**Where can you find help and advice to assist you with funding?**

A successful fundraising programme is likely to involve a range of supporters (individuals, businesses, charitable trusts/ foundations or other partners) through a mix of fundraising activities. Funding is available from lotteries, trusts and foundations, as well as from public sector agencies and government. It’s important to understand the type of grants you can apply for and save time chasing funds for which you are not eligible.

HTSI produce a monthly Funding Bulletin for members, which details current funding opportunities in Highland, and Marion MacNeil, our funding development officer, is available to answer queries on:

* completing funding applications
* considering how you will measure success
* how to prepare evidence for funders

We will also provide workshops for staff or volunteers in Highland’s third sector, to address some of the challenges we’re aware of when it comes to applying for funds.

We also distribute funds to third sector organisations on behalf of agencies in the public sector, e.g.

* Highland Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund
* Highland Alcohol & Drugs Partnership Local Improvement Fund

Other resources include:

[Funding Scotland](https://funding.scot/?utm_source=scvo&utm_campaign=page&utm_medium=website) is a free online database from SCVO (The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations) containing over 1,400 funds including grants, loans, and other support.

[Foundation Scotland](https://www.foundationscotland.org.uk/) helps people and organisations to fund good causes, strengthening Scotland’s communities and creating a lasting impact. As a charitable trust, they provide a [single] governance structure for hundreds of funds. Since 1996, they’ve helped distribute more than £130 million to charities and community groups through their effective and innovative funding programmes.

The [Corra Foundation](https://www.corra.scot/about/) exists to make a difference to the lives of people and communities. It works with others to encourage positive change, opportunity, fairness and growth of aspirations which improve quality of life. Since 1985 the foundation has distributed almost £193m and made nearly 24,000 grants to charities.

**How to prepare your organisation to secure funding**

Before you apply for funding, you will need to prepare evidence that demonstrates your capabilities and why your organisation is best placed to carry out the work you intend to do. You will usually be expected to have a constitution, a bank account in the organisation’s name and financial records.

It will also help if you have a clear strategy that reflects your organisational plans, targets and values. If you don’t already have a fundraising strategy, you can work towards developing something that shows where your organisation is now, where you want to be, and how you will get there. You can get more advice on developing a strategy from the [Chartered Institute of Fundraising - Guidance and resources (ciof.org.uk)](https://ciof.org.uk/guidance-and-resources).

If you are a new organisation with no financial records, you will need to have clear evidence of the needs you’ve identified and be able to demonstrate that your organisation is competent, reliable and able to respond appropriately.

**Evidence of need**

You should collate evidence on the need/issue/situation you are trying to address. Are there local statistics that support your claims? Have you liaised with your community? If you’re responding to local concerns, have your carried out your own analysis, to quantify the issue? If you are a new organisation and don’t yet have financial records, it’s even more important that you have clear evidence of the need you are proposing to address and your capacity to respond.

**What’s your USP (unique selling point)?**

Prepare an elevator pitch on what you stand for and what makes your organisation unique and well-placed to address this issue, demonstrating your experience and values. Case studies, evaluation from previous projects, press articles, awards, are all useful ways you can demonstrate your capacity and reliability. Think about what people in your community appreciate about what you deliver and how they value your organisation.

**Community engagement**

You should also gather evidence of your organisation’s engagement with key stakeholders, members of your community and people with lived experience. The results of your engagement should demonstrate that your response to this issue or situation has the support of people with relevant knowledge and expertise and is likely to generate ongoing participation that contributes to the success of the project. Consulting with your community also has the advantage of making your approach more transparent and sustainable. Community engagement – top tips:

**What do funders want to know and why?**

A funding application is your opportunity to tell the funders exactly what they want to know about your organisation and your proposed project. It is crucial that you read the application guidance thoroughly and confirm that you meet the essential eligibility criteria before you proceed. Funders usually provide FAQs (frequently asked questions), but if the information you’re looking for is not in the FAQs they will usually be happy to answer your queries and clarify anything that is unclear.

