GUIDANCE Document

Forth Valley & Lomond CLLD Fund

Rural Stirling, Clackmannanshire & West Dunbartonshire

About the Fund

Funding for FVL CLLD comes from the Scottish Government with an allocation set each year following the budget setting process at Scottish Government. The governance and decision making regarding project awards rests with the Local Action Group to reflect the grassroots nature of CLLD. More information on CLLD can be found on the Scottish Rural Network website https://www.ruralnetwork.scot/community-led-local-development

Fund Structure

BODY	ROLE
FVL CLLD LAG (Local Action Group)	Set the priorities and vision for the funding, oversee management of the fund, approval of projects. The FVL CLLD LAG is made up of representatives of the local area from both local agencies and community representatives from Stirling, Clackmannanshire and West Dunbartonshire.
Stirling Council	Accountable Body – processes grant payments on behalf of FVL CLLD LAG which are reclaimed from Scottish Government. Any grant payment will appear on your bank account as Stirling Council.

Eligible Rural Areas

The eligible area is rural Stirling (excluding Stirling City), Clackmannanshire (excluding Alloa) and rural West Dunbartonshire. If you wish to check that your planned project is being delivered in an eligible area, particularly if your project is located on a rural/urban boundary, please contact the FVL CLLD team.

How much is available?

The total allocation of funds for distribution across the Forth Valley and Lomond CLLD area for 2026/27 is £74,000 for capital projects, and £380,000 for revenue projects. Therefore a maximum amount is applied to each individual application as follows:

Capital Projects – Maximum £15,000. (Minimum application amount £5,000) *Larger awards may be awarded at the discretion of the LAG, but subject to availability of funds. Please discuss this with us prior to submitting your application.*

Revenue Projects - Maximum £30,000 (Minimum application £5,000)

Who can apply?

- Constituted Groups, CICs, SCIOs, Charities, Development Trusts, Community Groups, Social Enterprises.
- Businesses* a group of businesses or a single business delivering a project of demonstrative community benefit who are based in the Forth Valley and Lomond eligible area. **Please read Appendix 2 document at the end of guidance for further information.** **Note: Business organisations of up to 249 employees. Large organisations of 250/over are not eligible.*

What are the Aims of the Funding Programme?

Projects must demonstrate fit with at least two of the FVL CLLD Fund priorities and the overarching Scottish Government goal/priorities.

FVL CLLD Priorities **Please read appendix 1 document for full description**.
Investing in Sustainable Economic Actions
Creating Resilient and Smart Communities
Fostering Partnership Working *Particularly to support the eradication of child poverty*
Addressing Inequalities & Social Inclusion *Including supporting the needs and involvement of young people in local decision making*
Preparing Climate Actions & Responding to the Climate Emergency

Overarching Scottish Governments Goals
Advancing inclusion, equality and diversity, eradicating child poverty and economic growth

What can the grant be used for (eligible costs)?

CAPITAL PROJECTS:

1. Technical studies or professional fees to allow a capital project to proceed.
2. Legal costs specific to, and essential for project to proceed.
3. Purchase of equipment essential for the project to operate on an ongoing basis.
4. Acquisition, upgrading, or refurbishment costs for physical assets such as property, plants, buildings, technology, or equipment.
5. Materials for capital project.

REVENUE PROJECTS:

6. Market research / specialist support / feasibility studies.
7. Marketing materials.
8. Administration, (small) equipment and office running costs.
9. Training (not vocational or leading to academic qualification) and workshop costs.
10. Travel and subsistence costs of staff or volunteers.
11. Costs related to contracting someone on a self-employed basis, or costs relating to employing someone directly (gross salary, employer pension, employers NI) to deliver the specific project. *Applicants must meet the criteria of the Scottish Government's 'Fair Work' policy.* https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-work-first-guidance/.

