



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

Grant Aid Code of Practice

Reviewed April 2024



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Introduction

This document sets out Fermanagh and Omagh District Council’s Code of Practice and Guidance for the delivery of its grant aid programmes advertised on the Council’s website. [Grant Aid & Bursary Support – Fermanagh & Omagh District Council \(fermanaghmagh.com\)](http://fermanaghmagh.com)

This policy has been developed in line with the priorities set out in the Council’s **Corporate Plan and Community Plan**. Specific Programme Objectives have been prepared for each grant stream and all applicants should consider how their project/event fits with these objectives. The Specific Programme Objectives are listed in the Guidance Notes for each grant aid stream.

All Grant Aid Programmes will be advertised on the Council Website and in local newspapers, if applicable.

Who can apply for Grant Aid?

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council invites applications from voluntary clubs, societies, community and sporting organisations.

To be eligible for grant aid, groups must clearly demonstrate that:-

- the project is delivered within the Council area and to its residents.
 - the project need must be identified from within the community of benefit.
 - they have an appropriate governance framework and structures in place.
- there is no Conflict of Interest between an applicant group and a business owner in which a property is leased.

<p>Groups may be required to provide (as part of the application)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A ‘Governing Document’ for example a Constitution or a Governing body registration; • A list of committee members, including details of office bearers; • A copy of annual accounts or a statement of financial position; (most recent set of accounts no more than 2yrs old); • An equal opportunities policy/statement and a completed Equal Opportunities Monitoring Sheet. 	<p>Eligible groups must also</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be non-party political • Be non-profit distributing, or taking • Meet needs and/or provide services within the District Council area • Project need must be identified from within the community of benefit • Where possible work in partnership with others • Membership organisations can apply however, must demonstrate that their beneficiaries do not pay an excess of £1,000 per year. <p>See Appendix 4 for additional eligibility criteria, which may be applied to certain funding streams.</p>
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How to Apply

- Groups must complete a separate application for each grant stream applied for.
- Only applications which are fully completed on the relevant application form with appropriate enclosures attached will be considered. **For guidance on completing your application form please see Appendix 3.**
- Applications will not be considered for events/projects that have already taken place.
- Before submitting an application, groups are recommended to contact the relevant Council Service Area to discuss the application. Council Officers are available by appointment to provide support & guidance. Please ensure you contact an officer well in advance of the closing date to avoid disappointment.
- It is important to remember your application will be assessed on the information provided. Please answer all questions and include all relevant information in your application. We recommend you use bullet points and headings where possible.

Grant Aid - for Older Peoples' Groups

Grant Aid is available for older peoples' groups through the South West Age Partnership (SWAP; some grant stream exceptions may apply).

Older Peoples' Groups must apply directly to the South West Age Partnership (SWAP) for Grant Aid. For further information or to apply for Grant Aid please contact:-

Allison Forbes; Tel: 028 8225 1824 or Email: aforbes@southwestagepartnership.co.uk

What Grants Won't Cover

- Fundraising activities/Charitable donations
- Retrospective applications for grant aid/repayment of debts
- Fireworks
- Where project need is not identified from within the Community of benefit
- Projects that are likely to cause displacement of users from existing projects or where the result would be duplication of services in a particular geographical area
- Schools, **with the exception** of the **Good Relations Schools Programme**, Sole traders, profit-taking organisations, statutory bodies or Education Authorities
- Events/projects which are profit making (No grant will be paid where the income exceeds expenditure)
- Projects which are party political or organised by a political party
- Activities/Projects that promote a particular religion
- Monetary prizes
- Projects/activities which are the responsibility of another agency.
- Miscellaneous costs - all costs must be identified
- Any activity that is contrary to the Council's ethos.

Please note, the above list is not exhaustive and you should consult an officer if you have any queries. In respect of Capital Grants, please see Capital Grant Guidance Notes for additional exclusions.

Submitting Your Application

- Late Applications will not be considered.
- The application form should be checked to ensure all sections are completed and all requested information attached/uploaded.
- Application forms are submitted online, through the Councils Grant System. Officers are available to assist with this process, should you require support.
- It is recommended that groups retain a copy of the application form for their own records and proof of submission. Completed application forms can be downloaded from the Council Grant System along with proof of submission.
- Submitting an application, does not guarantee you will receive funding.

