

Cheshire & Warrington

Infrastructure Partnership



Mayoral Investment Fund (MIF) – VCFSE Grant Programme – Application Pack

Introduction

This £650,000 investment will create new opportunities for Cheshire and Warrington's voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector.

The VCFSE Grant Programme is funded by the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority through the Mayoral Investment Fund (MIF).

The programme forms part of the Celebrating Place: Communities, Culture and Renewal theme of the MIF.

It will be led by Cheshire and Warrington Infrastructure Partnership (CWIP), a collective of the four infrastructure support charities across the area – Cheshire Community Action (CCA), Cheshire West Voluntary Action (CWVA), CVS Cheshire East and Warrington Voluntary Action (WVA) – along with Voluntary Sector North West (VSNW) and Cheshire Community Foundation (CCF).

Eligibility criteria

Organisations with the following structures will be eligible for this programme.

- Charities and charitable incorporated organisations (CIOs)

- Constituted groups and clubs
- Community interest companies (CICs) and other not-for-profit organisations
- Town and parish councils (for the community buildings and spaces element)
- Community sports organisations
- Faith organisations where the building has significant wider community use (for the community buildings and spaces element)

Only organisations across Cheshire and Warrington – within the boroughs of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, and Warrington – will be eligible.

Partnership applications are welcomed, but one organisation will need to act as the lead applicant for the project. All delivery organisations through the partnership will need to meet the above eligibility criteria.

Priorities, outcomes and outputs

The VCFSE Grant Programme has three key priorities.

- Prevention and progression grants
- Community buildings and spaces grants
- Feasibility pipeline development

The below table shows the intended outputs or outcomes in each strand, the type of projects that could be eligible for funding, and how money can be spent.

Please note that the outputs and outcomes will be agreed with individual projects to achieve maximum impact, making sure they are proportionate to the funding.

	Prevention and progression grants (£165,000 in revenue funding)	Community buildings and spaces grants (£385,000 in capital funding)	Feasibility pipeline development (£100,000 in revenue funding)
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Intended outputs/outcomes	It will fund projects that will help people progress, or prevent any needs from escalating, by: • improving health and wellbeing • reducing inequalities • reducing social isolation • supporting people furthest from the labour market with progression into volunteering, training, employment or enterprise • improving access to community support, including the use of community buildings and spaces.	It will support projects that strengthen the long-term sustainability of community assets by: • reducing running or energy costs • generating or protecting income • increasing community use • enabling additional community or VCFSE services • protecting the continued operation of an important community facility.	It will fund projects that will help with: • a stronger pipeline of future projects • improved organisational readiness • increased future funding opportunities.
Examples of eligible projects	Eligible projects could include the following. • Mental health and wellbeing programmes • Community-based physical activity programmes • Befriending and social isolation projects • Skills, confidence and employability programmes • Community-led support for under-served communities	Eligible capital works could include the following. • Energy-efficiency measures, insulation and glazing • Renewable energy, solar, battery storage and low-carbon heating • Improvements to heating and lighting • Essential roof or building-fabric works	Eligible projects could include the following type of work. • Feasibility studies • Options appraisals • Asset development plans • Business planning for community buildings and spaces • Social enterprise business models • Structural surveys • Energy audits

	• Support for people facing barriers to employment • Small-scale social enterprise development initiatives	• Accessibility improvements and accessible facilities • Improvements to kitchens, cafés and community facilities • Improvements to fixed sports facilities • Drainage and flood resilience • Improvements to community outdoor spaces • Alterations that increase the use, capacity or financial sustainability of a community asset This is primarily a shovel-ready capital fund, with applicants needing to demonstrate that: • the project has a clear scope and realistic cost • appropriate quotations have been obtained • ownership or lease arrangements are secure • landlord consent is in place where required • relevant planning, listed-building, faculty or other	• Professional advice • Capital project planning and design work
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		permissions are in place, or confirmed as not required • necessary technical advice has been obtained • required match funding is secured • the organisation has the capacity to procure and manage the works. Having shovel-ready proposals will be a pass or fail gateway before any scoring or panels, making sure projects are able to be successfully delivered within the timescales. Applicants must be responsible for a community building or space within Cheshire and Warrington and have appropriate governance and financial arrangements. Where a building is leased, applicants should normally have at least 10 years remaining on the lease following completion of the works, unless there is another arrangement that adequately protects the investment.	
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How funding can be used	This is revenue money and funding is to be used for project-based activity, rather than generic organisation running costs. While core costs can be covered as part of a proposal, this can't be the primary focus, and the programme is looking to fund projects that will provide a route for continuous development and growth without the reliance on future Combined Authority funding.	The capital money won't normally support feasibility work, salaries, running costs, routine maintenance, activities or events, loose equipment, or expenditure incurred before a grant offer.	
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Award limits

The below outlines the award limits expected across the programme, helping make sure all VCFSE sector organisations, regardless of size, can access this programme. There could be exceptions depending on the quality of applications, and how they meet suggested outputs, outcomes and priorities.

