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1. Context

Welcome to the Uniting Opportunities Programme. Uniting Opportunities is a grants programme administered by the Department for Communities (DfC) as part of the Executive's Together: Building a United Community Strategy. Uniting Opportunities supports the Uniting Communities Programme by delivering projects which will promote good relations and reconciliation through sport and creativity by addressing the barriers to community participation that some young people face.

Together: Building a United Community

The Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Strategy outlines a vision of “a united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation – one which is strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced and where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.”

The Strategy reflects the Executive's commitment to improving good relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society. T:BUC outlines how Government, community and individuals will work together to build a united community and achieve change against the following key priorities:

1. Our children and young people
2. Our shared community
3. Our safe community
4. Our cultural expression

A range of strategic headline actions have also been identified. These headline actions provide innovative approaches to building a united, shared and reconciled community and comprehensively demonstrate the Executive's commitment to realising change across the key priorities. One of these innovative approaches within the “Our Children and Young People” priority, makes a commitment to developing and delivering a significant programme of cross community sporting (and creative activity) events throughout Northern Ireland. This headline action is the responsibility of the Department for Communities.

Department for Communities

The Department for Communities (DfC) is the largest of the nine Government Departments, with responsibility for a number of Strategic Objectives, including:

- A more confident people living their lives to the full
- More cohesive communities

The Department's 'Engaged Communities Group' will make a direct and significant contribution to these objectives through its work in: good relations, sport, culture, libraries and museums among others. In particular, DfC (also through the Engaged

Communities Group) has responsibility for developing and delivering a cross-community sports and creativity programme (known as Uniting Communities) identified as a headline action within the T:BUC Strategy.

2. Introduction to Uniting Communities

Uniting Communities is a cross community youth sport and creativity programme. It is one of the seven headline actions included in the Executive's Together: Building a United Community Strategy (or TBUC for short).

The outcomes of the Uniting Communities programme are:

- Increased youth engagement in sport and creativity
- Positive attitude towards those from different political, religious, ethnic and marginalised backgrounds
- Increased community capacity and capability

Uniting Communities Delivery Model



This good relations programme is delivered through the medium of sport, physical and creative activity. The programme has three key elements:

Uniting Communities through Leadership

- engages young people aged 16-24 years old who are recruited to become Young Leaders and take part in a structured standardised training programme.

Uniting Communities through Community Activity – involves young participants aged 11-16. The Young Leaders and younger participants are recruited from specific

geographical areas, all of which have good relations and interface issues. Young Leaders are provided with the opportunity to co-facilitate the delivery of the community activity as their training progresses.

Uniting Communities by Building Capacity -

awards funding through a **Uniting Opportunities Grant Scheme** to short-term intervention projects which support groups of marginalised young people. Over periods of 12 to 24 weeks, projects help young people to better engage with their community by building their confidence, personal abilities and core skills.

3. Uniting Opportunities Aim

Uniting Opportunities will promote good relations and reconciliation through sport and creativity by addressing the barriers to community participation that some young people face.

4. Uniting Opportunities Objectives

The Uniting Opportunities programme seeks to fund projects that will achieve all four of the following objectives:

- Young people who experience barriers to participation in their communities will have increased confidence, self-esteem and social skills to get involved
- Young people have the ability to build good relations in their communities by having a greater understanding of other religious, political, ethnic and marginalised communities
- Young people are more actively involved in sport and creativity, and are presented with opportunities to sustain their involvement
- Young people will have developed the appropriate attributes to enable further engagement with the Uniting Communities through sport and creativity programme

5. Uniting Opportunities and Good Relations

All Uniting Opportunities projects must promote good relations between the young people they engage with. Neither ‘good relations’ nor ‘promoting good relations’ is defined in legislation. However, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland has developed the following working definition of ‘good relations’:

“The growth of relationships and structures for Northern Ireland that acknowledge the religious, political and racial context of this society, and that seek to promote respect, equity and trust, and embrace diversity in all its forms.” (Equality Commission, 2008)

6. Uniting Opportunities Young People and Target Groups

Uniting Opportunities is aimed at young people aged between 11 and 24. The programme will target the following groups:

- Young and Homeless
- Young Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- Young People in Care
- Young People with a Disability
- Young People with Poor Mental Health and/or Addictions
- Young Offenders (and young people most at risk of offending)
- Young people at risk of rural isolation

7. Delivery Areas

Uniting Opportunities projects will be delivered in specific geographical areas (opposite) where our core Uniting Communities programme is currently being delivered, or is scheduled to be delivered. We do not anticipate the introduction of any additional geographical areas within the next two year period. Therefore, please do not apply to Uniting Opportunities in anticipation of funding for other areas becoming available. The delivery areas are as follows:

- Botanic - South Belfast
- Portadown and Lurgan
- Black Mountain (West Belfast) and Castle (North Belfast)
- Causeway - North Antrim
- Waterside/The Moor - Derry City
- Faughan - Derry City and Strabane

8. Who can apply?

- Charities (registered as a charity with HMRC)
- Community/Voluntary Group
- Public Sector Bodies/Agencies
- Companies limited by guarantee (registered with companies house)
- Other 'not for profit' organisations

9. Project Duration and Funding Limits

Uniting Opportunities projects must be planned for a duration between 12 and 24 weeks. Projects must be completed by 31 March in the same financial year in which the funding was awarded.

Eligible groups can apply for grants from £20,000-£60,000 per project*

*Subject to budget availability, funding limits may be subject to change. The same funding limits will apply to both 'Single Location Projects' and 'Multi- Location Projects'

10. Applying to Uniting Opportunities

Applying to Uniting Opportunities has been made as simple and stress free as we can possibly make it. The two stage application process has been summarized in the

following flow diagram. Further and more detailed information can be found under the relevant sections of this Information and Guidance document.

10a. Application Process

Stage One – Organisation Eligibility

Applicants will:

- Complete an online Eligibility Form
- Register with OR Update Government Funding Database
- Upload requested governance documents
- This stage will remain open for **two weeks**

Stage One – Governance Check

DfC Staff will:

- Check if your organisation is fit to spend public money
- Inform you of our decision

Stage One – Call-Off List

DfC Staff will:

- Create a Call-Off list of eligible organisations
- Invite eligible organisations to apply for funding
(As and when funding becomes available)

Stage Two – Applying for Funding

Applicants will:

- Complete a Uniting Opportunities Application Form
- Provide requested information on a project proposal
- This stage will remain open for **two weeks**

Stage Two – Assessment of Application

DfC Staff will:

- Assess applications in two parts:
 - Part 1: Organisational Experience & Project Need
 - Part 2: Project Proposal
- A scoring threshold will be set for each part

Stage Two – Award

DfC Staff will:

- Offer funding to the highest scoring applications
- Issue a Letter of Offer

11. Stage One – Organisation Eligibility

Stage one is all about checking governance and making sure your organisation is fit to spend public money. It requires your organisation to register with or update

the Government Funding Database. Guidance on how to register or update existing records is available online at ictweb.nigov.net/GFDInt_live

11a. Stage One – Step by Step

Step One

- Read the Uniting Opportunities Information and Guidance Notes
- Familiarise yourself with Uniting Opportunities and what it seeks to achieve
- Decide if your organisation is eligible to apply and if it has capacity to deliver a project

Step Two

- Complete the online **Eligibility Form** taking care to review all sections;
- Ensure you provide up-to-date organisational contact information;
- Provide your Government Funding Database Unique Reference Number (URN);
- Confirm the following key documents have been uploaded to the Government Funding Database (Ensure all documents are up-to-date and the latest versions available):
 1. Constitution
 2. Annual Accounts
 3. Organisation Chart
 4. List of Office Bearers

Registration with the Government Funding Database (GFD) is essential for applying to Stage One of Uniting Opportunities. Guidance on GFD registration, updating records and uploading documents is available online at www.communities-ni.gov.uk/instructions-register-gfd

- Confirm that your organisation has the following policies/procedures in place:
 1. Safeguarding Policy
 2. Equality Statement
 3. Health & Safety Policy
 4. Data Protection Policy
 5. Conflicts of Interest Register
- Indicate which Uniting Opportunities target group(s) your organisation can work with, and which geographical area(s) your organisation has capacity to deliver in;

You are reminded that your organisation will be asked to fully demonstrate previous experiences of working with the targeted group in the selected geographical area(s).

