

West Suffolk Council Thriving Communities Funding 2026-27

Guidance for applicants

West Suffolk Council's Thriving Communities provides grants to organisations that work to benefit local residents.

Please read the following guidelines to find out:

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Contact us

If you have any questions about the council's Thriving Communities grants or would like to discuss your project with us before making an application, please contact us on the details below.

Please note, the flowchart in section 3, may not be accessible for people using assistive technology. If you need details in an accessible format, please contact us on the details below.

Email: families.communities@westsuffolk.gov.uk

Phone: 01638 719235



1. Thriving Communities Funding

1.1 Introduction to the Thriving Communities Fund

- Thriving Communities offers a £645,953 package to support the work of community groups, charities and voluntary organisations in projects designed to help the health and wellbeing of residents in West Suffolk including supporting them through the continuing cost-of-living crisis.
- It includes grants from a minimum of £100 available throughout the year through our 64 councillors who each have an annual locality budget of £2,800 to support community groups and initiatives that benefit residents in their wards.
- It includes the annual Thriving Communities Fund which replaces Community Chest. The application process has been made easier to encourage small community groups to also apply while the grant scheme offers two levels of funding. The first, is for one-off projects that will support residents in a specific local community such as an estate or village and offers grants of between £2,000 to £8,000.
- The second, which will fund work to support residents across the whole of West Suffolk or large parts of the district such as a town, offers grants of between £8,001 to £20,000.
- And it includes a grant agreement of £200,000 a year, for three years, towards Citizen's Advice West Suffolk operational costs, giving them certainty over funding support from the council. The grant agreement is for operational costs and Citizen's Advice is still eligible, alongside other community, charity, and voluntary organisations, to apply for Thriving Communities funding towards significant new developments.
- Thriving Communities Fund is designed to provide a more coherent package of funding toward initiatives that support the health and wellbeing of residents across West Suffolk.
- The council is seeking to fund organisations who help to work towards strengthening these elements and towards the delivery of West Suffolk Council's values.

2. West Suffolk Council's Values

West Suffolk Council's Values

These values will be at the core of everything West Suffolk does.

Collaborative

Both within the council and across West Suffolk's communities, we will work in a collaborative way, recognising the different strengths and roles of ourselves as councillors and our partners in tackling common issues. This involves listening, being clear about our respective priorities, and taking an active role in delivering for West Suffolk residents.

Fair and inclusive

In everything we do, we will promote equality and diversity by seeking to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different groups of people through all aspects of our work across West Suffolk.

Championing local places

West Suffolk is made up of a large number of diverse communities across our villages, towns and rural areas. Our plans, policies and investments will respect these local differences, opportunities and needs. We will reflect on what is unique about each of our localities, ensuring fairness in the outcomes achieved for each place.

Innovative

In order to address the complex challenges we face in West Suffolk, we will not shy away from finding innovative solutions, in order to ensure we secure the best possible future for our residents.

