Guidance for Support

Updated: 11 April 2024

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# Accessibility

You can request any information from us in a more accessible format to you. You can do this by email or phone: 020 7812 3700.

We also have additional [accessibility-related support](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/applications/accessibility-and-support-applying/) available for applicants where our online application process may be a barrier to applying, including an Access Payment to support you to apply.

# About this guidance

This guidance is in three main sections:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. **How to apply:**
 | Information about the 6 steps to apply. Most people will only need to read up to step 3 of the application process: Expression of Interest. |
| 1. **Are we the right funder for you**
 | What we do and don't support. |
| 1. **Our strategy:**
 | If you want to submit an Expression of Interest, read more detail about our aims and funding priorities. You’ll find information about the outcomes we are focusing our support on. Read the parts relevant to your work. |

# How to apply for funding

There are 6 steps to apply for funding as outlined below. Unless specified otherwise, we accept applications on a rolling basis with no deadlines.

**Success rates for applications in 2023** (excluding those for follow-on grants and those we have proactively invited):

* 7% of eligible expressions of interest were invited to submit a proposal.
* 93% of proposals submitted went on to be awarded a grant.

**Please note:** due to limited capacity in our Creative, Confident Communities team, it is likely to take us a little bit longer to get back to you. We have updated the guidance to reflect this, and our response times to Expressions of Interest for Creative, Confident Communities is six weeks.

## 1. Quiz

Take our short [quiz](https://esmeefairbairn.typeform.com/to/xeB89baB) to find out if your work meets the minimum eligibility criteria for Esmée support. In 2021, around 6% of applications submitted through our open application process went on to be awarded grants.

## 2. Read the guidance

Read the guidance to decide whether your work could contribute to Esmée’s impact goals. If you have questions, [check our FAQ](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/applications/faq/).

## 3. Expression of Interest

When you are ready to tell us about your work, you can submit an expression of interest through our website. This is in two parts.

**First**, some details about your organisation including: charity or company number; total income for the last financial year; number of trustees and non-executive directors; and date established. We’ll also ask you about which aim and priorities your work fits.

**Second**, we want to know more about what you’re aiming to achieve and how you will make it happen with Esmée funding by answering two questions. You’ll have a **total of 300 words** to answer both questions.

* **What work would you like Esmée to support?**

*Briefly outline how our funding and support will be used.*

* **What’s the change you’re focused on achieving and how is your organisation well placed to deliver it?**

*We’re interested in understanding the need your work will address, and the opportunities your organisation or partnership is uniquely placed to take. We will also look at your website to learn more about your organisation so use this space to focus on the change you want to achieve in relation to Esmée’s priorities/long-term outcomes.*

Your answers to both questions are meant to be short. In addition to these, we will also be using your organisation details and the information on your website to learn more about your impact.

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI):** Once you’ve submitted your Expression of Interest, you will be redirected to a DEI monitoring form to complete about your organisation. We want to use the information we gather to help us identify and address structural inequity, and ensure that the reach of our funding and our funding practices are fair and just. [Learn more about how we're classifying our data](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/about-esmee/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/our-language-and-classifying-our-data/).

**Response times:** We will get back to you within:

* **Four weeks** for EOIs towards our priorities in A Fairer Future and Our Natural World
* **Six weeks** for EOIs towards our funding priorities in Creative, Confident Communities

**Feedback:** Because we receive many more requests than we can support, the Expression of Interest is intended to be quick. Unfortunately, this makes it difficult for us to give detailed feedback on applications at this stage. However, we share general feedback on [why we turn down requests and what we consider when making decisions](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/applications/why-we-turn-things-down/), which we hope is helpful.

**When you are ready, you can** [**submit an Expression of Interest**](https://www.tfaforms.com/5066065).

## 4. Initial conversation

If we think that your work potentially matches our aims, we'll invite you for a call to learn more about your plans.

**We will use this to:**

* Get a sense of whether your organisation and its work could contribute to our priorities and long-term outcomes.
* Find out more about your organisation and its work.
* Consider whether we might be the right funder for you.

**The conversation will cover:**

* **Fit to our strategy:** Your work, the change you hope to achieve and how you plan to achieve it; how your work complements our plans – the outcomes we want to contribute to and the work of others we fund.
* **Approach:**Who you work with and your appetite for collaboration; your approach to learning and how you act on it; your ability to take advantage of opportunities.
* **Track record:** Your organisation, influence, and impact to date.

After the call, we’ll consider your work alongside other funding requests at our staff meeting where we’ll look at fit to strategy as well as how well-placed an organisation is to deliver the work. We’ll decide which are the strongest fit and what will be the most effective use of our resources, and invite those applicants to submit a proposal. For those we decide not to take forward, we will offer feedback, which we hope is helpful.

## 5. Proposal

If we agree that your work is a good fit for our strategy, we’ll invite you to submit a proposal, which you'll have three months to do. If you have a business, project or strategic plan already in place that describes your work, which you can use to show how your work aligns with our strategy, please use this rather than write a new proposal.

**We will use this to:**

* Find out in more detail how your plans align with Esmée’s impact goals and priorities.
* Understand what the planned outcomes of your work are, and how Esmée could work with you to achieve them.
* Gather some important documents on your organisation.

**The proposal should cover:**

* **Alignment with Esmée:**What funding from Esmée will enable you to deliver, and how your current work or future plans align with our five-year priorities.
* **About you:** A summary of your organisation - its origins, major milestones, experience of working strategically and influencing.
* **Support:** In a sentence, what you would like us to support. The amount of funding you are requesting from us and over what period. If you are requesting multi-year funding, we encourage you to account for inflation and increase your annual amount accordingly. [Visit the Office for National Statistics for information on the current rate of inflation](https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices)*.*
* **The Work:** What you plan to deliver with the funding; the approach you will take and how this will achieve your intended impact; who you collaborate with; what risks you have identified.

