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Voluntary Action Coventry



Innovation Fund: Frequently Asked Questions

In this FAQ document

- ▶ Innovation Fund 22/23- this refers to the last round of applications for grants between £3k-£25k. Applications for this pot are now closed and the money has been distributed.
- ▶ **Micro-grants-** this refers to grants <£3k. Applications for this pot are now open. Microgrants may also be referred to as **Pot 1** in this document.
- ▶ **Innovation Fund 23/24-** this refers to the next round of applications for grants between £3k-£25k. Applications for this pot will be opening soon. Innovation Fund 23/24 may also be referred to as **Pot 2** in this document.

What is the VCSE Innovation Fund?

As part of the Community Mental Health Transformation programme, an Innovation Fund of £300,000 in 2022/23 (closed for applications), followed by another £300,000 in 2023/24 (opening soon), will be distributed to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) partners to fund targeted and specific projects addressing local health and life inequalities for people with severe mental health problems.

Organisations can apply for up to £25,000. We want to fund projects that demonstrate they can have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing for residents of Coventry and Warwickshire.

What are the Micro-grants?

Micro-grants will be distributed to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) partners. The main purpose of the Innovation Fund Micro-grants is to support small/grassroots organisations to deliver mental health interventions within the community.

Organisations can apply for up to £3,000 and funding must be spent by March 2024.

Both the Innovation Fund and the Micro-grants are delivered as a partnership between Voluntary Action Coventry (VAC), Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action (WCAVA) and Coventry and Warwickshire Partnerships Trust (CWPT). Fund distribution is overseen by Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board (ICB).

What are the aims of the Micro-grant fund?

The Innovation Fund Micro-Grant aims to promote the work of grassroots organisations and small groups supporting Coventry and Warwickshire residents aged 18+.

Applications must meet one of the following criteria:

- Use of community spaces to tackle loneliness and isolation
- Deliver peer support for people with mental health needs
- Improve accessibility to mental health projects/services e.g., through transport/outreach in local communities
- Provide health and wellbeing support in response to the cost-of-living crisis

Community Mental Health Transformation priorities:

- Young Adults– appropriate mental health interventions for 18-25s
- Older Adults– appropriate mental health interventions for over 65s (excluding dementia)
- Addressing health inequalities- people from under-represented groups/experiencing homelessness/experiencing poverty

You can apply for the Micro-grant fund if one or more of the following apply:

- Social Enterprise
- Independent Employee/Member/Retired Persons Social Associations
- Sports and Leisure Club and Societies
- Faith Organisation
- Registered Charity
- Constituted or Un-Constituted Community Group
- Company Limited by Guarantee with Charitable Aims
- Community Interest Company
- VCSE with income of less than £50,000 per annum

Funding to Community Interest Companies and other non-charities may include conditions to restrict funding to charitable objectives only.

Funding to Un-Constituted Community Groups is subject to appropriate governance being in place.

You cannot apply for the Micro-grant fund if one or more of the following apply:

- Public and Private sector organisations
- Political parties, trade unions and party-political organisations
- Organisations or projects owned or controlled by public or private sector organisations (e.g., local authority controlled companies)
- Services directly replacing statutory obligations and public funded services
- Statutory work in educational institutions
- VCSE with income of more than £50,000 per annum

If we are awarded the Micro-grant, how long do we have to start spending the money?

Once the money has been received, it should start being used within 3 months. Please provide estimated timescales in your application and communicate any delays with Eleanor Nunn.

How long do we have to spend the Micro-grant money we are awarded?

The grant money must be spent by March 2024.

Projects that apply for funding will need to provide an estimate of how long they expect their project to run for. Within your application, please include how you plan to spend the money and any relevant timescales.

What is the frequency of reporting back outcomes for the Micro-grant?

You will need to complete an end of grant monitoring form and supply at least one case study by March 2024.

The end of grant monitoring form will include the following:

- Participant outcomes (measured via a standardised measure)**
- The number of unique participants to date including any relevant demographics (gender, age, where they live e.g., Coventry, South Warwickshire, North Warwickshire, or Rugby)
- Number of referrals to your project/service
- How long participants attend/stay in the project/service
- Number of discharges from your project/service including onward signposting

** We want to advocate for the expertise of VCSE providers, and this includes trusting their professional judgement regarding outcome measures. Quantitative measures of participant outcomes should be agreed in conjunction with the VCSE team and outlined in the grant agreement.