In addition, it is essential that you approach a funding application from your organisation’s perspective, not your own. If a funder asks for your previous experience, they are seeking reassurance that your organisation can deliver a quality service, regardless of who may be employed to work there, and that there is no cause for concern should you or any key staff member leave the organisation.

**People-led proposals**

You need to reassure funders that your proposed project has been shaped by the experiences and views of people with first-hand experience of the issue, because this leads to projects being more successful in reaching people and meeting their needs. You should have evidence of how you involved people, how their views influenced your approach and/or examples of the views they shared with you.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

Funders want to see that you have considered how you will monitor the projects outputs and measure potential outcomes for your project’s participants. Be prepared to describe the indicators you intend to measure to capture evidence of success. They will also be keen to understand how you will use the overall impact and learning from the project, to support future planning.

We provide bitesize workshop sessions on preparing evidence for funders, find out more here [Training | HTSI main (highlandtsi.org.uk)](https://www.highlandtsi.org.uk/training).

**Evidence of inclusion**

Funders want to ensure that the grants they award are being spent on everyone who is entitled to the support you’re providing. It’s important to understand how you can build appropriate measures into your plans to break down the barriers that people face and potentially ‘level the playing field’. Additional costs associated with diversity and inclusion can be included in funding applications, and you should highlight these within your project costs.

**Evidence of the benefit to your community**

Whether you are proposing an innovative project, or a tried and trusted method of support, funders will want to understand how you can be confident that the people you reach will benefit. This involves demonstrating your knowledge and experience of the people you’re aiming to reach, and the service or activity you’re aiming to deliver. You can take case studies from elsewhere, but you must draw parallels to your community to explain why you believe your proposals will work.

**In line with strategic aims of the funder or specific fund**

You should be aware of what your funders value, their strategic goals and targets. You will find this information in their funding guidance and/or FAQs. Sometimes they will have multiple strategic outcomes they are aiming to achieve through their grant awards, and the guidance will clarify whether you need to align with all of them, or just one or two.

**Measuring outcomes**

To help you measure outcomes for your service participants, you can follow the below steps to identify outcomes and suitable indicators of success. You can also involve potential participants or people with lived experience in setting and measuring these outcomes.

Ask yourself:

* What is the problem/issue/situation that our service is seeking to address?
* What would success look like?
* What are the changes we are hoping to see in our participants?
* How can we measure that change?

You will probably be accustomed to reporting on what you delivered and how many people benefitted from your activities. You may also be in the habit of asking people for feedback, which demonstrates how they felt about what you delivered. But that doesn’t necessarily measure success, at least not the success that matters most to the people you’re trying to help. What you need is evidence that you achieved the purpose or outcomes you were aiming for.

Once you’ve clarified what the indicators of success would be, you can plan how you will capture the evidence. Some of the evidence may come from participants, others may come from observation or other methods. How you capture these will depend on the characteristics of your participants and your interaction with them.

You can also consider whether you would be looking for short-term changes in participants, as well as medium-term or longer-term.

**Useful Resources**

We have listed a few methods often used for measuring outcomes below and you can find out more from [Evaluation Support Scotland](https://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/choosing-the-right-evaluation-methods/).

**The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scales – WEMWBS**

[WEMWBS](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs) has two scales: the original 14-item scale and the short 7-item scale. These were developed with funding from NHS Health Scotland, to enable the measuring of mental wellbeing in the general population and the evaluation of projects, programmes and policies which aim to improve mental wellbeing. The items are all worded positively and cover both feeling and functioning aspects of mental wellbeing.

**Impactasaurus**

[Impactasaurus](https://impactasaurus.org/) is an online tool for recording, monitoring and reporting on soft outcomes. It is currently free to use. It uses scaled questionnaires to record quantitative data.

