

**BLACK COUNTRY
COMMUNITY GRANTS
PROGRAMME
2019-2023
APPLICATION GUIDANCE**

BLACK COUNTRY ESF COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMME 2019-2023

APPLICATION FORM GUIDANCE

a) What are ESF Community Grants?

The ESF Community Grants Programme is jointly funded by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the European Social Fund (ESF) and provides a Fund of £1,500,000 for small grants to be distributed in the Black Country region between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2023. The aim of the Programme is to engage with local communities to deliver a range of skills and employment support activities to enable people from the hardest to reach communities, who may be experiencing multiple disadvantages, to make progress towards and enter the jobs market. The administration of the Programme is managed by Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council (WMBC) who has been selected by the ESFA to act as the Grant Co-ordinating Body.

Funded activities must be aimed at participants who are unemployed (more than 6 months) or economically inactive individuals aged 16 years* and over who are more distant from the labour market as a result of their multiple disadvantages and barriers. There is no upper age limit but individuals should be still seeking employment. Within the target group, the Programme identifies the following priority groups as having particular disadvantage.

- Participants aged 50 and over (still seeking to enter the labour market)
- Participants with Disabilities
- Participants from Ethnic Minorities
- Participants who are Women

Applications should seek to provide support for the priority groups in addition to others who face barriers, for example lone parents, people who are homeless.

**Important note: although the programme is able to provide support for young people aged 16-18, due to existing NEET activity in the LEP area, applicants will be required to sufficiently demonstrate how support to this age group will not duplicate the work of the Black Country Impact Youth Employment Initiative and other related Programmes.*

b) How much can you apply for?

Grants of between £5,000 and £20,000 are available. The grant will need to be fully accounted and evidenced against the costs of delivery and cannot be used to match any other funding source. You should work out your costs carefully. Whatever costs you include must be essential to the running of the project. You must only spend the grant on the costs of the project and your expenditure will be monitored closely both through monthly reports, interim and final claims and on-site visits. Errors in accounting for spend may lead to repayment of grant.

We will require funded organisations to keep copies of all the invoices, timesheets, receipts and bank statements, relating to the project, as evidence of expenditure. Documents will need to be retained in line with ESF requirements securely and ready for inspection up to December 2033. If you do not feel that your organisation has the systems in place to do this, then this funding stream is not the right one for your proposal.

c) Who can apply?

The Programme is designed to assist small community and voluntary groups, charities or not-for-profit organisations based in and providing services in the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership area (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton). We particularly welcome applications from organisations who have not received a Community Grant before.

Eligible applicants must:

- Have an annual turnover of less than £300,000.
- Not be in receipt of direct funding from the ESFA or the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).
- Be established, based locally and provide services in the Black Country areas.
- Have a written Constitution/MMA, or set of rules, which has been formally adopted and confirms your eligibility to apply.
- Have a bank account in the organisation name with a minimum of 2 signatories.***
- Have a Health and Safety Policy in place.
- Have an Equality policy in place.
- Have a Sustainable Development Policy in place.
- Have employers and public liability insurance in place (where legally required).
- Have a Safeguarding/Vulnerable Adults Policy in place (where legally required for your project).

Organisations who cannot apply include:

- Individuals (not representing a group).
- Groups that consist of one family.
- Statutory bodies.
- Profit making organisations.
- Grant making bodies applying for funding to redistribute to individuals or groups.
- Political groups.

*** All applicants must prepare and maintain accounting records. Based on simplified Charity Commission guidelines, accounts appropriate to the size and nature of the organisation are required as detailed. Newly constituted organisations are required to provide a set of forecasted accounts.

Organisations whose annual gross income or total expenditure is less than £10k	Organisations whose annual gross income or total expenditure is over £10k but less than £100k	Organisations whose annual gross income or total expenditure is over £100k but less than £500k	Organisations whose annual gross income or total expenditure is over £500k
Signed annual receipts and payments accounts (income and expenditure and statement of assets and liabilities at end of the year).	Signed annual receipts and payments accounts (income and expenditure and statement of assets and liabilities at end of the year).	Signed accruals accounts.	Signed accruals accounts.
No external scrutiny required.	External scrutiny required (audit if organisation's constitution specifies).	External scrutiny required (audit if organisation's constitution specifies).	Full external audit by a registered auditor.

