Investing in Communities Fund: Supporting Community-Led Design

The places where we spend our time have an important impact on our lives. The way a place looks and how it works can influence our health, wellbeing, and the opportunities we have access to.

The Scottish Government wants to support the delivery of places that enable a high quality of life, help tackle inequalities and allow communities to flourish.

Since 2011-12, the Scottish Government has offered a grant funding programme to support participative design events, allowing communities to be involved in the design of changes and improvements to their place. For 2019-20, funding for community-led design can now be accessed through the Scottish Government's Investing in Communities fund, part of the [Empowering Communities Programme](#).

The Investing in Communities Fund is a new streamlined communities fund that builds on the learning from previous Scottish Government community funds. The fund aims to promote a more responsive, community-led place-based approach. One that is flexible and can adapt to existing and emerging community issues, circumstances and priorities; and in a way that encourages more effective strategic neighbourhood/place-based partnership working in a holistic way. The fund is open to community groups only.

The fund brings together a staged funding approach to enable communities to develop funding proposals from:

- capacity building stage – to strengthen communities;
- design stage – to identify local priorities; and through to
- delivery stage – to address what is most important to the community.

What is Community-Led Design?

Community-led design processes allow local people to come together to develop plans and designs relating to their area.

Design processes can take many forms, from intensive working over a few days to projects that adopt a slower pace over a longer timescale. Events where communities work intensively with a professional design team over a number of days, (sometimes known as charrettes) are eligible for support and the fund is also open to supporting other types of community-led design and capacity-building processes.

Proposals may look broadly at their whole place or have a more detailed focus on a particular aspect of that place. For example, an event may look at the town centre, particular streets/ neighbourhoods or specific buildings and local facilities. Projects of all scales or that consider any aspect of a place can be considered for funding.

Most design processes will involve an element of professional design input, perhaps involving a team of designers, planners, artists, professional facilitators or other experts. However, some processes may only require input from an individual or a small number of professionals, and some may utilise the expertise and talents of those living or working within the community. Processes should not simply be consultation events, but should allow for meaningful input from the wider community to be central to the development of plans and designs.

The precise approach to the project can be tailored depending on the scale and nature of the area being considered. Proposed design processes must allow communities to either lead the process, or to participate fully and be central to decision making on future plans for the place.

The fund can support a wide range of design and place-based issues, including the use of the Place Standard tool to help communities identify the assets within their local areas.

Local Place Plans
The Investing in Communities fund can be used for projects seeking to support the development of local place plans.

The Planning Bill currently before the Scottish Parliament seeks to introduce a new right for communities to produce plans for their places, with scope for those plans to become part of the statutory development plan. This effectively empowers a community to play a proactive role in defining the future of its place.

There is no set format to a local place plan and the community-led design fund aims to explore the challenges and opportunities arising from the preparation of these community-led plans.

The Design Approach

Whatever the type of design process used, it must be right for the particular community, and their context. It is important that the outcomes of the design process are realistic and useful in developing the ambitions and opportunities of the community.

In most cases, the type of design process that is appropriate will be dependent on:

- the scale and complexity of the project
- the level of detailed output that is required
- the community involved and the local context

An important part of a successful community-led design process is ensuring that all parts of the community are able to participate effectively. It is imperative that processes reduce the barriers that dissuade or prevent many local people from taking part in community discussions and planning events. The approach to encouraging engagement and participation in a design-led process should be a fundamental element of any proposal. We are keen to support projects that allocate time and effort to engaging with as wide a range of the community as possible, in ways that are genuinely effective and that are tailored to the individual community.

Engagement work in advance of a community-design event should be seen as a key part of the overall design-process to ensure the widest representation from the local community. Early engagement should focus on raising awareness, widening participation and should be tailored to the context of the community.

Applicants should consider using tools such as the Place Standard to help start discussions and set priorities in local areas.

Examples of design processes include:

Large scale and complex projects

If you are considering a large or complex area, such as the design of town centres, regeneration projects, or contributing towards Local Development Plans, the intensive and collaborative approach of charrette-style working may be appropriate. This typically involves a design team, working with the community, the local authority, and other stakeholders who have an interest in the place. These way of working is intensive, and will usually occur over several days, often running consecutively. Outputs may include a masterplan or design, action plan, and/or comprehensive set of priorities for the place, with substantial background material, research and detailed drawings. Large scale and complex projects may also adopt a design approach that is spread over a longer time, if that best suits the needs of the place.

Smaller sites and exploring opportunities

You may be considering a small site or exploring initial options for a place – in which case a design workshop, or a series of workshops held over a longer period of time might be a more suitable approach. You will still require design input, however the range of skills required at any one time may not be as broad as in larger, complex projects.

Issues/aspects of place

You may not be considering a particular physical asset within your place at all, but an issue, for example, safe streets or social isolation within a community. You may choose to explore the issue at a one-off workshop event, or hold several events to involve the whole community. The number of events you choose to hold will depend on the size and nature of the community, the complexity of issue(s) you are exploring, and how well developed the community's thinking already is on the subject.

Consideration of the skills required to deliver the whole process, including the early engagement work, is important. This may include more support on facilitation to complement the design skills in the team. It is important that the process focusses on how design decisions and thinking about place can improve the quality of life in that area.

Community context

The type of process that you choose is likely to be influenced by the type(s) of community involved. For example, in rural settings, where communities are dispersed over large areas it may be beneficial to hold a number of design events, spread over a longer period of time, in order to ensure that everyone can contribute. In an area where the community is very active, has a high level of understanding of what needs to change then you may choose to run the design event in one venue, to generate intensity and local interest over a short period of time.

The above are offered purely as suggested guidelines to help you think more about the type of project you might want to take forward and how best to achieve this. What is important is the approach that you choose should be appropriate to the project and that consideration is given to how to best engage with everyone in the community.

How to Apply

Applications for a Community Led Design grant should be made through the Investing in Communities fund. The fund is now open to applications and will close on 14 June 2019.

[Download the application form, guidance notes and help notes](#).

Applications should be submitted to InvestingInCommunities@gov.scot no later than **6 pm on 14 June 2019.**

When completing the application form, please state in Question 5.2 that you are seeking support for a community-led design project.

Whatever the particular focus of your community-led design project, all applicants must set out the following:

- how the design process will support the positive development of the place;
- how the project will contribute to an improved understanding of local needs;
- how the project will reduce barriers to involve disadvantaged groups, for example BME groups, people with disabilities, areas affected by poverty
- how the outputs of the design process will be implemented or taken forward to the next stage

Proposals must involve communities directly in some element of a creative design process with a physical output such as plans, drawings, action plans as well as feedback to the community.

We expect applications to demonstrate the [Place Principle,](#) which asks that we take a more joined up collaborative approach to services and assets within a place to achieve better outcomes for people and communities.

If you have any questions relating to applications for **community-led design support**, please contact architecture@gov.scot

General queries relating to other aspects of the **Investing in Communities Fund** should be sent to InvestingInCommunities@gov.scot

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot