

Community Investment Fund (CIF) FAQs from Engagement Events

Funding and applications

Q1.) Is this Capital funding? (What costs are eligible, including core, capital and project costs?)

A1.) No, this phase is primarily focused on front line delivery. Later phases may allow for capital funding if focused on direct payments.

Q2.) Does it all need to be spent in 12 months?

A2.) The current funding is for the 26/27 period any future spend will need to be accounted for in the upcoming budget in later years.

Q3.) How many grants in total will there be?

A3.) We are not limiting the number of grant applications for each phase.

Q4.) Can an organisation apply for more than one grant, including across different funding tranches?

A4.) Yes, organisations can send in multiple applications if they relate to distinctly different projects and will achieve the set out priorities in that phase.

Q5.) Are you able to consider a Financial Wellbeing project where funding is due to end?

A5.) Yes, one of the questions on the application is whether the project is a new initiative or an extension of a previous project.

Q6.) Which tier would you go for if your program is already set up and running? Are you funding only pilot programmes or will you consider funding existing services?

A6.) It can be either, one of the tiers is designed for Scale and Sustainability, if you've already piloted a project. As long as the project/ service align with the priorities and outcomes for that application phase.

Q7.) For Tier 2, is it £50k per year for 2 years or £50k in total split over 2 years?

A7.) This is per annum.

Q8.) Are you expecting projects to have matched funding or would these grants cover the whole project costs?

A8.) No, we don't expect projects to have match funding. However, one of the questions on application does ask about other funding organisation is receiving to ensure the project funds applied for are sufficient for the project proposed.

Assessment, decision-making and monitoring

Q9.) Who will be on the Panel

A9.) The Evaluation Panel will have representation from the Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise sector, Commissioning, Social Care Operational staff, and the Crisis and Resilience Fund.

Q10.) How will Return On Investment (ROI) be measured?

A10.) Monitoring and ROI Document is available on the CIF webpage which explains the monitoring and ROI methodology.

Q11.) Will feedback be given to unsuccessful applications?

A11.) Yes, proportionate feedback will be provided depending on the grant size.

Fund priorities and delivery

Q12.) How long will the fund operate, and will its objectives and priorities remain consistent across multiple years?

A12.) The Community Investment Fund currently has no set timeframe and will continue next financial year (2027/2028). The fund is subject to annual approval and will be confirmed as part of council budget setting. The incorporated Crisis and Resilience Fund has current UK Government Funding until March 2029. It is not currently envisaged that the priorities and outcomes would change each year. If the priorities and outcomes were to change this would be fully communicated ahead of time and it is highly unlikely that priorities and outcomes would change for existing projects.

Q13.) Will the fund support community-led delivery or the development of new community hubs?

A13.) The fund can be used for activities/ projects to be delivered by the community hubs, however, will not be able to fund a development of a new community hub.

Q14.) Was Voluntary Sector Northwest involved in coproduction?

A14.) The CIF Project Team have worked with Cheshire West Voluntary Action and Cheshire Community Action to provide local sector and community expertise.

Q15.) Re Strong Start - what age range for the first SEND priority?

A15.) SEND typically covers 0-25 years of age.

Q16.) Is this financial and community resilience strand focused at adults, or can this be for young people, maybe aged 15/16+?

A16.) It is not locked to adults but for such young people you would need to demonstrate how the financial resilience would be shown for people that age who wouldn't be in work or claiming benefits, so we would expect more proposals to be adult based.

Q17.) Can you bid in more than once for different priority areas?

A17.) Yes, so long as your bid focuses on different priorities.

Q18.) Will all procurement be external or will CW&C be delivering any projects themselves?

A18.) The local authority cannot apply for this fund.

Q19.) If a project sits across multiple 'priorities' (we'll obviously have to choose one to pitch for due to the siloed timelines) but is there any value in highlighting in the application the ways in which it may also provide positive outcomes against other priorities?

A19.) Yes

Definitions and eligible costs

Q20.) Will a glossary define key terms, such as who qualifies as a resident?

A20.) A resident would be classed as someone with ordinary address in Cheshire West and Chester Borough.

Q21.) Should applications include a breakdown of management and back-office costs, and will percentage guidelines apply?

A21.) The application form does request project breakdown costs, including staff costs (there is no set percentage but normally it would be considered at around

10% for management costs). However, the fund main objectives are to support direct service delivery (activities and support for residents in the borough).

Q22.) Are accessibility improvements to buildings eligible as renovation costs?

A22.) At present CIF funding will focus on projects/ activities that will deliver against the set out priorities. Building renovations costs would not be considered at this time.

Q23.) We are based within CWAC but offer services for residents in CWAC and Cheshire East - would we be able to apply? Can we apply if our project benefits both residents of CWAC and Cheshire East?

A23.) CIF is designed to support residents and communities of Cheshire West and Chester Borough only, the applications should reflect this. CIF would not be able to fund activities/ projects delivered in other boroughs, however, would welcome an application that supports a resident who has been placed by the local authority outside of our borough.

Q24.) Can we apply if our support/service is in one specific geographical location?

A24.) Yes, as long as it is within Cheshire West and Chester Borough, project does not have to cover the whole borough and can be rolled out in a specific location.

Q25.) Can a Community Benefit Society apply? Is there a validity of organisation type that can apply? Ltd company, CIC, etc?

A25.) The application form has a list of organisation types; it also allows you to select Other and you can input your organisation type if it is not on the list.

Evidence and adapting delivery

Q26.) Can funded services adapt as needs change, and can applicants use their own evidence of need?

A26.) If the service identifies the need to change or adapt the project mid-way through a grant the changes would need to be reviewed and agreed by the commissioning team to ensure that any changes reflect the priorities and outcomes of the CIF. Applicants can submit their own evidence of need as long as it aligns with the priorities and outcomes set out in the funding phase.

Partnerships, funding and organisational eligibility

Q27.) Will joint or partnership applications be accepted?

A27.) Yes, organisations can apply as a consortium- with one of the organisations taking the lead on the application and overseeing the project delivery.

Q28.) Can an organisation withdraw from the funding agreement if expectations change?

A28.) Successful organisations will be required to sign a Grant Agreement, which sets out sign a withdrawal of any further funding/ clawbacks. All successful projects will be subjected to monitoring, and any concerns/ changes can be noted through that which may lead to a support session to discuss any changes required.

Q29.) Will an organisation's level of financial reserves affect its eligibility?

A29.) No.

Lived experience and accessibility

Q30.) How will lived-experience feedback be collected in an accessible way?

A30.) Feedback on the individual grant will be expected to be collected as part of the monitoring and feedback processes provided by the grant recipient. The feedback can be captured through questionnaires, surveys, discussions in groups or through case studies.

Q31.) How will people with lived experience be involved in application assessment panels?

A31.) Due to the wide-ranging nature and variety of applications expected it is difficult to identify a singular individual with lived experience to form part of the panel. However, there will be representation from the Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise on the panel who have a wealth of knowledge as to what our local communities needs and wants are.

Cheshire West and Chester Council have co-produced all the strategies with people with lived experience. The fund's priorities have been aligned against the strategic direction of Children and Families, Adult Social Care and Public Health and the key strategies.

Project timescales and payments

Q32.) Is there a minimum or maximum project duration?

A32.) The project durations may depend on the funding tier. For example, tier 1 funding can be used for projects up to 12months and tier 3 funding can be used for projects up to 3 years. Please view the full CIF Guidance for further information.

Q33.) How will funding be released for multi-year projects?

A33.) The successful applicants will be informed of the timescales for fund release; it will depend on the size of the projects and funding tier. For example, tier 1 funding may be paid in one lump sum, or two smaller sums and tier 3 funding may be paid quarterly or six monthly for the duration of the project.

Q34.) When can funded projects start, including projects beginning from January onwards?

A34.) The expectation would be for projects to start within three months. The organisations will submit proposed start and end date of the project in the application form.

Q35.) Can a project's duration be changed after a grant is awarded?

A35.) The project would be expected to run for the proposed duration time as set out in the application. Cheshire West and Chester Council should be informed of any changes.