

The City of Edinburgh Council

Source to Ocean Action Recovery (SOAR)

Guidance on the Application Process

What is the SOAR Fund?

The SOAR fund will support projects that ***inspire and educate residents about the importance of the ocean and Edinburgh's own marine and coastal environments.***

£50,000 has been allocated by City of Edinburgh Council to activities that inspire, engage and educate residents and communities about the importance of the ocean and Edinburgh's own marine and coastal environments and to improve ocean literacy.

For this grant, the City of Edinburgh Council will use the IOC-UNESCO definition of **ocean literacy as 'an understanding of the ocean's influence on a person and their influence on the ocean'.**

Activities should aim to increase knowledge about and awareness of local river, coastal and marine environments and the benefits of **source to sea approaches**, driving a positive shift in attitudes, behaviours and community participation.

Source to Sea Approach: *Reducing pollution and other pressures that flow from land to freshwater, and to coasts and seas, for sustainable outcomes across the connected source-to-sea system.*

The City of Edinburgh Council Business Plan

This fund has been allocated to support the Council's strategic priorities:

1. create good places to live and work in Edinburgh.
2. take all the local actions needed to end poverty in Edinburgh, and
3. work to deliver a net zero city by 2030.

[More information on our business plan priorities, objectives and outcomes to deliver priorities can be found online.](#)

Guidance

This document is designed to support you to submit a grant application. Please read this guidance carefully before applying, as it contains key information on eligibility of projects, timescales, and how to submit your application.

All successful applicants will need to sign a funding agreement and complete a grant report, covering outcomes delivered.

Who can apply?

The application process is open to community organisations that are based in or operate in Edinburgh and are involved with projects and initiatives concerning the sea, coast, marine and

or watercourse environments. This includes charities, community benefit organisations, sports clubs, heritage groups, conservation groups, parent councils, community interest company (CICs) and companies limited by guarantee.

To qualify for this grant, you must:

- Be based or operate within the City of Edinburgh
- Be a registered charity, company and/or an unincorporated organisation who have a constitution or articles showing that:
 - the organisation has charitable purposes or objects or is set up for community benefit
 - if the organisation dissolves, any funds and assets will be transferred to another organisation set up for community benefit
 - funds are appropriately managed, for example, they have a bank account in the name of the group, with at least two authorised signatories required for banking transactions.
- Have capacity to start your project before March 2027 with full delivery and project completion as outlined in your proposal no later than end of 2027.

How much can I apply for?

- The SOAR fund has a total of £50,000 to allocate
- The maximum amount of a single grant award is £10,000.
- The minimum amount that can be applied for is £2,500.
- Grants for successful applications will be allocated in one single up-front payment.

What can the grant funding be used for?

We are seeking projects that inspire and educate residents about the importance of the ocean and Edinburgh's own marine, coastal and watercourse environments. The grant funding can be used for staff and material costs directly related to a defined project. Examples of projects we're looking to fund include, but not limited to:

- Beach-clear programmes which include an educational element for participants and/or space to reflect on their connection to the ocean (including costs for staff time during the defined project and associated equipment that can be retained for future re-use)
- Interpretive signage for ocean/water/ecological literacy (this can include artist installations and sculptures)
- Restoration events and/or habitat creation (hibernacula, basking banks, roosting platforms, birdboxes)
- Community planting initiatives (staff time, materials for planting, plants/trees, tools/equipment)
- Community environmental art workshops (staff time and materials for connection to nature sessions)
- Citizen science workshops for Bio Blitz/species recording (staff time, venue hire, materials, equipment, monitoring)
- Development of educational materials for source to ocean education
- Education sessions with schools or young people

What are the assessment criteria?

Applications will be assessed on the following criteria which have incorporated the headline findings from the [Scottish Government's Ocean Literacy survey](#).

For this grant, the City of Edinburgh Council will use the IOC-UNESCO definition of **ocean literacy as 'an understanding of the ocean's influence on a person and their influence on the ocean'**.

Activities should aim to increase knowledge about and awareness of local river, coastal and marine environments and the benefits of **source to sea approaches**, driving a positive shift in attitudes, behaviours and community participation.

To what extent is the project intended to:

1. Increase awareness and knowledge.
 - Increase levels of ocean literacy and positive attitudes towards habitat restoration and its role in tackling the climate and nature emergencies. *This can include projects that track and monitor changes in communities' attitudes to and knowledge of ocean recovery.*
2. Change attitudes and behaviour
 - Increase the number of volunteers involved with environmental stewardship for coastal, marine and watercourse environments. *This can include projects that encourage and enable resident and community actions for the marine environment.*
3. Communicate ideas
 - Communicate and engage with communities on the subject of ocean recovery. *This could include in-person educational events, talks and / or practical engagement sessions with various groups.*
4. Create a basis for long term and sustainable change
 - Increase the capacity and capability of community groups involved in coastal adaptation, marine restoration and source to sea activities to achieve successful delivery of projects and climate adaptation measures. *This can include capacity building training to enable communities to act themselves.*
5. Collaborate with communities
 - Make use of the existing strengths and assets in local communities to increase safe, equitable and appropriate access to coastal, marine and watercourse environments. *This can include utilising existing knowledge in the community as well as existing natural assets and infrastructure.*

Applications that meet more than one of these criteria will score higher. Each of the categories above will be given equal weight.

Applications that can give examples of relevant previously delivered projects will be scored higher.

Reporting

If your application is successful, the grantee must provide the following to the City of Edinburgh Council a report at the end of the project which will include:

- A summary of activity e.g. number of event attendees (monitor event registration vs actual turnout, the number of new contacts made, sign-ups etc.)
- A case study of an event, if applicable
- Results of surveys and engagement aimed at gathering participant feedback (feedback from any partners, sponsors or exhibitors - did their participation meet their business objectives?)
- The outcomes achieved
- Details of spend
- Lessons learned

This report is to be submitted within 2 weeks of conclusion of the project and before the end of 2027.

Timescale

- Projects must have commenced before March 2027 with full delivery and project completion by no later than end of 2027.
- Applications for the grant fund will open on 19 October 2026 and close on 30 November 2026.
 - Once you have completed the application in full, please submit the form as a Word document, along with the additional information requested, by email to climatechange@edinburgh.gov.uk by 12:00 on 30 November 2026.
- We aim to notify successful applicants from 16th December 2026 onwards

Compliance with legislation

The Council's Grant Standing Orders govern the award of external grants. Please note these have been updated as of 20 March 2025. By applying, you confirm on behalf of your organisation that the organisation will follow these procedures if the Council enters a grant agreement with the organisation. A grant agreement will follow, signed by both parties, to detail the target outcomes for the funding period.

<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/council-planning-framework/equality-diversity-inclusion/3mailto:communications.projects@edinburgh.gov.uk>

Further Reading

To fully understand the depth of possible options, we would encourage applicants to familiarise themselves with:

- the [10 dimensions of ocean literacy](#).
- [Ocean literacy survey: headline findings](#)