

Essex County Council COVID Safe Community Buildings Fund Guidance Notes

1.0 Introduction

Essex County Council (ECC) has received funding from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) to support costs associated with ongoing public health and outbreak management costs of tackling COVID.

The COVID pandemic has continued to provide challenges to Essex communities. As we emerge from lockdown most restrictions on social contact with friends and family will be lifted, and new pressures will begin to develop as people begin to mix again and access services or spaces previously not accessible during lockdown. To support and enable these opportunities to resume and activities to re-mobilise, it will become important to ensure that community buildings are safe and COVID compliant in order to minimise the risk of transmission.

This fund will make available £1,500,000 to assist community buildings, such as village halls, community centres, and faith buildings, with the costs of being COVID compliant and resuming activities safely.

2.0 Fund Administration

The fund is administered by the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) on behalf of Essex County Council (ECC)

Enquiries about this funding can be directed to:

Officer Names: Sue Gibson & Michelle Gardiner

Email: CovidCBFund@essexrcc.org.uk

3.0 Eligibility of Funding

The purpose of this funding is to assist community buildings to make the necessary adaptations to ensure COVID compliance – allowing people to safely use these spaces.

Grants of up to a maximum of **£15,000** are available to support activities that help to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 by ensuring COVID compliance in community buildings.

Funding should be used to put in place measures that reduce the transmission of the virus and help activities to resume safely. Funding can be used for (but are not limited to):

- Implementing measures that manage visitors and/or create space for social distancing
- Adaptions to encourage users to resume activities in the community hall safely
- Enhanced communication, websites, marketing and signage to alert users to COVID safety on premises
- Costs associated with cleaning and sanitising premises
- Online/website booking systems to minimise contact between the hall and hirer and set out any COVID-related conditions for hire (i.e. capacity for events)
- Costs of semi-permanent awnings/canopies to extend use to outside areas
- Costs associated with adaptions to introduce flexible partitions to encourage more use in smaller groups.
- Fitting out storage areas so that group equipment can be separated and kept clean.
- Installation of equipment to improve hygiene or hand washing
- Costs associated with improving or installing ventilation i.e. repairing windows, air conditioning units; air purifying devices; external bi-fold doors

Eligible Spend:

- Revenue costs
- Capital costs: Capital requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and should be able to clearly demonstrate how this activity will meet the objectives and timescales of the fund. Any capital assets will be owned and maintained by the applicant. ECC is not responsible for future/ongoing or disposal costs. Organisations are also responsible for ensuring necessary permissions are gained for any capital works.
- Staff and volunteer costs: if it can be demonstrated that they are vital in meeting the objectives of this fund

Outcomes:

All applications must demonstrate how their activities can contribute to the reduction of the transmission of the virus and resume activities safely.

3.1 Who can apply?

Applications are welcome from:

- *Community hubs such as village halls, community centres, and faith buildings in Essex (excluding Southend and Thurrock)

* A community hub is a community facility such as a village hall, community centre, parish or church hall, or faith building used for wider community activities run as a charity or on a 'not for profit' basis, that is available to the public to use and hire in a particular area for community-related recreational activities. This excludes halls only available primarily for one exclusive use such as pre-schools, members clubs etc.

⁵ For faith organisations, funding is not designed to support the promotion of a particular faith or religion but is available to make suitable building adaptations or implement measures to ensure opportunities to worship safely and/or the delivery of other open access community activities.

4.0 Grant Awards

- This is a rolling programme and will remain open until all funds are allocated or the fund closes. The last date for submission of applications will be 31 December 2021.
-
- Awards will be made on a rolling basis. Successful applicants will be notified, and grants awarded as quickly as possible.
- Grants are available to support both capital and revenue costs.
- Applications will be considered based upon feasibility of activities; value for money; and how activities meet the outcomes of the programme.
- The Funding Panel will reserve the right to use their sole discretion when assessing any grant applications for acceptance. Applications may be rejected, or grants awarded at a lesser level than applied for.

4.1 Validity of Funding

Funding should be spent by 31 March 2022.

If for any reason the project does not come to fruition or funds cannot be spent, the Funding Officer should be notified, and funds returned to Essex County Council.

Essex County Council will reserve the right to claw back all or partial funding owing to the performance of the project delivery and benefits realisation. Any unspent funding by 31st March 2022 will be returned to Essex County Council within 28 days.

5.0 Fund Administration

5.1 Demonstration of Need

Applicants must:

- Demonstrate how their activities will have an impact in meeting the programme outcome of reducing the risk of transmission of the virus and resuming activities safely.
- Applicants must outline the need for the project and any community consultation undertaken.

5.2 Financials

All applicants must:

- Have gained necessary permissions to undertake this work as required (i.e. permissions from landlords, planning permission)
- Demonstrate value for money
- Be fully transparent on the total project costs and where funding will be allocated as well as any in-kind support for your activity/project
- Submit a copy of your last year end accounts showing any reserves or restricted funds.

5.3 Project monitoring

To ensure grant funding is spent with due diligence, RCCE will issue a project monitoring report which is required to be submitted to the Funding Officer; this obligation will be included in the grant agreement upon confirmation of a successful award.

RCCE may request a full audit of the projects accounts and gain financial assurance.

5.4 Public Sector Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2010 states that public authorities must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty and for them to consider how their policies or decisions affect people who have protected characteristics under The Act.

These protected characteristics are:

- Age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, and marriage and civil partnership.

RCCE and Essex County Council are committed to the positive advancement of equality, fostering good relations between different groups and tackling unlawful discrimination.

When considering applications organisations should consider that their projects and activities will help advance the following of the Public Sector Equality Duty and The Act, the aims being:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation i.e. projects that seek to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Advancing equality of opportunity i.e. projects that provide opportunities to those with protected characteristics
- Fostering good relations i.e. projects that encourage those with protected characteristics to participate in public life, bringing communities together to share commonalities and promote community cohesion and inclusion.

5.5 Timescales and Application Process

This is a rolling programme and applications can be submitted at any time prior to the deadline of 23.59 on 31 December 2021.

Successful applicants will be notified by email as soon as a decision is made by the panel and will be required to agree to terms and conditions set out in a grant agreement set by RCCE.

RCCE and ECC reserve the right to change timescales if circumstances change. Late applications will not be accepted.

Supporting Documentation:

Please note the following will need to be provided:

- **Copy of your latest end of year accounts showing any reserves and restricted funds;**
- **Copy of quote for capital works or costings for revenue funding**
- **No more than 3 photos**

PLEASE NOTE: Failure to fully complete applications or supply required documentation may make your application null and void.

Completed applications are to be returned to RCCE. Applications should be emailed to the Funding Officer using the details on **page 1** of this document.