



Our Manchester Voluntary and Community Sector (OMVCS)

**Grant Programme Guide
2026 - 2029**



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1. Introduction

I'm delighted to introduce the third round of the Our Manchester Voluntary and Community Sector (OMVCS) Grants Programme, building on the success of previous rounds since its launch in 2017.

This £4.5million per year fund will support voluntary and community sector organisations over three years, starting from 1 April 2026. It will enable them to continue doing what they do best – having a positive impact on the lives of Manchester residents and helping to realise the aims of the new Our Manchester Strategy.

We remain firmly committed to investing in a thriving, sustainable voluntary sector that delivers meaningful outcomes for Mancunians across our many diverse places and identities. The Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector continues to play a crucial role in reaching communities and improving lives, and as a Council, we are proud to work in partnership to achieve our shared ambitions.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to the success of this fund to date, as well as every individual and organisation working tirelessly for Manchester. You are the heartbeat of our city and a big part of what makes it such a great place to live, work, and visit.



Councillor Joanna Midgley
Deputy Leader and Executive Member
for the Voluntary and Community Sector

To apply to this fund, you'll need this document, the application and guidance document and the online application form. To access these, and to find out more about our team and other funds we manage, [visit our website](#).

2. Purpose

The aim of this fund is to support voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) organisations to help deliver the priorities of the [Our Manchester Strategy 2025–2035](#).

What we will fund

We'll invest in core and activity costs for your organisation, to help you continue to have an impact on adults in Manchester and, where needed, build on what's already available. Your application can be just for core costs, activity costs or a mix. By core costs we mean things such as ongoing running costs like staffing, rent, utilities and so on. Activity costs are those directly related to delivering a specific project or programme. Any work that we fund can have already started.

We want to fund a variety of organisations, big and small. The goal is to offer a wide range of high-quality services and activities that reflect Manchester's diverse communities and needs, as well as the priorities of the Our Manchester Strategy 2025–2035. We particularly want to hear from organisations that:

- Know their place and community well, and respond to what people tell them
- Tackle discrimination and disadvantage for groups of people, especially related to racial and disability-related inequalities
- Help people to find effective and sustainable pathways out of poverty
- Support the health, happiness and safety of the people they work with.

What we won't fund

- Work that doesn't respond to the needs of Manchester City Council residents
- Work that is solely for under-18s. If you work with adults as well as under-18s, you can still apply for costs associated with over-18s
- Work that is outside of your organisational objectives
- Applications where a significant proportion of the funding will be used to pay consultancy fees
- Costs associated with the purchase of land, buildings or vehicles
- Major building refurbishments or extensions
- Costs incurred before 1 April 2026 or after 31 March 2029
- Activities that are religious or political in nature or promote religious or political affiliation. Faith groups that meet our eligibility criteria are welcome to apply.

In addition:

- We expect applicants to use our funding for ongoing costs, not to build up reserves.
- We will not fund projects and partnerships that have been created to apply to this fund.
- Funded organisations must reinvest all financial surpluses to advance social, environmental or cultural goals that significantly benefit Manchester communities; they must also not distribute surpluses or assets through share dividends to individuals or shareholders.

3. Key dates

Programme opens for applications	Monday 7 July 9am
Programme closes for applications	Monday 1 September, 12 noon
Communication of decisions	December 2025
Due diligence	January to March 2026
Grant offer	March 2026
Funding period	1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029

4. Our Manchester Priorities

You'll need to show us how your organisation contributes to one or more of the 12 Our Manchester Strategy priorities. We have included examples of past-funded activities below and encourage you to [read the full strategy](#).

1. Be happy, healthy and active from childhood to adulthood

For example, a programme for people with poor mental health to support them to manage their symptoms and increase independence.

2. Help people to have a great education and learn new skills as they grow older, so they can get the best jobs

For example, ESOL provision and employment skills support for unemployed people from different cultural backgrounds to support them to access meaningful work.

3. Be proud of our diversity, feel valued and included, knowing everyone belongs

For example, support to help refugees access healthcare services using translated and culturally appropriate resources.

4. Participate, engage, and influence decisions about communities and neighbourhoods

For example, managing a network for disabled people to improve accessibility of local services.

5. Be safe in person and online

For example, immediate and long-term support for survivors of domestic abuse, including practical help, advice, counselling, and social activities.

6. Have enough good-quality, genuinely affordable homes

For example, a housing advice service supporting low-income private renters, to challenge unsafe conditions and access legal support.

7. Be attractive and well kept with good facilities, services and green spaces

For example, a thriving community centre that offers a range of services, such as advice and drop-ins, exercise classes, growing projects, affordable hot meals, and social isolation support for older people.

8. Have a growing economy that provides jobs and equal opportunities for everyone

For example, tailored job coaching, skills training, and employer placements for disabled people.

9. Adapt to a changing climate and rapidly reduce carbon emissions

For example, a food pantry, reducing food waste, and providing access to affordable nutritious food.

10. Have world-renowned things for everyone to see and do, showcasing our talent for sport and culture

For example, adapted sport sessions for adults with disabilities or long-term health conditions, to improve physical health and access to sports activities.

