



Youth Scotland Rural Action Fund

April 2019 – March 2020



Rural Action Fund 2019/20

**“2,690 young
people reached”**

**“£42,909 funding to 57
projects
out of 71 applications”**

**“416 people
volunteering over
6,600 hours”**

This is brilliant I always liked coming to the youth club but now I love coming. I like the new games and stuff. I like to play and make new friends

**“18 applications
from non-Youth
Scotland member
groups”**

**“42 applications
from community
groups not
registered as
charities”**



When people put their mind to it, and with the help of volunteers and funding such as that provided by the Youth Scotland Rural Action Fund, communities can thrive to their full potential by working together to provide activities.

Purpose of the Rural Action Fund

The need

This fund was created in 2018/19¹ to respond to the specific needs of youth groups in rural communities. These groups are disproportionately affected by reductions in funding for universal youth work. It is also the case that funding targeted towards priority areas identified through the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation misses out on reaching rural communities. In addition, 40% of our member groups are not registered charities which further impacts on their ability to access funding reserved for registered charities.

In 2019, we have continued the fund with the support of The Robertson Trust and The Gannochy Trust, as a new partner in the fund. The fund continues to address the needs of rural youth groups. It is enabling these groups to deliver universal community-based youth work through funding costs that are often more difficult to secure. These include hall lets, equipment and sessional staff which are all essential to delivering high quality experiences for young people. In the past year, demand for support through the fund, and our wider capacity-building for rural youth groups has remained high and in some ways has increased.

The difference we wanted to make

In setting up the Rural Action Fund, Youth Scotland wanted to make it easier for rural youth groups to access small amounts of funding which could be used on what was really needed for young people in their communities. It was about:

- removing barriers to funding for groups that are reliant on volunteers and have limited capacity to apply for funds;
- removing the need to create new projects or services;
- being flexible in supporting the groups;
- reaching youth groups that other funders are unable to reach; and
- providing opportunities for young people to have fun and enjoyable youth work experiences in their local communities and beyond.

In this second year of the fund we wanted to build on the outcomes that were achieved in 2018/19. By supporting Youth Scotland, The Robertson Trust and The Gannochy Trust recognised the need for funding universal youth work and the specific needs of rural

¹ A report of the fund for 2018/19 can be found on our [website](#).

communities. The Rural Action Fund was also intended to make a difference in being able to reach small community-based youth groups for whom the funders are often unable to directly reach and fund.

Delivering the fund

Learning from Year 1

Small changes and improvements

Year 2 of the Rural Action Fund was very much focussed on building upon the successes of Year 1 and implementing small changes to improve its delivery and benefit for rural youth groups. These changes were:

- increasing the maximum amount of funding to £750 per application. We saw that there was a significant number of applicants which had to seek other funding so this increase helped address this particular issue.
- updating the eligibility criteria based on feedback, including:
 - removing reference to our CashBack for Communities programme which had led to confusion for some groups
 - increasing the number of full-time staff permitted from 1 to 2 and providing additional guidance in relation to seasonal staff increases. This meant more groups who had additional staff only during peak periods (e.g. summer programmes) could also now apply.
 - decreasing the maximum annual turnover limit from £200,000 to £100,000. Based on the groups funded in 2018/19 we anticipated this would have very little impact on those groups which had successfully applied but would reinforce our message on which groups the fund is targeted towards.
 - being explicit that the fund does not support uniformed youth groups. We had a small number of applicants in 2018/19 from uniformed groups and realised that our wording on this exclusion was clumsy, therefore we made it much clearer.
 - inviting potential applicants who are in receipt of funding directly from The Robertson Trust or The Gannochy Trust to contact us prior to applying.

Maintaining what worked

One of the key things we learned in Year 1 was the need to use both social-media and more traditional forms of communication to make the information and fund guidance as accessible as possible. We have heavily promoted the fund, in particular the application deadlines, through our e-bulletin and newsletters as well as our twitter and Facebook channels. We have also promoted the fund to a wider group of stakeholders through articles in [Third Force News](#) and in our very own [Magnet](#) membership (pages 5-6) publication.

