

Community Support Plan - Options for new funding programme 2026-2029

Note: The current budget available is £3.3m

Option 1

Status Quo, which retains Capacity and Revenue Programmes in their current format. This option is not recommended given that the engagement and feedback received highlighted the need for change to meet the needs of the sector and communities.

| Grant | Budget (approx.) | Max Award £ | Duration (no of years) | Min. No Awards |
|---------------|------------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Capacity | £1.85m | 50,000 | 3 | 36 |
| Revenue | £1.45m | 20,000 | 3 | 72 |
| Totals | £3.3m | | | 116 |

Option 2

- 1) Community Support Large Grant – offers financial support for both programme and core running facility/staff costs (Maximum individual award **£40,000**) and
- 2) Community Support Small Grant (Maximum individual award **£5,000**)- offers financial support for small scale project costs

| Grant | Budget (approx.) | Max Award £ | Duration (no of years) | Min. No Awards |
|---------------|------------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Large | £3.2m | 40,000 | 3 | 80 |
| Small | £0.1m | 5,000 | 1 | 20 |
| Totals | £3.3m | | | 100 |

Option 3

- 1) Community Support Large Grant – offers financial support for both programme and core running facility/staff costs (Maximum individual award **£35,000**) and
- 2) Community Support Small Grant (Maximum individual award **£2,500**)- offers financial support for small scale project costs

This is the preferred option as it provides a level of support to the largest number of organisations and still includes the allocation of small grants .

| Grant | Budget (approx.) | Max Award £ | Duration (no of years) | Min. No Awards |
|---------------|------------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Large | £3.2m | 35,000 | 3 | 91 |
| Small | £0.1m | 2,500 | 1 | 40 |
| Totals | £3.3m | | | 131 |

Comments on proposed new Funding Programme

- Having one large grant with wider criteria rather than the previous revenue (£20k) and capacity (£50k) enables organisations to access funding for both programme and core running facility/staff costs.
- A need for a grant that covered both revenue and capacity costs was identified through engagement, as was a need to increase the level of funding available for core running costs.
- Community partners via engagement sessions asked for a facility for small grants. This was an ask at every engagement session. It was noted that small grants can act as an entry point for groups to receive funding and support.
- Funding will be clearly aligned to Belfast Agenda outcomes and Community Support Plan priorities. Funded groups will have to show how their application contributes to these.
- There will be an open call, proportionate process for applying for funding, assessments will be aligned to outcomes, and a monitoring framework which will allow reporting on what has been achieved. Those projects which receive the highest scores will be allocated funding until the agreed budget has been used.
- It is possible that this programme will be oversubscribed. Therefore, we propose clear eligibility criteria which will focus on organisations that deliver community benefit and applications that deliver ongoing activity in community settings, rather than for activities such as events/festivals which are already catered for by other small grant schemes.
- Members should note that if the option to include a small grant programme is selected, this would operate in Year 2 of the new funding programme and that Year 1 would focus on the operation of the new Community Support Large Grant. This is based on current resources within Neighbourhood Services and the Central Grants Unit and the challenges of delivering 2 completely new Grants Schemes simultaneously. However, the current summer scheme small grants will still take place as normal.
- In advance of funding opening, officers will undertake training with potential applicants and provide support through the application process. This can be undertaken city wide and in areas where there is identified need. Further information on this will be brought back to Committee in advance of the Scheme opening.

Members may wish to note the following potential implications;

- With one large grant, some groups who currently receive Capacity funding, if successful in a new programme may receive a reduced amount of funding.

Belfast City Council's Community Support Grant eligibility (DRAFT)

Organisations can only make **one** application to the Community Support Large Grant.

Organisations in receipt of a Community Support Large Grant cannot apply for a small grant (This is based on small grants being open in Year 2)

Who can apply

You can apply if your organisation is one of the following:

- Voluntary or community organisation
- Registered charity
- Constituted group or club
- Not-for-profit company or Community Interest Company (where any profit is reinvested in the objects of the organisation).

