

**Third Sector Community Support Fund 2025/26**

**Background**

The Third Sector Community Support Fund 2025/26 is now open for applications to provide one-year funding to support a range of priorities set out below. The fund will be open for seven weeks with a closing date of Sunday, 23 February 2025.

Funding will be available to cover projects from **1 July 2025** to **30 June 2026.**

You will be informed of the outcome of your application no later than 31 March 2025.

**What are the priorities that we are looking to address?**

The funding is open to all properly constituted third sector organisations based in West Lothian that can deliver work that supports the aims of the fund, for example national organisations can apply but would be expected to have a base in West Lothian and be able to show clear strategic links at a local level. The funding aims to support the Council to address one or more of the five identified priorities and support the delivery of the Locality Plans in our most deprived communities.

1. **West Lothian Council’s Corporate Plan**

Applications should aim to address one or more of the five priorities. These are:

1. Raising educational attainment
2. Strengthening care and support for children, adults and older people
3. Investing in skills and jobs
4. Helping to create strong and sustainable communities
5. Tackling homelessness, poverty and inequality

West Lothian’s full corporate plan can be viewed at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/33026/Corporate-Plan>

Applications that directly focus on the provision of employability support, should be able to demonstrate that the project cannot be funded elsewhere through employability funding and has the full support of the LEP (Local Economic Partnership). Any that are unable to demonstrate this will not be funded.

1. **Areas of Multiple Deprivation**

The focus of the fund continues to emphasise supporting our most vulnerable communities, those in the bottom 20%, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zones. See the Scottish Government’s interactive map of the areas for more details (<https://simd.scot/#/simd2020/BTTTFTT/9/-4.0000/55.9000/> ). These areas are covered by the six Community Planning Partnership Locality Plans and applications should support the delivery of these plans. In each case there is a local partners group that overseas this each plan and related actions and if successful you would be expected to engage with that process to build links in the areas covered. Applications should be discussed with the Regeneration Officer before submission.

See below:

1. Armadale - [Locality Plan](https://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/viewDoc.asp?c=e%97%9Dj%93p%7F%89)
2. Boghall/Bathgate - [Locality Plan](https://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/viewDoc.asp?c=e%97%9Dj%94m%7D%88)
3. Bridgend - [Locality Plan](https://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/viewDoc.asp?c=e%97%9Dj%94j%7F%89)
4. Fauldhouse and The Breich Valley (Addiewell, Fauldhouse, Polbeth and Stoneyburn) - [Locality Plan](https://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/viewDoc.asp?c=e%97%9Dj%94j%7E%8D)
5. Livingston (Deans, Carmondean, Knightsridge, Dedridge, Ladywell and Craigshill) - [Locality Plan including Craigshill Engagement](https://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/viewDoc.asp?c=e%97%9Dj%94m%80%90)

[Locality Plan including Deans, Carmondean and Knightsridge Engagement](https://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/viewDoc.asp?c=e%97%9Dj%93ry%90) [Locality Plan including Ladywell and Dedridge Engagement](https://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/viewDoc.asp?c=e%97%9Dj%93rz%90)

1. Whitburn and Blackburn - [Locality Plan](https://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/viewDoc.asp?c=e%97%9Dj%94i%82%87)

The funding would like to see projects that can demonstrate **supporting communities to alleviate poverty.** See the current Anti-Poverty Strategy [West Lothian Tackling Poverty Strategy - West Lothian Council](https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/anti-poverty)).

The fund will also consider applications that support key thematic groups, for example young people, families, older people and people with protected characteristics. You should be able to show how you support any local strategic plans or partnership groups if not part of the plans highlighted above.

**How much can I apply for?**

Whilst you will need to cost your application to suit your identified needs. You must clearly show why you are asking for the amount identified. You should be aware that applications in excess of **£50,000** will not be considered.

One caveat to this relates to consideration of innovative consortium bids. Such bids may apply for a higher amount, will be considered on the specific merits and how this might affect the ability to support a range of applications. A maximum amount has not been specified to allow for applicants to make a value for money case. Consortium bids must have a lead partner.

**Balance of Funding**

Given the amount available and the likely high level of demand we are also looking for applications that maximise the funding being made available to support communities. It is unlikely that an applicant looking for 100% funding will be successful. Applicants will be expected to show how the funding will support delivery of a service or how it can enable projects that utilise other funding identified by the applicant thereby showing how the contribution of the Council through this fund helps to deliver that larger service provision. There is no specified percentage for this but this will be considered as part of the decision process.

Applications should be for either:

* a new project that could be funded through a mix of funding (external/self generated etc.) with the Council contributing a percentage of the total cost: **OR**
* a percentage to support the applicant’s ability to provide a service or project where those elements are vital but not supported or funded directly by other funders. This may involve some core costs for example.

You will need to evidence any match funding in the application, including time lines for any match funding correlating to the funding period.

Thought should be given to proportionality when putting your application together to be clear that the amount being asked for is justified by the number of beneficiaries or level of support, and clearly shows value for money.

**What can the funding be used for?**

You can only use the funding to pay for costs associated with delivering what is set out in your application. This can be for a wide range of costs both to develop and run a new project or can also cover core costs to help the organisations deliver ongoing work as long as it delivers to funding priorities. The funding is to primarily cover revenue but some small capital costs can be considered. These costs can include the following items:

* Staffing
* Core costs such as office management and administration
* Volunteer costs e.g. travel expenses
* Equipment and materials where clearly evidenced as crucial to delivery of the work as outlined in the application
* Hire of venues or rental of premises and related costs
* Other costs, including core costs

If you are including core costs you should itemise these to be clear what these are:

* how this is currently funded;
* why it is required;
* why it is important; and
* the difference it makes to your work.

