

## SOTSEF SED 2026 Community Zone Contributor

### Small Bursary Scheme - Guidelines

Please read these guidance notes carefully noting that the scheme is discretionary and applicable only for those contributing to the Community Zone as part of Science and Engineering Day (SED) on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2026, part of the wider Southampton Science and Engineering Festival (SOTSEF).

#### What is the purpose of the scheme?

The purpose of the small bursary scheme is to:

1. Minimise the financial cost to small, local VCSE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise) groups and organisations - including community groups, organisations, charities and Community Interest Companies (CICs) - of exhibiting at SED on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2026.
2. To therefore support and encourage small, local community groups and organisations to take part in SED 2026 who might otherwise face barriers to doing so.
3. To enable us to support the work of small, local community groups and organisations by making our engagement platforms such as SED 2026 genuinely accessible to them.
4. To support small, local community groups and organisations who wish to exhibit at SED 2026 to create an engagement plan, which describes how they will engage with visitors at SED 2026.

The bursary is part of a bespoke package of support for small, local community groups and organisations taking part in SED, which also includes: drop-in sessions and Q&A (Question & Answer) sessions; opportunities for networking, and trying out activities; step-by-step support throughout the process, from registering to being there on the day; template documents; and access to a team of named contacts specifically supporting community-led exhibits at SED 2026.

SED 2026 is part of the wider Southampton Science and Engineering Festival (SOTSEF) 2026, taking place 6<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> March 2026 (coinciding with [British Science Week](#)). For more information, visit: [www.sotsef.co.uk](http://www.sotsef.co.uk)

#### How much money can I apply for?

A small bursary for those that meet eligibility criteria, is available of **up to £200.00 (inclusive of VAT) per group or organisation.**

This amount has been discussed with community groups as likely to be sufficient to stop financial concerns being a barrier to them exhibiting at SED 2026.

## When should I apply?

Applications should be made as part of the Stage Two submission of the SED 2026 Exhibitor Registration Process, between **Monday 12<sup>th</sup> January and Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026**. We are also happy to discuss your need for the small bursary as part of your Stage One submission, and when considering exhibiting at SED.

## Who is eligible to apply for the small bursary?

Small, local community groups, organisations, charities and CICs (i.e. VCSE sector groups and organisations) that have submitted a Stage One submission to exhibit at SED 2026.

These should be activities that will be physically located in the 'Community Zone' at SED 2026, unless there is a valid reason for them to be located elsewhere (e.g. a particular link with a theme or other activities in another area of SED).

We are looking for community groups/activities that:

1. Are interested in developing positive relationships between their group or organisation and the University of Southampton (see below).
2. Are part of, or would like to become part of, one or more of our Public and Community Engagement (PCE) Hubs ([more information on the PCE Hubs here](#) and the [link to join the PCE Hubs here](#)).
3. Take appropriate steps to look after the safety and wellbeing of all the people involved.
4. Are realistic, with a clear plan for how you will engage visitors during SED 2026 and how they will benefit from engaging with you.
5. Consider value for money in their itemised budget.

## How can I develop positive relationships between my community group or organisation and the University of Southampton?

If your organisation doesn't currently have any positive relationship with the University, this is a chance to start building one. If you already have a relationship with the University, your application needs to show how you intend to develop this further. For example...

Starting out in creating relationships:

- Will your staff/volunteers will feel more able to reach out to the University as a result of getting to know us?
- Will your beneficiaries be more likely to consider the University as an employer or place to study in future?

Building on or growing existing relationships:

- Will there be University staff and students involved with delivering your SED 2026 exhibit, your wider work, or specific projects?
- Are University staff or students among the residents who benefit from your work?

**It is NOT essential to have confirmed involvement from university staff or students when applying for the small bursary.** We are looking for a realistic approach.

### **How many grants are available?**

This is a relatively new scheme which we hope to continue to run annually for both Science and Engineering Day and, eventually, our [Southampton Arts and Humanities Festival \(UoSArtsHumFest\)](#) family-friendly event, Arts and Humanities Day.

We hope to support up to 10 community-led exhibits at SED 2026 with the small bursary.

**Please note that when making your application, we are unable to support applications that request more than the grant limit.**

### **Who or what is NOT eligible for funding through the small bursary scheme?**

The aim of the scheme is to fund contributors of the SED 2026 Community Zone who need support as part of the development and delivery of their engagement activity on the day. We will not fund:

- Standard for-profit organisations.
- Groups or organisations with an annual income of more than £250,000.
  - Groups who have an annual income of between £50,000 and £250,000 will be treated as a lower priority. This means that your application will be considered last, once all the applications from groups with an annual income of less than £50,000 have been considered.
- Individuals.
- Statutory bodies, including schools. We will fund organisations that work with statutory bodies and activities happening on the premises of statutory bodies (e.g., activities at after-school clubs).
- Politically affiliated groups, organisations.
- Groups or organisations without an organisational bank account.
- Companies without a governing document. Governing documents must be supplied along with your application if you're a company.

