

Belfast
Harbour
**COMMUNITY
AWARDS**
2026



HARBOURING CONNECTIONS
COMMUNITY AWARDS

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Belfast Harbour

HARBOURING CONNECTIONS COMMUNITY AWARDS

Harbouring Connections Community Awards are designed to support the work of grassroots community organisations and charities.

The Harbouring Connections Community Awards will be given to projects in which two or more grassroots, community embedded, not-for-profit organisations with a charity number or a governing body affiliation, work together on the creation and delivery of the project or enhance their organisational resilience.

Belfast Harbour is committed to supporting projects that help to transform our community, create vibrant places and help local people thrive.

Objectives of Harbouring Connections support:

1. Bringing people together - this can be different age groups, different communities, people with different skills and interests to create a shared understanding and enhance life experience.
2. Create resilience within organisations through sharing best practice, volunteer training and experience or widening catchment areas for participants in a programme.

Assessment Criteria

All proposals received will be assessed using the following criteria:

- How does the proposal align with Belfast Harbour's Community Engagement priorities as outlined by the award categories?
- What positive change will partnership deliver for the organisations involved?
- What positive change will the activity deliver for individuals and/or communities?
- What benefits will the project provide to your local community?
- Delivery of value in relation to outcomes vs. costs will be assessed.
- Is the proposal innovative and original?
- Is it possible to evaluate impacts?
- Detailed costs and details of funding from other sources must be provided with every community fund application.

Applications will be scored against the above criteria, with available funding allocated in order of merit.

Organisations must submit a detailed proposal about the project, including costs, and complete the Belfast Harbour application form for the request to be considered. They should also include a list of each organisation's Board members and audited accounts.

What support is available?

The Harbouring Connections Community Awards Fund will provide two grants of up to £5,000 each.

Who Can Apply?

Any grassroots, community embedded, not-for-profit organisation with a charity number or a governing body affiliation may apply. Individuals and businesses are not eligible, and we do not support projects with religious or political objectives. The applications are evaluated by the Community Award Management Team to determine funding allocation.

The Harbouring Connections Community Award Fund is open to projects targeting the following areas and which, must be based in Northern Ireland.

Awards categories

- Supporting Employability and Skills
- Supporting our Environment
- Building Vibrant Communities

What do these Categories cover?

Supporting Employability and Skills Creating a skilled workforce, both for now and the future

- Initiatives supporting skills development in NI.
- Give support to those who face significant barriers to work.
- Digital Skills.

Supporting our Environment Supporting a sustainable environment for current and future generations

- Working with partners to deliver environmental education.
- Increase and improve the level of biodiversity activity occurring within the project area.

Building Vibrant Communities Addressing social issues to improve local communities

- Supporting the empowerment of young people and isolated groups to achieve their potential.
- Sustaining our rich and varied maritime heritage.
- Development of more sustainable community organisations through partnership.

Shortlisting

Process

All applications will be shortlisted based on the criteria, and Belfast Harbour will aim to communicate a decision within six weeks of each funding deadline.

Publicity

Applicants should be prepared to participate in media and PR activity surrounding successful projects, in both the local press and in Fund communications.



How organisations can apply?

The application form can be found on the Belfast Harbour website - [Belfast Harbour | Community Awards](#)

In addition, applicants may be required to complete a second stage process. This may include a request for further information, a visit to the project and/or a meeting with a Belfast Harbour representative.

Applications for this year's Awards are accepted from April 29th - May 29th 2026. Applications made outside of these periods will not be accepted. Allocated funding for Harbours Connections Community Awards will total £10K.

Tips for working together

It is essential to discuss how you will work together, defining roles, responsibilities and contractual or other legal obligations, and to get this in writing in a joint working agreement.

Working in collaboration requires shared values, such as trust and aligned objectives. Even where you have a pre-existing relationship and trust on which to build, preparation, planning and a written agreement can help avoid misunderstandings.

It may be helpful for one organisation to act as the accountable body for the receipt of funding.

It is important that staff and volunteers understand why their organisation is working collaboratively and have an insight to partners' aims and values. Time spent developing an understanding of partners' culture can help people from different organisations to work together.

Which partner will take this role?

You should consider how you explain the joint project in external materials if these are necessary as part of the partnership. It should be agreed prior to application who will manage any administrative tasks such as risk assessment, engagement with participants etc as necessary, depending on the partnership activity.

Charities must account for their collaborative projects in line with the Charity Commission requirements and describe the funding arrangements transparently in their annual accounts.

Application Eligibility

1. Funding will only be given to organisations that have charitable status or affiliated to their governing body.
2. Applicant organisations must have been established for a minimum of 24 months and be able to demonstrate financial records for a minimum of 12 months.
3. Applicants must have an organisational bank account to make payment to.
4. Preference will be given to applications and projects that benefit all sections of the community, regardless of age, race, gender, disability, sexual orientation or religion.
5. Harbours Connections Community Awards will not be awarded to organisations which have statutory responsibilities such as local authorities, hospitals, surgeries, clinics or schools, unless it is for a project which is over and above the core activities and statutory obligations.
6. Applicants must provide details of programme feasibility, e.g. level of interest, expected number of participants or intended outcomes/ monitoring.
7. Applicants cannot be individuals.
8. General funding for medical purposes will not be supported.
9. Harbours Connections Community Awards will not be awarded retrospectively to projects that have already been carried out or have already commenced.
10. Harbours Connections Community Awards funds will not be awarded for the purchase of land and buildings.
11. Harbours Connections Community Awards funds will not be made available for salaries (including salaries and overheads).
12. Harbours Connections Community Awards funds will not normally be awarded for general repair and maintenance of buildings, although a specific item of community benefit may be allowed, such as security or adaptations for disabled use.
13. Harbours Connections Community Awards funding will not be made to political parties, commercial organisations or those which are working for profit.
14. Harbours Connections Community Awards funds will not be made available for recurrent expenditure or running costs.
15. A maintenance plan may be required for projects which involve the creation of a physical asset e.g. a garden requiring ongoing maintenance.
16. All successful organisations who receive funding from Belfast Harbour Community Awards are required to complete an evaluation report which is to be provided following the completion of their project. The final 20% of funding will be paid upon receipt of the evaluation report.
17. The following types of events/projects are considered to be ineligible:
 - Programmes which support political or religious objectives
 - Programmes that denigrate, exclude or offend minority community groups
 - Programmes that may present a hazard to the community
 - Programmes that create environmental hazards
 - Programmes that may be perceived to be controversial (at Belfast Harbour's discretion)
 - Programmes offered by advocacy, lobby or special interest groups whose mandate is to influence government policy





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