

Grantmaking policy

Table of Contents

PURPOSE.....	2
INTRODUCTION	2
GRANT MAKING PRINCIPLES.....	2
FUNDING GROUPS	2
GRANT MAKING SUPPORT.....	3
FUNDING INDIVIDUALS	3
GOVERNANCE.....	3
ASSESSMENT	4
MONITORING.....	4
FEEDBACK.....	4
APPEAL	4

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FUTURE REVIEW

Any new policy will be reviewed by the Grants and Programmes Committee and approved by the Board of Trustees to ensure that it continues to meet the social needs of the people of Essex, Southend and Thurrock, as well as any changes in regulation or legislation.

For further information please contact:

grants@essexcf.org.uk

01245 356018

Grantmaking policy

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Grantmaking Policy is to set out clearly and simply our principles and approach to ensure our grantmaking is accessible to the wide range of groups (we use the term groups to also mean organisations) and individuals seeking funding. Helping to deliver, thriving communities in Essex. The policy should be read alongside our [grantmaking guidance](#).

INTRODUCTION

Essex Community Foundation was established in 1996 as an independent charitable trust. Our aim as a place-based funder is to enable growth in community and improvements in the quality of life of people across Essex through our grant-giving. We manage donations from individuals, companies, charitable trusts, and statutory bodies, so we can provide long term sustainable funding to voluntary and community groups in Essex.

We encourage applications seeking funding from community groups of all sizes, from across the whole of Essex, which will deliver benefit to people in Essex, including Southend and Thurrock. We are committed to ensure our grant making is accessible to all groups especially those new to grant funding or who are smaller and wholly volunteer led. As a funder, we fill a particular gap in the funding landscape by recognising the benefits these groups bring to their communities. We also recognise that they are particularly well placed to identify and work with the most marginalised and underrepresented communities in Essex.

GRANT MAKING PRINCIPLES

We follow the Institute for [Voluntary Action Research \(IVAR\) flexible funder principles](#) to ensure we are an open and trusted grant maker. We value the importance of the community groups who are led by the lived experiences of the communities they work with. Our grant making is designed to be both responsive and adaptive, reflecting the diversity of our county and addressing emerging social issues and priorities. We look to make decisions within 2 months of receiving an application, however for some funds and programmes this may not be possible. We are keen to encourage groups to build on community assets and to promote equity, diversity and inclusion. Our funding supports projects, core costs, capital work and strategic or IT development. Increasingly we look to provide core and multiyear funding, helping groups focus on their work and plan for the future.

We are committed to actively listening to groups through our Community Listening Project, using the insight gained to inform the development of our grantmaking. For transparency we published publicly all our grants' data using [360Giving GrantNav](#).

FUNDING GROUPS

The majority of our grantmaking is delivered through an 'open' application process, where applications are matched with appropriate funds. We also manage specific funding programmes throughout the year, which may have different eligibility criteria. Where significant community issues are identified, we may look to develop a programme of work to address the need, such as the Covid Response and Recovery Fund.

All applicants will need to demonstrate their benefit to the community, and the criteria upon which we accept applications are:

- From charitable, non-profit making and social enterprise groups, including Charities, Community Interest Companies, Charitable Incorporated Organisations, Unincorporated groups and Companies Limited by Guarantee.



Grantmaking policy

- All applicants need to demonstrate shared decision-making, which means having at least 3 trustees or directors (not related, and no significant control by an individual) and the organisation displays a commitment to engagement with the communities they work with.
- For the benefit of people living within the administrative county of Essex, Southend or Thurrock (the Foundation can, at the request of a donor, award funds outside of Essex).
- Organisations with a permanent presence in Essex, Southend or Thurrock, (national or regional groups may apply if they are engaged with local communities and networks).

