

Festival & Events Fund 2026–27

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the Festival & Events Fund?

The Festival & Events Fund provides small grants to help local people and community groups start or develop new grassroots festivals and events in Sunderland.

The fund is designed to support community-led ideas that bring people together, create local pride, build volunteer skills and strengthen neighbourhoods.

What does "grassroots" mean?

A grassroots event is one that is:

- Led by local people or community groups
- Developed in response to a local need or opportunity
- Supported by volunteers
- Focused on community benefit rather than making money
- Small-scale and locally focused

Who is the Fund for?

The Fund is aimed at:

- Community groups
- Residents' associations
- Voluntary organisations
- Registered charities
- Small not-for-profit organisations

Priority will be given to groups with limited access to other funding opportunities.

What kind of events might be supported?

Examples could include:

- Community celebrations
- Heritage events
- Neighbourhood festivals
- Arts and cultural events
- Family activity days
- Community parades
- Food and cultural celebrations
- Local history projects with a public event

These examples are not exhaustive.

Can we apply if we have never organised an event before?

Yes.

The Fund is specifically designed to help groups test new ideas and build confidence in delivering community events.

We recognise that many groups may be applying for funding for the first time. The Events & City Projects Team can support groups to develop event ideas, budgets, event management plans and more

What Good Looks Like

A strong application will typically be:

- Led by local people
- Volunteer supported
- Addressing a local need
- New or early-stage
- Low-cost
- Financially realistic
- Not reliant on commercial income



- Able to demonstrate community benefit

Can established events apply?

Generally no.

The Fund is intended for:

- New events, or
- Events that have only taken place once before

Established annual events and recurring programmes are not eligible.

Can a Community Interest Company (CIC) apply?

Only if it can clearly demonstrate that it is operating as a small, grassroots, community-led organisation and meets all eligibility requirements.

Applications from organisations with significant turnover, staffing structures or established delivery programmes are unlikely to be eligible.

Can a limited company apply?

No.

The Fund is not designed to support commercial organisations or businesses.

Can organisations that already receive funding apply?

Possibly, but organisations receiving significant public funding may not be eligible.

The Fund is intended for groups with limited access to funding and those that would struggle to deliver activity without support.

How much can we apply for?

You can apply for a contribution towards your event costs, subject to the current funding limits and eligibility criteria.

Applications should only request what is genuinely needed to deliver the event.



Can the grant fund 100% of our event?

No.

Applicants are expected to contribute towards delivery through:

- Volunteer time
- Fundraising
- Donations
- In-kind support
- Other funding sources

The Fund is intended to support, not fully finance, events.

What can the funding be used for?

Eligible costs may include:

- Equipment hire
- Entertainment and performer costs
- Venue hire
- Marketing and promotion
- Safety and event management costs
- Insurance
- Training or volunteer support

All costs must be directly related to delivering the event.

What can't the funding be used for?

The Fund will not support:

- Profit-making activity
- Ongoing organisational running costs
- Debt repayment
- Purchases unrelated to the event
- Activity already completed before funding is approved



Can we charge for tickets?

Possibly.

However, ticket sales must not be used as a profit-making model.

Any income generated must be reinvested into the event or future community activity.

Can we have stalls at the event?

Yes, but stall income must not be the primary way the event is funded.

Applications that rely heavily on stallholder fees or commercial trading are unlikely to be supported.

Can alcohol be sold?

Alcohol sales may be permitted where appropriately licensed, but the event must not depend on bar income as a core funding source.

The Fund is not intended to subsidise events built around commercial bar operations.

Can we make a profit?

No.

The event must be delivered on a not-for-profit basis.

Any surplus must be reinvested into future community activities.

How are applications assessed?

Applications are assessed in three stages:

1. Officer Sift

- Eligibility check
- Financial review

2. Panel Assessment

- Eligible applications are scored

- Community benefit and financial need are considered

3. Funding Decision

- Award approved
- Award reduced
- Application rejected

What are the Panel looking for?

The Panel will consider:

- Community benefit
- Local involvement
- Grassroots delivery
- Value for money
- Financial need
- Long-term sustainability

What might cause an application to be rejected?

Common reasons include:

- The event is commercial in nature
- The event is already established
- The organisation has significant alternative funding
- The event is not community-led
- The application does not demonstrate financial need
- The event relies on profit-making activity

When will we receive the grant?

Funding is normally paid **in arrears**.

This means payment will usually be made after:

- The event has taken place



- Required reports have been submitted
- Eligible expenditure has been evidenced

What evidence will we need to provide?

You may be asked to provide:

- Receipts
- Invoices
- Bank statements
- Attendance figures
- Photographs
- Marketing materials
- Evaluation reports

What information do we need to report after the event?

Successful applicants will need to tell us about:

- Attendance numbers
- Volunteer involvement
- Community participation
- Event outcomes
- Feedback received
- How the grant was spent

A reporting template will be provided.

What happens if we don't submit the required information?

Failure to provide monitoring, evaluation and financial evidence may:

- Delay payment
- Reduce payment



- Result in recovery of funding
- Affect future applications

Need Further Support?

If you are unsure whether your event is eligible, or need help completing an application, please contact the Events & City Projects Team before submitting your application – events@sunderland.gov.uk.

We're keen to support local people with great ideas that bring communities together and create positive local impact.