**Highland Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults Year 4**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

The following are some anticipated FAQs, we will keep this up to date as further queries come in.

Our Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund for Adults is divided into two separate funds for which you may apply, depending on your plans and eligibility.

**Small Grants £10,000 or less**

For grassroots activity which aims to address one or more of the following:

* Reducing social isolation for people over the age of 26
* Unpaid carers and those with a long-term condition
* Prevention of crisis and suicide
* Rurally distanced
* Poverty
* Trauma ​

**Development & Collaboration £50,000 or less**

* To support greater collaboration between one or more organisations in meeting the underpinning priorities, **or**
* To provide investment to implement action plans prepared in consultation with the community, with needs analysis demonstrating particular impact for the mental health and wellbeing of the community.

**How to apply?**

Applications for small grants will be completed through the [HTSI web portal](https://form.jotform.com/241923433879365) using this link. This will be open between 30 July and 8 October 2024.

* Phase One (applications received by midday 2 September) - assessed late September
* Phase Two (applications received after midday 2 Sep and before 5.00pm 8 October) - assessed early November

Expressions of interest in the Development & Collaboration Grants will be accessed via the [HTSI web portal using this link](https://form.jotform.com/242354511603346). This will be open between 9 September and 28 October, and you can expect decisions by 29 November.

**What can you apply for?**

The range of activities you could undertake to meet your locally identified needs is quite broad but is only aimed at reaching adults over 16 within the Highland area (starting by April 2025). The fund is aiming to invest in new initiatives, but we can fund existing projects if you are improving or developing the original project and are clear howyou plan to reach more people (especially seldom heard, at-risk groups). However, an award in previous years gives no indication of the likelihood of success this year.

You are permitted to apply for more than one small grant if you have separate activities that meet the criteria. However, we would urge caution as the fund is usually oversubscribed by a significant amount. It is possible that the funding panel may select only one of an organisation’s multiple applications for this reason.

You may also apply for both a small grant and a separate application to the Development & Collaboration Grant. However, these must be for separate projects/activities and bear in mind the funding panel, when considering the larger grants will already be aware of the results of the small grant awards.

The key thing is to make sure the proposed activity is driven by evidence of need, to promote mental health and wellbeing and/or protect against the impact of distress and mental ill health within your community. If you can explain the relevancy and anticipated impacts and outcomes from your activity, then there are only a few activities that will not be considered:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **We will fund** | **We cannot fund** |
| Equipment | Contingency costs, loans, endowments, or interest |
| One-off events | Electricity generation and feed-in tariff payment |
| Hall hire for community spaces | Political or religious campaigning  |
| Capital spend up to £5,000 (i.e. land or building projects)  | Profit-making/fundraising activities |
| Staff costs (one off or fixed term due to the lack of ongoing funding)  | VAT you can reclaim |
| Training costs | Statutory activities |
| Transport | Overseas travel |
| Utilities/running costs | Alcohol |
| Volunteer expenses |  |

**Can we select both development and collaborative options?**

If you are applying for the large grant, you must select either development or collaboration? Essentially, we expect proposals for large and small grants to demonstrate development and/or collaboration to some degree. This is a core element of successful applications, due to the fund being aimed at grassroots initiatives with a strong community focus. However, what we’re looking for with the larger grant amounts is to identify enhanced levels of development, or collaborative work, to a particular stage of ‘readiness’ for investment.

**Can we apply to deliver online activities?**

Yes, but you should include background information on the rationale, ie. whether this is instead of in-person activities or an additional option. For example, if you chose to deliver online instead of in-person, do you have evidence that this is how people would prefer to engage with the activity? What evidence do you have that this would provide adequate support for your community? Contrast and compare with alternatives to show that you’ve considered a range of options.

**How much can you apply for?**

Small grants applications must be for £10,000 or less. This should give you an indication of the scale and scope of the projects that are appropriate. Remember that this is for small-scale, grassroots community activity.

Your request should be driven by the actions you want to test, pilot or deliver with the guidance in mind, and the actual cost of delivery, rather than designing activity to fit the budget.

If you have a collaborative project developed with one or more other organisations, the anticipated costs should dictate whether you apply for a small grant or the larger grant. Collaboration is always to be encouraged, because it tends to provide more innovative and effective solutions. So, collaborative projects may still apply for the small grant.

The maximum limit for including capital costs in your proposal for either grant is £5,000. Capital costs are fixed, one-time expenses, e.g. for purchase of land, buildings, construction, or equipment such as laptops. Smaller items of equipment don’t need to be included as capital costs. If you’re in any doubt, please contact us as early as possible.

**How do I decide the amount to apply for?**

We recommend you establish costs for every item required for running the activity and then group these into overall categories, e.g. staffing, travel, volunteer expenses, equipment. You can also include a contingency for meeting accessibility needs, based on your own research or engagement. Be careful about over-estimating costs as this can result in costs being queried by the funding panel, or projects having to return an underspend at the end of the year.

