Strong Communities Grant Fund
Guidance Notes 2025-26

Before completing an application form, applicants <u>must</u> contact the Strong Communities Grant Fund team to discuss the eligibility of your project idea.
Email: scgfapplications@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

What is the Strong Communities Grant Fund?

The Strong Communities Grant Fund will offer grants to Community Groups, Voluntary organisations and Town and Community Councils towards the cost of initiatives within the Vale of Glamorgan that help to support the Council's vision of "strong communities with a bright future".

The deadline for applications is midday on 30ᵗʰ April 2025, Projects must be completed by 31ˢᵗ March 2025.

We are pleased to advise that this round of the Strong Communities Grant Fund is funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. As such, there will be specific requirements in your application to show how your project fits with the Shared Prosperity Fund themes and sub-themes, and if successful, projects will be required to provide some specific evidence regarding their outputs and outcomes. As always, the Strong Communities team will be available to help you navigate these.

The fund aims to:

1. Improve the resilience of organisations/groups or their activities by funding activities which add value to their current work and reduce their reliance on grant funding in the future;

2. Provide seed corn funding towards initiatives that can demonstrate longer term sustainability;

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3. Undertake consultation, feasibility, design and other specialist work to develop proposals for future activity and funding bids;

4. Meet the capital costs of schemes by purchasing plant, machinery, equipment or other assets or

5. Undertake work that would enable services to be provided, for example, through increased income generation potential and demonstrate what such investment would mean in savings and/or community benefits.

6. Encourage projects that include innovative ways of addressing climate change.

7. Encourage projects that help Vale communities to cope with the rising cost of living.

8. Where relevant support projects that address placemaking and the associated needs. You can find information on placemaking here.

How do I apply?

Applicants must complete a Strong Communities Grant application form and the Outputs and Outcomes table. Anyone considering making an application must contact the Strong Communities Grant Team **before** completing an application form, so that eligibility can be assessed at an early stage.

Email: scgfapplications@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk : with a brief paragraph outlining your project, so that we can advise you further.

If your project is deemed eligible, you will be provided with an application form. Additional information may be required in support of your application post appraisal particularly to evidence match funding.

Incomplete applications or applications submitted without the correct supporting documentation may not be considered.

Who can apply?

The following categories of organisation are eligible to apply:
- Community groups and voluntary organisations
- Town and Community Councils, independently or in partnership with a community group where the latter lacks legal status.
- Consortia of the above, including those that have established formal governance arrangements such as social enterprises.

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How much can we apply for?

Applications are invited for grants of between £5,001 and £15,000. The maximum grant that will be offered towards any single project is £15,000.   Applications for projects of up to £5,000 should be directed to enquiries@gvs.wales

The total available budget for this grant fund 2025 – 2026 is £180,000

Value for money is a key assessment factor and demand is likely to be high. All applications must have match funding of at least 20% of the total project cost. Regardless of the percentage of match funding, the maximum budget awarded by this grant will be £15,000 per project.

Illustrations of this policy are included in the case studies given in the "What we can fund" section below. Your application must include all financial details of the project, particularly details of the match funding which will need to be in place at the time of applying.

Please do not be discouraged by the application form – the Council is here to support you through the application process. We hope that this will help you in the future if you apply for other funding from other bodies.

The amount of information that we are expecting you to provide in this form should be proportionate to the amount of money you are applying for. We need to know exactly what you plan to spend the grant on, what you hope to achieve through your project, who will benefit and how this will help in you in the longer term. You can contact us at any point for support to complete your application and we encourage you to provide us with an early draft so that we can provide feedback, if necessary.

What can be funded?

Here are some examples of things that could be supported. (This list is not exhaustive):
- Projects that improve the ability of the applicant to generate income.
- Projects that support an applicant to take on and sustain an asset.
- Feasibility studies, community mapping & detailed design to prepare for funding bids
- Purchase and hire of equipment, machinery or other assets.
- Marketing and translation costs
- Capital works, including refurbishment of buildings and open spaces/or purchase of storage equipment. Please note that this may require planning permission.
- Investments which reduce the long-term running costs of the applicant organisation
- Investments which improve the efficiency of the applicant organisation
- Activities which pool resources across several organisations in order to save costs.
- Research and other consultancy costs
- Cost of staff, only where the cost relates to delivery of the project.
- Training
- Travel & subsistence related to the project, including volunteer expenses.
- Irrecoverable VAT
- Venue hire

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What can't be funded?

