

Renfrewshire Council Cultural Organisations Fund

Guidance for Applicants, April 2025-March 2028



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Section 1: Fund Overview and Summary

What is the purpose of the fund?

Renfrewshire's Cultural Organisations Fund (COF) is designed to support our region's key cultural organisations to ensure they deliver sustained programmes of creative and cultural activity.

Funds can be used to cover a wide range of costs, including those are not typically covered by project-based funding awards. Operational costs such as electricity, staffing, and building repair (as examples) which help organisations keep cultural spaces open for the community are viable uses of the fund. Organisations will be able to determine the best use of the funds based on the changing needs and priorities of the organisation throughout the funding period.

COF is intended for organisations who wish to enter into a sustained strategic funding relationship with Renfrewshire Council. Organisations will be expected to set annual targets with the council and report on their delivery of these aims at the end of each financial year.

Fund Timeline

Date	Activity
9am on Tuesday 8 April 2025	Applications open for COF
Tuesday 15 April 2025 from 10am to 11am and Wednesday 30 April 2025 from 2pm to 3pm	Online information sessions for prospective applicants Contact us at cof-enquiries@renfrewshire.gov.uk to register your interest to attend and your preferred date.
5pm on Tuesday 20 May 2025	Applications close for COF
23 May 2025 to 15 July 2025	Assessment Period
16 July 2025	Application results for COF are announced, successful applicants are issued a contract stipulating grant regulations and payment schedule
17 July 2025 to 14 March 2028	Grant delivery period
15 March 2028	End of grant period for COF

Section 2: Fund Criteria and Key Information

Who can apply?

This fund is designed to support established creative and cultural organisations based in Renfrewshire that are looking to undertake a programme of creative and cultural activity that delivers public benefit and aligns with Renfrewshire Council's 2025-2028 strategic aims for culture.

All applicant organisations must have a UK bank account in the same name as the applicant organisation. All organisations applying for COF will be required to pay all hourly staff at least the National Living Wage, and that freelance creative contracts are paid in line with the Scottish Artists Union (SAU), Musicians Union (MU), or other relevant representative body's rate.

It is expected that organisations are formally registered companies or charitable entities with a primary purpose of promoting culture and creativity. The following is a list of the eligible types of organisations:

- **Registered Charities:** Charities registered in Scotland and undertaking activity related to the arts, creativity and culture.
- **Companies Limited by Guarantee:** Companies Limited by Guarantee which can clearly demonstrate that their programme of work will promote the public good through arts and culture.
- **Community Interest Companies:** CICs registered at Companies House with a focus on arts and culture and governing document that include an asset lock.

Who cannot apply?

The following are a list of reasons why an organisation may not be eligible beyond legal registered status.

Organisations cannot apply if they:

- do not have aims related to cultural, creative or arts activity

- do not have a business address within Renfrewshire
- are in administration, receivership, or liquidation
- are in debt to the council
- received funding from the council, so they have more than £315,000 of national Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) from any source or for any purpose within a three-year period – you can find out more about [MFA on the gov.scot website](#).

How much can I apply for?

Applicants can apply for either £10,000, £15,000, or £20,000 per annum for a total of up to £60,000 over the three years.

Applicants should bear in mind that funding is limited, and the fund may not be able to support all eligible applications. Applicants should demonstrate how their proposed activity represents good value for public money.

How long will COF support us for?

All applicants to COF are applying for financial support that runs from 17 July 2025 to 14 March 2028. All funding awards will be subject to satisfactory annual reporting.

What are the criteria that will be used to assess an application?

The applications for COF will require organisations to submit a full business plan that covers 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28. This plan, in addition to the online form and the additional documentation requested, will form the basis of the assessment. Organisations can submit their business plan in any format they choose but must include a description of their activities and services, their strategic aims, and a budget covering the full period.

Renfrewshire council utilises three criteria to evaluate COF applications. These criteria are:

- 1. PROPOSITION BASED ON STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT**
- 2. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**
- 3. FINANCIAL RISK AND MITIGATION**

Proposition based on strategic alignment assesses how well the proposal fits with Renfrewshire Council's 5 strategic aims for Culture (2025-2028). The aims, inspired by the Future Paisley Step Changes, represent Renfrewshire's ambitions for its cultural and creative offer to residents. As strategic partners, COF organisations will be expected to help deliver these ambitions for the region. The strategic aims are as follows:

1. To **promote local culture** and history from the region
2. To **improve wellbeing** in our communities through engagement in cultural activity
3. To **produce innovative cultural experiences** in Renfrewshire for residents and visitors
4. To **revitalise civic spaces** in Renfrewshire's town centres through cultural production
5. To **offer cultural employment opportunities** that demonstrate Renfrewshire's cultural sector is a positive place to work

Section 3: How to Apply

How to make an application

You can access the online form at <https://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/COF>

If you need the form in a different format, email us at cof-enquiries@renfrewshire.gov.uk.