Step Three

- Submit your completed Eligibility Form online on or before:
 - 4.00pm on Monday 23 August 2021
- Late submissions will be deemed ineligible;
- Submissions with no Government Funders Database URN or missing key documents will also be deemed ineligible;
- You will receive an email from us to acknowledge receipt of your Eligibility Form.

Step Four

Your Applicant Eligibility Form and GFD records will be checked against the following criteria:

- Your constitution permits your organisation to deliver a project;
- Your annual accounts show that your organisation is in good financial health;
- Your organisation has a structure that shows capacity to deliver a project;
- Your organisation has at least 3 committee members;
- Your policies are in place;
- All Eligibility Forms will be checked by the Uniting Communities team;

Step Five

- Decision – Eligible or Not Eligible;
- DfC hope to make decisions within 2 weeks of the closing date (subject to volume of applications).

11b. Stage One: What happens if your organisation is eligible?

- Uniting Opportunities will issue you with a decision letter
- Your organisation will be added to a 'potential project call-off list' for a period of 24 months from the date of decision letter
- Organisations on the 'call-off' list will be contacted via email on each occasion Uniting Opportunities funding becomes available. The Uniting Communities team reserves the right to re-run Stage One if the need arises

11c. Stage One: What happens if your organisation is ineligible?

- Uniting Opportunities will issue you with a decision letter including an explanation/ reasons for ineligibility
- Your organisation will not be added to the 'potential project call-off list'

11d. Stage One: Call-off List

If your organisation is deemed 'eligible', it will be added to a call-off list of organisations who have the potential to deliver a successful Uniting Opportunities project. The list will be held by the Department for Communities for a two year period (2021-2023). If and when Uniting Opportunities funding becomes available, only those organisations on the call-off list will be invited to apply for funding.

12. Activities and items Uniting Opportunities **will** fund:

- Projects that promote good relations, reconciliation and support increased participation in sport, or creative activities primarily amongst young people from Uniting Opportunities Target Groups
- Costs associated with Goods and Services that can be deemed relevant and appropriate to project delivery (e.g. Insurance, Entry Fees, Refreshments etc)
- Costs associated with residential visits and travel
- Salary costs that can be directly associated to staff involved in project delivery. Costs must be proportionate to the size and scale of the project
- Organisational running costs that are proportionate to the size and scale of the project being delivered
- Costs/Expenses that remove barriers to young people's participation in a project (e.g. child care, transport, mentoring etc)
- Instructional/Coaching courses or Access NI Registration for those directly involved in project delivery
- Instructor or Coaching fees
- Personal Development courses/training (e.g. Disability Awareness, Good Relations, First Aid, Leadership etc)
- Volunteer 'Out of Pocket' Expenses
- Project specific venue hire
- Project specific travel that are proportionate to the size and scale of the project
- Equipment hire to allow you to run your project
- Project specific equipment – Buying equipment shouldn't be the focus of your project. We view equipment as a means to achieving our target of promoting good relations and increasing participation. Any application for equipment should explain why it is needed and how it will achieve this. No single item can be valued at over £1,000

13. Activities and items Uniting Opportunities **will not** fund:

The following activities and items are ineligible and will not be funded under United Opportunities:

- Costs that are deemed not to be directly related to delivering a good relations and reconciliation project
- Capital works
- Loan repayments and endowments
- VAT that can be recovered from HM Revenue and Customs
- Retrospective funding or costs that will be incurred after the communicated grant period
- External project evaluation costs
- Costs that are deemed to be disproportionate to the size and scale of the project
- Goods and Services which are being funded by another organisation during the timeline of your Uniting Opportunities project
- Consultancy fees, including those incurred in completing a Uniting Opportunities application
- Parades or festivals

NOTE: Specific activities or items not listed above can be proposed by an applicant organisation. A decision on eligibility will be made at the discretion of the Uniting Communities team.

14. Stage 2 – Application for Funding

Stage Two is all about proposing a project which uses sport and/or creativity to achieve the objectives of the Uniting Opportunities programme. Projects must specifically target young people from a Uniting Opportunities target group and be delivered within one of the four delivery areas.

14a. Stage Two – Issuing a call for project proposals

The Uniting Opportunities programme may issue a number of ‘calls for potential projects’ between 2021-2023. All Uniting Opportunities ‘calls’ will be issued via an emailed specification document which will outline specific requirements for potential projects. Only those organisations that have been deemed eligible at Stage One will be given an opportunity to submit a proposed project.

There is no obligation on eligible organisations to submit a proposed project in response to each ‘call’. Eligible organisations will remain on the ‘call-off’ list should they decide not to respond to a call.

The Uniting Communities team recommends that organisations carefully consider the specification document contained within each ‘call’, and decide whether your organisation is best placed to deliver a good relations project that will make a significant difference to young people’s lives.

14b. Stage Two – Single or Multi-location proposals?

DfC will welcome either of the following types of application:

1. A ‘Single Location Project’. This application will propose a single project, located in a single area (as indicated in the Project Specification), targeting a single Uniting Opportunities target group
2. A ‘Multi-Location Project’. This application will propose a project, located in multiple areas (as indicated within the Project Specifications), targeting a single Uniting Opportunities target group. This application must broadly adopt the same approach to project delivery across all locations

NOTES

- All projects must indicate a primary Uniting Opportunities target group. It is accepted that other Uniting Opportunities target groups may be secondary beneficiaries

14c. Stage Two – Step by Step

Step One

- Review Uniting Opportunities Information & Guidance Notes, and the Project Specification Document. Contact us if you have any questions
 - Complete the application taking time to answer all questions
 - Decide if your Project is; A ‘Single Location Project’ or A Multi -Location Project’
- IMPORTANT:**
- Organisations are only eligible for target groups noted in their Stage One decision letter
 - Organisations must indicate a primary Uniting Opportunities target group in their application
 - Decide if your project is a:
 - A ‘Single Location Project’.
 - A ‘Multi-Location Project’.

Step Two

Your application will be assessed using the following criteria, and scored against the success factors listed below:

Assessment Criteria	Weight	Success Factors
Criteria 1: Organisational Experience Previous experience of delivering projects to the selected target group and delivery within the chosen delivery area?	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant has demonstrable experience of engaging the target group through previous projects? • The applicant has delivered successful projects in the geographical area?
Criteria 2: Need Why is this project needed in the area?	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for the project been demonstrated? • The project proposal articulates the good relations need in the area?
A quality scoring threshold of approx...75% (18 marks) will be set for Criteria 1 and 2. Only those applicants scoring above the quality threshold will have the remainder of their application form assessed.		
Criteria 3: Barriers Understanding of the barriers to community participation faced by the target group of young people?	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant clearly understands the barriers/needs of the target group of young people?

Assessment Criteria	Weight	Success Factors
Criteria 4: Project Proposal Describe your project proposal?	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project proposal is clear and unambiguous? The project shows innovation and creativity? The project has the potential to address the barriers/needs outlined above? The project appears to have been well planned?
Criteria 5: Recruitment & Mentoring How young people will be recruited onto the project, and supported/mentored throughout?	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project prioritises the hardest to reach young people? The approach to recruitment has been outlined? The approach to support/mentoring has been outlined? To what extent will project partners be involved?
Criteria 6–9: Contribution to Objectives Increasing confidence, self-esteem and social skills; Enabling and sustaining participation in sport and creativity; Greater understanding of other religious, political, ethnic & marginalised groups Young people will have developed the appropriate attributes to enable further community engagement	2 2 2 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project contributes to the objective? The project has the potential to bring about a depth of change in young people? The project provides links to other activities/services delivered in the area?
Criteria 9: Value for Money Delivery costs	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project costs have provided adequate detail? The costs are proportionate to the size and scale of project? The proposed costs are essential to project delivery?

Step Three

Submit your completed application on or before the date stated in the specification document (when issued).

Send your completed application by email to: **tbuc@communities-ni.gov.uk**

- Late submissions will be deemed ineligible
- You will receive an email within 7 days of the closing date to acknowledge receipt of your application
- Applicants are advised to request a read receipt when submitting an application via email. It is an applicant's responsibility to ensure that their application has been received by DfC

Step Four

Your application will be scored using the following matrix:

Link at project level	Score
No evidence of the organisations ability to deliver a project which addresses the criteria.	0
Little evidence of the organisations ability to deliver a project which addresses the criteria.	1
Some measures of the organisations ability to deliver a project which addresses the criteria.	2
Good evidence of the organisations ability to deliver a project which addresses the criteria.	3
Well documented evidence of the organisations ability to deliver a project which addresses the criteria.	4

Step Five

- Applications will be assessed and scored by DfC officials
- All applications will be moderated by a decision making panel
- A total quality scoring threshold will normally be set at 60% overall and 60% for value for money.

Step Six

- Decision – Successful or Unsuccessful
- DfC hope to make decisions within 4 weeks of the closing date, subject to volume of applications

14d. Stage Two – What happens if your organisation is successful?

- Uniting Opportunities will issue you with a decision letter (i.e. a Letter of Offer)
- You will be contacted by a member of the Uniting Communities team to schedule a Project Initiation meeting
- Your organisation will remain on the ‘potential project call-off list’ and will be entitled to submit further project plans if opportunities become available

14e. Stage Two – What happens if your organisation is unsuccessful?

- Uniting Opportunities will issue you with a decision letter including an explanation/ reasons for why your application was unsuccessful
- Your organisation will remain on the ‘potential project call-off list’ and will be entitled to submit further applications if opportunities become available
- Your organisation can request a review by: Following the Application Review Procedure at Section 14

NOTE: Uniting Opportunities has a limited budget and is likely to be highly competitive. It is therefore unlikely that Uniting Opportunities will be able to support all eligible organisations. DfC reserves the right to create a reserve of projects in the event of additional budget being made available during the financial year.

15. Application Review Procedure

The Uniting Communities team recognises the importance of feedback and the benefit of application reviews, which can be requested regardless of our funding decision. We welcome the opportunity to communicate with applicants and to provide feedback which may improve the probability of successfully applying to future funding opportunities.

Our decision letters include the following process for review:

1. An applicant can request feedback by writing to, emailing, or telephoning a member of the Uniting Communities Team within seven days from the date of our decision letter. All requests for feedback will be acknowledged within five working days and a full review will be given within a further ten working days (either in writing or by telephone)
2. If an applicant is not satisfied with the response it receives, organisations can request a meeting with representatives from the Uniting Communities Team (including the Head of Branch)
3. If you are still unhappy with the service you receive from the Uniting Communities Team you have the right to complain. The Department for Communities complaints policy is designed to deal with complaints in relation to the functions carried out by the Department and its staff. The complaints procedure is available here: www.communities-ni.gov.uk/dfc-complaints-procedure

16. General Information

Funding

The Uniting Opportunities programme has a limited budget and is likely to be highly competitive. It is therefore unlikely that Uniting Opportunities will be able to support all eligible organisations.

Suspected Fraud

Applicants are advised that any materially misleading statements (whether deliberate or accidental) given at any stage during the application process or award period could render the application invalid and the applicant liable to return any money already paid out on the project in question. Any cases of suspected fraud may be referred to the PSNI. This includes falsification of information, inappropriate use of funds and misinformation at the application and evaluation stages.

Data Protection

The Department for Communities (DfC) is fully compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Europe's new framework for data protection laws. Subsequently, DfC will manage any data you provide us with in accordance with the UK government's Data Protection Act (2018).

DfC may share some information with other Government Departments, Bodies, or organisations that have a legitimate interest in the Uniting Communities programme, or for the prevention or detection of fraud. We may also use some information and data for our own research or promotion.

DfC recognise the need to maintain the confidentiality of vulnerable groups and their details will not be made public in any way, except as required under the Data Protection Act (2018).

Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives members of the public the right to request any information that we hold. This includes information received from third parties, such as, although not limited to, grant applicants, grant holders, contractors and people making a complaint. If information is requested under the Freedom of Information Act DfC will release it, subject to exemptions; although we may consult with you first. If you think that information you are providing may be exempt from release if requested, you should let us know when you apply.



Contact Information

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