Companies Limited by Guarantee with social aims may apply, however, to mitigate risk to the fund you must be able demonstrate the following.

- An up to date Memorandum and Articles of Association with a clear asset dissolution statement.
- Vision and Mission Objectives.
- Proven track record of engaging with communities through social media/website.

d) What kind of activities will Community Grants fund?

Any activity that will help an individual's progress towards employability/access to employment will be considered. Learners are required to complete a minimum of 12 guided learning hours during the life of the project. Examples of activities to integrate within projects include:

- First contact/taster sessions for participants not normally in contact with official organisations, for example, Colleges, DWP providers.
- Softer skills for confidence building/personal/social development involving activities such as sport, gardening, music, art and other creative/innovative activities.
- Developing informal networks and groups to support people to get a job or access learning, for example Learning Champions/Buddies, Job Clubs.
- Informal or non-accredited RARPA evidenced learning modules including Basic Skills in English, Maths and English Speaking for Foreign People.
- Volunteering and work experience placements. ▪ Job search assistance/computer literacy/ICT.

Your project should contribute towards the outcomes (outputs and results) of the Black Country Community Grant Programme's totals which are listed below.

- 1064 participants assisted, of which
- 181 will progress into paid employment/self-employment.
- 149 will progress into education/training.

Projects will need to provide evidence on participants assisted recording their starting, progression and completion of the learner journey. Prior to commencing, it will be necessary to confirm that people are

eligible to join by checking right to work status, residency, age, followed by initial assessment and learning plan development. On completion of outcomes, projects will be required to report on progression and achievement with specific information relating to education/training and employment/self-employment destinations. The ESFA will require evidence for the following deliverables.

ST01 Participant Assessment Plan

- Individual Learner Record or equivalent signed by the participant.
- Copy of a signed ILP/Learning Agreement and Initial Assessment.
- Signed provider declaration to confirm and detail confirmation of participant eligibility.

PG01 Progression Paid Employment

- Evidence of start in paid employment showing participant details, job title, employer name and address, start date and hours contract (form provided).
- Self-employed registration with HMRC and documentary evidence to support self-employment. ▪ Deliverable must be achieved within 28 days of participant's completion of ESF funded activity.

PG03 Progression Education

- Documentary evidence of the participant starting on a programme of education and training at a higher level than completed on the ESF project or a minimum of 20 GLH at the same level.

Positive outcomes outside the ESFA Deliverables will need to be recorded in addition. Full details of documentation to be used and evidence requirements will be provided at the mandatory training workshop for all successful applicants.

The Programme is not looking for high volumes of participants. Output unit cost is in the region of £1,000 - £1,200 reflecting the anticipated investment of time and resources required to assist people with multiple disadvantage. Project proposals should be constructed with this intense level of support in mind. Projects can range in length up to 6 months depending on your project's rationale. Please note, your project cannot go ahead until your grant agreement is signed off nor can it pay for activities that have been already carried out.

e) Your proposed project

The aim of the programme is to move people closer to the labour market, therefore all participants should be either registered unemployed for more than 6 months or economically inactive and able to work in the UK. Projects cannot support people already in employment (this includes self-employment).

All projects should be delivered within the Programme's period of 1 April 2019 to 14th January 2023. All expenditure relating to the delivery of the project will need to be completed and paid out (defrayed) before the Programme's end date. Projects are advised to set end dates with this deadline in mind.

f) What items can Community Grants fund?

Grants awarded must be between £5,000 and £20,000. You must itemise your costs accurately and values should be based off real costs, where possible. If your budget appears excessive, compared to other similar projects, your requested grant value may be reduced, or your application may be unsuccessful.