What Happens Next

- Submitted applications will be acknowledged automatically by email. Initial checks will be undertaken to ensure that the application is eligible for support from the Council. **See also Appendix 1 which details the application process.**
- If the application is considered eligible, it will be assessed against the published criteria for each relevant grant aid stream and a recommendation will be made taking account of resources and competing demands.
- Grants of over £500 will be presented to an Elected Members' Grant Aid Panel and subsequently to a Council meeting(s), correspondence will be issued thereafter.
- Grants of £500 and under, correspondence will be issued to all applicants following the assessment process.
- Please note - if you previously received a Letter of Offer in the same financial year, your project may be de-prioritised depending on available funding and the number of applications received.
- If successful, a Letter of Offer will normally be issued containing details of grant offered, specifically what the grant is for, outputs expected, deadlines for claiming the grant and any other requirements. NB: depending on the funding stream and availability of resources, applicants may initially be advised of an intention to award funding, subject to the completion of any appeals process. In these circumstances, a formal Letter of Offer will only be issued when any appeals process has concluded.
- No grant payment will be made prior to the return of the signed Letter of Acceptance.
- Grants will only be paid after the event has taken place. Claimants must submit a completed claim pack and associated documentation via the Council's online Grant System. Following the vouching process and satisfactory demonstration that outcomes and Letter of Offer conditions have been met, payment will be processed. **Please note cash payments cannot be claimed.**

See also Appendix 5 which details Good Financial Practice and Verification Procedures.

- Grants may be monitored to ensure that the agreed conditions have been fulfilled.
- If unsuccessful, a letter will be issued outlining the reasons.

Appeals

If your application is unsuccessful, or you are not satisfied with the recommendation, you must contact the grants team for feedback before submitting an appeal.

For groups or individuals who wish to appeal a decision of the Grant Aid Panel following their feedback, the process will be as follows:

- Contact the Grants Team in writing outlining the reasons for appeal within 10 working days of the date of your unsuccessful letter/notification of application outcome.

Anyone requesting an appeal will receive an acknowledgement of their request.

Requests for an appeal of a grant outcome will only be considered on the following grounds:

- **Option 1** - the decision was wrong because the Council failed to take into account the information contained within the written application or took into account information that was not contained within the written application; and/or
- **Option 2** - there was a failure in adherence to procedures and guidance issued with the call for applications or a failure in systems that materially affected or could have materially affected the decision; and/ or
- **Option 3** - that officers involved in the assessment process have had a clear Conflict of Interest and have failed to declare this in the appropriate manner.

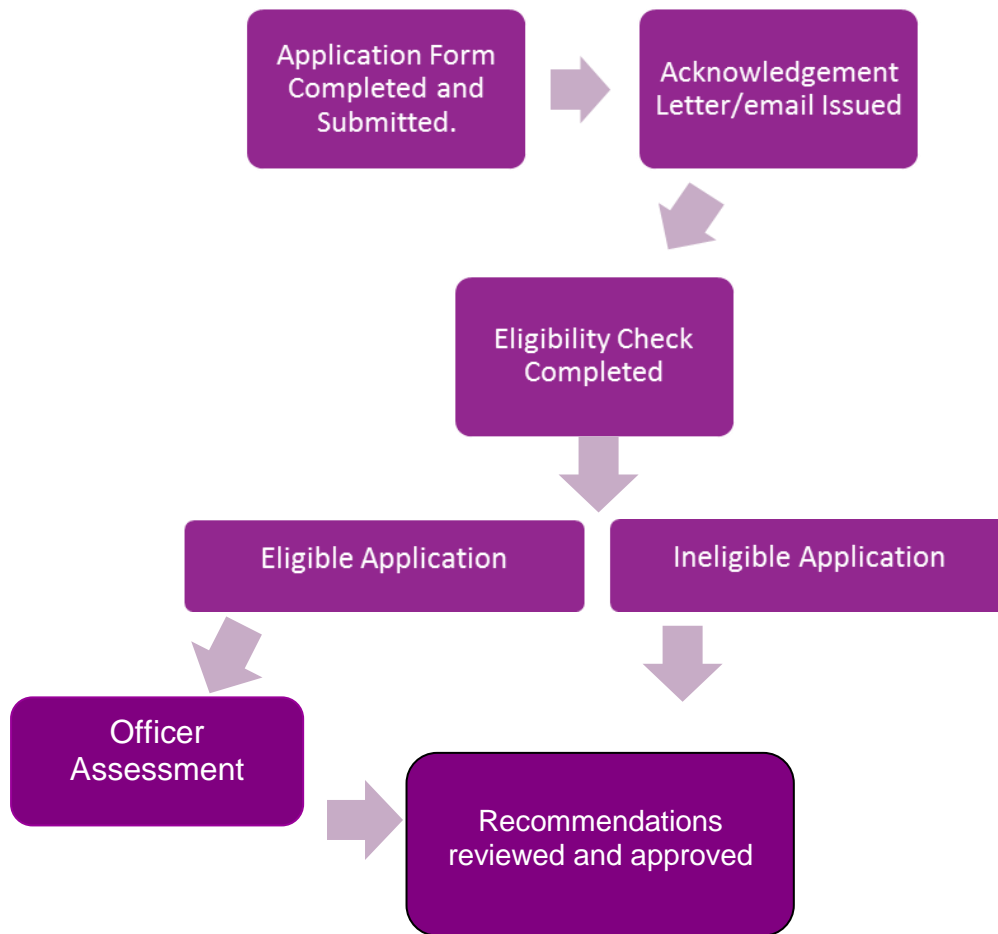
Appeals on any other grounds will not be considered.

