**Rochdale Communities Fund – Food Solutions Grants**

**Guidance Notes**

The Rochdale Communities Fund is a mutual fund to invest in and strengthen Rochdale Borough’s VCFSE sector. It funds groups and projects which directly benefit local people and communities, delivered by VCFSE organisations with roots in the borough.

Thanks to funding from Rochdale Borough Council Public Health team, Action Together is offering investment to help the VCFSE groups provide emergency and immediate food offers, as well as investing in supporting the longer-term sustainability of our borough’s food providers.

The fund priorities have been co-produced by a group of representatives from the Anti-Poverty Network, Welfare Advice Forum, Food Solutions Forum, Ethnic Communities Network and the Digital Inclusion Forum.

**Your project must fall within one or more of the following priorities:**

1. **Emergency Free Food:**  Providing short-term, emergency support which aim to relieve immediate need for food, such as foodbanks, waste food projects, soup kitchens and community fridges.

2. **Supporting People Out of Poverty:** Creating routes out of poverty and giving people access to affordable food. For example food pantries, pay-it-forward pantries and co-operative food buying schemes.

3. **Sustainable Access to Healthy Food:** Projects that bring people together to eat, cook or grow healthy and sustainable food. For example growing projects, educational food projects and social eating projects.

4. **Making Emergency Food Accessible:** Addressing barriers to making food offers accessible to people from different communities, such as providing culturally appropriate food or enabling home delivery of emergency food to people who can’t attend foodbanks or pantries.

**Grant amount:** Grants of up to £5,000 or up to £10,000 are available

For up to £5000:For grants of up to £5000 we can fund new projects within the Rochdale Borough, where a strong need is demonstrated and evidenced.

For up to £10,000:Grants of up to £10,000 are for strengthening ongoing, established food projects being delivered within the Rochdale Borough.

**Deadline:** Sunday 17th November 2024

**What we can fund:**

* Purchase of food (the purchase of a food will be a priority during the decision-making process)
* Equipment, project resources and running costs that are relevant to the delivery of this project.
* Staff time and volunteer expenses that are relevant to the delivery of this project.

**We cannot fund:**

* For applications over £5,000, we are unable to fund new food projects. The higher grant application is to support ongoing, established food projects being delivered within the Rochdale Borough.

Please note, we encourage all groups submitting an application form to include your management costs within the budget for your project. We are able to fund up to 10% of management costs of the total grant amount.

For a clear and simple introduction to calculating the full costs of a project, read the [National Lottery Community Fund’s full cost recovery guidance](https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/funding-guidance/full-cost-recovery).

We are willing to provide this grant for cash first schemes. If you’d like to apply for cash first project, you are required to get in touch before applying so we can really understand your thinking and process behind this approach. If you are selected to use this approach, Action Together would like to work to provide mentorship and support.

**Who is the funding for:**

* you are a voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) group locally rooted or actively working in the borough of Rochdale; ***and***
* you are a member of Action Together CIO (you can register for free to become a member [here](https://www.actiontogether.org.uk/become-member))
* you are formally constituted.

To ensure limited funds reach as many groups as possible, there is also a limit on the number of times groups can apply to the Rochdale Communities Fund. Action Together members can apply to our funding if you have already received funding through the Rochdale Communities Fund as long as:

* The applications are for different projects, or you can show the project needs to continue.
* You have submitted all monitoring for previous projects.
* You are in contact with your Community Development Worker
* You have not already received a grant from the categories above the one you are applying for (i.e. a small grant and you’re applying for a micro grant)

**Decision making process:**

Grant decisions will be made by Action Together’s Community panel. Decisions will be made once the fund has closed for applications.

You may be asked for further information or to redevelop aspects of your proposal.

All applications must be sent to hayley.tomlinson@actiontogether.org.uk and you will receive the decision via email.

**Monitoring:**

At the end of your project, we will ask you to fill out a monitoring form to tell us:

* The story of your project
* How many individual people benefitted.
* Any challenges you faced during your project and learning you have from the project.
* Any other plans you have for your community following the project.
* Photos, feedback sheets, promotional materials, or anything else relevant to the project.

Our Community Development Workers will check in with you during the project and can help you plan how you want to share the impact and success of your project. As part of this process, you will be required to undertake a due diligence exercise to ensure that your project meets the food safety standards.

**Please note:**

* Action Together is an accredited Living Wage Funder. This means we encourage organisations that employ staff to become an accredited [Living Wage Employer.](https://www.livingwage.org.uk/become-a-living-wage-employer)

**Completing the application form**

* Please ensure that ALL boxes on the application form are completed.
* When completing your budget, please clearly evidence how you have arrived at your costings and use exact figures.
* If you have any queries about the application form or application process, please contact Hayley Tomlinson on 0161 339 2345.
* Please note, we can only accept one application per organisation.

**The use of AI within your application**

We recognise that AI can be a valuable tool in various aspects of project development, such as brainstorming or editing responses. However, we strongly discourage its use for the drafting of answers within funding applications, as it can compromise the integrity of the application process.

It is often clear when an organisation uses AI to draft their application as we notice similar or identical language and content within numerous funding applications. Strong applications help us understand your organisation and your community, but when they are drafted by AI the generic language which is used makes it hard to understand what your organisation is planning to do and why.

AI written responses often claim to have taken certain steps to develop their project idea, such as a needs assessment, focus groups or consultation with users. Unless the group includes statistics and quotes in their bid, it raises doubt about whether these steps have actually happened. This can affect the decision-making process and an outcome of an application as the authenticity of the application can be called into question.

Where there is doubt about if your application has been drafted by AI, we will ask for some additional information to support your application.

**Please note that the Rochdale Communities Fund is ongoing therefore our approach will be under constant review. If there are any changes, these will be communicated appropriately.**