Practical

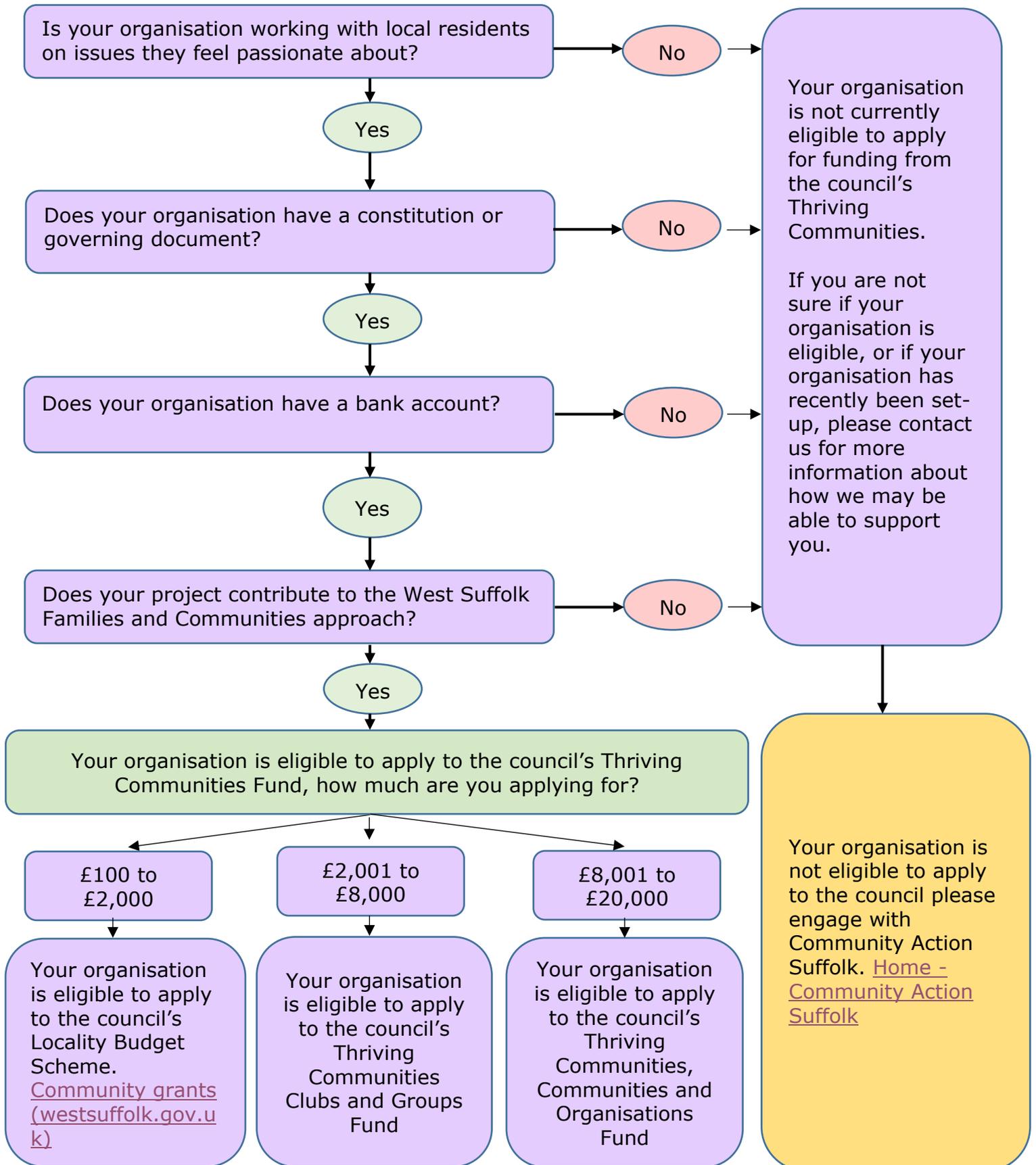
As a local authority, West Suffolk's priority is to deliver 'change on the ground' for local businesses, communities and residents. This means being practical, getting the right people and resources together and pressing ahead with local delivery.

Financially astute decision making

In the context of an increasingly challenging financial environment for councils and residents alike, we will ensure that our decision making is financially astute and makes the best use of public money. For example, we will make investment decisions that both secure better outcomes for communities but also a financial return that can be reinvested into council services.

3. Is your organisation eligible for Thriving Communities funding?

Flowchart may not be accessible for people using assistive technology. If you need it in an accessible format, please email families.communities@westsuffolk.gov.uk



4. Guidance and funding restrictions

4.1 Eligibility criteria

In order to apply for Thriving Communities funding, groups and organisations must:

- be a voluntary, charitable, community, faith group or social enterprise organisation and not an individual, business, public body or political party – **please note** applications from faith groups must be inclusive.
- have a constitution or set of rules by which they operate.
- have a management committee or board of trustees.
- have a bank account in the name of the organisation and with two signatories.
- must have in place appropriate insurance, risk assessments and/or health and safety policies.
- be seeking to deliver activities within the West Suffolk Council area for the benefit of its residents. Report regularly to the West Suffolk council on the use of the funding and its impact, including progress towards any agreed outcomes or targets. Applications can also be received from new organisational start-ups approved within the last three months.

