

Ayrshire Rural and Islands Ambition (ARIA) Fund



Main Fund Applicant Guidance

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V1 May 2024

1. Introduction

Welcome to the Ayrshire Rural and Islands Ambition (ARIA) Fund. The fund replaces previous EU rural development fund LEADER and forms part of the Scottish Government's Community Led Local Development (CLLD) programme. It involves similar bottom-up decision making to Ayrshire LEADER, delivered by representatives from the local area: the Local Action Group (LAG).

Fund Structure

Body	Role
ARIA Fund LAG	Fund leads, decide on all aspects of fund including grant allocation.
South Ayrshire Council	Lead Partner, administers funds/manages staff on behalf of LAG.

This document provides applicant guidance for the main ARIA fund process and **should be read carefully before applying.**

2. Pre-Application Engagement

Applicants must **engage with the ARIA Fund staff before applying.** Applications from applicants who have not committed to this step **will not be accepted.**

Applicants can do this via the ARIA expression of interest form. The **eligibility criteria** should be read prior to committing to this step. The expression of interest form is available at www.southayrshire.gov.uk/ariafund

Further information will be given in information sessions or, where applicable, 1:1 slots.

Applicants are **strongly advised** to submit a **draft application** to the staff team **before the closing date** for review. **Reviews may not be available after the closing date.**

3. Key Dates

- **WC 03-06-2024**, launch of fund.
- **09-08-2024, midnight**, closing date.
- **Early September** - applications assessed.
- **Mid September** – grant award letters issued.
NB: Project spend should not be incurred before this. **Please therefore do not plan for project spend before start October 2024.**
- **28-02-25** – final date for project claims submission.

4. Grant Specifications

1. Grant size - **£5k to £50k.**
2. Grant requests of **up to 90% of total eligible project costs** will be accepted (at least 10% match funding is required).
3. **Match funding** should:
 - Account for at least 10% of total eligible project costs.

- Be in 'cash', not 'in-kind'.
- Be in place at time of application.

4. Grant Payments

- **Community/third sector organisations:** grant will be paid in a 50% upfront payment with two payments of approximately 25% in arrears. The final 25% will be paid when all valid cost evidence is provided.
- **Businesses:** grant will be paid in arrears, with the final 25% paid when all valid cost evidence is provided.

In both cases, payment of the final 25% is further dependent upon a successful monitoring visit by a LAG representative where physical items have been procured and fulfilment of all reporting requirements. This is likely to occur in mid-March 2025.

5. Assessment

Applications will be assessed by the ARIA Fund staff in a technical check, which covers eligibility, fit with fund priorities, costs alignment, submission of supporting documents etc. Those with best fit will be forwarded to the LAG for assessment.

6. Eligibility

Eligible Area

The eligible area is rural and islands (Arran and Cumbrae) Ayrshire defined by the eligible area map available at <https://tinyurl.com/LAGArea23>

Please use the finder tool at the top right of the map to check that your **project falls within the eligible area.**

Please note, the organisation **does not have to be registered within the Ayrshire eligible area if delivering a project within it** to be eligible.

Fund Priorities

Projects must demonstrate fit with at least one of the **ARIA Fund priorities** and at least one of the **overarching Scottish Government goal/priorities for 2024/2025**. Applicants must select **only the two most applicable from each category** (ARIA/SG) on the application form. **Any more and the application may be penalised.**

ARIA Priority	Objective
Community Wealth Building (CWB) Please refer to ARIA Community Wealth Building Guidance at www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/ariafund	To support communities, organisations and enterprises to apply/engage with CWB.*
Quality of Life	To support communities to maintain a good quality of life for all age groups/capabilities.
Community Led Tourism (CLT) Only available to third sector/ community organisations	To support communities to have full ownership and management of their local tourism experience, ensuring the economic benefits of tourism stay within their community.

Enterprise	Rural Enterprise including Community Enterprise	To support rural/community enterprises, especially in key sectors** to develop and grow.
	Rural Jobs	To support local people to access jobs closer to home with a higher wage bracket, created/safeguarded by rural/community enterprises.
Net Zero Please refer to Net Zero for Communities guidance at www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/ariafund	Climate Change Mitigation	To support projects that contribute to/escalate progress towards net zero ambitions through lowering of carbon emissions.
	Just Transition	To support job transition to the green economy, with rural/community enterprise.
	Climate Change Adaptation	To develop the region’s natural assets which would enhance carbon sequestration/flood attenuation/ biodiversity/local supply chain development***

* Community Wealth Building is about retaining wealth, jobs and enterprises in the local area to create more sustainable and resilient rural and island economies. ARIA aims to support communities, organisations and enterprises to apply Community Wealth Building approaches to their activities.