To submit an online application, you will need to register for MyAccount, Renfrewshire Council's customer account portal. A full list of the questions is available in Appendix 1 of this document if you would like to work on the application within your organisation separately before submitting the online form. However, late applications will not be accepted, and all material must be submitted online prior to the deadline for the application to be eligible for assessment.

If you already have a Renfrewshire Council MyAccount, you do not need to register again.

It is only possible to create a MyAccount for individual citizens, not organisations. However, the only data we will see will be the information you submit in your application.

Answering Questions in the Application Form

The online application opens at 9am on 8 April 2025. Applicants can then log in and begin their application.

Within the form, applicants will be asked to confirm that their business plan contains the necessary information and address how their application meets the required criteria for the fund. A guide on addressing these criteria can be found in Appendix 2.

Section 4: Decision Making Process

Checking for eligibility and completeness

Once we have received your application it will be checked for eligibility and completeness. If your application is incomplete, you will be contacted and advised of the missing information we require. We will give you 5 working days to supply this information, or your application will be considered ineligible. If your application is deemed to be ineligible you will be contacted, given the reasons, and your application will not proceed further.

Assessment

All eligible applications will proceed to assessment. Assessors will review the application in detail.

The assessment team will appraise all the information provided. In exceptional circumstances they may also contact an applicant to check/clarify a specific detail which may be ambiguous. This will not be to seek new or additional information, and the applicant will not be able to add anything new at this point. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure all details provided are clear, true, and accurate. Applications that do not meet this standard are likely to be assessed as unsuccessful.

All applications will be assessed against the three core criteria. Criteria will be scored utilising information from the full application, including the attached business plan and the specific questions addressing the criteria in the application form. Scores will be on a scale from 0-4, as follows:

- Outstanding – 4 – the application meets the criteria and shows outstanding qualities
- Strong – 3 – the application meets the criteria and shows strong qualities
- Sufficient – 2 – the application meets the criteria adequately
- Limited – 1 – the application partially meets the criteria
- Insufficient – 0 – the application does not meet the criteria

All assessments will then be collated into a list of recommendations which will be given to the review panel. The review panel will make their final recommendations for awards, which will be given to the Head of Service for approval. The Head of Service will have delegated authority from the Leadership Board for approval.

Notification of Results

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by email on 16 July 2025.

Successful applicants will receive an email with their grant offer letter, including information on payment schedules and reporting.

Unsuccessful applications will be notified via email. You can request feedback by emailing cof-enquiries@renfrewshire.gov.uk.

Section 5: Further Details

Freedom of Information

As a public authority, Renfrewshire Council must comply with the Freedom of Information Act (Scotland) 2002. By law, we may have to provide your application documents and information about our assessment to any member of the public who asks to see them under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. We may not release those parts of the documents which are covered by one or more of the exemptions under the Act. See the Freedom of Information website at www.itspublicknowledge.info for information about the Act generally and the exemptions. We will not release any information about applications during the assessment period, as this may interfere with the decision-making process.

Data Protection

Renfrewshire Council takes the privacy of your personal data very seriously. Personal data collected in this application process is necessary for proper assessment of applications. If you would like to know more about how Renfrewshire Council handles your information, you can read the [privacy policy on the Renfrewshire Website](#).

Notes on this Document

The format and contents of this guide were crafted based on the Creative Scotland Multi-Year Funding Guidance for Applicants document and previous Renfrewshire Council cultural funding grant applications, including the Culture, Heritage, and Events Fund (CHEF) and the Cultural Organisation Development Fund (CODF).

Appendix 1 – Application Form Questions (For Information Only)

The following are the questions that will be asked on the online application form. All information must be submitted **in the online form only prior to the deadline** for the application to be eligible for assessment.

Section 1: Your Organisation

Organisation Information

Organisation Name: _____

Address: _____

Website: _____

Legal Status: _____

Charity or Company Registration Number: _____

Year Established: _____

Mission Statement: _____

Contact Details

Name: _____

Position: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Contract Address: _____

Operational Details

Complete this section based on your organisation's current operations.

