



Guidance notes notes 2026 – 2027 for community projects up to £5000

1. What is LeithChooses?

LeithChooses gives the people of Leith a unique opportunity to choose, by vote, which local projects should receive funding. It works on the principle of 'participatory budgeting' (PB) which means local people get to say how public money is spent.

Everybody who lives, works, volunteers or studies in Leith, and is over 8 years old, can vote. We want as many people as possible to take part.

Every vote is personal, same as it would be for an election. While advertising your organisation is a core part of the process, coercing individuals or fraudulent voting activity may lead to penalties for the organisation involved.

Voting will take place in January 2027. There will be both 'in-person' voting and online voting, like last year.

Anybody who needs help to apply and/or to vote is welcome to contact the LeithChooses team for support at LeithChooses@edinburgh.gov.uk.

2. How much is available?

Currently, approximately £44,000 is available for projects. This is from the City of Edinburgh Council 'Community Grants Fund' for Leith. Any further funds raised throughout the year will be added to this same 'pot' to extend the number of grants that can be made to community groups.

3. What are the timescales?

This is an annual process, so there is only one window for making applications.

- Applications open: Monday 10 August 2026
- Applications close: Monday 12 October 2026
- In-person voting: Saturday 23 January 2027
- Online voting window: Tuesday 26 January to Tuesday 9 February 2027
- Results announcement: Thursday 18 February 2027

4. Who can apply for money?

Any group or partnership (defined below) with charitable purposes, or that is set up for community benefit, can apply as long as the **Council's Funding Conditions** (see section 6) are met.

Schools may not apply, but parent councils can apply for projects that benefit the wider community and are not part of the core curriculum.

Appropriately constituted Community Interest Companies (CIC) may be able to apply.

Partnerships: Groups can partner with another group or groups, with one group taking a 'lead' role in the application and assuming overall responsibility.

5. How much can you apply for?

Groups or partnerships can apply for a grant of any size (but please only apply for what you actually need), up to a maximum of £5,000.

All applications are welcome! **Each group or partnership can only submit one application for funding.**

6. Council Conditions of Grant

To qualify for a grant, you must have a constitution or articles of association showing that:

- the organisation has charitable purposes/objects or is set up for community benefit.
- the organisation has a bank account in its name.
- if the organisation dissolves, any funds/assets will be transferred to another organisation set up for community benefit.
- funds are appropriately managed (e.g. has a bank account in the name of the group, with at least two authorised signatories required for banking transactions).

(If further funds were to become available for small projects by **unconstituted** groups, this would be advertised separately).

7. What types of projects will be funded?

- Your project must benefit the community and the people in Leith.
- Your project must address real needs in the community, and your application should reference evidence of these.
- Your project must either be a new project or a distinct addition to an existing project, not just a continuation of an existing/ongoing project.

Funding can cover things like buying equipment, transport, event costs, sessional/ additional staff time, specialist services, reimbursement of volunteer expenses, communications/ promotional materials for the proposed project, special licenses or insurance required for the project.

LeithChooses has been running since 2010. For examples of past projects, check out the online gallery at www.leithchooses.net/leithchooses-2024-2025/gallery/

You can also find more information about what can/cannot be funded on pages 5 – 7 of the [Community Grants Fund Applicant Guidance Document](#).

8. Is there a theme, this year? Will there be a Boost Vote again?

Yes, your project must fit within the theme: **‘Greater Leith Harmony’**

Yes, there will be a Boost Vote option again for minority ethnic community projects. The details of the qualifying criteria for the Boost Vote are available in sections 17 -19 below. LeithChooses will make the final decision on whether a project qualifies for a Boost Vote.

9. Can you get help with your application? How we can support you

Yes! We really want your application to succeed and are very happy to help you. Please contact LeithChooses as soon as possible, and we will do our very best to help you.