The following are examples of things that would not generally be supported. (This list is not exhaustive):

- Day-to-day running costs (e.g. core staff, utility bills, council tax, rent and insurance)
- Projects that are more appropriate for support from other Council Schemes: e.g. Events fund
- Projects that do not align to the Council's Corporate Plan
- Projects that cannot demonstrate need.
- One off fundraising events
- Projects that happen or start before we confirm our grant.
- Items that mainly benefit individuals (for example, equipment that is not shared)
- Religious or political activities, including campaign groups.
- Hospitality e.g. Purchase of alcohol.
- Routine repairs and maintenance – e.g. Boiler servicing, grass cutting.
- Projects that do not take place in the Vale of Glamorgan
- Recoverable VAT

The following examples may help you to judge the eligibility of your project. Please note, however, that projects extending beyond one year are no longer eligible for support. **All projects must be completed by no later than 31st March 2026.** Please calculate costs according to the exact length of the project.

What we would support: Case Study 1

The Community Kitchen

A community identifies the need for a lunch club through talking to users of the community centre and other residents. This kitchen could also be used for weddings and other functions, therefore making the overall facility more sustainable. The Hall does not have a commercial grade kitchen. Funding could be used to purchase equipment and the installation of the kitchen. The fund could also support the training of volunteers and marketing of the club itself. Support for marketing the newly installed kitchen could also be provided. The lunch club would cover its costs and generate additional income through appropriate charging which would allow for future investment in replacement equipment.

Example of eligible costs

Installation of new kitchen and other equipment at community centre	£9,000
Project / volunteer Coordinator (part time)	£3,200
Training and certification of volunteers	£1,450
Travel costs for the volunteers	£190
Marketing materials (pop ups, leaflets and an advert in local press)	£560
Menu development	£380
Total project cost	**£14,780**
Match funding @ 20%	**£2,956**
Project application requirement	**£11,824**

The project has other funding of 20% of total project costs, so the requirement from the SCGF application is **£11,824**

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What we would not support:
A community thinks that a lunch club will work and wants to pay a catering company to come in and provide this service using the existing facility. It wants to pay itself room hire and pay session staff to support the activity. It proposes to charge a nominal amount for lunch or offer it for free which means the grant is subsidising the running costs of this service.

What we would support: Case Study 2

Service user training and employment projects – catering

A community led organisation identifies training opportunities for its service users through the establishment of a community café. Funding could be used to develop the café space, provide seed corn funding for rent and staffing costs. Volunteers would gain valuable skills and hopefully move into employment. The café would also have developed a customer base and regular income over this period to enable it to cover costs in the longer term.

Example of eligible costs

Installation of new kitchen	£15,600
Rent for space	£2,000
Project / volunteer Coordinator	£8,000
Travel costs for the volunteers	£1,200
Marketing materials (pop ups, leaflets and 2 x adverts in local press)	£1,500
Total project cost	**£28,300**
Match funding @ 47%	**£13,300**
Project application amount	**£15,000**

Regardless of total project cost, any grant offer would be limited to a maximum of £15,000. Therefore this project would need match funding of £13,300, representing match funding of 47%. These additional funds would need to be secured and evidenced in the project application.

What we would not support
The cost of a training officer to train 36 clients in classroom environment in catering skills. No long term income could be identified through this approach. The project would just end after three years.

What we would support: Case Study 3

Taking on assets – A sports club

A bowls club that is taking on an asset owned by the Council currently has the green mowed by contractors. It cannot afford to do this once it takes on the asset. It works with two other clubs nearby to see how they can reduce the costs of grass cutting and painting. It was decided that a mower and a trailer to transport it would help them to reduce costs. The club thinks that it may be able to use the mower and volunteers to offer services at other clubs across the County. Payment for this service would help cover running costs.

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They also think that the clubhouse could be rented out for conferencing and events so have asked for some conference equipment.

Example of eligible costs

Sit on specialist mower	£8,000
Trailer and 3 x hook-ups to transport between clubs	£1,800
Health and safety training	£600
3 x security sheds and locks	£1,500
Projector, Screen and Flip Chart Stands	£1,000
Total project cost	**£12,900**
Match funding at 20%	**£2,580**
Project application amount	**£10,320**

What we would not support:
The cost of grass cutting by a garden contractor
Lease of a mower (what happens at the end of this funding?)
Ongoing servicing and repair costs of the mower

Do I include VAT in my application?

You can only include VAT in the application if you cannot claim it back from HM Revenue and Customs. Applicants are responsible for taking advice on VAT. Unfortunately, the Council cannot offer this advice.

How long does a grant last?

If your application is successful, your funding offer letter will specify a deadline by which the project must be completed, and no later than 31st March 2026. You will also be required to report on the progress of your project periodically and in line with the terms and conditions of your grant offer.

