



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

---

Paper 28/17

3 May 2017

NIAR 58-2016

**Eleanor Murphy**

# Sources of Funding for the Voluntary and Community Sector

This briefing paper provides an overview of the different types of funding available from public, charitable and corporate sources. It is not possible for RaISe to provide a comprehensive list as there are hundreds of different sources of grant aid and they change constantly. However, weblinks are provided for various comprehensive funding databases such as NICVA's Grant Tracker and the Government Funding database which are regularly updated with funding opportunities. Social media is also an excellent source of up-to-date funding information particularly the twitter accounts of NICVA and the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland and links to these are enclosed.

## 1 Grant Tracker

Grant Tracker is a website dedicated to finding grants and fundraising opportunities for charities, clubs and community groups in Northern Ireland. The database is maintained by the *Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)* and can be accessed at [www.grant-tracker.org/](http://www.grant-tracker.org/). Help with using the website and identifying suitable funding sources is available from NICVA see [www.grant-tracker.org/support](http://www.grant-tracker.org/support). NICVA will be able to provide advice to groups on making funding applications and on fundraising, for details see <http://www.nicva.org/services/fundraising>.

## 2 Funding from government departments and other public bodies

### Government Funding Database

The Grant Finder facility on the NI Government funders database is useful in locating available funding from Government Departments and local councils. Details of open and closed funding programmes for each Department is provided in the database. It also provides summary information on financial support that has been awarded to each voluntary and community organisation. The link to the database is

<https://govfundingpublic.nics.gov.uk/>

To locate the open and closed grant programmes for each Department click on Grant Finder, tick “funding source”, this will provide a drop down menu for each Department and local council. This is a live database which is updated. Information is held for both open and closed grants schemes. It is worth keeping a watching brief on closed grant schemes as a number of these may re-open for applications in the future.

## 3 EU Funding

Of the many programmes and sub-programmes listed in the EU Budget, NICVA have identified around 20 programmes that offer the most potential for EU funding for the voluntary sector in Northern Ireland. Whilst most of the funding associated with the programmes is awarded to public bodies, private companies and research organisations, NICVA believes there is a sizeable opportunity for voluntary groups to access some of this finance. However, the majority of EU funding programmes require organisations to work in partnership with organisations from other EU countries. Brexit is likely to have a significant impact on the availability of future EU funding.

The NICVA website provides further details of the types of funding which is available. There is a contact number/email address at the bottom of the webpage for NICVA's fundraising advice officers who may be able to provide assistance to groups seeking to make applications. See [www.nicva.org/article/fundraising-alternatives-part-6-a-focus-on-eu-funding](http://www.nicva.org/article/fundraising-alternatives-part-6-a-focus-on-eu-funding)

NICVA also provide a useful 7-step guide by which organisations can assess whether they are eligible to apply for EU funding. See [www.nicva.org/resource/couldshould-you-apply-for-eu-funding](http://www.nicva.org/resource/couldshould-you-apply-for-eu-funding)

Further information on EU funding is available from the ‘Access Europe’ website. This is a project aimed to assist Irish Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in identifying and securing EU funding. See [www.accesseurope-ireland.org/](http://www.accesseurope-ireland.org/)

## 4 Funding from charities and corporate organisations

### NICVA

In addition to public funding, there are also a number of charities and corporate organisations (e.g. Tesco, Asda and various high street banks) that provide grants for various community projects. The NICVA Grant Tracker website is dedicated to finding such grants and fundraising opportunities - [www.grant-tracker.org/](http://www.grant-tracker.org/). There are over 900 potential sources of funding schemes available to search.

The Northern Ireland Assembly Library has a subscription to GrantTracker that can be accessed through the AsslSt intranet -

<http://assist.assemblyni.gov.uk/services/rsrchlib/eresources/azresources.htm>

**Note that NICVA's twitter account** is also very useful source for providing up-to-date information on small grant funding opportunities for local organisations see

[https://twitter.com/nicva\\_fradvice](https://twitter.com/nicva_fradvice)

Organisations can join NICVA for free if they are voluntary, community or social enterprise organisations with an income of under £20,000 per year and includes a reduced annual fee for the use of Grant Tracker. See [www.nicva.org/article/free-nicva-membership-for-small-organisations](http://www.nicva.org/article/free-nicva-membership-for-small-organisations)

### Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

The purpose of the Community Foundation is to connect local and international donors with community projects that require funding. The website provides information on rolling funding streams see [www.communityfoundationni.org/funds](http://www.communityfoundationni.org/funds) and [www.communityfoundationni.org/apply](http://www.communityfoundationni.org/apply)

Note that the **Community Foundation twitter account** also provides up-to-date information on funding opportunities <https://twitter.com/CFNIreland>

### The Big Lottery Fund NI

The Big Lottery Fund (NI) is one of a number of significant investors in community groups and projects in Northern Ireland. It provides grants from £300 to over £500,000 to local organisations ranging from small local groups to major national charities. It has various funding programmes for Northern Ireland, for example the 'Awards for All' initiative (which is a quick way for groups to access small Lottery Grants of between £500 to £10,000). The Big Lottery Fund website contains a searchable database of funding as well as comprehensive information and guidance on how to apply for funding see [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding)

The Big Lottery Fund '**Awards for All**' provides grant funding of between £500 - £10,000. It is an open programme (i.e. there are no closing dates for applications). The programme provides funding for projects that strengthen community activity (e.g. improving physical and mental health, safer communities, community participation). For further information see [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/global-content/programmes/northern-ireland/awards-for-all-northern-ireland](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/global-content/programmes/northern-ireland/awards-for-all-northern-ireland)

The Big Lottery Fund '**People and Communities**' funding stream provides grant funding of between £30,000 to £500,000 to support social enterprises, co-operatives and mutuals. This is an open programme. For further information see [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/global-content/programmes/northern-ireland/people-and-communities](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/global-content/programmes/northern-ireland/people-and-communities)

## Some notable organisations providing grant funding in Northern Ireland

### ▪ **BBC Children in Need**

BBC Children in Need awards grants to organisations supporting disadvantaged children and young people in the UK. It provides "main grants" and "small grants". Information on the application process is available at [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/1N4ddmFHns8VPKjyp3PMYwn/apply-for-a-grant](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/1N4ddmFHns8VPKjyp3PMYwn/apply-for-a-grant)

### ▪ **Comic Relief**

Comic Relief has provided significant grant funding to a range of organisations in Northern Ireland including Action Mental Health, Age NI, Include Youth, Women's Aid, Simon Community and Women and Children's Centres. Information on grants including the application process is available at [www.comicrelief.com/grants](http://www.comicrelief.com/grants)

### ▪ **Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust**

Provides grant funding for projects working in five areas – peace and security; power and accountability; rights and justice; sustainable future; and Northern Ireland. The Trust tends not to fund organisations that deliver services or alleviate immediate needs but rather organisations that address the root cause of problems such as violence or injustice. The Trust is particularly interested in funding work that cannot be funded from other sources.

For further information see [www.jrct.org.uk/funding-priorities](http://www.jrct.org.uk/funding-priorities)

- **Halifax Foundation for Northern Ireland**

Open to organisations that have an income of less than £1m in the previous 12 months. The aim of the Foundation is to “support underfunded charities that enable people, especially disadvantage or people with special needs, to play a fuller role in the community”. Further information is available at

[www.lloydsbankfoundationni.org/programmes/community-grant-programme/application-process](http://www.lloydsbankfoundationni.org/programmes/community-grant-programme/application-process)

- **Northern Ireland (Electricity) Networks Charities Fund**

The fund is financed from NIE staff salaries and pensions which aims to raise £100,000 annual for distribution to local charities including e.g. women’s groups and play groups. Further information is available at [www.nienetworks.co.uk/Charities-fund](http://www.nienetworks.co.uk/Charities-fund)

- **Santander Foundation**

The Foundation’s flagship community programme is the “Discovery Project” which aims to provide grants to “support knowledge, skills and innovation to give disadvantaged people the confidence to discover and create a new world of opportunities”. Grants of up to £5,000 are available. Further information is available at [www.santanderfoundation.org.uk/](http://www.santanderfoundation.org.uk/)

- **The Ireland Funds**

Is a global philanthropic network that aims to support peace, culture, education and community development throughout Ireland. The Ireland Funds operate two competitive grant rounds each year. The Small Grants round offers grant funding under £7,000 for smaller community organisations and for organisations that have not previously been supported by the Ireland Funds. The Flagship Grants Round provides funding of up to £50,000 for organisations seeking to pilot new programmes for expanding programmes which have proven successful. Further information is available at <https://irelandfunds.org/grants/>