We know from a variety of metrics that our online promotion efforts reached a very wide audience. For example, our Facebook promotional campaign had 7,823 unique views with 383 people physically interacting with the posts and 234 link clicks across the Facebook campaign. We saw broadly similar levels of engagement through our campaign on Twitter with 32,902 impressions and 565 people engaging with the posts and 133 link clicks. The 2019/20 campaign successfully created a spike in traffic to the pages relating to the Youth Scotland Rural Action Fund on our website, with nearly 2,800 unique page views alone on our programme page.

Nevertheless, we learned early on in Year 1 that many rural youth groups, the majority of which are entirely volunteer run, respond better to physical mailouts of the guidance and application form. Therefore, we repeated this process in Year 2, sending 330 letters in two mailouts in August 2019 and January 2020. Each mailout corresponded with an increase in applications for the next deadline. We believe that this has been helped by including examples in our letters of the type of activities and requests which we have funded. This was intended to stimulate ideas for other groups. We also promoted through word of mouth across the Youth Scotland network at various training events and through our partner Area Associations who worked to spread the word about the fund in their areas and actively supported groups to apply.

Throughout the delivery of the fund, we spoke with a number of applicants directly (or those supporting them locally) prior to them submitting an application to talk through their ideas and support them in completing their applications. Feedback suggests this was valued by those who applied as well as for those who we were able to advise did not meet the criteria (e.g. having too many paid staff etc.) so they did not waste their time and effort.

Grants awarded

Over the year, we received 84 applications to the fund having had funding rounds in:

- June 2019

- September 2019
- November 2019
- January 2020
- March 2020

Owing to the impact of the Coronavirus crisis, emerging in March, we took the decision to 'pause' the Rural Action Fund given the impact of social distancing and lockdown on the delivery of face-to-face youth work. This resulted in 13 applications not being considered. Having discussed this with applicants, we have funded three through our crisis fund: 'Youth Scotland Action Fund' with the remaining 10 agreeing to be placed on hold until the Rural Action Fund is re-launched. This resulted in **71** applications being considered in the past year.

Across the four rounds of funding, we awarded 57 grants to 47 different groups. Four groups submitted more than one application throughout the year, having completed their original projects and sending in end-of-project reports. The total amount of funding confirmed to date was **£42,909**, with awards ranging from £150 to £750. The majority (49) were awarded £750. Included in this figure is an award of £2,000 made to support a number of youth groups on Orkney, through the Orkney Association of Youth Groups. A detailed list of the organisations which were funded is provided as an appendix to this report.

It was agreed with both The Robertson Trust and The Gannochy Trust, that the money not yet spent within the Rural Action Fund could be reallocated into the Youth Scotland Action Fund. This would support groups in meeting young people's needs as a result of coronavirus pandemic and will be the subject of a separate report.

Support for groups

Over the year our support for groups has been based on three areas:

- increasing awareness of the Rural Action Fund and supporting groups to apply;
- Being responsive and flexible to groups needs in changing circumstances once funding has been awarded; and
- Increasing awareness of the wider range of our training and capacity-building support.

We have continued to focus of our efforts on supporting groups to become aware of and apply for funding to the Rural Action Fund. The overall volume of applications has increased by almost one third on last year up to 84 from 63. Pleasingly, out of the 71 applications we considered, 39 had not been funded previously by the Rural Action

Fund with 32 having received funds in 2018/19. This indicates our efforts to increase awareness of the fund and support more groups to apply are making a difference. It is also in line with our experience with our previous small grants programmes where awareness and participation grow over time.

The overall number of youth groups supported through the Rural Action Fund, where youth workers have gone on to participate in one of our training or other events, remains relatively low. Nevertheless, we have increased our delivery of training and capacity building support across rural areas and outwith the central areas of Scotland. Examples include:

- PDA in Youth Work courses delivered in/being delivered in Aberdeenshire, Orkney, Dumfries and Galloway.
- Ready for Youth Work delivery in Perthshire, Elgin, Orkney and Shetland.
- Child Protection Awareness training in Highland
- Trusted Adult modules training delivered in Scottish Borders
- Supporting young people and youth workers from rural communities in Skye, Shetland, Elgin, Duns and Barra to take part in our annual Big Ideas Weekend.
- Awards training in Dumfries & Galloway, Scottish Borders, Highland, Ayrshire, Angus, West Dunbartonshire, and Argyll & Bute.
- Training to introduce STEM activities in youth work environments in Perthshire, Ayrshire and Scottish Borders.

