

Application Form Guidance Notes

Community Growing 'Let's Grow NMD'

Applications are open from 13th January 2024

and close 24th February 2025 at 12noon

Projects must be delivered between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026.

Please note if applying under Community Growing 'Let's Grow NMD' under Basic Eligibility projects MUST:

- Enclose the identity of the landowner(s).
- Enclose proof of written permission, where available, for use of the land from the landowner(s).

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1. Overview

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council invite applications for financial assistance from the community and voluntary sector (i.e. not-for-profit). This document sets out guidance for applicants applying for financial assistance.

Council's purpose in providing financial assistance is to allow it to achieve its objectives in line with clearly identified local needs and within the parameters of Council's powers. Council will seek to ensure that any funding provided is:

- In line with Council's Corporate Strategy and other key strategic and policy documents.
- Consistent with Council's Financial Assistance Policy.
- In line with the specific requirements of the programme being applied for.
- Able to meet a clearly identified need.
- Used in an effective and efficient manner and to demonstrate value for money.

These Guidance Notes set out the process to be used in applying for funding and the processes Council will use in assessing eligibility, suitability, and level of funding available and how Council will review and monitor applications. Applicants should ensure that they have a sound understanding of the specific rationale for the programme to which they are applying and that their proposal responds to each of the criteria set out by Council. Council will only seek to obtain the minimum information necessary to assess an application. It is the applicants' responsibility to ensure that this information is provided in full.

2. Overarching Principles and Eligibility

Council's overall vision for financial assistance is to maximise the impact of its work across the Council area for the benefit of residents.

Council will use financial assistance in a way which is:

- Strategic and helps Council deliver its objectives in line with its statutory responsibilities.
- Transparent and accountable.
- Fair and equitable – funding allocation will be based on merit and no other factor.
- Needs based – funding will only be provided where there is a clearly demonstrated need.
- Efficient use of funding/value for money.
- Able to show tangible outcomes.
- Outcomes that can be measured.
- Able to engage the community.

3. Theme specific criteria

Community Growing 'Let's Grow NMD' projects must complement the programme aims and objectives as outlined below. **Biodiversity focused projects should apply to the Local Biodiversity Enhancement theme.**

The Council will only consider **one** application per organisation for the Community Growing 'Let's Grow NMD' programme.

Please note if applying under Community Growing 'Let's Grow NMD' under Basic Eligibility projects MUST:

- Enclose the identity of the landowner(s).
- Enclose proof of written permission, where available, for use of the land from the landowner(s).

Theme – Community Growing 'Let's Grow NMD'

Threshold: Grants are between £500 minimum and £1,500 maximum

Indicative budget for the theme is £10,000. Please note this is subject to change.

Latest project end date: All project activity MUST be completed no later than 31st March 2026.

Please note: Claims must be submitted within six-weeks of the chosen project end date or the letter of offer will automatically be withdrawn, and the funds redistributed.

Aim: This funding is to promote and develop Community Growing for food growing – i.e. fruit and vegetable growing. Projects should be principally based on fruit and/or vegetable community growing and not solely for flower or non-edible plant growing, memorial gardens or sensory gardens.

Objectives:

- To support and promote community growing (food growing) within the District.
- To support community-based groups to develop their community growing sites.
- To support community growing groups to:
 - Purchase tools and equipment for their activities.
 - Purchase seeds, plants, compost, soil and other items essential to community growing activities.
- To support the establishment and upkeep of community orchards.

Eligible Expenditure:

- Tools and equipment used for community growing activities.
- Pots, compost, seeds, plants, bulbs and similar items.
- Materials for building raised beds and similar growing areas.
- Equipment which can be demonstrated to be essential for the running of community growing.

- A maximum contribution of 75% towards costs of greenhouses or similar structures.
- A maximum contribution of 75% towards costs of sheds or storage containers.
- One-off event insurance linked to the project is eligible or, if applicable, part payment of annual insurance. **Please note** the part payment should be proportionate to the activity taking place (and must be pre-agreed with the Grants & Funding Unit prior to claiming).

