



CAITHNESS & NORTH SUTHERLAND FUND

Guide for Applicants

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Contents

What is the Caithness & North Sutherland Fund?	3
Is Caithness & North Sutherland Fund right for you?	4
What will Caithness & North Sutherland Support?	4
Who can apply?	4
We will not fund:	4
Voluntary and community organisations	5
Independent branches of larger organisations	5
School Parent Councils	5
Faith Based Organisations	5
What will we fund?	5
Salaried Posts	6
VAT	6
Land and Buildings	6
Sustainability	6
Other Funding	7
Application Process	7
Completing your application form	8
Completing the form	8
Procurement	8
Checking your answers	8
Prior to submitting your application	8
In-kind and Volunteer contributions	8
Remuneration & Voluntary In-kind Contribution Guidance	8
In-kind Volunteer Rate	9
Other information to consider	9
Projects working with children, young people or vulnerable adults	9
Insurance and safety	9
Equal opportunities	9
Assessing your application	10
Assessing your project for subsidy	10
Offering a grant	11
Withdrawing our offer	11
Confirming our grant	11
Monitoring your grant	11
Future Applications	11
Unsuccessful Applications	11
What you need to send us	12
Bank or building society account requirements	12
New organisations	12
Internet bank or building society accounts	12
Data Protection	13
Freedom of Information	13

What is the Caithness & North Sutherland Fund?

Caithness & North Sutherland Fund aims to help communities of Caithness & North Sutherland by providing grant support to worthwhile projects which increase the attractiveness of Caithness & North Sutherland as a place to live, work and invest. The Fund places particular emphasis on projects that support sustainable development, including environmental, social, culture and infrastructure improvements.

Up to £4M has been provided by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, £1M at start of construction in 2011 and £300,000 in 2014 and each year until 2023. In 2025, a further £1M across three years has been pledged.

The fund aims to assist people living in the Dounreay Travel to Work Area, see green area on the map below.



You can apply for between £1,000 to £50,000 (requests for higher amounts may be considered in exceptional circumstances).

This guide tells you:

- Who can apply
- What we will and won't fund
- How to apply

If you have any questions or communication needs (such as Braille or large print, screen reader, audio tape, sign language or a community language) please:

- visit our website: www.cnsf.org.uk
- send us an email: enquiries@cnsf.org.uk

This guide will be reviewed periodically, so if you have had this guide for more than six months, please visit our website to check that you have the most recent version.

Is Caithness & North Sutherland Fund right for you?

1. Do you need assistance of between £1,000 and £50,000 towards a project that aims to help communities increase the attractiveness of Caithness & North Sutherland as a place to live, work and invest?
2. Does your project support sustainable development, including environmental, social, culture and infrastructure improvements?
3. Are you a voluntary or community organisation, school parent council or community council?
4. Do you have a UK based bank or building society account in the name of your organisation that requires at least two people to make payments, sign cheques, and make withdrawals?
5. Can you send us an application at least four months before your project starts?
6. Can you explain the requirement for your project and how it will benefit Caithness & North Sutherland?

If you can answer yes to these questions, then Caithness & North Sutherland Fund may be able to assist you.

What will Caithness & North Sutherland Support?

Caithness & North Sutherland Fund aims to help communities of Caithness & North Sutherland by providing grant support to worthwhile projects which increase the attractiveness of Caithness & North Sutherland as a place to live, work and invest.

The Fund places particular emphasis on projects that support sustainable development, including environmental, social, culture and infrastructure improvements.

We will consider how well your project meets our aims during our assessment. You must show how your project meets at least one of them to be considered for a grant.

Who can apply?

You can apply to Caithness & North Sutherland Fund if you are a:

- Voluntary or community organisation
- School Parent Council (not for statutory function)
- Community council
- Community groups
- Community development groups

We will not fund:

- 'For profit' organisations
- Individuals and sole traders
- Operations for personal benefit
- Non-departmental public bodies
- Government departments
- Statutory bodies (for example, education, local authority or health board) providing a statutory function
- Funding consultant fees

We are unlikely to fund organisations that are in poor financial health or those that have had a previous grant from us which has not been managed satisfactorily.

The organisation filling in the form must be the same organisation that will receive the grant and manage the project. We will not consider an application made by one organisation on behalf of another or fund consultant fees. Applicants cannot be the recipients of the grant for any funded salaried posts.

Voluntary and community organisations

Voluntary and community organisations are also known as 'third sector' organisations, as they are separate from the public and private sectors. They are value-led organisations established for social purposes rather than the pursuit of profit and they reinvest surpluses to help tackle issues facing people and the planet.

They include:

- Registered and unregistered charities
- Co-operatives
- Friendly societies
- Industrial and provident societies
- Companies that are not-for-profit businesses
- Unincorporated associations

Voluntary and community organisations must have a written governing document (i.e. a constitution, set of rules or trust deed) and at least three unrelated people on their governing body/management committee.

Independent branches of larger organisations

Independent branches of larger organisations can apply direct to us. They must have their own governing document and be allowed to manage funds and staff without referring to another body. Dependent branches can also apply directly to us if they have their own governing document (or adopted the parent organisation's governing document), produce their own annual accounts and have a bank or building society account and are responsible for how the funds in it are spent. If we offer a dependent branch a grant, we will ask the parent organisation to accept overall responsibility for it.

School Parent Councils

We welcome applications from school parent councils, but we will not pay for activities or services that schools have a statutory responsibility to provide. This means we will not pay for activities that are in the school curriculum or directly related. We expect projects to take place before or after school, during lunch or in the holidays unless you can explain in your application why this is not possible. We will accept applications for projects working solely with children with special needs although you still need to provide evidence that your project is extra-curricular. The parent council chairperson must submit the application with an accompanying letter from the head teacher.

Faith Based Organisations

Religious organisations who are eligible can apply for funding assistance for specific projects which can evidence to be fully accessible and inclusive to all groups and not be subject to religious doctrine.

What will we fund?

In your application you will need to tell us what the grant would be spent on and how this will achieve one of our aims. You can apply for between £1,000 and £50,000 to fund part of your project. It should be noted a higher percentage of match funding will be looked upon more favourably and evidence will be required of that match funding. All sources of match funding whether successful, pending or unsuccessful should be included in the application.

Some examples of what we will fund:

- Equipment hire or purchase
- Annual events we have not previously funded
- Feasibility studies for community projects
- Improvements or additions to playing or arts facilities
- Information technology equipment
- Building, refurbishment, landscaping or property projects (including playpark associations and temporary buildings)
- Materials or equipment for use in your project
- Some publicity materials for use in your project
- Sessional workers
- Start-up costs
- Team clothing or kit
- Training costs
- Transport costs
- Venue hire
- VAT that you cannot recover

Some examples of what we won't fund:

- Activities that happen or start before we confirm our grant
- Any costs you incur when putting together your application (i.e. consultant's fees)
- Any expenditure incurred or committed before we confirm our grant
- Contingency costs
- Endowments
- Fundraising activities for your organisation or others
- Items that mainly benefit individuals (e.g. equipment that is not shared)
- Loans or interest payments
- Political or religious activities
- Projects that you cannot maintain because of high ongoing costs or the need for specialist skills
- Projects or activities that the state has a legal obligation to provide
- Purchase of alcohol
- Registration and affiliation fees for existing clubs
- Repeat or regular events we have funded previously
- Routine repairs and maintenance
- VAT that you can recover
- Projects that do not demonstrate community support

Salaried Posts

If your project includes salary costs, you must provide clear evidence of why a salaried position is required to deliver the project.

You should provide:

- Evidence of how the project will provide greater benefit than simply the provision of local employment as a result of the salaried post.
- Copies of the job description(s) and a person(s) specification(s), for the salaried post(s), including clear alignment between the role description and the objective(s) of the project.
- Details of the recruitment process for the salaried post.
- Details of how the salaried post holder will be managed and paid.

In instances where the requirement for the salaried post(s) will extend longer than the duration of the CNSF funding, you must demonstrate that you have considered the ongoing sustainability of the project and the associated salaried post(s), e.g. through increase in expected income, or through other sources of funding.

Applicants, or any Trustees, Directors, Committee Members of the organisation cannot be the beneficiary of the post for which funding is awarded.

Any recruitment process must be open and transparent.

VAT

You may need to pay VAT on purchases you make as part of your project. You must only include VAT in the amount you request from us if you cannot claim it back from HM Revenue and Customs. If you later find that you can recover VAT that we have included in our grant you must repay this amount to us.

Land and Buildings

Projects involving work on land or a building (including refurbishment) can be complicated and take time to complete. So, if you need building warrants or planning permission, you must either have it in place before you apply or provide evidence of the intent to obtain it. You also need to own the freehold of the land or building or hold a lease that cannot be ended by the landlord for at least five years. The evidence of the right for exclusive use of land and/or building must be provided with an application where appropriate.