It’s also a good idea to have a back-up plan, should costs turn out to be higher or lower than expected. This means you can switch to delivering your ‘plan B’ during the project’s original delivery time, rather than waiting till you are close to completion and discovering that you can’t continue or must ask for an extension.

**When does the funding have to be spent by?**

We anticipate the majority of projects will be 6-12 months in duration. Given the disproportionate impact the rising cost of living has had on existing mental health inequalities, we are looking for activity to start as soon as is practicable, once funds are paid into your account.

Small Grants recipients must begin at the earliest opportunity and preferably start before end December 2024. There are two phases to this grant process, so payment will depend on which phase you apply for.

Development & Collaboration grants will be paid early in the new year, so we ask that funded projects begin by April 2025.

At the very latest, we ask that all projects begin by end of April 2025 and conclude by end April 2026.

**How do we decide who should be the lead applicant?**

If you’re considering submitting a bid for the large grants as a group of organisations, you should agree which partner should lead on the application. However, please bear in mind that the lead applicant will also be responsible for managing the funds and submitting reports throughout the duration of the project.

**What reporting and evaluation expectations are there?**

All projects are expected to complete a closing evaluation report as a minimum. This report will ask you to confirm the actual spend and report any challenges or changes you’ve encountered in your delivery up to that point. The level of detail should be proportionate to the funding received, so the larger your grant sum, the larger the level of activity and consequently, the more detail we would expect.

If your project runs beyond six months, you will be asked to provide at least one progress report halfway through and a closing report at the end of your project.

If your project is close to the original completion date and you have identified an underspend – please do not submit a closing report before you contact us to discuss the most appropriate solution. You may be granted an extension, and your end date could be amended, in which case a closing report would have to be provided again.

Failure to provide your reports on time or contact us to discuss, may affect future funding decisions or result in HTSI seeking to reclaim the funding provided.

Please note, if you are awarded a grant, it is your responsibility to plan your evaluation process and allow time to submit reports as requested. You should not rely on funders to remind you when the reports are due.

**Am I expected to work in partnership?**

The short answer is yes. You don’t have to submit a partnership application, but even for a small grant, you will be asked how you are working with groups and other organisations in your community or thematic interest, and you need to make sure you can demonstrate strong connections within the community. Additionally, it is important that you can describe how people who will benefit from your proposed activities have been involved in designing the activity and how their views have shaped your proposal. This participatory approach is more effective and ensures time is spent on what matters most to the people you aim to support.

We are keen to avoid unnecessary duplication and would encourage you to make sure you explain how you are linking into similar services to provide assurance that your activity is additional and not duplicating an existing service.

**Why is there a 100 word limit on project description?**

This is a limit set by Scottish Government.

**How can I reduce my word count without missing out valid information?**

Example (removing 19 words): ~~There are several online articles~~ You can consult ~~for~~ tips on writing concisely ~~to help reduce word count easily~~ without losing ~~any~~ meaning from ~~the information you include in~~ your ~~funding~~ application.

**Who can apply?**

Any constituted third sector organisation who has access to their own bank account and can demonstrate their ability to competently deliver what they set out in their own application.

The Government are anticipating that most applications will come from smaller grass roots organisations, with encouragement to consider projects that put participation and co-design at the heart of an application.

Parent councils are eligible to apply, but the activities must specifically focus on supporting adults rather than children or young people under 16 years.

If you are an un-constituted group who would like to apply, please contact us to discuss how we might be able to support your group. We can support you to become constituted or provide small value grants for capacity building purposes.

**Can a larger Third Sector Organisation apply?**

Yes. Large organisations undertaking local initiatives are not excluded but are also not the focus of this fund. We would not expect to see Highland-wide applications except where they apply to a distinct thematic community (e.g. women from a BAME community).

The fund doesn’t stipulate the size of organisations that can apply but rather the size and focus of the work that will be commissioned. A larger organisation may be the most appropriate to deliver the work but what won’t be considered are applications working across large geographic areas or populations in one proposal.

What the panel are also unlikely to accept are multiple applications, of a similar or identical nature, for multiple areas in Highland. If a larger organisation is working with multiple communities to deliver services that are similar, there should be identifiable differences reflecting the range of needs that are particular to the proposed beneficiary group.

**What do you mean by ‘community’?**

In this instance we are looking at communities that are relatively small, either thematic or geographic. For example, we are not looking at a community that is based around a substantial population, such as ‘Inverness’, ‘Easter Ross’ or ‘Women’, these would be too large. It might be that you have a combination of geographic and thematic, i.e. ‘*women affected by domestic abuse in Mid Ross’* or ‘*men over 65 with a long-term condition in Hilton*.

