced, the expectation being that at least one channel at both levels (individual and collective) is evidenced.

Evidence of payment of the real Living Wage

Grant value	Evidence			
	Directly employed staff	**Apprentices**	**16-17 year old workers**	**Contracted and agency staff**
Below £100k (cumulative)	• Living Wage Accreditation; or • Self-declaration	• Self-declaration	• Self-declaration	• Self-declaration
Equal to or above £100k (cumulative)	• Living Wage Accreditation; or • Anonymised payroll; or • Accountant certificate	• Anonymised payroll; or • Accountant certificate	• Anonymised payroll; or • Accountant certificate	• Anonymised copy of contract for relevant contractors/ agency workers

Living Wage Employer Accreditation
Living Wage Employer Accreditation applies to only:
• directly employed staff aged 18 years of age and over
• those who are not apprentices

Further supporting documents can be found here:
https://www.gov.scot/policies/fair-and-inclusive-workplaces/

ANNEX C: Web Application Guide

Application

After you have submitted your Expression of Interest (EoI) you will be emailed a link to the full application.

- You do not need to complete this in one sitting:
  - To save your draft application, scroll to the bottom of the page and click on 'Submit Later'
  - You will be sent a link to your draft application
  - Click on the link to resume your application

To complete your application:

- Complete all mandatory areas, you will not be able to submit your application unless these are completed
- You must include 2 signatories (please ensure their emails are correct or you will not be able to sign your offer of grant)
- Please ensure the 'Amount applied for in this application' is correct. This is your costs minus your match funding (where applicable)
- Finally, there is a section to upload your:
  - Constitution or memorandum of understanding and up to date board members list
  - Most recent bank statements
  - Most recent management/audited accounts
  - Additional section for any supporting documentation; you may wish to include value for money exercises here

Once you have submitted your application you will be emailed a link where you can download a copy of your application. Please ensure you save a copy of this for your records as it forms part of your contract, should you receive an award.

After your Submission

Your application will now be sent to the co-ordinator for checks. Once these have been completed you may receive an email asking you to supply more information or to say the application has been approved for the next stage.

It will then be assed by the Local Action Group (LAG).

- Your application may be:
  - Reverted to draft if it requires more information
  - Approved
  - Approved with conditions
  - Declined
- You will receive an automated email with your grant status and the co-ordinator will also email you regarding any conditions of grant or the reason if your application has been declined.
- Please note you may also be offered a grant smaller than you requested. In this instance the co-ordinator will email you to explain the circumstances.

If approved you will be sent an email from 'Signable' so that you can sign your offer of grant online. You can do this by typing, singing or uploading a signature. Both signatories must sign the document. Once this is complete you will receive an email with a link that enables you to download a copy of your offer of grant.

Claims

An email with a link to the claims process will be sent to you. Please save this email or bookmark the link as all your claims will be made using it. This can be resent by the co-ordinator if you mislay it.

When you are ready to make a claim please click and follow the process below:

1. Click 'Make a Claim' at the top of the page
2. The system will automatically generate a claim title (this may be edited)
3. Under 'add receipts' click 'upload picture/pdf' to add your invoice or receipt:
   a. Choose a cost category from the drop down
   b. Under 'document notes add a descriptive title e.g. '(Item 1 - Boardroom Chairs – INV No. 123 – 2024/11/26'
   c. Add the total costs you are claiming e.g. including/excluding VAT
      i. If you are adding more than one document per item (e.g. you are adding an explanatory note) **please only put the cost against one document**
   d. Click 'upload selected files'
   e. You can upload more items for your claim returning to step 3
4. Under 'Additional Supporting Documents' add the bank statement(s) that show the defrayal of the items uploaded
   a. Please highlight the items you are claiming. If there are a large number of items it is advisable to number them and include the number in the description of your receipt (Step 3.b.). This will help us to process your claim more quickly
   b. You may redact personal or private payments from the bank statement
5. You may also use the 'Additional Supporting Documentation' section to upload any outstanding value for money exercises.
   a. Please upload quotes or screen shots of website prices. Links to websites are not accepted as prices may change.
   b. If you have a number of value for money exercises to complete you will need to upload a spreadsheet tracking your costs and quotes.
6. Once all our documents are uploaded please hit submit or save the claim if you still have more work to do on it. You can return to it at any time using the original link.

✓ Please note that the system does not stop you exceeding the limit on your costs categories or your grant as a whole. You will need to check this against your application.

Not using the cheapest quote/supplier

If you wish to use a supplier that is not the cheapest available it will need to be approved prior to spending the funds. To do this please email the co-ordinator with the cost comparison and an explanation of your choice. Approval will be given by the co-ordinator or the LAG depending on the significance of the price difference. Once this is agreed you will also need to upload this information as part of your claim.

Match Funding

If your project has match funding you will be paid a percentage of the costs claimed as outlined in your Offer of Grant.

E.g. if your project costs £10,000 but you have £1,000 match funding them we will pay 90% of your costs. This means when you submit a claim you will receive 90% of the amount claimed.

Example:

Project Cost: £10,000	Awarded: £9,000
Match Funding: £1,000	Percentage: 90%
Claim 1: £1,500	Amount paid: £1,350

The online system is not currently able to make these calculations so it will be done by the co-ordinator once the claim is checked.

7. Once the co-ordinator has checked your claim it will either be:
   a. Approved and your payment calculated and processed
   b. Declined and sent for rework
   c. Declined as ineligible

If the claim needs reworking the co-ordinator will email you to explain what needs doing. You can use the original link to rework your claim. If the claim is ineligible you will receive and email explaining why.

8. You can use your original link to make as many claims as you need to draw down your award.

Once your claims and project are complete you will be asked to complete some outputs and outcomes to measure the success of your project. This via be via the Social Value Engine, which measure social return on investment. The co-ordinator will be in touch regarding this separately.