

DMU Community Challenge Fund

Information Pack 2025-26

Thank you for your interest in the Community Challenge Fund. This information pack is designed to provide you with all the guidance you need prior to submitting your application.

Please read all of the information provided carefully to give yourself and your organisation the best chance of success.

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What is the Community Challenge Fund?

The Community Challenge Fund (CCF) is a fund set aside by the university for charities and non-profit organisations working in the interests of the people of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

From the CCF, we are able to award seed grants to support projects which serve a public need and which create meaningful opportunities for our students to engage with the local community.

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The Community Challenge Fund significantly contributed to the success of our alternative education provision and youth sessions. Participants experienced notable improvements in mental health and wellbeing, and there was a marked enhancement in their social skills. The skills and confidence they gained through our programmes have positively influenced their prospects in employment and further education.

The Cooke e-Learning Foundation (E2)

Background

We can award grants of between £500 and £2000 to projects which complement our mission. Applications are open to all charities, non-profit organisations and community groups in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Our mission as a university is to discover gateways of opportunity that empower students, staff and our community to create a fairer society.

Our vision is to create a community of participation, fairness and collective responsibility, transforming individual lives and championing a fair and sustainable society.



Crucial to achieving our mission and vision is The Empowering University strategy, which guides the direction of our work, both across the institution and specifically in terms of public engagement.

You can find out more about The Empowering University strategy [here](#).

The Community Challenge Fund plays a key role in supporting this strategy by enabling us to create partnerships with purpose, through which we may work collaboratively to invest in projects that make a true difference to the community.

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The grant that we received from the Community Challenge Fund allowed us to reach so many different people from different backgrounds and to offer them some community kind of cohesion. Bringing people closer together, making new friends over food, discovering new ingredients and learning how to shop and cook on a budget has been a great way to teach our young people that others care about them and their wellbeing.

The Centre Project

What are we looking for?

The Community Challenge Fund is intended to support projects which meet the following key criteria...

- The project should clearly and demonstrably benefit the community (or a particular section of the community) in Leicester, Leicestershire or Rutland.
- The project should offer opportunities for students to learn and gain practical experience by getting involved, such as through knowledge exchange, research opportunities, real-life learning or volunteering.

Our key research themes

Projects supported by the Community Challenge Fund should also clearly align with one of our key research themes, which are as follows...

- Peace, equality and social justice.
- Lifelong wellbeing.
- Creative and heritage industries.
- Living in a digital society.
- Net zero.

You can find out more about our key research themes [here](#).

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The Community Challenge Fund was instrumental to the success of our project. Specifically, it allowed us to engage experienced facilitators, offer flexibility to attendees and ensure a professional and well-organised experience. By empowering local women and equipping them with practical tools and knowledge, the project made a tangible difference in the community, addressing employability challenges in a supportive and inclusive way.

Women Who Can

UN Sustainable development goal 11

You can find out more about the United Nations' SDG 11 [here](#).

To learn more out more about our role as a UN SDG global academic hub, click [here](#).

DMU is the lead university for the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 11: To make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

The university works with the UN as the chair of SDG 11, with three other universities, who lead as vice-chairs on teaching and education; outreach and partnership; and research.

Whilst not essential, proposals linked to SDG 11 are especially welcomed.

How can you apply?

Applications can be submitted through our online proposal forms, using the links provided here.

Round One Proposal Form
(Open Thursday 1 – Saturday 31 May 2025.)

Round Two Proposal Form
(Open Monday 1 – Tuesday 30 September 2025.)

Please complete the form in as much detail as you can.

All the information you need regarding the application and project delivery process can be found below.

However, if you should have any questions, or wish to discuss any aspect of the process in greater detail, please email engage@dmu.ac.uk and one of the team will be more than happy to help.

What happens next?

Top tips

Please note that grants from the Community Challenge Fund may only be used in relation to specific projects and cannot be used to cover day-to-day organisational expenses and running costs.

When writing your proposal, be as clear and concise as you can, ensuring that you include all the relevant details, to give us the best understanding of your project vision.

To stand the best chance of success, please ensure that your proposal clearly outlines the following...