Prevention and progression grants	Community buildings and spaces grants	Feasibility pipeline development
• Micro grants/seed funding – supporting pilots for smaller VCFSE sector organisations – up to £1,500 • Larger grants – up to £10,000	5,000 to £50,000 – the MIF grant should normally represent more than 50% of the eligible cost of the project or clearly defined project phase. Match funding is welcomed but not essential. Where match funding is required to complete the project, it must	Individual awards in the region of £10,000-£15,000

	be confirmed before a grant award is finalised.	
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Timeline for VCFSE Grant Programme

The programme will be delivered through two funding rounds.

Round one

- 12 October 2026 – programme launches and opens for applications
- 22 November 2026 – six-week window for applications closes
- December 2026 – successful projects notified, with grant agreements and payments issued
- January 2027 – funded projects begin delivery
- 31 March 2028 – all delivery through the programme concludes

Round two

- 5 April 2027 – programme reopens for applications
- 14 May 2027 – six-week window for applications closes
- June 2026 – successful projects notified, with grant agreements and payments issued
- July 2027 – funded projects begin delivery
- 31 March 2028 – all delivery through the programme concludes

While all delivery through the programme must conclude by 31 March 2028, we're keen to see projects finish earlier, particularly those funded in round one, to help us highlight the impact of MIF funding.

Funding has been allocated in the following way across the programme.

	2026-27 (round one)	2027-28 (round two)
Revenue funding (prevention and progression grants; feasibility pipeline development)	£185,500	£79,500
Capital funding (community buildings and spaces grants)	£115,500	£269,500
Total	£301,000	£349,000

Application process

CWVA will be overseeing the application process and evaluation through Plinth, a community impact system used by many VCFSE sector organisations in the region.

- [Access the application form](#)

Organisations will need to create a free account when using Plinth for the first time, allowing you to save applications and return to them at a later date.

When you visit the application form, you'll see options to 'Create an account to start' or 'Log in' at the bottom of the introduction page. Simply log in if you already have an account, or follow the basic steps if you're using Plinth for the first time. You'll see an icon in the bottom right corner for online support should you need it. Please note that Plinth can offer technical support if you're having issues accessing the system, but you'll need to use the 'Get in touch' section at the bottom of this pack for support or advice about the actual programme.

Decision making

After each funding round closes, a panel will meet to score applications and decide where funding should be allocated.

The panel will include representatives from all six organisations referenced in the introduction that are members of CWIP, plus a representative from the Combined Authority.

All applicants will be scored against the following criteria.

Category	Weighting/scoring
Track record and project readiness/deliverability	20%
Evidence of community need and geographical targeting	20%
Alignment with programme/CA priorities	30%
Target outputs/outcomes and value for money provided	20%
Financial sustainability	10%

CWIP will endeavour to make sure there is an even spread of projects across Cheshire and Warrington, although an even share won't be allocated from the outset. Applications will be assessed in line with the programme criteria, and priority will be given to projects serving rural, deprived or underserved communities.

Due diligence checks

Please upload or include all requested information, documents and links to the application form as checks will include:

- Charity Commission or Companies House records
- policies and procedures.

For capital projects, additional checks, where appropriate, will include:

- ownership and lease documentation
- planning requirements
- landlord approvals

- insurance arrangements
- procurement readiness
- match funding confirmation.

Monitoring and evaluation

Each funded project will be issued with a grant agreement, clearly outlining the outputs and outcomes expected to be reported on.

Monitoring and evaluation will be proportionate to the type of project and size of grant. It is likely that, for most projects, a report will be requested at the end of the agreed funding period, with light-touch check ins throughout to monitor progress.

Get in touch

Several online webinars will be held for the VCFSE Grant Programme, outlining its priorities and application process.

- [Mayoral Investment Fund \(MIF\) webinar – Thursday 15 October 2026, 3pm-4pm](#)
- [Mayoral Investment Fund \(MIF\) webinar – Tuesday 27 October 2026, 1pm-2pm](#)

VCFSSE sector organisations are also encouraged to reach out to their local infrastructure organisations for any support they might need.

- Projects focused on community buildings and spaces – Cheshire Community Action (CCA) – enquiries@cheshireaction.org.uk
- Projects in Cheshire West – Cheshire West Voluntary Action (CWVA) – enquiries@cwva.org.uk
- Projects in Cheshire East – CVS Cheshire East – enquiries@cvsce.org.uk
- Projects in Warrington – Warrington Voluntary Action (WVA) – info@warringtonva.org.uk