MARMOT ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME (2026-2028)

GRANT PROSPECTUS: YOUNG PEOPLE – NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING (NEET)

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Glossary

Term	**Definition**
KCC	Kent County Council
LEEEF	Lived Experience, Engagement and Employment Framework
MECC	Making Every Contact Count
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training

Introduction

On 13 March 2026, Kent County Council (KCC) and its partners launched the Kent Marmot Coastal Region – a long-term initiative to reduce health inequalities by addressing the social determinants of health across Kent's coastal communities. The initiative has an initial focus on work and skills. Evidence shows that being Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) is associated with poorer outcomes across employment, health, wellbeing and life opportunities. See Appendix A for further information on the Kent Marmot Coastal Region.

As part of this initiative, the Marmot Accelerator Programme (2026-2028) aims to test and evaluate innovative local approaches that help Kent residents overcome barriers to employment, education and training.

This prospectus outlines grant funding available to projects focused on supporting Kent residents, aged under 25 who are NEET, to progress towards education, employment and training. Funded projects will generate evidence and learning on ways to support young people into education, training and employment as well as identify and embed sustainable outcomes that contribute to the wider objectives of the Kent Marmot Coastal Region.

Further details on the funding aims, eligibility criteria, strategic context and project requirements are provided in the following sections and appendices.

Aims of the grant

This grant aims to fund **test-and-learn** projects to build an evidence base on ways to support young people into education, employment and training as well as inform future policy, commissioning and service development.

The grant-funded projects will support KCC to meet its pledge of helping at least 200 young people aged under 25 into education and employment, who would otherwise be part of the Not in Education, Employment or Training group (NEET). This pledge was announced as part of the Kent Marmot Coastal Region launch.

Who can apply?

Applications are welcomed from a wide range of organisations, including, but not limited to:

- Community Interest Companies (CICs)
- Faith-based organisations
- Further education colleges and training suppliers
- NHS organisations
- Not-for-profit organisations
- Parish and town councils
- Partnerships or consortia (a lead organisation must be identified and act as the main point of contact)
- Registered charities
- Schools and educational settings
- Social enterprises
- Voluntary and community sector organisations

This list is not exhaustive, and applications from other organisations able to demonstrate their capacity to deliver the aims of the Programme, in line with the grant criteria, are encouraged.

Grant applicants must:

- Be a formally constituted organisation with appropriate governance, management and financial oversight arrangements in place.
- Demonstrate financial stability and the ability to manage grant funding responsibly.
- Hold appropriate insurance cover, including Public Liability Insurance and, where applicable, Professional Indemnity Insurance.
- Have the capacity and capability to deliver the proposed project and achieve the intended outcomes within the funding period.

Funding available

KCC has allocated a total grant fund of **£90,000 for 2027/28** to support innovative projects that meet the grant criteria.

Funding is available for projects delivering within **one or more** of the following districts: **Ashford, Canterbury and Thanet**.

Grant applicants may apply for a grant of **between £10,000 and £30,000**. Grant applicants should **only** request the amount of funding required to deliver the proposed project.

Only **one fully completed application** may be submitted per Grant applicant (i.e. per organisation).

Projects must commence from **1 April 2027** and be completed by **31 March 2028**. Grant applicants may be required to submit a mobilisation plan outlining key activities, milestones, staffing, and any partnership arrangements to demonstrate readiness for delivery.

KCC reserves the right to request copies of funding applications, agreements or award letters submitted to, or received from, other funders where these may relate to, overlap with, or impact the delivery of the proposed project. This includes any associated commitments, obligations or funding conditions.

Funding is **not** available for the following activities:

- Activities organised for party political, religious or charity fundraising purposes
- Activities that promote unhealthy behaviours or illegal activity (e.g., smoking, drinking, gambling)
- Capital schemes. We define capital expenditure as that being used to meet the provision and improvement of permanent fixed assets, for example buildings, land and play parks.
- Activities which have already taken place or is funded via other sources.
- Anything which conflicts with Kent County Council's policies.
- Activities delivered by organisations that are not a legal entity.