Ineligible:

- Large infrastructure developments e.g. large permanent buildings.
- Development which requires planning or other permissions and does not have this in place at the time of application.
- School gardens are not eligible for this funding.
- Private, memorial and sensory gardens, wildflower areas or meadows.
- Award ceremonies including gifts.
- Projects that do not adhere to the Habitats Regulations requirements.
- Residential courses.
- Core running costs - due to the focus on community participation/volunteering, rent, salaries, staff time, administration or project management fees will not be funded.
- Awareness raising or communication projects - an element of communication e.g. interpretation panel will only be considered if part of a wider project.

Funding will not, normally, be provided for:

- Festivals/events taking place outside Northern Ireland
- Trade or professional conferences/conventions
- Award ceremonies or industry events
- Residential courses and associated events
- Festivals that are social events for an organisation
- Fireworks
- Presentations or gifts to individuals
- Hospitality
- Private security
- Admission to attractions
- Projects which deploy potential sources of income from the project to a charity or other third-party organisation via sponsorship or donations.
- Projects which are generating a profit unless the income being generated is being used to enhance the project or offset costs outside of those applied for.
- Volunteer or existing staff costs, donations to charities.

As per Council regulations:

In most cases Council will not provide funding for any of the following elements:

- Any costs which clearly fall within another statutory agency's remit.
- Projects or activities which are delivered outside the Council area and do not meet needs within the area.
- Activities which specifically exist to raise funding.
- The purchase of alcohol.
- Salaries and/or administration costs will not be funded.
- Costs incurred prior to the funding application and letter of offer from Council.

- Costs that can be recovered elsewhere, for instance recoverable VAT.
- **Payments to any members of the applicant group, including employees, directors, board members, trustees or the immediate family of any of the above, for services provided in relation to the project i.e. self-invoicing.** An exception can be made for volunteer expenses as long as they are not receiving any other financial benefit from the project e.g. fuel, parking.
- Gifts / prizes / presentation items or awards to individuals including sweets such as selection boxes.
- Only one Financial Assistance application per event/project.
- Applicants in receipt of an SLA or other funding for delivery of an event must declare in the FA application, the FA application will then be assessed on that basis. Please note this does not include organisations who hold an SLA for facilities or an FMA.

Organisations that are uncertain whether they are eligible for funding are advised to discuss this with the relevant Council officers before submitting application forms to minimise unnecessary effort.

4. Application Process

Financial Assistance Programmes will be operated through the online Electronic Grant Management System (EGMS); however, Council may require additional specific information and therefore reserve the right to amend accordingly. A paper alternative will only be offered in exceptional circumstances should an applicant be unable to access the EGMS.

Applications must be completed in full and returned along with any documentary evidence required for the funding programme by the closing date stipulated on the application form.

Incomplete or late applications will automatically be deemed ineligible whether online or by paper.

Any applications returned without the necessary details, signatures or required attachments will also be rejected. There will be no opportunity to submit information at a later stage and therefore it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all requirements are met at the initial application stage.

5. Completing the Application Form

Applicants will be unable to submit applications after the closing date. Applicants should assume that Council Officers have no prior knowledge of their organisation and should include all information necessary to adequately inform the assessment panel.

The amount of information provided should be proportionate to the scale of funding and the nature of the programme. Where possible please provide information as concise bullet points.

Please note that each question is assessed on a stand-alone basis on the information provided in the associated answer box (scoring outlined below under section - Assessment Criteria, Project Appraisal and Scoring - Stage 2 Scoring).

The application will be a two-stage process, with Stage 1 - Basic Eligibility and Stage 2 - Scoring.