What the grant cannot be used for (ineligible costs)

- Expenditure incurred prior to the acceptance of the FVL CLLD grant award letter.
- Expenditure defrayed out with the programme period (after March 2027).
- Delivery of courses which form part of the SCQF primary/secondary/tertiary education.
- Consumables including alcohol, gifts, hospitality or stock for resale.
- Activity taking place outside the eligible area.
- Staffing costs that are reclaimable by the applicant ie statutory maternity / paternity / adoption pay / statutory sick pay for employees.
- Bonus or commissions.
- Gifts.
- Financial charges – bank / credit card / loan charges / foreign exchange commission etc.
- Costs involved in winding up a company or organisation including redundancy costs.
- Payments **not** supported by invoices and/or documents proving expenditure.
- Recoverable VAT.
- In-kind costs.
- Business applicants' own staff time or core business operating costs.

Supporting Documents - required to be submitted with application

1.	**Constitution/governing document** • Please supply a full list of directors, board members or Trustees (as appropriate)
2.	**Incorporation document** (if applicable)
3.	**Accounts:** Community/third sector organisations: • Latest year of accounts (audited/examined if thresholds reached). Businesses: • Latest year of accounts (audited/examined according to regulator thresholds). • Management accounts to bridge gap between latest day of accounts and the present.
4.	**3 months' bank statements** • For the account the grant would be paid into. • As close to the date of application deadline as possible.
5.	**Copy of VAT certificate where applicant is VAT registered**
6.	**3 quotes for eligible costs** *You will be provided with a 'Value for Money' form to be completed and submitted with application**.** - When obtaining quotes from contractors & suppliers, please ensure that they are able to complete contracts within the funding programme timescales.
7.	**Need/demand of project – provide as appropriate:** ○ Business plan / project plan ○ Research undertaken / consultation carried out/feasibility studies completed. ○ Community / Place Plan ○ Job descriptions
8.	**Local support** – minimum 2 letters of support from community.
9.	**Staff Costs / Salaries**
1.	Existing jobs: Payroll statement showing gross salary costs, employer NI and employer pension costs for the employees you wish to claim against. Note the **Scottish Real Living Wage** is the minimum requirement. https://scottishlivingwage.org/what-is-the-real-living-wage/
2.	New Jobs: benchmarking x 3 + proposed salary
3.	Statement on Fair Work Policy / provision of effective workers' voice. https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-work-first-guidance-2/pages/8/

10.	Capital Projects (Land / Buildings)
1.	Valid lease/title deeds, in place at least 5 years post project completion.
2.	Where lease, landlord's permission to carry out works.
3.	Evidence of Statutory Regulatory Requirements e.g. planning/building warrant/SEPA license/event licence in place/not needed (i.e. not required for installation of items). - **We require that any permissions (planning, land owners etc.) are obtained prior to submitting an application**.

How will my application be assessed?

- Extent to which proposed activity fits with the priorities of the FVL CLLD fund.
- Extent to which issue being addressed impacts on local community or area as a whole.
- Longevity of the project outcomes.
- Previous work already undertaken in preparation for the project.
- Robustness of the need / demand of the project.
- Track record of applicant organisation or the team proposed to fill any skills/experience gaps.
- Viability and robustness of ongoing management plan of any equipment purchased.
- Quotes/ costing of proposed project costs.
- How the project has considered inclusion, equality and diversity aspects of the proposed activity?

Process

1. Submit and Expression of Interest outlining your project via https://www.fvl.org.uk/how-apply/eoi-form/
2. You will be contacted by a member of the team to discuss your application within 7 working days.
3. If your project is eligible, you will be sent an application form.
4. **Applicants are strongly advised to submit a draft application before the closing date of application for review / advice. Reviews will not be available after the application deadline date.**
5. Your application will then be submitted to the Local Action Group panel for decision. Applications can be:
    - Approved
    - Approved subject to specific conditions
    - Deferred requesting more information, or
    - Declined
6. If application is successful, a formal grant letter will be issued for signing.
7. You will be notified that the project can commence.
8. Your project will be subject to monitoring and inspection through the delivery and project completion period.