We will not support:

- Organisations that are for the sole benefit of animals or plants
- Undefined contribution to a general public wide funding appeal
- Political promotion including political party activity
- The support or promotion of a religious doctrine; mission; proselytisation or promotion of the beliefs of a particular faith (beyond basic religious/cultural/values awareness raising)
- Statutory agencies and bodies including Parish Councils in the discharge of their statutory obligations
- Retrospective or deficit funding
- Funding grantmaking by other organisations

GRANT MAKING SUPPORT

We want to fund great work in Essex, so we aim to provide support and guidance with applying and reporting on grants. We endeavour to keep the application process as simple as possible, only collecting the information needed about the group and eligibility to make a decision. We may contact groups for further information when needed.

[Our guidance for our 'open' applications is published on our website.](#) Other Funds and programmes may be subject to additional criteria and for these, specific guidance will be published separately on our website.

We are committed to identifying, listening to, and supporting underrepresented and marginalised groups to apply for funding, offering advice and guidance to groups that need support. We work closely with infrastructure organisations to support capacity building and shared learning.

FUNDING INDIVIDUALS

Although we predominately support community groups. We are also able to award grants to individuals and the application can be found [here](#). These funds are available to help children and young adults where money is a barrier to them reaching their full potential. There are currently four main themes education, sport, mental health, and disabilities, depending on the availability of donor funding. Grant decisions will be made by the donor or an independent panel. Grants will be paid to the education provider or organisation providing the service, equipment, or training unless, under exceptional circumstances, where the grant may be paid to the individual directly.

GOVERNANCE

Our Board of Trustees has delegated their grant-making powers to the Grants & Programmes Committee, and they approve all our grants. Donors are encouraged to be actively involved in decisions about grant applications. Our decision-making processes will vary according to the nature of the agreement with each individual donor or funder. The level of donor/funder involvement in grant making could be at any point on a continuum between the following:



Grantmaking policy

- The Acorn Fund (our fund, made up of individual donations), in this case the donor leaves the grant making decisions to our trustees.
- A Discretionary Fund where the donor may specify criteria for grants to be awarded but leaves all grant making decisions to our trustees.
- A Donor-Advised Fund where the donor plays an active role in grant-making decisions, supported by us. (Most funds held by us are Donor Advised funds.)
- A Donor-Directed fund whereby the donor chooses the organisations to be funded and the level of funding.

ASSESSMENT

The aim of the grants assessment is to ensure the group meets our eligibility and criteria, then to establish and summarise the overall benefit. We provide guidance to our assessors on how applications are assessed and any additional information that may be used, such as, website, social media, references and previous monitoring. All applications go through a two-stage process, so each application is assessed by an individual member of staff and then the assessments peer reviewed by the grants team. So that applications can be prioritised equitably our assessors use the following categories for assessing applications:

- Evidence of Need
- Benefit to the community and organisation
- Community Involvement
- Management, Capacity and Governance
- Strength of financial management

MONITORING

All successful applicants are required to complete project monitoring at the end of the grant, we will provide feedback and, in some cases, ask for more information. The success or otherwise of a project will not necessarily affect further funding. However further grants will not be awarded unless a satisfactory monitoring has been returned. Where multi-year funding is agreed, an appropriate monitoring framework will be implemented.

Organisations awarded grants will be invited to provide case studies, photographs, short videos, quotes and other evidence that demonstrates the impact of a grant. This will be used for publicity and for feedback to donors. The outcomes achieved from the funding provided by us will be used to identify need and best practice in service delivery. These will support the development of our grantmaking in the future.

FEEDBACK

We provide feedback to all unsuccessful candidates, explaining the reasons given, and unsuccessful applications may apply again providing they are eligible. We also welcome feedback, so we send every application an anonymised survey at the end of the grant approval process (successful or unsuccessful) and at the end of the grant. This information is used to continuously improve our service in response to your feedback.

APPEAL

A grant applicant cannot appeal the Foundation's decision not to fund or to partially fund, if the decision is based on insufficient funds being available. Appeals will only be allowed in the following cases:

1. Where the organisation provides evidence that the Foundation's representative showed prejudice in considering the request, or

Grantmaking policy

2. The details provided to the Grants and Programmes Committee or the donor advised panel were factually incorrect in some material aspect.

The appeals process is outlined below.

