



Exeter Grants Programme

Grants Panel Terms of Reference

June 2025 Revised 6th January 2026

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Background

The Voluntary & Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE) is a key part of the city's fabric and it delivers extraordinary value for the grant funds allocated from the Council and a wide range of other sources. Their value is so much more than the services or the events our grants fund, their value is also in the social benefits brought to communities through local connectivity, social organisation, leadership and ownership demonstrated through the fantastic things that people achieve in their communities.

The Exeter Grants Programme aims to support community groups and organisations as they continue to work together on local projects that help make Exeter such a great place to live. I am delighted that the council has been able to find a way, despite current financial constraints to ensure that community groups have access to a sustainable grant fund to help them to take action on the things that matter most to them as they take on the opportunities and challenges of a growing city.

Link to Exeter City Council Special Executive 22 January 2024 with details of Community Grants Programme 2024/25 <https://bit.ly/3XnAyZD>

Cllr Matt Vizard Portfolio Holder for Climate, Ecological Change and Communities

Chair of Grant Panel 2025/26

Governance

Good governance that recognises the specific accountability of elected members but enables the Council and community to decide on priorities together

The purpose of the Panel is to provide strategic direction for the Exeter Grant Programme and to ensure that grant awards are made in line with Council priorities and requirements. The Chair will be accountable for ensuring that decisions and recommendations made by the Panel are fair and transparent and that the underpinning system and processes are proportionate to the funding required but that they also recognise the accountability of elected members.

The panel membership will reflect the political make-up of the Council and will include community representatives and advisers. Membership in 2025/26 will be five Councillors with one being the Portfolio Holder who oversees Communities who will be the Chair of the panel. Advisory Members (non-voting) will be invited and are likely to include Director with responsibility for Communities, CEO or representative from Exeter Community Initiatives and Programme Manager for Wellbeing Exeter.

The advisory members will be appointed to provide strategic advice and guidance to the panel.

In 2025/26 the grants available are Ward Grants and the City Grant Fund. The ward grants will be agreed through an established process of ward councillors making decisions on applications for their ward as in previous years. The City Grant Fund process will be overseen by the Exeter Grant Programme Panel.

Grants Panel Composition

- Chair of Panel - Portfolio Holder for Climate, Ecological Change and Communities
- Four other councillors reflecting the political make-up of the Council

Advisory Members (non-voting) will be invited and are likely to include Director with responsibility for Communities, CEO or representative Exeter Community Initiatives and Programme Manager Wellbeing Exeter.

Transparency and Accountability

Conflicts of interest must be declared prior to reviewing applications and attending panel meetings. (Where there is a conflict of interest the panel member will not have a vote, following guidance from the Chair).

The grants process and the grants panel will follow a transparent process, and so:

1. Grant application guidelines will be publicly available.
2. Minutes will be taken at all panel meetings, which will include a brief statement of the reasons for any decision taken on a grant application.
3. Minutes will be published on the [grants website page](#).

Decisions of the panel will be made fairly in line with criteria. There is not a right of appeal.

Grant-Making Process and Timetable

Grants available in 20226/27 are anticipated to be :

City Grant Fund – £50,000 available - grants up to £2,500. As part of City Grant application process, applicants will need to have a minimum of 20% match funding (cash contribution). The maximum award in the year to any one group is £3,000.

Ukraine Wrap Around Support Fund - £150,000 available funded by Homes for Ukraine budget - Decisions around the use of this fund will be made in line with priorities of the City Grant Fund, with a particular focus on supporting the Ukrainian community. For example, addressing inequalities through provision of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) employment and housing support, and supporting the community to address local needs such as integration and improving wellbeing. Decision making will be supported by the Communities Team and through a newly commissioned Ukrainian Community Connecting Contract also funded through the Homes for Ukraine Budget.

In 2025/26 the City Grants Fund switched from an open rolling programme to a more structured approach opening the grant fund for limited periods 2 or 3 times a year. This is less resource intensive for staff and members and provides flexibility in managing fluctuations in Neighbourhood CIL income. The schedule for each round is set annually.

Priorities

There are 8 key priorities:

1. Address Inequalities
2. Improve Health & Wellbeing
3. Get people active
4. Support communities working together to address local needs
5. Support digital inclusion
6. Encourage volunteering
7. Improve where we live
8. Support community-based arts and cultural activities

3.3 Priority neighbourhoods

Council has agreed that the grants panel should prioritise the priority neighbourhoods over others for City Grants funding.

The priority Neighbourhoods are as follows:

Exwick, Redhills, St Thomas, St David's, City Centre, Newtown, Mincinglake, Beacon Heath, Whipton, Wonford, and Countess Wear.

These areas are priority areas for the city as they are the LSOA's with the highest rate of health inequalities.

The grant process will be administered by the Exeter City Council Communities Team. They will liaise with the Panel Chair to agree applications that broadly meet eligibility criteria that can then progress to the panel, or identify those that need further work that need to be referred back to the applicant.

Exeter Grants Programme Conditions

All grant applications will:

- Be made online through the Council's Exeter Grants website: the application process will be easy to access.
- Only be accepted from constituted bodies with bank accounts in the name of the organization, although small community groups can apply via an umbrella organisation who will hold the funding on their behalf.
- Supported by copies of appropriate policies if required, for example Safeguarding Policy
- Show that the project ties in with one or more of the City Council priorities and how it meets the demands of development across the city.
- Applicants need to have a minimum of 20% cash match funding in place to be considered by the Grants panel
- Show that there is community support for the project: this can be established by demonstrating local people support the project via a small consultation exercise or to evidence need in the local community.
- Be required to provide feedback about how the grant has helped by supplying proof of how fund monies have been spent in the form of invoices, photos and a simple project summary and impact template within 1 month of project completion.

All grant applicants will need to confirm that they understand:

- Funds must only be spent as detailed in the project application.

- Funds cannot be allocated to individuals or private/for-profit enterprises.
- Funds cannot be allocated retrospectively.
- Funds not spent must be returned to Exeter City Council.
- Repayment of the fund can be required at the sole discretion of Exeter City Fund if you supply false information or you do not spend funds within 12 months.
- Repeat funding will not be awarded unless there is a compelling business case proving transition to sustainability.

Evaluation Framework for Grant Applications

Project purpose – what we set out to achieve	
Outputs and Outcomes – what we delivered and what we achieved	
Community Impact Please tell us how the project benefitted the lives of local people. Please feel free to use case studies in this section to document and illustrate the impact your project had	
Beneficiary Numbers Please tell us how many people benefited from the project (must be a number and not words)	
LSOA or Priority Areas Which LSOA or Priority areas, if any, did your project cover?	
Beneficiary Groups Please tell us which of the following beneficiary groups you worked with during your project * You can tick multiple boxes Ethnically diverse communities Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Transgender and/or Questioning + (LGBTQ+) Physical Disability Learning Disability Elderly People's Group Women's Group Mental Health Support Group Young People None of the Above	
How we spent the money What we spent the money on *	
How do you feel about the project What went well?	
What we would do differently next time	

Top tips for other groups thinking about doing a similar project Please upload evidence: e.g. news articles, photos, feedback from participants *	
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Notes

- Funding applications should be led by community organisations. Collaboration might see groups working with statutory bodies, but the application should be community led
- Applications can be for different elements, activities and services and be viewed as 'new project'
- An Impact Evaluation Framework will be provided with the application guidance and form