West Lothian - Rural Community Local Led Development 2024-2025

Application Guidance

Contents

1. 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 Group (LAG), made up of people from the local community as well as public sector organisations. They work in partnership to agree local priorities and make decisions on grants.

The fund is supported by West Lothian Council who act as 'Lead Partner' to administer the grants on behalf of the LAG.

Please Note:

- Due to the short-term nature of the funding we do not anticipate covering staff costs (please see Section 3)
- We do not pay costs upfront
- Projects must not start until you return your signed Offer of Grant
- All project must be complete by 13th March 2026
- Supporting Documents – Naming Conventions:
    - Please ensure you name your documents in compliance with the naming conventions outlined in Annex A and in the Cost Workbook.

PLEASE READ THE GUIDANCE IN FULL BEFORE COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION

3. IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Dates and Deadlines

Round 1	Dates
Application deadline	Monday 7th July 2025
Application assessment date	Thursday 17th July 2025
Project Award notification by	Thursday 24th July 2025
Round 2	**Dates**
Application deadline	Monday 22nd September 2025
Application assessment date	Wednesday 1st October 2025
Project Award notification by	Wednesday 8th October 2025
Programme Closure	
All projects must be completed	13th March 2026
Financial claims must be submitted by	23rd March 2026

Eligible Areas

Projects based in, or benefitting, rural areas of West Lothian are eligible. We are currently using the National Records of Scotland population estimate for mid-2022.

List A: Towns and villages with population under 10,000 - **Eligible**

List B: Towns and villages with population under 10,000 but part of a larger conurbation - **Eligible if part of a project that covers a wider area of places from List A or that can demonstrate a high level of fit with rural development**

List C: Towns of over 10,000 - **Not eligible**

List A		List B	List C
Addiewell	Loganlea	East Whitburn	Armadale
Blackburn	Longridge	Pumpherston	Bathgate
Blackridge	Mid Calder	Uphall	Broxburn
Breich	Philipstoun	Uphall Station	Linlithgow
Bridgehouse	Polbeth		Livingston
Bridgend	Seafield		Whitburn
Dechmont	Stoneyburn		
East Calder	Threemiletown		
Ecclesmachan	Torphichen		
Fauldhouse	West Calder		
Harburn	Westfield		
Kirknewton	Winchburgh		

Eligible Applicants

Organisations 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 this time
- If you are unsure if your organisation/group qualifies please get in contact

Funding Available

- Funding for 2025/2026 is mainly capital with a smaller allocation of revenue funds:
    - Capital expenditure is defined as money spent to acquire physical assets such as property, technology, or equipment
    - Revenue expenditure is defined as money used to cover operating costs, administration and services
- You may apply for up to 100% of costs but projects with match funding are encouraged
- Minimum project size: £500
- Maximum project size: £20,000 unless covering a significant amount of the eligible West Lothian area.
- In accordance with the Third Sector Fair Funding Charter we support the Full Recovery Costs (FCR) model and will allow operational costs to be added to a project with a limit set at 20% of total project value.[1]

<u>Please note</u>, **project costs are not paid up front.** All cost must be incurred and a claim submitted with relevant evidence before we make any payment. For further information please refer to the claims section.

Funding Priorities

Projects must align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the Scottish National Performance Framework and achieve progress towards at least one of the Scottish Government's policy priorities which are:

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

Projects should also seek to advance inclusion, equality and diversity.

The LAG will also be looking for projects that have long term sustainability inbuilt, or that have a clear exit plan.

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 organisations to share what they have learnt or learn from others. If you wish take this opportunity you must provide information on your plans within your application (Project Benefits section). You will also need to set out the cost of doing this 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.

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[1] If you wish to include these costs you must discuss them with the co-ordinator prior to application.

5. INDICATIVE COSTS AND PROCUREMENT

A Cost Workbook will need to be submitted with your application. This will be supplied along with the application form.

