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Strategic Events Grant Fund 2025/26

Applicant Guidance Notes

1. Introduction to the Strategic Events Grant Fund

The Strategic Events Grant Fund supports public-facing events in the Highland Council area that boost local economies, extend the visitor season, and enhance the region's cultural and community offering. The fund is targeted toward events held between September and March, aiming to drive overnight stays, promote responsible tourism, and increase strategic value in the events sector.

2. Who Can Apply?

Applicants must:

- Represent or be partnered with a constituted group or legal entity.
- Hold a business bank account.
- Deliver an eligible event within The Highland Council area.
- Submit a completed application form with required supporting documents.

3. How Much Is Available?

- Total fund available: £75,000.
- Event organisers may apply for a grant between £3,000 and £10,000. Applications for amounts outside this range may also be considered, subject to available funding and the proposal's alignment with fund's strategic objectives.
- Funding level: up to 100% of eligible costs (no match funding required), but applicants must demonstrate additionality.

4. What Events Are Eligible?

Eligible Events Include:

- Sports, music, food and drink, community, cultural/arts, and nature events.
- Events open to the public in indoor, outdoor, or mixed settings.

- Existing events with growth or strategic value, or new events with potential to develop.

Ineligible Events Include:

- Private events (e.g., weddings, parties, conferences).
- Events not accessible to the general public.

5. What Can Funding Be Used For?

Eligible Costs:

- Enhancements to existing events.
- Development of new strategic events.
- Initiatives attracting external visitors.
- Environmental sustainability and responsible tourism efforts.
- Community engagement and improved accessibility and inclusion.

Ineligible Costs:

- Utilities (e.g., electricity), hospitality, staff and security, and licensing/permits.
- Core delivery costs unrelated to the strategic aims of the fund.

6. Assessment Criteria

Applications will be assessed primarily on how well they align with key strategic priorities, including:

- [National Events Strategy: Scotland the Perfect Stage 2024–2035](#)
- [The Highland Council’s Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2024–2030](#)

| National Events Strategy: Scotland the Perfect Stage 2024-2035 | |
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| National Priority | Events Sector Outcomes |
| Economy | The events sector is financially robust, sustainable, and growing. It delivers significant economic benefit across regions, islands, and to Scotland as a whole. |
| Community | Events contribute positively to the physical, mental, and social health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. |

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| Environment | The events sector is environmentally responsible and delivering the sector's just transition to Net Zero. |
| Workforce | The events sector is an attractive sector for employment with Fair Work practices for its workforce through effective voice, security, fulfilment, opportunity, and respect. |
| Reputation and Profile | Events deliver excellent experiences and showcase Scotland, our values, and assets globally, achieving national and international profile and reputational benefits. |

| Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2024-2030 | |
|--|---|
| Theme | Key Focus Areas |
| Communities | Improve quality of life, enhance culture and heritage, provide high-quality job opportunities and careers for Highland people, and address demographic challenges. |
| Economy | Vibrant, dynamic, and resilient industry that develops attractive careers and job opportunities, has year-round appeal, is spread evenly across the region, and contributes towards a greener future. |
| Environment | Highland events contribute towards a climate-resilient tourism destination, take responsibility for and necessary actions to enhance the natural environment, and address the risks and impacts of climate change. |
| Visitors | Encourage a more relaxed pace of travel, promote responsible behaviour towards local heritage, communities, and the environment, offer exceptional and authentic experiences, and ensure high visitor satisfaction. |

To support strategic alignment, proposals must clearly demonstrate how they contribute to economic, social, and environmental sustainability. These three dimensions will form a core part of the evaluation process, ensuring that funded events deliver meaningful and lasting impact in line with broader strategic goals.

Additionally, deliverability of the event and value for money will be critical in determining the feasibility and overall impact of each application.

The assessment will consider the following key areas:

- ❖ **Economic Impact**

The event should show potential to:

- Attract local, regional, national, or international audiences
- Generate visitor spend and encourage overnight stays
- Support local employment and businesses
- Deliver a strong return on investment and minimise displacement

❖ **Social Impact**

The event should contribute to:

- Community engagement and volunteering opportunities
- Celebration of culture and heritage
- Social inclusion and skills development
- Accessibility and equality for all participants

❖ **Environmental Sustainability**

The event should demonstrate:

- Use of sustainable practices (e.g. waste reduction, energy efficiency)
- Governance and capacity to deliver a low-impact event
- Long-term sustainability and, where applicable, match funding

❖ **Deliverability**

A combined assessment of:

- Financial readiness (e.g. clear budget, recent bank statements)
- Evidence of demand and audience relevance
- Realistic and detailed project planning
- Risk management and contingency planning
- Organisational capacity and proven track record

❖ **Value for Money**

The event will be assessed in terms of:

- Efficient use of public funds
- High impact relative to the level of funding requested
- Clear justification of costs and anticipated outcomes

7. Application Requirements

Applicants must:

- Submit a complete application form and checklist.
- Provide an Event Plan or provide suitable information on the event, such as financial planning and target audience.
- Provide evidence such as a constitution, recent accounts, bank statements, and quotes.
- Justify the funding requested and demonstrate its additionality.

8. Payment Terms

- 90% of the grant will be paid upon submission of a valid claim and relevant invoices.
- 10% will be paid after the Outcome Report is approved and spend is verified by 20 March 2026.

9. Timescales

The expected timescales are as follows:

- Application window: 2 June to 30 June 2025 (4 weeks)
- Notification of outcomes: 18 July 2025
- Signed grant acceptance: within 3 weeks of award letter
- Final reporting and evaluation: by March 2026

10. Supporting Documentation Checklist

In support of the application, you will be asked to provide the following documents:

- Constitution (signed and dated)
- Most recent annual accounts (or projected first-year income/expenditure for new groups)
- 3 months of bank statements
- 3 quotes for goods/services over £5,000 and one for items under £5,000
- Event Plan summary and completed application form

11. How to Apply

Submit your completed application form and all required documents via email to:
Tourism@highland.gov.uk

For queries, contact the Tourism and Inward Investment Team at the same address.

12. Monitoring and Evaluation

Please note that all successful applicants will be required to complete an Outcome Report following their event, including:

- Final attendance numbers
- Financial summary
- Evaluation of economic, social, and environmental impact
- Evidence of how funding was used.

This reporting process plays a key role in capturing the outcomes and learning from each event, helping to shape and strengthen the design and delivery of future funding programmes.