

Organisational Development Fund

A handy guide to applying
for funding



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The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Organisational Development Fund (ODF) is a new Camden Council grants programme designed to strengthen and support organisational sustainability for VCS.

Introducing the Organisational Development Fund

Camden's vision – as set out in *We Make Camden* – is of a borough where everyone works together to tackle big challenges and improve community life.

Camden's Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) plays a critical role in achieving this vision, with over 2,000 organisations ranging from informal neighbourhood groups to multi-million-pound charities. These organisations deliver vital services, innovate to solve social problems, and amplify the voices of diverse communities. A strong, sustainable, and well-run VCS is central to Camden's ambitions for an inclusive and resilient borough.

The Organisational Development Fund (ODF) is part of Camden's VCS Investment Programme 2024–2031, designed to strengthen the borough's VCS. It supports organisations to become more resilient, sustainable and adaptable, recognising the vital role they play in supporting residents, tackling inequality, and building community strength.

The fund builds on lessons from previous rounds of the VCS Resilience Fund, which showed that one-off grants for organisational development can help groups adapt to crises like the pandemic and cost-of-living pressures and emerge more sustainable. The Organisational Development Fund – which has been developed in partnership with the sector – aims to ensure Camden's VCS not only survives immediate challenges but are equipped to plan ahead, collaborate, and to continue delivering for residents in the long term.

How to use this guide

This guide provides you with information about the Organisational Development Fund, its aims and criteria and who is eligible to apply.

Please read this guide carefully before filling out an application.

Check the section '[Who is eligible to apply?](#)' to ensure that your organisation is eligible and that what you are proposing, is aligned to the aims of the fund.



Who is eligible to apply?

The Organisational Development Fund is for organisations that are based in Camden and that are focused on delivering for Camden communities. You should have knowledge of, and existing connections with Camden's diverse communities and a good track record of delivering in the borough.

Please check the eligibility criteria and minimum requirements before spending time on an application, as we will not be able to offer a grant to organisations who don't meet these.

Your organisation is eligible to apply if:

1	Place and beneficiaries: You can demonstrate that you are a local Camden based charity, with your main base in Camden and the majority of your organisation's focus, time and money spent on delivering for Camden residents.
2	Organisational structure: You are a not-for-profit organisation. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered Charity • Social Enterprise with a 'not for profit' distribution clause • Community Interest Company (CIC) • Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) • Cooperative or Community benefit Society • Not-for-profit Faith organisation • We are unable to consider applications from private companies e.g. Companies Limited by Shares, private partnerships or sole traders
3	Grant history: You have not received an ODF maximum award of £10,000 in any rolling 24-month period.
4	Minimum requirements: Your organisation meets (or will meet at the time of signing a grant agreement) the minimum requirements set out below.

Minimum requirements

In addition to the eligibility criteria above, there are several minimum requirements around governance, policies and procedures we expect of organisations we fund. You do not need to submit these with the application, but you must confirm they are in place. We may request to see them at a later date. The minimum requirements are listed below. Please check these requirements before completing your application.

If you don't have one or more of these policies or procedures in place already, there may be organisations who can support you to develop these. Please see our website for further information about support available: [Voluntary and community sector in Camden - Camden Council](#)

If you need advice or support in relation to the minimum requirements, please contact us at VCS@Camden.gov.uk

Minimum requirements checklist

Governing document	
A governing document would include your memorandum and articles of association, or constitution.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Latest set of accounts	
If you are registered on the Charity Commission, we will be able to take a look at your latest set of accounts for the last financial period. If your accounts aren't available to view on the Charity Commission, we will ask you to submit this as part of your application. You will need at least one year's accounts to be eligible to apply.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Public liability insurance	
You are responsible for ensuring that you have Public Liability Insurance to cover your activities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)	
You will need to confirm that you have undertaken all the relevant DBS checks where required.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Safeguarding policies	
You will be asked to provide a copy of your safeguarding policies, including a named Safeguarding Lead and their contact details.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Bank account	
You should have your own organisational bank account with at least two unrelated signatories.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Accounting	
You should have annual accounts with proper accounting systems and arrangements for income tax (PAYE); National Insurance and VAT where applicable.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Governance	
We will check that you have a minimum of three unrelated directors / trustees on Companies House / Charity Commission.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
London living wage	
Any employees and/or contractors whose salaries are funded through this grant should be paid London Living Wage as a minimum.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Complaints	
You should have an up to date and transparent complaints procedure for service users.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Data protection	
You have a Data Protection policy or GDPR statement, ensuring you handle personal data responsibly.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Equalities	
You have an equalities policy or statement that commits to non-discrimination and is compliant with the Equality Act 2010.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Who is not eligible to apply?