- Applications led by members of staff from any university, including the University of Southampton. Students from any local university can apply but must do so through an organisation (e.g., a student society) and must be working with and for locally based residents, including residents who are not currently students.
- Groups or organisations whose only charitable objective is the promotion of religious or political beliefs. We check this against your Charity Commission registration, not what's on your website.
- Staff time that isn't specifically for contributors of the SED 2026 Community Zone, i.e. we will not fund staff involved with the general day-to-day running of your organisation (e.g. receptionists, janitors, cleaners). We will fund staff already employed by your organisation for any time being spent delivering your contribution for the SED 2026 Community Zone. You are also welcome to recruit new staff.
- General running costs of a building or organisation, e.g. rent, utilities.
- Renovations or other building work.
- Applications where there isn't evidence of a will to engage positively with the University of Southampton.
- Groups or organisations in financial difficulties.

### **Support with applying for the small bursary scheme**

If you have questions or need assistance with any part of the small bursary scheme process, we are happy to speak to you on the phone, over an online video call such as Teams or Zoom, or even meet you in person. (If meeting in person, a mutually suitable venue can be agreed). We allow up to 20-30 minutes per meeting. We may be able to speak for longer or more than once if needed and our staff have time.

To arrange a call or meeting, please email [festival.community@soton.ac.uk](mailto:festival.community@soton.ac.uk) (inbox checked during working hours Monday-Friday) or call 023 8059 7521 (9.30am-5.30pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, or Friday) to arrange a time slot. When contacting us, please let us know if you need extra assistance to meet with us, such as BSL video interpreting, text relay or a meeting venue with level or step-free access.

You will be speaking with a member of the University's SED Community Zone team, made up of staff from our [Public Engagement with Research unit \(PERu\)](#).

### **Further Support**

Those that are registering as a contributor for the community zone as part of science and engineering day and/or are applying for a small bursary are welcome to come along to two scheduled drop-in sessions facilitated by a PERu team member and our In-Resident Community Development Worker, taking place on;

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2026**, 15:00-16:30pm - hybrid - in-person or online at Southampton Voluntary Services, Queensway Room, The Voluntary Action Centre, St. Mary Street, Southampton, SO14 1NW.

To join online, visit;

### [Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 396 994 450 653 79

Passcode: Yi9Pw9Pc

**Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026: 11:00am-12:00pm** - online, via Teams, join link;

### [Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 394 265 249 234 25

Passcode: ES9aE2Ea

#### **Who will decide if my application gets funded?**

Whilst this is a discretionary bursary scheme, a small panel of university staff involved in communications, social responsibility and community engagement will review applications alongside our partners from [SVS \(Southampton Voluntary Services\)](#), a local external organisation that represents the VCSE sector. Panel members are required to declare conflicts of interest and do not mark applications where these arise.

#### **When will I hear if my application has been funded?**

We aim to let you know within the week commencing Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2026, i.e. the week before the Stage 3 submission window opens (Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026).

For more information about the SED 2026 submission process, see: [Southampton Science and Engineering Festival 2026 - SED-registration](#)

#### **What terms and conditions apply if I accept funding from the University?**

As the funding is to support exhibiting at SED 2026, we expect your group/organisation to do so, and to adhere to our [Code of Conduct](#) as contributors to the Festival. The following things would also help us in working with your group/organisation:

- When taking pictures or films of your SED 2026 activity, please try and get **consent** for the University to use any content publicly in relevant communications (we can provide the relevant consent forms).
- Please **keep in touch** with us, both before and after the event, and especially if your preparation for SED 2026 is not going to plan as **we would like to help you overcome challenges where we can**.

- Where appropriate, please **acknowledge** the University's support for your SED 2026 exhibit (we can provide you with e.g. templates for printed materials).

### **How long will you keep my personal data for?**

For unsuccessful applications, we will keep personal data included in your application (including your name and contact details) for up to five years, then delete it. We will keep a copy of the rest of your application indefinitely. For successful applications, we will keep your name and contact details on our records indefinitely but will delete your signature and bank account details after five years. [Read more about how we use your personal data.](#)

### **What if my questions have not been answered here?**

Please contact the SED Community Zone team via: [festival.community@soton.ac.uk](mailto:festival.community@soton.ac.uk)