

East Suffolk Community Centre and Village Hall Repairs & Improvement Fund

Guidance

IMPORTANT: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING GUIDANCE CAREFULLY BEFORE FILLING IN THE APPLICATION FORM.

The fund opens on June 4th, 2025 and closes on September 16th, 2025 (9.00am)

1. ABOUT THE FUND

The Funders

This grant scheme is funded by the **Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)** - which aims to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities. Match funding is provided by the **East Suffolk Community Partnership Board**. East Suffolk Council is administering the fund on behalf of REPF. For a summary of the fund please see:

<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/business/uk-shared-prosperity-fund/rural-england-prosperity-fund/>

Context

Much of East Suffolk is rural and sparsely populated, with communities living in hamlets and villages, many in remote locations. These rural locations are nestled within the outstanding environment we enjoy in the district. However, we know that living in these communities can sometimes be hard, with limited access to transport, challenges accessing key services; higher costs for things like food and fuel and increased levels of isolation and loneliness. Community hubs, including community centres and village halls, are therefore essential focal points for local communities – providing a meeting space, opportunities for social connection, increased access to services, health and wellbeing activities, digital connectivity, social events and much more.

Aims of the Fund: Essential Repairs and Improvements

There is a strong network of community buildings across East Suffolk and, following our larger 21st Century Business and Community Hub grant scheme (which ran for two years up to March 2025), we have set up a smaller fund to enable community buildings to undertake essential repairs and improvements to ensure they can continue at the heart of their community for many years to come.

Strategic fit and priorities

We are looking to fund schemes that will enhance, upgrade, extend and improve community centres and halls, as well as schemes looking to repair, maintain and replace existing structures. Whilst we want to encourage community hubs to think creatively about what else they could offer their community; we recognise that sometimes essentials repairs to the fabric of the building are a priority.

I received funds from Rural Business and Community Hub Fund Rural Business and Community Hub Fund – can I apply again?

If you have already been successful with an application to the 21st Century Business and Community Hub Grant Fund (funded by the Rural England Prosperity Fund between 2023 and 2025), priority will be given to new applicants. However, we are not excluding previous successful applicants from applying for **NEW** projects.

Advice before you start: Community Action Suffolk

Before starting work on your application, you may want to contact Community Action Suffolk who can provide FREE advice to village halls and community centres and may be able to advise on how to develop your project and write a strong funding bid.

How much can I apply for?

Up to 80% of the capital funding needed to make improvements to these vital community facilities i.e. we expect to see a minimum of 20% match funding from applicants.

Grants of between £2,500 - £15,000 are available. The total funding pot is £190,000 for 25/26. Grants for larger amounts i.e. between £7,500 and £15,000, are likely to include multiple elements or more significant works, which you would need to clearly justify in your application.

All funding MUST be spent (and the project completed) by 31.3.26

2. WHAT CAN WE FUND?

Your application must demonstrate how the grant will support your village hall, community centre or other community hub to continue to support the local community to **stay connected, supported, active and engaged**. Below is a list of examples of the kind of projects we can support - these are given as a guide and are not exhaustive:

- Essential repairs e.g. to the roof, windows, doors or fabric of the building
- Upgrade of toilets, including installation of disabled toilet facilities
- Increasing accessibility e.g. ramps, accessible parking, automatic/wider doors, hearing loop installation etc.

- Replacement windows, doors or floors
- Improved heating systems and/or insulation, with a priority given to more sustainable energy solutions e.g. PV cells, ground or air source heat pumps
- Increased digital connectivity e.g. broadband installation or upgrade
- Installation of EV charging points in the car park
- Physical alterations to internal space e.g. to sub divide the space to maximise use by different groups at the same time
- Replacement kitchen facilities e.g. units, oven, fridge, freezer, sink etc.
- Equipment to enable new activities e.g. sound system for exercise classes, sports equipment, cooking equipment for community lunches or cooking classes

As well as Community Centres and Village Halls, **other** community buildings, e.g. church halls may also apply, **as long as the building is available for use by the wider community i.e. not restricted to a single group.**

We specifically want you to think about what the improvements or additions will enable you to do for your community...

