

Strengthening Communities Programme 2027-2030 Guidance Note

What is the Strengthening Communities Programme?

The Strengthening Communities Programme (SCP) is funded by the Scottish Government and administered by delivery partners across Scotland.

DTAS is a delivery partner administering the programme to provisional and full DTAS members.

The programme aims to support community-anchor organisations to develop the capacity needed to build stability and resilience, and work towards long-term sustainability.

The programme aims to support ambitious and enterprising programmes, projects and activities where the outcomes and legacy achieved through the funded work, will provide long-term benefits to the local community.

Eligibility

To apply for the SCP, you must:

1. You must be a DTAS provisional or full member.
2. DTAS membership fees must be paid and up to date.
3. You must not currently be a recipient of an SCP grant.
4. You must not have been a recipient of an SCP grant within the last five years.
This includes if SCP funding was received via Highlands and Islands Enterprise, South of Scotland Enterprise or Community Enterprise in Scotland.
5. Your proposal must meet at least two of the four programme outcomes.

Funding

The SCP offers a grant to fund a full-time post for up to three years.

This programme provides funding from April 2027 to March 2030.

Each year's funding is dependent on approval following a Comprehensive Spending Review undertaken every financial year.

This means that each year the budget needs to be approved before the funding can be released.

Funding follows the financial year 01 April to 31 March.

Funding runs from April to March, following the financial year.

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SCP Outcomes

There are four programme outcomes

1. Increased income-generating revenue streams
2. Increased income through assets
3. Improved organisational resilience and increased sustainability
4. Increased capacity development

We recognise that developing new income-generation can take time and must be carefully balanced with the needs and priorities of the local community.

As such, the programme does not expect groups to become fully independent of grant funding within three years. However, SCP support can provide a step-change by helping your organisation begin, or accelerate, its journey towards more diverse income streams and reduced reliance on grants.

Application process

You need to complete an **Expression of Interest** (EOI).

This is an online form which asks you to provide brief information about your organisation and to describe what you would propose to do with an SCP grant.

When you complete the EOI, you will be asked to identify which outcomes your proposal will achieve. You must choose at least two of the programme outcomes.

You can choose all four outcomes if this fits your proposal.

Each EOI submitted will be reviewed by DTAS and members who meet all criteria will be invited to complete a **full application** to the programme.

Applications will be assessed by DTAS, and members will be notified of a decision in writing with feedback provided.

Timeline

1. The process to submit an EOI is open until **23 September 2026**.
2. The deadline for full applications to be submitted is **11 October 2026**.
3. It is anticipated that final decisions will be made and outcomes sent to members in **December 2026**.

Please note that the timelines in the programme may be subject to change. We will share all updates with members at the earliest opportunity.

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Application assessment

The application assessment process takes place over three main stages:

1. DTAS will assess each application submitted by members providing a decision of successful or unsuccessful at this initial stage.
2. Members will receive a full written decision with feedback.
3. At the second stage, these successful applications will be submitted to the programme's Operational Delivery Group for consideration. This group is made up of all programme delivery partners and Scottish Government representatives. The Operational Delivery Group has responsibility for programme delivery and monitoring.
4. Successful nominations at this stage will then be considered by the programme's Advisory Board where final decisions are made.
5. The Advisory Group has strategic oversight of the programme and makes recommendations to Ministers annually on final approvals from the nominations that have been submitted.

Please note that the timelines in the programme may be subject to change. We will share all updates with members at the earliest opportunity.

What will the SCP fund?

The type of posts funded through the SCP can vary depending on the specific need of the organisation, however, they are generally Development Officer, Development Manager, Business Development Officer, Project Development Officer or Enterprise Development Officer, for example.

The programme will fund up to 1 Full-Time Equivalent which is approximately 35 hours per week.

The SCP can also fund reasonable associated costs with recruitment and new staff onboarding such as training and travel expenses.

The SCP will also fund small capital costs related to setting-up a new postholder such as a laptop, for example.

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Applications can include request for resources to:

- Increase community engagement;
- Strengthen Board governance and organisational capacity;
- Improve communications;
- Improve partnership working and local collaboration.

Overall, applications must clearly show how the proposal supports the purpose, aims and objectives of the SCP and delivers against a minimum of two of the programme outcomes.

Applications should provide clear and realistic proposals for delivering key milestones, along with methods for monitoring and measuring progress towards the identified outcomes.

Proposals must be linked to organisational resilience, capacity and sustainability providing benefit to the local community.

Examples of building resilience, capacity and sustainability could include:

- Generation of sustainable revenue streams;
- Acquisition, development and management of community owned land and assets - this might include where this helps to deliver Local Place Plans, Community Action Plans or other local improvement plans;
- Job creation;
- Development of renewable energy schemes;
- Increased community confidence, self-determination and autonomy;
- Local delivery of community-designed services;
- Community infrastructure such as broadband connectivity; and population retention and improved demographic representation.

Areas identified as priority for the programme

1. Organisations in areas Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)1-4 are prioritised.
2. It is recognised that the SIMD is not always an accurate indicator for rural areas and Islands. In these areas, organisations in communities with a lack of access to key services, experience of poverty and/or loss of working-age population will be prioritised.
3. Organisations currently in receipt of funding from the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (RCGF) or successful at stage 1 of this year's RCGF application round will be prioritised.