Your local Liaison Officer will be there to support you throughout the running of your project/service and may plan a visit to see how the grant is being spent. They will give appropriate notice beforehand.

Can we apply for both pots of funding, **Micro-grant (Pot 1, under £3k)** and the **Innovation Fund 23/24 (Pot 2, £3k-£25k)**?

We want to consider a variety of applications which support the needs of the community. Below are some considerations:

**** Please note, the Micro-grant is only open to VCSE organisations/groups with an income of less than £50,000 per annum**

Your organisation/group may chose to apply for the Micro-grant but later identify that the Innovation Fund 23/24 is better suited to the scale of your project/service.

You have two options:

- 1) Withdraw your application from consideration for the Micro-grant (by contacting Eleanor Nunn, e.nunn@vacoventry.org.uk) and then resubmit to the Innovation Fund 23/24. You may be asked for more information for Pot 2 due to the size of the grant.
- 2) Apply for both Pot 1 and 2. If you are successful, the decision panel will then decide the amount of funding they feel is appropriate. You will only receive funding from one stream and the decision panel will determine this when your application is discussed.

I received a grant from the Innovation Fund 22/23:

Can I apply for the Micro-grants (Pot 1)?

Recipients of the Innovation Fund 22/23 can apply for the Micro-grant but not to support/expand the same project they received money for previously.

Can I apply for the Innovation fund 23/24 (Pot 2)?

You are still able to apply for the second year of the Innovation Fund 23/24; however just because you were successful in 22/23 does not guarantee your success in 23/24. You must go through the same application process when applying in the second year of the Innovation Fund. The VCSE Team will be able to let you know when applications for the second year of funding are opening if you wish to apply again.

Can we access bid writing support?

Your local liaison officer will be happy to answer any questions that you have while writing your bid. If your project covers both Coventry and Warwickshire, you can pick either one to ask for help! We can also direct you to additional bid writing resources and support if required.

VCSE Coventry Liaison Officer: Khadija Bakali, k.bakali@vacoventry.org.uk

VCSE Coventry Liaison Officer: France Flint, f.flint@vacoventry.org.uk

VCSE Warwickshire Liaison Officer: Mandy Groves, mandy.groves@wcava.org.uk

What does “Trauma Informed” mean?

“Trauma Informed” is a clinical way to describe working in a “person centred” way. We asked people with lived experience of severe mental illness to share what this type of care means:

[Trauma Informed means] that the staff or volunteers are able to recognise distressed emotions and symptoms of trauma/PTSD in people that attend the services. I would hope that they would be able to reassure/support people with trauma to reduce the symptoms and to request external/clinical support if needed. I would expect the organisation to have knowledge of, and ability to offer mental health first aid in these situations.

Trauma informed means that there isn't any judgement on you for being ill, for having a specific diagnosis. It means accepting the person in front of you for who they are and being compassionate and empathetic regarding what is happening for them, and supporting them accordingly. It also means listening to their wishes and treating them how they want to be treated. Groups [that practice TIC] empower and work with their members to support them in becoming who they want to be, rather than who we want [them] to be.

Trauma informed group is that if it has someone in it, that is after a psychosis, where the topic was religious matter, participants of that group are aware not to use specific terminology. What happens is sometimes after such psychosis people get aversion, especially in the early stages, to everything connected with the religion. Then, using terms like "Thanks God it's Friday" or even wishing Merry Christmas can really upset them.

This is one example and people can have many different traumas and such groups need to be cautious for many triggers which is not always possible. But with time members of the group get know each other and their traumas.

It means they accept me for who I am, and I accept them for who they are. Kind of like how everyone should be treated. I don't mean accept them if there kicking off or being mean but if they're being ok then who am I to judge? There's too much judgement around. We just need to be kind.

Does our organisation/group just need to work with people with a diagnosis of Severe Mental Illness?

Part of the Community Mental Health Transformation is moving away from using diagnosis as the threshold to accessing treatment. People may be experiencing severe mental illness but due to various factors, may not have received a diagnosis. Your organisation/group does not need to work with people with a specific mental health diagnosis, the focus just needs to be on improving people's mental health and wellbeing.

Are you accepting partnership bids?

We are accepting partnership bids. If you are submitting a partnership bid, the name of the other organisation/s must be clearly stated in the application and a plan of how your organisations will work together needs to be explained thoroughly- how will your organisations work together and what result will this have on people accessing your project/service? The VCSE organisation completing the application form for the project/service will be held accountable and is responsible for due diligence of the other organisation/s they are working in partnership with.