Our training programmes are delivered at times to suit volunteers and part-time youth workers with a significant volume of delivery in the evenings and weekends. However, this is often also the time when youth work activities are taking place. Where groups are mostly volunteer-run (as is the case with Rural Action Fund applicants), this makes it harder to take part in training. We are continuing to review how we best support our rural youth groups and ensure our training is accessible to those voluntary youth workers who are currently unable to attend. The development of our online training and capacity-building in response to the coronavirus pandemic could have a positive benefit in being more accessible to this particular audience.

Unfortunately, the Rural Action Fund does not meet the needs of all our rural youth groups and there are occasions where we are unable to provide funding. However, as with all our projects, we work hard to help our members to find alternatives to ensure that community-based youth work can flourish. One such example is how we supported 'Street Games' in Brechin, Angus.

Street Games is entirely youth-led and stemmed out of another project which we delivered to support young people to improve greenspaces and activities for their peers and local community. They had identified a local high street shop, where the owner was in agreement to lease the premises to Street Games in order to provide a safe space for young people to come together and enjoy youth work activities. Although Brechin is not a large community, and young people do face challenges accessing youth work, it is not considered to be a rural location and therefore we felt unable to provide funding through the Rural Action Fund. However, we worked with the group and helped them to connect directly with The Robertson Trust to seek support through the Wee Grants for Wee Groups fund. Following our support, the group was successful in securing £1,000 towards the costs of bringing their youth work space to life.

Thank you so much for all your help we received news last week that we were eligible for £1000 which is amazing and we are so appreciative. Thank you for helping with the application. Jo, Street Games

Impact of the Rural Action Fund

Year 2 has been another success for the Rural Action Fund, continuing to demonstrate the impact which small amounts of funding can have when youth groups are able to meet their own identified needs. Based on the applications and end of project reports received we can be confident that the following outcomes have been achieved:

1. We have removed barriers facing young people in accessing youth work opportunities.
2. We have helped to sustain and in some areas increase provision of youth work opportunities.
3. We have helped youth groups to increase their capacity.

1. Removing barriers to youth work opportunities in rural communities

In 2018/19, groups told us that accessing youth work opportunities due to a lack of suitable transport was the biggest barrier they faced. This is similar to the feedback we received this year, with 80% of applicants citing distance to activities and amenities and 73% citing access to public transport to attend youth groups. Many groups applied for funding to removing these as barriers which helps to address inequalities where only those young people who have their own transport through family members can access youth work opportunities. These barriers are illustrated in the quotes from youth groups' applications below, which were overcome for young people through this funding:

The distance to any large town/city amenities e.g. MacDonalds, shopping Malls, large leisure centre is (a) 250 mile round trip - by public transport 3-4 hours each way. Highland

...because we are so rural, local can be a two-hour bus journey. Skye

(What is preventing young people from taking part?) The rural location, cost of transport, nearest sports facility is at least 7 miles away. Fife

Designated transport will make a huge difference here as children from further afield will be able to attend. Transport costs can be high due to increased fuel costs on the island so specific funding for transport would be really helpful. Young people can then mix from other areas and this often helps with transition from primary to high school. Islay & Jura

2. Sustaining and increasing provision of youth work opportunities in rural communities

In its first year, the fund helped some groups to continue that would otherwise have been unable. While we have continued to receive applications to sustain existing provision, this year we have seen more applications focusing on increasing their provision and offering activities that they could not do without the funding.

Sustaining provision means different things for different groups. For **Kyle of Sutherland Hub**, funding meant being *“able to offer youth activities throughout the summer holiday period and continue with fitness activities during term time up to the October school holidays. Without this fund we will not be able to run any youth activities over the summer period.”* Whereas for **Strathglass Youth Club** this meant being able to replace damaged equipment and continuing to run the club. They told us it would *“make a huge difference. We are a small community and try to fundraise as often as we can but unfortunately expenses sometimes outweigh what we make”*. At **Camas Outdoor Centre**, the Rural Action Fund enabled the group to replace internal and external doors which were essential to their continued operation. Without these they would be unable to deliver safe residential opportunities for young people.



