



Frequently Asked Questions

Who can apply for SHINE funding?

We welcome applications from individual mainstream secondary schools, or groups of schools, within the City of Sunderland (such as Multi Academy Trusts or informal learning clusters). Although SHINE Sunderland is specifically reserved for mainstream secondary schools, we may accept collaborations involving primary schools, alternative provisions, or other providers/organisations, provided that a secondary school takes the lead in running the project.

How can I get an application form?

Our full application forms are not publicly available. Please submit an outline proposal, including an indicative budget and summary of the work, via email, to grants@shinetrust.org.uk and a member of the team will be in contact to discuss your idea further.

What are your deadlines for submitting a funding application?

Our main application deadlines are at the end of October and March for projects starting in January, April, or the following academic year. Exact dates will be confirmed once you have submitted an initial enquiry.

How much funding does SHINE provide?

We anticipate allocating the majority of funding to projects with a 3-5 year timeframe, though 2-year projects will also be considered. Projects with a duration of 1 year or less are unlikely to receive approval.

Grants are anticipated to be between £20,000 and £100,000 per year. Applications at the higher end of this range will be required to demonstrate greater impact and reach a larger number of beneficiaries.

Projects that are new, in the pilot/testing phase, or have a smaller reach in terms of student impact, will typically receive funding at the lower end of this range and may be supported for a shorter duration. In contrast, projects with a stronger evidence base and a larger number of beneficiaries will be considered for funding at the higher end of the range. For more details, please refer to our [Approach to Evidence](#) guidance.

What do you look for in a successful application?

SHINE hopes to identify innovative approaches to addressing the needs of children in Sunderland. Projects that demonstrate innovation – whether through the type of intervention or the model and method of delivery – are more likely to succeed.

Our aim is to develop the very best practice in schools and make a lasting contribution to the capacity and potential of schools, teachers and students across Sunderland. For more information, please review our [Application Guidelines](#).

SHINE will assess proposals against the advice provided in our [Application Guidelines](#), scoping work and the additional information provided in these *FAQs*.

In general, we look for:

- ▶ Evidence that the project meets the needs of students in Sunderland, for example, by focusing on areas identified from the scoping work.
- ▶ A clear statement of what the barrier is that you hope to address and how this links to the core objectives for the fund. When discussing the problem, this should be directly referenced to your school's context
- ▶ A clear explanation of how you hope to address this problem, including an outline of the project's structure. Imagine you are describing your plans to someone completely unfamiliar with them.
- ▶ A clear statement of the expected outcomes. A small number of specific, attainment-focused outcomes in core subjects are typically more valuable than a long list of vague or less defined goals.
- ▶ Clear information on how you plan to measure outcomes and evaluate the impact of your project. How will you determine if the intervention has successfully addressed the problem you identified?
- ▶ A plan for the long-term sharing and sustainability of the project. This should include how you intend to share key learnings with other schools, settings, or organisations, and how the intervention can be maintained after the grant funding has ended. We will consider the intensity of the project relative to its cost, its potential for significant impact, and how it can be sustained after funding concludes. Additionally, we will review your budget to ensure that all expenses are reasonable.
- ▶ Evidence of value for money. One way we might look at this is through the cost per child/student/beneficiary. We will look at how intensive the project is for the cost, how likely it is to achieve significant impact, and how it might be sustained once funding has ended. We will also assess your budget to confirm that all costings are reasonable.
- ▶ SHINE looks favourably on applications that involve collaboration with other schools. We are also interested in understanding how your school(s) collaborate with other schools, families, community groups, or organisations. Additionally, please share any relevant experience you have in developing and testing ideas or projects.
- ▶ Evidence that the project has the potential for sustained change over time. One way we may look at this is by considering the duration of the grant and the funding needed for implementation.



How does SHINE's application process work?

Applicants planning to submit a proposal by one of the draft application deadlines should contact SHINE well in advance – ideally one to two months beforehand – to discuss their project idea and complete the necessary application forms.

Once an enquiry has been submitted, the next steps are:

- ▶ We will contact you within two weeks to arrange a telephone call or meeting to discuss your project idea in more detail to ascertain whether the proposal is a fit for funding.
- ▶ We will then provide SHINE's application forms and advise of the next deadline for draft application submissions; if you have any additional queries about the forms, please contact SHINE by email at grants@shinetrust.org.uk.
- ▶ Please submit your application form and budget template online by the draft application deadline for the funding round you are applying to.
- ▶ SHINE will review your draft application and provide feedback before the final deadline. In some cases, we may advise you not to proceed with your application. If this occurs, we will make every effort to provide you with constructive feedback and explain the reasons behind our recommendation.
- ▶ Applicants can then rework and amend their application based on this feedback and should resubmit the forms by the final application deadline for the relevant funding round.
- ▶ We will provide a decision on whether your application has been successful within one month of the final application deadline.

How competitive is SHINE funding?

We will be available throughout the application process to offer hands-on support and guidance in developing your proposal. Through our collaborative funding approach, we hope to identify projects that best align with our criteria and priorities and have the highest likelihood of approval from our Board of Trustees. However, please note that our funding remains competitive at this final stage.