Stage 1 Basic Eligibility

Applicants can fail to pass Stage 1 due to the following reasons:

- An incomplete application.
- Failure to provide the application form and all the details required by the closing date/time (the EGMS will not allow this to be submitted).
- An application which has not been approved by two office bearers
 - Group is constituted, not-for-profit and can prove they are governed appropriately.
 - Upload accounts / income and expenditure
 - Completed compliance declaration for all risks including Safeguarding and risk assessments.

Please note applicants must enclose the identity of the landowner(s) and proof of written permission, where available, for use of the land from the landowner(s).

Section – Applicant Landing Page

My Details – Organisation Profile & My Profile My Profile

The applicant must ensure the contact details are correct for the contact person, as this will be the only person we will contact regarding your application(s). If the contact person changes during the period of the application process, please update the My Profile section accordingly.

The e-mail contact details will be used for future correspondence therefore it is vital this is up-to-date and correct.

All of the information you provide will be held on computer. This information will be used for the administration of financial assistance, for producing statistics and information on successful applicants. Remember to keep a copy of the completed form and enclosures for your own records.

Organisation Profile

The applicant must ensure the organisational information provided is accurate; these details should be updated as and when required. Please note this section forms part of the Basic Eligibility requirements. Applicants must provide the following information within the organization profile before they can apply for financial assistance. If an applicant fails to attach relevant documentation along with the necessary declarations as outlined above they will not progress to Stage 2 scoring.

- Documents showing the legal status of the organization such as:
 - Constitution
 - Charity Status

- Annual accounts, independently examined accounts, or an income expenditure report (applicants can use bank statements to compile an annual spreadsheet detailing their income and expenditure for the most recent financial year; however bank statement alone will not suffice).
Please note: Council will only accept accounts dated within two years of the date of the application. Applicants must update these prior to beginning a new round of financial assistance applications. New groups that have not been established for more than a year are exempt from providing this detail but must provide a rationale and outline the reason they are not submitting this information.
- Bank account details – The applicant must ensure the bank account details are correct and used by the organisation making the application. **Please note,** any expenditure relating to the project must be from the account named. The Council must be informed of any changes made to an organisation’s bank account details.

Applicants can upload as many documents as required under each section; however, a combined document for each section is preferable.

Section – Application

Project Tab

Project Title

This will be the project name used in all future correspondence.

Primary Activity Quarter, Start and End Date and Project Duration

Please review the programme guidance to ensure your project’s delivery date is as per Guidance Notes.

Applicants must provide accurate start and end dates for their project. Select the timeframe when the main project will take place from the quarterly drop-down menu. **Please note:** Claims must be submitted within six-weeks of the chosen project end date or the letter of offer will automatically be withdrawn, and the funds redistributed.

All projects must be completed no later than 31st March 2026.

What is the Primary Area of Benefit.

The applicant must ensure the project is delivered within the eligible Council areas. An applicant must ensure they identify an eligible Council area.

Provide a description of the project and how it fits the theme applied for as per the guidance notes.

Applications should evidence how project activities promote and develop Community Growing for food growing – i.e. fruit and vegetable growing. Projects should be principally based on fruit and/or vegetable community growing and not solely for flower or non-edible plant growing, memorial gardens or sensory gardens.

Applicants should evidence how the project will:

- support and promote community growing (food growing) within the district.
- To support community-based groups to develop their community growing sites.
- To support community growing groups to:
 - Purchase tools and equipment for their activities.
 - Purchase seeds, plants, compost, soil and other items essential to community growing activities.
- To support the establishment and upkeep of community orchards.

Provide an outline of the aims, objectives and outcomes of the project. Complete the key activities table which are the outputs of the project.

This question allows the applicant to provide details on what your project is about and what you will do. This may include:

- An outline of what the project is.
- Details of project delivery and specific actions that will be delivered.
- The target group and numbers involved.
- The duration of the project.
- The location of the project.
- The outcomes of the project.
- The direct and indirect benefits of the project.
- How the project complements the programme; the aims and objectives of which, are outlined above.

