

**UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

**Communities and Place**

**Specification**

**Call for Volunteering and Social Action Programme**

**1st June 2023 – 31st March 2025**

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**North of Tyne UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Communities and Place**

This open call should be read in conjunction with the North of Tyne Combined Authority’s UK Shared Prosperity Fund Volunteering and Social Action Open Call Guidance.

1. **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)**

The UKSPF will invest in economic growth and regeneration in the regions of the United Kingdom (UK), replacing the previous European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). All current European funded programmes will end in 2023.

To help realise their Levelling Up aims, Government has set out that the UKSPF should invest to achieve the following objectives:

* Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards.
* Spread opportunities and improve public services.
* Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging.
* Empower local leaders and communities.

The UKSPF has three investment priorities of Communities and Place, Local Business Support, and People and Skills. This call for proposals is part of the Communities and Place priority.

1. **North of Tyne Combined Authority**

The North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) is a strong cross-party, cross-regional collaboration led by a mayor and cabinet working hard to create inclusive, sustainable growth through devolution.

Covering the areas of Newcastle, North Tyneside, and Northumberland our focus is to drive jobs, inclusion, new homes, the net zero transition, and positive economic change in our region.

NTCA’s vision is of a dynamic and more inclusive economy, one that brings together people and opportunities to create vibrant communities and a high quality of life, narrowing inequalities and ensuring that all residents have a stake in our region’s future. Reducing inequalities and improving access to opportunities is also an inherent part of the Government’s Levelling Up programme[[1]](#footnote-2) and subsequent UK Shared Prosperity Fund prospectus[[2]](#footnote-3).

NTCA will invest their allocation of UKSPF resources in activities to achieve this vision. This includes a co-ordinated place-based approach to address key challenges, with a focus on building opportunities and restoring pride of place.

Our proposals for the Communities and Place Investment Priority will address the two UKSPF objectives of:

* Strengthening our social fabric & fostering a sense of local pride & belonging.
* Building resilient, healthy & safe neighbourhoods.

1. **UKSPF Communities and Place: Programmes of Activity**

NTCA will deliver three programmes of activity in the UKSPF Communities and Place theme:

* Regeneration of our Places: Towns, high streets, rural centres, and local events
* Community programmes and partnerships
* Energy efficiency

Volunteering and Social Action is a key element within the Community Programmes and Partnerships activity. This call seeks to invest up to £1 million in a programme of impactful volunteering and social action that develops social and human capital across the North of Tyne Combined Authority area.

We know that volunteering and social action offers significant social and economic benefits both to the individuals directly involved and to the wider community. For the volunteer it can help to build new skills, increase confidence, widen social networks and expand horizons. It can also result in physical and mental health benefits. For the beneficiary it can offer friendship, improved access to key services and the opportunity to benefit from vibrant community spaces. In short, volunteering and social action are mutually beneficial acts that have the power to create stronger, more prosperous and resilient communities.

1. **Strategic Context**

**4.1 Volunteering, Social Action and the VCSE sector**

Volunteering, social action and the VCSE sector play a crucial role in supporting our communities and places. The recent [Third Sector Trends Report](https://www.communityfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Third-Sector-Trends-in-England-and-Wales-2022-structure-purpose-energy-and-impact-November-2022.pdf) (November 2022) estimates that there are 6,900 VCSE sector organisations active in the North East employing 37,300 people and supported by 152,100 volunteers. These organisations work with some of our most vulnerable residents facing multiple barriers to engaging in our economy by providing support around health, wellbeing, financial security and community cohesion. The value of this support is estimated to be £1.65bn across the North East.

Volunteering and social action provide fantastic opportunities to strengthen social and human capital within our communities. The [Levelling Up White Paper](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1095544/Executive_Summary.pdf) identifies human and social capital as part of a framework of six capitals that, when developed and supported, can reduce inequalities between places:

* physical capital – infrastructure, machines and housing;
* human capital – the skills, health and experience of the workforce;
* intangible capital – innovation, ideas and patents;
* financial capital – resources supporting the financing of companies;
* social capital – the strength of communities, relationships and trust;
* institutional capital – local leadership, capacity and capability.

We believe that communities with high levels of human and social capital can:

* develop local solutions in response to needs and opportunities that will help to create stronger local economies and more prosperous and resilient places;
* be more resilient in the face of hard times due to their ability to look after one-another, solve problems together, and shape services;
* support a more inclusive economy where people are better able to take advantage of economic opportunities through having access to strong, supportive and diverse social networks.

**4.2 Volunteering and the pandemic**

The value of volunteering and social action was clearly demonstrated during the pandemic as people and organisations came together with the singular aim of providing life-saving practical and emotional support to their neighbours. The Relationships Project [‘Active Neighbours Guide’](https://relationshipsproject.org/active-neighbours/) details this outpouring of community-led support. Volunteers from all walks of life stepped up to lend a hand with shopping, prescription collections, food parcel drop-offs, gas and electric tops-ups, befriending, sharing trusted guidance, and supporting people to access vaccination clinics. Much of this activity was co-ordinated at neighbourhood level via mutual aid groups and existing relationships between friends and neighbours. Communities rich in connected and cohesive relationships appeared better equipped to deal with adversity during the pandemic. ‘First responders’ were more likely to be neighbours, friends and family rather than public sector services.

Across the North of Tyne area we saw some innovations in volunteering and social action that were essential to meeting the sheer scale of demand. This included:

* more people able to accommodate volunteering as part of their working day thanks to more flexible working arrangements, with volunteering offering a welcome relief to the isolation of home working;
* increased numbers of local businesses keen to join the volunteering effort motivated by a real desire to support their local communities, rather than a need to meet CSR targets and/or deliver cost-free team building events;
* the emergence of more flexible volunteering roles not requiring long-term or regular commitments, providing easier access for parents, employees, students, etc;
* increased use of digital tools to more efficiently recruit and co-ordinate volunteering activity.

UKSPF investment provides an opportunity to build a positive Covid legacy by sustaining the amazing volunteering and social action we witnessed during the pandemic to not only support communities in the face of future challenges, but also support them to be able to take full advantage of economic opportunities across the North of Tyne.

**4.3 Existing support for volunteering and social action**

In 2021 the National Lottery Community Fund invested in three VCSE sector Local Infrastructure Organisations in the North of Tyne area to develop a North of Tyne Volunteering Partnership. The Partnership works with key organisations committed to establishing a volunteering area of excellence across the Combined Authority supporting formal and informal volunteering. This Partnership has since grown to also include Volunteer Centre Newcastle in addition to the founder members of Connected Voice, Northumberland Community and Voluntary Action (CVA) and North Tyneside Voluntary Organisations Development Agency (VODA).

The Partnership has facilitated a range of consultation activity with volunteer-involving organisations to share good practice and identify areas for further development. The programme of research also focussed on perceived barriers both to being a volunteer and involving volunteers in an organisation. As a result of this consultation the Partnership has identified three areas of focus based on the needs of local volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations:

* developing innovative systems to support the effective recruitment, co-ordination and development of volunteers at scale;
* developing a strong system of support and collaboration for formal volunteer-involving organisations and informal neighbourhood-level mutual aid activity;
* creating a strong employee-volunteering scene, enabling private sector organisations to easily support their local communities.

In 2022 the North of Tyne Combined Authority’s VCSE sector Stakeholder Group adopted ‘developing the North of Tyne as an area of excellence in volunteering’ as a key area of focus. The Stakeholder group contains all four members of the Volunteering Partnership, alongside Citizens Advice Northumberland and Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE) working alongside colleagues from our three constituent local authorities.

1. **Call Parameters**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Dates** | The earliest potential start date for delivery is 1st June 2023  All activity and spend must be complete by 31st March 2025. |
| **Indicative Fund Allocation** | We are looking to invest a total of £1 million UKSPF in a single volunteering and social action programme.  To maximise reach and deliver economies of scale, we particularly welcome applications from a single programme lead, working with delivery partners. |
| **Applications** | Applicants are expected to submit proposals which demonstrate impact and additionality. UKSPF funding is not intended to replace existing funding. |
| **Geographical Scope** | Delivery must cover all three Local Authority areas within the North of Tyne Combined Authority – Newcastle, Northumberland and North Tyneside. |
| **Deadlines** | Applications must be submitted by noon on 3rd May 2023. Any application not fully completed and submitted by this date and time will be disregarded by the assessment panel. |
| **Application selection** | All applications will be scored in line with the application award criteria set out in the supporting guidance. |
| **Specific Funding Requirements** | All activity should deliver the objectives, outputs and outcomes set out in this document.  Proposals will also need to:   * add value to, and align with, relevant existing activity; * demonstrate that applicants already have volunteering infrastructure in place in local communities to ensure rapid mobilisation, activity and spend; * consider social value within their response (please see guidance for additional information).   The successful provider / partnership will be required to actively work with the three Community Partnerships and Employment Partnerships in Newcastle, Northumberland and North Tyneside, as well as the successful VCSE Employment Support providers to ensure UKSPF funded projects add value to, and enhance, existing provision. This might be through aligning activities to identified community needs, by supporting local residents to access volunteering opportunities, or referring volunteers into relevant employability and training support. |
| **Definitions** | Volunteering is when someone chooses to spend their time, unpaid, doing something to benefit others and/or the environment. Helping close friends or relatives isn't volunteering. Nor is work experience or student placements. We expect volunteering opportunities to add value to existing provision and to avoid substituting paid roles and/or statutory obligations.  Social Action is about communities coming together to solve issues that are important to them. It tends to be less formal and less structed than our definition of volunteering above.  The VCSE sector is made up of incorporated voluntary, community or social enterprise organisation which serve our communities. Organisations within this sector tend to be registered charities, Community Interest Companies and constituted community groups. |
| **Eligible match funding** | NTCA welcomes programmes that bring match funding. There is no set level of match funding required, however, NTCA expects match funding to be auditable and attributable to project expenditure. Therefore, match funding for programmes must relate to actual programme expenditure. Please see guidance for additional information. |
| **Procurement** | Applications must demonstrate that the programme will follow national procurement regulations (where applicable), and that procurement processes achieve best value for money for public funds. |
| **Calculation and eligibility of costs** | Please see guidance document for additional information regarding the calculation and eligibility of costs. |

