



MK Community Foundation

Grants Policy

Version: November 2018

Introduction

Milton Keynes Community Foundation is an independent charity working for and at the heart 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 also guided by our Vital Signs research, which aims to collect the most up to date information about the issues affecting Milton Keynes and to stimulate responses 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, or individual estates and areas of need.

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 impact-focussed projects, where organisations have a clear understanding of the difference they will make.

Support and guidance is open for organisations throughout the grants process, and open communication between applicants and the Community Foundation is encouraged at all stages. We also offer regular training.

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 is endorsed by the Charity Commission and governs our standards of Grant Making, Community Engagement, Finance and Governance.

MK Community Foundation's Equalities and Diversity Policy and Safeguarding Policy apply to all areas of its work, including grant making.

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 the majority 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:

Micro Grants: A rolling programme with no fixed deadline, for grants of up to £200 (or £300 for projects taking place in New Communities areas) for small projects. Applications should be for all or a significant proportion of projects costs, and are not intended to cover budget shortfalls. Organisations may apply up to 4 times a year to this programme. This programme is intended for smaller organisations with a turnover of less than £20,000 per year, though larger organisations may be considered, for instance, when applying in support of a smaller group. Applications are approved internally by the Executive Team.

Small Grants: A monthly programme for applications up to £1,500. Applications are approved internally by the Small Grants Panel (please see [here](#)).

Community Grants: For grants of up to £5,000, with 5 deadlines per year. Applications are approved by an external Grants Committee.

Transformation Grants: For grants over £5,000 for projects taking place within a 12 month period addressing new and priority needs. Applications are by invitation only and only organisations with a history of managing significant or equivalent levels of grant funding are eligible. The programme runs twice annually. Applications are approved at a minimum by the Grants Committee.

Large Strategic Grants: An annual programme for multi-year strategic grants, over a maximum of 3 years. Applications are by invitation only following an Expression of Interest stage, once annually. 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.

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

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

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.

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

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.

Interest Free Loans: These can be offered by specific arrangement with a group, or as an alternative to a grant payment if agreed to be appropriate by the relevant decision making panel. The maximum repayment period is three years and the applicant must be able to demonstrate that they will be able to make repayments as agreed. The Community Foundation Director of Finance will review the application, confirm the availability of funds for making the loan and must then endorse the request in order for the loan to be offered.

Grants Panels & Scoring

Delegation of authority to award grants

- The Executive Team have authority to award grants of amounts up to £2,000.
- Awards of over £2,000 must be ratified by a minimum of 2 Grants Trustees.
- Awards of £25,000 and over must be approved at a quorate Board of Trustees meeting.

Panels and Committees

All grants panels have the discretion to defer, veto (if supported by 60% of panel members) or define the type of award (e.g. full award, part award, Guarantee Against Loss, loan) providing the decision it is ratified by the appropriate authority, unless otherwise stated.

Small Grants Panel: This panel comprises trained staff, and either the Chief Executive or Deputy Chief Executive must be present to approve all decisions.

Grants Committee: This panel comprises up to 12 Community Representatives, including a Chair, who can all score, and who are selected by the Philanthropy and Executive Teams for their position based on their skill, experience and knowledge, and who are from the local Voluntary and Community Sector, are donors, or are individuals with an understanding of Milton Keynes.

In addition, up to four Trustees will be invited to represent the Board in the grant making process. These trustees can attend and vote at the Grants Committee meetings. Members of the Executive Team and other Community Foundation staff can attend in advisory or observational roles and are not eligible to vote.

A minimum of six scoring members must be in attendance at a Grants Committee Meeting in order for the meeting to be quorate, including a minimum of two Grants Trustees.

The Terms of Reference for the Grants Committee are laid out in Appendix 2.

Other panels: Additional panels may need to assemble throughout the year for the delivery of additional grant and bursary programmes. The Philanthropy Team endeavour to ensure representation from individuals with relevant expertise to any given programme, and Grants Trustees will be involved where amounts to be awarded may require it.

Assessment & Scoring

All applications are assessed and scored by assessors and panels against the following criteria:

- Need and Demand
- Reach and Impact
- Sustainability
- Innovation
- 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.

Weighting and scoring protocol varies per programme and is determined and regularly reviewed by the Philanthropy and Executive Teams.

All grants and bursaries are prioritised individually on their own merit, without reference to other applications under consideration.

Conflict of Interest

Any individual with an interest in or association with a grant applicant organisation shall declare it. They will be asked to leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion regarding that application, and will not be involved in the assessment of the application. They will also not be permitted to score the project.

Confidentiality

The content of all grant applications, including the name of any applicant group, that are pending a final decision or are unsuccessful is treated as confidential. Members of staff, assessors, committee members and other advisors (including donors) must not discuss them with external parties at any time.

The Community Foundation reserves the right to promote all awarded grants.

Monitoring & Evaluation

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

Our Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy is currently being redeveloped, in order to meet the wider organisational strategy for 2018-2023. Once in place, it will be included as an appendix to this policy.

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

Unless stated otherwise, applications to all our programmes are accepted via online forms, available on our website. Offline forms are available for those unable to access the forms, and are distributed by the Philanthropy Team.

Eligibility

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

For organisations:

Who we can fund:

We are able to 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
- Sports Clubs
- Faith groups
- Community Interest Companies

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.

- Companies limited by guarantee
Must provide evidence of being not for profit in governing documents, showing that any surplus revenue is used toward the company's social purpose and that the company is set up with an asset lock. Must have a management committee who provide oversight and strategic guidance, comprising at least four unpaid, unrelated members, not living at a shared address, to apply.
- Companies limited by shares
As 'Companies limited by guarantee' (above) and company shares are limited to no more than 100 shares of £1 each.

Who we cannot fund:

- Individuals (outside of our bursary and prize programmes)
- For-profit organisations
- Political parties or affiliated groups
- Organisations with free reserves equivalent or greater than 12 months' turnover, except in exceptional reserves. 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).

- 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 or Diversity and Inclusion Policy
 - Child and Adult Safeguarding Policies (including Vulnerable Adult Policy, if applicable)
 - Evidence of expected cost such as quotes may also be requested at the discretion of the assessorSufficiency 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 despite several requests;
 - 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 individuals 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. All grant periods must run for no longer than 12 months (with the exception of 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
- Animal welfare
- Projects involving political or campaigning activities
- Projects promoting religion or religious beliefs
- 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, at the discretion of the Philanthropy Team.
- Medical Research or treatment
- Deficit funding or repayment of loans
- Unspecified expenditure
- Events or activities where the primary purpose is or includes fundraising
- Re-granting (with the exception of specific partnership arrangements).
- Projects not benefiting people from Milton Keynes

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. 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. Organisations making repeat applications will be asked to demonstrate their efforts to reduce reliance on Community Foundation funding.
- **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. 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 unless it is determined that the reasons they were unsuccessful have been sufficiently addressed.

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 well-placed 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 strategise / 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.'

Innovation / Creativity

- The project is innovative and/or unique in the area and is it a creative approach to addressing a need.
- Will the project help our community to get 'ahead of the curve' in meeting a still-emerging need in our community before it gets more critical or damaging

Group Profile

- Previous grant monitoring been submitted on time, to a good standard
- There is a good record of sound financial and project management
- Provided governing documents and policies are of a good standard
- 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

Appendix 2: Community Representative Terms of Reference

1. The Grants Committee meets a minimum of 6 times per year. Basic eligibility of applications is established by the Philanthropy Team. In respect of eligible applications, reports are written by the Philanthropy Team in accordance with Community Foundation policies and procedures. Community Representatives are provided with a copy of the assessment report in advance of Grant Committee meetings. These confidential documents inform discussion at the meeting, upon which the Committee makes decisions to approve, refuse or defer applications.
2. Community Representatives appointed by MK Community Foundation have an important and valuable role to play in helping us ensure that the funds allocated across the city are used to address local needs and although voluntary, this role is accompanied by several responsibilities.