For a full breakdown of application questions, including recommended word counts, please see the appendix to this pack.

- The purpose of the project and the intended target audience.
- How the project aligns with The Empowering University strategy.
- The ways in which DMU students, staff and alumni could get involved, with a focus on meaningful engagement (in alignment with The Empowering University strategy).
- How the project will remain financially sustainable beyond the funding awarded from the Community Challenge Fund.

Timetable

We will be opening two application windows during the 2025-26 academic year.

You can use the timetable provided in this pack to help you plan the delivery of your project...

Please prepare your proposal with reference to the recommended project delivery windows shown. Should this present a significant challenge in relation to the specific needs of your project, please email engage@dmu.ac.uk prior to submitting your application so that we can discuss your individual circumstances and advise you further.

Round One

Applications Open
Thu 1 May 2025

Applications Close
Sat 31 May 2025

Outcomes
Mon 30 Jun 2025

Delivery Window
Oct-Dec 2025

Impact Deadline
Sat 31 Jan 2026

Round Two

Applications Open
Mon 1 Sep 2025

Applications Close
Tue 30 Sep 2025

Outcomes
Fri 31 Oct 2025

Delivery Window
Feb-Apr 2026

Impact Deadline
Sat 31 May 2026

Outcomes

Please note that a total turnaround time of 90 days following the closing of the application window should be factored into the project delivery timeline specified within your proposal.

Whenever possible, we aim to return outcomes to all applicants within 30 days of the closing of the application window, however, this may vary depending upon the volume of applications we receive. If your application is successful, a member of the team will contact you to discuss the next steps.

The payment of any grant awarded may take up to 60 days following a successful outcome, pending the fulfilment of any outstanding requirements.

Unfortunately, we are unable to support every proposal that we receive. If your application is unsuccessful, we will explain the reasons why.

We are very happy to provide more detailed feedback upon request, should you feel that this may benefit your submission of grant applications going forward. We also strongly encourage you to reapply for the Community Challenge Fund in future.

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The Community Challenge Fund was pivotal to delivering a project that benefited DMU students, local artists and the Leicester community. The success of this initiative has established a model for future volunteer-led live productions, ensuring continued access to career pathways in Leicester's creative industries.

2Funky Arts

Delivery windows

Round one delivery window
October-December 2025

Round two delivery window
February-April 2026

We encourage all successful applicants, wherever possible, to deliver their projects within the recommended delivery windows for each round, as set out in the timetable. This is to ensure sufficient lead-in time, to maximise the potential for student involvement and to enable the collection of impact and evaluation data.

Impact and evaluation

Following the completion of your project, a member of the team will arrange a reflection meeting with you to discuss what went particularly well and which aspects of the project you may be interested in developing further in the future.

Round one impact deadline

Saturday 31 January 2026

Round two impact deadline

Saturday 31 May 2026

Following this meeting, we will send you a link to our online impact and evaluation assessment form, which we will then ask you to complete. This data is essential to helping us demonstrate the difference made by the Community Challenge Fund, enabling us to continue to provide such support going forward.

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Our event created a welcoming space for reflection, learning, and the celebration of cultural diversity. By offering free food and interactive activities, the event not only educated but also strengthened the community's sense of connection and identity. This success would not have been possible without the Community Challenge Fund.

ZamZam Unlimited Possibilities

Frequently asked questions

Can I submit multiple proposals to the same application window?

We kindly ask that you do not submit multiple proposals during the same application window.

Can I resubmit my proposal in order to include further details?

If you submit your proposal and then wish to add further details, you may do so, providing that the deadline for applications has not yet passed, however, please note that you will be required to complete the proposal form from scratch and should clearly mark it as the most recent submission.

What happens if I am unable to recruit student volunteers to support my project?

If your application is successful, a member of the team will discuss volunteer recruitment with you during your initial meeting, to outline the ways in which we can help to facilitate this.

We strongly encourage all successful applicants to do all they can to recruit student volunteers to support their projects. However, we appreciate that recruiting volunteers can sometimes be challenging and will not penalise applicants who are unable to do so, having tried.

With this in mind, your project proposal should contain a suitable contingency, explaining how it can be carried out successfully regardless of student support.

What happens if I need to delay delivery of my project?

We strongly encourage all applicants to submit proposals for projects which can be carried out within the CCF timetable, however, we appreciate that even the best laid plans sometimes need to change.

If your application to the CCF is successful, but you subsequently feel that you may need to delay its delivery for any reason, please contact us as soon as possible to agree upon a suitable alternative delivery timeframe.



Can DMUEngagement help to promote my project to others?

We are very happy to assist in promoting projects we fund through our digital communications channels. We distribute a monthly email newsletter to our network of community partners and regularly post content on the DMUEngagement instagram account @dmuengagement.

If you receive funding from the CCF and would like us to promote your project, please send us pre-prepared graphics, images etc to the specifications listed.

We regret that we are not able to create marketing collateral on your behalf.

Email banner

2048 x 652 pixels

Instagram story

1080 x 1920 pixels

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The Community Challenge Fund enabled us to provide a week-long experience that was a great opportunity to develop 38 young people's creative and technical, artistic and musical skills. It was an intensive learning and creative experience, the kind of which is not provided in mainstream education and replicates the experience of studying for a creative degree or working in the creative sector.

Soft Touch Arts

Get in touch

Having read the information in this pack, if you would like to know more, or have any questions regarding the Community Challenge Fund, please don't hesitate to drop us an email with the subject line 'CCF2526' and one of the team will be more than happy to help.

engage@dmu.ac.uk

DMU Global carbon levy

DMU Global, our award-winning international experience programme, has established a carbon levy for those who fly overseas on any of its trips.

The proceeds generated from this are then used to support community projects with environmental, climate and social justice outcomes. DMU Global sets an annual fundraising target, half of which consists of student contributions paid through the levy, which is then matched by the university to make up the full total.

This is a separate, additional allocation of funding, but may be applied for instead of, or in conjunction with the Community Challenge Fund if your project meets all of the relevant criteria.

You can find out more about the DMU Global Carbon Levy [here](#).

For more information, please send us an email with the subject line 'CCF - Carbon Levy'.

engage@dmu.ac.uk

Appendix

Application questions

Project title

Give your project a distinctive title to convey a sense of identity and direction.

Start and end dates

Let us know when you anticipate that your project would take place.

Funding request

Let us know the amount you require from the Community Challenge Fund to complete your project successfully.

What is the vision for your project?

Describe the central concept and activity of your project, including all of the key elements that you plan for it to encompass. (max. 200 words)

What is the core aim of your project?

What is the one, overarching thing that you would like your project to achieve? How would your project make a positive difference to an issue facing the local community? (max. 150 words)

You can find out more about The Empowering University strategy [here](#).

**How does your project align with DMU's
The Empowering University strategy?**

(max. 150 words)

THE YARD

Who are the primary beneficiaries of your project?

Who do you think is most likely to benefit from your project, and how will they feel this benefit? Please also specify any key demographics you intend to target. (max. 150 words)

Additional audiences

Besides the primary beneficiaries identified above, are there any other audiences that you think your project might appeal to? (max. 100 words)

Community engagement approach

How do you plan to promote your project and engage audiences effectively? (max. 150 words)

Student engagement approach

What engagement opportunities would your project offer to DMU students - for example, volunteering, real-life learning or knowledge exchange opportunities? How would you promote these opportunities effectively? (max. 150 words)

Third-party collaboration

Does your project involve collaboration with any third-party individual or organisation? If so, please let us know who, and describe the nature of their involvement. (max. 100 words)

Does your project require additional funding from other sources besides the Community Challenge Fund?

...if so, please provide further details. (max. 50 words)

Project budget

Please provide a full breakdown of your project's expected costs, and of how funding from the Community Challenge Fund and elsewhere would be used. Please present this as a clear, itemised list. (max. 75 words)

Project impact and evaluation

Please outline the key success indicators of your project, and how you intend to measure them. (max. 100 words)

DMU Engagement

Partnerships, Civic and Community
Trinity House, The Newarke, Leicester, LE2 7BY