Expenditure
Indicative costs should be submitted using costs headings and the Outline Spend section of the workbook used to give more detail.

For example:
Cost heading: Activity Equipment
Cost: £500
Outline Spend: Paint, paper, brushes

Grouping spend into cost headings will allow you more freedom for minor changes in expenditure and avoid numerous change requests.
In most instances, cost over £1000, or for which you are getting sperate quotes, should be listed on separate lines. If you are unsure how to set out your expenditure please contact the co-ordinator.

Cost that will not be reimbursed without prior agreement with the co-ordinator may be, but are not limited to:
- Staff costs
- Travel and subsistence costs
- Overheads including utility costs and management fees

Value for Money
The following value for money (VFM) evidence supplied for all project costs:

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

For example:
Cost heading: Activity Equipment
Cost: £500
Best Value: We compared cost of items across Amazon, Hobbycraft and a local supplier. The local supplier is best value as we have agreed discounts for bulk purchases.

To evidence prices from websites please take a screen shot. Photographs of screens and web links will not be accepted.

Use of local suppliers are encouraged but fair an open competition, as well as conflicts of interest, must be considered.

Fit for purpose: Price comparisons for capital items should be made on a like for like basis and it should be noted that the cheapest option may not always represent value for money. For example, office chairs bought from low cost online retailers tend to have a limited life span. Specialist retailers of office and hospitality equipment sell chairs made from more robust materials that are built to be used every day and have a much longer lifespan, and often a guarantee. These would therefore be considered better value for money as well as more sustainable.

Please note: Should you wish to proceed with a supplier that is not the cheapest (in a 'like for like' comparison) you will need to contact the co-ordinator for approval *prior* to purchases being made.

Staff Costs

Due to the short-term nature of the funding we do not anticipate covering staff costs. However, they may be considered for one off events or similar. Please discuss this with the co-ordinator before submitting your application.

If staff costs are agreed you will be asked to submit a 'Fair Work First' Policy and provide evidence that you pay at least the real living wage. For more information please see Annex E.

Evidence of employers NI, pension contributions and hours worked will be required. A staff cost calculator can be supplied.

Any staff costs not discussed prior to award will not be paid. This includes travel and subsistence costs.

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
- Payments for unfunded pensions
- Bonus or commission payments
- Gifts and hospitality
- Costs to meet a statutory requirement
- Cost reclaimable by the Grantee elsewhere

*Your project cannot start before your signed offer of grant has been returned to, and acknowledged by, the co-ordinator.

**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.

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.

Please note: Where a project has match funding, your award will be made based on a percentage of the total costs of the project. When making a claim you will need to submit and evidence the total costs.   You will then be paid at the percentage outlined in your cost workbook. Please see the example in the table below:

Total Project Costs	Match Funding	RCLLD Funding
£5,000.00 (100%)	£2,000.00 (40%)	£3,000.00 (60%)
Claim 1	**Match Funding Contribution**	**RCLLD Payment**
£1,500.00 (100%)	£600.00 (40%)	£900.00 (60%)

If your other funder is paying for an item/cost in full then it is <u>not</u> considered match funding and it should not be counted as part of the project you are applying to RCLLD for. If you are unsure please discuss with the co-ordinator prior to submitting your application.

Payment

Costs must be paid by card or bank transfer from the bank account for which you have supplied a statement for at the time of application. If you use an alternative payment system this must be discussed with the co-ordinator prior to application. Please read the Claims Guidance in ANNEX C for further information.

Please note: Unless evidence can be provided to demonstrate otherwise, we will assume that your match funding will be paid in full. Where your project spend is less than was originally anticipated your RCLLD payment will be reduced accordingly. This will be calculated at final payment stage. Please see the example in the table below:

Total Project Costs	Match Funding	RCLLD Funding
£5,000.00	£2,000.00	£3,000.00
Actual Cost	**Total Match Funding Payment**	**RCLLD Payment**
£4,500.00	£2,000.00	£2,500.00

6. REPORTING

We are currently using the Social Value Engine to measure the social return on investment (SRI) each project contributes to their local community: **https://socialvalueengine.com/**

Please list as much detail about your expected outputs and outcomes, including quantitative and qualitative information, in the Benefits section of your application.