**Additional questions:**

* **Outcomes:** Tell us up to three outcomes you are planning to achieve, and what your indicators of progress might be. These should contribute to Esmée’s impact goals and five-year priorities. See our [guidance on outcomes](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-support/grants/outcomes-and-indicators/) for more information.
* **Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI):** Tell us about your approach to DEI within your organisation and through your work. We are interested in hearing about current challenges and any changes you are looking to make.

Why we ask about DEI: We think it's a key responsibility for us as a funder to influence more inclusive practice in the sectors and organisations we support. By learning about the progress of those we fund, we will be able to share good practice with others. We also want to support organisations that have further to go on DEI, which are keen to improve their practice.

* **Real Living Wage:** As part of the information about your organisation, we will ask if you pay all staff the real Living Wage.

Why we ask about the Living Wage: Esmée is a [Living Wage Funder](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-support/living-wage-funder/), which means that we encourage all organisations we fund to pay the [UK Real Living Wage](https://www.livingwage.org.uk/what-real-living-wage) as a minimum.

**Supplementary Documents:**

Along with your proposal we will also ask for the following documents:

* A copy of your latest approved annual report and accounts
* An income and expenditure budget for the organisation for the current financial year
* A copy of your safeguarding policy (learn about [our approach to safeguarding](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-support/safeguarding/))
* A set of management accounts covering the last financial year if you do not yet have an audited version (if applicable)
* If you are applying for a project, a budget identifying what you would like us to fund and any other funding approached/secured
* A copy of your Constitution, Memorandum and Articles of Association or other rules (if you are **not** a registered charity)

If you do not have an existing business, project or strategic plan which covers this information, and are putting together a proposal just for us, it should be 4-6 pages for smaller requests (£90k or less), and 8-12 pages for larger ones. You will have three months to submit. When we receive the proposal, we’ll set up a follow-up conversation to discuss it.

## 6. Follow-up conversation and decision

When we receive your proposal, we will start our potential relationship with a call to:

* Explain our new strategy. We will explore how we could use our additional tools to support your work, and how the proposal might fit with our future portfolio.
* Build the relationship. It’s important to us to build bridges and networks with all organisations working towards our goals, whether or not we decide to fund them.
* Build our understanding. The more we listen and learn from you, the better our assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal, and how we could best work together, will be.
* Understand the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion in our work more widely.

**The conversation will cover:**

* **Mission and vision:**What is your understanding of the broader context of your work and the communities it serves? We are looking for our funding to make a significant impact – does your ambition match up?
* **How you work:**What is your methodology? Is it new or established? Sometimes we are looking for pioneering approaches, lateral thinking that opens up new ground – is there evidence of that? What is significant, important, or different about this proposal?
* **What could go wrong:** Is the work new and untested? What other risks are there? How does the potential impact balance the risk?
* **Voice:** To what extent is the proposal grounded or designed in collaboration with those it is supporting?
* **Collaboration:** To what extent do you collaborate and who or what else needs to be funded for your work to be successful?  How do we see them interacting with our extended tools and new approach?
* **Diversity, equity and inclusion:**  What is your approach to DEI?
* **Governance and finance**: How robust is your organisation, and how strong is your governance?

## Decision

Our [Trustees](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/about-esmee/our-people/trustees/) work with our [executive team](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/about-esmee/our-people/staff/) to make decisions on how to use our resources and make funding decisions.

Decisions are made depending on the size of the funding request:

* **Grants up to £90k** - Executive Team
* **Grants up to £250k & social investment up to £500k** - Executive/Trustee committee, which meets every 6 weeks
* **Grants over £250k and Social Investment over £500k** - Trustee Board, which meets 6 times a year

We aim to give you a decision within three months of receiving your proposal. However, there may be a few occasions where larger requests take longer due to the timing of our Board meetings. Decisions are usually faster for smaller grants (£90,000 or less).

See our [FAQs](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/applications/faq/) and [why we turn things down](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/applications/why-we-turn-things-down/) for more on how we make decisions.

## Feedback

We will give feedback to every organisation we ask to submit a full proposal. Detailed feedback will not be given on expressions of interest, but we will track and use our team’s assessments to amend our guidance, answer frequently asked questions, and give more general application advice on our website.

# B. Are we the right funder for you?

It is difficult to get support from Esmée. The majority of people (in 2022, 82% of all applicants, and 97% of "cold" applicants via our website) who apply for our funding are not supported. Before committing to lots of research on what we support, or putting in a proposal, please check your eligibility by taking this short [**quiz**](https://esmeefairbairn.typeform.com/to/xeB89baB). It will also help you to decide whether this would be a good use of your time.

From 2020, we are aiming to support fewer organisations for longer, and to provide more support. The organisations we support will be doing truly exceptional work, which we think could have a ripple effect, i.e: an influence that reaches beyond direct results and is taken up by others, with the potential for long-term change.

## About Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation aims to improve our natural world, secure a fairer future and strengthen the bonds in communities in the UK.

We support people and organisations with brilliant ideas who are doing everything they can to bring about the change they want to see.

Under this strategy we are changing our approach. In addition to funding organisations with longer grants, we will take a more active role ourselves. Working in collaboration with others, we will use all our tools to unlock change - not just grants and investments - but our influence, endowment, and our ability to broker alliances and remove barriers.

## Who is this guidance for

This guidance is for organisations looking for a grant or social investment.

We encourage organisations to apply as part of a partnership or collaboration, and welcome work which fits more than one of our impact goals or funding priorities.

### Grants

Our [grants](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-support/grants/) support organisations’ core or project costs, including staff salaries and overheads. We also provide unrestricted funding for charities. We do not fund building or equipment costs, or individuals.

The minimum amount we offer is £30,000 and we have no maximum amount. We also have no minimum or maximum terms for grants – however, the majority of our grants are three to five years.