1. **Call objectives**

The purpose of this programme of activity is to both better co-ordinate, and to increase the scale, scope and quality of volunteering and social action opportunities across the North of Tyne area, building on and adding to the volunteering activity currently provided by Local Infrastructure Organisations and Volunteer Centres.

We are seeking to invest in one programme, that can deliver activity across the North of Tyne area.

The specific objectives of this investment are to:

1. Develop more opportunities for North of Tyne residents from all walks of life to access high-quality volunteering roles that respond to local need. By high quality we mean opportunities that are clearly defined, do not replace or duplicate paid work, offer protection to volunteers via appropriate policies and procedures, and offer suitable induction and training. We expect these opportunities to be accessible to residents who may face additional barriers to volunteering due to lack of confidence, experience and/or protected characteristics.
2. Co-ordinate an accessible programme of free training and development opportunities for volunteers. It will be important that this offer does not duplicate the UKSPF People and Skills offer. We would expect training and development delivered within this programme to primarily be one-off non-accredited sessions that focus on the skills and knowledge required for people to carry out volunteering roles. This might include things such as Safeguarding, Professional Boundaries, First Aid, Trustee Skills and Befriending.
3. Co-ordinate an accessible programme of support for volunteer-involving organisations based in the North of Tyne area, to develop their capacity to recruit, co-ordinate and support volunteers.
4. Co-ordinate an offer of support for local groups based in the North of Tyne area, enabling them to deliver meaningful social action projects. It will be important that this offer adds value to any similar place-based activity that might be delivered by Community Partnerships.
5. Develop a co-ordinated approach to brokering opportunities for private sector organisations in the North of Tyne area, to meaningfully support their local communities.

The investment is an integral part of the Community Programmes and Partnership activity within the Communities and Place Investment Priority. As such, it is closely aligned to the work of the three Community Partnerships and to the Crowdfunding initiative (see Annex B). Whilst programme delivery is expected to cover the full combined authority geography, we would also expect the successful provider / partnership to work closely with the three Community Partnerships (one in each Local Authority area) to:

* increase the number, range, and quality of volunteering opportunities available in the Community Partnership target areas,
* support residents of the target areas to access and benefit from volunteering opportunities, and
* collectively develop and deliver social action projects.

Care must be taken to avoid double-counting of UKSPF outcomes and outputs when working with Community Partnerships.

In addition, we would expect the successful provider / partnership to liaise with the three Employment Partnerships (one in each Local Authority area) and successful VCSE providers of UKSPF funded employability support to ensure local residents from across the North of Tyne area can access good quality volunteering opportunities. (See Annex B for details).

1. **Eligibility criteria**

To be eligible for funding under this open call, applicants must:

* be able to deliver activity across the full North of Tyne area;
* already have volunteering infrastructure in place in local communities to ensure rapid mobilisation, activity and spend;
* be prepared to work with the Community Partnerships and Employment Partnerships (see Annex B for further details).

