Department of Health

Core Grant Funding Scheme

2027/28

Applicant Guidance: Processes and Background Information

1. Introduction

1.1 This guidance has been prepared to assist organisations in applying to the Department of Health's Core Grant Funding Scheme for 2027/28. It also sets out the basis for the Department's authority to provide grants to the sector.

1.2 Please read these guidance notes carefully before completing the application form.

1.3 Applicants may access the digital application form and guidance on the Department's website from Monday 19th October 2026. You may email a completed application form to CoreGrantAdmin@health-ni.gov.uk or mail a completed physical form to:

DoH Core Grant Scheme

FCPD Admin
Room A3.7
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BT4 3SQ

Completed forms must be received prior to the application deadline of 12pm on Friday 20th November 2026.

2. Authority for Award of Core Grants

2.1 Article 71 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 authorises the Department to make grants to voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland which provide services similar or related to any of the health or social care services.

3. Funding Objective and Scheme Design

3.1 The Department awards grants to voluntary and community sector organisations which are, through the work of the organisation, contributing towards the outcomes envisaged by the key departmental strategic and policy initiatives outlined below:

1. **Public Health, including reducing health inequalities.**

2. **Supporting adults, including those with disabilities and vulnerabilities, to live an independent, healthy and inclusive life.**

3. **Supporting children and young people, including those with disabilities and vulnerabilities, and their families.**

4. **Improving the mental health and wellbeing of the population.**

3.2 Organisations must either deliver front-line services based on identified need or provide central support services, which are in line with DoH strategic and policy objectives, and particularly the vision for the HSC articulated in the Reset Plan – available at https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/health-and-social-care-reset-plan.

3.3 Core costs are the essential running expenses that keep a charity operational, rather than specific projects.

Core costs—also referred to as overheads, running expenses, or organisational costs—are the essential, behind-the-scenes expenses that allow a charity to operate effectively. These include administration, governance, and infrastructure. While they are not linked to any single project or service, they are vital for ensuring the organisation can deliver its mission safely and sustainably.

Programme and service delivery costs are not covered by this scheme. This includes staff salaries for projects or frontline service roles, as well as the cost of materials or supplies used directly in providing services to individuals or groups outside the organisation.

If you are unsure whether any costs included in your application are ineligible, you can submit a query to CoreGrantAdmin@health-ni.gov.uk.

3.4 Organisations receiving financial assistance must make no personal payments to its members or trustees, other than for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses or other payments allowed by the governing document (e.g. for occasional professional services where procurement procedures have been fair and equitable). Any profits generated should be reinvested in pursuit of the organisation's objectives which should be classifiable by the Inland Revenue as of a charitable or philanthropic nature.

3.5 Each of the 4 policy areas above has been allocated funding of £450,000.

3.6 Each £450k fund will contain 2 funding 'tiers' with £350k allocated to lower bids of £5,000 - £25,000 and £100k allocated to bids of £25,001 - £50,000.

3.7 The number of large organisations (defined as organisations with an annual income of over £1m) is limited to two per policy fund, as outlined below:

Bid value	Allocation	Maximum large (over £1m annual income) organisations supported	Minimum total no. of applicants supported
£5,000 - - £25,000	£350,000	1	14
£25,001 - - £50,000	£100,000	1	2

4. Application and Assessment

4.1 Application forms should be returned to the Department, as per paragraph 1.3, by 12pm on Friday 20th November.

4.2 You will receive emailed confirmation of receipt of your application within 5 working days of the application being received. This does not communicate confirmation that all the required information has been provided, but rather that the information sent by the applicant has been received by the Department.

4.3 Incomplete or ineligible applications will not be assessed. Applicants are responsible for ensuring all the necessary information is provided, and the

Department cannot guarantee that applicants who submit incomplete applications will be notified in time to re-submit their application.