Other communities may be thematic living anywhere in Highland, such as refugees, or the LGBTI+ community. These communities are among the at-risk groups prioritised by the Scottish Government due to existing health inequalities.

**When can I apply and when will a decision be made?**

Applications for small grants <£10,000 will be open between 30 July and 8 October 2024.

* Phase One - assessed 27 Sep, decisions shared by 7 Oct
* Phase Two - assessed 5 Nov, decisions shared by 11 Nov

After the first panel meeting, there will be an opportunity for the panel to offer suggestions for improving an application, which may then be reconsidered at the following panel meeting. If you apply in phase two, this is no longer an option and panel decisions will be final. For this reason, the earlier you can submit your application, the better.

Expressions of interest for Development & Collaboration grants <£50,000:

* Expression of interest (EOI) opens Monday 9 September 2024
* EOI deadline Midday 28 October 2024​
* Responses will be shared w/c 25 November 2024
* Panel presentations will take place 21 January 2025
* Decisions shared w/c 3 February 2025

HTSI Delivery partners will assess applications along with other partners, providing a local perspective, based on local priorities and need.

**When will we be paid?**

We aim to have funding agreements issued within two weeks of the decisions, and payment will follow when you return these to HTSI.

All grants will be made in one BACS payment before end of March 2025.

**When do we need to deliver the activity?**

We anticipate the majority of projects will be 6-12 months in duration and we are looking for activity to start as soon as is practicable, once funds are paid into your account.

Small Grants recipients must begin at the earliest opportunity and preferably start before end December 2024. There are two phases to this grant process, so payment date will depend on which phase you apply for.

Development & Collaboration grants will be paid later in the year, so we ask that funded projects begin by April 2025.

At the very latest, we ask that all projects begin by April 2025 and conclude by April 2026.

We have some discretion to continue if costs permit, for maximum 18 months but we’re required to report on impact of this fund in April 2026. In view of this, we would prefer most projects are wrapped up and reporting on results by then.

**How will our applications be assessed?**

In Highland we are working in partnership with the Community Planning Partnership Mental Health Delivery Group to assess applications. As such a panel of individuals from both Public and Third Sector organisations, including those who have been selected because of their relevant life experiences, will work together to approve applications.

Applications will initially be assessed, to determine if the proposal meets the essential criteria:

* small-scale, community proposal with evidence of participation
* to promote mental health and wellbeing and/or protect against the impact of distress and mental ill health
* aimed at the adult population (16 years and above)
* new initiative or developing/improving/expanding on an existing project

Applications will then be assessed on:

* Quality and appropriateness
* Collaboration and involvement of beneficiary group
* Community development practice, if appropriate
* Priorities and outcomes (including fit with areas of priority need in local areas)
* Fit with the aims and principles

Further details on the assessment process can be found in the Guidance document, which is available to download from our website <https://www.highlandtsi.org.uk/cmhwf-y4>.

**What happens if we are unsuccessful?**

This depends on when you apply. If you are not selected by the panel for an award, you will be notified by email.

If you apply for a small grant in phase one, and the panel feel the overall proposal has the potential to meet the criteria, but they don’t have enough detail or evidence to assess it, you will be invited to submit an amended application. Again, this information will be provided by email.

If you apply for a small grant in phase two, there will be no option to resubmit your application.

When you apply, we expect you will endeavour to keep track of the panel dates and contact us if you have not received a response in the estimated time. In this scenario, please check your spam folder as providers may block emails for various reasons. Please call us if you don’t find any communication from us in your spam folder.

The timeline which includes deadlines and panel dates will remain on our website for reference until the final panel meeting has taken place.

**How do we apply Fair Work if we do not directly employ staff?**

Fair Work aims to balance the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers and generates mutual benefits for individuals, organisations and communities. Fair work is embedded in public sector financial support, which means that all grant recipients will be required to pay at least the real Living Wage and provide appropriate channels for effective workers' voice as a minimum standard.

*“All UK-based staff aged 16 and over, including apprentices, who are directly employed by the grant recipient, must be paid at least the real Living Wage; and any UK-based workers who are not directly employed but are directly engaged in delivering the grant-funded activity, whether they be sub-contractors or agency staff, must also be paid at least the real Living Wage.”*

*“The Scottish Government or other relevant funder may apply limited exceptions to provide funding to organisations who cannot pay at least the real Living Wage in order that the measure is proportionate.”*

In Q39, you should describe how your organisation meets your responsibilities within the Fair Work Framework. The link is provided in the [online guidance](https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-work-first-guidance-2/pages/6/) within the question. If you need assistance understanding your responsibilities, please contact us.

Scottish Enterprise, in conjunction with the Scottish Government, Fair Work Convention and other partners, have developed an online [tool](https://fairworktool.scot/) to help employers understand and fully embed the dimensions of Fair Work.

**How can we access help with technical difficulties with the online form?**

Please contact enquiry@highlandtsi.org.uk.