

MK Community Foundation

Grants Policy



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Introduction

Milton Keynes Community Foundation is an independent charity providing grants and encouraging philanthropy across the borough of Milton Keynes.

Our Vision is for a thriving Milton Keynes where everyone contributes to their community.

Our Mission is to connect people with resources, skills and ideas to enrich lives and create positive growth for Milton Keynes. We achieve our mission through the themes of:

- Supporting: to support the growth and development of our voluntary community and cultural sector.
- Inspiring: to inspire giving to our communities through philanthropy and other social action
- Leading: to take a lead in connecting and growing sustainable communities.

Our grant making is guided by **our Vital Signs research**, which aims to collect the most up to date information about the issues affecting Milton Keynes; our impact goals and feedback from the local community, particularly the Voluntary, Community, and Cultural Sector.

Grants Policy

MK Community Foundation's grant making supports Milton Keynes to grow and thrive, through strong communities, a healthy voluntary sector and engaged individuals. Projects may benefit Milton Keynes generally, individuals through our bursary programme; individual estates or areas of need as well as emergency responses

We aim to fund a wide range of non-profit organisations working to create social change across all 12 Vital Signs thematic areas: Strong Communities, Disadvantage and Poverty, Diversity, Health and Wellbeing, Crime and Safety, Housing, Arts and Heritage, the Local Environment, Economy, Transport, Work, and Education. We welcome applications that respond to issues raised in the Vital Signs report.

We particularly welcome applications from organisations looking to address new, emerging, and/or unmet needs, those working collaboratively or in partnership, and/or those working to improve the efficiency and capacity of the local voluntary sector. We look to support projects that are impact-focussed and promote equality, diversity and inclusion and are creative, where organisations have a clear understanding of the difference they will make.

Support and guidance are available to all organisations throughout the grants process, and we seek to create open communication between applicants and the Community Foundation is encouraged at all stages. Our larger Grants programmes requires a pre application meeting. This can be offered for the smaller grant programmes where helpful. We also offer regular training on applications processes, evaluation techniques and monitoring.

We reserve the right to withdraw or reject applications, unsuccessful applicants are welcome to request feedback from the Community Foundation and may wish to refer to our Appeals Procedure.

MK Community Foundation is committed to quality in all aspects of its work. It has achieved UK Community Foundations' Quality Accreditation, which governs our standards of Grant Making, Community Engagement, Finance and Governance.

Applications must align with MK Community Foundation's Equalities and Diversity Policy and Safeguarding Policy.

The MK Community Foundation is an accredited Living Wage Friendly Funder¹.

The Community Foundation's published criteria for the type of projects and organisations we can consider supporting is set out in Appendix 1 of this policy.

Funding Programmes

We aim to deliver most of our funding through general programmes in order to prioritise projects by their individual merits. However, from time to time we may need to deliver criteria or fund-specific programmes. Our standard programmes include the following:

Small Grants: A monthly programme for applications between £300 - £3000. Small Grants are approved by an internal panel. The decision is usually known within 2-3 weeks of the deadline date.

Community Grants: A quarterly programme for grants up to £10,000. Applicants are strongly encouraged to have at least 20% of project funding from another source. Applications are approved by an external Grants Committee, made up of Community Representatives and Trustees.

Transformation Grants: For grants over £10,000 for projects taking place within a 12-month period addressing new and priority needs. Expression of Interest are required in the first instance through a pre-application meeting and only shortlisted projects are invited to submit a full application. Organisations must have a history of managing significant or equivalent levels of grant funding and the project must Transform either the organisation or it be transformational for its beneficiaries and/or Milton Keynes. This programme runs twice a year please refer to the website for any further criteria. Applications are approved by an external Grants Committee, made up of Community Representatives and Trustees.

Large Strategic Grants: A programme for larger grants which will be delivered over more than one financial year up to a maximum of three. Projects must make a Strategic Impact on the work of the organisation or its beneficiaries. Expression of Interest are required in the first instance through a pre-application meeting and only shortlisted projects are invited to submit a full application. Organisations must have a history of managing significant or equivalent levels of grant funding. As there are limited funds which can accommodate awards of this size, additional criteria to the general grants Eligibility Criteria (see Appendix 1) are applicable in this round and are detailed on the website at programme launch. Applications are recommended by an external Grants Committee, and subject to approval by the Board of Trustees.

Partnership Grants: Annual grants awarded to selected partner organisations with whom we have an established relationship, as identified by the Philanthropy and Executive Teams. These are approved annually by Board who agree continuation funding based on an assessment of the effectiveness of the partnership. We do not accept unsolicited applications to this programme.

