Oak Grants - (Grants between £5,001 - £15,000)

Grant Guidance

Oak Grants are designed to support established organisations to scale proven approaches, embed lasting change, and tackle systemic disadvantage.

Before committing to an application, please make sure that your organisation and project are eligible for funding and that you have read our grants policy in full.

Grant Size
Between £5,001 – £15,000

Oak Grants cannot fully fund projects, applicants must secure at least **20%** of project funding from other sources.

Grant Deadlines
For exact dates please check table at the end of this document. Applications must be **submitted by midday** of the deadline date. A decision is usually known within 10 weeks of the deadline date.

What Types of Projects Can It Support?
Oak Grants can support a range of projects and activities. We encourage applications that respond to issues raised in our annual Vital Signs report, address local needs, work in partnership, and aim to strengthen the voluntary sector.

Please refer to how your project is addressing issues highlighted in your application.

Our Vital Signs Areas

Stronger Communities	Disadvantage and Poverty
Local Economy	Diversity
Transport	Health and Wellbeing
Work	Crime and Safety
Education	Housing
Environment	Arts and Heritage

Who Can Apply?

We can accept applications from constituted, not-for-profit organisations supporting beneficiaries from Milton Keynes:

- Unincorporated associations
- Registered charities
- Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs)
- Sports clubs
- Faith groups - *where the primary project activity is community-focussed and not for the promotion of religion. Beneficiaries must not be required to take part in religious activities, and no individual may be excluded from benefiting on the grounds of faith, religion or lack of belief.*

Community Interest Companies (CIC)

CICs can be funded for start-up costs through Oak Grants. Please speak to a member of the Philanthropy Team before you apply.

CICs applying for start-up costs must:

- Submit a business plan covering the first year of operations
- Have been incorporated no more than three months prior to application
- Ensure funding is focused on community benefit
- Seek pre-agreement with the Philanthropy Team before applying for a Partnership Grant

Finances

- If your organisation's income is over £5,000 at the time of application, your organisation must be registered with The Charity Commission or the relevant regulator (e.g. Companies House, CIC regulator or Financial Conduct Authority) or be in the process of registration. Evidence of this must be submitted with your

application. Guidance on setting up a charitable organisation can be found at
www.gov.uk/setting-up-charity

- Organisations with over six months' free reserves should be prepared to explain why they need to hold this level. ("Free reserves" do not include designated or restricted funds).

Governance

All applicants must provide the following documentation:

- A governing document/constitution that details the name and purpose of the organisation. It must also include an appropriate asset lock and confirmation that the organisation is not for profit. (The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has advice on **writing a constitution**. GOV.UK also provides information on **how to write your charity's governing document**.)

- Trustee/Management Committee details – a list of names and addresses of your management (governing)committee; we require a minimum of three contacts.

- Most recent Annual Accounts/Financial records covering a minimum of past 12 month (For organisations that have existed for under a year, a bank statement will suffice).

- A recent bank statement to show the bank account is in the organisation's name (as written in your constitution/governing document). The account must have at least two unrelated signatories.

- EDI/Equal Opportunities policy covering nine protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010.

- Child and Adult Safeguarding Policies with details of the local lead person (including Vulnerable Adult Policy, if applicable)

- Evidence of expected cost such as quotes when requested by the Philanthropy Team.

What the Grant Will Not Cover

- Core/running costs, except where these are essential to project delivery, or where they meet eligibility under our Cost-of-Living grant programme (for example, increases in utilities, rent, or staffing costs linked to rising living expenses).
- Statutory activities, or purchase of equipment that will become the property of a statutory body.
- Animal welfare projects.
- Retrospective costs (anything that has already been bought). Rare exceptions may be made where deposits are required. (Must be agreed in advance by a member of the Philanthropy Team).
- Medical research or treatment.
- Deficit funding or repayment of loans.
- Unspecified expenditure.
- Contingencies and miscellaneous expenses.
- Events or activities where the primary purpose is to fundraise.
- Redistributing funds to other charitable organisations (except for specific partnership arrangements).
- Food and drink (unless vital to the project).
- Travel and accommodation (unless vital to the project).

Decision Making

- Oak Grants are scored and approved by an independent panel made up of MK Community Foundation Trustees and external community representatives.
- MK Community Foundation staff do not score or approve any Oak Grant applications.

Scoring

- Oak Grant applications are scored out of 55 (10 points per section – Need/Demand, Reach/Impact, Sustainability, Partnerships and Inclusion & 5 points for Group Profile Score)
- Applications that score 33 or more will be successful.
- Please note that the panel may decide to fund the full amount requested or part of the amount requested.