4.4 The application assessment process will be in 2 stages.

5. Stage 1 - Scoring

5.1 Assessment on the eligibility of the application will be made based on the response to Sections 1, 2 and 4.1.

5.2 Eligible applications will be scored against each assessment criterion within a range of 0 - 10 using the following scoring guide:

9-10	**Exceptional/outstanding adherence to this criterion/degree of evidence.**
7-8	**Very good adherence to this criterion/degree of evidence.**
5-6	**Good adherence to criteria/degree of evidence.**
3-4	**Moderate/limited adherence to criteria/little evidence.**
1-2	**Poor Adherence to criteria/little evidence.**
0	**No evidence to meet this criterion.**

Any application receiving a score of less than 3 for any criterion shall not proceed to the next stage.

5.3 Each score shall then be weighted as below:

Criteria	Weighting
4.2 Alignment with the Department's strategic objectives in the policy area selected in Section 1.6.	**30**
4.3 Evidence of undertaking one or more of the activities as outlined in Section 2 (B).	**20**
4.4(i) Expected outcomes to be achieved with the support of core grant funding	**22**
4.4(ii) Similar outcomes successfully delivered and how success was measured	**8**
4.5 Monitoring and control systems, qualified and experienced staffing	**15**
4.6 Partnership working and collaboration	**5**
Total	**100**

- Please note the maximum word limits that apply to each response in Section 4 of the application form. Any content exceeding these limits will not be considered.

- Where tables are used, all words contained within them count towards the overall word limit.

- No links to further information will be accepted.

- Answers to each question must be provided in the appropriate section.

5.4 All applications will then be listed in order of score from highest to lowest for each tier in each policy area.

5.5 The highest scoring 'large' organisation shall be identified for each tier, and all lower scoring 'large' organisations shall be removed from the merit list.

5.6 The Department will identify all the organisations (from the top of each Tier List moving down in merit order) who can be funded from the allocation for that Tier.

5.7 During the process by which applications are selected for funding based on their score, a situation may arise where there is insufficient budget remaining to fully award the next highest scoring application. In this scenario, the applicant will be offered the amount of funding which remains in the budget. Should they refuse, the organisation will be bypassed in the merit list, and the applicant who submitted the next best application within the relevant policy area and tier will be offered funding, until the budget is no longer able to support any further applications.

5.8 Where two or more organisations achieve the same score and available funding cannot be awarded to all, applications will be differentiated by prioritising scores across individual assessment criteria in the following order:

1) 4.2
2) 4.4(i)
3) 4.3
4) 4.5
5) 4.4(ii)
6) 4.6

5.9 The Department will conduct further scrutiny of the application and the organisation to verify the information provided and to ascertain that the applicant's primary activities align with the Department's expectations for the fund.

If it is determined that an applicant has misrepresented their activities, the Department will reassess and re-score the application. Where this results in the application no longer ranking highly enough on the merit list, it will be removed from Stage 2 of the assessment process, and the next highest-ranked organisation within the relevant policy area and tier will proceed to Stage 2.

6. Stage 2 – Verification and Financial Viability Checks

6.1 Once all applicants who can be allocated funding in each tier have been identified they will be notified that they have proceeded to Stage 2 and will be asked to supply the following documentation:

- Annual Report (latest year)
- Audited Accounts (latest year)
- Most recent 3 months of bank statements for the account into which funding will be deposited.
- Organisation Chart
- Job descriptions for posts for which funding is applied
- Copy of the latest salary pay scales and indicate the relevant pay scale point for each post included in the application.
- Copy of relevant salary records from the payroll system for those posts for which funding is being applied for
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Child Protection Policy/Safeguarding Policy
- Travel and Subsistence Policy (if applicable)

This information will be used to confirm that an organisation is viable to receive funding. In the event that an organisation is deemed not to be viable, their application shall not proceed and the next organisation in the merit list for that policy area and tier will proceed to Stage 2.