¹ Living Wage Foundation: <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/about-friendly-funders>

Prizes and Bursaries: These are delivered in partnership with other local organisations. Programme criteria and processes, including promotion, vary. See Website

External Grant Programmes: In addition to our regular programmes, the Community Foundation regularly collaborates with the UK Community Foundation network to deliver national programmes in Milton Keynes (e.g. #iwill). These programmes may involve separate application processes, and the criteria and processes are promoted individually on our website and through social media.

Emergency Appeals: Additional grants can be awarded in cases of disaster or emergency and the criteria will be set in line with the objectives of the appeal.

Assessment Criteria

All applications are assessed and scored by assessors and panels against all the following criteria (unless otherwise stated):

- Need and Demand
- Reach and Impact
- Sustainability
- Partnership
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Group profile (an assessment of the strength of an organisation's governance and track record of delivering projects of quality.)

Guidelines around these criteria can be found in Appendix 1.

The pass criteria vary depending on the size of the grant and is reviewed annually.

All grants and bursaries are assessed individually on their own merit, without reference to other applications under consideration. However, they may be prioritised on score depending on availability of funds.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Successful applications are subject to reporting conditions that require grantees to update on the impact the grant has made as set out in the original application and to report on their expenditure. This supports the Community Foundation to understand the effectiveness of our grant-making, demonstrate the impact our funding makes, and inform our future decision-making.

Our current monitoring procedure is included in Appendix 3.

Variations to this policy

The Board of Trustees may vary the terms of this policy at its discretion.

Appendix 1: Grant-making criteria

Applications to all our programmes are accepted via online forms, available on our website under the relevant programme headings. If due to accessibility issues, this is not practical speak to a member of the Philanthropy team who will discuss alternative methods of application.

Eligibility

The following details the minimum criteria for those wishing to make an application for grant funding. Some of our grant's programmes may have additional criteria.

For organisations:

Who we can fund:

We can accept applications from constituted, not-for-profit organisations supporting beneficiaries from Milton Keynes, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Local community groups
- Voluntary Sector Organisations
- Registered Charities
- Charitable Incorporated Organisations
- Social Enterprises (for start-up only)
Must include evidence that Directors are not be paid above a level that would make the provision of grant funding inappropriate, and must have a management committee who provide oversight and strategic guidance, comprised of at least four unpaid, unrelated members, not living at a shared address, to apply. There must be clear, evidenced community benefit.
- Sports Clubs
- Faith groups *where the primary activities to be delivered at the site are community-focussed and not for the promotion of religion, and where potential beneficiaries are not required to participate in religious activities, nor excluded on the basis of faith, religion, or lack thereof, or any other protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010;*
- Community Interest Companies (for start-up only)
Must include evidence that Directors are not be paid above a level that would make the provision of grant funding inappropriate, and must have a management committee who provide oversight and strategic guidance, comprised of at least four unpaid, unrelated members, not living at a shared address, to apply. There must be clear, evidenced community benefit.

Who we cannot fund:

- Individuals (outside of our bursary and prize programmes, or specific disaster emergency funding)
- Social Enterprises (for continuation or project funding)
- For-profit organisations
- Political parties or affiliated groups
- Organisations with free reserves equivalent or greater than 12 months' turnover, except in exceptional circumstances. Organisations with over 6 months' free reserves should be

prepared to explain why they need to hold this level. ("Free reserves" does not include designated or earmarked reserves as stated in Annual Report).

- Groups who do not supply the following documentation:
 - A governing document that details an appropriate asset lock and that details that the organisation is not for profit
 - Financial records for a minimum of 1 year. The type required will depend on the size and structure of the organisation. For organisations that have existed for under a year, a bank statement will suffice.
 - A bank statement in the organisation's name, for an account with at least two unrelated signatories.
 - Equal Opportunities policy covering 9 protected characteristics as outlined in the equalities act.
 - Child and Adult Safeguarding Policies with details of the local lead person (including Vulnerable Adult Policy, if applicable)
 - Evidence of expected cost such as quotes when requested by the assessor
- Sufficiency of documentation provided is determined during assessment and organisations submitting documentation that does not meet required standards may be withdrawn from our programmes, at the discretion of the Philanthropy and Executive Teams.
- **Statutory bodies** are generally not eligible for grant funding, and we cannot fund statutory work of any kind. However, schools and academies are eligible to apply in certain circumstances, as we recognise that schools can sometimes be best placed to deliver projects of significant impact for the wider community. MK Community Foundation cannot accept unsolicited applications from these organisations, and applications must be invited in writing. Unsolicited applications will be automatically withdrawn. Schools or academies must first speak with the Philanthropy Team, who will advise on whether an application can be invited based on the nature of the project and availability of donor funds.
- We cannot accept applications where the signatory has an unspent conviction for an offence involving dishonesty or deception, such as fraud.
- Organisations which have been disqualified from Community Foundation Grant Programmes, for reasons including but not limited to:
 - Monitoring details not returned within 6 months the date out lines on the agreement;
 - Misuse of previous grants e.g. significantly changing the project without written approval from the Community Foundation or using the money for core costs or another project;
 - Failure to return unspent funds over £50 from previous grants;
 - Failure to return funds when requested by the Community Foundation;
 - Fraudulent activities e.g. intentionally providing misleading or incorrect information as part of an application, monitoring or evaluation;
 - Failure to meet any other terms and conditions detailed in the signed Grant Agreement.

