



COVID-19 Charities Fund

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About the COVID-19 Charities Fund

1. What is the COVID-19 Charities Fund

The National Lottery Community Fund is distributing the COVID-19 Charities Fund on behalf of the Northern Ireland Department for Communities.

The £15.5m COVID-19 Charities Fund will provide grants to meet unavoidable costs for charities that have exhausted all other avenues of support and are facing imminent closure.

It will provide financial support to charities who:

- Have lost income due to the impact of COVID-19 and
- Are unable to cover unavoidable costs until September 30th 2020.

The fund is limited. We will only be able to provide funding for costs that are unavoidable, so it is important to think about what you can do or have already done to reduce your expenditure.

We will not be able to fund new programme activity or costs associated with on-going activity that could be suspended.

If demand is high, priority will be given to those charities that communities rely on the most to deliver essential services and to ensuring equitable distribution.

2. Who can apply?

Charities applying must meet all of the following eligibility criteria:

1. Have been formed prior to 31st March 2020 and be a lawfully operating charity as defined by the Charities Act (NI) 2008
2. Have at least two unrelated people on its board or committee
3. Have a UK bank or building society account in the legal name of the charity with at least two unrelated people who can manage the account
4. Have been financially stable prior to the impact of COVID-19 and where The National Lottery Community Fund have no concerns regarding fraud or financial mismanagement
5. Be able to demonstrate that their fundraising or trading income has reduced due to the impact of COVID-19 and they have unavoidable costs to cover up to 30th September 2020
6. Have unavoidable costs that cannot be covered by existing grants or public funding and are therefore at imminent risk
7. Have not received other COVID-19 financial support from NI Executive departments:
 - Department for the Economy Small Business Support;
 - Retail, Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Grant.
 - Microbusiness Hardship Fund.

- £6.5m fund for charities released by the Department of Finance for Hospices and charities.

If you are unsure about your charity's eligibility, please contact the Department for Communities on covid19charitiesfund@communities-ni.gov.uk

3. Who won't be able to apply?

Your charity is not eligible if it is a:

- Community Amateur Sports Club
- Community Interest Company
- Non charitable social enterprise
- Non charitable trading arm

Your charity is not eligible if it:

- Was formed after 31 March 2020
- Submitted an Expression of Interest (EOI) after 31 March 2020
- Was called forward by Commission for registration but failed to apply
- Was called forward by Commission for registration but your application was withdrawn and you never reapplied when invited to do so
- Was called forward by Commission for registration but your application was rejected and you never reapplied when invited to do so
- Has informed the Commission for Northern Ireland that you have or are about to close.
- Has never informed the Commission of its existence.

4. What is the deadline for applications?

The COVID-19 Charities Fund will be open for receipt of applications for a 4-week period until 10th July 2020 (depending on programme launch and demand).

5. How do I apply?

Visit www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/covid-19-charities-fund, where you can access the online application form. Use the eligibility check at the start of the application to help you find out whether you are eligible to apply.

If you are eligible you can continue completing the application form and submit the required documentation to support your application.

6. How long will this funding last?

This funding will be distributed as a one-off payment and is intended to cover a shortfall of unavoidable costs from 1st April to 30th September 2020.

7. I have applied for another COVID-19 non-repayable government grant but I do not know if the application has been successful. Can I still apply?

You can apply to two government grant programmes at the same time. However, you must withdraw your application to the COVID-19 Charities Fund if you receive an award from another source. Likewise, if you receive an award through the COVID-19 Charities Fund you must immediately withdraw your other application for the other government grant.

8. Can I apply if I'm in receipt of other funding or others forms of support?

Yes, however if other funding streams are not providing enough cover for the services your charity is required to deliver, or where the funding has been cut, it is recommended that you have an initial discussion with the funding provider to explore all possible options before applying to the COVID-19 Charities Fund. It is vital that this scheme supports and prioritises those charities who can no longer find a way to sustain their services and are at risk of closure.