We will not be able to offer funding if:

- Your organisation is *not* based in Camden or has only minimal connection to Camden.
- You are a statutory body or public sector organisations (e.g. schools, hospitals, Council services) – this fund is for independent VCS organisations only.
- You are a national body whose proposal is primarily non-Camden in scope.
- Your organisation operates for profit or distributes profits or dividends to owners/ shareholders. This includes private businesses, sole traders, and any social enterprise that has a clause allowing profit distribution.
- You are an individual – you cannot apply in a personal capacity or for personal grants, and you cannot apply on behalf of an organisation that is not formally constituted.
- Your organisation is primarily dedicated to promoting religious or political beliefs.
- You seek to fund deficits or debt without a credible recovery plan.
- You are unable to meet all of the minimum requirements set out above.

Fund aims

The Organisational Development Fund has the two following aims. Your proposal should address at least one of these:

1. **Sustainability:** To help VCS organisations address key risks – stabilising in the short term and putting them on a path to viability in the long term
2. **Adaptability:** To enable VCS organisations to adapt and innovate in response to internal and external changes, challenges and pressures



Fund criteria

Your application to the Organisational Development Fund will be evaluated against a set of assessment criteria designed to identify organisations and proposals that best meet the fund's aims.

We will consider:

1. Your community impact in Camden
2. Your assessment of the challenges you are facing
3. Your proposals, including, your plans, finances, expected impact and approach to learning

Please ensure that your application clearly addresses each of these areas.

The assessment criteria are:

1 Community impact

- The organisation clearly articulates its mission, values, and the difference it makes for Camden communities.
- There is evidence of a strong connection to Camden communities, community engagement, local accountability, and a commitment to equity and inclusion for Camden communities.

2 Understanding of organisational needs and challenges

- The application provides a robust analysis of current organisational strengths and areas for development (e.g. governance, finance, people, systems, strategy).
- Risks and challenges to sustainability are identified, with reference to both internal and external factors (e.g. workforce pressures, digital inclusion, or sector trends).
- The organisation demonstrates a reflective approach, using diagnostic tools or self-assessment where appropriate.

3 Your Proposal

3.1 Quality and feasibility of the proposal

- The proposal sets out clear, realistic, and achievable plans for organisational development, capacity building, or strategic change.
- Activities are well-defined, time-bound, and proportionate to the organisation's size and context.
- The plan demonstrates readiness to adapt and innovate in response to changing needs or opportunities.

Fund criteria continued

3.2 Financial position and use of funds

- The organisation provides a transparent account of its financial situation, including income, reserves, and any deficits or liabilities.
- The funding request is justified, with a clear budget and rationale for each cost.
- There is a credible plan for sustainability beyond the grant period, including how improvements will be maintained.
- There is clear evidence of need for the funding – i.e. your organisation would be unable to deliver this initiative from existing budgets or reserves.

3.3 Impact and learning

- The proposal articulates how the funded work will strengthen organisational resilience, sustainability, adaptability or effectiveness.
- There is a clear link between the proposed activities and anticipated outcomes for the organisation and its beneficiaries.
- The organisation commits to learning, reflection, and sharing insights (e.g. through peer learning and evaluation).



What can be funded

These grants are intended to fund a wide range of organisational development activities that will improve your organisation's adaptability or sustainability. Here we outline examples of what can be funded.

Financial management: Strengthening financial sustainability, including diversifying income, reducing costs, improving financial systems, and exploring new business models. It can fund expert advice, feasibility work, and early-stage development.

Good governance: Strengthening governance and leadership, such as recruiting skilled trustees, improving induction and outreach, or using specialist recruitment. Eligible activities include governance training, reviews, policy updates, coaching for senior leaders and improvements to improve board diversity, effectiveness, and accountability.

Strategy, planning and delivery: Supporting organisations to undertake strategic or business planning, such as developing new strategies, business plans, theories of change, or community research. It can fund away days, facilitated workshops, consultancy, and early merger exploration.

Staff and workforce development: Supporting workforce strengthening, including recruitment, retention, and volunteer engagement. Funding can cover training, staff development programmes, HR reviews, salary benchmarking, and expert advice. It can also support professional development and specialist training.

Evaluation and communication: Supporting organisations to understand, measure, and communicate their impact. Funding can cover evaluation frameworks, external evaluators, data tools, and improved communication practices, such as websites, stakeholder engagement, or impact materials.

