**SOUTH AYRSHIRE**

**COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT FUND**

**2025/2026**

**GUIDANCE NOTES**

**Background – Community Empowerment**

Empowering communities is a national priority for the Scottish Government. It is an important part of public service reform, focusing attention on reducing disadvantage and inequality and improving outcomes for communities.

Community empowerment processes support people to do things for themselves and enable people to take control over the decisions and factors that affect their lives and communities. Community empowerment is a gradual process which involves continual learning and the constant building of a community’s capacity to articulate and address their priorities.

It also involves communities having greater influence and input to decision-making. Public bodies and communities are likely to be at different stages as they develop their understanding and gain confidence in working together. Public bodies need to invest in capacity building appropriate to their local communities, particularly in the poorest communities, to successfully address their priorities.

**Objectives of Fund**

The Community Empowerment Fund continues to support community groups in delivering services that meet local needs while contributing to community-led regeneration. This includes fostering healthy, safe, and inclusive communities, enhancing community spaces, and supporting local economic development. It also reflects the increasing role of community groups in addressing issues such as active travel, cultural and heritage development, and local sports, which directly align with national priorities for creating thriving, resilient communities.

Community groups across Scotland are playing a strong role in planning and delivering services that complement those provided by public services. These services are particularly strong in developing flexible and innovative activities that are highly valued by local people and contribute to a sense of community pride and cohesion.

Increasingly, there is interest among community groups in becoming owners or custodians of publicly owned buildings and land through community asset transfer. This initiative helps ensure productive use of assets and harnesses the ideas and capabilities of local people.

The definition used in respect of community-led regeneration by the Scottish Government, states that community-led regeneration is about “people identifying issues and opportunities in their local area; deciding what to do about them and making positive change in their communities.”

Successful community-led regeneration:

* increases the number and strength of locally controlled, enterprising community organisations
* supports local organisations taking ownership of assets such as buildings or land
* helps people to co-ordinate action and respond to challenges in areas where there are high levels of disadvantage
* helps people identify and act on the priorities in their areas

For the year 2025/2026 the Council has committed £100,000 to establish a Community Empowerment Fund to support community groups with projects that promote community empowerment.

For this year the funding will be split £20,000 for revenue costs and £80,000 for capital costs.

The main objectives of the fund will be to assist groups with community empowerment through health and wellbeing, community safety and community inclusion.

Two strands are available under the fund

1. Small grants: for constituted groups to help sustain or develop their group/service. For projects that are locally led and assist with community led regeneration activities including initiatives that address health and wellbeing, community safety, inclusivity, and local cultural or heritage development.
2. Community Asset Transfer (CAT) /Community Ownership/ links to place plans and Community Action Plans (CAP): For groups who are going through CAT or looking to begin this process, as well as groups who are taking ownership of assets/land. To assist with community led regeneration initiatives through progressing with the priorities identified within the Place Plan/CAP.

**Encouraged Project Considerations**

Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how their projects contribute to the broader goals of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). Specifically, projects should focus on fostering local economic growth, supporting active travel initiatives, enhancing digital connectivity, and improving community safety. Projects should also contribute to creating healthy, safe, inclusive communities, and provide opportunities for cultural engagement and community cohesion.

**Criteria**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Who can apply?** | **Purpose** | **Max award** |
| Small Grant | Groups who are constituted. | To assist with overcoming any barriers to sustaining or developing your group/service. | £4950 |
| Community Asset Transfer (CAT)/ Community Ownership/Place Plans/CAP’s | Groups who are going through CAT or who have achieved this. Groups who have signed a lease for a local asset.  Groups who are taking ownership of land and assets  Groups who are taking forward the priorities identified within their local place plan/Community Led Action Plans | To assist with any capital spend relating to CAT.  To assist groups with any capital spend required to make their community owned asset a success.  To help groups work towards the priorities identified within their plans. | £15,000 |

**Who can apply:**

**All applicants** must be active in our South Ayrshire Council’s area and spend any agreed funding such that it benefits residents/communities in South Ayrshire Council’s area.

**Third Sector organisations/community groups** require to have a constitution and appropriate governance and financial arrangements in place, proportionate to the value of the application.

**How to Apply**

The fund is open for applications until Thursday 1st May 2025 at 5pm.

An application form is available to download on SAC Community Choices – Your Area, Your Voice, Your Choice. Following the closing date, it is expected that a decision will be made within 4 weeks by a Panel, comprising a representative from the CPP, South Ayrshire Council, and the Voluntary Sector.

Contact South Ayrshire Council for further information:

[**Grants@south-ayrshire.gov.uk**](mailto:Grants@south-ayrshire.gov.uk)

**Eligibility**

Applications must:

* detail the full project costs and can be for **capital and/or revenue** costs
* directly benefit South Ayrshire communities

**EXCLUSIONS**

Applications:

* **cannot** be from any South Ayrshire Council Service
* **must only be from** groups supporting health and wellbeing, community safety and community inclusion.

**Awards Process**

An awards panel comprising of a representative from the CPP, Third Sector organisations and South Ayrshire Council officers, will review all applications and inform groups of the outcome of their submission.

The Award panel decisions are final, there is no appeals process.

Part funding may be offered if the fund is over subscribed.

Any monies awarded must be spent by the 28th February 2026.

Any unspent monies will be required to be returned.

**Filling in your application form**

* Please click on the relevant boxes and type your answers in full.
* Only one fund can be applied for
* Fill in the whole form.
* Please don’t state ‘See attached’ or ‘See Section…’ as an answer to any question.
* Please don’t attach additional papers or continuation sheets other than the supporting evidence required.
* For costs over £1000, 3 quotes need to be provided – if relevant quotes are not provided when submitting application, it will not be considered.
* Explain in full any technical or specialist terms that you use. Please avoid the use of abbreviations.
* When you’ve finished the form, please sign the declaration page (electronic is accepted).
* Applications should be completed on the SAC Community Choices website - [Your Area Your Voice Your Choice](https://sac.communitychoices.scot/)
* Please avoid submitting printed originals unless you must – if you do, please enclose a stamped addressed envelope for their return.
* We won’t process your application or submit it for consideration if you have not provided all the necessary documents and all sections on the form are completed. If you’re not sure about anything contact us to discuss it.
* You should keep a copy of the completed application form and any documents to support your application in case you need them in the future.
* Please note any supporting documents should be emailed to [grants@south-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:grants@south-ayrshire.gov.uk) when submitting your application.

**Contact Information**

For any enquires regarding the Community Empowerment Fund please do not hesitate to get in touch, we are here to help with any questions you have and to support in any way possible. Please email us at [grants@south-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:grants@south-ayrshire.gov.uk)

**Closing date**

The closing date for applications is Thursday 1st May 2025 at 5pm

**Monitoring & Evaluating**

* All grants awarded will be subject to strict monitoring and evaluating procedure.
* A midterm revue will be carried out.
* Any changes to your proposed project, or any delay in spending then you must inform the grants officer immediately.
* An evaluation form will be issued on completion, and this must be returned. All invoices/receipts and proof of payment need to be returned. Failure to return may result in you having to pay back your grant funding.
* Any groups not submitting an evaluation form may not receive any future funding from South Ayrshire Council. You may also be asked to repay the grant if you are not able to provide satisfactory evidence that the grant has been spent for the intended purpose.