

CRC's Core Funding Programme

Frequently Asked Questions

1 Does the application need to cover traditional groups e.g. PUL and CNR alongside other identities or can other identities be stand-alone pieces of work?

While the founding focus of the CORE Fund has been on community relations work between the two traditional communities in Northern Ireland, the Community Relations Council recognises the changing demographics of Northern Ireland and therefore is open to supporting community relations work that includes new communities as an element of a wider programme.

2 Has the scheme budget been reduced this year?

No, the scheme is worth the same amount as last year (c£1.2 million) however CRC has a funding commitment to other organisations moving into the second-year funding cycle and so part of the annual budget is already committed to these organisations. The amount to be allocated in the funding round for 2027-2028 is estimated to be £600,000 (subject to confirmation from TEO).

3 Can a joint application be made with a partner organisation?

This scheme core funds organisations, not projects. One organisation needs to apply and take the lead. The lead organisation must submit the documentation required at page 8 of the application form and the partner documentation will need to be submitted separately. If you are considering making a joint/partnership bid please speak with Programme staff to discuss your particular requirements well in advance of the 12th of November deadline.

4 Can National organisations apply given that we work with Hate Crime in Northern Ireland?

Yes, if there is a regional office that is legally registered in Northern Ireland.

5 If we have never had a successful application is there any point in applying?

CRC bring new groups on each year to the Core funding scheme. We absolutely encourage new groups to apply. The assessment is carried out on the quality of the application and scored individually based on the answers given.

6 Do you fund Rural Groups who are maybe not looking for a large salary?

A group does not need to be requesting a large salary to be funded, however, we don't fund project work through this scheme. The small grant schemes – Community Relations/Cultural Diversity may be more beneficial as project work is funded through this scheme.

7 What is the timing of decisions?

The NICRC Board will make final decisions on core funding awards in March 2027 and the contract start date will be 1st April 2027.

8 If you apply for 2 years and you do not get funded for this length of time, does that mean you won't receive any funding?

No, the Board of NICRC may decide to make an award for less than the requested period e.g. 1 year instead of 2 years.

9 What types of salaries/posts can I apply for?

Salary costs for posts that are directly described in the work plan can be applied for and they should primarily deliver community relations related activity. You must highlight where these posts will deliver on the work to achieve the outcomes identified in the work plan. This Programme will only provide up to a maximum of 90% of salary costs.

10 Can finance or administrative posts be applied for?

Finance/admin costs will be supported for a maximum of 2 full days salary per week and up to a maximum of £7,500 (total requested from CRC).

11 When completing the question around match funding, does this have to be from another funder or can it come from the organisation's own resources?

Match funding can come from either another funder or from your own organisation's reserves. It would be expected that your accounts would provide evidence of these reserves.

12 Are running costs apportioned and do you have to apply for them?

No, they are not apportioned and you do not need to apply for running costs if your organisation does not require them. Some applications are made for salaries only or salaries and associated travel costs. The particular running costs listed in the budget table are the only costs covered by this programme but you can select which ones you wish to apply for. You should also note that if you own your own building, you cannot apply for rent costs.

13 Is there a % allowance for identified running costs?

The running costs will need to be proportionate and realistic to the costings you are looking for i.e. in relation to the number of staff and salaries that CRC could potentially be funding. Please note the total running costs cannot exceed 25% of the total grant requested.

14 If we apply for a large amount of money, would NICRC consider part-funding it?

You should only apply for the amount that you require in order to deliver on the work plan as described in your application. The assessment considers your application in its entirety and makes a value for money assessment on this basis, we will not select aspects of the work plan that we wish to support and disregard other parts, nor will we do this with the budget and the amount of support you request. Please only apply for the amount you need, and it is useful to bear in mind that this is a highly competitive programme with limited resources.

15 Is there a table showing Core Areas i.e. Related Themes and Outcomes?

Yes, these documents are linked at the top of the workplan pages. We advise all applicants to print these out as an aid in completing their workplans.

16 Do we need to complete all 4 Work Area templates?

No, we are asking that you complete one Work Area template per strategic work area. The number you require will vary depending on the work of your organisation and the level of funding sought.

17 If we are applying for 2 years funding, do we need to complete a 2-year work plan?

No, every applicant needs to complete a work plan for the April 2027 – March 2028 (12 month) period. If your application is successful with a 2-year term awarded, you will be required to complete a year-on-year plan of work.

18 How do we describe our work if it fits across more than two of the core funding themes?

You can select a primary and secondary theme from the drop-down list that gives an adequate reflection of your work, so for example if your work were focussing on improving relationships between interface communities whilst also addressing contentious issues such as parades or bonfires, you would select:

NICRC Core Funding Programme Theme (Primary): Shared Spaces (Interfaces & Contested Spaces both Urban and Rural) and

NICRC Core Funding Programme Theme (Secondary): Cultural Expression.

You should then refer to the outcomes section to give additional information that provides more depth to the description of your work.

19 If the outcomes provided in the drop-down boxes are not applicable to our work, can we add in our own outcomes?

No, you must use one of the outcomes in the drop-down lists provided, or select N/A, if they are not applicable. The CRC Core Outcomes are described in the Programme Guidance (at Appendix 2) and these were identified from an analysis of work supported by this programme over a long period of time. If there is something that you feel is not covered then please do speak to us and we will advise you on where your work may sit. As a general rule however, if you are struggling to fit your work into the framework that is provided, you may need to consider if this Core Funding Programme is an appropriate fund for your organisation.