Sustainability

Sustainability must be considered for each project. Environmental considerations and impacts must be considered and addressed where appropriate.

Other Funding

If you need to raise funds from other sources, you must be able to show that this will not delay your project. Evidence of confirmed match funding must be provided. An indication of a timeline for pending match funding applications must be provided and the outcome advised once known. A list of all sources of match funding options explored whether successful, pending or unsuccessful should also be provided.

In general, where an applicant is considered eligible for support from other existing community benefit funding available in their local catchment area, we would normally expect such applications to include an appropriate level of match funding support from those funding sources.

Projects should only be supported by one source of NDA funding i.e. Caithness & North Sutherland Fund, Dounreay Communities Fund, or NRS Dounreay/NDA Socio-Economic Funding.

Application Process

Read this guide to check your organisation can apply, that we can fund your project and it meets our aims.

1. Submit enquiry form and send it to Fund Administrator.

Send this at least four months before your project will start. This will be screened, and an application number will be allocated. The Fund Administrator will issue full application form to you.

2. Complete application form and send to us with any requested information.

Send this at least three months before your project will start. Your application will be acknowledged within 7 working days, including an indication of timeline. Your application will be scored. If your application form is not complete, we will return it to you and give you 10 working days to provide the missing information. We might contact you with questions during our assessment, but this is often not necessary.

3. We will notify you of the assessment date.

Following scoring your application form is then submitted to the Caithness & North Sutherland Fund Board for assessment. The board may still require further clarification on some points of your application. This may delay the decision.

4. We advise board's decision.

We will notify you of the board's decision in writing. If we offer you a grant it will be conditional on you signing and returning our offer letter and accepting our terms and conditions of grant. If your application is unsuccessful, we will write to you informing you of our decision.

5. Documents returned to Funding Administrator

You must return everything we ask for within 20 working days of the date of our offer letter. You cannot start your project until we have received, checked, and approved the signed offer letter and any other documents we may have requested. If you do not return everything by our deadline, we will withdraw our conditional grant offer (although we may agree a short extension if you contact us before our deadline and there is a good reason).

6. Confirmation of grant

If all documents are returned, we will write to you to confirm the grant and advise how payment will be made (we may offer a staged payment, but we will advise you of this in our terms and conditions of grant). If the documents returned are unsatisfactory, we will contact you if we think you may be able to resolve the problem. If there is a major problem or something that cannot be resolved, we will withdraw our conditional grant offer and write to you to advise why. A press release will be submitted to local press for successful applicants.

7. Project Commencing

You can commence your project once you receive our letter confirming the grant. Evidence of spend is required **before** payment of the grant is made. Once you have spent your grant and we have approved your end of grant report you can apply again. We want our funding to help lots of groups, so we will not normally give more than a total of £50,000 (in one or more grants) to an organisation in any 12-month period.

8. Project Completion

We will monitor your project as it progresses and we will ask you to complete an end of grant report, telling us how the grant has been spent and what you achieved with it. We may visit or phone you to check how the grant has been spent and will ask to see original receipts for the money that you spent.

Completing your application form

Filling in your application form can take time, but you may find it easier to work with someone else. We want to make a fair assessment of your application but can only base it on the information provided. We recommend the following approach:

1. Start off by thinking about the need you want to meet and how a grant from us might help you to do this.
2. Read this guide carefully to check that your organisation qualifies, and we can fund your project.
3. Make a list of all the things you think we need to know about your project. Keep this as a checklist to ensure you have included everything in your application.
4. Consult with your management committee or staff to go through the application form and take note of the main points that answer the questions. Use your checklist to ensure you have not missed anything.
5. If you are unsure of a question, then please contact us by email at: enquiries@cnsf.org.uk and we will help you.

Completing the form

It is best for one or two people to have a go at a first draft, issuing to others for comment. There is no need to use jargon, you need to ensure your answers are clear and easy to understand.

Procurement

Quotes must be provided for project costs, and you must ensure no ineligible costs are included in the project costs.

- Provide 2 quotes for items of expenditure between £1,000 & £3,000.
- Provide 3 written quotes for items of expenditure between £3,000 & £25,000. If you are unable to do this, please explain why you cannot obtain 3 quotes.
- Items for expenditure over £25,000 require a Request for Quotation.

Where the required number of quotes cannot be obtained, an explanation is required. Quotes provided for services/goods from business associates or close family members of the applicant or group will not be considered in normal circumstances due to a potential conflict of interest.