Grant Payments

- Grants will be paid in arrears*.
- Grants will be paid on receipt of claim form with evidence of expenditure** and bank statements (this can be monthly or quarterly, depending on cash-flow). All procurement documentation should be provided if not already submitted.
- All payments / claims *** should be made via organisation / business bank account.
- You can claim as often as you wish but please note you must submit at least one claim by the following deadlines:
    - 1 October 2026 for Round 1 projects
    - 1 December 2026 for Round 2 projects
- Final claim must be submitted by **Sunday, 14 February 2027**. Claims received after this date may not be eligible.

*If cash-flow prevents you from claiming retrospectively, please discuss this with the CLLD team.
** If you are planning to pay for items by cheque, Paypal, credit card or an alternative bank account, please **discuss in advance** of purchase of goods and services. The process requires additional financial evidence, and we **strongly discourage** you from doing so. We particularly advise you **NOT** to use personal credit cards.
*** Cash or Klarna payments for purchased items or services **WILL NOT** be accepted.

Milestones

Project milestones document the start and finish of a project or project phase. Milestones assist in focusing the project teams in meeting their objectives and the action steps that must be taken to achieve the fulfilment of the project within the necessary time-frame.

Do give some thought as to how you will manage your project cash-flow, in line with your milestones, you will be provided with a simple income/expenditure spreadsheet for you to complete.

Examples of project milestones:

- Advertise services required.
- Contractor / project officer in place.
- Order equipment required.
- Appoint contractor / project team.
- Service delivered / equipment installed.
- Interim report / study received from consultant.
- Final report / study received from consultant.
- Project complete.

Funding Administration – Responsibility of Applicants

Applicants will be required to submit project reports when submitting their financial claims, it is important that you record key data. If your application is successful, further advice will be given and the data to be gathered and will be tailored to your specific project.

Your project will be subject to monitoring and inspection through the delivery and project completion period.

Pre-Application Engagement

- Applicants **must** engage with the FVL CLLD before applying. Applications from applicants who have not committed to this step will not be accepted. You can submit a brief outline of your project and contact details via the Expression of Interest form, and we can send the application pack, https://www.fvl.org.uk/how-apply/eoi-form/
- The eligibility criteria should be read prior to committing to this step.
- Applicants are **strongly** advised to submit a draft application before the closing date of application for review / advice. Reviews may not be available after the closing date for applications.

Using AI Tools / AI Content

We will not reject an application that is composed wholly or partially using AI, but we recommend that you:

- Acknowledge the use of AI tool in the application, unless it is used for translating from other languages. This will have no influence on the decision-making process.

- Be cautious of what information you share, as some AI tools will store the information you input. Be aware of data protection legislation.

- Ensure the information generated is not mis-leading, is accurate, and related to the outcomes/themes of the grant being applied for.

- Make it personal by editing AI-generated content to reflect your own experiences, skills, and make sure your submitted application is clear about what your project.

- Needs or hopes for and how your project will fit the specific criteria and objectives of our grant funding.

- If using an AI tool to support your application, you should be aware that:

    - Use of AI has Environmental impact*: Use AI mindfully, only use AI where it will clearly help you apply or significantly improve the quality of your application.

- Errors or inaccuracies in an application as a result of using AI will not be accepted as cause for review of our decision on your application.

- The decision to use AI is yours. It can be a helpful tool, and we suggest that you use it with caution.

Mimecast Document Security

To increase security when sharing application supporting documents, we use the cyber-security programme - Mimecast. It is very straight forward; you will be provided with an electronic email link. Using this system ensures all sensitive documents, such as bank statements etc. are safely shared, bulk documents can be sent in one email and a clear record of documents provided are on record.

We recommend prior to uploading bundles of documents you zip them, this ensures the documents are compressed and using less storage.

