



# Volunteering Wales

## Strategic Grant Round 2 - 2025-28

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## **GRANT AIM**

This fund will enable a small number (approx. 5-10) of strategic investments (with the potential to deliver volunteering benefits at scale) to develop, build on, new or enhanced approaches/initiatives for volunteering across Wales. Enabling support for ideas or projects at all points in their life-cycle from “proof of concept” to the upscaling and embedding proven models.

## **GRANT OBJECTIVES**

Unlocking the strategic potential of volunteering over the longer term:

- Identify and explore the strategic need and opportunities for removing barriers to volunteering (at scale);
- Strengthen or explore partnerships within and between the third, private and public sector;
- Support the upscaling of delivery models and strategic infrastructure and volunteer organisations to embed emerging good practise;
- Undertake thorough learning around equality and inclusion in volunteering and how this impacts communities and their engagement;
- Lever further investment both financial and non-financial.
- Create a repository of learning to be shared with Wales’ growing Volunteering Community of Practice.

Since its inception the Volunteering Wales Strategic Grant (VWSG) awardees have produced research and resources that are moving volunteering practices forward for Wales through collaboration. To learn more about the achievements to date please visit [The Knowledge Hub](#).

Grant requests are welcome for projects up to 18 months, with the value of £50,000 to £100,000.

**High quality proposals are welcome from the following priority areas:**

- Health & social care
- Education & young people
- Environment/climate emergency

- Arts/culture/sport
- Welsh language/communities

## **NEW APPROACH TO VOLUNTEERING IN WALES**

### **The role of the Strategic Grants within it:**

In July 2025 Welsh Government and Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) launched a new, long-term, co-created New Approach to Volunteering in Wales (you can read more about the New Approach [here](#)). The Approach contains a Vision for Volunteering in Wales where:

- Volunteering is a 'way of life' in Wales.
- The wellbeing of individuals and communities is enhanced.
- Volunteering is safe, supported and sustainable.
- Volunteering is inclusive, and reflects Wales' society, culture and language.

The Approach also includes a framework to help us all realise this vision together based on encouraging and supporting anyone involved in volunteering to think about how they can contribute towards seven “Enablers” that are key to creating a safe, supportive and sustainable environment for our volunteers.

1. Determined leadership
2. Firm plans built on sound reasons, data and evidence
3. Clearly defined and practical objectives geared to specific actions
4. People with the budgets and resources needed to take action
5. Plans and actions built around the real needs of volunteers
6. Plans and actions that fit with our society, culture and language in Wales
7. Engagement with key groups, and especially young people

## **How we want to use these Enablers in this strategic grant:**

The New Approach to Volunteering outlines a set of Enablers designed to support organisations to strengthen the volunteering environment in Wales. As part of the VWSG process, you should use the Enablers and the associated Planning Matrix to guide your project planning, delivery, monitoring, reflection, reporting and future planning.

The intention is for this to provide an appropriate balance between providing structure to help you to reflect on your project, identify opportunities for improvement, and support clear and meaningful learning throughout the grant period and beyond, whilst also recognising the freedom you need to develop your unique ideas.

In order to apply the Enablers we have created a Planning Matrix (Annex 1) – you can use this to identify where your project currently sits against each Enabler - ranging from ‘under-developed’ to ‘highly effective’.

## **What the Planning Matrix is for:**

- Setting a starting point for your project
- Supporting discussions with staff, partners, and WCVA officers
- Identifying priority areas for development
- Supporting reflective monitoring and reporting

## **What the Planning Matrix is not for:**

- The matrix is NOT for determining whether a grant is approved - You do not need to demonstrate that your project scores highly across all Enablers – if it does there would be no need for the grant. Every project will have strengths in some areas and development needs in others.
- The matrix is NOT for assessing or scoring your organisation (you can use it for this purpose if you want but that is not its main use here)
- The matrix is NOT for comparing organisations

The Planning Matrix must be completed and submitted with your application via MAP, and referenced in the narrative of your application.

## **How to use the Enablers to help throughout all stages of the VWSG process:**

1. When you are planning your project you can use the Enablers to:

- Structure discussions with partners
- Identify gaps or risks early
- Clarify volunteer needs
- Map out where leadership, partnerships or resources might be needed

This will contribute towards the focus of your initial project planning.

2. When developing your application

We encourage you to use the Enablers to help structure discussions with the WCVA staff member assigned to help you, and to help shape your thinking and project narrative. This may include:

- Describing the issue your project aims to address using the Enabler framework
- Identifying which Enablers your project is likely to strengthen (maybe there is a logical sequence due to dependencies etc.) and using this to help set project objectives or create project Action Plans, and think about how you'll monitor progress against them.
- Using the matrix to reflect honestly on current challenges and opportunities

This should help strengthen strategic clarity without restricting your creativity or approach.

3. When monitoring and mid project review and reflection

During delivery, the Enablers can equip you to:

- Reflect (with partners) on what is changing
- Identify progress across different areas, objectives and outcomes
- Consider the volunteer experience
- Guide conversations with WCVA officers in 6 monthly reporting

This should help encourage both quantitative and narrative reporting and learning.

#### 4. When producing final project reports and thinking about what comes next

At the end of your project, revisiting the matrix can provide a guide to:

- Describe what has improved
- Highlight remaining gaps
- Identify future opportunities
- Share learning in a consistent and impactful way

This should support your legacy planning and will ensure your project contributes to shared learning across Wales.

In summary the Enablers and Planning Matrix should be viewed as flexible, supportive tools (not directives) designed to:

- Strengthen your project
- Offer clarity and structure
- Encourage thoughtful planning
- Enhance monitoring and evaluation
- Connect your work to the new approach to volunteering in Wales

Use them in the way that best supports your project's learning, development, and impact.

We appreciate that this is a new way of working and we are keen to make sure there is **support available** for you use to the Enablers effectively, including:

- A short explanatory video will outline how the Enablers and Matrix work ([Available here](#)).
- WCVA officers are briefed to support you throughout the process.
- Assessors will use the Enablers to structure feedback - not to score applications.

We will be asking for your feedback in order to keep improving this support.

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Ahead of submitting an application, you **must** speak to a named WCVA member of staff or a named member of the Third Sector Support Team at Welsh Government (see below). This will ensure that your activity is in keeping with the grant aims. As part of the application you will need to give the name of the staff member you liaised with. Applications where no prior contact has been made, will not be put forward to the panel.

**Please contact a team member you may have previously discussed your project with:**

| Staff member          | Job title   | Email  |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Sian Baker<br>Maurice | Head of Grants and<br>Income                          | <a href="mailto:sbakermurice@wcva.cymru">sbakermurice@wcva.cymru</a>           |
| Maggie Smith          | Volunteering<br>Engagement &<br>Communication Officer | <a href="mailto:msmith@wcva.cymru">msmith@wcva.cymru</a>                       |
| Felicite Walls        | Volunteering Manager                                  | <a href="mailto:fwalls@wcva.cymru">fwalls@wcva.cymru</a>                       |
| Lynne Connolly        | Helpforce Wales<br>Manager                            | <a href="mailto:lconnolly@wcva.cymru">lconnolly@wcva.cymru</a>                 |
| Welsh<br>Government   | The Third Sector Support<br>Team                      | <a href="mailto:thirdsectorqueries@gov.wales">thirdsectorqueries@gov.wales</a> |

- Your organisation is focused on taking the next steps with your strategic volunteering activity, looking to build on lessons learned to date to further evaluate and strengthen your approach. E.g. increasing scale, extending partnerships, clarifying leadership and accountability or building a stronger infrastructure of support.

- Your organisation has an annual income over £250,000 (this can be averaged over the past three years) and the level of grant requested must not comprise more than 20% of your annual income.
- Applicants will be expected to review the research and resources produced to date through the Volunteering Wales Strategic Grant to avoid duplication and ensure work is an enhancement or novel. Some of which can be found here: ([Knowledge Hub](#) - search 'Strategic')
- You are an incorporated organisation with at least two years of operation
- You are able to provide letters of support from potential/existing partners and/or letters of support from relevant leadership/strategic/partnership boards/working groups.
- Applications are welcomed from all sectors.
- Partnership applications are encouraged, but projects do not necessarily need to be collaborative.
- Ability to be delivered in the specified timeline.
- CVCs can be named partners in applications, but cannot be the lead applicant.
- Previous recipients can apply for this round, but for activities that are the next stage/building upon the work previously funded; or for a completely new activity.