Checking your answers

Make sure you explain the need you want and how your project will meet that need. We assess every application against our aims so tell us how your project meets them. Your project budget must be as accurate as possible. This may take time but is a requirement as we are unlikely to offer a grant without it. **Back up your answers with evidence.** You may not need to send all evidence with the form, but you can tell us about the evidence you have in your answers – we may ask for this evidence if we believe it is required.

Prior to submitting your application

Check that you have answered all the questions. Uncompleted applications will be returned to you which may cause delays that mean we are unable to give our decision in time for your project to proceed. You must be prepared to comply with our terms and conditions if we offer you a grant. Remember to keep a copy of your application form in case we contact you with questions.

In-kind and Volunteer contributions

Many projects rely on volunteers to carry out some of the vital tasks required to deliver a project to completion. Unpaid voluntary work can be used as a source of applicant in-kind match funding for projects applying for CNSF funding assistance.

Remuneration & Voluntary In-kind Contribution Guidance

Generally, CNSF is not inclined to fund an organisation's activity where a voluntary member is being paid for services provided. A voluntary member charging fees for services to a voluntary organisation's activity is potentially a conflict of interest and may not be considered good ethical practice. Generally, voluntary member's contributions would be expected to be provided as in-kind contributions.

This does not include volunteer reimbursement for reasonable approved out-of-pocket expenses that is in accordance with the organisation's governing document. Any paid services being provided to an organisation's activity funded by the CNSF would be expected to be subject to open procurement procedures to enable as many eligible and suitably qualified service providers fair opportunity and ensure that best value for money is achieved.

In exceptional circumstances, under the provisions of the Charity Act, CNSF may agree to an applicant/beneficiary body paying one or more of its members for professional services where this can be seen to strongly demonstrate providing a significant and clear advantage over all other options. Any such payment must be reasonable and provide best value for money and, in the case of a charity, must provide evidence the payment is in full compliance with Sections 67 - 68 of the Charity Act and common law conflicts of interest.

Definition of Volunteer for CNSF Match Funding

Eligible volunteers must be individuals that are directly involved in the project or activity who are undertaking work for the project or activity in their own private time. Time spent by volunteers discussing a project or activity will not be eligible. Only volunteer time that has occurred after a project or activity has been awarded a grant is eligible for In-kind match funding.

In-kind Volunteer Rate

Match In-kind volunteer work should be carried by volunteers at £17.50 per hour for all volunteers.

Maximum amount of volunteer time

Grant payments to a project will not be more than the actual expenditure paid out in respect of that project. This is because volunteers are not actually paid anything and to pay out the full grant rate may mean some organisations using a lot of volunteers could make a profit on this. Therefore, the grant will be limited to the relevant grant rate for the project or the expenditure actually paid out, whichever is less.

Example

Project Costs		Funding Sources		£	%
Volunteer 1 (e.g. Electrician) In-kind work @ £17.50ph	£840.00	Applicant In-Kind	£5,520.00	27	%
Volunteer 2 (e.g. Joiner) In-kind work @ £17.50ph	£840.00	Other	£5,000.00	24	%
Volunteer 3 (e.g. unskilled work) In-kind work @ £17.50ph	£840.00	CNSF	£10,000.00	49	%
Materials	£3,000.00				
In Kind Total	£5,520.00	Total Project Costs	£20,520.00	100	%
Hire of toilets	£2,000.00				
Hire of generators	£3,000.00				
Hire of tables & chairs	£5,000.00				
Sound & Lighting Equipment	£5,000.00				
Cash Total	£15,000.00				
Total Project Costs	£20,520.00				

Other information to consider

Projects working with children, young people or vulnerable adults

If you are applying for a project to work with children, young people or adults who are vulnerable (because of their circumstances or problems) you must have a policy that explains how you will make sure they will be safe. You must be able to demonstrate in your application that your policy will be put into practice. It is your responsibility to have acceptable safeguarding protection policies and procedures for children, young people, and vulnerable adults in place, which we may ask to inspect at any time if we offer you a grant.

Insurance and safety

Depending on the type of project, you may need public liability insurance or qualified leaders. It is your responsibility to ensure you have adequate insurance in place. This should include cover for any assets you buy or events and activities you run using our grant. We may ask to look at these policies at any time. Your organisation must be affiliated to a governing body if your project involves a dangerous sport or activity.

Equal opportunities

We expect projects to be open to all who want to be involved, unless you can give a good reason why this should not be the case. If you plan to restrict who can take part you should explain why in your application, so that we can consider whether this is acceptable. If unsure, guidance can be provided.

Zero Tolerance Policy on Antisocial Behaviour

To ensure a fair, respectful, and professional process for all applicants, this policy exists to protect our personnel from inappropriate conduct. It also safeguards the integrity of the fund and its decision-making process. The Caithness and North Sutherland Fund is administered in accordance with principles of professionalism, respect, and integrity. Any applicant who engages in antisocial behaviour—including, but not limited to, aggressive, derogatory, or disrespectful language or conduct toward administrators, board members, or associated personnel—could be subject to immediate disqualification from the application process. All communications must remain courteous, constructive, and compliant with our organisational code of conduct at all times.

Assessing your application

When we receive your completed application form, we will start our assessment. We will only consider one application from your organisation at a time. We will check that your organisation can apply and whether your project meets our aim. We will then consider:

- The need for your project
- Who will benefit
- How you will achieve to meet our aims
- Whether you meet our mission statement
- If we have funded you before
- Your organisation's income
- The total project cost
- The wider community involvement

We would like to support all the applications, however due to limited funding this may not always be possible. When this happens, we need to make some difficult decisions.

We have a scoring system that helps us to do this. We give more points to applications that:

- Show strong evidence of need
- Seek to involve as wide a range of people as possible
- Meet our aims more closely
- Meet our mission statement
- Are from organisations that Caithness & North Sutherland Fund has not previously supported
- Are from organisations with a smaller annual income
- Are for smaller projects
- Are for projects that involve the wider community

The score that an application needs for us to fund it will vary depending on the amount and quality of the applications we receive and the amount of money we have available at the time.

Grants will be assessed on a competitive basis, taking into consideration of other available funds. We aim to assess each application equally and fairly. The fund directors approve the final decisions. We will require details of an independent referee who may be contacted to confirm details on your application. Your independent referee must be a professional person or a person of standing in the community.

Assessing your project for subsidy

A subsidy control assessment will be carried out on applications, where required, in accordance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the CNSF Subsidy Control Policy.

CNSF will follow the approach set out in NRS Dounreay's Subsidy Control Standard (STD 02401) and Guidance Note (GN 02187), excluding any requirements that are specific to NRS Dounreay's internal processes and governance.

Applicants will be advised if a project is subject to subsidy control.

Offering a grant

If we offer you a grant, we need you to confirm what you told us in your application before we will pay the grant to you. This means that our grant offer is conditional on you and a senior contact from your organisation signing and returning our offer letter and accepting our terms and conditions of grant. Both signatories must be over eighteen years old, and the senior contact must be your chair, secretary, treasurer, or chief executive.

You must return everything that we have asked for within 20 working days from the date of our offer letter, otherwise we will withdraw our conditional grant offer (although we may agree a short extension if you contact us before our deadline and there is a good reason).

Withdrawing our offer

If what you send is unsatisfactory, we will contact you if we think you may be able to resolve the problem. If there is a major problem or something that cannot be resolved, we will withdraw our conditional grant offer and write to you telling you the reasons why. You can send us a new application but before you do, you must address the reason why we withdrew our grant offer.

Confirming our grant

If what you send is satisfactory, we will send a letter of commitment of grant, informing you when we will pay the grant (this may be staged payments).

You cannot start your project until we have received, checked, and approved the signed offer letter and any other documents we have asked for. This includes but is not limited to evidence of match funding for the project. As part of our terms and conditions of grant your project will be monitored until completion.

Monitoring your grant

If we fund your project, we will need you to complete a claim form for each payment. Evidence of spend is required **before** payment of the grant is made to confirm how the grant has been spent and what you achieved. We may ask you for original receipts so make sure you keep them. We may also visit you to check how the grant has been spent. We will need you to complete an end of grant report before your final payment is made, when the project has completed.

Future Applications

Once you have spent your grant and we have approved your end of grant report you can apply again. In some cases, if you need funding assistance for an additional project that meets our aims, you may be able to apply again before your current project is completed. We want our funding to help lots of groups, so we will not normally give more than a total of £50,000 (in one or more grants) to an organisation in any 12-month period. We work this out using the date we confirmed our grant. This includes dependent branches.

If you have already received funding from the Caithness & North Sutherland Fund and are unsure whether you can apply again or how much you can apply for, please contact us to check before you apply. We consider each application on its own merits, so there is no guarantee that we will make another grant to the same organisation.