The applicant should provide as much detail as possible on how the project links to the theme applied under and detail the indicators that will help identify how project delivery will achieve this. Applicants must also ensure that activities link to the budget.

Key Activities table – Please add details of Key Activities and Events (include participants and the outcomes/outputs and/or benefits of each activity). Please note this table will be used in your evaluation of your project delivery and you will be monitored against the outputs you have set.

This question allows the applicant to provide further details on the project activity and how the key activities will meet the outcomes and/or benefits of the project for participants. The middle column of the answer table will expand for applicants to include all the relevant information. Activity information should have sufficient detail that an assessor, in theory, could turn up to participate in the activity and know exactly what to expect. It is important to provide clear information on the number of participants that will be involved in the proposed project. This information will be used to report on at the evaluation stage when submitting your claim.

Participants are individuals directly participating in a project e.g. event attendees or football players and referees at a match, **whereas beneficiaries** are individuals who gain some form of indirect benefit from the project/event taking place e.g. stall holders at an event, a nearby café or the spectators of a football match.

How the need for the project was established and how the project will fulfil this need.

This question allows the applicant to outline how they identified the need and why the project is needed in the local area. The applicant should outline the specific needs that will be met and clearly link these to the project's activities. There should also be a rationale explaining how the need was identified and why existing provision does not address this.

The applicant should provide as much detail as possible and, where possible, provide numbers, evaluation reports or research results. Where a similar or the same project has been delivered before then you will need to clearly demonstrate the additional needs identified and how this project will meet those.

Please note this section is not about the organisation and what the organisation is delivering but rather the project for which you are applying, how you identified the need for the project, how the project is going to fulfil this need and this should link back to the theme applied for.

Equality of opportunity and good relations.

This question allows the applicant to identify how the project will promote good relations and equality. The applicant should refer to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and detail what actions the project will undertake to promote equality and accessibility of services to all. The applicant should be specific in outlining the actions that will be taken through project delivery which will ensure the project is open and inclusive to all people. Note this is how the project will deliver on Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations and not your organisations daily delivery.

Sustainability.

This question allows the applicant to identify how the project will create positive impacts beyond the lifetime of the project and detail any direct and indirect sustainable benefits that have been created through project delivery. Note this is how the project will deliver on sustainability and not your organisations daily delivery.

Budget Tab

Cost overview.

This will consider that the costs are reasonable and proportionate to the project applied for with a detailed budget breakdown including income generation and how this is being applied to the project.

The applicant should include 100% of all costs associated with the project including those you are not requesting funding for within this application.

The applicant must indicate the amount of funding required from Council ensuring they do not exceed the lower and upper thresholds as identified in the Guidance Notes. Applicants must also be aware that Council may fund less than the amount requested.

Costs should be outlined for every item of expenditure even where Council is not providing the funding. Applicants should ensure costs are realistic and should get quotes. You will be required to provide us with a breakdown of each activity (budget heading). You should provide a breakdown of all activities e.g. Artists fees, £1,500 – 5 artists x £300 each.

It is vital that the amount requested is within the eligible items of expenditure as highlighted for the programme and within the Council regulations. If applicants are not requesting 100% of the total cost of the project, they should provide evidence of any additional funding being received for the project including the organisation's own funding sources.

The applicant **must inform Council if they are planning to charge people** to attend the event or to take part in the project. If this is the case Council should know how much is expected to be raised through charging.

- Any income generated through the project or in match funding must be detailed.
- Any gap in funding i.e. shortfall, must be accounted for or a rationale provided. Failure to do so will impact on the score. Please provide details of any pending funding awards.

Please note:

- Projects which deploy potential sources of income from the project to a charity or other third-party organisation via sponsorship or donations will be ineligible
- Where projects are generating a profit, this will not be eligible. Where income is being generated from a project you must demonstrate how this is being used to enhance the project or offset costs outside of those applied for.
- Volunteer or existing staff costs, donations to charities are ineligible.

