

Festival and Events Fund Guidance – 2026/27

Purpose of the Fund

The Festival and Events Fund supports the development of new and emerging festivals and community-based events that enhance Sunderland’s cultural offer. The Fund prioritises seed funding for non-profit organisations to trial innovative, inclusive, and sustainable event models.

Strategic Objectives

- Cultivate a vibrant and inclusive city
 - Support innovation and long-term sustainability
 - Strengthen community participation and cohesion
 - Promote local talent and creativity
 - Encourage environmentally responsible practices
 - Maximise non-public funding sources
 - Reflect and celebrate Sunderland’s identity
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Scope and Eligibility

Eligible Organisations:

- Registered charities
- Constituted community groups
- Community interest companies (CICs) with clear social purpose
- Social enterprises and partnerships

Ineligible Organisations:

- Private limited companies or for-profit enterprises

- Events primarily focused on fundraising or commercial gain
- Events not open to the general public
- Regular programming in year-round venues
- Sporting fixtures or online-only events

Event Criteria:

- Must be a new event or less than five years old in current format
 - Must demonstrate community benefit and public accessibility
 - Must include a plan for future financial sustainability
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Funding Limits

- **Seed Funding (Year 1):** Up to £5,000
- **Seed Funding (Year 2):** Up to £3,000
- **Seed Funding (Year 3):** Up to £2,000

Funding will taper over three years to encourage financial independence. Events must demonstrate reduced reliance on public funding and increased external income year-on-year.

Financial Requirements

- Detailed budget breakdown with income/expenditure schedule
 - Evidence of match funding (cash and/or in-kind)
 - Clear plan for self-sufficiency
 - Organisations receiving over £50,000 in public event funding in the past three years may be deprioritised
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Eligible Costs

- Temporary staff and volunteer support
- Equipment hire (non-capital)
- Marketing and promotional materials
- Performer fees and travel

- Venue hire and licensing
 - Public health and safety consultancy
 - Subsidised catering from local suppliers
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Assessment Criteria

Applications will be assessed on:

- Alignment with Fund objectives
 - Community engagement and inclusivity
 - Financial viability and sustainability
 - Environmental responsibility
 - Value for money
 - Risk and safety planning
 - Marketing and outreach strategy
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Conditions of Funding

- Events must take place between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026
 - Events must not begin before funding is awarded
 - All marketing must include Sunderland City Council's City of Events logo
 - Successful applicants must submit final accounts and evaluation
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How to Apply

Applications open in April and September 2025. For support, contact:
events@sunderland.gov.uk