Full Time Employees: _____

Part Time Employees: _____

Do you pay all employees at least the [National Living Wage](#)? Yes/No

Does your organisation regularly work with freelance creative and cultural practitioners? Yes/No

If yes, do at least 70% of your contracts with freelancers comply with recommended rates for their relevant union (i.e. Scottish Artists' Union or the Musicians Union)? Yes/No

Volunteers: _____

Members: _____

Main artform:

- Archaeology
- Architecture
- Archives
- Broadcasting and media
- Crafts
- Creative industries (sector support or development)
- Dance
- Design
- Digital and new media arts

- Events and festivals
- Fashion and textiles
- Literature and creative writing
- Music
- Performance, theatre and drama
- Visual Arts

Secondary Artform *(Tick all that apply)*:

- Archaeology
- Architecture
- Archives
- Broadcasting and media
- Crafts
- Creative industries (sector support or development)
- Dance
- Design
- Digital and new media arts
- Events and festivals
- Fashion and textiles
- Literature and creative writing
- Music
- Performance, theatre and drama
- Visual Arts

What geographical areas do you deliver activity in? (Tick all that apply):

- Bishopton
- Bridge of Weir
- Elderslie
- Erskine
- Houston
- Howwood
- Inchinnan
- Johnstone
- Kilbarchan
- Langbank
- Linwood
- Lochwinnoch
- Online
- Outside of Renfrewshire
- Paisley
- Renfrew

Do you deliver any programmes that specifically works with these target demographics? (Tick all that apply):

- Children and young people
- Care experienced children and young people and/or young carers
- Older people
- Disabled people or people experiencing long-term ill health (including physical or mental health)
- People from minority ethnic communities
- Lesbians, gay men, transgender and/or bisexual people
- People with low income or living in the 20% most deprived areas according to SIMD statistics

Previous Renfrewshire Council Grants

List all funding received from Renfrewshire Council in the last 3 years (i.e. this current financial year from 1 April 2025 and the two financial years immediately preceding the current financial year):

Financial Year	Grant Name	Grant Amount	Grant Used For

UK Government subsidy regulations limit the amount of funding organisations can receive from a local authority over a three-year period without undergoing the full subsidy control process. This is known as Minimum Financial Assistance, or MFA. Can you confirm that the cumulative total of the grants you’ve listed above plus the amount you have requested for year 1 of your COF grant will not put you in excess of the £315,000 limit for MFA from Renfrewshire Council? Yes/No

Bank Details

Account Name: _____

Bank Name: _____

Branch Address: _____

Sort Code: _____

Account Number: _____

Current Balance: _____

Significant expenditure to be set against balance: _____

Detail of significant expenditure: _____

Signatories:

Name	Position in Organisation

Section 2: Your Plan

Activity

Your business plan should include a full description of the activities and services your organisation offers and their benefits to the community. Confirm that your business plan includes this information: Yes/No

How was the need for these activities and services identified and developed?

How do you see the funding from COF changing what you are able to deliver over this period?

Budget

How much are you requesting from the Cultural Organisation Fund (COF) over the three-year period from April 2025-March 2028?

- £10,000 per annum (£30,000 total)
- £15,000 per annum (£45,000 total)
- £20,000 per annum (£60,000 total)

Explain your reasoning for the level of funding you have requested:

Your business plan must provide a breakdown of your organisation’s planned expenditure for 2025 to 2026, 2026 to 2027, and 2027 to 2028, including projected income and expenditure across operational, staffing, and programming costs.

Confirm that your business plan includes this information: Yes/No

Which general areas of expenditure for 2025 to 2026, 2026 to 2027, and 2027 to 2028 do you intend to cover with the Cultural Organisation Fund (COF)?:

Confirm that your proposed areas of expenditure meet the minimum 40% programming requirement for the use of COF funds: Yes/No

Safeguarding Details

Does your organisation work with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults?: Yes/No

If so, do all workers and volunteers involved hold the appropriate level of disclosure/criminal record checks?: Yes/No

If your work involves children, young people and/or vulnerable adults, outline the safeguarding plans and procedures in place (you will be asked to attach your full safeguarding policy to the end of this form):

Section 3: Addressing the COF Criteria

Assessors will utilise the following three criteria to determine the overall quality of the application. Assessment will take a holistic view of the applications. Use this space to demonstrate precisely how your application addresses the criteria.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Explain how your proposed activity will contribute to the Fund’s purpose to strengthen and build the capacity of local cultural and creative organisations. (Use no more than 300 words):

Explain how your proposed activity will contribute to one or more of the Fund’s key objectives. (Use no more than 300 words for each objective):

Strategic Aim	
1. To promote local culture and history from the region	
2. To improve wellbeing in our communities through engagement in cultural activity	
3. To produce innovative cultural experiences in Renfrewshire for residents and visitors	
4. To revitalise civic spaces in Renfrewshire’s town centres through cultural production	
5. To offer cultural employment opportunities that demonstrate Renfrewshire’s cultural sector is a positive place to work	

