**Highland Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults Year 3**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

The following are some anticipated FAQs, we will keep this up to date as further queries come in.

**How to apply?**

We expect that most applications will be completed through the [HTSI website portal](https://form.jotform.com/232501461904347). Where groups are unable to access the internet or there is another significant issue or barrier, we can accept applications via a word document.

Applications will be open between 29 September 2023 and midday 9 January 2024.

* Applications received by midday 27 October - assessed in November
* Applications received by midday 29 November - assessed December
* Applications received by midday 9 January - assessed late January

**What can you apply for?**

The range of activities you could undertake to meet your locally identified needs is quite broad but is only aimed at reaching adults over 16 within the Highland area (starting by end of April 2024). The fund is aiming to invest in new initiatives, but we can fund existing projects if you are improving or developing the original project and are clear howyou plan to reach more people (especially seldom heard, at-risk groups). However, an award in the first or second year is no indication of the likelihood of success this year.

The key thing is to make sure the proposed activity is driven by evidence of need, to promote mental health and wellbeing and/or protect against the impact of distress and mental ill health within your community. If you can explain the relevancy and anticipated impacts and outcomes from your activity, then there are only a few activities that will not be considered:

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| **We will fund** | **We cannot fund** |
| Equipment | Contingency costs, loans, endowments, or interest |
| One-off events | Electricity generation and feed-in tariff payment |
| Hall hire for community spaces | Political or religious campaigning  |
| Small capital spend up to £5,000 (i.e. land or building projects)  | Profit-making/fundraising activities |
| Staff costs (one off or fixed term due to the lack of ongoing funding)  | VAT you can reclaim |
| Training costs | Statutory activities |
| Transport | Overseas travel |
| Utilities/running costs | Alcohol |
| Volunteer expenses |  |

**How much can you apply for?**

The guidance from the Government is that most of the grants will be for less than £10k. This should give you an indication of the scale and scope of the projects that are appropriate. Remember that this is for small-scale, grassroots community activity.

The panel will have some discretion to award grants above £10K but this is likely in only a few cases, and applicants must contact us as early as possible to discuss your reasons for seeking a higher-than-average grant amount before submitting an application.

Your request should be driven by the actions you want to test, pilot or deliver with the guidance in mind, and then the actual cost of delivering it rather than designing activity to fit the budget. We would rather see a project that cost a little more than £10K coming forward than missing the opportunity to develop the activity because it cost £10,775.

The maximum limit for including capital costs in your proposal is £5,000. Capital costs are fixed, one-time expenses, e.g. for purchase of land, buildings, construction, or equipment such as laptops. Smaller items of equipment don’t need to included in capital costs. If you’re in doubt, please contact us as early as possible.

**How do I decide the amount to apply for?**

We recommend you establish costs for every item required for running the activity and then group these into overall categories, e.g. staffing, travel, volunteer expenses, equipment. You can also include a contingency for meeting accessibility needs, based on your own research/engagement.

It’s also a good idea to have a back-up plan, should costs turn out to be higher or lower than expected. This means you can switch to delivering your ‘plan B’ during the project’s original delivery time, rather than waiting till you are close to completion and discovering you can’t continue or must ask for an extension.

**When does the funding have to be spent by?**

Projects must start before the end of April in the financial year 2024/25.

Given the disproportionate impact the rising cost of living has had on existing mental health inequalities, we are looking for activity to start as soon as is practicable, once funds are paid into your account.

**What reporting and evaluation expectations are there?**

All projects are expected to complete a closing evaluation report as a minimum. This report will ask you to confirm the actual spend and report against delivery of the outcomes outlined in your application. The level of detail should be proportionate to the funding received, so the larger your grant sum, the larger the level of activity and consequently, the more detail we would expect.

If your project runs beyond September 2024, you will be asked to provide at least one progress report, around this time and a closing report due at the end of your project.

If your project is close to the original completion date and you have identified an underspend – please do not submit a closing report before you contact us to discuss the most appropriate solution. You may be granted an extension, and your end date could be amended.

Failure to provide your reports on time or contact us to discuss, may affect future funding decisions or result in HTSI seeking to reclaim the funding provided.

**Am I expected to work in partnership?**

The short answer is yes.

You don’t have to submit a partnership application, but you will be asked how you are working with groups and other organisations in your community or thematic interest, and you need to make sure you can demonstrate that. Additionally, it is important that you can describe how people who will benefit from your proposed activities have been involved in designing the activity and how this has shaped your proposal.

We are keen to avoid unnecessary duplication and would encourage you to make sure you explain how you are linking into similar services to provide assurance that it is additional and not duplicating an existing service.

**Who can apply?**

Any constituted Third Sector Organisation who has access to their own bank account and can demonstrate their ability to competently deliver what they set out in their own application.

The Government are anticipating that most applications will come from smaller grass roots organisations, with encouragement to consider projects that put participation and co-design at the heart of an application.

Parent councils are eligible to apply, but the activities must specifically focus on supporting adults rather than their children.

If you are an un-constituted group who would like to apply, please contact us to discuss how we might be able to support your group. We can support you to become constituted or provide small value grants for capacity building purposes.

**Can a larger Third Sector Organisation apply?**

Yes. Large organisations undertaking local initiatives are not excluded but are also not the main focus of the fund. We would not expect to see Highland-wide service delivery applications except where they apply to a specific and distinct thematic community (e.g. women from a BAME community).

The fund doesn’t stipulate the size of organisations that can apply but rather the size and focus of the work that will be commissioned. A larger organisation may be the most appropriate to deliver the work but what won’t be considered are applications working across large geographic areas or populations in one proposal.

What the panel are also unlikely to accept are multiple applications, of a similar or identical nature, for multiple areas in Highland. If a larger organisation is working with multiple communities to deliver services that are similar, there should be identifiable differences reflecting the range of needs that are particular to the proposed beneficiary group.

**What do we mean by ‘community’?**

In this instance we are looking at communities that are relatively small, either thematic or geographic. For example, we are not looking at a community that is based around a substantial population, such as ‘Inverness’, ‘Easter Ross’ or ‘Women’, these are too big. It might be that you have a combination of geographic and thematic, i.e. ‘*women affected by domestic abuse in Mid Ross’* or ‘*men over 65 with a long term condition in Dalneigh’*.

Other communities may be a thematic community living anywhere in Highland, such as refugees, people from minority ethnic backgrounds, or the LGBTQ+ community. These communities are among the at-risk groups prioritised by the Scottish Government due to existing health inequalities.

**When can I apply and when will a decision be made?**

The HTSI funding application portal will be open between 29 September 2023 and midday 9 January 2024.

* Applications received by midday 27 October - assessed in November
* Applications received by midday 29 November - assessed December
* Applications received by midday 9 January - assessed late January

There is no expression of interest this year. After the first two panel meetings, there will be an opportunity for the panel to offer suggestions for improving an application, which may then be reconsidered at the following panel meeting. After the final panel meeting in January, this is no longer an option and panel decisions will be final. For this reason, the earlier you can submit your application, the better.

Geographic community projects will be appraised by HTSI Delivery partners, who will provide a localised view for the rest of the panel, based on local priorities and need.

If you are applying for a larger figure (considerably more than £10K) you must contact HTSI Development Officer (Funds & Fundraising), well in advance so we can discuss your proposal before submitting your application.

**When will we get paid**

We aim to have funding agreements issued within two weeks of the decision, and payment will follow when you return these to HTSI.

All grants will be made in one BACS payment before end of March 2024.

**When do I need to deliver the activity?**

The activity should begin before end of April 2024 and generally, projects should be completed within a 12-month period. We have some discretion to continue if costs permit, for maximum 18 months but we’re required to report on impact of this fund in April 2025. In view of this, we would prefer most projects are wrapped up and reporting on results by then.

**What happens if I am unsuccessful**

If you submit an application and are not selected by the panel for an award, you will be notified by email.

If the panel feel the overall proposal has the potential to meet the criteria, but there is not enough detail or evidence to assess it, you will be invited to submit an amended application based on feedback from the panel. Again, this information will be provided in an email.

When you apply, there is an expectation that you will endeavour to keep track of the dates that the panel are likely to be assessing it and contact us if you have not received a response in the estimated time. In this scenario, check your spam folder in case your provider has blocked the email and then call us if you don’t find any communication from us.

The timeline of cut-off dates and panel dates will be published on our website and remain there for reference until the final panel meeting has taken place.

**How will the application be assessed?**

In Highland we are working in partnership with the Community Planning Partnership and Health and Social Care Partnership to assess applications. As such a panel of individuals from both Public and Third Sector organisations, including those who have been selected because of their relevant life experiences, will be responsible for assessing applications.

Applications will initially be assessed, to determine if the proposal meets the essential criteria:

* small-scale, community proposal with evidence of participation
* to promote mental health and wellbeing and/or protect against the impact of distress and mental ill health
* aimed at the adult population (16 years and above)
* new initiative or developing/improving/expanding on an existing project

In addition, proposals will be sense-checked by HTSI delivery partners for:

* the perceived value to the proposed community
* evidence that there is no duplication
* fit with areas of priority need in the local area

Applications will then be assessed on:

* Quality and appropriateness
* Collaboration and involvement of beneficiary group
* Priorities and outcomes
* Fit with the aims and principles

Further details on the assessment process can be found in the Guidance document, which is available to download from our website <https://www.highlandtsi.org.uk/hcmw-fund>.