20 Do the strategic priorities/ welcome statements have a specific budget apportionment?

No, the budget hasn't been divided up in that way.

21 Under the 'Direct Engagement' part of the Work Area templates, what level of detail is required, and should we list every single group we work with?

It is important that you clearly demonstrate who your beneficiaries are. You need to be able to specifically name the groups or partners you will directly engage in each work area as this shows your organisation has a clear plan and strategy in place for work next year. Applications that can clearly define this will score higher than an application that references working with the 'general public' or 'Belfast youth' for example. If you are able to identify your programme beneficiaries then you should also be able to provide their specific locations at a postcode level (for example if it is working with a particular youth club/ residents group etc.).

If you simply provide a list of all the groups/ agencies you currently work with, this will not give the assessing officer enough detail or focus on the specifics of the work you are outlining– we need you to narrow the focus onto the direct beneficiaries of this particular aspect of your work. We expect that in most cases these beneficiary details will be different for each Work Area template you complete.

22 Will additional weighting be applied to applications meeting one or more of the strategic priorities/ welcome statement areas?

Part of the assessment process (under the methodology score) will consider if you are proposing to work in areas that we have identified as a strategic priority.

You should note that the work described must still be high quality, community relations work that fits with the programme remit/ strategic fit. Please refer to appendix 1 in the programme guidance notes where you can see the Core Funding Programme Themes and Descriptors in more detail.

This section carries the highest marks, so applications that provide strategic, achievable and clearly articulated outcomes under the strategic priority areas we have identified will score higher marks in this section than those that don't.

23 How will NICRC assess value for money?

Value for money will be determined using a number of indicators that include: the overall cost of the bid; looking at the work plan and determining if it is part of a planned, wider strategic plan (rather than reactionary); that it is achievable and that the work will provide good geographical coverage in areas of need and will have sound community relations outcomes.

If you make an inflated bid (in the hope that a lesser award would actually be enough for you to deliver) you must understand that this will affect your value for money score. Inflated costs are immediately recognisable to assessing officers and asking for more than you need may have a detrimental effect on your assessment score.

24 What is the difference between Audited Accounts and Management Accounts?

Audited Accounts - are the yearly accounts that have been completed for each financial year by an accountant and are presented at the AGM of the Management Committee or Board and then provided to Charities Commission NI and/or Companies House.

Management Accounts – will often be a one-page summary of your most recent financial position that summarises income, expenditure, assets, liabilities and your groups reserves. We expect this to be a document your organisation routinely prepares for the Board and/or treasurer for internal management purposes. The management accounts are used to give CRC an indication of your current financial position and do not need to be externally verified.

25 What policies do I need to submit with my application?

You must submit either a Community Relations Policy, Good Relations Policy or an Equality Policy with your application. If you work with children or vulnerable adults, you must also submit your child and adult safeguarding policies with the application.

Please ensure all policies are up-to-date and have not passed their review date.

26 Do I need to submit my organisation's Strategic Plan with my application?

Yes, you must submit your organisation's Strategic Plan with your application. The Strategic Plan must cover at least the funding period for which you are applying, i.e. if you are making an application for the period 1st April 2026 until 31st March 2027, your Strategic Plan must cover up to at least 31st March 2027. Your application proposal must also strongly link to some of the strategic objectives within your Strategic Plan.

27 What is the difference between a Strategic Plan and Operational or Action Plan?

Strategic Plan – A strategic plan is a formal, high-level document that outlines an organisation's long-term vision, mission, and values, along with the specific goals, objectives, and actionable steps needed to achieve them over a period, typically three to five years. It functions as a roadmap, guiding decision-making, aligning stakeholders, and allocating resources effectively to achieve organisational success by considering both internal factors and external market conditions.

Operational Plan – An operational plan is a short-term, detailed document that translates a business's high-level strategy into actionable steps for daily and weekly activities, typically over a period of one year or less. It acts as a roadmap, outlining specific tasks, responsibilities, timelines, resources, and key performance indicators (KPIs) for departments or teams to execute, ensuring that the organisation's broader strategic goals are achieved.

Action Plan - An action plan is a detailed document that outlines the steps, activities, and resources required to achieve a specific goal or objective. It serves as a roadmap for success, breaking down a larger strategy into manageable tasks with clear timelines, assigned responsibilities, and defined outcomes.

28 Can I download a pdf of the application form?

Yes – from the Summary Page you can view or download a PDF of the application form at any stage of the application process.

29 Do you save progress at each stage or if moving from page to page or back to Summary Page?

Yes – save your progress to ensure that your work is not lost.

30 Completing the Form

You will not be able to submit your form until all the questions have been answered and the form is 100% complete. The system will tell you where there are any questions unanswered by highlighting these at the top of the page and highlighting the questions themselves in red. The submit button will be found under the bar indicating that the form is 100% complete.

31 Will the presentation slides be shared?

Yes, the information session was recorded, and the presentation and slides will be shared on our website.

If you have any further questions, please contact us on 028 9022 7500 or email Karina Pieterse on kpieterse@nicrc.org.uk