**Eg: tourism, food & drink, accommodation, social care.

***ARIA will support principal funders eg: NatureScot, Peatland Action on carbon sequestration activities where applicable.

Please see the **appendix** for project types/examples associated with the ARIA priorities.

Scottish Government Priorities 2024/2025
Eradicating child poverty
Growing the economy
Tackling the climate emergency
Improving public services

Eligible Organisations

- Community groups/third sector organisations with a constitution/incorporation. Those without this may be able to apply through a parent/sponsor organisation who are constituted/incorporated. Accounts, bank details etc should also be from this parent organisation.

- Businesses
- Farms
- Organisations of up to 49 FTE employees. Large organisations of 50 full time employees and over are ineligible.

It should be noted that micro business (up to ten full time employees) applications will be prioritised by the fund but applications from small businesses (up to forty nine full time employees) will be considered, on a case-by-case basis.

Eligible Activity

The ARIA fund has approximately £420,000 to allocate in 2024/2025 with both revenue and capital funding available.

Examples of Eligible Revenue Spend

- Technical Studies or feasibility studies to facilitate a future project, **where the outcome/destination of the study is fully determined/specified**. Training. ARIA has a focus on skills development so training is important. Training should be **specific to the ARIA Fund/listed Scottish Government priorities (section 6)**, and not form part of primary/secondary/tertiary education programmes.
- Event costs.
- Market research/specialist support/marketing support.
- Costs of promotional activities, eg: awareness raising/promotion of a service (eg: energy awareness/active travel/cycle hire facilities).
- **Staff costs** – salaries/National Insurance(NI)/pension costs for staff employed on the project described in the application. This can be existing or new staff.

Costs will go on gross salary + % of this for NI/pension as outlined below so **you must use these figures for your calculations:**

	NI	Pension
Staff on Hourly Rate	4%	1.4%
Salaried Staff	9%	3%

Please note:

- In line with **Fair Work First requirements¹**, staff should be paid at least the real Living Wage, and appropriate channels for an effective workers' voice should be evidenced in any organisation with twenty-one employees or more.
 - Where staff are doing less than 100% of hours on the ARIA project appropriate records, e.g timesheets must be kept and be made available for inspection by ARIA.
- Volunteer costs

¹ Required of public sector grants from 1st July 23, <https://www.gov.scot/policies/fair-and-inclusiveworkplaces/public-sector-grants-and-funding/>

- Running costs – where **specific** to the project described and are **over and above normal running costs**. The size of the project as a proportion of mainstay work should be used to determine the proportion of running costs applied for, and this should be detailed (**clearly**) at application.

Examples of Eligible Capital Spend

- IT Equipment
- Vehicles
- Plant/ Machinery
- Furniture, Fixtures and Fittings
- Green Energy Equipment
- Improvement to/expansion of existing buildings/facilities
- Improving land, e.g.: landscaping works, playgrounds etc.

Capital spend will be permitted where **statutory regulatory requirements** eg: Planning/building warrant/listed buildings consent **are already in place** or are **demonstrated as not needed**.

Statutory Regulatory Requirements

If any eligible project spend requires **statutory regulatory requirements** eg: Planning/building warrant/listed buildings consent or events licence, this must be **submitted along with your application**. If not required, evidence of this must be provided.

Ineligible Activity

- Expenditure committed prior to the ARIA grant award letter (successful applicants) - expected mid-September 2024.
- Statutory duties.
- Delivery of courses which form part of primary/secondary/tertiary (eg: colleges, university) education programmes.
- Staff not directly attributable to the ARIA project delivery.
- Staffing maternity/paternity/adoption pay/statutory sick pay.
- Payments for unfunded pensions.
- Bonus or commission payments.
- Gifts and hospitality.
- Primary production of food.
- Purchase of land/buildings.
- Retention on 'capitalisation' items – part-payment withheld for assurance of quality/performance until after the project end date.
VAT reclaimable by the applicant.
- Financial charges– bank/credit card/loan charges/foreign exchange commission/loses etc.
- Costs involved in winding up a company/organisation.

7. Supporting Documents

The following applicable supporting documentation must be supplied with your application.

