**Highland Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults Year 5/6**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

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

Our Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund for Adults is divided into three separate funds for which you may apply, depending on your plans and eligibility.

**Micro Grants £10,000 or less for 1 year**

For grassroots activity which aims to address one or more of the following:

* Reducing social isolation
* Unpaid carers
* People with long-term conditions
* Prevention of crisis and suicide
* Rurally disadvantaged
* Poverty
* Psychological trauma ​

**Small Grants £20,000 or less per year for 2 years**

For grassroots activity which aims to address one or more of the following:

* Reducing social isolation
* Unpaid carers
* People with long-term conditions
* Prevention of crisis and suicide
* Rurally disadvantaged
* Poverty
* Psychological trauma ​

**Collaboration Grants £50,000 or less per year for 2 years**

To support greater collaboration between one or more organisations in meeting the underpinning priorities, and improving identification pathways, support mechanisms and building trusted relationships.

**How to apply?**

**Micro Grants**

Applications for micro grants will be completed through the [HTSI web portal using this link.](https://form.jotform.com/251823599600360)

This will be open between Friday 4 July 2025 and closes for application at midday, Tuesday 05 August 2025.

The panel will meet the w/c 18 August and decisions will be shared w/c 25 August 2025.

**Small Grants**

Applications for small grants will be completed through the [HTSI web portal using this link.](https://form.jotform.com/251823711434351)

This will be open between Friday 4 July 2025 and closes for application at midday, Thursday 14 August 2025

The panel will meet w/c 3 September and decisions will be shared w/c 15 September 2025.

**Collaboration Grants**

The application process is divided into two stages:

**Stage One:** The Expression of Interest (EoI) opens Friday 29 August 2025 and the deadline to submit is Midday, Tuesday 30 September 2025.

Expressions of interest form can be accessed via the HTSI web portal (TBC).

After the initial assessment, HTSI will notify shortlisted applicants by 17 November 2025.

**Stage Two:** Applicants are invited to present their proposals to a funding panel w/c 12 January 2026 and decisions will be shared w/c 19 January 2026. Proposal documents to include an outline of the activity, outputs, outcomes, and financial breakdown along with a presentation, followed by a Q&A with the panel members.

**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 April 2026 at the latest). The fund aims 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. However, an award in previous years offers no indication of the likelihood of success in subsequent years.

You may apply for more than one micro or small grant if you have separate activities which meet the criteria. However, we would urge caution as the fund is usually oversubscribed by a significant amount. Although applications will be assessed on their own merit, it is possible that the funding panel may consider the overall picture when allocating funds.

You may also apply for all grant programmes - Micro, Small and Collaboration Grants. However, these must be for separate projects/activities and bear in mind the funding panel, when considering the larger grants will already be aware of the results of the small grant awards.

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, developed as a direct result of engagement with intended beneficiaries then there are only a few activities that will not be considered:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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  |
| 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 |  |

**Can we apply for property rental/lease costs?**

Yes, this is permitted along with other running costs. However, it is important to demonstrate that the activity is viable within the funding period and contributes meaningfully to community mental health and wellbeing. Sustainability should be addressed by showing how the initiative will continue to deliver impact, or transition responsibly, after the funding ends. You should also explain how this was funded before, if applicable.

**If collaborating, do we have to apply for a collaboration grant?**

No, we expect all proposals for large, small and micro grants to demonstrate collaboration to some degree. This is a core element of successful applications, due to the fund being aimed at grassroots initiatives with a strong community focus. However, what we’re looking for with the larger grant amounts is to identify enhanced levels of collaborative work, create or build on positive relationships, improving how services are delivered and helping to prevent or reduce gaps in provision.

**Can we apply to deliver online activities?**

Yes, but you should include background information on the rationale, ie. whether this is instead of in-person activities or an additional option. For example, if you chose to deliver online instead of in-person, do you have evidence that this is how people would prefer to engage with the activity? What evidence do you have that this would provide adequate support for this community? Contrast and compare with alternatives to show that you’ve considered a range of options and are confident this is the best solution.

**How much can you apply for?**

Micro grants applications must be for £10,000 or less. Small grants must be for £20,000 or less per year, for two years. Collaboration grants are for up to £50,000 per year for two years.

