

abrdn Charitable Foundation

Powerful Partnerships – Funding Guide – 2024-2025

A Scottish registered charity (SC042597)

abrdn Charitable Foundation Overview:

Through the abrdn Charitable Foundation (aCF), we direct funding to charities around the globe. We aim to create fair and impactful charity partnerships which align to our strategy and engage colleagues to use their skills to benefit society.

We focus our strategy through the theme of 'Tomorrow's Generation', which means engaging young people between the ages of 16-25. This is then distilled through two main categories: 'People' and 'Planet'. Under 'People,' our aim is to help to break down barriers to education, employment, and financial wellness, with a key focus on Social Mobility. Under 'Planet,' we are looking to work with organisations who are protecting nature and addressing the impacts of climate change. A key feature of our approach is to support a small number of Powerful Partnerships, which are typically significant multi-year grants to organisations and projects where aCF support can have a transformative impact – see appendix for further detail.

We recognise that charitable giving is a key part of our overall sustainability strategy and, through our giving strategy and Powerful Partnerships, we are making significant social and environmental impacts within local communities and across the globe.

The aCF is governed through a Board of Directors which includes two prominent Independent Directors.

Powerful Partnerships Overview:

The Powerful Partnerships fund is for invited charities only. It supports large scale grants of around £1.0 million overall (or local currency equivalent) for typically a 3-year partnership. These grants enable innovative projects within the partnership and are transformational for the successful organisation.

Powerful Partnerships must align not only to our giving strategy but also provide opportunities to engage with abrdn through our environmental and social policy aims.

The aCF has a number of current Powerful Partnerships, headline details are included in the appendix below to help provide example and context. We take a targeted and thematic approach to funding applications for this fund during Q1 and Q3 each year.

The Powerful Partnerships fund is seeking projects that are innovative, practical, collaborative, and systemic – so they provide learning that can be applied widely to deliver lasting impact, as with all our grant making globally. Applications are currently accepted on an invitation basis.

Frequently Asked Questions:

The following section is intended to provide potential applicants to the Powerful Partnerships fund answers to common questions and to help organisations decide how best to prepare their application. It is aligned to our approach to strive to be an equitable and thoughtful grant maker.

Who can apply?

Invited registered charities that align with our values and stated mission and that engage young people between the ages of 16-25.

How much can we apply for?

A maximum of £1.0 million to fund a specific project over typically a three year period. Ideally, the aCF is seeking partnerships that have a transformational impact on the charity and its social mission.

Can our project last multiple years?

Yes. We are looking to support projects that would typically be delivered over a three-year active partnership. Impact measurement is critical to the aCF's ability to monitor and understand the social impact that has been achieved. Monitoring throughout the project and meetings with the aCF team are required. If possible, representatives of the aCF will visit the project in location to learn more about the work and gain further insight regarding its' impact.

What is the application process?

Applicants are requested to complete an initial expression of interest form, charities will then be shortlisted and successful charities will be asked to complete a thorough application form which will be shared directly by the aCF team. Successful charities will then pitch to the aCF Board at the relevant funding meeting. This has been designed to capture the necessary information to understand more about your organisation and the project, without placing undue pressure on the finite resources of organisations.

Application process – summary:

- Invited charity submits expression of interest.
- Review by aCF team – successful charity asked to make full application.
- Full application scored by aCF team – feedback provided.
- Selected charities invited to meet Directors (virtual).
- Grant decision made – agreements drafted and funding released.

What is the deadline for applications?

Application deadlines will be communicated at the start of each stage within the application process.

When will we receive a decision?

All applications who are progressed to the second stage (full application) will be reviewed and scored by the aCF team using an established scoring matrix. Successful applicants will be informed in a timely manner and the timescale will be clearly communicated on receipt of an application. Application windows will typically be in Q1 and Q3 of any given calendar year. All applicants who make it to this stage will also receive feedback on their applications.

Will we have the chance to present our project to Directors?

Yes. Successful applicants will be invited to present their project to Directors at a meeting of the Board. These meetings are quarterly and visibility will be given on dates well in advance to help planning. Support in preparing the application and in the presentation will be provided by our external agency The Giving Department. These sessions are typically virtual.

Are any organisations restricted from applying?

Yes. The aCF does not fund political organisations and organisations that promote a single religious faith. We are also not able to fund for profit companies or individuals.

We are not a registered charity, can we still apply?

No. The Powerful Partnerships fund is only open to invited charities that meet the required threshold and are registered with the relevant governing body for their region.

Can we apply for funding towards capital developments?

No. The Powerful Partnerships fund is not positioned to fund capital, such as the build of a new facility or building linked to your social mission.

Can we apply for funding for research?

Yes. The aCF would consider discreet research projects that align to our mission and enable the applying charity to uncover new insights that will significantly extend or enhance their field of activity. This can include funding for an external agency that would be sub-contacted by the applicant charity with direct oversight and contracts held by the applying charity to complete the research on their behalf.

If we have applied or been funded by the aCF before, can we apply again?

Yes. Charities who have applied and have been unsuccessful are welcome to apply again. Special consideration will be given to eligible charities that have been funded through the Innovation Fund in a previous period.

If we are not successful, will we receive feedback on our application?

Yes. The aCF team and The Giving Department will provide feedback on the application and presentation (if relevant) to the applying charity. This is in line with our efforts to be an equitable and thoughtful funder.

Can employees of abrdn recommend charities?

Yes. We encourage colleagues from within abrdn to share the details of charities where they have a personal knowledge or connection. These applications will be considered alongside a carefully researched pipeline of potential partners. This research is undertaken by our external specialist partners at The Giving Department.

Are joint applications between organisations allowed?

Yes. We welcome collaboration and wish to help foster joint working within the charity sector in the UK and overseas. One charity will need to be the lead applicant and any awarded funding can be allocated as required to successfully complete the project.

Will the project be monitored and what feedback will the charity be asked to share?

Yes. The aCF uses a monitoring and evaluation form that has been developed using expert external resource. It is intended to provide a straightforward platform to enable the successful charity to capture the outcomes and impact of the project in a format, without putting additional pressure on finite resources.



Contact information for further information

Email address: charitablefoundation@abrdn.com

Appendix:

Headline information on three of the current Powerful Partnerships:

UNESCO – global three-year partnership since 2022 to carefully select sites of special scientific significance to undertake unique research projects with a focus on education and promoting learning in schools relating to sustainable development. The growing portfolio of projects promote research related to UNESCO’s science intergovernmental programmes: biodiversity, nature-based solutions, ecosystem services, water, the ocean, and the climate, whilst also contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goals 6 (water), 13 (climate), 14 (ocean) and 15 (land).

The Alan Turing Institute – global three-year partnership since 2023 supporting the charity’s mission to help change the world for the better using data science and artificial intelligence (AI). aCF funding will enable a global research programme with The Alan Turing Institute and the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology. The AMBER project will monitor and collect biodiversity data and understand the impact of climate change on ecosystems and insect populations. Funding supports the deployment of automated sensors, bioacoustics, and computer vision (a field of AI that trains computers to interpret and understand the visual world) to monitor insects, bats and birds. The finding will be used to inform science on new species and generate accurate estimates of how species populations are changing.

WorkingRite – Scotland focused three-year partnership since 2024 transforming the lives of young people who struggle to find a route into college or work before they leave school. The charity advocates for mentored work-based learning as an effective approach to prepare disengaged and disadvantaged young people for the workforce. WorkingRite’s collaboration with the aCF aims to significantly enhance support for disengaged mid-teen students in Scottish secondary schools, helping them transition into sustainable careers.

For more information visit abrdn.com

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