Document
Constitution/governing document**.
Incorporation document**.
<p>Accounts**: Community/third sector organisations: latest year of accounts (audited/examined if thresholds reached). Businesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latest year of accounts (audited/examined according to regulator thresholds). • Sole traders – latest year of accounts plus evidence of HMRC account with Unique Tax Reference (UTR). • Management accounts to bridge gap between date of above/present. • Business plan in certain circumstances.
<p>3 months' bank statements**.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the account the grant would be paid into. • As close to the date of application as possible.
Evidence that match funding is in place**.
VAT certificate where applicable, evidence not needed where not**.
1 piece of cost evidence for costs £500 - £1,000
3 quotes for eligible costs >£1000
Salaries
<p>1. Existing jobs: payslips. Where Real Living Wage requirement would alter salary, this must be shown clearly on Value for Money form with anticipated increase if desired.</p>
2. New Jobs: benchmarking x 2 + proposed salary
3. Statement on provision of effective workers' voice eg: trade union for staff with evidence where applicable.
Projects with Capital Elements
1. Valid lease/title deeds, in place at least 5 years post project completion.
2. Where lease, landlord's permission to carry out works.
3. Evidence Statutory Regulatory Requirements eg: planning/building warrant/event licence in place/not needed.
Need/demand of project – maximum 2 documents.
Local support- where available please provide any letters of support
ARIA Equal Opportunities Form

**From parent/sponsor organisation where a smaller organisation applies through this route.

Appendix

Priority	Objective	Examples (Not Limited To)
<p>Community Wealth Building (CWB)</p> <p>Please refer to ARIA Community Wealth Building</p> <p>Guidance at www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/ariafund</p>	<p>To support communities, organisations and enterprises to engage with CWB.*</p>	<p>Buying goods, services or produce locally and developing stronger local supply chains or a circular economy;</p> <p>Feasibility studies for organisations who want to use / take ownership of local land or property assets for community or enterprise use;</p> <p>Organisations who want to grow or develop an existing generative enterprise model (e.g. employee owned business, social / community enterprise) to enhance their social or environmental purpose.</p>
<p>Quality of Life</p>	<p>To support communities to maintain a good quality of life for all age groups/capabilities.</p>	<p>Improving physical and digital connectivity.</p> <p>Fit out of community spaces.</p> <p>Events/activities for people to interact.</p> <p>Amenities at risk from public body cuts.</p>
<p>Community Led Tourism (CLT)</p> <p>Only available to third sector/ community organisations</p>	<p>To support communities to have full ownership and management of their local tourism experience, ensuring the economic benefits of tourism stay within their community.</p>	<p>Community Owned accommodation facilities</p> <p>Volunteer run entertainment venues.</p> <p>Investment is community owned attractions</p>

Enterprise	Rural Enterprise including Community Enterprise	To support rural/community enterprises, especially in key sectors** to develop and grow.	<p>Investment in amenities/attractions which will bring added community benefit/business resilience.</p> <p>Development of natural assets to support rural/community enterprise. Improving access to these assets, eg: paths development/active travel promotion.</p> <p>Community-led/sustainable/agri-tourism initiatives.</p> <p>Training, market research, specialist advice, marketing support.</p> <p>Events including 'dabble' events.</p>
	Rural Jobs	To support local people to access jobs closer to home with a higher wage bracket, created/safeguarded by rural/community enterprises.	<p>Skills development/training.</p> <p>Creation/retention of accessible, good quality local jobs, especially in key sectors**.</p> <p>Opportunities to work locally, eg: creation of digital hubs.</p>
	Climate Change Mitigation	To support projects that contribute to/escalate progress towards net zero ambitions through lowering of carbon emissions.	<p>Reducing energy consumption, though energy efficiency improvements/awareness raising/bikes***/e-bikes/cycle accessories***/renewables***/Electric Vehicle charging points***.</p> <p>Promoting home working/working from local digital hubs.</p>

Net Zero Please refer to Net Zero for Communities guidance at www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/ariafund			Promoting active travel/waste reduction. Technical/feasibility studies (with clear outcome/destination).
	Just Transition	To support job transition to the green economy, with rural/community enterprises.	Green skills training. Creation of green jobs to replace industrial/mining jobs lost.
	Climate Change Adaptation	To develop the region's natural assets which would enhance carbon sequestration/flood attenuation/biodiversity/local supply chain development****	Peatland restoration.**** Tree planting.**** Improvement of the local supply chain of eg: food & drink and development of skills therein. Volunteer costs.

* Community Wealth Building is about retaining wealth, jobs and enterprises in the local area to create more sustainable and resilient rural and island economies. ARIA aims to support communities, organisations and enterprises to apply Community Wealth Building approaches to their activities.

**Eg: Tourism, food & drink, accommodation, social care.

***Within capitalisation thresholds.

****ARIA will support principal funders eg: NatureScot, Peatland Action on this.