6.2 Organisations will have 14 days to return the proforma and the requested enclosures. A reminder shall be issued 7 days after the proforma has been issued. Failure to supply the requested information will result in the application being considered ineligible and the next organisation on the merit list shall be issued with a Stage 2 Proforma for completion.

6.3 While awaiting the above documents, the funding requested in Section 3 will also be scrutinised. The applicant will be contacted, if necessary, to identify potential service delivery costs which are ineligible, confirm eligible totals, and request any additional information required.

6.4 Where Service Delivery costs are identified within an application, the corresponding amount will be deducted from the funding request. **Applicants will not be permitted to reprofile any element of their funding request that relates to Service Delivery costs.**

6.5 Once viability checks have been completed, the Department will issue a letter of offer to all successful organisations setting out the terms and conditions which govern the allocation, including:

- award approval;
- funding period and termination;
- the precise purposes of the grant, including the outputs and outcomes

expected to be achieved;
- the conditions of grant, and other general conditions that apply, including the arrangements whereby funding can be clawed back if necessary;
- fraud detection and prevention arrangements;
- information sharing requirements;
- the monitoring and evaluation arrangements; and confirmation that under the Audit (Northern Ireland Order) 1987, the Comptroller and Auditor General has the right to examine the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which the recipient organisation has used the grant aid; and
- the requirement for the applicant to register their Grant award on the Government Funding Database within one month.

The letter of offer will require a signed confirmation of compliance by the Chief Executive with the requirements of funding to be returned by the successful organisation within 14 days.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

7.1 The Department's aims in monitoring grants are to:
- keep well informed about the organisation's activities and contribution towards the Department's objectives;
- ensure that the work of the organisation is of real benefit to service users;
- ensure that grants are managed effectively and efficiently for the purpose specified;
- assess the extent to which objectives and targets are being met and outcomes achieved; and
- encourage organisations to monitor and evaluate their own performance in the pursuit of good management.

7.2 Monitoring arrangements may vary depending on the type of grant awarded and the organisation's individual situation and will be agreed with you when the offer of funding is made. Normally as a minimum, the Department will require:
- submission of quarterly monitoring reports including the auditor's report;
- availability of paperwork which confirms actual spend as requested by the Department; and
- facilitation of visits from the Department's monitoring officers who may wish to assess and discuss progress in achieving the grant objectives, and also examine the effectiveness of financial controls, and verify payment claims on a sample basis.

7.3 Evaluations will involve consideration of the following, and evidence should be gathered by the organisation which will assist the Department in providing responses to these questions:
- Have the agreed objectives and targets been met?;
- Have the expected outcomes been achieved?;
- What do the users think of the organisation and the service it provides? What practical benefits are there for users? What is the quality of feedback from users? What evidence is there of support from users i.e. in money or time?;

- Has the organisation been complying with the conditions of the grant?;
- Has the grant provided value for money?;
- Has the grant been administered with proper management and financial controls?; and
- Has any duplication of work being done elsewhere arisen during the grant award period?

7.4 Evaluation reports should be finalised within 12 months of the end of the grant funding arrangement, 3 months if you are successful in the following year's grant scheme. Recommendations contained in the evaluation report represent action that the Department expects the organisation to take within a specified period of the publication of the recommendations, and progression of the report's findings will be closely linked to decisions on applications for future funding from the organisation.

7.5 The Department reserves the right to circulate the results of an evaluation to any other statutory bodies funding the organisation concerned.

8 Information Retention and Sharing

8.1 All Government Departments, Agencies and other funding bodies may share information to enable them to prevent and detect fraudulent applications and to co-ordinate the processing of complementary applications. Accordingly, information provided by the Organisation during the application and assessment process, monitoring returns and any other information provided by the Organisation may be made available to other Departments/Agencies for the purpose of ensuring the accuracy of information and preventing or detecting crime. Such information may also be placed in the public domain.

8.2 All records and information relating to Grant expenditure must be retained by the organisation for a period of not less than 7 years following the last payment of Grant any such record shall be made available for inspection upon request by the Department or the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland.