



THE ROYAL
COUNTRYSIDE
FUND

Supporting Rural Communities

FAQs

WHAT DO YOU FUND? WHAT DON'T YOU FUND?

This funding is available to rural **community organisations**, not individuals or private businesses. You can apply if your organisation has an income of less than £500,000 a year and is a:

- constituted voluntary or community organisation
- registered, exempt or excepted charity
- charitable incorporated organisation (CIO)
- not-for-profit company limited by guarantee
- community interest company (CIC)
- community benefit society
- co-operative society

If you're an unincorporated group

It might be appropriate for you to become a company or other type of incorporated organisation. We suggest you look into this and think about how it might work for your organisation.

You need at least 2 board or committee members who are not related

Related can mean:

- related by marriage
- in a civil partnership with each other
- in a long-term relationship with each other
- related through a long-term partner
- living together at the same address
- related by blood.

All companies who apply must have at least two directors who are not related in any of these ways. This also applies to companies that are also registered as charities.

Types of organisation that we are unable to fund:

These include (but are not limited to):

- Care Farms or similar activities where the beneficiaries are drawn from a larger area than just the local community.
- Local Authorities, including Town and Parish Councils.
- Hospitals and Schools.

- Private companies and individuals.
- Youth clubs.
- Uniformed groups such as scouts, guides and sea cadets.
- Sports clubs and associations.
- Organisations that look to make profits and share these profits out privately - including companies limited by shares, organisations without the right asset locks, or organisations that can pay profits to directors or shareholders.
- Organisations applying to more than one of our funds for the same project over the same period. This is because you cannot get duplicate funding for something we're already funding you to do. It's OK to apply to another programme if you've already had an unsuccessful decision though.

What we don't support:

We are unable to fund:

- Rent costs
- Projects taking place in Cumbria and Northumberland
- Activities which involve capital work to buy or build, refurbish, extend or alter a property or other construction-related works.

This includes:

- refurbishment
- retro-fitting
- extending buildings
- purchasing land or buildings
- creating a new building
- developing an external space like a community garden.
- Landscape-scale or nature recovery type projects
- Purchase of buildings or land.
- Planning permission/building regulations.
- Insurance costs
- Activities taking place in a location where the purchase/rent agreement is not complete.
- Statutory requirements.
- Technical energy activities where a specialist funder might be more appropriate.
- Activities that replace government funding
- Activities that benefit individuals, rather than the wider community
- Lobbying activities
- Retrospective costs
- The topping up of organisation reserves.
- Activities where our contribution makes up less than 10% of the total cost of the activity
- Activities that aim to promote a religion
- Consumables including food, fuel or refreshments.
- Political activity/campaigning
- Working capital
- Loans.
- Activities where there may be other, more appropriate funders with a better understanding of the issue. For example, those dealing with:
 - domestic violence
 - migration
 - dementia or elderly care
 - healthcare or mental healthcare provision.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE RURALITY?

We focus our support on isolated rural areas with populations usually less than 4,000 where the project is required due to a lack of alternative services in that locality. Therefore, applications from small villages and towns, or rurally dispersed areas, will likely be prioritised over those from larger towns, which may be better served. However, we appreciate that some larger towns may still be underserved and distant from urban and peri-urban hubs, so we will assess these applications on a case-by-case basis. If your community falls into this category, we recommend contacting the grants team to discuss prior to starting an application [using the online form on our website](#).

HOW DO YOU ASSESS COMMUNITY NEED AND DEPRIVATION?

As a rural funder, the RCF recognises that deprivation is often hard to quantify through the usual statistical measures. However, we want to direct funding where it is needed most. Therefore, applications from areas of deprivation, or those that can show how the project will benefit those most in need within an area of wealth disparity, will likely be prioritised over those from more affluent areas.

IF MY PROJECT REQUIRES PERMISSIONS SUCH AS PLANNING CONSENT, DO YOU NEED TO SEE PROOF THAT IT HAS BEEN SECURED?

We will need to see evidence of relevant permissions if you are invited to submit a full proposal to us. We do not accept projects where planning permission has not already been secured.

CAN I APPLY IF I ALREADY HAVE AN ACTIVE AGREEMENT?

You may have two active agreements at once. However, there should be no adverse risks relating to the delivery of the first project. You will need to be able to demonstrate this when asked. We cannot fund organisations applying to more than one of our funds for the same project over the same period. This is because you cannot get duplicate funding for something we're already funding you to do.

