# **The Vision Fund Application Guidelines**

The Vision Foundation works across London to eliminate isolation and ensure social, cultural and economic inclusion for blind and partially sighted people. We fundraise from individuals and organisations, and then disperse those funds to our long-standing partner charities and through open grants programmes.

Whether it is ensuring that a child affected by sight loss can access education; offering employment skills training to a young adult; or funding yoga, cookery and Zumba classes for an isolated older person; our aim is to improve lives by transforming services and public attitudes.

### **What is the Vision Fund?**

The Vision Fund is a discretionary fund that is available for work which supports blind and partially sighted people who live, work, study or visit in London.

While the fund welcomes applications to cover all aspects of living with sight loss, we are particularly interested in those that are in line with our 3 strategic aims:

1. **Opening London up:**

Everyone living, working or visiting London should have access to the rich cultural, economic and social opportunities of our city. In reality, only a quarter of blind and partially sighted working-age Londoners are working. Alongside poor employment, blind and partially sighted people tell us that they face barriers in taking part in physical activity, navigating city streets and engaging in social activities – many things sighted people take for granted.

To ensure we have the biggest impact, we are interested in projects which:

* Educate and influence employers.
* Empower individuals through education and building confidence, networks and skills.
* Ensure sports, arts, social and cultural spaces are accessible.
* Improve public transport and public safety.
1. **Empowering those at-risk:**

Within the visually impaired community there are certain groups who can face a “double disadvantage”. When facing sight loss, those from the BAME community, older people, women, those living on a low income and those with other disabilities are at risk of experiencing poorer outcomes. In addition, there are some consequences of sight loss that are not supported well or at all, such as the heightened risk of domestic violence, poverty or poor mental health.

To ensure we have the biggest impact, we are interested in projects which:

* + Identify and advocate with those particularly marginalised.
	+ Identify the moments when people face the greatest risk of spiralling outcomes, including bereavement, the point of diagnosis or upon losing a job.
	+ Sight loss services focused on at-risk communities.
	+ Ensuring that specialist services for the general population are fully accessible and are reaching blind and partially sighted people.
1. **Preventing avoidable blindness:**

200,000 people are living with sight loss in the capital and just under 700,000 (1 in 12 adults) are living with a sight threatening condition. Unless there are bold interventions, these figures are set to increase significantly by 2030. An estimated 50% of sight loss could be prevented if detected and treated in time.

To ensure we have the biggest impact, we are interested in projects which:

* + Raise public awareness about the importance of sight tests, particularly among at-risk communities.
	+ Improve access to sight tests including adapted tests and community-based testing.

### **The Application Process**

Please use the guidance notes in this document to complete and send us your project proposal. Your proposal should not exceed more than the page limit for each grant size (small: 3 pages; medium: 5 pages, large: 8 pages, excluding your accounts and safeguarding information). There are notes to guide you through each section of your project proposal.

Once you have submitted your proposal, it will be reviewed by the Vision Foundation Grants and Partnerships Officer. If necessary, we will arrange a meeting to discuss your project further. If we feel it is appropriate, we will then ask you to attend the committee meeting where the final decision is made and present your project proposal to the committee.

### **Who can apply?**

The Vision Fund does not support individuals. We support the following types of organisation:

* UK registered charities working in the UK
* Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs)
* Educational establishments
* Social enterprises which are registered limited companies

### **How much you can apply for?**

We have a tiered system of grant awards and can award grants up to the following values. We are happy to receive unrestricted applications or requests for core costs, provided that the overall activity of the organisation supports our aims.

1. Small grants: Up to £5,000 (for smaller projects, organisations or initiatives)
2. Medium grants: £5,000 - £20,000 (funding can be split over 1 or 2 years)
3. Larger grants: £20,000 - £50,000 (funding can be split over 1, 2, or 3 years).

The application, assessment, and monitoring of our grant programmes is proportionate to the size of grants, and we are able to give many more small grants in any given grant round than our medium and larger grants.

### **Keeping in touch and waiting times**

Once your project proposal is received, we will be in touch if we need any further information or to arrange a meeting. However, if you do not hear from us, please be assured that your project proposal is being processed. We anticipate that it will take us approximately five months to give you a decision from when we receive your project proposal. If there is a change to this timeframe, we will let you know.

If you wish to contact us with questions about drafting your project proposal, please contact Khafsa Ghulam (Grants and Partnerships Officer): kghulam@visionfoundation.org.uk

## **Drafting your project proposal**

Familiarise yourself with our Theory of Change (can be downloaded separately) and think about how your project fits in with our strategic aims and our overarching impact statement.

Read the guidance notes carefully.

Include a contact name and details in your application document, and your charity name and number.

If your submission is written (small grant applications only can be video), write concisely and clearly.

Proofread your proposal and make sure it is easy to understand from the perspective of someone new to your work.