## **WHAT CANNOT BE FUNDED**

- Grants will not be awarded retrospectively i.e., for costs already incurred prior to the receipt of the grant offer letter and signed terms and conditions.
- Where there are other Welsh Government grants available for specific activities, it is expected that they will be accessed where possible.
- Proselytising activities

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

The application process is split into two stages for applicants.

### **Stage 1: application**

The first part of the application will be where you provide details of your organisation, including policies, recent accounts and contact details.

The rest of the application is where the project will be described in detail.

Once the application is submitted the Grants team will review the application against the eligibility criteria and assess answers against the grant aim and objectives. You may be contacted to provide additional detail, supporting information/documents if these are missing.

Applications will be quality checked prior to final recommendations made to the Volunteering Wales panel.

### **Stage 2: Volunteering Wales panel\***

All applications that pass the eligibility checks will be referred to the Volunteering Wales panel. The panel will decide which applications to fund. They may also make recommendations of partial funding where appropriate / according to the funding available.

Once the Chair has signed off the final decision, outcome letters will be sent to all applicants.

\*The Volunteering Wales panel provide strategic direction and overview to the grant scheme, support the appraisal and awarding of grants and review the performance of projects. The panel is comprised of members of WCVA's Board and members drawn from the Welsh volunteering community.

## REGISTERING WITH MAP

In order to apply to the Volunteering Wales Grants, you will need to register with WCVA's Multipurpose Application Portal (MAP). If you have previously registered with MAP, you can log in by entering your username and password on the home screen.

Organisations can register by visiting the website: [map.wcva.cymru](http://map.wcva.cymru)

Once you have registered with MAP you will be able to apply for any funding opportunities administered by WCVA.

## APPLICATION - ELIGIBILITY CHECK PROCESS

**Please review the following information ahead of applying to the grant round. Only applications from organisations which can demonstrate meeting the basic criteria will be taken to full assessment:**

1) Ensure basic criteria are met:

- Incorporated for a minimum of 2 years
- Income over £250,000 (as an average of 3 previous financial years where applicable) and the level of grant requested must not comprise more than 20% of your annual income
- Objectives of the fund are met

2) Evidence provided that the organisation is focused on the next steps with their strategic volunteering activity, looking to increase scale, partnerships, strategy and organisation. Examples of **evidence** that must support the described purpose and plan could include:

- A volunteering strategy
- Organisation's five year strategy or annual plan
- Minutes from senior management meetings
- Planning documents/records/minutes/agreements with partners

- Reference to area of activity in local/regional partnership strategies eg RPBs, PSBs, Local Resilience Fora etc
- 3) Any identified partners must have provided a letter of support/intent. Letters of support must be clearly linked back to the described activity and not support for the organisation activities in general.
  - 4) If specific partners are not yet identified as this activity is to “Identify the strategic need and explore new volunteering opportunities” then relevant leadership/strategic/partnership boards/working groups have provided letters of support/intention to engage. E.g. Public Service Boards, Regional Partnership Boards, Health Boards, Local Resilience fora. These must specifically relate back to the activity described and not a general letter of support for the organisation’s overall activities.
  - 5) Please note: Priority will be given to applications working in the identified priority areas (listed on page 3).

## **WHAT DOCUMENTS DO I NEED TO SUPPLY?**

The application will require you to submit documents online in the form of a scanned PDF.

You will be required to submit organisation specific documents however if your organisation does not currently have finalised versions of any of the policies you can contact your local CVC for support ([directory found here](#)). It may not make your application ineligible; however, we would expect to see policies in development prior to award:

- Volunteering Policy
- Governing document
- Equal opportunities policy
- Environmental policy
- Welsh language policy
- Data protection policy (which demonstrates GDPR compliance)

- Safeguarding policy (Safeguarding policies must be fit for purpose. If on review updates/amendments need to be made you will be notified. No application will be recommended to panel with an insufficient Safeguarding policy) see guidance: <https://thirdsectorsupport.wales/resources/safeguarding-policy-guidance/>
- A copy of a recent bank statement (within the last 3 months)
- Latest set of full audited accounts
- Latest set of draft accounts (if audited accounts are older than 12 months old OR Management accounts (if audited accounts are older than 12 months old)
- A project financial profile (this will need to be completed on the mandatory WCVA template)
- Planning Matrix - Annex 1 (this will need to be completed on the mandatory WCVA template)

## WHAT WILL BE ASKED AS PART OF THE APPLICATION FORM

(your application must be submitted via [MAP](#)):

- 1) All proposals will need to provide a project plan which outlines what the purpose of the funding request is and how it will be achieved, this should include:
  - The strategic need for the project
  - The aim(s) and objectives of the project
  - How the aim and objectives will be achieved; what will be measured in order to demonstrate this
  - Describe how this activity will be resourced – creation of unsustainable temporary roles should be avoided where possible
  - Key risks and mitigating measures
  - Brief timeline of activities

You are required to use the Enablers and Planning Matrix (Annex 1) as described in detail above **to think about and structure the narrative of your project plan.** Remember, you need to show what the impact of your activity will be;

- Expected outcomes and impact within the lifetime of the project and beyond.
- If your aim and objectives are achieved what does this mean for your beneficiaries and key stakeholders in the long-term?
- The potential to share or scale up emerging good practice for wider use across Wales.
- How will the evaluation of impact be conducted?
- How will the evaluation of impact inform your next steps?

2) You should also show who your partners/stakeholders for this activity are and the governance underpinning it, for example:

Possible areas for consideration:

- Accountability and leadership – how will the project be led and governed at a strategic and/or operational level?
- If your aim and objectives are achieved what does this mean for your beneficiaries and key stakeholders in the long-term?
- Are these established strategic/operational partnerships and/or is the application supported by potential partners?
- Specific roles and responsibilities of each partner including lead applicant – consider the systems in place, including partnership agreements and key inputs from each partner

3) What will be the impact of your activity?

Possible areas for consideration:

- Expected outcomes and impact within the lifetime of the project and beyond.
- If your aim and objectives are achieved what does this mean for your beneficiaries and key stakeholders in the long-term?
- The potential to share or scale up emerging good practice for wider use across Wales.
- How will the evaluation of impact be conducted?
- How will the evaluation of impact inform your next steps?

#### 4) Budget

Things to consider:

- This is for predominantly revenue costs, but small items of capital costs (max £5,000) will be considered if essential to the delivery of the project
- The budget clearly links back to the described activities
- Costs should be proportionate to the scale of the activity
- Proportional consideration should be given to an evaluation and dissemination of lessons learned. Any monitoring and evaluation activity should be carried out throughout the project's lifetime, with findings presented within three months of project closure.
- Please make consideration for Welsh translation of final evaluation and/or resources produced.

#### **IMPORTANT DATES**

Launch date: 2 March 2026

Closing date: 22 May 2026

Outcome of grant application: July 2026

Earliest project start date: 1 August 2026

Latest project start date: 1 October 2026

## Planning Matrix

Assessing a whole area of activity or a specific segment against the key enablers

| Enabler / Necessary Condition  | 1<br>Under developed | 2 | 3<br>Relatively effective | 4 | 5<br>Highly effective |
|--|----------------------|---|---------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Determined leadership  |                      |   |                           |   |                       |
| Firm plans built on sound reasons  |                      |   |                           |   |                       |
| Clearly defined and practical objectives geared to specific actions        |                      |   |                           |   |                       |
| People with the budgets & resources needed to take action                  |                      |   |                           |   |                       |
| Plans and actions built around the real needs of volunteers                |                      |   |                           |   |                       |
| Plans and actions that fit with our society, culture and language in Wales |                      |   |                           |   |                       |
| Engagement with key groups, and especially young people                    |                      |   |                           |   |                       |

Scores given on this Planning Matrix **must** be addressed within your project plan (via MAP). How did you reach this score? How you will use the enablers to guide and deliver your project? And how enabler scores could be increased during the life of the project. **Use enablers to think about and structure the narrative of your project plan.** Progress scores will be monitored at each 6 monthly reporting period.