We are choosing to focus our grant funding on work that we believe will deliver the greatest long-term impact and create change for the future. This means we will be making more longer-term grants to organisations that will have a lasting and significant contribution to our impact goals, and fewer short-term or small-scale grants.

### Social investments

Our [social investments](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-support/social-investment/) start with the social need and tailor the investment to it: adapting and selecting financial instruments that are most appropriate. We invest directly into organisations and indirectly, through funds.

### Applying for both a grant and social investment

Organisations interested in applying for both a grant and social investment support should submit an expression of interest for social investment in the first instance.

## What we don't support

* Organisations with an annual turnover of less than £100,000 (see our [FAQs](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/applications/faq/) on [how we assess turnover](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/applications/faq/#34-how-will))**\***
* Organisations that do not have at least three trustees or directors (the majority of whom should not be paid employees)
* Organisations that are not registered charities or do not have an asset lock or other way to make sure that the assets of an organisation, including profits or surpluses generated, can only be used for the benefit of its community or to further its activities and mission (this exclusion applies to grants; for social investments, we only invest in organisations with charitable aims and mission). See our [FAQs](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/applications/faq/) for information about the [types of organisations we support](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/applications/faq/#22-what-kinds) in terms of governance.
* Grants for less than £30,000
* Social investments for less than £100,000 or more than £2m
* Work that is not legally charitable
* Work that does not have a direct benefit in the UK
* Grants to individuals
* Capital costs including building work, renovations, and equipment (this exclusion applies to grants only, we may make [social investments](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-support/social-investment/) for these)
* Academic research – unless it can demonstrate real potential for practical outcomes
* Healthcare with a clinical basis, including medical research, hospices, counselling and therapy, arts therapy, education about and treatment for drug and alcohol misuse
* Independent education
* Work that is primarily the responsibility of statutory authorities to provide using public funds (for example: social services for children and older people)
* The advancement of religion

**\*** *We will be working with partners to identify new ideas we could support which are at an earlier stage and might not get through our applicant quiz. We will contact organisations proactively to apply for this support.*

## We are looking for:

### Across all our aims, applicants need to show that:

* Their organisation is **leading the way** itself, or as part of a collaborative movement or partnership.
* Their work is **driving change for the future** by breaking new ground, or by using tried and tested models to push things forward.
* Their work **aims to make a lasting difference**, reaching beyond those directly engaged to influence the policy, practice, or behaviour of others.

### We are looking to support:

* Unusual collaborations and ambitious partnerships which are delivering at scale and involving or engaging a range of charity, public sector or corporate stakeholders.
* Work which makes connections across our aims: Our Natural World, A Fairer Future and Creative, Confident Communities.
* Communities or people most affected being involved in campaigning or leading change.
* Work which uses a preventative approach.
* Work that has practical plans to achieve and sustain change over the long-term.

For social investments, we also look for:

* The existing or potential ability to repay our investment.
* Alternative forms of investment and social investment in innovative models.

### When making decisions, we consider:

* **Track record:** we look at successes, but also what was learned when things didn’t go to plan.
* **Connections:** how this could link to and complement other work we support, and increase the combined impact.
* **Broader context:** the opportunities and barriers, allies and collaborators, for the work; and what influence or leverage the work aims to have.
* **The difference our support could make**: the value our funding, and extra support, could add to this work; along with the contribution the work could make to our impact goals.

# C. Our strategy

Our strategy focuses on three interdependent aims:

* Improving Our Natural World
* Tackling injustice to deliver A Fairer Future
* Nurturing Creative, Confident Communities

You can see the overall framework for these alongside our impact goals by 2030 and our priorities for the first five years below. Keep scrolling down to see more detail about our aim, funding priorities and the outcomes we are focusing our support on. Read the sections relevant to your work.

|  |
| --- |
| **Our Mission:** Esmée Fairbairn Foundation aims to improve our natural world, secure a fairer future, and strengthen the bonds in communities in the UK. We do this by contributing all that we can to unlock change by people and organisations with brilliant ideas who share our goals. |
| **Aims** | **Impact goals by 2030** | **Priorities in the first 5 years** |
| **Our Natural World** is protected, restored, and improved   | Preserved and improved species health and habitats  | * Peat
* Space for nature
 |
| Clean and healthy freshwater  | * Freshwater
 |
| Sustainable and ethical food | * Nature friendly farming
* Fishing in tandem with nature
 |
| **A Fairer Future**   | Improved systems, policy and practice | * Arts and creativity making change
* Children and young people’s rights
* Racial justice
* Gender justice
* Migrant justice
 |
| Organisations are strengthened to use their power to tackle systemic injustice and inequity  |
| Organisations work together and build movements to tackle systemic injustice and inequity |
| **Creative, Confident Communities**   | Communities use their power to make change happen | * Communities working together for change
 |
| Local economies work better for the people who live there | * Community ownership and regeneration
 |
| Culture and creativity build thriving communities | * Community-led art and creativity
 |
| **Our commitment**: In everything we do, we are motivated by the need to address the causes and impacts of climate change and inequity, and to recognise our role in addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion. |

# Our Natural World: priorities

We want to ensure that our natural world is restored and protected and that people benefit from its recovery. Working with others, we will contribute to three key impact goals:

* Preserved and improved species health and habitats
* Clean and healthy freshwater
* Sustainable and ethical food

By focusing on these areas we aim to make a significant difference on climate change.

If you are working across more than one area, this will make us more, rather than less likely to support you. We are keen to support organisations working in partnerships, as well as key organisations that work across our priorities to convene, mobilise or generate new ideas.