It should also be noted that no additional supporting documentation other than that submitted with the original application will be considered at this stage.

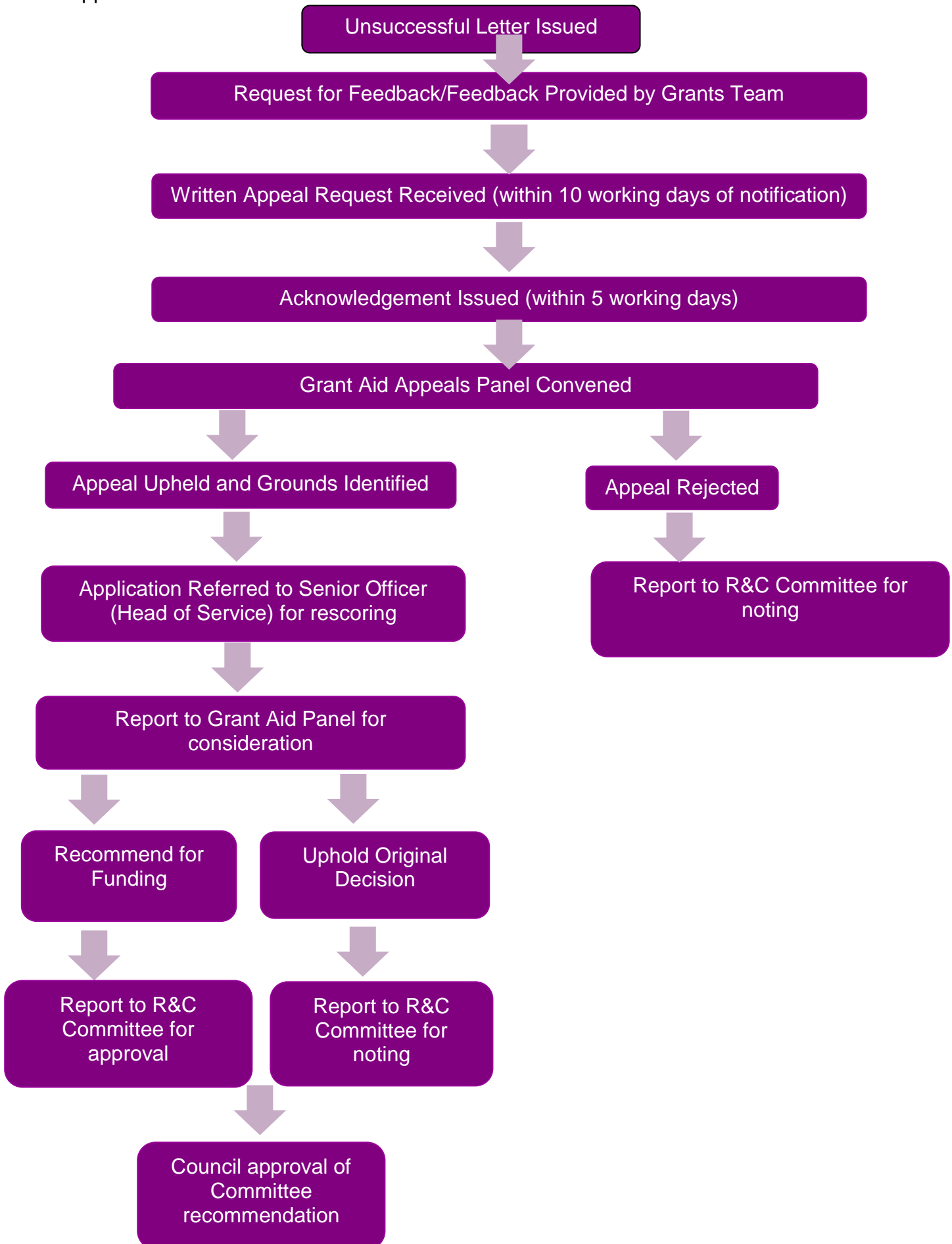
- The Grant Aid Appeals Panel will be convened to determine whether the grounds for a reassessment of a grant outcome have been met.
- If the appeal is upheld the Grant Aid Appeals Panel will confirm the grounds upon which the appeal is upheld (i.e., Options 1-3) and will refer the application to a senior officer (Head of Service or above), who was not involved in the original assessment process for reassessment based upon the upheld grounds. The Grant Aid Appeals Panel must clearly outline the reasons for referring the application appeal back for reassessment. Once this process is complete the application will be considered by the Grant Aid Panel and a recommendation will then be presented to the Regeneration and Community Committee. Following Council approval, the appellant will be notified of the outcome.
- If the appeal is not upheld, a report for noting will be presented to the Regeneration and Community Committee. Further to Council ratification of the Committee recommendation, the appellant will be informed of the decision. The decision of the Council is final.

The Application Process

Appendix 1



Appeals Process Flowchart:



Fermanagh and Omagh District Council - Strategic Outcomes

The Council, as a key partner contributing to the delivery of the Community Plan, has aligned its services and activities to deliver towards the six long-term Community Planning outcomes set out below in 3 themes.

Theme	Outcome
<p>1. People and Communities</p> <p>(Aim: To improve the wellbeing of all citizens and develop thriving rural and urban communities)</p>	<p>1. Our people are healthy and well – physically, mentally and emotionally</p> <p>2. Older people lead more independent, engaged and socially connected lives</p> <p>3. Our communities are inclusive, safe, resilient and empowered</p> <p>4. Our people have the best start in life, with lifelong opportunities to fulfil their potential</p>
<p>2. Economy, Infrastructure & Skills</p> <p>(Aim: To improve employment opportunities for all by supporting the development and growth of a more sustainability local economy and better connected area)</p>	<p>5. Our economy is thriving, expanding and outward looking</p>
<p>3. Environment</p> <p>(Aim: To promote positive action on climate changes, sustainable management and enhancement of the natural, built and cultural environment)</p>	<p>6. Our outstanding culturally rich environment is cherished, sustainably managed and appropriately accessible</p>

Through the Grant Aid Scheme, the Council can work towards achieving the above outcomes.

Filling in the Application Form

The application form is made up of a number of questions.

All of the relevant questions must be answered to successfully submit the application form.

Applicants are responsible for the accuracy of the information provided, the submission of any additional supporting documentation required and submission prior to the closing date.

Eligibility Check

Council Officers will determine if the application is eligible to proceed to assessment. This entails checking if you have fully completed and signed your application, submitted all necessary documentation and have answered each question to comply with the eligibility criteria. The onus is on the applicant to ensure all required information is completed and submitted prior to the closing date.

Pass	Fully completed Application Form, submission of associated documentation and fully compliant with eligibility criteria.
Fail	Incomplete Application and/or failure to provide associated documentation and/or not compliant with eligibility criteria.

The Council will also check that the project aligns to one or more of the Council’s Corporate Objectives/Strategic outcomes as set out in Appendix 2.

Promoting Equality & Good Relations.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council must promote Equality & Good Relations. Please complete, sign and date the Policy Statement of the Application Form.

Equal Opportunities Monitoring

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council must promote equal opportunities. Fermanagh and Omagh District Council must also promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. All of the information you provide in this questionnaire will be treated as anonymous. We do not consider it in the assessment of your application.

The Assessment Process

If the application is considered eligible, it will be assessed against the programme specific criteria and a recommendation will be made taking account of resources and competing demands.

Each eligible application will be assessed and forwarded for review/moderation. For Grants over £500 recommendations will be considered by the Elected Member Grant Aid Panel; this Panel will then make recommendations to a meeting of the Council. For Grants of £500 and under recommendations will be approved by a Head of Service and forwarded retrospectively to a Grant Aid Panel for noting. A List of ineligible applications will also be reported to the Elected Member Grant Aid Panel.

The following process will be used to assess applications:

Applications will be checked against the eligibility criteria and if successful will be forwarded for assessment as outlined in the table below:

Eligible Criteria / Checklist	
<p>Fully completed application form to include all associated attachments*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group is constituted • Group has a Committee and has provided a list of the Group's Committee Members' • The project, activity or event has not commenced and is within the relevant financial year. • Group is non-profit distributing or taking • Group and/or beneficiaries are from the Fermanagh & Omagh District Council area • Group has supplied annual accounts or an annual financial position • Group has the relevant children/young people or vulnerable adults policies in place (if applicable) including Access NI checks • Project is not party political or organised by a political party • Project is not the responsibility of another statutory agency • Group will have the relevant insurances in place to cover the project and will indemnify the Council against any proceedings arising from the project • Membership organisations can apply however, must demonstrate that their beneficiaries do not pay an excess of £1,000 per year. • Group is committed to promoting Good Relations, Equal Opportunities and Section 75 legislation. (Signed Policy statement and Equal Opportunities form provided online within the application form) <p>The application will be reviewed to ensure it meets the Council's Corporate Objectives/Community Plan/Strategic Outcomes - See Appendix 2. (This will be assessed by Council Officers from details provided in your application about the project / activity).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PASS / FAIL (Application will only progress to the next stage of assessment if it passes the eligibility check)</p> <p>*Eligibility Criteria may vary depending on the Grant Aid Stream</p>	
Assessment - Programme Specific Criteria	Weighting
Assessment will be against the programme specific criteria listed under the grant stream you are applying to in Grant Aid Guidance Notes.	100%

Your response may be assessed against each criterion using the following scoring system:

Score	Description
5	An excellent fit with the priority; all objectives/targets addressed to a very high standard
4	A very good fit with the priority; multiple objectives/targets addressed to a high standard.
3	A good fit with the priority; some objectives/targets addressed to a good standard
2	An average fit with the priority; adequate in terms of addressing objectives/targets
1	A poor fit with the priority; inadequate objectives/targets addressed
0	No response

Verification Requirements and Good Financial Practice

When a group is successful in an application for grant aid, the support is offered on condition that the group meets the objectives and produces the pattern of expenditure within the approved time limits set out in the Letter of Offer.

Groups are required to maintain an adequate record of all transactions relating to the project.

Procurement - Where procurement of services is required this should take place in line with Council procurement limits. If an applicant is successful, procurement requirements will be outlined within the Grant Aid - Terms & Conditions. If an applicant proceeds with procurement prior to a Letter of Offer being issued it is the responsibility of the applicant to be aware and adhere to the Terms & Conditions of funding. Please note only costs incurred after the Letter of Offer Date will be considered. A copy of the Grant Aid - Terms & Conditions can be viewed on the Council's website. [Grant Aid & Bursary Support – Fermanagh & Omagh District Council \(fermanaghomagh.com\)](http://fermanaghomagh.com)

Failure to comply may result in non-payment of grant or items disallowed. If you require further information please contact the Grants and Investment Unit, email: grants@fermanaghomagh.com , telephone: 0300 303 1777.

All claims must be submitted online via the Council's Grant System following completion of the event or project and by the **Claimed By Date** outlined in the Letter of Offer.

All financial records must be retained for a period of 7 years, after the end of the financial year in which the Council has made payment of the grant.

Any financial accounts and records and/or equipment/materials purchased shall be made available to the Council and its Internal Audit function, at the Council's discretion. The same right of access will, if required, be made available to Local Government Audit.

The Council at its sole discretion has the right to carry out a verification visit at any time of the project.

Publicity

The grant must be acknowledged by including the text below along with the Council Logo in all publicity associated with the project; for example, Press Releases, Websites, Advertisements, Flyers, Posters, etc. Other funding logo's may also be required depending on the grant stream. (Details of publicity requirements will be provided to all successful applicants with their Letter of Offer). **Failure to include logo's as required may result in a financial penalty or non-payment of grant.**

'This project/event* is supported by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council'

*Delete as appropriate

Making a Claim

The following information will be required in order to process a claim (Please note, depending on level of funding awarded, not all documentation listed below may be requested);

- the claim form;
- a detailed income and expenditure account relating to the funded activity, signed by two office bearers;
- original invoices, bank statements, (An e-banking statement certified by two office bearers may be accepted for this purpose, depending on the value) and other relevant documentation as requested by the Council.

