

NIO Launches Engagement for Change Fund to Empower Community and Voluntary Sector

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The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) has today, Friday 24 April, launched the Engagement for Change Fund.

The Northern Ireland Office has today, Friday 24 April, launched the Engagement for Change Fund. This is a three-year, £100,000 initiative designed to significantly bolster the capacity of the community and voluntary sector across Northern Ireland.

The Fund directly supports the sector's vital role by providing targeted leadership and advocacy development, enabling organisations to more effectively champion their crucial work and the communities they serve.

It acknowledges the profound and diverse expertise the voluntary sector has cultivated through decades of on-the-ground experience and successful intervention delivery.

Driving Policy Influence and Inclusive Democracy

The primary objective of the Engagement for Change Fund is to foster a more resilient and inclusive democracy. By enhancing the sector's ability to influence and inform policy-makers, the Fund will secure a stronger voice for civil society at the strategic Governmental level.

A key pillar of this initiative is dedicated to increasing the representation of women in the public forum. The programme will focus on upskilling and empowering women to confidently and effectively engage with strategic Government policy-making processes, with a clear mandate to achieve a demonstrable, measurable increase in their visibility and participation in public debate.

Delivery and Application Details

The total £100,000 funding will be allocated to a single delivery organisation over the three-year period. The successful organisation will be required to execute a comprehensive development programme structured around six core areas of support, including strategic communication and advocacy training, navigating the complex policy landscape, and advanced media and digital engagement skills.

Application guidance, forms, and budget/delivery templates are available below.

To apply, you must submit an application form, budget/delivery plan template (as provided below) and organisation accounts to community.projects@nio.gov.uk by 5pm Friday 22 May 2026.

Applications submitted after this deadline will not be accepted.

Application Guidance: Engagement for Change (PDF, 317 KB, 12 pages)

Engagement for Change Fund Application Form (MS Word Document, 465 KB)

Engagement for Change Fund Budget & Programme Plan Tool (MS Excel Spreadsheet, 186 KB)

EXAMPLE Engagement for Change Fund Budget & Programme Plan Tool (MS Excel Spreadsheet, 192 KB)

Engagement for Change Fund FAQs (PDF, 273 KB, 8 pages)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nio-launches-engagement-for-change-fund-to-empower-community-and-voluntary-sector>