

# Applying for Motability Foundation Grants

## Introduction

The Motability Foundation has reopened its Community Transport Grants, so here are some suggestions to help you develop a strong Expression of Interest (EOI). It is a **two-stage process** for the larger applications, and you will only be invited to put in a full application if you get through Stage 1 (the EOI).

We know from the last grant round that **around 20% of applications were successful** and this grant round is likely to be equally competitive, so the stronger your EOI, the greater the chance that it will get through to the second stage.

## Tip 1: Make sure you meet the criteria

It sounds obvious but check that your organisation meets the basic criteria for the grant programme you're interested in, for example:

- Does your income in the last three years of published accounts meet the income threshold specified?
- Have you removed fixed assets from your unrestricted reserves calculation? Motability ask you to use the following calculation:  
$$\text{Total unrestricted funds} - \text{Unrestricted fixed assets} / \text{total unrestricted expenditure}.$$

## Tip 2: make sure you pass the due diligence checks

Motability's due diligence checks cover six key areas to help them identify whether there are any risks to funding your organisation:

- governance
- finances
- management
- reputation
- applicant capability
- proposal feasibility

Consider whether there are any actions you can do before applying so that there are no issues with the due diligence checks. For example:

**Your website:** Does your website need updating? If so, you may want to do this before applying. Are there positive comments from key partners / stakeholders on your website? Do you include some impact information, such as quotes from passengers about the value of your service, numbers of passengers supported, quotes from drivers or other people involved in your work.

**Record-keeping:** Have accounts been filed on time and are your records up to date on regulator's websites, such as the Charity Commission and Companies House? Are trustee details current?

**Financials:** Have there been any significant fluctuations in funding? Is the level of unrestricted reserves level reasonable? Are there any potential financial difficulties that could jeopardise your ability to deliver the project and put the grant funding at risk? If there is anything in your Annual Accounts that you think might raise any concerns, try to include a brief explanatory note somewhere in the EOI to alleviate any concerns.

**Governing document:** Has the document been updated in the last six or seven years? Is there a requirement for a minimum number of trustees? Is it clear who the members are? Is there a dissolution / winding up clause which states that any assets left over will go to another charitable organisation with similar aims? What are your rules for dealing with conflicts of interest on your Board or Committee?

## Tip 3: Make sure your application fits with Motability's aims

Look at the key phrases in the online information about your chosen fund and think about how you can show your proposal aligns with the funder's aims (in bold type):

## **'To support organisations to provide services for disabled people'**

*"You're disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities."*

(Gov.UK <https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010>) Although the Act doesn't apply to Northern Ireland the definition is useful in thinking about different groups of people your proposal could apply to.

- be specific about the number of disabled people you support e.g. 'We support 1200 people annually. From our most recent passenger data in 2024, over 70% of the people we support are disabled. This equates to 840 individuals.'
- are there disabled people who do not currently access your services and does this proposal offer a way to reach them? For example, you may have analysed your passenger data and realised that certain groups are under-represented.

## **'We're particularly interested in funding projects that deliver meaningful impact in deprived area, or to under-represented groups'**

The Motability Foundation will invest where they can make the greatest difference. Share information about:

- the Indices of Deprivation for your area – is your location in the top 20% most disadvantaged areas, for example. Or if the overall rating is average, is there a specific indicator such as Access to Services that shows your area needs funding? You can search for information on the following websites:

England - [https://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/iod\\_index.html](https://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/iod_index.html)

(turn off the 2015 map by clicking on the button at the top, and when the 2019 map is shown, use the pin marker to search for your organisation's postcode).

Wales - <https://apps.dataunitwales.gov.uk/welshindexofmultipledeprivation/>

Scotland - <https://simd.scot/>

Northern Ireland - <https://deprivation.nisra.gov.uk/>

- any relevant reports or data showing how your area faces challenges or disadvantage e.g. Census information on the number of households where people are in poor health, whose disability 'limits them a lot', or who lack access to a vehicle. You can explore Census results here:

England and Wales - <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census>

Scotland - <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

Northern Ireland - <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/people-and-communities/census>

- are you supporting under-represented groups such as people with a specific disability or from particular communities – if so, show the funder this, explaining why supporting your work is necessary. Are you the only service in the area providing access to transport for this group?

## Tip 4: Check your policies

You'll be asked to supply a Safeguarding policy with the EOI and, if you get through to the next stage, will need to submit a Whistleblowing policy and an Equal Opportunities policy, so it's a good idea to check your policies are in line with current best practice.