Submission Tab

Final Application Submission

- **Data Protection**

A copy of our privacy notice is available on request or via the following link: http://www.newrymournedown.org/media/uploads/privacy_notice.pdf

- **Declaration**

Please ensure to complete all declarations including the Safeguarding declaration which states that when engaging children or adults with vulnerability safeguarding and preventing harm is a mandatory responsibility for anyone receiving financial support through Council. If you are unsure or need clarity in relation to any safeguarding elements of this application, please contact us as soon as possible and we will ensure you receive the necessary support to complete your application.

Please ensure all relevant sections are complete and signee details are inputted as this section forms part of the Basic Eligibility requirements.

6. Assessment Criteria, Project Appraisal and Scoring - Stage 2 Scoring

All applications passing Stage 1 Basic Eligibility check, will proceed to a "Full Project Appraisal and Scoring" carried out using the following criteria, process and scoring system. The assessment panel then makes a recommendation to the Council for consideration/approval.

All eligible applications will be assessed against the pre-set criteria agreed by Council. All applications will be scored out of 100 (weighted final score). An application must score a minimum of 50% under Programme and Priority criteria, Efficiency and Effectiveness criteria as well as under the Cross-cutting themes, before it can be considered for funding. Projects under 50% will not be recommended for support.

However, a score equivalent to 50% or above will not necessarily guarantee funding as applications will be scored and ranked with funding available awarded to the highest ranked projects. Thereafter a project may be reconsidered, and allocated funding should it become available at a later date.

For consistency and to facilitate efficient assessment the following approach has been adopted to scoring against the following criteria:

Question (as per application)	Criterion	Maximum	Weighting	Weighted Final Score
	Council & Programme or Service Area.			
Provide a description of the project and how it fits the theme applied for as per the guidance notes.	Fit with the programme or service area being applied for.	5	x 4	20
Provide an outline of the aims, objectives and outcomes of the project. Complete the key activities table which are the outputs of the project.	Fit with the programme or service area being applied for.	5	x 4	20
	Efficiency & Effectiveness / Need			
Cost overview. This will consider that the costs are reasonable and proportionate to the project applied for with a detailed budget breakdown including income generation and how this is being applied to the project.	Cost overview	5	x 3	15
How the need for the project was established and how the project will fulfil this need.	Establishment of Need	5	x 3	15

	Cross-cutting themes			
How will the project improve equality of opportunity and good relations? Please detail what actions will be undertaken which will contribute to improvement of equality of opportunity and good relations.	Equality of opportunity / Good relations	5	x 3	15
How will the project be sustained beyond the period over which the funding is being sought? Please outline any likely sustainable benefits which will occur through the delivery of this project.	Sustainability	5	x 3	15

In addition, the following scoring system will be used by the panel to ascertain the scores for the criteria above:

Link at project level	Link to Criterion	How evident	Score
The project proposal does not demonstrate that it has the capacity to deliver basic project outcomes that would be expected in order to be awarded funding.	The application does not meet the basic standard under this criterion	No evidence provided	0
The project proposal demonstrates some ability to deliver key outcomes in some areas but overall, it is below the standard expected in order to be awarded funding.	The application met some of the basic requirements of this criterion.	Not sufficient evidence	1
The project proposal demonstrates an ability to deliver project outcomes to an acceptable standard and it may be considered suitable for funding.	The application met the requirements of this criterion.	Less Evident	2
The project proposal is evident in the way it describes a range of activities that will result in good outputs and the achievement of outcomes.	The application is evident in the requirements of this criterion.	Evident	3
The project proposal is strong as the activities described will result in good outputs and the achievement of outcomes.	The application was very evident with strong fit with the requirement of this criterion.	Strongly evident	4
The project proposal fully complies with the outputs and achievement of the outcomes.	The project is excellent and fully met the requirements of this criterion.	Highly Evident	5

7. What Happens Next?

Once your application is submitted it will enter the Council's assessment process. The system will not allow applications to be submitted after the closing time 24th February 2025 12:00noon. There will be no right of appeal.