Eligible expenditure, which ESF funds can be used to contribute towards include, revenue costs for participants' learning activities, staffing and additional resources required. Small items of equipment (maximum £1000.00, net VAT) are permitted if specifically required to provide support. If your organisation is not VAT registered, the £1000.00 is inclusive of VAT. All expenditure will have to be demonstrated through appropriate evidence. Your budget should be realistic and should include administration time spent on managing project documentation. Costs incurred to rent facilities, should be claimed as Other Direct Costs.

Examples of the revenue costs, which can be covered by programme funds include:

- **Direct Staff Costs** - staff costs for both full time and part time staff, which are involved in delivering project activities and administration.
- **Direct Staff Costs** - for external support staff, including tutors, trainers and freelancers.
- **Volunteer Costs** - to cover expenses incurred by volunteers, such as travel and subsistence.
- **Participant Costs** - to cover expenses incurred by participants or behalf of participants, such as travel, subsistence, external courses, qualifications, accreditations and childcare.
- **Marketing and Publicity** costs related to the project.
- **Other Direct Costs** related to the project delivery, such as stationery, postage and learner resources.

ESF acknowledges that organisations draw on other indirect costs in the delivery of projects. For example, ad hoc office staff and premises support (overheads). Therefore, Community Grants also contributes to generic overheads (Indirect Costs). A simplified method of accounting for these costs has been introduced, whereby a value of 15% of the Direct Staff Costs is accounted for in expenditure without the requirement to provide details or documented evidence. An example is provided below.

Total Direct Staff Costs	£15,000.00
Other Project Costs	£2,750.00

The calculation is based on 15% of the total Direct Staff Costs (£2,250.00), which is then added to the Staff Costs and Other Project Costs to produce the Total Project Costs.

Total Direct Staff Costs	£15,000.00
Other Project Costs	£2,750.00
Indirect Costs (Overheads)	<u>£2,250.00</u>
Total Project Costs	<u>£20,000.00</u>

Further information, relating to ESF expenditure, can be found in the ESF National Eligibility Rules Guidance, July 2017. This is available on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/europeanstructural-and-investment-funds-programme-guidance> and www.bcta.org.uk. You should contact the Community Grants Team for additional advice.

g) Direct Staff Costs

If a staff member is spending all of their time on Community Grants activity, the organisation should claim actual salary costs for the period they are employed on the project.

If a staff member is working full-time, but only working part of their time on ESF, then **only** those hours spent on ESF can be claimed. The hourly rate applicable is calculated by dividing the latest documented annual gross employment costs by 1720 hours.

HOURLY RATE = $\frac{\text{Total Annual Salary + On Costs}}{1720}$

1720

To enable you to accurately calculate these costs, we have created an **Hourly Rate Calculator template**. So, before requesting staffing costs, you may be required to use the Hourly Rate Calculator, to determine the correct hourly rate to input in your application, for staff time. In order to identify if this is required for your application, you should consider which type of staff will be involved in the project, for which you will be claiming funds. Review the list below, of staff options, and identify which category is appropriate.

- A.** Our project will involve, both full time and part time employed staff on payroll, spending **all of their time** on the project.
- B.** Our project will involve, both full time and part time employed staff on payroll, spending **part of their time** on the project.
- C.** Our project will involve, External staff not on payroll, which are paid for the **time they contribute** to the project. For example, Consultants, Freelancers and Sessional Workers.

If any of your staff members fall under category **B**, project staff, which have been identified as **Internal** and who will **partially work on the Community Grants project, in addition to other activities**, it is **compulsory** for you to complete the Hourly Rate Calculator, as this is a requirement for all project staff that do not spend 100% of their working time on the delivery of Community Grant projects. They are paid only for the time they work on Community Grants. Therefore, ensure you complete the Hourly Rate Calculator (separate document), for each relevant member of staff. Guidance on how to use the calculator has been provided within the document. After you have calculated the hourly rate, you must input the exact rate into your application form. Completed calculations will need to be submitted with your application. For additional guidance, you may also refer to the ESF guidance published on the GOV website.

h) What Community Grants cannot fund

Community Grants provides 'project-based funding'. The grant requested should fully fund the delivery costs of a distinct piece of activity i.e. 'the project.' Community Grants funds cannot be used to meet core costs and should not be considered full cost recovery activity nor a contributor to reserves.