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

COF funded organisations are required to demonstrate that they are effectively governed and managed. Provide a short statement (up to 500 words) about how you believe your business plan and proposal addresses these criteria:

FINANCIAL RISK AND MITIGATION

COF funded organisations are required to demonstrate that they are a secure investment for the council and offer best value for the use of public funds. This includes strong evidence that the organisation has accounted for any financial risk. Provide a short statement (up to 500 words) about how you believe your business plan and proposal addresses these criteria:

Section 4: Your Documents

Upload copies of the following:

- A current business plan for your organisation.
- An outline annual plan for 2025 to 2026 (maximum 2 pages).
- A recent bank statement, less than 3 months old.
- A copy of your most recent Annual Accounts or Income and Expenditure Statement. These should be less than 15 months old, dated and signed as approved. You may provide a link to OSCR/Companies House submitted file.
- A signed, dated copy of your Constitution or Memorandum and Articles of Association. You may provide a link to OSCR/Companies House submitted file.
- Where applicable, a copy of the organisation's safeguarding or child protection policies.
- A copy of the organisation's equalities policy or clear evidence of commitment to equalities and diversity.
- A completed equalities monitoring form, using the template provided.
- Optional: any other relevant information to support your application, such as examples of previous work or letters of support or evidence of income from other sources or CVs of artists or key staff involved in your project.

Appendix 2 - Addressing the Criteria

Section 3 of the application asks applicants to address how their business plan and organisation specifically meets the criteria for assessment. This is to provide the applicants with a clear space to make a case for their application.

Assessors will consider these statements alongside the other information in the application to make their recommendations. This appendix provides applicants with an exact copy of the prompts included in the assessor’s form. Applicants should take these prompts into consideration when crafting their application.

Strategic alignment

Assessors will consider:

- Does the organisation have a convincing track record of delivery in Renfrewshire?
- To what extent does the organisation’s vision, mission, and values align with Renfrewshire’s strategic aims for culture (2025-2028)?
- Do the organisation’s planned activities and services deliver on one or more of the Renfrewshire Council’s strategic aims for culture (2025-2028)? Which ones and to what extent? Applicants do not need to meet all the aims; it is preferable for applicants to meet fewer aims well.
- Has the impact of the organisation’s activities and services been clearly articulated? Have they provided evidence of this impact?
- What are the expected outputs and outcomes from the organisation over this period?
- Are the applicant’s ambitions clear?
- Does the organisation provide a unique cultural offer to Renfrewshire?

– 0 – Insufficient: the application does not meet the criteria	– 1 – Limited: the application partially meets the criteria	– 2 – Sufficient: the application meets the criteria adequately	– 3 – Strong: the application meets the criteria and shows strong qualities	– 4 – Outstanding: the application meets the criteria and shows outstanding qualities
<p>The organisation does not deliver activity in Renfrewshire.</p> <p>The organisations overall vision, mission, or aims do not align with Renfrewshire Council’s strategic aims for culture (2025-2028).</p> <p>The applicant fails to articulate the activities they plan to undertake in a way that can be understood by the assessors.</p>	<p>The organisation loosely outlines a programme of activity but fails to specify how they deliver on Renfrewshire Council’s strategic aims for culture (2025-2028).</p>	<p>The organisation describes their activities and states they align with one or more of Renfrewshire Council’s strategic aims for culture (2025-2028). They may lack details about the activities’ impact or justification on <i>how</i> they deliver on the strategic aims, but there is evidence that the aims were considered by the organisation.</p>	<p>The organisation describes a strong track record of delivering creative and cultural activity in Renfrewshire.</p> <p>The organisation articulates how their planned activity for 2025/26-2027/28 aligns with one or more of the Renfrewshire Council’s strategic aims for culture (2025-2028) and includes a logical justification for how those activities will deliver on the aim,</p>	<p>The organisation demonstrates a track record of delivering creative and cultural activity in Renfrewshire. This record is evidenced through clear quantitative and qualitative data. The value this organisation adds to the community is recognised by those outside the organisation and well documented.</p> <p>The organisation demonstrates how their planned activity for</p>

			possibly including the outputs and outcomes for each activity.	2025/26-2027/28 aligns with one or more of the Renfrewshire Council's strategic aims for culture (2025-2028) through description of various outputs and outcomes. These outputs and outcomes have clear targets for the funding period which are based on the outputs and outcomes from previous projects the organisation has delivered.
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Governance and management

Assessors will consider:

- Is the business plan realistic?
- How well does the business plan show the applicant's ability to manage activity successfully?
- Is there evidence of a clear structure for management and governance? Do the management team and board or governing body have the relevant expertise and experience to deliver the business plan? Are there clear roles and responsibilities?
- Does the organisation's work involve partnership work? What is the nature of the partnerships? Are they genuine, beneficial and collaborative? Is there evidence of commitment from partners to the project (such as letters of support, a financial contribution or support in kind)?
- For projects organisations that work with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults: are there appropriate safeguarding plans and procedures in place for the activity?
- Does the organisation provide quality work experiences for employees and freelance contractors?
- Does the organisation demonstrate a robust system for monitoring and evaluation?
- How effectively has the applicant's business plan identified and considered any risks?