The application will then proceed to the assessment process. This will involve the following steps:

- An Assessment Panel consisting of Council Officers will be set-up to consider applications for each programme. Your application will be forwarded to the panel responsible for the programme for which you have applied.
- Applications will be assessed against the basic eligibility criteria for the programme concerned.
- If the application meets the basic requirements outlined in stage one, it will pass to the next stage. If not, it will be rejected as ineligible.
- Applications will be assessed against the criteria for the programme concerned. If it doesn't meet the minimum score requirements it will be rejected.
- Council will consider the scores of all applications above minimum threshold for the particular programme and will place these in ranked order.
- Depending on the amount of funding available applicants will be funded in order of their score, with higher scoring applications funded first.
- Recommendations will be made to the Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee who will be responsible for ratifying the overall process. Applicants will be recommended for funding based on their score and a Score and Rank system will be implemented.
- The Committee will make recommendations to full Council.
- Applicants will be informed of the outcome of Council's decision, around twelve weeks after the application deadline.

You will receive one of four outcomes from the application and assessment process:

- **Ineligible** – Your application will automatically be ineligible if:
 - It is incomplete.
 - It fails to provide the necessary detail; uploaded documents will be reviewed to ensure they are eligible.
 - It has not been signed appropriately/incomplete online declaration.
- **A Rejection** – if your application fails to meet the necessary threshold score for support under the individual programme you will be informed that your application has been rejected.
- **Score and Rank** – a score equivalent to 50% or above will not necessarily guarantee funding as applications will be scored and ranked with funding available awarded to the highest ranked projects. Thereafter a project may be reconsidered, and allocated funding should it become available at a later date.
- **A Letter of Offer** – if your application is successful, you will receive a Letter of Offer. This will set out the specific requirements associated with financial assistance and any special conditions. It will describe the information you will have to submit

with a claim for funding. It will not constitute a formal funding agreement until these conditions have been agreed and the Letter of Offer accepted in full, in writing, by your organisation.

- **Post letter of offer workshops - Revenue**

These will be offered to all successful applicants to include training on how to adhere to the letter of offer including procurement and submission of a claim including evaluation requirements.

8. Appeals

Where an application has been rejected for reasons of incomplete information, failure to sign the application/complete the declaration, or ineligibility, there will be no right of appeal. However, where an application is unsuccessful after the full assessment process, appeals can be made to Council on the following basis:

- The outcome was a decision that no reasonable person would have made on the basis of information provided to the Financial Assistance Assessment Panel.
- That Council's stated policy or procedures had not been followed and led to a materially different decision.

Should you wish to submit an appeal this must be done as follows:

- A request for debrief must be lodged, in writing, within 15 working days of the date of the rejection letter and must take place within a 21-day period of the written request. At the debrief an officer will talk you through the scores your application was awarded.
- After debriefing, if you wish to appeal the panel's decision an appeal must be lodged in writing within 10 working days of the date of the debrief session.
- The appeal should be submitted to the Grants and Funding Unit and proof of receipt obtained.
- The appeal request must state:
 - The application details including programme applied for, title of project and contact details for the applicant.
 - The grounds on which an appeal is being made.
 - Any evidence the applicant believes the review process should consider which supports the view that one of the two bases for an appeal is justified.

The appeal will be reviewed by a panel independent from the original scoring panel who will decide on the appeal. This could result in several possible outcomes including:

- Rescoring of the application.
- If the appeal is upheld an appropriate Letter of Offer will be issued as for a successful application.
- If the appeal is not successful, the applicant will be informed and the reasons for the rejection provided in writing.

9. Useful Contacts

For further information please contact:

Grants and Funding Unit

Telephone: **0330 137 4040**

Email: programmesunit@nmandd.org