Application Questions

When completing an Oak Grant application via the online form, you will be required to answer the following questions (the criteria areas each question relates to are in red):

- *Project Name & Description of your project:*
- *Project/Grant Funding Start Date:*
- *Project/Grant Funding End Date:*
- *What is the total cost of your project?*
- *How much are you applying for in this application? (at least 20% of the project costs should come from alternative sources)*
- *Have you secured additional funding for this project elsewhere? Please provide details.*
- *Please provide an overview of fundraising plans, other funding applications you have approached or plan to approach to run this project.*
- *Which Geographical area will most beneficiaries come from?*
- *Full Breakdown of Cost/Project Budget*

1. *Explain the need for your project, how the need was identified and how this project will address the need.* **(Need & Demand)**

2. *Outline the key steps you will take to deliver the project and achieve the aims of the project.*

3. *Who are the beneficiaries of this project, what impact will the project have (please provide details on both short- and long-term impact of the project)* **(Reach & Impact)**

4. *How will you measure and record the impact of your project?* **(Reach & Impact)**

5. *How will you promote the project and ensure the project reaches the intended beneficiaries?* **(Reach & Impact)**

6. *How will you continue to fund the project beyond this grant? If the project is addressing a short-term need or a one-off activity, please highlight the lasting impact of the grant to your organisation or beneficiaries.* **(Sustainability)**

7. *The project should demonstrate collaboration with relevant partners, who are you working with to develop/deliver the project and how are they involved.* **(Partnership)**

8. *Have you explored similar services or projects in the city, and considered opportunities to collaborate or partner with those organisations to increase impact? Please provide details of any discussions, research and how this has influenced the project.* **(Partnership)**

9. *How does the project ensure it is inclusive and reaches diverse communities in Milton Keynes?* **(Inclusion)**

10. *Please expand on the steps taken to actively reach and engage with underserved and marginalised communities to ensure the project is accessible to all intended beneficiaries?* **(Inclusion)**

Oak Grant Criteria

When completing an Oak Grant application, you are scored on the following criteria areas.

To be successful, applicants must address the criteria when answering each question. Please note, the bullet points under each heading are not to be 'ticked off' one by one – they are pointers to help you shape the answers to each question.

Addressing all the points below does not guarantee funding.

- **Need and Demand**

  - The group has provided strong evidence that there is a need for this project.
  - This need is not being satisfactorily met locally by other agencies, i.e. this is not a duplication of an existing service.
  - This is the best way to meet this need.
  - There are limited opportunities for these funds to be raised elsewhere and/or there are not more appropriate other avenues for this funding to be sought
  - There is a need for this project to be supported by grant funding, e.g. the applicant organisation could not reasonably fund this from free reserves or other means.

- **Reach and Impact**

  - The project and all associated costs and activities are relevant to the need it is trying to address.
  - The applicant is properly qualified to deliver these services to the relevant individuals in the community and possesses the skill or established connections to ensure they are delivered effectively.
  - The project will serve under-funded geographical areas and/or communities.
  - The application shows an understanding of and plans for effective outreach.
  - The group has addressed barriers to provision (e.g. cost, access, cultural divisions).
  - The project will serve a hard-to-reach demographic and there is evidence that the group will be able to work well with this demographic.
  - The project will build useful skills and resources for the local community.
  - There are other long-term benefits to the community from this project.

- **Sustainability**

  - The applicant can evidence that their group has begun to strategize / investigate long term funding options that will enable this project to continue past the end of this grant.
  - There is a realistic expectation that long term funding can be secured following the end of this grant.
  - If the project is not long term, the costs and financial projections offered are realistic and sustainable for this project. 'Good value for money.'

- **Diversity and Inclusion**

  - The project is fully inclusive and has considered differing needs within Milton Keynes' diverse communities.
  - Reflects an awareness of the nine protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) in terms of flavour and design.

- **Partnerships**

  - The project must show collaboration with other organisations where objectives are similar.
  - The project brings together several groups to maximise expertise.
  - The project is innovative and/or unique in the area and is it a creative approach to addressing a need.

- **Group Profile Score**

  - Previous grant monitoring been submitted on time and to a good standard.
  - There is a good record of sound financial and project management.
  - The organisation has reputable endorsements from individuals and/or other organisations.
  - The organisation has a record of enterprise or fundraising.
  - The organisation has a history of reaching diverse and/or vulnerable. beneficiaries and/or supporting Vital Signs priority areas.

When To Apply

Applications must be **submitted by midday** of the deadline date:

For January Round – 2026/01	**Friday, 12th December**
For April Round – 2026/04	**Friday, 13th March**
For July Round – 2026/07	**Friday, 12th June**
For October Round – 2026/10	**Friday, 11th September**
For January Round – 2027/01	**Friday, 11th December**

How To Apply

To apply for an Oak Grant, you must use our online application form which can be found by visiting: https://miltonkeynescommunityfoundation.my.site.com/fundseekerportal/s/login/

It is advised that all previous grant monitoring is submitted before you make a new application to any programme.

Need More Help?

If after reading the guidelines, you have any questions or need some help completing your application, please get in touch with our team:

Email: applications@mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk