



Grant Funding for Building Informal ESOL Capacity Guidance for VCSE Applicants August 2025

Introduction

East Midlands Councils (EMC) is launching a grant programme for Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) groups, to support capacity-building in the informal English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) sector, and is inviting bids from qualifying providers for grants of up to £10,000, supporting projects to be completed by 31st March 2026.

EMC represents the interests of local councils to Government and national organisations, fostering collaboration on key issues and providing advice and services on topics including employment, transport, planning, and asylum/refugee resettlement.

EMC hosts and provides governance for the East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership (EMSMP), one of 12 such regional partnerships across the UK, funded by the Home Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). EMSMP is led by the Regional Migration Board.

Our objective is to provide advice, development and consultation for organisations from the statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors for the coordination and provision of support services for forced migrants.

EMC serves the counties of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire, and Rutland.

EMC has been awarded additional targeted funding by MHCLG for the purpose of building capacity and resilience in the informal ESOL sector. We appreciate and value the crucial role that VCSE groups play in the overall picture of ESOL provision, and want to ensure that such organisations have access to funding to support their work.

Funding Details

How much is available?

Grants of up to £10,000 are available.

Who can apply?

The fund is open to Registered or Exempt Charities, Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs), Community Interest Companies (CICs), charitable companies, community benefit societies, constituted community groups, and faith groups (where the activity is not promoting religion).

Beneficiaries of projects funded by this grant must be migrants or displaced people, with an emphasis on those who are Hong Kong BN(O) or Homes for Ukraine visa holders, or



resettled refugees under the Communities for Afghans initiative, and their dependents, residing in the East Midlands region (as defined above).

What type of activity will be funded?

EMC is seeking non-capital projects from VCSE groups providing ESOL whose values are aligned with the priorities of the UK Government and EMC, and which are specifically intended to improve or increase informal ESOL capacity and the resilience of students and tutors in this space.

EMC will support projects which align with the high-level objectives of the fund by:

- Enabling relevant migrant cohorts (as defined above) to feel fully part of and positively contribute to life in the UK, both economically and socially, enriching our society.
- Increasing and/or improving informal and community-based ESOL capacity.
- Developing awareness of trauma-informed teaching practice in the informal and community-based ESOL sector (including secondary or vicarious trauma).

We are particularly interested in applications from organisations that can demonstrate understanding of the relevant cohorts, and can tailor support accordingly – for example, providing support for Pre-Entry, basic literacy, or classroom skills. We also encourage bidders to demonstrate their understanding of gaps and barriers in the local ESOL sector, and to focus their proposals on addressing these.

EMC priorities for proposed activity include (but are not limited to):

- Projects supporting the specific English language training needs of relevant migrant cohorts (as defined above).
- Projects to improve or develop the capacity of VCSE organisations delivering ESOL to relevant migrant cohorts (as defined above).
- Projects to support the upskilling of volunteer ESOL tutors working with relevant migrant cohorts (as defined above), with an emphasis on trauma-informed practice and secondary/vicarious trauma.

What can the funding be spent on?

- Project-related sessional work
- Expansion or development of existing projects to include relevant cohorts
- Venue hire and/or refreshments
- Non-capital expenditure on equipment or supplies
- Publicity materials or other communications
- Interpreting, translation, or alternative formats
- Volunteer expenses and training
- Other non-capital projects which align with the objectives outlined in this guidance

What activities will NOT be funded?

- Activities of a political or exclusively religious nature
- Activities already funded by other public or private sector grants
- Projects or activities which have already completed prior to the agreement of funding (ie, retrospective applications)



Monitoring

As a requirement of this grant, successful bidders will be subject to monitoring to ensure that projects meet the criteria and objectives outlined above. Grant recipients will be expected to provide regular updates to EMC and to advise of any changes to agreed proposals.

A final outcome report must also be provided, which must include evidence of how the project has met the objectives of the grant, and anonymised demographic data (including age/gender/postcode area/employment status/route of entry to the UK) of those receiving support from such projects (where available). Anonymised case studies are also welcome as part of your reporting.

Application Process and Timeline

Your completed application form must be emailed to smp@emcouncils.gov.uk and received before the deadline of 1700 on Friday 12th September 2025, alongside a copy of your constitution, your safeguarding policy, evidence of your public liability insurance, your organisation's bank details, and an itemised budget for your project.

A timeline of key milestones is included below:

Activity	Deadline
Submission of completed application	Friday 12 th September 2025 (1700)
Assessment of applications	W/c Monday 15 th September
Announcement of awards	Monday 22 nd September (1700)
Interim monitoring meeting	Friday 28 th November 2025
End of project monitoring meeting	Friday 27 th March 2026
Completion of projects	Tuesday 31 st March 2026
Submission of final outcomes report	Thursday 30 th April 2026

Publicity

EMC will share details of awarded grants via its website and other media channels. This may include anonymised case studies or publicity for events which are funded by this grant.