Activities at Strathglass Youth Club, Beauly

Increasing provision and new opportunities included buying new equipment, delivering new activities, taking trips and extending programmes to run on more nights or into holiday periods. Examples include **Barra Youth Café**, which added martial arts to its offer in response to requests from young people. **Drymen**

Youth Café were able “to take the young people to the Indoor Go Karting Experience at Hillington where they can Go Kart and Laser Quest”. While Rokzkool were able to offer music sessions, cookery and sports activities:



In a great example of responding to young people’s needs, Papdale Halls Youth Group requested funding to start a Dungeons and Dragons club:

There is a large need for this type of game play in the Halls as not everyone is sporty or likes to do mainstream activities. This is an ideal chance to accommodate a large group of young people who may otherwise feel their choices to participate are limited.

Howwood Youth Club were able to purchase new equipment including a dart board, snooker table, net ball hoops and a Jumbo Connect 4 as well as take a group of young people trampolining in Glasgow.



I loved the Christmas Trip to ‘Flip Out’ with the Youth Club. It was exciting going on the bus with all my friends, and we had a brilliant time when we got there. Lewis, young person

3. Increasing the capacity of rural youth groups

Like last year, the capacity of volunteers and youth workers remains one of the biggest limiting factors in groups’ capacity to deliver youth work. One of the biggest ways in which the Rural Action Fund has helped has been through youth groups being able to attract new volunteers. Out of 544 volunteers involved in the groups funded activities, 23% (128) were new to the groups. While not all of these are regular volunteers, it is helping to create new connections between youth groups and people in communities.



A few more facts and figures...

Overall, in 2019/20, the Rural Action Fund has reached 2,690 young people in nearly 50 rural communities from 15 local authority areas across Scotland. The breakdown of young people reached by youth groups taken from the total successful applications is shown in the table below:

Age	Female	Male	Total
<10 years	486	548	1,034
10 - 17 years	699	709	1,408
18 - 25 years	120	128	248
Total	1305	1,385	2,690

A total of 42 groups were funded which are not registered charities and therefore could not have secured funding directly from either The Robertson Trust² or The Gannochy Trust.

As with Year 1 on the fund, we have successfully reached some of Scotland's most rural communities with this funding in 2019/20. Using The Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification to analyse the post codes of the groups that were funded, nearly 60% of the groups applying were from communities ranked as the most rural in Scotland. This means they are "Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more." Overall, 91% of applications came from groups rated between 4 and 6 on the Scottish Government's 6-point scale, where 4 means "Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more". These figures are broadly in line with those we achieved in 2018/19.

Rurality versus Deprivation Indices

One of the drivers for setting up this fund was to address the challenge of rural youth groups being unable to access other sources of funding which is targeted towards specific groups. Such targeted funding is often on the basis of 'deprivation' as measured using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation where funding goes towards those

² This was accurate as when the fund was established which was before the launch of 'Wee Grants for Wee Groups'.

most deprived such as communities ranked as the 20% most deprived. Of the 71 applications we received for the Rural Action Fund in 2019/20, only two of these were from groups in communities considered amongst the 20% most deprived (Only one of these two met the criteria for funding). This indicates that the Rural Action Fund is continuing to achieve our objective for providing funding to those groups who are unable to access other funding restricted to targeted groups based on deprivation.

Looking to the future

The future of community-based youth work is uncertain as is most aspects of our lives at present due to the impact of the coronavirus across the globe. We know that it is highly unlikely that face-to-face youth work will resume in the near future. As such, we believe our efforts are best spent supporting youth groups across Scotland, both rural and urban, to ensure that they are well placed to meet young people's needs through digital youth work. Therefore, we anticipate that the Rural Action Fund will remain on hold with the funding from both The Robertson Trust (if successfully re-funded) and The Gannochy Trust, will be re-allocated into the Youth Scotland Action Fund. This fund will continue to enable smaller youth groups to purchase equipment and essential resources to allow them to support young people, with a particular focus on mental health and wellbeing. At such time when face-to-face youth work is able to resume, we would anticipate re-launching the Rural Action Fund.

Further information

For further information on this report, please contact:

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