Buildings and physical resources: Helping organisations optimise their premises through non-capital improvements, including feasibility studies, expert advice on office reconfiguration, relocation appraisals. Energy-efficiency measures, such as audits or small upgrades that reduce running costs, are also eligible.

Partnerships and collaboration: Strengthening collaboration, such as shared services, joint premises, partnerships, or early-stage merger exploration. Eligible activities include facilitation, legal advice, governance planning, and community consultation. The fund supports groundwork for effective joint working, shared models, or co-designed services.

Systems and operations: Supporting organisations to improve systems and operational processes, enhancing efficiency and resilience. Funding can cover new databases or CRMs, IT and cloud upgrades, and strengthening HR, volunteer management, or monitoring and evaluation.

What cannot be funded

There are certain expenses the ODF will not support. These include:

Direct service delivery: The Fund does not fund frontline services or new projects that create ongoing delivery costs; it focuses on organisational development, not project delivery. This would be more suited for the [We Make Camden Project Fund](#).

Ongoing or unsustainable staffing: Permanent roles or salaries without a sustainability plan cannot be funded. Only temporary, consultancy or increased hours for existing staff are eligible.

Deficit or debt support without change: The fund will not cover debt or deficits unless part of a credible recovery plan.

Major capital works: Construction, renovations, and large equipment purchases are not eligible. Local Community Infrastructure Levy may be more suited for this.

Retrospective costs: Activities or expenses already incurred before the grant award cannot be funded.

Core operating costs without strategic purpose: Core costs are only eligible if they clearly support organisational sustainability (e.g., freeing staff time for improvement work), not for routine operations.

Available funding

The Organisational Development Fund has a total of £400,000 in 2026/7.

Organisations can apply for grants of up to £10,000.

If you are successful, the grant provided will be restricted to the proposals that you have included in your approved application.



How to apply

You will need to register for an account on [Plinth](#) to be able to complete the application.

If you have any issues with the form, there is a chat button at the bottom right of the screen. This will enable you to speak to Plinth directly for assistance.

The application form includes the option to translate the form into other languages.

As part of your application, we will ask that your organisation meets the minimum requirements. If your organisation has applied for funding via Plinth in the past 12 months, the documents you submitted should appear on your application. If there have been any changes to these documents, you will need to upload the latest version.

The assessment panel aims to meet at the start of each month. The cut off point for application submissions will be 10 working days prior. Any applications received after this will be reviewed the following month.

Funding timeline

The fund will open for applications on March 9th 2026 with no deadline for applications.



Organisations can apply at any time, accommodating your timelines and needs.

Once your application has been submitted, we will aim to get back to you within 8 weeks.

To receive announcements about future funding please sign up to our [VCS newsletter](#).

Assessment process

Rolling application and support

- Applications to the fund can be accepted at any time, allowing organisations to apply when they are ready and when development needs arise.
- All applications will be checked to ensure that the organisation meets the essential criteria and is not subject to any mandatory exclusions.
- All applications will be assessed against the fund criteria detailed above.

Expert and peer review

- Applications are reviewed by a panel that may include Council officers and voluntary sector experts.
- Where appropriate, experts may be engaged to deliver training packages aligned with key organisational development themes.

Thematic and collaborative approach

- The assessment process recognises the value of collaboration and sector-wide learning. Applicants may be invited to join peer learning sets or thematic workshops, particularly where proposals align with shared priorities such as governance, digital transformation, or leadership development.

Feedback and learning

- The fund is designed to be open and iterative, with regular review and adaptation based on sector feedback and evolving needs.

Evaluating impact

We will stay in touch with you throughout your grant to capture learning and gather feedback to improve future funding rounds. Each successful organisation will be asked to submit an impact report one year after receiving funding.



Peer learning approach

This fund will include an opportunity for peer learning sessions that enable organisations to share experiences and to learn with, and from one another.

Peer learning sessions focus on the challenges set out in grant applications and funded organisations will be invited to join sessions with others who are working on similar challenges and issues.

These groups will provide opportunities for practical training, open and honest conversations, and the chance to explore and test solutions together.



Support

If you would like to discuss your application before submitting, or if you have any questions or need support, please email vcs@camden.gov.uk to speak with a member of the Community Partnerships Team. We are particularly happy to help with queries about eligibility criteria, minimum requirements, or your proposal.



It's the first time we've run this programme, and it's a new approach for us, so we'll be using feedback to improve what the fund looks like in years to come.

vcs@camden.gov.uk

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