How will the grant be paid?

The grant will be paid in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in the funding letter. The grant will usually be paid retrospectively and subject to all invoices / receipts being submitted to the Council. In exceptional circumstances where this could cause real difficulties for small organisations, stage payments will be considered. The best thing to do is talk to us about your financial position and we will do our best to work out the method of grant payment. Your funding letter will state grant amount as a percentage of the total project cost. Strong Communities Grant Fund payments cannot be allocated against specific elements of the project.

What is the application timetable?

Application windows for the grant funds will be advertised on the Vale of Glamorgan Council website. Your application must be complete with all attachments and submitted by email, by 12 noon on the deadline date. You can submit your application at any point during the window. Keep in touch with us and don't hesitate to ask any questions by emailing scgfapplications@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

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If your application is successful, you will be issued a funding letter and associated documents to sign and return electronically. The pack will explain any conditions, the approval process and how to submit a grant claim. If you have any questions at this point, we will be happy to help you.

1st April 2025	Applications open
30th April 2025	Applications close
June 2025	Notification emails if successful
June 2025	Award letter
June 2025	Return award letter and procurement requirements
1st July 2025	Project start date
15th Sept 2025	First claim date
15th Jan 2026	Second claim date
31st March 2026	Project end date and final reporting

Outputs & Outcomes

All projects funded by the Strong Communities Grand Fund must align with one or more of the sub themes listed in the Outputs and Outcomes spreadsheet, in columns B and C. Projects must submit the required evidence to demonstrate they have achieved these.

Who makes the decision and what are the assessment criteria?

Your application will be examined by the relevant Grants Officer at the Vale of Glamorgan Council and any queries followed up with you.

Applications for grants of between £5,001 and £15,000 will be submitted to a grant evaluation panel meeting for consideration. The panel is made up of the following:

- Leader of the Council
- Cabinet Member with responsibility for Regeneration
- One representative from a Town Council
- One representative from a Community Council
- One representative from each of any donors of recurring third party funding
- One representative from Glamorgan Voluntary Services
- One representative from a member organisation of the Public Services Board
- One representative from the Waterloo Foundation

The Grant Panel may choose to attach conditions to your grant offer, if successful. You will then be notified in writing of the decision on your application.

The panel will assess your application against the following criteria:

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	Priority Criteria	Score
1	Strategic fit with: • Shared Prosperity Fund themes and sub-themes • Vale Council Priorities (Corporate Plan 2025 - 2030) • Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015	0 – 25
2	Value for money, including a proportionate number of outputs and outcomes pledged for the level of funding requested.	0 – 25
3	Stakeholder engagement in shaping and delivering the project.	0 – 25
4	Added value and sustainability	0 – 25
	Total	**100**

All projects must meet a pass rate of 70 to be considered for funding, this must include a minimum pass rate of 5 per criteria.

Marketing / Promotional Materials

Your grant offer is conditional upon the use the funding partners' logos on associated marketing / promotional products e.g., flyers, website, social media, interpretation panels. There is specific guidance on this matter which you are asked to follow and if your application is successful, we will supply this with your funding letter.

Will I need to monitor the project?

As part of your application, you will have set out what you hope to achieve with your funding. This might be the number of individuals benefiting, receiving training, or physical projects completed. We will ask you to report to us on progress periodically during delivery of your project and on its completion. Please work with our officers as part of this application process to agree and set out the outcomes of your project.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council must be notified if you propose to change the use, or sell any building or equipment acquired, reclaimed or refurbished using this grant. If this does not continue to reflect the objectives of the grant scheme VOGC may recover from you funds up to the total amount of grant paid in respect of that project for a period of up to 5 years from final payment of the grant.

Date of disposal of asset (s)	Amount to be repaid
Within 1 year	Funding to be repaid in full
Within 2 years	80% of funding to be repaid
Within 3 years	60% of funding to be repaid
Within 4 years	40% of funding to be repaid
Within 5 years	20% of funding to be repaid
After 5 years	No funding to be repaid

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How many quotes do I need to seek?

The tendering table below sets out the procedure you need to follow.

All projects' costs should be accurate and based on fact. Projects that are awarded funding cannot return and ask for additional funds because their project was not properly costed. Therefore, projects should be costed based on the recent acquisition of quotes, or recent experience. Projects will be required to provide evidence of the following tendering activity before grants will be paid, and we strongly advise that this is undertaken prior to application submission.

Tender Information

Estimated value	Tender Action Required
Up to £2,499	Direct award
£2,500-£24,999	3 written quotes or prices sought from relevant suppliers of goods, works and/or services
Over £25,000	Formal tender process

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