Please note that CASH transactions will be considered as ineligible expenditure.

Withholding and Clawback of Grant

The Council shall

- (i) be under no obligation to make any payment of financial assistance to the Grant recipient and
 - (ii) clawback all or part of any grant paid on the project, if at any time;
- (a) there are anomalies/irregularities arising out of the information provided to the Council in respect of the Grant. Grant recipients are advised that any materially misleading statements, (whether deliberate or accidental), given at any stage during the grant process may result in the grant award being disallowed. This includes the falsification of information, inappropriate use of funds and misinformation at any stage of the grants process. If funding has been awarded the Grant recipient will be liable to return any money already paid out on the project in question. All cases of suspected fraud will be referred to the respective funder (if applicable) and the PSNI; or
 - (b) the Grant recipient is in breach of any of its obligations under this letter, any of the specific conditions attaching to the grant as specified are not satisfied or an event of default occurs. Default may be defined as follows:
 - i) there is a material change in the nature, implementation, scale, costs or timing of the project so that it no longer complies with the description included in this letter of offer and any amendments that may have been agreed subsequently; or
 - ii) there is unsatisfactory progress towards completing the project; defined as a failure to meet the aims or objectives; or
 - iii) any of the information provided in the grant recipient forecasts or in supporting or subsequent correspondence is found to be substantially incorrect or incomplete; or
 - iv) the grant recipient receives grants from other funders or any other public authority towards costs funded by this Letter of Offer (LoO), unless the grant was explicitly taken into account in making this offer;
- or
- (c) in the opinion of the Council, the project has been abandoned or ceased or is not being pursued in a satisfactory manner. This may be defined as follows:
 - i) being an incorporated body passes a resolution that it should be wound up, is ordered by the High Court to be wound up, has an administrator appointed by order of the Court, has an administrative receiver appointed, or being a company is struck from the register at Companies House.

Clawback of grants is enforceable for up to a period of 7 years.

What is Good Financial Practice?

The Council recognise that good accounting and financial management systems don't need to be complicated; however, they do need to meet the needs of your organisation. The system needs to be appropriate to the size of the group's annual income and needs to be understood by all of the committee or board. In addition, your systems must comply with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements. Some very basic principles of good financial practice are included in the table below.

Groups should use this table as a form of self assessment to ensure that their practice meets with these minimum requirements.

Minimum Requirement	Yes	No
The group has a proper bank account <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This should be in the exact name of the group • Requires at least two signatures on cheques/withdrawals 		
All income received is recorded whether cash, grants or fundraising income and the record includes; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date payment received • Lodgement number • Receipt number • Who was it received from • Amount received • Description – grant, donation etc. 		
Receipts are issued to anyone who gives the group money, stating; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The name of your organisation • The receipt number • The date • The name of the person supplying the money • A description of what the money was for 		
All expenditure is recorded. This may include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invoice records – paid and unpaid • A cheque journal • A petty cash record • A postage book 		
The treasurer reports to the committee regularly (at least quarterly) on the groups finances and the report includes; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A monthly bank reconciliation record • An outline of planned expenditure • A cash flow forecast (if appropriate) • Any outstanding liabilities 		

If you find that your group is not meeting some of these basic requirements please contact the Community Services Department who can assist your group with the introduction of new procedures.

Compliance with Procedures and Relevant Legislation

Suspected Fraud

Applicants are advised that any materially misleading statements, (whether deliberate or accidental), given at any stage during the application process or award period could render the application invalid and the applicant liable to return any money already paid out on the project in question. This includes the falsification of information, inappropriate use of funds and misinformation at the application stage.

All cases of irregularities or anomalies involving attempted or suspected fraud will be reported to appropriate authorities, including the Northern Ireland Audit Office, PSNI and any other relevant funding body (if applicable) or departments within the Council (if applicable).

For further information please visit the National Fraud Initiative Background (NFI) section on our website at:

<https://www.fermanaghomagh.com/your-council/policies/national-fraud-initiative-nfi/>

Bribery Act Legislation

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is committed to carrying out business fairly, honestly and openly and has a zero tolerance towards bribery.