3. IS MY PROPOSAL ELIGIBLE?

Your application must indicate how you will meet at least one of the following REPF outcomes under the Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Communities theme:

ROP3: Amenities/facilities created or improved

ROP11: Local events or activities supported

ROC2: Increased users of facilities/amenities

ROC12: Volunteering opportunities created as a result of support

If you are applying for physical upgrades or improvements that will require planning permission, grants will only be approved if planning permission has already been granted or if there is evidence that it is currently being sought. The grant will be awarded on a conditional basis that planning permission is approved as long as the project can commence within six months. All funding must be committed or spent by 31st March 2026. You will also be asked within the application form to declare any other permissions or licences that are required for your project and when they will be obtained.

If your project is taking place on rented / leased / tenanted land or premises, please ensure you obtain and submit a letter of authority from the land or premises owner or that the owner applies for the grant funding direct.

4. WHAT MAKES A STRONG APPLICATION?

We expect there to be significant interest in this fund and therefore you will need to convince the funding panel there is a strong case to fund your project, for example by:

- Providing evidence of need from within the local community for this project (for example the results of a user or residents engagement survey) and how it delivers against the REPF outcomes.
- Demonstrating that the project would not proceed without our help or that the grant will enable the project to be undertaken in a shorter timescale, be undertaken earlier or proceed on a larger scale.
- Ideally, show how this grant will enable you to undertake additional things/activities to benefit your community – and who it will benefit.
- Explain how the grant would help you do something different from what you do already.
- Showing that our funding would act as a catalyst - for example by helping to secure funding from other sources.

As part of the application process, you will be asked how you have considered:

- Environmental impacts associated with the project – ensuring that your project will not negatively impact the local environment
- Equality and diversity impacts associated with the project - including how you have considered the positive impacts of your project on the following groups: ethnicity, disability, age, gender, religious beliefs, marital status, gender reassignment and sexual orientation (protected characteristics) and ensured that no particular group in the community is discriminated against.

5. HOW SHOULD YOU EVIDENCE YOUR COSTS

- A funding summary, providing a detailed breakdown of the total project cost and individual project elements, must be included showing, where relevant, how each figure is calculated.
- Unreserved funds held by your organisations must be stated and a reason given why these cannot be used.

To ensure value for money, you will need to provide evidence of your proposed project costs. You must use a third-party supplier and not a business that is connected to your organisation e.g. through a trustee to provide the services or goods. What you need to provide to us depends on the amount you plan to spend per contract or supplier. The table below outlines the minimum

procedures (the minimum individual invoice we would support is £250). In a nutshell, all capital (physical assets) expenditure approved will require evidence of three quotes for all costs over £2,500. Expenditure over £25,000 will require a formal tender process, ie if any one item or the contract you will award to a contractor is £25,000 or more, you must undertake this.

Please provide all quotations that you have obtained for the project along with the completed application form. This means that you should be able to provide evidence that you have tried to obtain three-quotes, e.g. examples of emails/letters contacting potential suppliers. It does not necessarily mean that all potential suppliers contacted will provide you with a quote.

Value of Purchase	Procedure to be followed
£0 - £2,499	Direct Award (meaning you can choose who is awarded the works without obtaining any quotations)
£2,500 - £24,499	3 written quotes or prices sought from relevant suppliers of goods, works and / or services
£25,000+	A formal tender process.

6. WHAT AND WHO WE CANNOT FUND – INELIGIBLE COSTS:

We **CANNOT** fund the following items / type of activity:

- Kitchen utensils, consumables, furnishings for ANY room in the building and similar items
- Recoverable VAT. Please do not include VAT in your project costs if you are able to claim it back.
- ANY REVENUE or routine organisation running costs; staffing costs, project management costs or maintenance
- Items or services that are not essential to the success of your project
- Projects unable to start within 6 months of the grant award date
- Projects that cannot be completed within 12 months of award date
- Activities promoting political or religious beliefs
- Payments to endowment funds, deficit funding, loans, sponsored/fundraising events
- Funding for trips abroad or hospitality to other organisations
- Repeat funding if East Suffolk Council has previously provided a grant for exactly the same activity
- Items or projects which only benefit an individual
- Retrospective costs e.g. costs incurred prior to grant approval confirmation
- Projects that will displace existing provision

- Activities that are to meet statutory obligations

We **CANNOT** support projects that have received funding from other DEFRA grant-funded schemes. This includes: The Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund - grant funding (to 2025) to support capital improvement projects for village halls, covering extending buildings and modernising facilities.