You may include images, tables or graphs if helpful. Please ensure you provide a written description/explanation of any images and graphs, either through captions or alt-text. Please submit all applications electronically. **We will not access paper-only applications.**

### **Small Grants (up to £5,000)**

Your project proposal must not exceed more than 3 sides of A4, font size 11+, and include the following sections:

1. **About your organisation**: including your income/expenditure for the last three years, your team, who and how many people you support, your track record, focus, past successes, and ambitions for the future.
2. **Your project**: Which of the Vision Foundation’s aims does it relate to? What will you do? Who will it help? How many people will you reach and what difference will it make to them? How will you measure your success and use or share what you learn in the future? Have you done something similar before? How will you mitigate risks?
3. **Your budget:** breakdown for the project or your organisation, including any funding already secured, and how much you would like from us? How will you sustain the project in the future?
4. (Optional) Anything else you would like to share – quotes, photos (please provide descriptions).

Please also attach a copy of your most recent annual accounts and your safeguarding policy, or a paragraph about your approach to safeguarding.

**Video:** We also accept applications to our small grants programme via video or recorded audio of 15 minutes or less. The quality does not need to be professional, a recording on a smartphone is fine, but please make sure that the words are audible, and the above elements are covered.

### **Medium grants (£5,000 - £20,000)**

Your project proposal must not exceed more than 5 sides of A4, font size 11+, and include the following sections:

1. **About your organisation:** including your income/expenditure for the last three years, your team, your leadership, who and how many people you support, your track record, focus, past successes including any outcome data, and ambitions for the future.
2. **Your project:** Which of the Vision Foundation’s aims does it relate to? What will you do? Who will it help? How many people will you reach and what difference will it make to them? Have you done something similar before? Why are you well placed to deliver this? Who will you collaborate with? How will you recruit participants? Will you stay in touch with them?
3. **Monitoring and evaluation:** How will you measure your success and use or share what you learn in the future? What is your track record in impact measurement? Please share examples of data you have obtained, even if it’s for a very different project.
4. **Risk:** Do you foresee any risks that could put the project delivery at risk? If so, please explain further along with how you plan to mitigate them. Do you have the resources to deliver? What will happen if the full funding is not awarded? Will you be in a position to deliver the project, will you need to scale down the project or seek additional funding?
5. **Your budget breakdown:** for the project or the organisation, including any funding secured, and any applications pending.
6. **Thinking ahead:** Tell us about the sustainability of the project in the long-term (if applicable). Will there be any long-term impact for participants? Will you measure this, or is there external data which suggests your work will have a long-term impact?
7. (Optional) Anything else you would like to share – quotes, photos (please provide descriptions).

Please also attach a copy of your most recent annual accounts, and your safeguarding policy.

### **Large grants (£20,000 - £50,000)**

Your project proposal must not exceed more than 8 sides of A4, font size 11+, and include the following sections:

1. **About your organisation:** including your income/expenditure for the last three years, your team, your leadership and governance, how you champion diversity and inclusion, who and how many people you support, your track record, focus, past successes including any outcome data, and ambitions for the future.
2. **Your project:**
	* Which of the Vision Foundation’s aims does it relate to? How does it fit with our Theory of Change?
	* What is the need for this project? Provide statistics/research which support this rationale.
	* What will you do? Who will it help? How many people will you reach and what difference will it make to them?
	* Have you done something similar before? Why are you well placed to deliver this? Who will you collaborate with?
	* How have your users been involved in the development of the projects? How can they feedback to improve practice during the project?
	* How will you recruit participants?
	* How do you ensure value for money? Is there any likely social return on investment?
3. **Monitoring and evaluation:** How will you measure your success and use or share what you learn in the future? What is your track record in impact measurement? Will you use any externally validated measures? Will you explore external evaluation? Please share examples of data you have obtained, even if it’s for a very different project.
4. **Risk:** Do you foresee any risks that could put the project delivery at risk. If so, please explain further along with how you plan to mitigate them. Do you have the resources to deliver? What will happen if the full funding is not awarded? Will you be in a position to deliver the project, will you need to scale down the project or seek additional funding?
5. **Your budget breakdown:** for the project or the organisation, including any funding secured, and any applications pending.
6. **Thinking ahead:** Tell us about the sustainability of the project in the long-term (if applicable). Will there be any long-term impact for participants? Will you measure this, or is there external data which suggests your work will have a long-term impact?
7. **References:** Please provide the details of at least one reference, it could be a partner organisation, funder, user (who has consented to be contacted by us and is over 18, or a parent or guardian).
8. (Optional) Anything else you would like to share – quotes, photos (please provide descriptions).

Please also attach a copy of your most recent annual accounts, and your safeguarding policy.

**ALL GRANTS**

Once your project proposal is complete, please send by email to Khafsa Ghulam (Grants and Partnerships Officer): kghulam@visionfoundation.org.uk. **Please do not send hardcopy paper applications.**