Applicant organisation must:

1. Have an office in and operational focus in the Belfast City Council local government district.
2. Have community benefit-as a primary objective in their constitution.
3. Have up-to-date annual and management accounts
4. Hold a bank account in the organisation's name and provide evidence of this.
5. Have a board or management committee and hold Annual General Meetings at which Board / Management Committee Members are appointed using a democratic process. (A list of members will be required and must demonstrate at least 3 board / committee members who are not related).
6. Have a governing document (Constitution comprised of the Memorandum and Articles of Association), organisational policies and procedures in place which are up to date and fit for purpose to comply with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements for the services and activities for which your organisation is wholly liable.

Applications where all questions are not completed or do not provide detailed financial budgets in the application form will also be deemed ineligible.

The organisation completing the form must be the same organisation that will receive the grant and manage the programme. We will not consider an application made by one organisation on behalf of another.

Who cannot apply:

- Individuals / sole traders.
- Organisations located outside or with an operational focus outside the Belfast City Council local government district.
- Companies that can pay profits to directors, shareholders, or members.
- Local authorities or public sector organisations.
- Schools, preschools/nursery schools, formal youth organisations (that is, those registered with the Educational Authority (Further Education, Higher Education and Parent Teacher Associations and Boards of Governors), or uniformed organisations.

The activities we fund:

We fund applications that contribute to the following priorities:

1. Active, engaged and resilient communities
2. Ensure access to quality community facilities
3. Joined up community support through partnership development and collaboration.

For the larger grant you must contribute to at least 2 of the above

For small grants you must contribute to number 1

Our grant thresholds:

We offer 2 grant thresholds:

1. Small Grants **up to** £[insert value] per annum for a maximum of 1 year. These grants aim to support short-term activities which create active, engaged and resilient communities.
2. Community Support Grants **up to** £ [insert value] per annum for a maximum of 3 years. Proposals for Community Support Grants must seek to **achieve at least 2** of the three outcomes listed above.

Costs our grants will cover

- Programme costs
- staff costs
- training costs / costs of activity facilitators
- venue costs (e.g. maintenance costs, cleaning, health and safety, security, insurance, rent)
- utilities (gas, electricity, oil, water)
- core running costs (e.g. insurance, telephone, postage and IT costs)
- volunteer expenses
- equipment which is essential to the operation of the planned programme

We will support organisation running costs, however, please note we want to know how supporting core costs will lead to and deliver against the agreed outcomes and priorities.

The grant guidance will provide a standard list of activities which Council does not fund.

These will include activities which;

- have no significant benefit to the Belfast City Council area.
- provide no potential benefit to the public, either in the short or long term.
- could be carried out on a commercial basis.
- have already taken place or are already under way at the time of the assessment.
- duplicate what already exists.
- are charity or fundraising events or activities.
- are of a party-political nature.
- promote a particular religion.
- are against Belfast City Council policy. For example, we do not allow balloon or Chinese lantern releases as they are against our environmental policy.
- Overheads allocated or apportioned at rates more than those used for any similar work you carry out.
- Building/capital costs
- Costs which are not clearly linked to the project.
- Costs that are associated with filling in this application form.
- Costs that are poor value for money, or that are bought from outside of Belfast City Council procurement guidelines.
- Costs that are already covered by other funding or income sources including other Council Grant Schemes.
- Costs related to private or unfunded pensions.
- Reclaimable VAT.
- Flags and bunting.
- Alcohol, gratuities, gifts, donations, competition entry, prizes, and trophies
- Equipment costs unless they have an ongoing use throughout the project and are essential and necessary to complete the project.
- Loan Repayments, Bank interest charges, referral fees and foreign currency transaction charges.
- On-going Licence Fees
- Costs towards utility or fuel support for beneficiaries.