As part of the application form applicants should provide information on whether they pay the Living Wage, Real Living Wage and adhere/or working towards the Scottish Government’s Fair Work First approach ([Fair Work First: guidance - March 2023 - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-work-first-guidance-2/)).

**How to Apply**

**Completed applications and required documentation should be returned by email to the Community Wealth Building Team at the following email address:**

**RegenerationTeam@westlothian.gov.uk**

This should be no later than: **Sunday, 23rd February 2025.**

Any application received beyond that date will not be eligible for consideration.

A maximum word count has been set per section. You **must** stick to this and be clear, concise and where possible, use bullet points. To be fair to all applicants any words over the word limit will **not be** considered. If your project comprises more than one discrete element please treat and describe them individually.

As part of the application process you will be asked to provide the following information:

**A general summary of your project which outlines and identifies:**

* Who will benefit (if a specific community you must be able to evidence that they live in that community (i.e. via post code for example);
* How it will clearly align with and contribute to the priorities that you have selected.
* How it links to other funding you have identified and/or other projects you will be delivering, and
* How you have considered the sustainability of the work

**Need for the Project**

* How do you know the project is needed? (For example, is it based on surveys of your community (local community based or thematic), engagement with users, links to partnership work, link to plans etc);
* What support have you received from partners mentioned within the application;
* Have you identified an existing gap in provision based on an understanding of other support that may be available to your beneficiaries. (For example, if your project aims to address employment, wellbeing, older/young people you should show how you have identified this as a gap based on understanding of what may be being delivered by other local organisations including West Lothian Council and other Community Planning Partners.)

**Outcomes for the project which outline:**

* What you want to achieve; what changes or difference will the funding we give you make to the people and communities that you are targeting?
* Your planned activities: What measurable programmes, projects or activities you will design, use and deliver to achieve your outcomes? (For example, a training course is an activity; community engagement is also an activity. You should also show how the project is going to be advertised and promoted and beneficiaries recruited/targeted/accessed).

**Outcome indicators for the project which demonstrate:**

* How you will measure your success?
* How you will show you are achieving or will achieve your stated outcomes?
* You have robust systems in place to track your chosen indicators (so that, for example, we can clearly see you are targeting the right beneficiaries, no duplications, they are signposted to the right organisations as necessary, you can follow up on clients as they require)

**Costs which clearly show:**

Your application should clearly show how you have costed your project with a breakdown of the resources you require e.g. staff, rent, equipment, training/course materials etc.

You will be asked to report back on a quarterly basis and at the end of the funding period to show how the funding has been utilised including the provision of supporting evidence (i.e. pay slips, timesheets, invoices, bank statements etc.).

**How will the application be assessed?**

All applications will be assessed by a panel made up of Council officers and external Community Planning Partner officers. That panel will draw on expert advice from officers from the Council and Community Planning Partners to ensure that the application being considered addresses local strategic priorities, builds on or complements other provision and does not duplicate other provision already in place.

The panel will also consider the applicant’s financial health and governance arrangements.

Please be aware that you ***must*** submit all requested documentation by the deadline or your application will not be submitted to the panel for assessment.

Officers may contact you with supplementary questions for the purposes of clarification both before the panel meets and possibly after.

The panel will meet in late March and applicant will be informed of the outcome by 31 March 2025.

**What happens if the application is successful?**

If you are successful, you will receive an offer letter from us via email that will outline how much we are investing, the terms of the offer and the methods of monitoring our investment.

Please note that you may not be offered the full amount requested. However, where this is the case officers will detail the panel’s reasoning for this decision.

All funding is reliant on you signing a Conditions of Grant agreement. Funding will be paid directly into your bank account in June 2025 on receipt of an invoice. Please note that no funding will be provided until the Conditions of Grant agreement is signed.

**Monitoring**

All organisations that receive funding will be required to complete a **quarterly monitoring** form. Details of which will be included with the award letter which must be completed and submitted each quarter with a full one of year report to be completed after 12 months.

Copies of the monitoring form will accompany your funding award letter and conditions of grant so you will be clear of the requirements before you sign the offer. **This will cover both your performance in relation to your outcomes and financial monitoring.**

**Link Officer**

Each successful project will be allocated a Link Officer who will be your contact point for the duration of the funding. The officer will be relevant to the area of work you are delivering. You will be responsible for keeping in touch with the officer and work with them to ensure the project/service is on track both in terms of actions and spend. They will also discuss any relevant areas identified in the section covering governance and health of the organisation and support as may be needed.

**What happens if the application is unsuccessful?**

If you are unsuccessful in your application, feedback will be provided as to the reasons why.

However, the decision that we make is final and there is no process for appeal. Council officers will offer support and provide advice on alternative sources of funding.

**Additional conditions**

Additional conditions that will apply to the offer will include:

* Right of access to organisation’s financial records to ensure the funding is being used for the purposes it is granted for
* The council can reclaim funding if it can be shown that it has not been used in accordance with the application and with conditions of funding agreement. We will not reclaim funding if it can be shown that there is no fault on the part of the organisation.

Other conditions appropriate to our investment may also be included in the Offer Letter and Funding Agreement.

For further information on how your data will be processed please view the privacy notice at [Third Sector Community Support Fund Privacy Notice](https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/58549/Third-Sector-Community-Support-Fund-Privacy-Notice/pdf/Third_Sector_Community_Support_Fund_Privacy_Notice.pdf)

**Help and Advice**

You can also get help and advice on your application by contacting the Community Wealth Building Team at (regenerationteam@westlothian.gov.uk) and we will get back to you.