Additionally, we will **NOT** be able to fund your project if you have received a previous grant from East Suffolk Council and have not returned your **MONITORING FORM**.

7. WHAT ABOUT SUBSIDY CONTROL?

You will be required to make a declaration of the subsidies that your organisation has been awarded previously on the application form.

The EU State aid rules no longer apply to subsidies granted in the UK following the end of the transition period, which ended on 31 December 2020. This does not impact the limited circumstances in which State aid rules still apply under the Withdrawal Agreement, specifically Article 10 of the Northern Ireland Protocol. The United Kingdom remains bound by its international commitments, including subsidy obligations set out in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) with the EU.

East Suffolk Council will be providing this grant to the business / organisation as a Minimum Financial Assistance (MFA) subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act (2022).

MFA subsidy limit is £315,000 over a three-year period (including your current financial year and the previous two financial years). This means that you need to declare all grants and subsidies your organisation has received over the previous three financial years and that the total amount does not exceed £315,000.

For more information on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund subsidy control please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-subsidy-control-7>

8. HOW TO APPLY - THE APPLICATION PROCESS

You will be required to provide routine documents in support of your application as follows:

- **Application Form**, fully completed, signed and dated
- All **quotations and/or evidence** (e.g. examples of emails/letters) to show that you have tried to obtain three-quotes/ followed a tender process (if applicable)

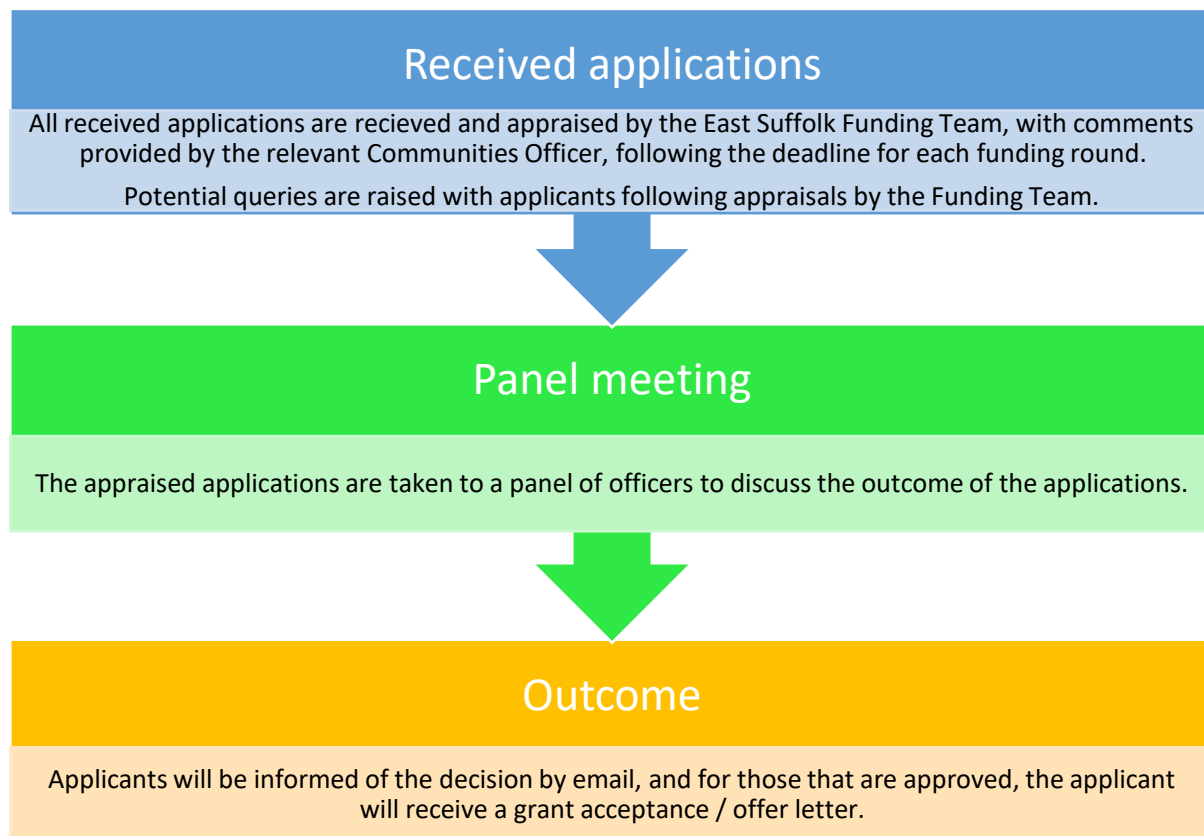
- **Relevant permission(s)/licence(s)** for the proposed project (if applicable), e.g., a copy of planning permission/landlord's permission/business change of use

