

ACCESSING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES - KNOW YOUR PROJECT

Increasing parental engagement in children's learning is a priority in many school Improvement Plans. Schools across Scotland are thinking creatively and innovatively to devise projects that will achieve this aim and have a positive impact on children's learning and wellbeing.

Many of these projects can benefit from external funding, as well as support from the wider local community.

This guidance will help schools and partners find out what funding is available, helping to ensure a project has the very best chance of success.

There are three key steps to this process;

1. Know your project
2. Identify funding opportunities
3. Fill out the application form

KNOW YOUR PROJECT

Before researching what funding is available, it is important to have a very clear idea about:

- Why the project is needed,
- What you want your project to achieve,
- How you will achieve its aims,
- Who can help and
- How much it will cost.

This will need some research and preparatory work, but will be worth it. Being clear about these questions from the outset will help you:

- Identify whether you need more money in the first place and/or whether you need to partner up with others to deliver the project – it may be that your aims can be achieved with existing support from within school, or local authority
- Choose the right fund if additional money is required
- Communicate to funders what you want to achieve – they will look very carefully at how a project's aims fit with the aims of their fund.

Why is your project needed?

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- Successful funding applications, if you decide to do this, depend heavily on the applicant being able to show evidence of why the project is needed.

Funders want to see evidence of how their funds will contribute to sustained improvements over time in the priority areas they support, such as tackling gaps in attainment or improving the health and wellbeing of children.

You will need to have this 'evidence' to hand in order to complete the application process. There are a few key sources that you could use to provide this evidence:

School Improvement Plan

- This will help you paint a full picture of your school community and highlight key information to support the overall purpose and aims of your project. For example, if a key aim of your parental engagement project is to raise attainment among pupils affected by poverty and deprivation
- Pull out statistics on free school meal entitlement and eligibility for school uniform grants
- Highlight the number of children with additional support needs
- Provide assessment and attainment data that highlights the need to raise attainment
- Describe the strengths of your school community but also the challenges
- Describe the current level and extent of parental engagement in your school
- Describe the socio-economic characteristics of the catchment area – e.g. housing stock, community centres
- Provide information on the health and wellbeing of the catchment's population

Your education department

- Your education department may be able to help source this information and statistics that you don't have to hand.

Other types of supporting evidence can be helpful and make a strong case such as:

- Stories that demonstrate the success and challenges you are addressing in your school. You might want to focus on individual children or year groups of children and/or their parents
- Surveys of the year groups of children / parents you are targeting
- Minutes of meetings

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- Quotes from supporters of the project or from those who know and work with them.

An added benefit of spending time on this planning is that it will help secure greater support from those involved in the project, which will help it to be a success.

Your Community Planning Partnership (CPP)

- Your CPP is responsible for achieving national outcomes and it needs to report on these every year. Your education department and its schools need to report on how they contribute to achieving these outcomes. The three specific outcomes that your school will contribute to are:
- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.
- We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk.
- We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society.

Ask your education department or look up your CPP's report and you should be able to find information that can be used when funders ask how your project will help achieve long-term outcomes.

Once you are confident that you have a clear case for demonstrating why your project is needed and how it will contribute to your CPP's outcomes, you can begin to look at a range of potential funders whose criteria match or align with your proposal.

What do you want your project to achieve?

Identify the overall purpose and aims of your project. Ask yourself:

What change would I like to see happen?

How am I going to know what difference it makes?

How will you achieve its aims?

When you are clear about your project's purpose and aims, think about what you will need to do in order to achieve these. Managing and sustaining a project over and above the everyday requirements of your school is a significant commitment. Think about:

People/Time/Resources (equipment, supplies and money)

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Ask yourself: do I have staff with the skills, interest and time to see the project through? And do I have access to the additional resources that will be required? Think about the time, people and resources that will be required to:

- Write a detailed project plan
- See through the process of applying for additional money, if you decide to do this (as a guide it can take approximately five days to complete a good funding proposal)
- Get the project up and running
- Keep the project running, including management of the people involved (the staff, pupils and parents), and ongoing costs such as overtime, expenses and the purchase of equipment and supplies
- Set up a system of monitoring, review and evaluation. Is the project achieving what you want it to?

With these questions answered, you should know whether the project can be delivered using existing resources within school, and/or the local authority, or whether additional, external money and/or help from others in the local community is required. The following sections have tips to help you decide:

Find out what is already available in your local area.

There is considerable expertise within local authorities that you can approach for information, advice and support:

- Your quality improvement officer may know about similar projects among primary, secondary or special schools and about specific themes, for example the curriculum, health and wellbeing, and parental engagement. They may be able to signpost you to other officers in the authority who can help.
- Your education department may already have a partnership arrangement with a local or national organisation like Save the Children's Families and Schools Together (FAST) programme, Place2B or your local housing association.
- The educational psychologist team will often know about examples of work that can promote additional support for learning and parenting.
- A peer in another school may have set up a similar project or wish to set up a similar project and be keen to work in partnership.
- Your local community health contact will have a wealth of knowledge about local projects that focus on improving health and wellbeing; if that is an area you are looking at.

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- Your community police officer or local youth justice team may know of local projects that focus on keeping young people active and engaged.
- Your community learning and development team will have information on local projects supporting families, carers, children and young people.
- Some local authorities have a 'Funding Team' who may be able to signpost you to other sources of money.

The following people and groups may also be able to help:

- Active Schools Coordinator
- Local clubs
- Local voluntary groups (Volunteer Scotland can tell you more about who your local groups are)
- Community Planning Partnerships
- Community Councils.

If you decide that there is nothing already available "off the shelf", look to the wider local community

- What about local businesses? Don't underestimate the potential for good will towards your school - they know that parents are often their customers and often employ, or might be run by, the parents whose children are at your school.
- Others in the community such as, artists, musicians, writers, farmers, mechanics etc. may have particular expertise in the type of project you would like to set up.
- Parents have a breadth and wealth of expertise themselves, plus local contacts who could help with your project idea. Parents often wait to be asked, so make sure they know you are a school that welcomes ideas and input.
- National organisations such as YouthLinkScotland, (www.youthlinkscotland.org.uk) YouthScotland (www.youthscotland.org.uk) and Enquire: the Scottish advice service for additional support for learning (www.enquire.org.uk) can be excellent sources of information and advice.

Having thought through this process you may still decide that you need to set up and design a specific project to suit your school's needs, and seek external money to support this.

You will find support to do this in the identifying funding section.