4.2 Application guidance

Throughout the application the applicant should evidence:

- how the project has come from the community's desire to improve the lives of local people. Successful applications will show how the project is supported by local people, for example, by providing evidence of how the community have been involved in the project and any consultation that has taken place
- how the funding will help local people support one another
- how the funding will help grow voluntary, community or social enterprise organisations
- the results that the funding will achieve in west Suffolk
- how the project is supported by evidence that action is needed. This can be in the form of facts and figures as well as case studies and may be locally collected, or based on existing research
- how the proposed project will contribute to West Suffolk's strategic objectives and specifically its Families and Communities Approach: [Families and Communities approach](#)

- how the project promotes innovation in working with communities, for example, by trying new approaches to supporting local communities that could be tried elsewhere in west Suffolk and beyond

Please adhere to the word limits where stated. Any text in addition to the advised limit will be disregarded.

4.3 Funding restrictions

Grants are awarded on the understanding that funding:

- is for projects which are going to happen in the future (no retrospective applications)
- is not just for research or analysis
- is for work that will benefit people who live or work in West Suffolk Council area
- is not for promoting a religious or non-religious belief or philosophy or party-political view
- will not be used for work or activities that are the statutory responsibility of a public body and already funded by the taxpayer (for example, highway maintenance, mainstream education provision)
- will, where possible, be match funded by funding from other organisations.
- will not be awarded from more than one West Suffolk grant programme for the same work (for example, Thriving Communities and Locality Budgets). Match funding could include in-kind contributions such as volunteer hours; and
- will, usually be for a period of one year, but with the option of two-year grant awards where appropriate (subject to budget setting).

5. How to apply for a grant from the Thriving Communities - financial year 2026-27

Applications are open until **5pm on Friday 26 September 2025**. Successful grants will be awarded by the end of February 2026 and paid in April 2026.

You can apply for a grant from the council's Thriving Communities by completing an application form. The online application form along with other useful documents can be found at [West Suffolk Council - Community grants](#)

Thriving Communities funding is offered by West Suffolk Council. If you would like to discuss your activity or draft application before you submit you are very welcome to do so using the 'Contact us' details on page 1.

6. How your application will be assessed

- When you have submitted your application, your project will be reviewed. We may contact you for clarification on the information you have provided.
- Recommendations on funding will be made by a grant working party.
- When the recommendations are approved, we will write to you to let you know the outcome of your application. Decisions on applications are final and there is no appeals procedure.

7. What happens next

- If successful, you will be asked to sign a grant agreement, setting out the terms and conditions of your grant and the outputs and outcomes you will be expected to achieve and report to the council, taken from your grant application form.
- Once your signed grant agreement is returned and verified, this will enable your payment to be made.

8. Thriving Communities scoring matrix

This is the scoring matrix the council uses to evaluate applications for Thriving Communities funding.

Assessment criteria

1. Evidence of need and local community support

0 —————→ to —————→ 5		
No evidence produced and/or no community involvement	Some evidence of need and a community desire for the project	Strong and clear evidence of need backed up with strong community support for the project

2. Building capacity of local people and/or the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations

0 —————→ to —————→ 5		
No or limited opportunity for local people to be involved	The project identifies opportunities and supports upskilling of local people	The project has a strong element of capacity building for individuals and the wider community

3. Contribute to West Suffolk's priorities

0 —————→ to —————→ 5	
No or limited evidence of the project having clear outcomes that fit with West Suffolk's priorities for families and communities	Strong evidence of the project having clear outcomes that fit with West Suffolk's priorities for families and communities

4. Promote prevention and early intervention

0 → to → 5

Limited evidence of preventative approaches being used	Strong evidence of prevention/ early intervention approaches being used, to build resilience and avoid the need for crisis interventions later on
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5. Support continued partnership working

0 → to → 5

Little or no evidence of partner support for or the involvement in the project	The project has the support of partners and/or involves them in joint working	The project has broad based support from partners and/or involves strong partnership working
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6. Ability to deliver

0 → to → 5

The organisation has no track record in delivering projects	The organisation has some experience in delivering community work or related projects	The organisation has a clear track record of community work
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7. Financially Astute

0 → to → 5

The organisation has no clarity in the financial information shared	The organisation has some clarity in the financial information shared	The organisation has a clear clarity in the financial information shared
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9. Sample grant agreement

You will be expected to sign and return a completed grant agreement before your grant is paid to you. The council is aware that many voluntary organisations and charities spend a lot of time reporting to their funders, and we would like to minimise this burden as much as possible, so you can get on with the important work of helping our communities.