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:

We commit to funding more organisations led by communities experiencing racial inequity, and in Our Natural World - where the majority of organisations are not ethnically diverse – we will use our position as a funder to influence recruitment and governance practice to be more inclusive.

| **Impact goals by 2030** | **Priorities in first 5 years** |
| --- | --- |
| Preserved and improved species health and habitats | Peat Space for nature |
| Clean and healthy freshwater | Freshwater |
| Sustainable and ethical food | Nature friendly farmingFishing in tandem with nature |

## Peat

Esmée has long been a supporter of peatland due to its value for nature, climate change and for a range of other benefits including flood prevention and purifying water.  Whilst still under-appreciated, peatland bogs are more effective at carbon storage and mitigation than tropical forests.  Peat has relevance across many of our priorities (habitats, climate, freshwater, nature-friendly farming).

### Impact goal:

Preserved and improved species health and habitats

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| We want to support: |
| * Peat to be recognised as a climate change superpower as well as for its importance to nature.
* Peat to no longer be a component of horticultural products and people understand the implications of their buying choices on global peat stores and climate change.
* Degraded peatland sites to be restored for nature and for people.
* All important peatland sites, including those outside protected areas, to have statutory protections at least as powerful as currently in place and those that are to be properly applied.
* Farmed peat soils to be managed sustainably
* All UK countries to manage their peat resource sustainably.
 |

## Space for nature

The scale of nature’s decline in the UK cannot be addressed by our existing nature reserves nor without fundamentally changing the way we use the land. Fortunately, this decline is mirrored by a growing movement for connecting with nature and for finding and creating more wild spaces for nature - enabling natural processes to shape land and sea, repair damaged ecosystems and restore degraded landscapes.

By restoring space for nature near where people live, we will ensure that communities lead change but also that nature is accessible to all.

### Impact goal:

Preserved and improved species health and habitats

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| We want to support: |
| * Restoration of space for nature across whole landscapes, through collaborative working between landowners, communities, businesses, regulators and NGOs. This includes species-specific projects where it brings together a wide range of stakeholders to deliver a broad set of environmental outcomes and action – particularly where there is a strong connection to our other priorities.
* Policy frameworks that support nature restoration at scale or tools such as shared learning on innovative funding models.
* Restoration of marine habitats at scale, reconnecting coastal areas with their natural heritage.
* Work that improves access to nature for people and which considers the additional barriers that some people face in accessing nature, particularly due to discrimination or economic disadvantage. Where physical access is limited due to the sensitivity of some habitats or species, we’re interested in creative ways of engaging people.
* Work which aids the recovery of nature whilst also delivering other benefits, such as building carbon stores and reducing flood risk.

We will prioritise proposals that bring together partnerships, including groups of landowners or communities, or where there is a clear mandate and commitment to active involvement from those partners. We will consider support at an early stage where there is evidence of commitment from all parties, and proposals can demonstrate a strong track record in genuine partnership working. |

## Freshwater

One of the biggest challenges to the UK environment is the poor state of freshwater and the amplifying impact of climate change on the pressures that already exist.  Wildlife in freshwater has declined at a faster rate than in other habitats and is particularly susceptible to climate change.  Despite the magnitude of the problem, it is easily disregarded by a public unaware of the implications of poor water stewardship.

### Impact goal:

Clean and healthy freshwater

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| We want to support: |
| * Nature-based solutions to environmental challenges such as flood, drought and poor water quality, that also allow the restoration of wetland at scale or demonstrate smaller scale solutions that could be applied more widely.
* Engagement with biggest abstractors of water to reduce their impact, and to invest in improving the freshwater environment.
* Improvements to legislation and regulation for abstraction and water pollution that are fit for purpose and properly applied.
* Campaigns that mobilise communities in improving and raising the profile of freshwater environment - shining a light on poorly understood issues and bad or illegal practice.
* Work which holds to account polluters of all kinds that recklessly damage freshwater habitats, through legal action and shareholder engagement.
* Improved understanding of the needs and state of freshwater wildlife in our rivers, lakes, streams and wetlands – so that measures can be put in place to enable recovery.
 |

## Nature-friendly farming

There has been huge loss of biodiversity on farms:

* 56% decline in farmland birds since 1970
* 97% of wildflower meadows present in the 1940s have been destroyed (3 million hectares)
* Current farming approaches result in 0.1 to 0.3 tonnes of soil lost per hectare per year

Large areas of farmland will be unprofitable within a generation under the current model, but markets have not yet recognised the added value of nature-friendly farming. However, increasing innovation and a growing sense of awareness have created a window of opportunity.

### Impact goal:

Sustainable and ethical food

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| We want to support: |
| * Landscape-scale initiatives to enhance soil health and wider farmland biodiversity.
* Ambitious work to drive access to, and public demand for buying and consuming, food from local and nature-friendly sources.
* Greater transparency and accountability within supermarket supply chains.
* Work to encourage the transition to agro-ecological farming or food production, reducing pollutants and emissions.
* Initiatives designed to make nature-friendly farming the ‘new normal’.
 |

## Fishing in tandem with nature

Overfishing is the biggest driver of biodiversity loss in the seas yet there are currently poor safeguards to prevent damaging exploitation. The implementation of an effective network of marine protected areas is key to tackling this, alongside more sustainable aquaculture.

With the UK leaving the EU and the Common Fisheries Policy, there is real opportunity for change for marine life, as well as the coastal and island communities who depend upon it.

### Impact goal:

Sustainable and ethical food

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| We want to support: |
| * Designated and properly enforced marine protected areas across the UK which enable marine life to flourish.
* Work to ensure that small fishing businesses which demonstrate a sustainable approach to fishing and aquaculture can continue to play a key role in the economy of coastal communities.
* Innovation in alternative forms of UK aquaculture for sustainable farmed seafood.
* Increased consumer understanding of seafood choices, and changes in procurement and consumption.
* Improved understanding of the status of marine wildlife populations so that safeguards can be put in place to allow recovery.
* Ambitious collaborations for influencing policy across regions and nations.
 |

# A Fairer Future: priorities

A fairer future will require changes to systems and structures, while building the power and capacity of people and organisations. We want to provide the support and space to enable others we work alongside to create lasting change, and to challenge systems that stand in the way.

We have five priority areas where we believe we can make the most effective contribution; using our existing knowledge and relationships, by working at the intersections of issues and by building our understanding through working with others, especially those with experience of the issues we are trying to address.

We want to contribute to a socially just and anti-racist society, where people have their rights protected, as well as the opportunity to speak and be heard, and the freedom to express their creativity.

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:

Across all our priorities in A Fairer Future, we are interested in working with organisations who can demonstrate how diversity, equity and inclusion runs through all they do and how they work.

We are especially keen to support organisations led by the people they serve. For this, we have adopted the [DEI Data Standard](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/about-esmee/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/our-language-and-classifying-our-data/) to define what we mean by leadership.

We commit to funding more organisations led by communities experiencing racial inequity, and we aim to give more long-term funding and support to organisations working to advance racial justice. We will also work with partners to identify, fund, and nurture smaller organisations led by communities experiencing racial inequity that are working towards our impact goals.

Through our support in A Fairer Future, we want to recognise that tackling injustice – particularly for people who are affected by systemic injustice – requires resource, capacity and emotional resilience.

## Climate change:

Across all our aims, we are keen to support work which addresses the causes and impacts of climate change.

| **Impact goals by 2030** | **Priorities in first 5 years** |
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| Improved systems, policy and practice | * Arts and creativity making change
* Children and young people’s rights
* Racial justice
* Gender justice
* Migrant justice
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| Organisations are strengthened to use their power to tackle systemic injustice and inequity  |
| Organisations work together and build movements to tackle systemic injustice and inequity |

## Arts and creativity making change

Our focus is on two ways in which culture and creativity can build a fairer future:

* Creating a cultural workforce that is more reflective of UK society, by enabling more people to progress in their career in the arts who identify as D/deaf, disabled or neurodivergent, are from communities experiencing racial inequity, or who are economically disadvantaged.
* Supporting young people to build their own creative lives and to use arts and creativity to influence the world around them.

**We have two long-term outcomes:**

1. A representative cultural workforce led by a new and diverse generation of cultural leaders.

**Targeting our support:** We make 8-12 grants a year towards a more representative cultural workforce. As demand is very high, we encourage applicants to consider how closely their work fits what we want to support (see table below) as this informs our decision-making.

We will prioritise funding organisations that:

* Are led by and for underrepresented groups that need support to grow their work
* Have strong networks and evidence of contributing to long-term change and share power with underrepresented groups.

We also want to allocate more of our funding outside London, and to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

1. Youth-led culture and creativity enhances young people’s lives, and enables them to influence change in their communities or wider society.

**Please note:** we are temporarily closed to applications for work towards this outcome and plan to re-open in February. [Learn more about our plans for youth-led culture and creativity](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/latest-news/changing-how-we-fund-youth-led-culture-and-creativity/).

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| Long-term outcome: |
| A representative cultural workforce led by a new and diverse generation of cultural leaders. |
| We want to support work that: |
| * Creates change in the cultural sector to ensure there is equal access to creative, technical and administrative careers for people who identify as D/deaf, disabled or neurodivergent, are from communities experiencing racial inequity, or who are economically disadvantaged.
* Addresses barriers to career progression due to systemic injustice in the cultural sector.
* Builds the capacity of a new, inclusive generation of cultural leadership, creating change and encouraging diverse ideas, perspectives, and experiences to inform whose stories get told and how.
* Is ambitious and can contribute to embedding change long-term to address injustice, particularly those that overlap with our other priorities.

We will consider work that involves Further Education and Higher Education – particularly where there is a need for specific technical or artistic skills.Case studies:* [Graeae Theatre](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/graeae-theatre-company/)
* [Culture&](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/culture/)
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| Long-term outcome: |
| Youth-led culture and creativity enhances young people’s lives, and enables them to influence change in their communities or wider society. |
| See separate guidance on how to apply |
| Together with Esmée's Involving Young People Collective, we have reimagined the guidance and application process for work towards Youth-Led Creativity. In 2024, we will make 8 to 12 grants, totalling £1m. There is a separate process for applying and we are accepting applications until 5pm on 15 March 2024.[See the guidance for our Youth-Led Creativity programme and how to apply](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/latest-news/youth-led-creativity-funding/). |

## Children and young people’s rights

Creating a fairer future requires lasting changes to policy and practice that gets support to children in the vital first years of life, and to young people at important transitions in adolescence. This particularly includes those at risk of school exclusion or in contact with the care or youth justice system, along with earlier support for disabled young people and those with special education needs.

Through everything we do, we commit to supporting young people who have known injustice in their lives to drive change, reimagine and create a fairer future.

**We have five long-term outcomes:**

1. A shift in early years provision to ensure that young children (0-5) and their families facing barriers have quality support.
2. Fewer young people, particularly those experiencing racial inequity, in contact with the youth justice system, excluded from school, and entering state care.
3. Children’s rights are better met, with specialist legal support and better protection for marginalised groups.
4. Young people (14-25) with experience of injustice create and lead positive change, and shape decision making.
5. An end to the ‘cliff edge’ of support for young people leaving care.

**Involving young people**

We want the views and voices of children and young people to be at the heart of our work in Children and young people’s rights. To help us do this, we will use the Involving Young People Values to support our decision-making. These were developed by Esmée’s Involving Young People Collective and offer guidance and learning for organisations on co-production with young people.

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| Long-term outcome: |
| A shift in early years provision to ensure that young children (0-5) and their families facing barriers have quality support. |
| We want to support work that: |
| * Is strategic and takes a collaborative approach to influence national policy.
* Makes the case for models that tackle inequality early for families and young children facing the greatest challenges, who are not getting the support they need from services.
* Goes beyond service delivery to influence the early years sector and spread effective approaches to reach more young children and their families.

Case studies:* [Parent-Infant Foundation](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/parent-infant-foundation/)
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| Long-term outcome: |
| Fewer young people, particularly those experiencing racial inequity, in contact with the youth justice system, excluded from school, and entering state care. |
| We want to support work that: |
| * Is designed and driven by young people with lived experience of the youth justice, school exclusion and care systems.
* Challenges injustice in systems for young people, particularly for those experiencing racial inequity, disabled young people and those with special educational needs.
* Goes beyond delivery of preventative programmes to share learning and spread effective approaches in statutory services.

Case studies:* [Power The Fight](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/power-fight/)
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| Long-term outcome: |
| Children’s rights are better met, with specialist legal support and better protection for marginalised groups. |
| We want to support work that: |
| * Is driven and shaped by young people with experience of injustice.
* Improves and protects the rights of marginalised children and young people through influencing and strategic litigation.
* Builds understanding of children’s legal rights amongst organisations working with children and young people, as well as their confidence to identify issues earlier and better use the law.

Case studies:* [Just for Kids Law](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/just-kids-law/)
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| Long-term outcome: |
| Children’s rights are better met, with specialist legal support and better protection for marginalised groups. |
| We want to support work that: |
| * Is driven and shaped by young people with experience of injustice.
* Improves and protects the rights of marginalised children and young people through influencing and strategic litigation.
* Builds understanding of children’s legal rights amongst organisations working with children and young people, as well as their confidence to identify issues earlier and better use the law.

Case studies:* [Just for Kids Law](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/just-kids-law/)
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| Long-term outcome: |
| Young people (14-25) with experience of injustice create and lead positive change, and shape decision making. |
| We want to support  |
| Using what we have learned from [funding youth activism](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/latest-news/funding-youth-activism-learning-act-change-fund/), we will continue to invest in young people’s drive, talent and passion to tackle issues of injustice and inequality that they experience, through organising and campaigning for change.We want to support work that:* Engages young people with experience of injustice, building their capacity to lead and secure change in unjust systems.
* Supports young people to develop creative solutions to social justice and environmental issues as well as build strategic alliances to create change.
* Enables young people to increase their understanding of the root causes of social injustice, with pathways to develop their changemaking and activism.

Case studies:* [The 4Front Project](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/4front-project/)
* [We Belong](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/latest-news/we-belong-young-migrants-standing/)
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| Long-term outcome: |
| An end to the ‘cliff edge’ of support for young people leaving care. |
| Closed to applications: |
| We are closed to applications for this outcome. We are currently supporting a cohort of organisations working in this area and are focusing our time on working more closely with them to achieve our desired outcomes. We may make new grants where we identify a gap in one of our focus areas, but these will be small in number and by exception.**Please note:** we are unlikely to fund work with care leavers under other outcomes and priorities. However, if applying for support for work with care leavers under another outcome or priority, please read the relevant guidance to understand whether there is a good fit for your work.What we hope to achieve from our work:* More care leavers develop and sustain stable, supportive, and fulfilling relationships.
* Young people leaving care have more say over the decisions that matter to them, their voices are listened to, and acted on.
* There is consistent and good quality support for care experienced young people that leads to successful transitions and independence.
* The system responds quickly to messages from research, learning about good practice and the voices of young people. There is challenge when things go wrong and sharing and spreading of what works well.

To learn more about our work, see our [Young People Leaving Care Learning Programme](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-support/convening-and-connecting/leaving-care-funding-stream-learning-programme/). |

## Racial justice

Racial equity and justice are a fundamental necessity for a socially and economically healthy nation. The historic under-funding of organisations led by people experiencing racial inequity has undermined progress toward this ambition. Our efforts need to be rooted in a better understanding of the interconnected nature of racial inequity and injustice across all parts of our strategy. Providing support that is sustainable, accessible and responsive will enable these organisations to create a more equitable future, while determining for themselves the best way they can thrive and achieve impact.

###### **We have three long-term outcomes:**

1. Organisations working towards racial justice across our strategy, led by people experiencing racial inequity, are financially resilient and socially transformative.
2. Racial inequity in leadership is challenged and changed.
3. Disproportionate harm caused by racial injustice in systems, policy and practice is reduced.

###### **Building our understanding and how we are prioritising our support**

We recognise that there is a lot for Esmée to learn about racial justice, and we are exploring where our contribution can have the biggest impact as we continue to build our understanding of the issues. To help us do this, we will be prioritising work that is led by communities experiencing racial inequity. By this, we mean that 75% of the Board or Management Committee, and 50% of senior staff are people with experience of racial inequity.

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| Long-term outcome: |
| Organisations working towards racial justice across our strategy, led by people experiencing racial inequity, are financially resilient and socially transformative. |
| We want to support work that: |
| Initially, we are seeking to work with a small number of partner organisations who can lead this work. We want to work with partners who:* Are driven and shaped by communities experiencing racial inequity.
* Have an infrastructure role, supporting and building the capacity of frontline organisations that are led by communities experiencing racial inequity, and may have experience of delivering grants.
* Are leading the way itself or as part of a partnership or collaboration to create transformative change towards racial justice.
* Are able to operate regionally or nationally, or where the approach has the potential to spread by sharing learning and replication elsewhere.
* Have the relationships and networks to directly reach and engage with communities experiencing racial inequity.

Case studies:* [Comic Relief’s Global Majority Fund](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/global-majority-fund/)
* [Imkaan](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/imkaan/)
* [Rosa’s Rise Fund](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/rosa-rise-fund/)
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| Long-term outcome: |
| Racial inequity in leadership is challenged and changed. |
| We want to support work that: |
| * Is driven and shaped by communities experiencing racial inequity.
* Is challenging the status quo and developing solutions to shift what leadership looks like to create racial equity, and influence systemic change.
* Supports and builds the capacity of a new, inclusive and racially diverse, generation of leaders and organisations who are influencing change and developing solutions to create a fairer future.