**Safeguarding policy:** Your safeguarding policy should include the following:

- a policy statement
- names and contact details of the Designated Safeguarding Lead(s) – phone numbers and email addresses, and summary of their responsibilities
- an outline of types of abuse, and how to recognise the signs of abuse
- a clear procedure for how to report concerns
- a commitment to following safer recruitment practices
- sections on consent and capacity
- useful external contacts and links

It needs to be clear how often safeguarding training is provided, and how frequently the policy itself is reviewed. Due to the importance of safeguarding, an annual review is recommended. Depending on the size of the organisation, a flowchart to summarise the procedure and a sample form for reporting concerns could be included in the document.

The document should be signed and dated, with a review date specified. If you have used a template as the basis for your policy, it needs to be clear that the policy has been adapted so that it is specific to your organisation.

## Tip 5: Work through a Logframe before applying

***“We strongly recommend taking some time to plan your logframe before starting the application process.”*** (Motability Foundation)

Motability's website includes guidance on logframes. It is a useful exercise to do before preparing the EOI because it helps to think through the issue you are trying to address, the activities that need to be delivered, and the results you want to see. If you are invited to submit a full application, you'll need to include your logframe at that point.

We know from the first grant round that it can be quite challenging to work through this, but it is worthwhile spending time on this from the outset to help clarify your thinking.

## **Tip 6: Show how your proposal supports disabled people**

It is important to be specific about how disabled people will benefit. For example:

- have disabled people been involved in the development of your proposal – if so, briefly describe how they were involved. Did you hold a meeting, run a survey or do telephone interviews to gather their insight and feedback?
- will disabled people be involved as the project develops e.g. will there be a working group with disabled people overseeing the development of services, or more disabled people included on your Board and advising your organisation in some way? How many disabled people will be involved? Again, try to be as specific as possible e.g. "We will establish a Steering Group with over 60% of places for disabled people to ensure lived experience is included at project management and delivery level."
- describe how you will reach the disabled people who most need your services. What outreach will you do to encourage take-up of services?
- how many disabled people will benefit overall e.g. "Over the three years, our proposal will identify 300 new beneficiaries, and 75% (225) of these will be disabled people, providing enhanced access to services and facilities."

## **Tip 7: Make a strong case for why this work is needed**

Include any information you've gathered under Tip 3 and outline:

- any gaps in existing services which means your proposal is crucial

- any evidence you have showing the potential for growth in your services e.g. 'Over the past year we have seen a 20% rise in enquiries for our service, and in the last 6 months we have had to turn down [x number of] journey requests.'
- brief quotes from disabled people and disabled people's groups about why the work is needed, the number of disability groups you have engaged with, and a summary of the main transport priorities disabled people identified
- any local reports backing up your information on gaps in transport services

The funder wants to understand the strategy underlying your proposal, as well as to see it is feasible and you have the capability to deliver it successfully. Check:

- is it clear what your organisation is trying to achieve and how it wants to develop? Avoid leading with your need for vehicle replacement. Focus instead on improving or expanding services or new ways of working that will lead to better outcomes for disabled people. Funding decisions are made by Grant Panel members who want to see people's lives improved.
- does the project budget relates to the activities and have the right elements been included to ensure the project can be delivered? For example, if you plan to increase the number of journey bookings by disabled people, what marketing activities have been costed and what staffing capacity is needed to handle increased bookings? What management capacity is there to oversee the project?
- has your organisation successfully managed other projects that demonstrate a good track record, and how recently?

## Tip 8: Getting the financials right

It's a good idea to ensure the financial information you supply at the EOI stage is as close as possible to any final information if asked to submit a full bid. Whilst a small variation may be acceptable to a funder, if there is a significant difference between the costs outlined in the EOI and those in the full bid, it could cause issues and your organisation may need to make up the difference.

Bids need to be costed accurately, that is, neither over-inflated nor under-estimated. The Grant Panel will want best value, so consider how to show this. For example, you might:

- refer to how salaries for any job roles have been benchmarked against similar roles in the sector
- outline how the total amount of resources requested (for vehicles, salaries and running costs) is warranted by the amount of project outputs and the overall number of disabled people supported
- if asking for funding for vehicles, describe how you'll maximise vehicle use such as through evening or weekend services as well as weekday provision
- calculate the value of any volunteer contribution to the project e.g. the total number of volunteer hours over a year x National Living Wage £12.21ph (2025 figure) x the number of years the project will run

We hope these tips have been useful.

**Good luck with your application!**