**YOU Ladder**

[The YOU Ladder](https://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/evaluation-ladder-drugs-and-housing/) is a visual measure of where the client is at any particular moment in their life, with regards to drugs and housing. This ladder was adapted by Kevin Callaghan from West Lothian Cyrenians to use in their Drugs Outreach Project.

**Outcomes Star**

The Outcomes Star™ is a unique tool for supporting and measuring change when working with vulnerable people. It is widely used and has been adapted for different client groups and settings, including homelessness, mental health, employment.

There are now over 30 tools available and full training is now delivered in Scotland. There is a license fee to use the online and paper version and the social enterprise offer free support with implementation and reporting. You can find license options and costs on their website [https://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/.](https://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/)

**Recognising our rich tapestry**

[Recognising our rich tapestry: measuring the contribution of third sector organisations to tackling health inequalities](https://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/recognising-our-rich-tapestry-measuring-the-contribution-of-third-sector-organisations-to-tackling-health-inequalities/). This resource seeks to help third sector organisations to understand:

* explain to funders or commissioners the value that your current work has in tackling health inequalities
* help you plan new work and inform discussions with funders, commissioners or partners about new areas of work
* decide what you will measure for the people you work with.

**Common errors**

Common mistakes people make when applying for funding include:

* Failing to check their eligibility for the fund – this is the main reason funding applications are turned down. Look carefully at who is eligible, and what is eligible before you proceed. If you’re still not sure, make contact to discuss.
* Writing an application as if they are applying for a job – the questions are not aimed at you personally, you are representing your organisation. A first-person perspective gives the impression that the activity relies solely on you and if you were offered another job, the enterprise may fail.
* Failing to read the guidance before completing the form – funding guidance is designed to provide an explanation of the criteria and of each question, so that there can be no misunderstanding about what they are looking for.
* Misinterpreting the question – eg. if a question asks ‘how you achieve something’, the answer should be a description of how you actually do it, not confirmation that you do, or who you do it for, or why. Also, if two questions seem to you to be asking the same thing, it’s possible that you have misinterpreted the questions, so check the guidance again.
* Repeating the same information in response to different questions – funding panels may have to read hundreds of applications. Your challenge is to be brief, succinct and respond only to what is being asked, otherwise you’ll not only make their job more difficult, but reduce the chance of being awarded the grant.
* Providing outcomes that are descriptions of your activity – an outcome should describe the change you hope to see in your service participants. If your ‘outcome description’ includes what you will do, who you will be helping or how, then you should move these to a more appropriate question, leaving only the reason(s) why you do it as outcome(s).

Example: “Practising yoga and other wellness activities promotes relaxation and has been shown to reduce stress and feelings of anxiety.” The outcome is: reducing stress and feelings of anxiety.

Example: “Upskilling individuals enabling them to access our facilities at X Hall, using online and face to face training, improving employability skills.” The outcome is: improving employability skills.

Example: “The event will address social isolation faced by many, which will contribute to improved mental health and reductions in suicides.” The outcomes are:

* reducing social and geographical isolation,
* improving mental health,
* reducing risk of suicide.

Example: “Providing X more vulnerable adults with learning difficulties a safe and supportive environment to develop transferable skills and an increased sense of self-worth through engagement with the outdoors and gardening.” The outcomes are:

* increasing sense of self-worth,
* developing transferable skills.

In order to measure your outcomes, you will need to capture (as a minimum) a baseline measurement and then compare that to a subsequent milestone. Think of it in terms of monitoring someone’s physical journey from A-B. Record their starting point, their distance part-way through the journey time and their end point, to see how much progress they made. It can be challenging to monitor progress if you’re aiming to improve mental health, but you will find links in useful resources, to several methods designed to help with this, such as WEMWBS (Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale).

Be careful about claiming all the credit when your participants have made progress over a long period of time. There can be many contributing factors, both positive and negative, so keep that in mind when analysing the results of your measurements.