For projects:

All applications must be for the benefit of communities in the Unitary Authority Area of Milton Keynes, or individual's resident in the Unitary Authority Area of Milton Keynes. The Community Foundation may make a rare exception to this rule at the direction of the fund holder whose fund would support the project, where appropriate.

All projects must start within six months of the grant being awarded, or groups may be asked to return the grant if they breach any part of the offer agreement. All grant periods must run for no longer than 12 months (except for those funded by the Large Strategic Grant Programme).

We cannot fund:

- Core costs not related to specific project delivery, except in exceptional circumstances
- Statutory activities, or purchase of equipment that will become the property of a statutory body
- Projects that will give a charity an unfair commercial advantage
- Animal welfare
- Retrospective costs (anything that has already been bought or committed to). Rare exceptions may be made where a deposit may be required to secure a venue and must be agreed in advance by a member of the Philanthropy Team.
- Medical Research or treatment
- Deficit funding or repayment of loans
- Unspecified expenditure
- Events or activities where the primary purpose is to fundraise,
- Re-granting (except for specific partnership arrangements).

Applications must be complete by the relevant deadline to be included in the coming round. Applications received which are missing documentation or substantive information are not considered complete. Incomplete applications may be withdrawn from the round.

Frequency of applications

- We cannot accept more than one application per programme per round for any group or organisation.
- There is no set maximum to applications organisations can make within a 12 month period, but organisations that have been repeatedly funded within such a period may not be prioritised, and we advise that organisations remain in discussion with the Community Foundation about their overall work to identify best approaches to applying for funding.
- **Repeat funding:** We cannot guarantee continued funding, and applications for repeat funding may not be prioritised for funding. Applications for repeat funding of the same project, must show an element of development; growth or attempt to be more sustainable. However, we recognise that services that deliver vital impact for Milton Keynes sometimes require continued support, and as such can support previously funded projects at the discretion of the relevant decision-making body.
- **Resubmission of Applications:** Unfortunately, we are not able to fund all the applications that are submitted to us. We are not always able to accept resubmissions of unsuccessful applications, but if you would like to resubmit please call the Philanthropy Team to see if you may be eligible.

Scoring

In order to be successful, applicants must persuasively address the following criteria. Please bear in mind that the bullet points under each heading are not criteria to be 'ticked off' for higher marks, and that addressing each point will not mean a group is guaranteed funding.

Need & Demand

- The group has provided strong evidence that there is a need for this project.
- This need is not being satisfactorily met locally by other agencies, i.e. this is not a duplication of an existing service.
- This is the best way to meet this need.
- There are limited opportunities for these funds to be raised elsewhere and/or there are not more appropriate other avenues for this funding to be sought
- There is a need for this project to be supported by grant funding, e.g. the applicant organisation could not reasonably fund this from free reserves or other means

Reach & Impact

- The project and all associated costs and activities are relevant to the need it is trying to address
- The applicant is properly qualified to deliver these services to the relevant individuals in the community and possesses the skill or established connections to ensure they are delivered effectively.
- The project will serve under-funded geographical areas, communities.
- The application shows an understanding of and plans for effective outreach.
- The group has addressed barriers to provision (e.g. cost, access, cultural divisions).
- The project will serve a hard to reach demographic and there is evidence that the group will be able to work well with this demographic.
- The project will build useful skills and resources for the local community.
- There are other long-term benefits to the community from this project.

Sustainability

- The applicant can evidence that their group has begun to strategize / investigate long term funding options that will enable this project to continue past the end of this grant
- There is realistic expectation that long term funding can be secured following the end of this grant.
- If the project is not long term, the costs and financial projections offered are realistic and sustainable for this project. 'Good value for money.'

Partnership

- The project has shown consideration for collaboration with other organisations where objectives are similar.
- The project brings together several groups to maximise expertise

Inclusion & Diversity

- The project is fully inclusive and has taken onto account differing needs with the diverse communities of MK
- Reflects an awareness of the 9 protected characteristics in terms of flavour and design

Group Profile

- Previous grant monitoring been submitted on time and to a good standard
- There is a good record of sound financial and project management
- Provided governing documents and policies that comply with criteria
- The organisation has reputable endorsements from individuals and or other organisations
- The organisation has a record of enterprise or fundraising

- The organisation has a history of reaching hard -to-reach beneficiaries and/or supporting Vital Signs priority areas.