This should give you an indication of the scale and scope of the projects that are appropriate. Remember that the overall fund is aimed at small-scale, grassroots community activity.

Your request should be driven by the actions you want to test, pilot or deliver with the guidance in mind, and the actual cost of delivery, rather than designing activity to fit the budget.

If you have a collaborative project developed with one or more other organisations, the anticipated costs should dictate whether you apply for a small grant or the larger grant. Collaboration is always to be encouraged, because it tends to provide more innovative and effective solutions. So, collaborative projects may still apply for a smaller grant.

The maximum limit for including capital costs in your proposal for either grant 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 be included as capital costs. If you’re in any 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 additional costs of meeting accessibility needs, based on your own research or engagement. Be careful about over-estimating costs as this can result in costs being queried by the funding panel, or projects having to return an underspend at the end of the year.

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 may adjust to ‘plan B’ during a project’s original duration, rather than requesting approval to extend.

**What portion of funding is available for each grant programme?**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **GRANT PROGRAMMES** | **MAX AMOUNTS P.A.** | **TOTAL P.A.** |
| Micro Grants | 10000 | £       100,000.00 |
| Small Grants | 20000 | £       180,000.00 |
| Collaboration Grants | 50000 | £       300,000.00 |
| Intensive capacity building | 20000 | £       120,000.00  |
|   |   | **£       700,000.00** |

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

For the micro grants, we anticipate the majority of projects will be 6-12 months in duration. For the small grants, projects should last for up to two years.

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.

Micro and Small Grants recipients must begin at the earliest opportunity and preferably start before end December 2025.

Collaboration grants will be paid early in the new year, so we ask that funded projects begin by 1 April 2026.

At the very latest, we ask that two year projects conclude by end April 2028.

**How do we decide who should be the lead applicant?**

If you’re considering submitting a bid for the large grants as a group of organisations, you should agree which partner should lead on the application. Lead applications should be third sector organisations. However, please bear in mind that the lead applicant will also be responsible for managing the funds and submitting reports throughout the duration of the project.

**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 any challenges or changes you’ve encountered in your delivery up to that point. 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 six months, you will be asked to provide at least one progress report halfway through (or every six months for 2-year projects) and a closing report at the end.

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. We may be able to grant an extension, and approve an amended end date, in which case a closing report would have to be provided again.

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.

Please note, if you are awarded a grant, it is your responsibility to plan your evaluation process and allow time to submit reports as requested. You should not rely on funders to remind you when the reports are due.

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

The short answer is yes. Even for a micro/small grant, 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 strong connections within the community. 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 their views have shaped your proposals. This participatory approach is more effective and ensures time is spent on what matters most to the people you aim to support.

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 your activity is additional and not duplicating an existing service.

**Why is there a 100 word limit on project description?**

This is a limit set by Scottish Government as this is one of the data points included in end of year reporting. You must be clear and concise to ensure you describe your project within the word count. But it’s also important to inspire – describe what is unique about your project and the impact it will have. Use bullet points if necessary, but always use spacing and sections to make the information stand out!

**How can I reduce my word count without missing out valid information?**

Example (removing 19 words): ~~There are several online articles~~ You can consult ~~for~~ tips on writing concisely ~~to help reduce word count easily~~ without losing ~~any~~ meaning from ~~the information you include in~~ your ~~funding~~ application.

**Can I edit my application after submission?**

JotForm will issue an auto-response to the email address provided in Q4, which contains a hyperlink to ‘edit your submission’. You should save this email – if you can’t find the email, this could be because:

* It has gone to your Junk/Spam folder
* There’s a typo in your email address

**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 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 children or young people under 16 years.

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 help you consider appropriate partners who could help you mitigate any risks associated with managing grant funding.

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

Yes. Large organisations undertaking local initiatives are not excluded but are also not the focus of this fund, so would only be funded by exception, i.e. this may require evidence that there is no alternative to meet the needs of a specific community. We would not expect to see Highland-wide applications except where they apply to a 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.

**Why do you ask if we applied to any other TSIs for funding?**

All TSIs in Scotland offer similar grant programmes originating from this Scottish Government fund. In previous years, some organisations have applied to deliver support in multiple localities both in and beyond the Highland area, thus applying to other TSIs. By asking you to declare this, we can make connections with relevant TSIs as required and our funding panel will be better informed.