11. Have reliable transport that gets you where you want to go, quickly, cheaply, safely and cleanly

For example, a volunteer driver's scheme for people with mobility issues, to access healthcare, shops, and social activities.

12. Embrace technology to achieve our aims, safely and ethically

For example, a scheme to provide people on low incomes who are digitally excluded with free refurbished laptops and help them learn digital skills so they can use important online services.

5. Grant amounts and limits

- All grants are for three years from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029.
- The minimum you can apply for is £10,000 a year. The most you can apply for is £100,000 a year.
- We are unlikely to fund proposals that are more than 100% of your organisation's previous annual income.
- We are unlikely to fund proposals asking for 100% core-cost funding.
- We won't fund proposals that ask for more than 100% of your total costs, whether core or activity costs.
- The eligibility requirements are slightly different depending on which funding level you apply for:

Funding Level	Over three years	Per year equivalent	Eligibility differences
Small	£30,000– £120,000	£10,000– £40,000	For a small investment you'll need to show: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 18 months of working with adult Manchester residents• Your most recent annual report and set of annual accounts (at due diligence stage).
Medium	£120,001– £210,000	£40,001– £70,000	For a medium investment you'll need to show: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least three years of working with adult Manchester residents• Your two most recent annual reports and two sets of annual accounts (at due diligence stage).
Large	£210,001– £300,000	£70,001–£100,000	For a large investment you'll need to show: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least three years of working with adult Manchester residents• Your three most recent annual reports and three sets of annual accounts (at due diligence stage).

Partnership limits

- You can apply once for your organisation, OR once as the lead partner in a partnership. You can apply once for your organisation, AND be a named partner on someone else's partnership application. If you're applying as a lead partner or have any queries about partnership bids, please get in touch with us.
- We will not fund costs for partnerships that are less than 18 months old, or where no agreement is in place.
- The lead partner and any named partners who will receive regular funding from your application must all meet our eligibility criteria.

6. Eligibility

You don't need to have received funding from us before to apply, and you can apply if you're already funded by Manchester City Council.

To apply for this funding, your organisation must be one of the following types of voluntary, community, faith or social enterprise organisation:

1. a registered charity
2. a Community Interest Company (CIC) limited by guarantee
3. a Community Interest Company (CIC) limited by share (Schedule 2 with 100% asset lock only)
4. a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
5. a Community Benefit Society (CBS) registered as an Industrial and Provident Society (IPS)
6. a charitable company limited by guarantee
7. an unincorporated charitable association

In addition, you will need to have:

- Your own organisation bank account
- At least three trustees or directors who are not related to each other and are not paid shareholders
- The following documents:
 - a governing document (constitution, articles of association, etc)
 - safeguarding policy (including their named safeguarding lead)
 - health and safety policy
 - data protection policy
 - equal opportunities policy
 - finance procedures
 - business plan, organisational strategy, development plan or equivalent
 - a dividend policy if applicable (eg. if you're a CIC)
- Appropriate insurance certificates for the work you do (For example, Employer's Liability, Public Indemnity, etc)
- Evidence of four quorate board meeting/management committee reports in the past 18 months.

You do not need to give us any of this information when applying; you only need to provide confirmation. We will perform our own checks to confirm eligibility and may contact you to help us with this. If you are successful, we will carry out further due diligence checks. This means we will ask to see your organisation's documents and any other evidence we reasonably need to make a grant offer.

7. Assessment

All applications will be assessed against three criteria:

- 1. Impact on Manchester residents** – what you do and the difference you've made in Manchester to date. This criterion has the greatest impact on your score. We'll ask questions such as: Who do you work with and what challenges do they face? What difference have you made in the past 12 months?
- 2. Case for funding** – what you will do with our funding and how this connects with your impact to date. We'll ask questions such as: How do you plan to use the funding? How have you worked out your costs? What income have you secured in the past 18 months?
- 3. Ways of working** – how you work in ways that support impact. We'll ask questions such as: What are the skills and experience of your trustees and senior staff? Are you led by the people you work with? How do you involve them in the design and delivery of your work?

We will tell you if you are successful or not, and we expect to do this in early December 2025. There is no appeals process, however we may reach out to you at our discretion at any point before confirming a decision. If you are successful, we will want to confirm the things you said in your application and see any relevant documents.

8. Monitoring expectations

As well as progress against the outcomes from your application, we will want to monitor three areas:

1. **Real Living Wage** – supporting Manchester's ambition to be a **Living Wage City**. These wages can be included in your application, and we will pay for accreditation costs during the funded period.
2. **Zero Carbon** – working together to reduce the city's carbon emissions and environmental impact.
3. **Development** – actions that help strengthen the sustainability of your offer and its impact.

9. How to apply

Apply using the application form on Smart Survey. The form opens on 7 July 2025 at 9am and closes on 1 September at 12 noon. Read our guidance before applying and use it to prepare your answers. Give yourself plenty of time to copy and paste these answers into Smart Survey before the deadline.

For everything you need to apply, including guidance and help with your application, **visit Macc's website**. If you need an alternative format for accessibility reasons, please email **omfunds@manchester.gov.uk**