You can contact us directly with questions, or just for advice. You can ask for someone to speak with you and/or your group by phone, email, on a face-to-face visit, or by video conference etc. You can ask for a named LeithChooses ‘mentor’ who will guide you through the whole process. You can come along to group support sessions on the following dates on Microsoft Teams (you don’t need a Teams account to be able to join!):

- 17 August 2026 2:30pm – 3:30pm [register online for 17 August](#)
- 30 September 2026 5:30pm – 6:30pm [register online for 30 September](#)

If you want help and support, the main thing is **‘Don’t leave this until the last minute!’** Get in touch with a request for support as soon as you are clear that you wish to apply.

Email: leithchooses@edinburgh.gov.uk Tel: 07743 167 340

10. What kind of things will NOT be funded?

Applications will **not** be considered for:

- Organisations/groups/projects that do not comply with equalities duties ([Equalities Act 2010](#) & [Equality Act 2010 \(Specific Duties\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#).)
- Party political, lobbying or religious activity, although applications can be accepted from faith groups if they are for local community work.
- Self-payment – e.g. charging for use of your own venue or materials.
- Routine property maintenance or repairs, overheads or ongoing running costs, e.g. rent/rates, insurance, office supplies, postage, phone bills, website etc.
- Utility costs such as heating, electricity, water.
- Salary for core staff/ staff time that isn’t specifically for delivering the project in question.
- General administration.
- Servicing of debt or monies already spent.

- Contributions to much large fund-raising, e.g. for a new building. Unless the funding applied for is for a specific stand-alone element of the larger project that can be delivered independently of the other work.
- Projects proposed by bodies that are publicly funded, e.g. schools, NHS, Police. (Exceptionally, projects based on partnership with community group(s) may be considered.)
- Organisations or individuals that have received funding previously, but failed to submit a report by the deadline. See section 16 for details.
- Organisations that have been found to have unduly coerced voters or attempted voter fraud during the voting process.

11. Any other rules?

Applying: You must submit your project outline, logo and photograph by the deadline.

- You must send with your application a good quality photo (This should be ideally at least 2000 x 2000 pixels at 72 dots per inch, so a photo taken with a modern phone or camera will be fine) that illustrates your group and/or your project, along with permission for this to be displayed online. You must also agree that your text describing your project, will be displayed online for people to consider before and at the time of voting.
- If your project or organisation has a logo, please send this with the application and photo. The logo should ideally be at least 500 x 500 pixels at 72 dots per inch.
- If your project involves public or private property, you must show evidence that the owner supports your project, and that appropriate planning permission or licences are in place.
- If relevant to your project, you may also need insurance or Disclosure Scotland PVG checks.
- If your project will cost more than the amount you are applying for, you must show that you will have the rest of the money, and can complete the project.

Taking part and collecting votes

- In order to receive votes, your group **MUST** attend and participate in the in-person voting day event.

12. How to apply

This is a change from previous years

You should **apply online** at edinburgh.gov.uk/applyleithchooses

Please note that you cannot save and come back to your online application, if you close your browser at any point, so we recommend that you write your application answers in advance before completing the online form. A copy of your application answers will be sent to you via email upon completing the online form.

If you would like access to the application form in a different format, please contact leithchooses@edinburgh.gov.uk as early as possible.

Fill out the online application form and submit it by Wednesday 12 October 2026 at the latest. This date gives time for any necessary cross-checking and final adjustments.

You must also attach:

- two good quality images that will illustrate your group and your project visually: (1) your group's logo and (2) a relevant photo or image (or two photos if you don't have a logo). These must be in JPG or PNG digital format, not on paper, emailed to leithchooses@edinburgh.gov.uk.

Your application will be checked and, if needed, you may be asked for a bit more information.