Community Grants activities must also not duplicate provision already funded through existing ESFA/DWP mainstream provision or projects funded through the ESF Opt-in or Direct ESF routes.

We will not fund:

- Projects that promote political beliefs.
- Projects that promote religious beliefs.
- Projects benefiting people in employment.
- Projects benefitting people aged under 16 years old.
- Projects already in receipt of ESF funding.
- Projects funding statutory activities i.e. the responsibility of the Government, local government or another service provider/agency.

Grants will not pay for:

- Individual items of equipment costing more than £1,000, even if you contribute to the rest of the cost yourself.
- Purchase or hire of second-hand equipment.
- Building or structural work.
- Buying property or land.
- Purchase of vehicles.
- Single trips or outings purely for a social benefit i.e. not benefiting the participant.
- Tickets, gifts or prizes purely for a social benefit i.e. not benefiting the participant.
- Loans cannot be made with grant money.
- Reclaimable VAT.
- Travel outside the UK.
- Bank charges, legal fees, fines or costs arising from legal action.

i) Learner Eligibility

Eligibility evidence has to be provided for each participant to prove:

- Right to live and work in the UK
- Age

- Residency in the Black Country
- Unemployed/ economically inactive for over 6 months

EEA Nationals Eligibility

Please be aware that as from 1st January 2021 in addition to the usual eligibility checks of Residency, Age, Address & unemployed/ economically inactive status. EEA Nationals must also have leave to remain with permission to work granted under the new Points Based Immigration system to be eligible for ESF support.

For further information please see: **Action Note 057/20 Eligibility Rules and Programme Guidance Revision – Changes to the European Economic Area Nationals (EEA) for ESF support from 1 January 2021 and a minor amendment to Participant Allowance Section.**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esf-action-notes-2014-to-2020-programme>

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

This is a rolling grant with Round deadlines, we aim to publish round dates on www.bcta.org.uk so applicants are aware when the application will be considered. Before applying please contact Helen.kirk@walsall.gov.uk for an informal conversation about your application.

Applications will be initially assessed to ensure the application has been fully completed, all supporting documents have been included and eligibility checked against the essential eligibility Gateway Criteria which includes the following.

- Activity based in and serves residents in the Black Country area.
- Applicant is a third sector/not for profit entity with a turnover of less than £300,000 per annum.
- Applicant confirms project will support participants who are either unemployed for more than 6 months or economically inactive, aged over 16 years and able to work in the UK.
- Applicant confirms understanding of and, is able to meet, ESF Regulatory compliance in the CrossCutting Themes, Publicity and Procurement (purchasing).

Applications that pass the Gateway Criteria, will be then evaluated by a Grants Assessment Panel (GAP) based on responses to the application form's selection questions (highlighted blue in the application form) against the following set of quality selection criteria.

- Criteria 1: Quality of proposed learner journey from recruitment to exit (Question 20).
- Criteria 2: Quality of proposed progression and evidencing of outcomes from the project (Question 22).
- Criteria 3: Quality of knowledge of the target group(s) and research supporting the need for the project (Question 21).
- Criteria 4: Quality of financial systems to be used for the management and claiming of expenditure (Question 28).
- Criteria 5: Previous performance, if applicable.

Each of the 5 criteria will have a maximum of 5 points awarded based on the quality of responses graded: Fully (5); Partially (3); Not at all (0). A total of 25 marks is therefore available. Applications that meet the quality threshold of 60% and above, i.e. 15 out of 25, will be recommended for support to the Black Country Programme Advisory Board (PAB), for formal approval of grant.

The PAB will consider the following in making their decision:

- Quality and relevance of the application as reflected in the final GAP recommendation
- Vale of contribution to the Community Grants Programme's outcomes
- Funding available and the need to achieve an equitable distribution across the sub-region.