**What do you 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 would be too large. 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 Hilton’*.

Other communities may be thematic living anywhere in Highland, such as refugees, or the LGBTI+ 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?**

**Micro Grants**

Applications for micro grants will be completed through the [HTSI web portal using this link.](https://form.jotform.com/251823599600360)

This will be open between Friday 4 July and midday Tuesday 5 August.

The panel will meet Monday 18 August and decisions will be shared w/c 25 August.

**Small Grants**

Applications for small grants will be completed through the [HTSI web portal using this link.](https://form.jotform.com/251823711434351)

This will be open between Friday 4 July and midday Thursday 14 August.

The panel will meet 3 September and decisions will be shared w/c 15 September.

**Expressions of interest for Collaboration grants** <£50,000:

* Expression of interest (EOI) opens Friday 29 August
* EOI deadline Midday Tuesday 30 September
* Invitations to present proposals will be shared w/c 17 November 2025.
* The panel will meet w/c 12 January 2026
* Decisions will be shared w/c 19 January 2026.

HTSI Delivery partners will assess applications along with other partners, providing a local perspective, based on local priorities and need.

**When will grants be paid?**

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

All grants will be allocated by BACS payment – multi-year grants will be paid in annual instalments, once conditions have been satisfied.

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

This depends on the grant you are awarded. We anticipate micro grants projects will be 6-12 months in duration, small grants will be up to two years in duration, and we are looking for activity to start as soon as is practicable, once funds are paid into your account.

Micro and Small Grants recipients must begin at the earliest opportunity and no later than **1 January 2026**.

Collaboration grants will be paid later in the year, so we ask that funded projects begin by **1 April 2026**.

**How will our applications be assessed?**

In Highland we are working in partnership with the Community Planning Partnership Mental Health Delivery Group 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 work together to approve 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)
* complies with Fair Work First policy

Applications will then be assessed on:

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

Further details on the assessment process can be found in the Guidance documents, which are available to download from our website [Communities Mental Health Fund Y5 | Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI)](https://www.highlandtsi.org.uk/cmhwf-y5).

**What happens if we are unsuccessful?**

If you are not selected by the panel for an award, you will be notified by email. There is only one panel meeting to assess each of the micro and small grant applications. There will no opportunity to revisit your application should it fail to meet the criteria, or provide insufficient evidence. So, it’s crucial that you follow the guidance and contact us if anything is unclear.

When you apply, we expect you will endeavour to keep track of the panel dates and contact us if you have not received a response in the estimated time. In this scenario, please check your spam folder as providers may block emails for various reasons. Please call us if you don’t find any communication from us in your spam folder.

The timeline which includes deadlines and panel dates will remain on our website for reference until the final panel meeting has taken place.

**How do we apply Fair Work if we do not directly employ staff?**

Fair Work aims to balance the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers and generates mutual benefits for individuals, organisations and communities. Fair work is embedded in public sector financial support, which means that all grant recipients will be required to pay at least the real Living Wage and provide appropriate channels for effective workers' voice as a minimum standard. If you do not employ staff, directly or indirectly, this may not apply to your organisation.

*“All UK-based staff aged 16 and over, including apprentices, who are directly employed by the grant recipient, must be paid at least the real Living Wage; and any UK-based workers who are not directly employed but are directly engaged in delivering the grant-funded activity, whether they be sub-contractors or agency staff, must also be paid at least the real Living Wage.”*

*“The Scottish Government or other relevant funder may apply limited exceptions to provide funding to organisations who cannot pay at least the real Living Wage in order that the measure is proportionate.”*

In Q39, you should describe how your organisation meets your responsibilities within the Fair Work Framework. The link is provided in the [online guidance](https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-work-first-guidance-2/pages/6/) within the question. If you need assistance understanding your responsibilities, please contact us.

Scottish Enterprise, in conjunction with the Scottish Government, Fair Work Convention and other partners, have developed an online [tool](https://fairworktool.scot/) to help employers understand and fully embed the dimensions of Fair Work.

**How can we access help with technical difficulties with the online form?**

Please contact enquiry@highlandtsi.org.uk.