13. What happens next?

1. You may be contacted about details of your application that need adjustment.
2. If your application meets the conditions and is accepted, you will be informed.
3. Information about your proposed project will be published online, for the Leith community to read about, in an online 'gallery' on the LeithChooses website, and later on the City of Edinburgh Council Consultation Hub.
4. You should ensure that your current and potential service users know about your application, and you are free to 'advertise' in order to encourage people to vote for you.
5. You are required to attend the voting day event on a Saturday in January 2026, in Leith, where you will run a stall/table and explain your project to people who come to cast their votes in person. **Please note that if you do not attend, your group is at risk of being disqualified.** (In case of last-minute unavoidable emergency, please be sure to contact LeithChooses.)
6. People from Leith will also cast votes online. Online voting will be open for a period of two weeks.
7. Total vote numbers will be calculated to determine which projects will get money.

The results will be announced publicly about 2 weeks later.

14. If the Leith people vote to give money to your project

You will be sent a 'letter of offer' that will ask you to complete a simple funding agreement and acceptance form, within one month.

When you send back those documents, the money will be put directly into your group's designated bank account.

If your project is awarded LeithChooses funding, **it must be completed within 12 months from the receipt of funding**, that is by 31 March 2028.

15. What if something goes wrong?

If your project needs to be changed, please contact us to discuss and agree changes. If the grant is unspent, the project cannot be delivered, or if the organisation dissolves, any unspent LeithChooses project funds must be returned. Funding cannot be retained or added to the organisation's reserves.

16. Do groups need to report on their project?

Yes, you need to send us a short report within 12 months of the start of the project, that is, by 31 March 2028 at the latest. We will send you a report template at the time funding is transferred initially, and we will also remind you around the 6 month and the 9-month stages, if necessary. You will be asked to provide:

- a breakdown of how the money was spent.
- a short report, including photos if possible, detailing what impact the project had, who benefited, and how the project addressed inequalities.

We try to keep this process as short and easy as possible for you, but it is very important that this report is submitted. **If it is not, your group will not be eligible to apply for funding for the foreseeable future.**

17. Boost Vote

What is a Boost Vote?

The Boost Vote is a fairness mechanism introduced to help address historic under-representation of minority ethnic groups in funding decisions. It gives eligible projects additional consideration in recognition of structural barriers.

Applicants must self-declare if they believe they qualify, but final decisions are made by LeithChooses, based on evidence.

Please refer to our guidance notes for further information and our website leithchooses.net for [FAQs](#).

Who can qualify?

A project may be eligible if it supports minority ethnic communities as a core part of its purpose and delivery.

This typically means:

- The organisation and/or project is primarily focused on one or more minority ethnic communities, and a significant proportion of staff, volunteers, and/or management are from minority ethnic backgrounds
- At least 50% of beneficiaries are from minority ethnic communities

There is evidence of historical meaningful engagement, outreach, or partnership with minority ethnic communities or new partnerships between organisations. Evidence of support for minority ethnic communities may include:

- Existing work with minority ethnic communities
- Outreach and engagement plans
- Documented partnerships (e.g. meetings, agreements, or ongoing collaboration plans)

What projects or organisations are not eligible?

A project will **not qualify** if:

- It is open to all but does not make specific or only limited effort to support or engage minority ethnic communities.
- It serves group(s) with little or no representation from minority ethnic communities.

What is a 'Minority ethnic project'?

Minority ethnic projects are those specifically concerned with groups or individual members of the Leith community with a different or additional original race, nationality, culture or language from the majority. There should be a clear understanding on all sides that working with people from minority ethnic communities should be a foundational (and ideally, a long-standing) part of the organisation's work, and a key part of the proposed project, rather than just creation of a new/temporary partnership as a quick 'tweak' to meet short-term project funding requirements.

Who do we contact if we need more guidance?

Please refer to the [Community Grants Fund Applicant Guidance Document](#) for more information about eligibility criteria and what can/cannot be funded.

Email: leithchooses@edinburgh.gov.uk Tel: 07743 167 340

Online

The online application form can be found here: edinburgh.gov.uk/applyleithchooses

For general information, visit www.leithchooses.net

Facebook: facebook.com/LeithChoosesNet 'X' (Twitter): [@LeithChooses](https://twitter.com/LeithChooses)