

DC CUA Thriving Futures for Young People Small Grants Fund Guidance (2026-2027)

Description of funding scheme

Overview

The Devon County Civic University Agreement (DC CUA) Thriving Futures for Young People Small Grants Fund will help to accelerate delivery of evidence-based initiatives for young people across Devon. The programme will directly support the ambitions of the [DC CUA Thriving Futures for Young People Mission](#) and the Devon County Council's (DCC) [Brighter Futures: An Employment, Education and Training Strategy for Devon](#) by supporting the implementation of research findings, piloting and scaling proven interventions, strengthening delivery capacity and helping to shape regional policy that supports and improves outcomes for young people in Devon.

A total fund of £30,000 is available and applicants can apply for funding from £2,000 up to £15,000.

Objectives

Primary Objective

To invest collaboratively in small, high impact projects that deliver measurable improvements in opportunities, wellbeing, and long-term life chances for young people in Devon.

Secondary Objectives

1. Enhance collaboration across the Young People's Delivery Group
2. Create a repeatable, scalable model for joint civic investment
3. Enable University knowledge to contribute to projects which support young people in Devon
4. Build momentum behind existing evidence and ongoing initiatives rather than commissioning new research.

Eligibility criteria

Applications will be accepted from partnerships including at least one of the following:

- A member of staff from the University of Exeter
- A VCSE organisation (constituted community group, CIC, or charity) operating in Devon County Council administered areas
- A secondary or post-16 education or training provider for young people under 25 in Devon County Council administered areas

Scope

We are seeking to fund projects that align with at least one of the ambitions of the [DC CUA](#)

Thriving Futures for Young People Mission:

- **Ambition 1:** Increase opportunities and improve social mobility for young people across Devon and the South West
- **Ambition 2:** Ensure Inclusive Access to Education
- **Ambition 3:** Widen access to HE
- **Ambition 4:** Improve Mental Health of our young people

By either:

- Translating *research findings into practice;
- Piloting or scaling evidence-based interventions; or
- Delivering capacity building activities which support sustained delivery. E.g.
 - Evaluation activities
 - Co-development of resources or toolkits

*Research findings may be informed by local, regional, national or international studies which may or may not have been conducted by the application partners.

If you are unsure whether your project is suitable for this fund, we encourage you to check your idea against the assessment criteria provided below. If you are still uncertain, you can contact Lindsey Anderson at l.j.anderson@exeter.ac.uk.

Application process

All applications must be submitted through the following online Microsoft Form:

[DC CUA Thriving Futures for Young People Small Grants Fund Application Form 26-27 – Fill out form](#)

The application deadline is **6pm on 29th May 2026**. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

Key Dates

Date	Item
25 th March 2026	Funding announcement
29 th May 6pm 2026	Application deadline
12 th June 2026	Notice of awards to applicants
18 th July 2027	Awardee spending deadline
28 th August 2027	Awardee reporting deadline

Selection process

Each application will be assessed against the eligibility criteria and then reviewed by a panel comprising representatives from the University of Exeter, Devon County Council, and experts working with Young People in Devon.

The applications will be reviewed according to the following assessment criteria:

Assessment Criteria

Criterion	Description
Partnership	The project involves appropriate partners, and each partner has a clear and suitable role.
Within Scope	<p>The project aligns with at least one of the ambitions of the DC CUA</p> <p>Thriving Futures for Young People Mission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ambition 1: Increase opportunities and improve social mobility for young people across Devon and the South West ➤ Ambition 2: Ensure Inclusive Access to Education ➤ Ambition 3: Widen access to HE ➤ Ambition 4: Improve Mental Health of our young people <p>By either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Translating research into practice; ➤ Testing or expanding evidence-based approaches or interventions; or ➤ Capacity building activities that support sustained, long-term delivery. <p>The application clearly explains how the project will lead to better outcomes for young people in Devon.</p>
Project Feasibility	The project has a clear and realistic plan, with milestones and expected results that match the time and funding available.
Value for Money	The budget is sensible, transparent, and shows that funds will be used responsibly.
Ethical Considerations	The application demonstrates thoughtful consideration of ethical issues and how they will be managed.
Evaluation	The application describes an appropriate and proportionate evaluation plan which focuses on concise, meaningful reflections that demonstrate reach, learning, and impact.
Legacy	<p>The application identifies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ potential for follow-on activities and/or long-term impact beyond the funding period; and ➤ if applicable, has identified progression opportunities for the young people following the duration of the project.

Budget

We are seeking thoughtfully scoped budgets that reflect good value and clear priorities.

Funds *can* be spent on:

- Costs directly linked to delivery, such as venue hire, learning resources, and training materials.
- Paying for partner, facilitator, or community researcher time.
- Paying for a contracted researcher (e.g., Research Assistant, Research Fellow) or Student Intern.
- Participant Payments when deemed appropriate (e.g. for thanking young people for their time in a focus group).
- Domestic travel.

Funds *cannot* be spent on:

- Paying for University of Exeter or Devon County Council core funded staff, topping-up existing salaries or covering UoE postgraduate studentship fees or estates and indirect costs.
- Direct interventions or therapy for children, young people, staff, or parents/carers.
- Extending an existing funded service or provision.
- Activities that are funded under existing grants or funding.
- Projects which are entirely research.
- Subsistence or accommodation costs.
- Purchase of IT hardware.

Please note:

It will be the responsibility of the lead applicant to manage the budget. Depending on the nature of the project, funding will either be:

- Granted to the lead non-university applicant, along with a signed collaboration agreement; or
- Managed by the lead University of Exeter applicant within the university via a unique budget code.

Ethics

If you plan to use some of this funding to undertake research with people as participants, you will need to obtain ethical approval and factor the time required for this into the proposal.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and reporting will be appropriate to the size of the grant and the scale of funded activity, and will focus on concise, meaningful reflections that demonstrate reach, learning, and impact.

Questions

If you have questions about the Fund or the application process, please contact l.j.anderson@exeter.ac.uk.