1. **Eligible activities**

Eligible activities include, but are not limited to:

* promotional campaigns and activities that make it easier for people to find out about volunteering opportunities;
* supporting organisations to develop and fill new volunteering opportunities;
* supporting organisations to identify and address barriers to volunteering;
* promoting and supporting existing training and development opportunities available to volunteers, volunteer-involving organisations and social action groups and developing additional offers where current provision does not meet need;
* exploring and developing the role of digital technology to help develop more efficient ways of recruiting and co-ordinating volunteers;
* brokering mutually beneficial relationships between private sector and VCSE sector organisations that enable businesses to give their time to meet real community needs.

1. **Outputs and outcomes**

The following *minimum* UKSPF outputs and outcomes must be achieved by the end of the delivery period (March 2025). Please see Annex A for full definitions of outcomes and outputs.

**Table 1: Outputs**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **UKSPF Intervention** | **Outputs** | **Target** |
| E9 | Number of volunteering opportunities supported | 250 |
| E9 | Number of organisations receiving non-financial support | 120 |
| E9 | Number of local events or activities supported | 15 |
| E9 | Number of projects successfully completed | 15 |
| E11 | Number of people attending training sessions | 100 |

**Table 2: Outcomes**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Outcome** | **Target** |
| Number of volunteering opportunities created as a result of support | 250 |

1. **Funding**

There is a maximum of £1 million UKSPF revenue funding available.

1. **Geographical coverage**

We are looking for a single project to deliver activity across the full North of Tyne Combined Authority area. This includes the following Local Authority areas:

* Newcastle City Council
* Northumberland County Council
* North Tyneside Council

Volunteer opportunities created must be based in the North of Tyne area, and accessible to volunteers who are also North of Tyne residents.

1. **Timescales**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Activity** |
| 22nd March 2023 | Open call published |
| Noon 3rd May 2023 | Deadline for submission of bids |
| Week commencing 8th May 2023 | Assessment Panel meets |
| 1st June 2023 – March 2025 | Delivery of activity |
| 31st March 2025 | All activities completed and budget fully spent |

1. **Data submissions and quarterly monitoring arrangements**

NTCA’s claim process operates quarterly in arrears with programmes able to claim for actual expenditure on programme activities on a quarterly basis after the money has been spent. Applicant organisations are required to cashflow the project prior to receiving the first claim payment; this needs to be factored into programme planning and financial profiles included within the business case. Once a complete claim is received against eligible expenditure as described in the business case, NTCA will pay the grant to programme based on the programme intervention rate. For example, a programme with a total value of £1m with £500,000 NTCA investment would have a 50% intervention rate. If a programme submitted a claim for £200,000 of eligible expenditure, then NTCA would pay 50% of those costs (£100,000). In exceptional circumstances NTCA may agree to adjust the profile of financial drawdown, this should be agreed as part of the contract discussions.

Claims will be paid when:

* a fully completed claim form has been approved by NTCA together with supporting information (including a detailed transaction list from which information will be sampled and evidence of defrayment required);
* any programme specific funding conditions have been complied with;
* financial, output, milestone, risk and progress information has been uploaded correctly onto the NE OPS portal.

Claims will be due one month following the quarter end. For example, a Q1 April-June 2023 claim will be due by 31st July 2023.

1. **Evaluation, Research and Data Collection**

The evaluation of the UKSPF programme is vital as it will help to inform the future direction and longevity of the policy. All participating organisations must commit to participate in research and evaluation by collecting and providing data, taking part in qualitative interviews, completing surveys and allowing their data to be processed and analysed for this purpose.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has recently published [this](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-evaluation/ukspf-evaluation-strategy) guidance setting out their UKSPF evaluation strategy.

# **Annex A: Output and outcome definitions**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-outputs-and-outcomes-definitions-2>

