

## Food Innovation Fund – Guidance Note

### Introduction and purpose

In Waltham Forest, we have a proud history of supporting residents in accessing the good quality, culturally appropriate food that everyone needs to lead happy and healthy lives.

Despite this, many residents in Waltham Forest experience high levels of financial insecurity, which for many has been worsened due to the cost-of-living emergency and inflationary price rises. Many more of our residents are being pushed into food poverty, with **1 in 5 residents now struggling** to make ends meet, **22% of residents buying less food** and some cutting their intake.

The support available to residents would not be possible without the vital infrastructure and safety net created by the Voluntary and Community sector (VCS), from our food banks offering the critical emergency support, to our mutual aid networks and community cafes and kitchens providing spaces to eat and access support. Most notably, members of the VCS-led 'Food Resilience Network' and 'Food Growers Network' are already leading the way in showing us the potential of **innovative practice** and what can happen when we **work together in partnership**.

The **Household Support Fund (HSF)** has been a vital lifeline for the Council to support our VCS in the amazing work they do with residents and the community. However, with the HSF likely discontinuing from April 2024, the need for the Council to support our VCS to become more resilient in crisis has never been more important. We want to support the VCS to take that next step.

### The Food Innovation Fund

In a world of increasing demand against reduced resources, the Council wants to support our VCS to continue to lead the way and become London's most responsive borough in addressing food insecurity. With the Council itself now looking inward at how we can fundamentally transform the way we operate; we want to give our food-VCS the opportunity and resources to do the same.

Waltham Forest Council is therefore proud to launch **the Food Innovation Fund**.

The Food Innovation Fund will offer grant funding to food-related VCS groups who want to disrupt the status quo in Waltham Forest and move towards more innovative practices and a more diversified offer of support for residents.

Innovation does not mean business as usual. It could be turbocharging your capacity and resources to deliver to more residents, including diversifying the type and format of food support you offer. It could mean creating more holistic offers of advice to get to the root of our residents' food insecurity, or it could be moving to more community-led or partnership-based practices. These are just some of the examples of what innovation means.

In the spirit of inspiring greater partnerships across our community, the Council is proud to have worked with OrganicLea and Hornbeam on the design of this fund, alongside Sustain, who are national leading experts in community-food support. *For more information on Sustain please refer to Appendix A.*

### Available funding and pursuing an innovative and partnership-based approach

We are inviting VCS groups to apply for grants of up to **£10,000** per organisation, and up to **£30,000** if applying as a partnership (joint application).

We are particularly interested in **collaborative partnership-based applications** that demonstrate innovation and foster greater connections and partnerships across the existing VCS food landscape.

We are looking for innovative, community-led ideas, such as ones that sit outside of the traditional food bank model and/or those that build a resilient, sustainable community of support based on the foundations of collaboration, mutual aid, and dignity for all.

Please see *Appendix B* for examples on what an innovative and partnership-led approach can look like.

The Innovation Fund is not to fund existing activity, but to support groups looking to make more seismic shifts across **how** they operate, **what** they offer and **who** they work alongside. If you require support with ongoing emergency food provision, then we are happy to explore alternative ways to help with this.

### Information included in these guidance notes

- Link to Q&A session
- Key Dates, including Q&A, application deadline and bid outcome dates.
- Funding options
- Financial arrangements
- Reporting and shared learning
- Costs we will not cover
- Application scoring and key criteria.
- Eligibility
- Governance requirements
- Conditions of Grant
- Support available
- Completing an application for the Food Innovation Fund
- Appendix A - Sustain
- Appendix B - examples of what the Food Innovation Funding could cover

### Q&A Session

If you have any questions or would like to discuss your application, the Council will be hosting a Microsoft Teams online Q&A session:

**Time: 12.30pm -1.30pm**

**Date: Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device.

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

### Key dates

<b>Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2024</b>	Applications close
<b>W/c 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024</b>	Applicants notified of outcomes.
<b>X March 2025</b>	Funded activity to be completed

### Funding options

1. **Up to £10,000 funding** is available for individual groups applying to run a project as a single entity.
2. **Up to £30,000 funding** is available for a maximum of three groups (maximum of £10,000 per organisation) to apply to run a project as a partnership.

**We especially encourage partnership bids between groups - priority will be given to those who apply as a partnership.**

### Financial arrangements

Recipients must be able to receive financial support into a designated business bank account and have the appropriate financial governance in place to manage funds.

The grant offer letter will detail the full terms and conditions we agree with you, including guidance on ensuring that the grant is spent on charitable purposes.

*Given the potential for significant diversity of applications, conditions and schedule of payment will be decided on an individual basis, dependent on delivery plan and funding amount requested.*

## Reporting and shared learning

**Project Initiation:** Grant recipients will be required to attend a project initiation meeting (to take place online on a date in April) to introduce projects and present final plans for how they plan to use the grant funding.

**Progress updates:** grantees will be expected to provide reporting on the progress of the project through periodic check-ins with a member of the Communities Team. Due to the diversity of potential funded projects/programmes/initiatives, reporting metrics will be decided individually. Here are some examples of what we may ask for:

- Progress towards establishment of new service or organisational model and number of residents supported upon foundations
- Impact of staff recruited because of the funding, such as engagement officers/business support workers
- Feedback from stakeholders, for example residents, staff and volunteers, project partners

**End of project report:** After the project ends, funding recipients will be required to participate in a post-funding interview workshop and complete an evaluation survey.

**Participation in events:** You may also be invited to share your work during Council or Sustain-led conferences and events.

## Costs we will not cover

The Food Innovation Fund is designed to be as flexible as possible and cover the widest range of costs to support new and innovative proposals. However, as the fund is seeking to foster **new and innovative practices** as opposed to complementing existing activity, we will not cover costs for existing services. This includes:

- Overheads **already being paid**
- Staff who are **already in post**
- Purchasing of ambient and non-ambient foods for **an existing service**
- Replacing white goods, kitchen items or storage that **is part of existing infrastructure**.

Please visit our Waltham Forest VCS Funding [portal](#) where you can access local and national funding opportunities that may be able to support with costs this funding will not cover.

## Application scoring and key criteria

Below outlines the key criteria applications will be assessed against:

### Your proposal

Your proposal must demonstrate:

- **Innovation:** Proposal is creative and innovative and demonstrates either a new service, way of working, or approach to partnership or governance that represents good value for money, complemented by an achievable delivery plan.
- **Impact:** Proposal demonstrates a positive impact on residents facing food insecurity and/or addressing the root causes of food insecurity (e.g. issues around employment, mental health, and housing support).
- **Sustainability:** Demonstrate how the proposal plans to continue sustainably after the funding period.

### Your organisation's capacity, skills, and experience

Your application should demonstrate the following attributes:

- **Experience working in food:** demonstrable experience working as a VCS food organisation/project (*if a partnership bid, the main applicant must meet this criteria*)
- **Collaboration:** experience of or willingness to work more closely in partnership with other VCS organisations (this applies regardless of whether a single or joint application)
- **Embedded in communities:** demonstrably rooted and trusted within the community and has a clear approach to engaging with and involving residents.
- **Resident knowledge:** demonstrable understanding of service user needs, principally focused towards reducing food insecurity, however additionally the root cause of food insecurity e.g. unemployment.

Applicants must also demonstrate that they already or plan to:

- Offer/continue to offer a healthy and diverse food offering
- Already/plan to work in an environmentally sustainable way

*Please note: our partners at Hornbeam and OrganicLea have offered extensive support on the design of this fund to ensure maximum impact in the community. However, to safeguard their impartiality and avoid any conflicts of interest, neither organisation will be involved in the scoring of applications.*

## Eligibility

### Types of organisations

Applications will be accepted from any constituted voluntary or community group working with residents in the London Borough of Waltham Forest.

Eligible organisations	Ineligible organisations
Voluntary or community organisations	Individuals (non-registered)
Registered charities or CIOs	Sole traders
Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG)	Organisations not providing services for residents living or residing in London Borough of Waltham Forest
Community interest companies (CIC)	
Community Benefit Societies	
Social enterprises	
Constituted groups	

Organisations are only able to apply for a grant if they operate on a wholly not-for-profit and/or charitable basis and that the appropriate measures are in place to demonstrate this. The following criteria, regardless of organisation type, must all be met:

- 100% of surplus funds are reinvested into the organisation and no profits are made.
- Executive directors operate in a voluntary capacity and not as paid shareholders.
- There is a 'no profit distribution' clause and/or an 'asset lock' in the governing document, unless this is already a statutory component of the organisational structure (e.g. CICs already have a statutory asset lock and therefore nothing additional is needed)

## Governance requirements

### Financial controls

All grantees must have a bank account in their organisation's name (this cannot be a personal account) and the necessary finance and business governance controls in place to manage funding.

### Effective resource management

We expect your staff and/or volunteers to have the appropriate training, experience and/or qualifications in place that satisfy the requirements of your business – any staff and/or volunteers working directly with food should be fully trained to handle food and you should have the appropriate policies for them to follow in place.

Your organisation must also have a Safeguarding policy in place.

## Food Hygiene certification

If you operate a service that necessitates the appropriate Food Hygiene (or any other) certifications, you must have these in place.

## Insurance

Recipients must hold the following level of insurance:

- **Employers Liability** – £5,000,000 for any one claim or series of claims arising out of any one occurrence.
- **Public Liability** – £5,000,000 for any one claim or series of claims arising out of any one occurrence.
- **Professional Indemnity (if applicable\*)** – £2,000,000 for any one claim or series of claims arising out of any one occurrence.
- **Buildings and/or Contents insurance** - £1,000,000 for building and contents insurance

*\*Professional Indemnity is only necessary if your project includes provision of training or advice. If you are working with partners who provide these services, they must have these insurances in place.*

## Conditions of grant

- This grant cannot be used to fund any shortfall in existing service delivery.
- Funding cannot be used for any back-dated costs encountered before the start of the funded initiative.
- This is a one-off amount and there is no assurance provided for any additional or continuing funds.
- A clear audit trail and record of spend must be maintained as agreed in accordance with good financial governance processes.
- The space you are using, if any (whether your own space or that of another organisation), must have either a Health and Safety policy in place or a suitably recorded health and safety arrangements, including fire safety arrangements along with plant and equipment maintenance (where applicable).
- Applications will be reviewed individually, and applicants may be asked to provide other relevant policies depending on the proposal.
- A written risk assessment (if applicable) to address any significant hazards of the space and surrounding rooms/area

## Support available

Grantees will be expected to join the Waltham Forest Food Partnership upon launch and will also have access to further support.

## Completing an application for the Food Innovation Fund

All groups that meet the eligibility criteria can apply for the Food Innovation Fund.

The application form is split into 5 parts:

### **Part 1: Your organisation and lead applicant information**

This part of the application form requests basic information about your organisation.

For joint applications, the lead applicant for this fund **MUST** have demonstrable experience working within the food space. You will be asked to demonstrate your experience later in the application.

Partnering organisations details should be captured on the Partnering Applicants Form

### **Part 2. Your experience to date offering food support**

This part of the application form requests information on your current area of work and evidence of expertise in food support. This should include any examples where your organisation has gone above and beyond to support residents facing food insecurity.

### **Part 3: Your Innovative Proposal**

This part of the application form requests further information about your food innovation proposal. If this is a joint application, it should describe planned roles and responsibilities.

### **Part 4: Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, and Sustainability**

This part of the application form requests information on your approach to advancing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and sustainability.

### Part 5: Activity Timeline

This part of the application form requests an activity timeline for your project including project start and end date as well as a list of proposed key activities.

### Part 6: Budget

This part of the application form requests information on how much funding you are applying for and whether any of the budget will go towards funding advice services.

Partnering organisations budget and breakdown should be captured on the Partnering Applicants Form

## Appendix A - Sustain

Sustain is an alliance of organisations and communities working together for a better system of food, farming, and fishing and cultivating the movement for change. They advocate food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity. Sustain leads and collaborates on a number of programmes addressing food insecurity and promoting good food for all, including Good Food for All Londoners, the London Food Poverty project, and Bridging the Gap, as well as the Sustainable Food Places programme.

<https://www.sustainweb.org/what-we-do/>

## Appendix B – Examples of Food Innovation

Outlined below are some (non-exhaustive) examples of what the Food Innovation Funding could cover. You will note these are all new and novel proposals that diverge from the support each example currently offers:

**Example 1** - A food bank, community food growing project and a mental health support charity apply in partnership to improve residents' access to nutritious food and wellbeing support. The partnership sets up collaborations between projects, including growing produce for the food bank, using the growing and food bank spaces to host wellbeing and mental health support sessions.

**Example 2** – A community group currently running a food bank identifies an opportunity to open a community pantry and applies for funding to cover running costs and a case worker support for one year. The community pantry side of the food bank charges £5 for £30 worth of food (higher charge for 'solidarity' members who can afford more), offering a space for pantry members to socialise over refreshments. The pantry sources food from a mix of surplus food organisations and bulk-purchased staples, with a suggestion board for other items members would like to source.

**Example 3** – A community space currently hosting a food bank and community pantry diversifies its community offer and income streams by investing in an update to its community kitchen space to prepare its use for cookery sessions, community meal prep and renting out the space to micro enterprises and corporate teambuilding events. They hire a kitchen coordinator to promote and support community and corporate uses of the space.

**Example 4** – A community pantry offering a mix of fresh, frozen, and ambient items diversifies its supply chains to include local and independent producers and suppliers, including local growing projects and other community food enterprises. They recruit a Business Outreach and Engagement Officer to engage with new ethical suppliers and arrange purchasing of surplus and hosting of members visits and activities, for example harvest and group lunch sessions.