As a Community Representative you agree to:

- Attend regular meetings. Continuity is a matter of importance and Community Representatives attend the Committee on a regular basis. Membership will be reviewed for non-attendance.
- Convey apologies to the Community Foundation should you be unable to attend any meeting, as soon as possible in advance of the meeting. You will still be sent committee papers, unless it is agreed this would serve no purpose, and any written feedback you provide before the meeting will be passed on to the Chair.
- Prepare for the meetings by reading the papers and particularly the documents relating to individual projects.
- Arrive promptly for meetings.
- Contribute to discussions in a relevant and constructive way.
- Conduct yourself in an appropriate manner, in particular not interrupting other speakers and respecting the authority of the Chair to direct the meeting.
- Listen to the views of other committee members and attempt to reach consensus decisions.

- Respect the final decision of the Chair.
 - Make unbiased and fair judgements of grant applications against the others presented within the round.
 - Observe strict confidentiality about the application forms being assessed, the discussions which take place and the decisions made.
 - Undertake induction and any further training provided by the Foundation to enable you to become a more effective adviser
 - Make clear a declaration of interest where you have connections with an applicant group.
 - Adhere to the Community Foundation's Equal Opportunities Policy
 - Report any breach of these policies to the Community Foundation Director of Philanthropy or other Executive staff member.
 - Be prepared to act as an Ambassador on behalf of the Community Foundation.
3. Community Representatives will be reviewed every financial year to ensure the composition reflects the expertise, local knowledge, spread of background and ethnicity required to ensure the funding is focussed effectively to meet the objectives of the Foundation. Advisers are able to serve a maximum of 3 consecutive years.
 4. Community Representatives are not remunerated but are entitled to claim their expenses, using the MK Community Foundations' expenses form.
 5. Community Representatives serve at the discretion of MK Community Foundation, which has the right to remove from the committee, any advisor who in its view fails to adhere to this agreement or to observe the other policies of the Foundation.

SIGNED

DATE

Appendix 3: Monitoring and Evaluation Procedure

Project Outcomes and Impact

All grant applicants must report to the Community Foundation on the outcomes and impact of their project, during and at the conclusion of the grant period. This can take the form of a written Grant Impact Evaluation Form, or verbally as part of a Grant Impact Evaluation Meeting. Deadlines for final reporting are set by the Philanthropy Team upon the date of award, but can be changed upon written request from the applicant, at the team's discretion.

Where reasonable and proportionate, applicants may include costs incurred in the evaluation of the project within the original grant application.

Grant Expenditure

All organisations in receipt of grants from the Community Foundation must provide a breakdown of grant expenditure. Any amount of a grant over £50 that is not spent must be returned to the Community Foundation.

Grantees are expected to retain all evidence of expenditure with the grant for a minimum of 7 years.

All first-time grant recipients are required to provide full evidence of expenditure. Organisations with a poor track record of submitting satisfactory monitoring or about whom the Community Foundation has any additional concerns may also be required to submit full evidence of expenditure, at the discretion of the Philanthropy and Executive Teams.

An additional 10% of all other grants awarded will be randomly selected and affected applicant organisations will be required to supply full evidence of expenditure.

- For salary costs, a letter from the organisation's treasurer is considered sufficient evidence. We do not expect organisations to supply payslips or P60s as these contain sensitive personal information, and any copies of these provided will be immediately destroyed by the Community Foundation.
- Copies of receipts and or invoices are expected for most other forms of expenditure
- For any expenditure that an organisation anticipates being unable to evidence, this must be discussed with the Philanthropy Team in advance of any grant expenditure

Upon failure to provide sufficient evidence of expenditure when requested by the Community Foundation, organisations may be requested to return all or part of the funds. Failure to meet requests to return funds may result in disqualification from Community Foundation programmes.