- **St Stephen’s Green Trust**

Is a grant-giving charitable organisation which operates a range of grant programmes in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The grant programmes seek to effect social change in a range of areas e.g. prisoners/ex-prisoners and their families; travellers; homelessness. The general grants programme is now closed but will re-open in August 2017. Further information is available at

[www.ssgt.ie/general\\_grants\\_programme.html](http://www.ssgt.ie/general_grants_programme.html)

- **Ulster Garden Villages**

The charity allocates funding that will have a positive impact within Northern Ireland. Grants do not usually cover the costs of office expenses or administrative staff salaries. In addition to grants the charity may also provide loans. Examples of projects funded include a scanner for the Royal Victoria Hospital; refurbishment of a suite at Belfast City Hospital; support for the refurbishment of Belmont Tower in East Belfast; and funding for various supported housing projects for older people and people with disabilities.

Further information is available at

[www.s137244257.websitehome.co.uk/ugv/index.htm](http://www.s137244257.websitehome.co.uk/ugv/index.htm)

- **Victoria Homes Trust**

Is a small independent grant-making trust which only funds registered charities in Northern Ireland. The purpose of the trust is to assist the physical, mental and spiritual development of young people under 21 years old. Projects addressing the following needs of children and young people are particularly welcome – alcohol and drugs abuse, homelessness and counselling. The majority of grants are between £500 to £2,500.

Further information is available at [www.victoriahomestrust.com/](http://www.victoriahomestrust.com/)

- **Enkalon Foundation**

Funds different types of organisations across Northern Ireland (Co Antrim in particular) including cross community groups, self-help groups, unemployment assistance organisations and those helping this disadvantage. The average grant available is £500 - £1,000. Further information is available at

[www.enkalonfoundation.org/page2.html](http://www.enkalonfoundation.org/page2.html)

- **The Fermanagh Trust**

Is an independent community based organisation supporting local communities and groups across County Fermanagh. It offers a board portfolio of programmes and funds e.g. community wind farms; encouraging young talent in sport, music and performing arts; and supporting young people's voluntary work overseas. Further information is available at [www.fermanaghtrust.org/](http://www.fermanaghtrust.org/)

- **The Honourable Irish Society**

The society is a self-funding, cross-community charitable organisation working for the benefit of communities across County Derry/Londonderry. It welcomes grant opportunities from a range of individuals and local organisations e.g. amateur sports clubs and community groups. Further information is available at

[www.honourableirishsociety.org.uk/charitable-grants/charitable-grants](http://www.honourableirishsociety.org.uk/charitable-grants/charitable-grants)

## 5 Advice and Guidance on making a funding application

Many community groups find it difficult to apply for grants as the application process can be complex and confusing. There are many useful sources which provide advice and guidance on how to apply for funding e.g.:

**NICVA** can provide advice, information and training for groups seeking to access funding – see [www.nicva.org/services/fundraising](http://www.nicva.org/services/fundraising)

See also NICVA's "Writing Successful Funding Applications" advice [www.nicva.org/resource/writing-successful-funding-applications](http://www.nicva.org/resource/writing-successful-funding-applications)

**The Big Lottery Fund** provides extensive guidance on applying for funding including its 'Getting funding and planning successful projects' guide. See [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding/funding-guidance/applying-for-funding](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding/funding-guidance/applying-for-funding)

Venture Outdoors – '**Community Toolkit to Success: Writing Successful Funding Applications**' [www.outdoorrecreationni.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Community-Toolkit-to-Success-Writing-Successful-Funding-Applications\\_ORNI-2012.pdf](http://www.outdoorrecreationni.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Community-Toolkit-to-Success-Writing-Successful-Funding-Applications_ORNI-2012.pdf)

**Department for Communities** – Investment Readiness Toolkit - [www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/how-investment-ready-are-you](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/how-investment-ready-are-you)

**NCVO** – 'Writing a Fantastic Funding Bid' [www.smallcharities.org.uk/resources-fundraising-writing/](http://www.smallcharities.org.uk/resources-fundraising-writing/)