- Please note we can still receive singular documents as email attachments if you are happy to do so.

- The link expires at a set-date to enable you to submit your application documents up to 2GB, it can only be used once, but you can request additional secure links if needed, i.e. if sending documents in more than one batch.

- Once you have submitted your application and supporting documents, you will receive a confirmation email from the system with a summary of the files attached for your records.

Our IT system does **not accept** documents to be sent via *We Transfer* or *Drop Box* or any other file transfer apps.

APPENDIX 1 – Further Information on FVL CLLD Priorities

The appendix outlines the five strategic priorities guiding funding and support under the FVL Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) approach:

1. Investing in Sustainable Economic Actions

Focuses on supporting businesses, communities or users/customers to achieve positive environmental impact while avoiding over-concentration or resource exploitation. Emphasises collaborative initiatives, shared use of resources and skills, and investment in training and upskilling to build a skilled, supported workforce and community.

2. Creating Resilient and Smart Communities

Supports communities to use technology and innovation to address current and future challenges such as visitor management, digital infrastructure gaps, and climate change. Includes digital inclusion, education outreach, and support for community asset transfers, with strong emphasis on community participation, capacity building, and shared learning.

3. Fostering Partnership Working

Encourages new and strengthened partnerships between communities and other sectors (e.g. land management). Promotes co-delivery models and mechanisms that make partnership working easier. The Local Action Group (LAG) plays a facilitative role by enabling connections, supporting collaboration, and removing barriers—not solely through funding.

4. Addressing Inequalities & Social Inclusion

Targets young people, people with disabilities, carers, and other disadvantaged groups. Supports preparatory work to improve facilities, infrastructure, information, health, and wellbeing. Encourages projects that reduce barriers to employment, skills, and training; improve connectivity; support minority and refugee/resettled groups; and mitigate the impacts of the Cost of Living crisis.

5. Preparing Climate Actions & Responding to the Climate Emergency

Supports communities to take early steps on climate action across a wide range of areas, including land restoration, renewable energy, energy efficiency, transport solutions, active and safe travel, waste reduction and circular economy initiatives, and local food growing and availability. Also to undertake mitigation actions in the face of climate change, eg increased incidents of flooding and natural flood management.

APPENDIX 2 – Additional Information for Applications from Individual Businesses

Only Micro Businesses (under 10 employees) or Small and Medium Enterprise (SMEs – under 250 employees) are eligible to apply.

Applying to CLLD for funding is a competitive process and applications from Micro and SME Businesses will be assessed against the same criteria and priorities as applications from community organisations.

Businesses can be incorporated or operate as sole trader enterprises, but will require to have a business bank account (i.e. a bank account in the name of the business which is used for business related transactions only).

When considering whether your project idea is eligible for CLLD funding, you should identify the benefits of your project proposal to the wider community, which must go beyond the existence of your individual business in a community or the creation of local employment (commendable though this is).

Businesses are encouraged to think about how their proposals fit with the local Community Action Plan, Local Place Plan, or even the wider Development Plan for their locality. Letters of support should also be sought from the local community, which could be from the local Community Council, local Development Trust or other locally based group. Please ask them to articulate why they are supportive of your proposal.

This is not a prescriptive list, so think hard about how what you are proposing to do will be delivering a service or a facility that the local community want or need. Another option to consider would be to partner up with a local community in the delivery of your project.

Examples could be the construction of a building or facility that the community can also use, creation of visitor facilities that will benefit other businesses in the area also (or that would alleviate pressure on community facilities), events that bring visitors into the area out of season, projects that support the growth of the local food and drink sector and shorten the supply chain for local consumers and make it easier for them to access local food. More examples are available here https://www.fvl.org.uk/success-stories/case-studies/

Please note that the LAG is not able to cover the costs of business owners' or their staff's salary costs to run their businesses, or for stock. Only additional costs can be considered.