- 0 - Insufficient: the application does not meet the criteria	- 1 - Limited: the application partially meets the criteria	- 2 - Sufficient: the application meets the criteria adequately	- 3 - Strong: the application meets the criteria and shows strong qualities	- 4 - Outstanding: the application meets the criteria and shows outstanding qualities
The organisation's track record (through application or through public records on Companies	The business plan is created but is sparse or too general.	The organisation's business plan is well presented and	The organisation's business plan is clear, realistic, and explains how they will	The organisation has robust business planning, including

<p>House) demonstrates consistent issues with management and timely submission of required documents.</p> <p>There is no governance structure provided in the business plan.</p> <p>The organisation does not have proper safeguarding policies for the demographics they serve.</p>	<p>Different people in the organisation are listed, but it is unclear how their roles relate or how the organisation is governed.</p> <p>Safeguarding policies provided are lacking or not up to standard quality; there is little assurance from the policy that vulnerable groups will actually be supported.</p>	<p>explains the activities and ambitions for the organisation.</p> <p>The organisation has a formal governance structure.</p> <p>Necessary safeguarding policies are in place and of expected quality.</p>	<p>accomplish the work laid out in the plan.</p> <p>The organisation has a formal governance structure. Any partners are listed, and their partnership is described.</p> <p>Policies are in place to ensure safety, improve EDI, and work towards fair work practices.</p>	<p>clear policies, reporting practices, and governance.</p> <p>The organisation has a formal governance structure. Charitable boards, partnerships, and other forms of collaboration add knowledge and value to the organisation and improve their quality of work.</p> <p>The organisations policies lay out clear expectations for how the organisation manages itself. The organisation demonstrates how they are monitoring their adherence to policies as well as how they are striving for best practice in regard to safety, fair work, and EDI.</p>
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Financial risk and mitigation

Assessors will consider:

- Is all the required financial information included in the application?
- Does the income and expenditure balance?
- Is the budget appropriate and realistic for the activity proposed?
- Are fees or wages appropriate to the context? (e.g. are they industry/union-standard rates? are they appropriate for the experience and expertise of those involved? Do wages include National Insurance and pension contributions?)
- Has a clear case been made for any capital expenditure?
- How appropriate are the financial controls in place?
- If any other income is included in the budget, is it confirmed? If not, do potential income sources seem realistic?
- Is the amount of money the applicant is asking for suitable for the scale and type of activity? Does it represent good value for public money?

- Has cashflow been adequately considered?
- How are they mitigating the risk over 3 years of the fluctuating marketplace and/or potential changes to ongoing costs, staffing, and venue?

– 0 – Insufficient: the application does not meet the criteria	– 1 – Limited: the application partially meets the criteria	– 2 – Sufficient: the application meets the criteria adequately	– 3 – Strong: the application meets the criteria and shows strong qualities	– 4 – Outstanding: the application meets the criteria and shows outstanding qualities
<p>The applicant does not provide a complete budget or there are significant numerical errors, making the budget unable to be accurately evaluated.</p> <p>The applicant does not demonstrate that at least 40% of COF funds will go towards activity/programming costs.</p>	<p>The budget provided in the business plan does not align with the proposed activities or the income and expenditure are not balanced.</p> <p>Employment costs are missing key considerations such as National Insurance or pension contributions.</p>	<p>The budget reasonably covers the proposed activity. The budget is balanced. Income and expenditure align.</p> <p>All employment costs are accounted for, and employees are paid at least the National Living Wage.</p>	<p>The budget is clear and covers all activity proposed in the business plan. The organisation demonstrates how they are seeking other funding and has contingencies for if they are unsuccessful.</p> <p>All employment costs are accounted for, and employees are paid at least the National Living Wage.</p>	<p>The budget is balanced and covers all activities proposed. Income from external sources has been secured and the additionality provided by COF is clear. The organisation demonstrates best value for public money.</p> <p>All employment costs are accounted for, and employees are paid at least the National Living Wage.</p>