You won't be able to apply if your charity has received direct COVID-19 support from the following NI Executive departments:

- DfE Small Business Support
- Retail, Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Grant
- Microbusiness Hardship Fund.
- DoF Support Fund for Hospices

If your charity receives a significant amount of regular public sector funding you will have to explain why this is insufficient to keep it going in the immediate term.

9. What do I need to send to show that my charity is in financial difficulty?

You will be asked to provide some evidence to support your application including a copy of your latest bank statement, most recent annual/draft accounts and you'll need to complete a financial overview template giving us some detail of how your income and expenditure has been affected by the impact of COVID-19.

Watch this short video which will provide you with some guidance on what information we will ask you for.

10. My group cannot accept funding from The National Lottery. How can I make sure I receive money from the Government?

The Department for Communities has appointed the National Lottery Community Fund to administer this funding programme as after consideration of options it was concluded that this provides the most effective and efficient route to getting the grants to the charities who need them most.

However, it should be noted that the funding source is Government and is not coming from the National Lottery, therefore by applying to the National Lottery Community Fund you will be accessing money from the Government and not from the lottery.

11. Can social enterprises apply?

Yes, social enterprises can apply as long as they are a local charity and meet the eligibility criteria.

12. Can a faith based charity apply?

Yes, faith based charities can apply as long as they meet the eligibility criteria.

13. How will you decide who should receive funding?

This funding is aimed at charities who have found themselves in financial difficulties, having exhausted all other avenues of support including internal reserves, other measures such as the Job Retention Scheme and all available hardship funds.

It is vital that this scheme supports and prioritises those charities who can no longer find a way to sustain their services and are at risk of closure.

The assessment will focus on answering:

- What is the minimum amount of funding that is needed to cover unavoidable costs until 30th September 2020?
- The extent to which the charity has put in place credible measures to adapt their services and mitigate the loss of income
- The extent to which the community relies on the charity to deliver essential services.

14. How will you prioritise those charities that will receive funding when there is a limited amount available?

In the first instance, charities will be prioritised based on the extent and urgency of their financial need.

After this has been ascertained, the following further criteria will be used to prioritise funding recipients:

Impact

- How essential the service is to its users in their lives
- The extent to which the support the charity provides is available elsewhere.
- The extent of the challenge and impact that would be created if the service closed and had to be re-established after the current situation.

Activity

We will make particular consideration of the extent to which charities:

- Support people in times of personal crisis and vulnerability, including where these have increased through the impacts of COVID-19:
 - Those suffering poverty (whether that be in terms of finance, lack of key resources such as work or housing, or access to services such as health or education) or
 - Those vulnerable through infirmity, health conditions or circumstance or
 - Those who are experiencing or have experienced violence, hate, abuse or exploitation
- Enable communities to be more resilient, supportive and connected
 - Those which work to improve connections and understanding between communities or
 - Those which support people who are marginalised or
 - Those who work to reduce loneliness, isolation and improve wellbeing or
 - Those which support local community activity, including volunteering, and community organising or
 - Those who support community and sector infrastructure.

15. Will all charities receive the same amount of funding?

No, funding levels will be based on a proportionate assessment of a charity's short-term financial need. An award will be made for the amount of money required to cover unavoidable costs and prevent short term closure, which will vary in each situation.

16. What is the maximum amount of funding a charity can receive under this scheme?

To ensure a broad distribution of the funds available, the maximum level of grant under this scheme will be £75,000. However, awards will be made for the amount of money required to cover immediate costs and prevent short term closure, which will vary in each situation.

17. If I'm successful, how long will it take to receive the funding?

We anticipate that applications will be assessed and decisions made within 4 weeks of being received but it could take longer if demand is high. Funding will follow within a week of decision.

18. If my charity is still facing financial difficulty after funding has been used, can I access further support

Right now we are working to respond to an immediate need in a time of crisis. Any longer term needs and economic impacts will have to be considered as the situation develops. These are unprecedented times.

19. What are you doing for those who are not eligible for any of this funding?

This fund is aimed at providing assistance to charities who are facing imminent closure. The Executive has agreed the criteria for the scheme.

There are limited funds available and as with all Executive support in this very difficult time, hard decisions have had to be made.