Rochdale Communities Fund

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Guidance Notes

The Rochdale Communities Fund is a mutual fund to invest in and strengthen Rochdale Borough's VCFSE sector. It funds groups and projects which directly benefit local people and communities, delivered by VCFSE organisations with roots in the borough.

The Rochdale Communities Fund can support groups to try out a new project or sustain one that already exists. Action Together provides members with development support, training and other infrastructure alongside grant funding.

Thanks to funding from Rochdale Borough Council Public Health team, Action Together is offering micro grants of up to £1000 to help the VCFSE sector to support individuals, families and communities in the Rochdale Borough.

As there are limited funds, we will be prioritising applications from micro and small groups to our micro grants.

The priorities for grant investment

Your project must fall within one or more of the following priorities:

1. Challenging poverty and driving equality

- Support people and communities to get back on their feet and take more control over their lives – i.e. practical support, advice or peer support
- Reduce inequalities and help more people reach their potential
- Strengthen community voice and action on the things that matter most to them

2. Promoting health and wellbeing

- Enabling people and communities to support their social, mental and physical wellbeing
- Challenging health inequalities through working with marginalised groups whose needs are not being met by existing services
- Build strong relationships in and across communities

Grant amount: Grants of up to £1,000 are available

What we can fund:

- Equipment, project resources and running costs
- Staff time and staff and volunteer expenses

We are open to funding solo trips and days out, but applications of this sort must cover the following questions to be considered:

1. Who is it for, and why?

- Who will benefit, and what need does this address?
- Why is this support important for them?

2. Why this activity?

- Why was this trip chosen?
- Who helped shape the idea – was it led by those taking part?

3. What's the impact?

- What real benefit will it have beyond a trip out? For example, would it provide respite for carers, social connection, or inspiration for a creative project etc.

Please note that groups should not purchase any resources, equipment, or other items included in their grant application before receiving confirmation of the funding decision. Action Together is unable to reimburse or fund items that have already been purchased prior to the grant outcome being communicated. Any expenditure incurred before a formal grant award is made will be ineligible for funding.

We cannot fund:

- Discretionary funds e.g. One off food vouchers.

Who is the funding for:

- you are a voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) group locally rooted or actively working in the borough of Rochdale; ***and***
- you have income of less than £25,000 (this includes income generated through grants and donations
- you are a member of Action Together CIO (you can register for free to become a member here)
- you are formally constituted.

To ensure limited funds reach as many groups as possible, there is also a limit on the number of times groups can apply to the Rochdale Communities Fund.

Action Together members can apply for the Micro Grants funding if you have already received funding through the Rochdale Communities Fund as long as:

- The applications are for different projects, or build upon ideas tested in previous funding
- You have submitted all monitoring for previous projects, and this is to a good standard.
- You haven't received a grant/s up to or totaling more than **£3000** from Action Together previously
- You are in contact with your Community Development Worker

The use of AI within your application

AI tools can be powerful and incredibly helpful, making brainstorming ideas and drafting applications significantly easier and accessible. However, if an application contains evidence that AI has been used and contains inaccurate information or includes AI prompts and other indications that the application context has not been completed by the applicant, we reserve the right to ask for clarification or reject the application.

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Decision making process:

Grant decisions under £1000 are made by Action Together, while all decisions over £1000 are scored by the Action Together community panel. Decisions will be made within 4 weeks, unless you are asked for further information or to redevelop aspects of your proposal.

All applications must be sent to rochdalecommunitiesfund@actiontogether.org.uk and you will receive the decision via email.

Please note:

- We will only accept applications from organisations who have completed monitoring for any previous funds received from Action Together. If you have any queries about monitoring please email rochdalecommunitiesfund@actiontogether.org.uk
- This fund operates on a quarterly rolling programme and will be paused each quarter when available funding has been awarded.
- Action Together is an accredited Living Wage Funder. This means we encourage organisations that employ staff to become an accredited Living Wage Employer.

If you are successful:

We understand that running a group or organisation can be tough. As you grow and deliver more projects, each project budget needs to include the direct delivery costs and a share of the organisational running costs. This way we secure the true full cost of running each project, this is called Full Cost Recovery.

If you are a constituted group and are successful with an RCF micro grant, we will add on 20% of the value of your awarded grant to contribute towards your full cost recovery. E.g. You have applied for £1000 to run a parent support group – we will award you with a further £200 to support your overheads. This is to invest into the core of your organisation and our Community Development Workers can support you to include full cost recovery in all of your future funding applications. This only applies to your first successful application.

For a clear and simple introduction to calculating the full costs of a project, read the National Lottery Community Fund's full cost recovery guidance.

Monitoring:

At the end of your project, we will ask you to fill out a monitoring form to tell us:

- The story of your project
- How many people benefitted
- Any other plans you have for your community following the project
- Photos, feedback sheets, promotional materials or anything else relevant to the project.

Our Community Development Workers will check in with you during the project and can help you plan how you want to share the impact and success of your project.

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Completing the application form

- Please ensure that ALL boxes on the application form are completed.
- When completing your budget, please clearly evidence how you have arrived at your costings and use exact figures.
- Please ensure the main contact and second contact on the application form **are not** related/residing at the same address.
- Please ensure you include information in your application about how you will measure the impact and success of your project.
- If you have any queries about the application form or application process, please contact Hayley Tomlinson on 0161 339 2345.
- Please note, we can only accept one application per organisation.

The use of AI within your application

We recognise that AI can be a valuable tool in various aspects of project development, such as brainstorming or editing responses. However, we strongly discourage its use for the drafting of answers within funding applications, as it can compromise the integrity of the application process.

It is often clear when an organisation uses AI to draft their application as we notice similar or identical language and content within numerous funding applications. Strong applications help us understand your organisation and your community, but when they are drafted by AI the generic language which is used makes it hard to understand what your organisation is planning to do and why.

AI written responses often claim to have taken certain steps to develop their project idea, such as a needs assessment, focus groups or consultation with users. Unless the group includes statistics and quotes in their bid, it raises doubt about whether these steps have actually happened. This can affect the decision-making process and an outcome of an application as the authenticity of the application can be called into question.

Where there is doubt about if your application has been drafted by AI, we will ask for some additional information to support your application.

Please note that we aim to make our Rochdale Communities Fund as effective, efficient and equitable as possible. As such our processes are under constant review to keep up with best practice and we will communicate any changes to our processes clearly within guidance documents for our funding opportunities