

British Science Week 2027

Community Grants guidelines

British Science Week 2027 will run from Friday 5 to Sunday 14 March. This year, to celebrate British Science Week, we are offering two types of Community Grants. Both grants encourage communities to get creative with exploring how science and research can improve lives in their local areas.

The 2027 British Science Week Community Grants scheme, delivered by the British Science Association, and funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), has been designed to help communities explore issues that matter to them, develop new ideas, build partnerships and discover how research and innovation can contribute to positive change.

This is part of a wider six-year programme to engage the public with research and innovation across the UK. Funded by UKRI and delivered by the British Science Association, this new initiative will celebrate the full breadth of UK research and innovation - from science and technology, to the arts, humanities and social sciences - and the contribution it makes to improving lives and livelihoods. During the first year, some activity for this new programme (including the community grants) will be delivered through the established annual British Science Week campaign - taking place from 5-14 March 2027.

We know that communities are experts in their own lives and experiences. That's why this programme puts community leadership at its heart! Whether you're new to working with researchers or already have experience of community-research partnerships, we want to hear from you.

The programme offers two funding opportunities:

1. **British Science Week Pilot Grants** of £2,500, and;
2. **British Science Week Incubator Grants** of between £5,000 and £8,000

This guidance explains who can apply, what we are looking for, and how to submit an application.

What can you apply for?

Pilot Grants

Pilot Grants offer £2,500 for community organisations and groups to use research to test small scale pilot projects exploring how research can make a difference to local communities. You could do this by exploring an idea, investigating a question, testing a new approach or building relationships that could lead to future collaboration. As part of British Science Week, projects must demonstrate a clear connection to science. We take a broad and inclusive view of what this means, welcoming projects linked to STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), the social sciences, health and the environment. Projects that draw on arts and humanities research are also welcome, provided they include a clear and meaningful connection to science.

Pilot Grants are intended to support learning, experimentation and community leadership. We understand that not every idea will work exactly as planned, and we welcome projects that are open to learning and adapting along the way.

Researcher involvement is encouraged but **not** required for Pilot Grants.

Incubator Grants

Incubator Grants offer between £5,000 and £8,000 for projects that are co-designed between community organisations and researchers.

Project proposals must demonstrate a clear and meaningful connection to science in order to align with British Science Week. We take a broad and inclusive view of science, including STEM subjects, health, environment, technology, engineering and the social sciences. We also welcome projects that draw on arts and humanities research where there is a clear relationship to science and its role in society.

These grants are designed to deepen community researcher partnerships, build on existing learning, and support projects that have the potential to create meaningful benefits for communities.

Applicants for Incubator Grants must have a named researcher involved in the project and demonstrate how the project has been developed collaboratively.

Applicants do not need to have received a Pilot Grant previously. However, Incubator Grants are intended for organisations that already have some experience of working with researchers or research activity.

Successful recipients of Incubator Grants will be required to attend Community of Practice meetings three times a year.

What's the difference between a Pilot Grant and an Incubator Grant?

Pilot Grants are designed for learning, experimentation and relationship-building. They are suitable for organisations that are new to research and innovation or are at an early stage of developing an idea.

Incubator Grants are designed for organisations that already have experience of working with researchers or research activity and are ready to develop a stronger partnership and deliver a larger project.

Do I need to have received a Pilot Grant before applying for an Incubator Grant?

No.

Incubator Grants are open to organisations that have not previously received a Pilot Grant, provided they can demonstrate experience of working with a researcher and meet the eligibility criteria.

Eligibility

To be eligible for funding, you must represent a UK-based community group or organisation that works directly with one or more communities who are underrepresented in STEM, research and innovation.

Our definition of underrepresented communities includes:

- People from ethnic minority backgrounds
- People living in communities that face deprivation, including people disadvantaged in terms of education and income
- People with a disability or long-term health condition
- People living in remote and rural locations, defined as settlements of fewer than 10,000 people
- Girls and women*

* For community groups that work with girls and women, we prioritise those who work with at least one other underrepresented group.

We welcome applications from:

- Community groups
- Registered charities

- Community Interest Companies (CICs)
- Unincorporated community associations
- Faith organisations
- Other community-led organisations

We welcome applications from organisations of all sizes, but we are particularly interested in hearing from smaller grassroots organisations that have strong relationships with the communities they serve, and we will be prioritising applications from such groups.

In the case of Incubator Grants, we will also consider applications from ‘broker organisations’ such as festivals, who can broker and facilitate relationships between communities and researchers.

Can schools apply?

No. Schools cannot apply for funding through this programme, however if you are interested on applying for funding on behalf of a school, you may be eligible to apply for British Science Week [funding for schools](#).

What do we mean by research and innovation?

We take a broad view of research and innovation.

Research and innovation can involve exploring a question, testing a new idea, gathering evidence, learning from lived experience, creating new knowledge or finding different ways to tackle challenges that matter to your community.

Research and innovation can come from many disciplines, including STEM subjects, the social sciences, and the arts and humanities. All projects funded through this programme must demonstrate a clear connection to science in keeping with the aims of British Science Week.

You do not need to be a research expert to apply.

We are interested in projects that are driven by community priorities and a desire to learn, explore and create positive change.

We are interested in projects that are curious, community-led and open to learning. Projects do not need to have all the answers at the start.

Do I need a researcher to apply?

For Pilot Grants, no.

Researcher involvement is encouraged but not required.

For Incubator Grants, yes.

Applicants must have a named researcher involved in the project and demonstrate how the project has been co-designed.

What do you mean by 'researcher'? / What is a researcher?

Researchers are people who use evidence, inquiry, investigation or specialist knowledge to better understand issues and generate new insights. They may work in universities, research institutes, charities, community organisations, public services, industry, or as independent practitioners.

Researchers might include:

- Academic researchers and lecturers from universities
- PhD students and Early Career Researchers
- Scientists and engineers
- Social researchers and evaluators
- Healthcare researchers and public health specialists
- Environmental and climate researchers
- Historians, archaeologists and heritage researchers
- Arts and humanities researchers
- Independent researchers and consultants
- Data analysts and citizen science specialists
- Researchers working in charities, local authorities or public bodies
- Industry-based researchers and innovation professionals

How might you work with a researcher?

There are a number of ways you might work with a researcher. For example, researchers could:

- share knowledge about the topic or theme your project focuses on
- help you think about how your project will address a research question
- share new practices, innovations, or technologies
- help consult on/ design an activity
- provide training in research or evaluation methods
- help you make sense of/ analyse data.

Note, for the Incubator grants, we will not fund projects suggesting only a 'one-off' intervention with a researcher, e.g. a single visit with no follow-up, relationship building, or further interaction.

What is the Community of Practice for Incubator Grant recipients?

We have found that bringing community research projects together to connect and learn from each other is really valuable. To help with this, we will run two online *community of practice* meetings and one in-person which will provide support and networking between the funded groups throughout the grant funded programme. If you are funded, you will be expected to take part in the these meetings and we will cover participation and travel costs through a grant uplift.

What are our priorities?

We are looking for projects that:

- Demonstrate a link to science
- Respond to issues that matter to communities
- Value community expertise and lived experience
- Create opportunities for learning and exploration
- Build trust and relationships between communities and researchers
- Encourage participation and inclusion
- Strengthen confidence, skills and capacity of communities and researchers
- Create benefits that continue beyond the funding period

For Pilot Grants, we are particularly interested in ideas with strong potential for learning, and relationship-building with researchers.

For Incubator Grants, we are also looking for evidence of meaningful co-design, strong community-research partnerships and a clear approach to creating longer-term impact.

Can we apply for less than the maximum amount?

We are offering a set grant amount for the Pilot Grants of £2,500. For Incubator Grants you can apply for between £5,000 and £8,000.

Can we apply for both grants?

No, each organisation or group can only apply for one grant, either the Pilot or the Incubator Grant, but not both. You will need to decide which grant is best suited to your unique community context.

How will applications be assessed?

Applications will be assessed against both eligibility and values criteria. Our values criteria is broken down into 5 areas. Strong applications demonstrate:

Community Leadership

Projects are driven by community priorities, involve community members in shaping the idea and recognise community expertise. For Incubator Grants, we also expect to see clear community leadership throughout the project and evidence of thoughtful co-design with community members and research partners.

Learning, Exploration and Innovation

Projects explore meaningful questions linked to science, test ideas and show openness to learning and adapting. For Incubator Grants, we also expect to see a clear learning journey and an approach to capturing and sharing learning.

Inclusion and Participation

Projects engage people who are often excluded and provide accessible opportunities to take part. For Incubator Grants, we also expect to see a well-developed approach to inclusive engagement and meaningful participation throughout the project.

Relationships and Collaboration

Projects build trust, strengthen connections and create opportunities for collaboration. For Incubator Grants, we also expect to see a strong partnership with a named researcher and evidence of shared decision-making and mutual benefit.

Legacy and Capacity Building

Projects help develop skills, confidence, knowledge or opportunities that extend beyond the project itself. For Incubator Grants, we also expect to see a clear plan for building capacity and creating benefits that continue beyond the funding period. Building capacity could be through strengthening the abilities, skills, knowledge, resources, and confidence of individuals, groups, and organisations so that they can identify their own needs, solve problems and improve their communities in a sustainable way.

A note on the use of AI

You may use AI tools to help you write your funding application. We will not reject an application if AI was used.

However, AI-supported applications may not effectively represent the unique circumstances of your organisation or group and are often inadequate at describing what distinguishes your plans from similar generic approaches.

We encourage you to consider AI tools as a starting point and to further refine your application to demonstrably reflect your own experience and community context.

Please ensure that your application is succinct and clearly explains what your plans are, how your project meets the funding priorities, and that any budgetary information is specific and accurate.

Our approach to assessment

As part of our approach to assessment, funding decisions will be made using a 'portfolio' approach.

This means that in addition to assessing the quality and impact of individual applications, we will consider the overall balance of the portfolio to ensure funding is distributed across the underrepresented groups identified above, as well as across the four UK nations. This approach is intended to support a diverse and representative portfolio of funded projects that reflects the breadth of communities and geographies these grants aim to serve.

We will also be prioritising applications from grassroots community organisations.

What types of projects could be funded?

We welcome a wide range of approaches and are particularly interested in activity that makes most sense for your unique local community context.

Projects that explore research and innovation in science might involve:

- Investigating issues that matter to communities
- Developing research skills and creating new knowledge
- Connecting communities with researchers and research
- Exploring innovation and testing new approaches
- Ensuring value is placed on lived experience and community knowledge
- Creating positive change through research and innovation

These examples illustrate the types of questions, approaches, and partnerships that could be supported through this programme. The scale and scope of projects will vary, and Pilot Grants are intended to support smaller-scale exploration, learning and relationship-building activities. For example:

Objective	Example Activities	Examples of Previously Funded Projects
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Investigate issues that matter to communities	• Community conversations exploring local issues • Community-led investigations and inquiries • Gathering community knowledge and lived experience • Exploring challenges or opportunities affecting local communities • Researching issues related to health, environment, technology, culture or education	• Community Climate Change Conversations (ACAMHA) • Carbon Audit (Knaydart Climate Action Group) • A Biodiversity Snapshot of the Scoraig Peninsula
Develop research skills and create new knowledge	• Collecting and analysing evidence • Surveys, interviews and focus groups • Citizen science projects • Workshops and learning activities • Community researcher training • Developing research capability and confidence	• Net Zero Nairn • Citizen Science and Gaelic in Scotland • Biodiversity Baselineing with the Uigshader Living Forest Project
Connect communities with researchers and research	• Collaborative projects with researchers • Community-researcher partnerships • Co-produced research projects • Events bringing communities and researchers together • Learning from research expertise and methods	• Recommending the Coast • Reading HongKongers • Together as One
Explore innovation and test new approaches	• Testing new ideas and approaches • Piloting solutions to local challenges • Creative projects informed by research • Experimenting with new methods or interventions • Developing and refining community-led solutions	• Seaweed Gardens • School Run to Net Zero Project • Single Use Cup Trial (GRAB Trust)
Value lived experience and	• Gathering community insight and lived experience • Participatory and community-led	• TRIYBE • Future Stories

community knowledge	research • Co-designing research questions and activities • Exploring cultural knowledge, heritage and identity • Ensuring communities shape the direction of research	• Citizen Science and Gaelic in Scotland
Create positive change through research and innovation	• Developing solutions to issues identified by communities • Using research findings to inform action • Building community capacity and confidence • Influencing local decision-making, policy or practice • Supporting community action based on evidence	• Highlands Green Leadership Awards • Climate Action Plan (Eriskay Historical Society) • Slough Anti-Litter Society

These examples are not exhaustive, and we recognise the expertise of community organisations and encourage applicants to design research activities that work best for the people they work alongside and the communities they serve.

