

Information Guide

What is the Voluntary Sector Grant (VSG) funding?

- This is a small grants scheme funded by the Council, to provide support for communities across the District.
- The process aligns outcomes with those local strategic priorities as detailed in the Council's Business Plan and the Joint Rochford and Castle Point Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Who can apply?

- Applications are open to the local community and voluntary organisations that are within the district of Rochford and are representative of their local community.
- Eligible bodies may be, but not limited to:
 - Constituted Neighbourhood Committees, Residents Associations, Community Groups and Voluntary Organisations
 - Private enterprises operating for or providing social benefits e.g. local social enterprises

What are the qualifying criteria?

- As a council we are committed to ensuring that the public monies spent are done so with the aim of improving outcomes for the residents of Rochford across the district.
- Projects will be funded that:
 - Create or develop new community assets
 - enhance existing community assets
 - enhance or develop initiatives that enable communities
 - Improve outcomes for residents
- Applications will be considered on their merits and on strong community presence and identified need.
- Applicants must demonstrate clear evidence that the project meets a local need and has full community support. Applicants should provide strong evidence on co-production of their project's needs, accessibility and benefits

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through engagement and consultation with their local community and community partners.

- Particular emphasis will be given to those projects that support the priorities as set out within the [Castle Point and Rochford Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) and in the [Rochford District Council Business Plan 2016-20](#) .

What are the financial details?

- The VSG is subject to a maximum application of £1,000 for any one project.
- Organisations can apply for revenue funded schemes only. There is no capital funding available for this period.

Applicants must:

- Look to attract match funding or a contribution towards their project and inform Rochford District Council if they are receiving any other financial contribution from a public body.
- Demonstrate financial viability and on-going revenue costs. VSG funding is not utilised to support on-going revenue cost of day to day operations of any organisations.
- Be transparent in their amount of unrestricted reserves, and such reserves should be fully justified in formally ratified reserves policy.
- As the VSG is a small grant scheme it is prudent to minimise the amount of VSG grant funding that may be required for direct project costs (e.g. administration) assuring the greatest value of the grant is attained to achieve the maximum benefit to the local community. Therefore, applicants should be fully transparent on the total project costs and where funding will be allocated.
- Ensure that grant funding is spent due diligently, Rochford District Council reserves the right not to release funding dependent upon achievement of any agreed project milestones or delay or incompleteness of the project. Rochford District Council will reserve the right to claw back all or partial funding should owe to the performance of the project delivery and benefits realisation.
- Rochford District Council may request an audit of the projects accounts and gain assurance that the agreed funding has been spent due-diligently.

All funds awarded in 2019/20 must be spent by **31st March 2020**.

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Equality information

- Applicants must ensure that the project or facility is available to all sectors of the local community.
- No funding shall be provided to organisations which evangelise (the practice of preaching or spreading religious beliefs) or proselytize (the practice of trying to convert people to one's own beliefs or religious views).
- Rochford District Council recognises that faith-based organisations undertake valuable work in supporting disadvantaged and marginalised communities in Essex, and we wish to fully support this and work in the spirit of the Essex Faith Covenant.
- Projects should not be of a political nature.
- The Equality Act 2010 states that public authorities must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty and consider how policies or decisions affect people who have protected characteristics under The Act.
- These protected characteristics are:
 - Age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, and marriage and civil partnership.
- Rochford District Council is committed to the positive advancement of equality, fostering good relations between different groups and tackling unlawful discrimination.
- Applicants must when submitting applications organisations will be asked to demonstrate how their projects will help advance the following of the Public Sector Equality Duty the aims being:
 - Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation i.e. projects that seek to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - Advancing equality of opportunity i.e. projects that provide opportunities to those with protected characteristics
 - Fostering good relations i.e. projects that encourage those with protected characteristics to participate in public life, bringing communities together to share commonalities and promote community cohesion and inclusion.

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- Although, this is not an exhaustive list, grants will not be eligible for the purpose of:
 - The promotion of religion or political ideals
 - Work that has already taken place, contracted or order placed
 - Activities for which a statutory body is responsible
 - Animal welfare
 - Anything that has individual benefits only e.g. equipment that is not shared
 - Fabric appeals for places of worship
 - Fundraising events or activities
 - VAT or other taxes that cannot be recovered.
 - On-going revenue and operating costs.
- The lead council officers and the evaluation panels will reserve the right to use its sole discretion when assessing any grant applications for acceptance.

What are the VSG timescales?

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|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| • Application process and guidance published | 18 th | February 2019 |
| • Receipt of completed application forms | 15 th | March 2019 |
| • Evaluation Panel & Decisions | 18 th - 28 th | March 2019 |
| • Offer/unsuccessful letters emailed | 29 th | March 2019 |
| • Applicant to claim/spend grant by | 31 st | March 2020 |

What is the Evaluation Panel?

- Applications are considered by a Rochford District Council internal evaluation panel consisting of officers and the relevant Member Portfolio holders.
- Panel Members will not be allowed to adjudicate any grant application where they have a personal or pecuniary interest in the project, or outcome. All Panel Members shall be required to formally declare their interests.
- To assure fair and equitable distribution of funding, Panel Members will be made aware of any links with other projects, initiatives or services that may already pre-exist that could address the localised need.

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How do I apply

- Use the following link to the Council's website <https://www.rochford.gov.uk/vog> and click on the related contents where you will find the application form.
- Email the completed application form which with any supporting evidence to the Rochford District Council VSG lead officer: Kelly.Redston@rochford.gov.uk

For any further information on the VSG process please contact:

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