To apply, please send your application and **ATTACH** the relevant documents requested above to grants@eastsuffolk.gov.uk.

OUTCOME OF YOUR APPLICATION: If the application is fully complete (i.e. all the required information is provided) it will be taken to a Panel Meeting which will be during October.

See the diagram below for more information on the application process.

The Deadline for Applications is 16th September 2025 (9.00am)



If your application is successful, you will be notified of the decision through a **Grant Offer email** within 5 working days of the Panel meeting. Alongside this you will receive an **MFA statement** (see below) to complete and an **Evaluation and Monitoring Form (E&M)** for completion too. The MFA and E&M forms must be returned **no later than one month after** the stated project completion date (31.3.26 latest) on your application form.

Please keep copies of all receipts and invoices related to the project / activity – we may ask to see these as part of our monitoring process as we spot check a proportion of successful applications.

Subsidies and State Aid: You will be required to complete and return a declaration confirming that the Minimum Financial Assistance (MFA) threshold of £315,000 has not and will not be exceeded by the application with regards to the application made. Please see the Application Form for more details.

Primary Terms and Conditions:

Funds through this grant scheme **can only be spent on the items/purpose detailed in the Application Form and Grant Acceptance. Projects must start within 6 months of the date on the Grant Acceptance and ALL funding must be spent by 31.3.26.** All funding awarded will be for a maximum of twelve months, although our contribution could be part of a longer-term project match-funded from elsewhere. You must indicate on your form if you have applied for or intend to apply for match funding for this project. If the grant is not spent on the approved purposes or there is an underspend, the Council has the authority to reclaim part or all of the grant. If you are proposing to make changes to your approved project, please inform us as soon as possible. **Full terms and conditions will be within any Grant Offer made.**

The following scoring criteria will be considered by the Panel in assessing your application:

SCORING CRITERIA			
	Criteria	Strong projects will have...	Weak projects will have...
A	Impact on the building and on the community	The project will have a positive impact on the local community, and it is clear how the project is supporting the village hall / community centre to achieve its longer term aims.	It is unclear how the project will benefit the community, and it is not clear how the project is supporting the village hall / community centre to achieve its longer term aims
B	Clear links to the priority of the fund:	The applicant has clearly articulated how the investment will meet one or more of the fund priorities set out in the grant guidance.	The applicant has not clearly articulated how the investment will meet any of the fund priorities set out in the grant guidance.
C	Evidence of Need for the project	The applicant has demonstrated the required knowledge of need for the project and the risks if the repairs/improvement are not undertaken	The proposal is based on anecdotal evidence and it's unclear whether this project is needed.
D	Value for Money	The project has been realistically costed, and the impact of the project is appropriate in relation	The project is either significantly under costed or over costed which



HM Government



East Suffolk
Community
Partnerships
Bringing ideas to life



		to the amount of funding that has been requested. Required quotations have been provided. Sharing with a nearby Hall/Centre has been considered and the reasons why this is not possible included.	creates a risk to the project and its outcomes/impact. There are concerns about connections between the business and supplier.
E	Deliverability	The project is realistic and achievable, and it is clear how and when the project will be delivered and by whom.	It is unclear whether the project is realistic and achievable, and it is not clear how and when the project will be delivered and by whom.
F	Project legacy and sustainability	The applicant has considered project sustainability after the funded project has been completed i.e. it is clear how the project will continue after the grant funding has ended (if relevant).	It is unclear how the project will continue after the funding has been spent and whether what has been proposed is achievable.

If you would like this document in large print, Braille, audiotapes, or translated into another language, please contact us: grants@eastsuffolk.gov.uk