Case studies:* [Anti Racist Cumbria](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/anti-racist-cumbria/)
* [GirlDreamer](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/girldreamer/)
* [Stuart Hall Foundation](https://www.stuarthallfoundation.org/)
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| Long-term outcome: |
| Disproportionate harm caused by racial injustice in systems, policy and practice is reduced. |
| We want to support work that: |
| * Changes legislation, policy and practice to address racial injustice.
* Is driven and shaped by people with experience of racial inequity, so that they can themselves have a direct impact on changing the system.
* Brings to light and challenges racial injustice in systems, holding those in power to account, and influencing change.
* Enables and supports a movement for change, ensuring smaller and grassroots organisations’ voices are represented and amplified.

Case studies:* [Runnymede Trust](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/runnymede-trust/)
* [StopWatch](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/stopwatch/)
* [Anthony Walker Foundation](https://anthonywalkerfoundation.com/)
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## Gender justice

Gender justice requires changes to systems, policy and practice so that everyone's rights are recognised and protected. We will work with others to ensure that women and girls can live in safety and fulfil their potential, and that transgender and non-binary people’s voices are heard.

**We have four long-term outcomes:**

1. Gender-based violence is reduced through the delivery of preventative work.
2. Trans and non-binary people’s rights are recognised and protected.
3. Policy, practice, and the law better meets the needs of women experiencing multiple challenges and discrimination.
4. The negative impacts of the criminal justice system on women and their families are reduced.

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| Long-term outcome: |
| Gender-based violence is reduced through the delivery of preventative work. |
| We want to support work that: |
| * Develops and tests interventions to reduce gender-based violence.
* Influences policy and practice on the role of preventative approaches and makes the case for statutory support for preventative work.
* Challenges and addresses the normalisation of harmful attitudes, objectification, and violence at an early stage, as well as in communities.
* Takes a collaborative approach that enables and supports a movement for change.

Case studies:* [Circles South East](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/circles-south-east/)
* [Tender](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/tender/)
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| Long-term outcome: |
| Trans and non-binary people’s rights are recognised and protected. |
| We want to support work that: |
| * Is driven and shaped by trans and non-binary people, so that they can themselves have a direct impact on changing the system.
* Brings to light and challenges harmful attitudes and narratives about Trans and non-binary people, and builds understanding of the issues amongst the public and decision-makers.
* Takes a collaborative approach that enables and supports a movement for change.

Case studies:* [Gendered Intelligence](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/gendered-intelligence/)
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| Long-term outcome: |
| Policy, practice, and the law better meets the needs of women experiencing multiple challenges and discrimination. |
| We want to support work that: |
| * Is driven and shaped by women experiencing multiple challenges and discrimination, so that they can themselves have a direct impact on changing the system.
* Goes beyond service delivery, and changes legislation, policy and practice.
* Brings to light and challenges gender injustice in systems – particularly for women experiencing multiple challenges and discrimination.
* Improves access to justice for women experiencing multiple challenges and discrimination.

Case studies:* [Agenda](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/agenda/)
* [Imkaan](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/imkaan/)
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| Long-term outcome: |
| The negative impacts of the criminal justice system on women and their families are reduced. |
| We want to support work that: |
| * Is driven and shaped by women with experience of the criminal justice system and their families, so that they can themselves have a direct impact on changing the system.
* Goes beyond service delivery, and changes legislation, policy and practice.
* Takes a collaborative approach that enables and supports a movement for change, ensuring the voices of smaller and grassroots organisations are represented and amplified – particularly those led by and for women experiencing multiple challenges and discrimination.

Case studies:* [Agenda](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/agenda/)
* [Hibiscus Initiatives](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/hibiscus-initiatives/)
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## Migrant justice

Migration is a vital part of UK life. The power and leadership of those with experience of migration, asylum and detention are essential to achieve a society where migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have the tools and resources to understand and advocate for their rights, have their rights protected and can live in safety.

Working in partnership, we will support the development of a just legislative framework, a less polarising public narrative and on ensuring that migrants have access to legal help that enables them to secure their rights.

**We have three long-term outcomes:**

1. Migrants have improved access to legal help to exercise their rights.
2. Legislation and support ensure that migrants' rights are protected, and reflects their needs.
3. Public understanding and discussion of migration issues is better informed, particularly by those with lived experience of the migration system.

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| We want to support work that: |
| * Is driven and shaped by migrants, so that they can themselves have a direct impact on changing the system.
* Builds and uses evidence to design a better migration system.
* Changes legislation, policy and practice to meet the needs of migrants.
* Brings to light and challenges injustice in the migration system, countering misinformation.
* Builds understanding of the issues with local communities, the wider public, and decision-makers.
* Supports and amplifies the voices of migrants, enabling more stories of migration to be told and heard.
* Takes a collaborative approach that enables and supports a movement for change, ensuring the voices of smaller and grassroots organisations are represented and amplified.

**Case studies:*** [Asylum Reform Initiative](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/asylum-reform-initiative/)
* [Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/joint-council-welfare-immigrants/)
* [Migrant Voice](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/migrant-voice/)
* [Migration Exchange](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/right-remain/)
* [Right to Remain](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/our-aims/fairer-future/migration-exchange/)
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# Creative, Confident Communities: priorities

We want to strengthen the bonds in communities, helping local people to build vibrant, confident places where they can fulfil their creative, human, and economic potential. Places where the local economy works better for the people who live there, where there is equality of access to arts and culture, and where communities are at the heart of change.

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

We commit to funding more organisations led by communities experiencing racial inequity. In Creative, Confident Communities, we will also work with partners to identify, fund, and nurture smaller organisations led by communities experiencing racial inequity that are working towards our impact goals.

## Climate change

Across all our aims, we are keen to support work which addresses the causes and impacts of climate change.