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Output/Outcome** | **Definition** |
| No of volunteering opportunities supported | Number of organised volunteering roles supported as a direct result of the intervention. This includes opportunities for people to volunteer on a regular basis, and opportunities for one-off volunteering. - Formal volunteering refers to those who have given unpaid help via a group, club, or organisation: for example, leading a group, administrative support or befriending or mentoring people. |
| Number of new volunteering opportunities created as a result of support | The number of new organised volunteering roles created as a direct result of the intervention. This includes opportunities for people to volunteer on a regular basis, and opportunities for one-off volunteering.  - Formal volunteering refers to those who have given unpaid help via a group, club, or organisation: for example, leading a group, administrative support or befriending or mentoring people. |
| Number of organisations receiving non-financial support | Number of organisations receiving non-financial support with the intention of improving performance.  Organisations here will either be:  - The end beneficiary is the recipient of the award itself, for example, a local authority, higher education institute or an organisation representing specific sector who may be undertaking a feasibility study.  - An organisation that is an end beneficiary and does not fit into the above description nor can be classified under the business output indicators, for example, a charitable organisation.  - Non-financial support means business advice, guidance, mentoring and training. This must involve some form of direct interaction with members of the enterprises - in other words it cannot be broadcasted advice. Support may be on-going.  - Improved performance means reductions in costs or increases turnover/profit. |
| Number of local events or activities supported | Number of local events or activities supported. An event refers to planned activities. These should fall into the below categories:  - Those related to: (1) Film, TV, Music, Radio (2) Heritage (3) Arts, Museums and Libraries.  - Other activities and events include, for example but not limited to, sports, volunteering, tourism and social action. |
| Number of projects successfully completed | The number of individual projects completed in the last 6 month period.  - Completed means that all project activities have been completed and all further contractual obligations have been met. |
| Number of people attending training sessions | Number of people attending training sessions.  -Training sessions include, but are not limited to: training focusing on digital, management, leadership, collaboration, networking and lower-carbon alternatives skills. |

**Annex B Details of other UKSPF programmes:**

Volunteering and Social Action activity will be expected to add value to, and not duplicate, existing NTCA-supported activity. This includes:

**Community Partnerships**

Community Partnerships are a key element within the UKSPF Community and Place programmes of activity. They will take a place-based approach to supporting activity that increases the strength of communities, relationships, and trust. Investment will support communities to develop local solutions in response to needs and opportunities, which will result in stronger local economies and more prosperous and resilient places.

A place-based Community Partnership will be established in each of the three North of Tyne constituent local authority areas (Newcastle, Northumberland, and North Tyneside).

The purpose of the Partnerships will be to support and co-ordinate a programme of activity in each area. The three objectivesof the Partnerships are

* Connected**:** Increase opportunities for people to come together to build strong and trusting relationships.
* Organised**:** Strengthen the capacity of VCSE sector organisations to meet the needs of the local community.
* Participative**:** Support the community to play a stronger role in shaping and making decisions on local activities and developments, so that change can come from the grassroots.

For more information contact:

* Newcastle: [joanna.lompart.chlasciak@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:joanna.lompart.chlasciak@newcastle.gov.uk)
* Northumberland: [Kevin.Higgins@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Kevin.Higgins@northumberland.gov.uk)
* North Tyneside: [Anya.Lawrence@northtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:Anya.Lawrence@northtyneside.gov.uk)

**Crowdfund North of Tyne**

As part of the UKSPF Community Programmes and Partnerships theme, NTCA will be investing in the existing Crowdfund North of Tyne programme bringing people together to create vibrant communities. Through this programme local people and organisations can pitch their initiatives to NTCA for investment but must also crowdfund part of their costs to demonstrate public support for their project. Ideas are judged on the number of community backers – and not the amount of money raised.

Visit the [Crowdfund North of Tyne website](https://www.spacehive.com/movement/crowdfund-north-of-tyne/projects?status=6&category=0) to find out more or contact [emma.patterson@northoftyne-ca.gov.uk](mailto:emma.patterson@northoftyne-ca.gov.uk)

**Employment Partnerships**

To support the North of Tyne Employability Plan, NTCA has invested in Employment Partnerships in each local authority area. These partnerships help close the unemployment gap by supporting interventions to remove the barriers which make it difficult for people to take up employment and training opportunities and increase awareness and understanding of the local labour market.

Community Partnerships will be expected to actively work with their local Employment Partnership to ensure their proposed activity adds value to, and does not duplicate, existing interventions. This could include sharing local intelligence to help address gaps and identified needs, as well as providing regular progress updates and cross-referrals of participants to ensure they can access the most appropriate support for their needs.

Newcastle: [Chris.Ord@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:Chris.Ord@newcastle.gov.uk)

Northumberland: [kevin.higgins@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:kevin.higgins@northumberland.gov.uk)

North Tyneside: [mark.barrett@northtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:mark.barrett@northtyneside.gov.uk)

**Employment Support**

NTCA is investing UKSPF funding into the VCSE sector, via the People and Skills theme, to deliver employment support to out-of-work residents including intensive wrap-around support. This will include engagement and social inclusion activities supporting those furthest away from existing employability provision as well as intensive one-to-one wraparound support and guidance to identify, address and remove barriers and improve wellbeing, enabling participants to move closer to their goals.

For more information contact [ruth.gaul@northoftyne-ca.gov.uk](mailto:ruth.gaul@northoftyne-ca.gov.uk)

1. [Levelling Up White Paper](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [UK Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)