Grant Criteria

Grant requirements

Projects **must**:

- Support a **minimum of 30 young people**, aged under 25, who are at risk of becoming, or who are currently NEET into education, employment or training.
- Be delivered within **one or more** of the following districts: Ashford, Canterbury and Thanet.
- At a minimum, achieve **at least one** of the following outcomes for participants:
  - Improve attendance and engagement with education, employment, training or support activities.
  - Increase readiness for education, employment or training.
  - Develop employability and life skills that support long-term participation in learning and work.
  - Improve awareness of available education, careers, employment and support pathways.
- Be successfully delivered between **1 April 2027** and **31 March 2028**.
- Submit a Mid-Project report and an End-of-Project report.
- Be aligned with Kent-based strategies on employment, education or training, and public health. See Appendix A for examples of key strategies.
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of local need and how it will address inequalities experienced by young people who are or at risk of becoming NEET.
- Achieve **at least one** sustainable outcome that supports long-term improvements in practice, systems, partnerships and/or local provision.
- Be delivered in a safe and professional manner.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers are appropriately trained, supported, supervised and DBS checked, when required.
- Develop and maintain appropriate information governance, data protection and confidentiality arrangements throughout the project lifecycle.

In addition to meeting the core grant requirements, applicants are **encouraged** to:

- Adopt a Making Every Contact Count **(MECC)** and the Lived Experience, Engagement and Employment Framework **(LEEEF)** approach where appropriate.

- Demonstrate how the project contributes to the wider aims of reducing health inequalities and improving outcomes for young people.

- Work collaboratively with local partners, communities and stakeholders.

- Embed the principles of the **Kent County Council** Winning for Kent, 2026-2028 **Social Value Policy** within project delivery.

- Consider innovative approaches, including the use of technology, to improve reach, engagement and outcomes.

- Share learning, challenges and good practice with the Kent Marmot Coastal Region to support wider system learning.

While these elements are not mandatory, applications that demonstrate added value through partnership working, innovation and social value will be viewed positively.

Information Governance and Data Protection

Grant recipients must:

- Ensure appropriate information governance and data protection arrangements are in place throughout the project.

- Act as the **Data Controller** for all participant information collected as part of project delivery and comply with all relevant data protection legislation.

- Submit **only** anonymised and aggregated data to KCC for monitoring and evaluation purposes. Personal or identifiable information about participants **must not** be shared with KCC unless explicitly required and agreed through appropriate information-sharing arrangements.

- Maintain appropriate records, protect participant confidentiality, and implement processes to ensure the secure collection, storage, use and disposal of data.

Governance, Policies and Procedures

Grant recipients must:

- Be a formally constituted organisation with appropriate governance, management and financial oversight arrangements in place.

- Be financially viable, hold appropriate insurance cover, and have the capacity and capability to deliver the proposed project.

- Have the relevant policies and procedures in place, appropriate to the size and nature of their organisation. This should include (either standalone or overarching policies covering the following areas), as a minimum:

  - Safeguarding Children and Safeguarding Adults
  - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
  - Data Protection and Information Governance
  - Health and Safety
  - Complaints and Feedback
  - Risk Management
  - Safer Recruitment and Volunteer Management
  - Incident Reporting and Whistleblowing

- Comply with all relevant legislation and regulatory requirements applicable to their organisation and activities. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - The Equality Act 2010.
  - UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.
  - Health and Safety legislation.
  - Safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance, including Working Together to Safeguard Children.
  - The Care Act 2014, where relevant.
  - Employment law and relevant regulatory requirements applicable to staff and volunteers.

- Ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to meet all legal obligations throughout the duration of the project.

- Ensure that all staff and volunteers involved in the project:

  - Receive appropriate induction, supervision and support.
  - Have access to relevant training necessary to undertake their role safely and effectively.
  - Receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role and responsibilities.
  - Understand their responsibilities regarding confidentiality, information governance and data protection.
  - Hold appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks where required by law or best practice.

- Maintain clear procedures for managing safeguarding concerns and ensure that all concerns are reported and responded to appropriately.

Advertising

All promotional material, such as flyers, posters and digital content, used to advertise the grant-funded project will be required to include the Kent Marmot Coastal Region logo and be approved by KCC via the Marmot Coastal Region Coordinator – Munya.Badze2@kent.gov.uk

Grant recipients may be required to support and attend events promoting the Marmot Accelerator Programme and the Kent Marmot Coastal Region.

How to Apply

Grant applications **must** be submitted via the online application form. [insert application form] The application window opens on **Wednesday 18 November 2026** at **9:30am** and closes at **11.45pm on Sunday 10 January 2027**. Late applications will not be considered.

Grant applicants should note the following requirements:

- Only **one fully completed application** may be submitted per grant applicant (i.e. organisation).
- Grant applications **must** request funding of **between £10,000 and £30,000** and **only** request the amount of funding required to deliver the proposed project.
- Grant applications must **only** be submitted using the online application.
- **KCC reserves the right to reject applications that do not meet the requirements outlined within this prospectus.**

Timeline

Activity	**Date**
Grant window opens	Wednesday 18 November 2026
Grant window closes	Sunday 10 January 2027
Evaluation and moderation of applications	January / February 2027
Notification of outcomes	March 2027
Project start date	Thursday 1 April 2027
Project end date	By Friday 31 March 2028

Queries

Any queries regarding the grant prospectus and application process should be emailed to integratedteam@kent.gov.uk with the subject line **"Marmot Accelerator Programme Grant – Young People (NEET)"**.