CAN YOU FUND ORGANISATIONS THAT WORK ACROSS MORE THAN ONE RURAL AREA?

Our funding supports projects where the activities are driven by the local communities themselves. If your project includes more than one rural area you would need to demonstrate strong demand and involvement from the individual communities you are working with.

DO YOU FUND EXISTING PROJECTS OR MUST THE PROJECT BE A NEW ACTIVITY?

We do fund existing projects that are progressing well, as long as they can demonstrate strong community demand and long-term sustainability.

IS MATCH FUNDING A REQUIREMENT FOR THIS FUNDING?

Match funding is not a requirement, but we do like to see evidence of community fundraising and support and you will need to consider the long-term financial sustainability of the project. Our funding should contribute at least 10% (or more) of the total project budget

HOW SOON CAN I REAPPLY?

We do not insist on a gap between applications from the same organisation.

DO YOU HAVE APPLICATION DEADLINES?

Yes, our window for submission of expressions of interest is six weeks and closes at midday on Friday 21st February 2025. Check our website to keep up to date with announcements. We will let you know the outcome of the first stage of this application process by 22nd March 2025. Successful applicants will receive a phone call.

CAN I DISCUSS AN APPLICATION WITH YOU BEFORE I APPLY?

We know it can be helpful to discuss your project before applying. To arrange a call, please submit your details via the [online form on our website](#). We do ask that you use the form to contact us rather than emailing or phoning. This will allow us to provide you with better, more informed guidance. Please note that we are a small team, so may not be able to respond to you immediately. If you contact us via email or phone to discuss your project, you will be re-directed to the online form.

DO I HAVE TO COMPLETE THE APPLICATION FORM IN ONE SITTING?

No, once you have started your application you will be able to make changes until you are ready to click submit. Just remember to save your application before you leave the page. We also recommend drafting your application on a separate document offline, just in case.

HOW DO I KNOW THAT MY APPLICATION HAS BEEN SUBMITTED?

Once your application is submitted, you will be redirected to a page confirming submission and explaining the next steps. Once you have submitted your application, you may not hear from us until the end of our assessment process. Please try to refrain from phoning or emailing to check on your application – we will get back to all applicants as soon as the grants have been agreed. You may also need to check your spam/ junk email folder, as unfortunately emails from our grant management system sometimes end up here.

CAN I EDIT MY APPLICATION ONCE IT HAS BEEN SUBMITTED?

We are very sorry but we are unable to amend applications once they have been submitted. Please check your application thoroughly prior to submission. Once submitted, you will no longer be able to view your application, so please **save a copy for your records**.

CAN I SEE EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS THAT HAVE RECEIVED FUNDING?

You can find examples of past and present beneficiaries on our [website](#) and in the guidance document.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT AS AN APPLICANT AND HOW DO YOU MAKE DECISIONS?

We prioritise those that fit most closely with the programme aims to enhance the viability and sustainability of rural communities. We look for applicants that make a credible case for need and demand in their proposed rural locality, demonstrate their ability to achieve the outcomes intended, and that the activity represents value for money.

You must demonstrate demand for the project from the community it will be serving if asked to submit a full proposal. Applications are heavily assessed on this factor, so if you cannot demonstrate

this effectively, we recommend spending time gathering this information before applying. Applications which cannot evidence widespread community support will not be progressed.

RCF staff experienced in assessing and awarding grants will consider the applications as they arrive with us and will ascertain whether the application is eligible. All eligible applications are assessed twice against a set of scoring criteria, using the information provided in your application. The top-scoring applications will then be considered by our Grants Sub-committee, which is comprised of RCF trustees, independent members, and the Executive Director. They will make the final decision on which projects will proceed to the next stage. We will let you know the outcome of the first stage of this application process by 22nd March 2025. Successful applicants will receive a phone call.

Final decisions on which grants have been awarded will then be made in late May/early June 2025.

WHAT ARE THE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR THE FUND IF SUCCESSFUL?

If successful, you will be expected to:

- Have an initial 'kick-off' meeting with our team to talk through project delivery.
- Host some of our team for a visit to your project during the agreement period.
- Submit an interim report halfway through the project outlining spend, impact, learning, partnerships and identified risks.
- Submit an end of project report outlining spend, overall impact, learning and partnerships.
- Keep us up to date throughout the project.
- Actively participate in marketing the award (interviews, media content etc).
- Attend any events, stakeholder meetings or open days related to the event.