## Key features across our work in Creative, Confident Communities

For all our priorities in Creative, Confident Communities, we want to support work that:

* **Is inclusive and accessible**: by this, we mean work that engages and represents the diverse communities in a place.
* **Is co-owned, co-created, and co-designed with local people:** by this, we mean that local people are at the heart of change. For us, the process is just as important as the outcomes.
* **Is collaborative:** by this, we mean unusual alliances, cross-sector and multi-agency approaches.
* **Has potential for sustained change:** by this, we mean benefits communities beyond the lifetime of our funding.
* **Has potential for scale:** by this, we mean there is scope to share learning and/or replication elsewhere.
* **Can demonstrate multiple benefits for local people:** for instance, this could include reduced isolation, increased volunteering levels, as well as increased skills and engagement.

**Please note:** due to limited capacity in our Creative, Confident Communities team, it is likely to take us a little bit longer to get back to you. We have updated the guidance to reflect this, and our response times to Expressions of Interest for Creative, Confident Communities is six weeks.

You can find additional guidance for each priority below.

| **Impact goals by 2030** | **Priorities in first 5 years** |
| --- | --- |
| Communities use their power to make change happen | Communities working together for change |
| Local economies work better for the people who live there | Community driven enterprise and regeneration |
| Culture and creativity build thriving communities | Community-led art and creativity |

## Communities working together for change

Communities thrive when people have the power to take action and the capacity and capability to work together for change. We seek out ambitious work that puts communities themselves at the heart of the changes they want to make and can provide transformative models for others to learn from. We will support communities to exercise greater power over their economic, social, and environmental future.

### Impact goal:

Communities use their power to make change happen.

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| We want to support work that: |
| * Has local people at the heart of the change, is inclusive and accessible to all communities in a place.
* Takes a partnership approach resulting in the corporate, cultural, public, voluntary, and community sectors working together with local people to deliver collective change.
* Motivates and enables communities to use their collective ideas, skills and assets to bring about their vision of what they want their local area to be.
* Creates strong networks that continue to benefit communities beyond the lifetime of our funding.
* Tests new or uses proven models, provided there is scope for sharing lessons and replication elsewhere.
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## Community driven enterprise and regeneration

When communities have a greater stake in local transport, businesses, housing, and services, they can work better for communities, and generate financial and social returns that stay local. We believe that supporting stronger, sustainable, connections between people and their local resources can help rebuild and create collaborative, thriving, and green local economies for all.

### Impact goal:

Local economies work better for the people who live there.

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| We want to support work that: |
| * Takes a localised, community-led approach to engage people with the common goal of changing and reinvesting in their local economy for the better.
* Tests and grows new, sustainable models of community-led enterprise, which may include community ownership, with the aim of creating better outcomes for local people.
* Offers learning for others, or has the potential to be replicated elsewhere.
* Is inclusive and represents the diverse communities in a place.
* Champions environmental justice, regenerative enterprises, green recovery and access to nature in any economic development.
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## Community-led art and creativity

The power of culture and creativity to transform lives and communities is undervalued. Through our long-term interest in, and history of, supporting culture for social impact, we understand the role that culture and creativity can play in releasing potential, strengthening community relationships and bringing people together. We want to see the best of community-led culture and creativity as a core component in local regeneration and planning for the future.

### Impact goal:

Everyone can access the benefits of culture and creativity.

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| We want to support work that: |
| * Transforms places through a collaborative approach to culture that is co-created with local people alongside cultural organisations and other local players.
* Is led by local people, is inclusive and represents the diverse communities in a place.
* Enables and strengthens cultural organisations with a strong track record of community engagement to influence local decision-making and policies.
* Is ambitious with the potential for scale through a cross-sector or multi-agency approach. We will support work at different scales including: national initiatives and programmes working in multiple places; and region-wide activity as well as county, city or borough-wide programmes.
* Is linked to wider networks and has the ability to share learning, as well as contribute to wider learning about co-creation and co-design.

We will consider work that includes activity in schools where the work has broader ambitions and has an impact on the wider community. This includes work that engages schools as a way to reach children and young people, their families and build community relationships. Please note we tend not to support work that is exclusively in schools and is part of the curriculum. |

# New Ideas

We are committed to supporting organisations with vital, new or unusual ideas on the issues we care about. Ideas which could change the way we work, think, or create in future.

We want to support organisations that are grounded in evidence or experience, which have already delivered some initial work and have a workable governance model in place or are working towards one. They might be entrepreneurial, or want to shake up existing ways of working, and will now be ready to learn and develop. We want our funding to move organisations on to being able to take on additional support in the future; to grow an acorn into an oak.

Organisations with new ideas which already meet our funding criteria should take the quiz and submit an expression of interest. In addition, we will be working with partners (other funders, the organisations we fund, and other support schemes for new ideas in our sectors) to identify new ideas we could support which are at an earlier stage and might not get through our applicant quiz. We will contact organisations proactively to apply for this support.

# Infrastructure

Under our funding priorities we will support infrastructure, “backbone”, or second tier organisations which are key to achieving our impact goals. We are interested in progressive organisations which can accelerate collaboration, further best practice, or amplify collective voice.

In addition, we will identify and support a few key players that are doing essential work across all our sectors and impact goals. We are looking for organisations that can move issues on, accelerate the pace of change or stop wasted effort. We also want our funding to ensure future independence, capacity and integrity of the charity and social enterprise sector.

Infrastructure organisations which are working directly towards our funding priorities should take the quiz and submit an expression of interest. For infrastructure organisations working more broadly, across all our sectors or goals, we will contact organisations proactively to apply for this support.

# FAQs

## How do I apply for a social investment?

The process for applying for a social investment is the same as the grant application process. The only difference is at number 4 – the proposal stage – when there are no set questions to answer, and we will ask you to submit your investment or business plan documents to us by email rather than through our online portal.

## Why do you turn down applications?

See [why we turn down applications](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/applications/why-we-turn-things-down/).

## A full list of FAQs

There is a longer list of [frequently asked questions here](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/applications/faq/).