The deadline for submitting queries is **12 noon on Monday 4 January 2027**.

How applications will be assessed

KCC will ensure the grant process is transparent, open and fair. Applications will be considered by a small panel from KCC, comprising of at least two officers.

The panel will be looking for:

- Value for money
- Understanding of local need
- Alignment with relevant Kent strategies and policies
- Sustainability and legacy
- Delivery capability
- Evaluation and effectiveness
- Partnership working and collaboration
- Monitoring, evaluation and learning arrangements

Applications will be assessed and scored against the scoring matrix set out in Appendix B. Projects must achieve at least a 'Pass' to be considered for funding.

KCC reserves the right to :

- increase the total grant funding available.
- not award the total grant funding available.
- take into account the overall geographical spread of successful applications and the location of the organisations when making final funding decisions, to help ensure equitable access to funding opportunities and benefits for communities within Ashford, Canterbury and Thanet.
- reject applications where the application form has not been fully completed or where the request for funding exceeds £30,000 or is below the value of £10,000.
- request additional financial information where required and to withhold or withdraw a grant offer where sufficient assurance cannot be obtained.

As part of KCC's grant assessment process, all organisations recommended for funding will be subject to proportionate financial due diligence checks prior to any grant award being confirmed. This may include reviewing information available through Companies House and other relevant sources where applicable. These checks help to ensure that public funds are awarded responsibly, that organisations are financially viable, and that they have the capacity to deliver the proposed project and achieve the intended outcomes.

Notification of Outcomes and Feedback

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application in **March 2027**, following completion of the assessment, moderation and approval process.

Due to the anticipated high level of interest in this funding opportunity and the volume of applications expected, KCC will not be able to provide individual written or verbal feedback to unsuccessful applicants. Applicants are therefore strongly encouraged to ensure they have carefully reviewed the grant Prospectus, eligibility requirements and application guidance before submitting their application.

Funding decisions will be final and there will be no appeals process.

This approach enables resources to be focused on the fair and efficient administration of the grant, ensuring that all applications can be assessed consistently and that funding decisions are communicated to applicants in a timely manner.

Next steps for Successful Applicants

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a formal Grant Agreement with KCC before any funding can be released. Projects must not commence before the agreed start date of **1 April 2027**.

Prior to the grant award, successful grant applicants may be required to provide:

- A Theory of Change model for the project. Refer to this Guidance on what to include: Guidance-for-creating-a-theory-of-change.pdf
- Evidence of their governance and financial arrangements.
- Copies of relevant policies and procedures, including safeguarding, data protection and health and safety policies.
- Proof of appropriate insurance cover.
- Any additional information requested during the due diligence process.

During delivery, grant recipients will be expected to:

- Deliver the project in line with the approved application and Grant Agreement.
- Submit monitoring information and project reports at agreed intervals. See Appendix C for further information.
- Share learning and good practice to contribute to the wider evidence base on supporting young people who are NEET into education, employment and training.
- Comply with all information governance, safeguarding and grant monitoring requirements.

Projects must be completed by **31 March 2028**.

Payment Schedule

Funding will be paid in accordance with the Payment Schedule set out in Appendix D.

All payments are subject to satisfactory progress and compliance with the terms and conditions of the Grant Agreement.

Organisations that are new suppliers to KCC will be required to complete supplier verification checks before payment can be processed. Applicants should allow sufficient time for these checks to be completed.

Appendix A - Kent Marmot Coastal Region

People living in coastal areas often have poorer health than those living elsewhere. This difference, or 'coastal excess', remains even when factors such as age and deprivation are taken into account.

In response to the 'coastal excess' in Kent, on 13 March 2026, KCC, along with its partners, launched the Kent Marmot Coastal Region to reduce health inequalities by addressing the wider factors that affect people's health and wellbeing in these communities. The initiative has a long-term focus in the following districts: Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone & Hythe, Swale and Thanet.

The Kent Marmot Coastal Region is a strategic priority for KCC and supports the ambitions set out in Reforming Kent (2025-2028). It will be achieved through a three-tiered approach:

- Tier 1: Top-level change through a long-term coastal focus and culture change to address inequalities
- Tier 2: Mid-level change through system alignment
- Tier 3: Ground-level influence through small-scale impact testing via 'Marmot Accelerators'

The initial focus of the initiative is on improving outcomes relating to work and skills for work, recognising the important role that education, training and employment can play in reducing inequalities and improving health and wellbeing. The focus on work and skills has been informed by the recommendations of the Kent Marmot Coastal Region Data Report (2024), which identifies opportunities to strengthen pathways into education, training and employment through local partnership working, employer engagement and community-based support.

