

Grants Panel

Recruitment Pack



Introduction

Thank you for your interest in joining our Grants Panel.

Our panel members are hugely important to the integrity of our grants work and bring enormous value to the awards we make, through their careful and thoughtful considerations.

If you have a genuine interest in the charitable sector in Buckinghamshire, and of the issues facing our residents, I would urge you to consider joining our Panels. You don't have to have experience of grant-making, we will guide you through the process, all we ask is that you bring an open mind, your life experience and knowledge of your local communities.

Mark, Heart of Bucks Trustee



What does the panel do?

Our Panels help us to make sure that our grants are awarded thoughtfully and fairly and achieve the best possible outcomes for Buckinghamshire people.

Applications for Heart of Bucks (HoB) funding are initially assessed by members of the staff Grants Team. This involves a robust and comprehensive due diligence process, designed not only to test that applications meet the necessary criteria, but to closely examine the viability and sustainability of organisations making the applications.

However, the staff team are also involved in providing advice and support to the applicants to help them submit the best possible application. Therefore, to ensure that the final grant award decisions are independent of this advice and support, the award of grants is undertaken by a panel of independent volunteers who are vital to the integrity of our processes.

Ultimately, responsibility for all HOB activity rests with our Board of Trustees. However, the Board delegates authority to the Grants Panel to enable it to make a range of awards on behalf of the organisation.

The Grants Panels provide independent scrutiny of all applications across up to 40 different funds and are the decision makers on those applications. This independent scrutiny is vital to the integrity of our robust governance process.

What would I be doing?

You will be working with your fellow grants panel members to:

- Check that applications are eligible in accordance with our Grant Making Policy and fit the relevant fund criteria
- Consider whether the required grant investment would achieve the intended outcomes from the funding programme
- Ensure that guidelines and assessment criteria have been applied consistently and equitably.
- Make decisions on the relative merits of a range of applications, and, particularly where there is competition for funding, reaching considered decisions on which projects will receive grant funding.
- Identify any additional conditions that should apply to an award
- Identify (as far as possible) reasons for rejection of an application so the staff team can give constructive support to the applicants to improve future funding requests.

There is more information about the role in our Role Description. {where?}

Why do people join our panels?

There's probably as many reasons as there are panel members, but the ones that we most commonly hear are:

- Giving their time to support local charities do good works
- Maintaining their interest in the issues affecting our communities
- Hearing, sharing and understanding views with others on the panel
- Making a difference



"It is very rewarding to be able to make grants to support the charitable sector in Buckinghamshire and celebrate the wonderful volunteers involved in so many different aspects of life. I recognise my small part in trying to promote the needs of the voluntary sector and to encourage Philanthropy throughout the county." Lynda, Chair of the grants committee

Who are on the Panels?

Our grants panels are drawn from a pool of 20+ volunteers and are chaired by a Trustee of Heart of Bucks. In some cases, they will work alongside representatives of the organisation or person providing the funding.

We recruit our members via an open recruitment process and are always looking for new members who have a genuine interest in the charitable sector in Buckinghamshire and of the issues facing our communities.

All members are invited to take part in our main panels, whilst individual members with particular specialist knowledge or interest will also be invited to take part in our smaller sub-panels (more on this on p.7).



"I have really enjoyed being part of the different panels, and consider it a privilege to be involved in distributing the funding which is so vital to the voluntary sector."

Stephanie, grants committee member

How much time will I need to give?

It's up to you how many panels you'd like to be involved with. The main grants panel currently meet four times a year (February, May, September, November), and generally consider around 20-40 applications each time. But we also hold up to eight smaller sub panels per year, each looking at 5-15 applications.

On average Panel Members give around 6-12 days per year to the role, depending on which panels they join. We ask that you are available for a minimum of one main panel meeting plus one other sub-panel OR two main panel meetings per year, plus periodic training/workshop days. But you can of course join as many panels as you have time for.

Meetings are usually held in person at Heart of Bucks offices in Aylesbury but will periodically take place at other venues around Buckinghamshire and some have virtual attendance via Teams too. The bigger meetings run for up to three hours and usually take place during the workday, but we are currently exploring other models to make the opportunity available to a broader range of people.

Appointments are for an initial term of three years, which may be renewed for a maximum of two further terms of three years.

FAQS

Will I have to deal directly with the groups who are applying, about my decisions?

No, you won't. All communications are handled by the staff team, and we don't expect that you would be subject to "lobbying" by applicant groups. However, as part of our efforts to increase our own accountability and transparency, we hope to publish brief bios of panel members on our website.

Can I visit the groups who are funded?

Yes, absolutely! We encourage our panel members to get out to see the impact of their grants decisions in action if possible, but if you don't have time, its not a problem. We regularly publish impact stories of the good work that is being funded, so you'll have plenty of opportunity to read about the lovely outcomes of your decisions.

"I enjoy reviewing the various projects and grant applications and gaining an insight into the massive amount of work which is undertaken in the voluntary sector in Buckinghamshire. It is rewarding to be able to assist in this work by recommending funding where funds are available and the grants panel can reach a consensus on the need to fund projects in order to make a difference in the community." Laurie, grants committee member

FAQs

I work for a group that applies for funding. Can I still join the panel?

Yes, and being a panel member will not prevent you from applying for funding, but you will have to declare your interest and remove yourself from the decision-making process. If we are running a competition-style programme we may choose not to invite you for that panel.

Do I have to have experience of grant-making?

No previous experience of grants making is necessary for this role. We have an induction and training programme that will help you get up to speed, and you will have the support of many experienced panel members to help you find your own voice.

FAQs

Are you looking for anyone in particular?

We are open to the broadest possible range of volunteers as we believe this give us the best, most robust and informed basis for good decision making.

However, we particularly welcome applications from groups who are under-represented in our current membership – this is likely to include people who have been part of user-led groups of all kinds, and understand their funding needs, people from minority ethnic communities, from the LGBTQ+ community, and people with lived experience of disability.



“Our grant panel volunteers are essential to helping us distribute grants. The panel members provide valuable insight, and each bring a unique take on the applications we receive. Members can make a real difference in Buckinghamshire while meeting like-minded individuals on the panels. If you’re passionate about Buckinghamshire and charity apply today!”

Henry Allmand, CEO Heart of Bucks