Applicants will be sent an official letter informing them of their application outcome following the PAB meeting. Applicants who are successful will be asked to confirm that they wish to accept the offer. A formal contract will be put in place between the application organisation and Walsall MBC.

Unsuccessful applicants will be provided with feedback upon request. The Programme Advisory Board's decision is final and not open to appeal. Complaints relating to the grant application and approval process are covered in the Black Country Community Grant Programme's Complaints and Feedback Policy v2 2019-2020.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

All European Social Fund projects are required to comply with specific regulatory and guidance conditions. Access to these guidance notes can be found on www.gov.uk and www.bcta.org.uk and applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with the guidance notes relating to Publicity, Cross Cutting Themes and National Eligibility Guidance as a minimum. However, the Community Grants team is here to provide support.

All successful applicants will be required to:

- Attend mandatory training workshop, which will cover contract/project management; the learner journey recording (including RARPA), financial claims and progress reporting; and project closure.
- Receive an on-site visit to the location(s) where your learning activity will be delivered to ensure all aspects of project and learner management are in place.
- Read fully the commitments placed on your organisation through the Contract's terms and conditions of receipt of grant; sign and return the Contract to Walsall Council before commencing delivery.
- Complete necessary learner documentation contained within the learner journey and submit monthly returns to the Community Grants team. Applicants will be required to use Community Grant Programme forms relating to recruitment, the individual learning plan, end of course evaluation and outcomes on exit. Monthly returns will be required analysing participants engaged, outcomes achieved and project expenditure utilised.
- Provide regular case studies of achievements.
- Provide timely project claims for expenditure supported with required evidence. Retain originals for your records and audit purposes. Grant will be paid only where expenditure can be proven.
- Ensure participants have access to relevant information, advice and guidance, signposting to other Matrix Standard provision where applicable.
- Ensure that all marketing and publicity related to the project is compliant with the ESF guidance and ensure all learners are aware that the programme is co-financed by the European Social Fund.
- Comply with the Cross-Cutting Themes and integrate equality and sustainable development principles into project delivery.

GRANT PAYMENTS

Grant monies will be paid in three instalments depending on the time span of the project.

25% of the total grant awarded will be paid into the organisation's bank account once contracts have been exchanged and staff have attended the Community Grant Programme's induction workshop.

50% of the total grant awarded will be paid upon receipt of the interim monitoring report and on-site visit. Payment will be conditional on there being 50% of the contracted learners registered onto the project; the value of the first payment having been spent and satisfactory return of the monthly financial and participant data reports.

25% of the total final grant awarded will be paid on successful conclusion of the project and receipt of all related documentation. Grant payment will be delayed or cancelled where it is found grant recipients are under performing and/or not adhering to the terms and conditions of the contract. Where it is found that activity has not taken place, or activity delivered is different from the activity proposed in the application form, Walsall MBC reserves the right to claw back payments of all grant monies paid in full.

APPLICATION FORM SUBMISSION AND CONTACT

The application form itself contains notes about completing each section. Ensure you read this carefully before you complete the application form.

We require one **hard copy** of your application, with original signatures, and supporting documentation posted to:

Community Grants Programme Team
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
2nd Floor Civic Centre
Darwall Street
Walsall
WS1 1TP

and one **e-mailed copy** of your application form in **Microsoft Word** format, with supporting documents to communitygrants@walsall.gov.uk.

You should ensure that:

- Your application is fully completed.
- You submit the supporting documentation.
- Hand written applications are clear and legible.
- The form is signed and dated.
- You retain a copy for your records.
- You use the correct postage.

If information is incomplete or supporting documents are not provided your application will not be assessed.

Do not attempt to hand deliver your application to Walsall Council offices, as these will not be accepted.

Organisations requiring further support or guidance to assist in the preparation of the Community Grants Programme application should contact:

Helen Kirk, External Funding and Community Grants Manager, Walsall Council.

Tel: 07341 868092 | Email: communitygrants@walsall.gov.uk | Website: www.bcta.org.uk