What can the funding be spent on?

Funding may be used for:

- Materials and resources
- Venue hire
- Accessibility costs
- Reasonable volunteer expenses
- Travel and transport costs
- Publicity and communications
- Speakers, facilitators, trainers and freelancers
- Project-specific staff costs and proportionate overheads
- Community engagement activities
- Research-related activities and researcher fees
- Events and workshops
- Evaluation and learning activities

What can't the funding be spent on?

Funding cannot be used for:

- Activities that have already taken place

- Retrospective costs
- Ongoing organisational overheads already covered by other income
- Costs already funded through another grant
- Activities that do not primarily benefit eligible communities
- Schools applying in their own right

What information will we ask for in the application?

There are four 'free text' questions in each application. These are as follows:

Organisation Description (200 words maximum)

Please provide a brief description of your organisation, including the audiences/community members you work with.

Project description (300 words maximum for Pilot Grants, 600 for Incubator Grants)

Please describe your project idea, including telling us about the issue, opportunity or question you want to explore; why it matters to the community; how you plan to deliver the project and over what timeline.

Project objectives (300 words maximum for Pilot Grants, 600 for Incubator Grants)

Please provide a description of your event/project objectives, including what you hope to learn and develop through the project; whether researchers will be involved and what their role will be; how community members will be involved; and how you will ensure community member participation is accessible and inclusive.

Total Budget and Outline (200 words maximum)

Please provide a budget outline (short bullet points only) of costs associated with your event/project and how your grant funding will be used. This should equal the requested amount.

Do you provide feedback on applications?

Due to the expected volume of applications, we will not be able to provide detailed feedback to every applicant. However, we will aim to provide feedback wherever possible.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

We aim to keep reporting requirements proportionate and accessible and we will provide end-of-project templates. Our aim is to focus on building relationships with successful grant applicants, offering opportunities such as Community of Practice meetings, so that we can learn together.

Pilot Grant recipients will be asked to provide:

- A short end-of-project reflection
- A simple budget report
- A summary of learning and experiences

Incubator Grant recipients will be asked to provide:

- A short end-of-project report
- A simple budget report
- Reflections on learning, partnership working and community impact

Successful applicants may also be invited to contribute to case studies, events such as community of practice meetings, and programme learning activities.

Successful applicants must also comply with the monitoring, record-keeping and evaluation requirements set out in the full Terms and Conditions.

Deadlines and funding decisions

Applications open:

21 September 2026 at 12 noon

Applications close:

4 November 2026 at 5 pm

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by:

14 December 2026

We aim for funding to be issued by:

14 January 2027

Subject to due diligence checks.

Projects can commence as soon as funding is received, and we encourage successful applicants to commence delivery of their projects in line with British Science Week (5-14 March 2027) and projects must be fully completed by 27 February 2028.

Funding will be paid directly into the bank account provided in the application form.

Please ensure all bank account details are entered accurately. Incorrect information may delay payment and could result in funding being withdrawn.

How to apply

Applications must be submitted through the online application forms. Please note that you can only apply for either a Pilot Grant, or an Incubator Grant, but not both. We encourage you to think carefully about which grant is best suited to your idea/ activity and unique community context.

Before applying, please read this guidance carefully and ensure that you meet all the criteria.

When completing the application form, please ensure that all contact details and bank account information are correct.

Applications must be fully submitted before the deadline to be considered.

Accessibility and support

We want this programme to be as accessible and inclusive as possible.

If you have accessibility requirements, questions about eligibility or would like to discuss your idea before applying, please contact the Community Engagement Team:

communities@britishscienceassociation.org

We are happy to help!

Terms & Conditions

Please read the full Terms & Conditions before applying. These can be found on the final page of the application form.