The Marmot Accelerator Programme forms part of Tier 3. It will test local level approaches that can help people overcome barriers to employment, education and training. Projects funded through the Programme are expected to contribute to these wider objectives and align with relevant local and regional strategies that support skills development, employment and economic inclusion. These include:

- The Get Kent and Medway working plan (2025)
- Connect to Work in Kent & Medway
- Kent and Medway Economic Framework,
- Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent and Medway 2025-2030
- The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

For further information on the Kent Marmot Coastal Region, contact the Marmot Coastal Region Coordinator – Munya.Badze2@kent.gov.uk

Appendix B – Application scoring matrix

Status	Descriptor Score	Descriptor	**Scoring Descriptors Covering:** – Ability to meet requirements – Degree of omissions – Confidence in delivery – Level of detail and evidence – Concerns and risks
Fail	0	Unacceptable	The response is extensively incoherent, fragmented, and weak. • It fundamentally fails to satisfy any of the Authority's requirements and falls far below expectations. • There are extensive omissions, and the response provides overwhelming doubt about the applicant's ability to deliver the requirements. • The response is unrealistic, unjustified, and lacks content with no supporting evidence. • There are extensive and serious concerns, representing an unacceptable level of risk.
Fail	20	Poor	The response is incomplete, incoherent, and weak. • It fails to satisfy the majority of the Authority's requirements and is below expectations. • There are significant omissions, and the response creates substantial doubt about the applicant's ability to deliver the requirements. • The response is largely unrealistic, unjustified, and lacking content with minimal supporting evidence. • There are several serious concerns representing an unacceptable level of risk.
Pass	40	Adequate	The response is coherent and acceptable. • It satisfies the Authority's requirements in most respects, just meeting expectations. • There are several minor omissions, and the response provides limited confidence in the applicant's ability to deliver the requirements. The response is generally realistic and justified, with some supporting content and evidence. • There is one serious concern, or several minor concerns or risks which are considered acceptable but require significant action.
Pass	60	Good	The response is coherent and strong. • It satisfies the Authority's requirements in almost all

			respects, meeting expectations comfortably. • There are limited minor omissions, and the response provides confidence in the applicant's ability to deliver almost all the requirements. • The response is largely realistic and justified, with supporting content and evidence. • There are no more than two minor concerns or risks which are considered acceptable but require action.
Pass	80	Very Good	The response is full, coherent, and robust. • It satisfies the Authority's requirements in every respect and meets expectations very well. • There are no omissions, and the response provides full confidence in the applicant's ability to deliver all requirements. • The response is realistic and well-justified, with comprehensive supporting content and evidence. • There are no concerns or risks raised.
Pass	100	Excellent	• The response meets the requirements of a "Very Good" response, then goes further to exceed requirements by providing added value, continuous improvement, potentially through innovative means

Appendix C – Grant Reporting

Grant recipients are required to submit:

- A Mid-Project report by an agreed date with the Council.
- An End-of-Project report by 31 March 2028.

Further guidance and reporting templates will be provided by the Council as part for the grant award documentation. The reports will be used to capture outcomes, learnings and insights from funded projects, to inform and contribute to the wider Kent Marmot Coastal Region.

Reports must be submitted to Munya.Badze2@kent.gov.uk

Appendix D – Payment Schedule

Payment Schedule	
Payment 1 (50%)	Within 30 days upon receipt of a signed Grant Agreement and satisfactory completion of due diligence checks*
Payment 2 (20%)	Within 30 days upon receipt and approval of the Mid-Project report
Payment 3 (30%)	Within 30 days upon receipt and approval of the End-of-Project report

*Please note that where an organisation has not previously worked with the Council and needs to be set up on the Council's financial systems, the initial payment may take longer than 30 days while the necessary supplier onboarding and verification processes are completed. Suppliers are therefore encouraged to return all required documentation promptly to help avoid delays.

The Council may withhold, reduce or recover grant funding where the grant recipient:

- Fails to deliver the agreed project and outcomes.
- Does not submit the required reports.
- Breaches the terms and conditions of the Grant Agreement.
- Uses grant funding for purposes other than those approved.

The grant amount is fixed and will not be increased to cover any overspend incurred by the grant recipient in delivering the Project. Any costs incurred above the agreed grant amount shall be the responsibility of the grant recipient.