We are unlikely to fund the same project twice, so you need to show that you are doing something different, or making an important new development, compared with the previous application. A review would be carried out at the end of each project and previous performance would be considered.

The Fund reserves the right to assess each application on a case-by-case basis, with the discretion to award outside the guidelines.

Our scoring considers whether we have funded your organisation recently, so your chances of receiving another grant may be lower, unless your application is stronger in other areas.

Unsuccessful Applications

If your application is unsuccessful, we will write to you informing you of our decision. We may not be able to support all the applications we would like to and the decision is final. Unsuccessful applications will not usually be invited to re-apply and we recommend you seek funding from other sources.

What you need to send us

Before you apply make sure you can provide the following information if we make a conditional grant offer. Please do not send it with your application (unless stated on the application form).

We will confirm with you what we need from you in our offer letter. You cannot start your project until we have received, checked and approved everything we ask for.

- A copy of your organisation's latest approved annual accounts, signed, and dated by your chair, secretary or treasurer and by your auditor or independent examiner, where appropriate. If your organisation has been running for less than 15 months, you may not be able to give us this so in these cases we will accept a 12-month financial projection for the year when you will spend the grant.
- The last three month's bank (or building society) statements. If you use a building society passbook, we will need copies of pages containing the last three months transactions which must be certified by your building society with a stamp and signature as 'true copies of the original'. The pages you send must include your account details.
- A copy of your organisation's governing document, constitution or set of rules unless you are a community council, registered charity or a company limited by guarantee (or a registered company that is also a company limited by guarantee).
- If you are a branch of a larger organisation that has management and financial control over your work we will need a letter, signed by a senior officer from the larger organisation, confirming their support for your application and accepting overall responsibility for it.
- Letters of support from community stakeholders.
- We may contact you to ask for details of an independent referee, someone independent of your organisation but who know its work well. If we need an independent referee, we will explain our requirements when we contact you.

Bank or building society account requirements

You must have a UK based bank or building society account in the name of the organisation that submits the application to us and will carry out the project. We will require at least two people to sign each cheque or make a withdrawal. If any signatories are related or live at the same address, we need written confirmation from your bank or building society that these people cannot authorise payments together. If you are a school, a local authority bank or building society account is acceptable. We may ask you to open a new and separate bank account that will only be used for our funding.

New organisations

If your organisation has been running for less than three months, we will need all the original statements you have received from the bank or building society (or certified copies of all the pages from your building society passbook that have transactions on them). We will also need an original letter from your bank or building society showing your account details and when the account was opened.

Internet bank or building society accounts

If your organisation uses an internet account, we still need original, paper statements. You will need to ask your bank or building society to send these to you, as we will not accept downloaded versions. We also require at least two people to authorise a payment. If any of the people who can authorise a payment are related or live at the same address, we will need written confirmation from your bank or building society that they cannot authorise the same payments.

Governing Documents

A governing document sets out in writing how an organisation works. It may be called several things, such as a constitution, set of rules or trust deed. It explains what your organisation is set up to do and how it does it. We need to be sure that the organisations we fund are set up properly and able to manage a grant. Considering an organisation's governing document is one way we do this.

If we offer you a conditional grant and then find we cannot fund your organisation, we will have to withdraw our offer. So, if you are a new voluntary or community group, or have not applied to us before, we recommend you think about whether you need some assistance to write your governing document before you apply.

Data Protection

We will use the information you give us on the application form and supporting documents during assessment and for the duration of any grant we award you to administer and analyse grants and for our own research.

We may give copies of this information to individuals and organisations we consult when assessing applications, when monitoring grants and evaluating the way our funding programme works and the effect it has. These organisations may include accountants, external evaluators and other organisations or groups involved in delivering the project.

We may also share information with other government departments and other organisations and individuals with a legitimate interest in applications and grants, or for the prevention and detection of fraud.

We may use the data you provide for our own research. We recognise the need to maintain the confidentiality of vulnerable groups and their details will not be made public in any way, except as required by law.

Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2000 gives members of the public the right to request any information that we hold. This includes information received from third parties, such as, although not limited to grant applications, grant holders, contractors and people making a complaint.

If information is requested under the Freedom of Information Act, we will release it, subject to exemptions, although we may consult with you first. If you think that information you are providing may be exempt from release, you should let us know when you apply.



For any clarifications, please contact the Fund Administrator by email on enquiries@cnsf.org.uk or call on 01847 500101.