We therefore do not have a prescribed monitoring form. You can provide monitoring in a format that suits you, as long as the agreed outputs and outcomes are clear, and you provide a case study at some point during your grant period.

Thriving Communities sample grant agreement

Name of organisation or principal partner	Address
Contact details	
Funding	
Thriving Communities funding has been approved by West Suffolk council to the sum of £xxxx towards [name of project].	
This funding has been approved for the financial year xxxx to xxxx.	

<p>This funding agreement is between the council and the service provider and shall begin on dd/mm/yyyy.</p>	
<p>Summary of the purpose of the funding and outputs and outcomes to be achieved.</p>	
<p>Outputs (what has been delivered)</p>	
<p>Outcomes (the effect the activity has had on those taking part in or receiving it)</p>	
<p>Monitoring</p>	<p>Officer comments</p>
<p>We request the following information which we will require quarterly, by the end of the month following each quarter:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delivery of the above project 2. Number and demographics of attendees 3. Evaluation evidence of the outcomes in red. <p>We request the following information which we will require annually, at a time of your choosing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. A case study demonstrating the outcomes and impact of the project. 	<p>Monitoring information to be presented in a format decided by the grant receiving organisation.</p>
<p>[Name of organisation] will deliver adhere to the aims, activities and objectives outlined within the Thriving Communities Grant application.</p> <p>Payment of these grants will be made by the BACS transfer system direct to the bank account.</p>	<p>[information to be added as appropriate to each successful application]</p>
<p>Funding restrictions - please refer to the information contained in the guidance section of the information pack.</p>	
<p>Withholding, suspending and repayment of grant</p> <p>The council's intention is that the grant will be paid to the recipient in full. However, without prejudice to the council's other rights and remedies, the council may at its discretion withhold or suspend payment of the grant [and/or require repayment of all or part of the grant] if:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. the recipient uses the grant for purposes other than those for which they have been awarded. b. the delivery of the project does not start within the agreed time period of the commencement date and the recipient has failed to provide the council with a reasonable explanation for the delay. c. the council considers that the recipient has not made satisfactory progress with the delivery of the project. 	

- d. the recipient is, in the reasonable opinion of the council, delivering the project in a negligent manner.
- e. the recipient obtains duplicate funding from a third party for the project.
- f. the recipient obtains funding from a third party which, in the reasonable opinion of the council, undertakes activities that are likely to bring the reputation of the project or the council into disrepute.
- g. the recipient provides the council with any materially misleading or inaccurate information.

To be signed (wet signature required) by an authorised official of the organisation.

The payment of this funding is subject to the delivery of the project detailed above and compliance with all funding restrictions.

On behalf of the organisation above, I agree to the terms and conditions set out here and in the grant application documents

Signed	Print name
Position	Date
Organisation	

Payment details

Bank details are required in the table below.

Please note that payments cannot be made to individuals and the name of the bank account must be the same as the group receiving the funds.

Account name of organisation	
Registered charity number (if applicable)	
Address (if different to above address)	
Bank name	
Account number (eight digits)	
Sort code	

Office use only

Account code	R4711
Cost centre	2081
Supplier ID	
Immediate payment	Yes

10. Sample monitoring form

Name of organisation or principal partners	Address	Contact details.
Funding: Thriving Communities funding has been approved by West Suffolk council to the sum of £xxxx towards [name of project]. This funding has been approved for the financial year xxxx to xxxx		
Please note: The outputs and outcomes detailed below are for the year, you are not expected to have achieved all of them in Quarter 1.		
	Quarter 1 – Quarter 2: April 2026 to September 2027	Quarter 3 – Quarter 4: October 2026 to March 2027
Outputs (Can be found on your grant agreement)		
Outcomes (Can be found on your grant agreement.)		
Narrative or other comments (Please include any other information or statistics you feel would be beneficial to share.)		
Case study (please tick) One case study to be submitted across the year. Please submit as a separate document.		