The Council expects full compliance with the requirements of the Bribery Act 2010 from Councillors, Employees, Agents, Partners, Suppliers and Groups applying for, or in receipt, of grant aid.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is committed to developing, implementing and maintaining effective procedures and controls to prevent any occurrence of fraud and corruption. Any suspected cases of fraud or corruption will be fully investigated.

Such investigations may result in disciplinary and/or legal proceedings and changes to policies, systems and procedures. Strict confidentiality will be maintained during any investigation.

Child Protection / Vulnerable Adults

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council require all groups and organisations with access to children and/or vulnerable adults to have adequate policies and procedures in place and be appropriately Access NI checked and approved.

Data Protection and Freedom of Information

Under the General Data Protection Regulation, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council has a legal duty to protect any information we collect about you. The information which you provide to us in your application and any subsequent supporting documentation such as a claim, will be used for the purposes of taking the application through the process of assessment and processing a claim. Information may also be shared with other internal Council Service Areas. Only where external funding is provided, will the Council share the information provided in your application form, your claim pack and any other documentation supplied in relation to your application.

For further guidance on how we hold your information please visit the website at:

<https://www.fermanaghomagh.com/your-council/privacy-statement/>

Grant recipients should be aware that the information provided in respect of their application could be disclosed in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Should you consider that any of the information supplied is confidential in nature, this should be highlighted and the reasons for its sensitivity specified. In such cases the relevant material will, in response to

Freedom of Information requests, be examined in light of the exemptions provided for in the Freedom of Information Act.

[Freedom Of Information – Fermanagh & Omagh District Council \(fermanaghomagh.com\)](http://fermanaghomagh.com)

Summary details of information relevant to your application will be made available through a report to a Council meeting. Such reports are available for public viewing. Details of your grant request may also be included on the Government Funded Database which is also available for the public to access.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is required by law to protect the public funds it administers. It may share information provided to it with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds, in order to prevent and detect fraud. For further information please click here:- <https://www.fermanaghomagh.com/your-council/policies/national-fraud-initiative-nfi/>.

Equality Considerations

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council will work to ensure that it does not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of gender, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, responsibility for dependents, sexuality, age, economic status, social background, religious or political belief and marital status. Organisations seeking grant aid must be open to a full range of local opinion, be inclusive and non-party political. Government's Policy Appraisal for Fair Treatment (PAFT) guidelines and Targeting Social Needs (TSN) initiative are at the heart of our approach to grant decision making for community activity. When thinking about submitting an application for grant aid, groups should consider whether any aspects of the project could have a negative impact on people that have been excluded from activity in the past. For example, this might include people with disabilities, people from different age groups, and people with different religious, political or ethnic backgrounds.

Groups will also be required to sign the 'Promoting Equality and Good Relations' Statement within the online application.

Insurances, Risk Assessment, Licenses and Permissions

All applicants must ensure that all the necessary Public, Professional & Employers liability insurances, risk assessments, license requirements and any PSNI and NI Ambulance Service permissions and notifications are in place prior to a project/activity/event taking place. Failure to comply with the necessary requirements may result in non-payment of grant.

NI Charity Commission

It is a requirement for all charities in Northern Ireland to apply for registration. **This is irrespective of size, annual income or whether the organisation is registered with HMRC for charitable tax purposes. Some organisations that meet the definition may not previously have thought of themselves as charities.** An organisation must apply for registration as a charity in Northern Ireland if:

- it has exclusively charitable purposes;
- it is governed by the law of Northern Ireland; and
- it has control and direction over its governance and resources.

There are no exceptions or exemptions to applying for charity registration. This is important for public trust and confidence and to ensure that all charities are effectively regulated. To register your group with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, please log on to www.charitycommissionni.org.uk.

UK Subsidy Control – Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA)

Following the UK's exit from the EU, there are new rules governing subsidies. The EU State Aid Rules only apply in certain limited circumstances. This is when the Northern Ireland Protocol is engaged and/or where the funding originates from certain European funded programmes. All other funding measures are now subject to the new UK Subsidy Control regime. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/minimal-financial-assistance>

Under Section 36 of the Subsidy Control Act (2022) that came into force on the 4th January 2023 the maximum level of Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) is up to a maximum of £315,000 in any 3 year period.

Any award of MFA that exceeds £100,000 must be reported to UK Government and published on the UK's [transparency database](#), which is accessible by the public.