The co-ordinator will contact you regarding SRI reporting.

ANNEX A: Supporting Documents

All applicants must submit:
1. CLLD Costs and Management workbook and value for money evidence
2. Bank statement showing:
   a. organisation name and address
   b. account number
   c. sort code
   (Sensitive information may be redacted)
3. Your most recent management accounts
4. Constitution and/or Memorandum of Association
5. List of board members and positions held

Where staff costs are agreed you will need to submit:
6. Staff contracts (if not yet contracted these will need to be supplied prior to payment)
7. Job descriptions
8. Staff costs calculators
9. Fair Work First policy (see Annex E)

Depending on the type of projects, you may also need to submit:
10. Insurance (e.g. public liability, building and contents, etc)
11. Child protection and vulnerable adult policy
12. Copy of your match funding offer
13. Title deeds or valid lease and owners' permissions
14. Evidence of asset transfer
15. Evidence you have met with any statutory requirements
16. Evidence of operational cost agreed with the co-ordinator

You may also wish to submit the following to support your application:
17. Evidence of need or demand
18. Evidence of local support for the project

Please note: Other documents may be requested by the co-ordinator dependant on your project.

Naming Convention:
The following naming convention should be used for your supporting documents:

Organisation - Project Name – Type of document – document number (where applicable) - Date

E.G. West Lothian Forest Charity – Armadale Tree Planting – Quote - Digger Hire 2.B. – 01.05.2025

<u>**Please note:**</u> Failure to use the naming convention may mean your documents are rejected.

ANNEX B: 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/or 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

ANNEX C: Successful Applications

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 not be reimbursed.

- All changes between capital and revenue budgets must be agreed by the co-ordinator prior to spend
- Up to a 10% overspend will allowed per cost headings _without_ a Change Request providing there is no change between capital and revenue budgets. Overspends must be offset by underspends in other cost headings
- 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

Please contact the co-ordinator for a change request form.

Claims Guidance

A claim form and reporting template will be supplied by the co-ordinator.

You can make as many claims as you wish but your final claim must be submitted by 23th March 2026

Costs must be paid by card or bank transfer from the bank account for which you have supplied a statement for at the time of application. If you use an alternative payment system this must be discussed with the co-ordinator prior to application.

We do _not_ accept:
- Purchases made from personal accounts
- Credit card payments unless agreed with the co-ordinator at the time of application

Evidence

To make a claim for a purchase it must be evidenced by an:

- Invoice or receipt

To make a claim for staff costs they must be evidenced by:
- Payslips
- Timesheets where relevant
- Evidence for payment of employers NI and pension contributions (first claim only)

All claims must be evidenced by:
- Bank statement showing the funds have defrayed from your bank account:
  - Statements must show:
    - account number
    - sort code
    - organisation name
- Downloads and screenshots from online bank accounts are accepted as long as the above information is visible and clear

- Items being claimed should be numbered on the bank statement to match the numbers on the claim form
- You may redact personal or private payments from the bank statement that are not relevant to your claim

Submission
Your claim, along with supporting evidence, should be submitted via the RCLLD mailbox. All documents should be saved, prior to sending, using the naming conventions in the claim form and outlined below:

Invoice/Receipt:
Organisation - Project Name – Claim number – Item – Item number - Date of purchase
E.G. West Lothian Forest Charity – Armadale Tree Planting – Claim 1 – Apples Trees – 1a – 01.05.2025

Bank statements**:**
Organisation - Project Name –Claim number – Item Type - Date of statement
E.G. West Lothian Forest Charity – Armadale Tree Planting - Claim 1 – Bank Statement - 15.04.2025

Please note: Each item must be identifiable on the invoice and bank statement. If an invoice has purchases outwith your project then the relevant items must be highlighted and summed on the invoice. E.g. If the total invoice amount is for £500 but only £250 worth of items are for this project then those items should be highlighted and the costs totalled and written on the invoice.

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 RCLLD mailbox with the cost comparison/quotes 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.

Payment
All reasonable endeavours will be made to pay your grant within 2 weeks of receipt. Please be aware that delays to payment are usually due by missing information or poorly notated invoices.
If the claim needs reworking the co-ordinator will email you to explain what needs doing. If you need help with your claim please contact the co-ordinator.

Payment will be made via the council's payment system. If you are not registered with this system you will be required to complete a new supplier form prior to your first payment. **Please note** the system is cleared periodically meaning even if you have previously had payment from the council, you may still need to complete a form.

Match Funding
If your project has match funding you will be paid a percentage of the total costs claimed as outlined in your cost workbook. For more information please see the Match Funding section in the main guidance.

Underspends
Please inform the co-ordinator of any underspends as soon as possible. This allows us to reallocate funds that you cannot use to other projects.

If you would like to use the funds for additional purchases you will need to contact the co-ordinator and complete a change request form. If we are nearing the end of the programme this may not be possible.

End of Project Reporting
Reporting methodology for the Social Value Engine will be agreed with the co-ordinator on receipt of your grant award. You will also be asked to submit a short report for the Local Action Group along with supporting evidence, this this may include, photographs, videos, feedback forms and diaries.

Reporting Terminology
- Outputs: activity taking place as a result of the project e.g. 4 mental health workshops
- Outcomes: results of the activity undertaken e.g. improved mental health in participants

- Quantitative: data that involve numerical information e.g. number of people participating in a workshop
- Qualitative: information that is descriptive and non-numerical e.g. feedback from those participating in the workshop

- Social Return on Investment: a principles-based method for measuring extra-financial value not otherwise reflected or involved in conventional financial accounts: https://socialvalueuk.org/about-us/

Retention of Assets and Documentation
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

ANNEX D: Logos

All publicity must include the West Lothian RCLLD, WLC and Scottish Government Logos and the text: 'Funded by the Rural Community Led Local Development Fund'.

- You may include your own logos
- All logos should be of equitable size

If you require logos in a different format please contact the co-ordinator

Scottish Government logo:

West Lothian Council logo:

West Lothian RCLLD logo:

ANNEX E: Fair Work First

Fair Work First is the Scottish Government's flagship policy for driving high quality and fair work, and workforce diversity across the labour market.

For those receiving public sector grants the default position is that Fair Work First criteria for paying at least the real Living Wage and providing appropriate channels for effective workers' voice will be mandatory while the other criteria will be encouraged.

Fair Work First Criteria:
- payment of at least the real Living Wage;
- provide appropriate channels for effective workers' voice, such as trade union recognition;
- investment in workforce development;
- no inappropriate use of zero hours contracts;
- action to tackle the gender pay gap and create a more diverse and inclusive workplace;
- offer flexible and family friendly working practices for all workers from day one of employment; and,
- oppose the use of fire and rehire practice.

For more information please visit: Fair Work First Guidance: Supporting the implementation of Fair Work First in workplaces across Scotland (www.gov.scot)

Evidencing payment of the real living wage:
Grants under £100k – Self certification and evidence of wages paid when making a claim.
Grants equal to or above £100k - Living wage accreditation and evidence of wages paid when making a claim.

Evidencing 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. If your organisation has more than 21 workers please contact the co-ordinator.

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

ANNEX F: 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 in Annex B.

If your project turned down you will be supplied with the reasons for its rejection. You may reapply in future rounds.

If your project was rejected you may appeal this decision if you believe there were 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 information and evidence as to demonstrate 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: RCLLD@westlothian.gov.uk