We are happy to provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants to explain the reasons behind our decision. For applications that are not successful, we may offer earlier-stage development funding for ideas that show promise but may need strengthening prior to a final application.

Do you provide bursaries or capital build costs?

SHINE currently does not provide grants for bursaries, simple resources, capital build costs or direct replacements of statutory funding. Additionally, we will not fund ideas where the total equipment, resource or license costs are over 50% of the total budget. We will pay for administrative support and cover should teaching staff need to take time out of the classroom to deliver aspects of the project. All proposals to SHINE should be for a sustained project lasting between 2 and 5 years that can be effectively monitored and evaluated.

I'm part of a Multi Academy Trust that has schools outside of Sunderland, can the grant work with these settings as well?

SHINE Sunderland is dedicated to supporting only the schools within Sunderland. Consequently, we cannot approve applications that involve schools outside the city. If an application aims to extend support beyond Sunderland, SHINE may consider contributing a percentage of the funding specifically to support the Sunderland schools involved.



Do you have any priority areas for the fund?

SHINE aims for the fund to address the challenges identified in the scoping work. We are therefore particularly interested in projects that:

- ▶ Improve **literacy** skills by implementing evidence-informed approaches that improve standards across the cohort.
- ▶ Provide the foundations for successful **transition** between primary and secondary school to improve secondary school outcomes.
- ▶ Address underlying barriers that prevent children from reaching their full potential, including, but not limited to, **mental health challenges, attendance, parental engagement** or **SEND**.
- ▶ Improve **aspirations and engagement**, and offer enriching educational experiences, especially for disadvantaged students with high prior attainment.

However, to ensure the biggest impact, we are particularly interested in ensuring that all contexts and communities within the City of Sunderland are served by our funding.

Does an application need to have match funding in place?

SHINE encourages applications that include some form of match funding, although this is not essential. This match funding can take the form of 'in-kind' contributions, such as a school covering the costs of senior leadership time, teacher time, or providing space for the project to take place.

I am a school that wants to submit a proposal to work with other schools. Do I need to have the schools signed up/committed before applying?

We encourage applicants to secure commitments from schools prior to submitting their applications. This ensures there is sufficient demand and support for your proposed project. However, if identifying schools in advance is not feasible, please include the following in your application:

- ▶ Evidence of your school's track record and ability to foster partnerships with other schools.
- ▶ Evidence demonstrating demand for your intervention from schools.
- ▶ A plan outlining how you will identify and engage schools to secure their commitment.

I'm unclear about what SHINE means by 'scaling a project'. What would this look like in an application?

Our aim is to help schools and teachers build and develop their ideas so that learnings can be shared, ultimately leading to significantly improved outcomes for large numbers of disadvantaged children. While identifying other schools or settings interested in adopting your innovation is essential for scaling, the design of the innovation and the support provided to teachers will play a crucial role in the success of this collaborative effort.

Generally, the evidence we would look for in an application might include scenarios such as:

- ▶ The outcomes will be shared with other schools in the area, a MAT or informal cluster.
- ▶ The evidence will be shared more widely through other specialist hubs/knowledge sharing events or networks.
- ▶ The intervention involves a CPD model or resource pack.

What evidence base does SHINE require to fund an intervention?

SHINE seeks to fund a variety of interventions, from innovative early-stage ideas to those that have been piloted in your school or setting, as well as well-established concepts supported by existing educational research.

Our requirements for evidence depend on the size of the grant requested, and you can find more guidance in our [Approach to Evidence](#).

What are SHINE's monitoring requirements once a grant is awarded?

SHINE requires bi-annual reporting, consisting of a lighter mid-term update and a more comprehensive end-of-year report. Our monitoring requirements will depend on the size of the grant, the nature of the project, and the outcomes outlined in your application. We encourage projects to utilise existing data collected by schools or settings to evaluate their impact on attainment. For more information on evidence quality and evaluation, please refer to our [Approach to Evidence](#). As the funding request increases, we expect a stronger evidence base to support the project. Successful applicants will be invited to participate in workshops led by evaluation experts, as well as opportunities to collaborate with other grantees and receive ad hoc advice and support. This will help ensure your project achieves the desired impact and allows you to identify opportunities for learning, adaptation, and improvement throughout its duration. For more information on what to expect as a SHINE grantee see our [What to Expect](#) document.

If successful how and when will I receive the grant payment?

We work with successful grantees throughout all stages of the project. Payments are therefore generally paid three times per year.

My school is part of a Multi Academy Trust, can payments be made to the MAT rather than the school in Sunderland?

SHINE is happy to make grant payments to Multi Academy Trust. Any successful grants must be ring-fenced to the project and participating Sunderland schools.

What can I expect as a SHINE grantee?

SHINE is a 'hands-on' funder, and we work with successful grantees throughout their projects. We provide ongoing support in areas such as project management, monitoring, and evaluation. Grantees can also expect regular collaboration within Sunderland and opportunities to network and engage with others across our broader grant portfolio and beyond. For more details on what it means to be a SHINE grantee, please refer to our [What to Expect](#) document.

What does SHINE mean by 'demonstrates innovation'?

Applicants should show how their idea is different, or an improvement on what currently happens in school. Examples of current SHINE-funded projects include: [Whitefield Primary School](#), [Advance Learning Partnership](#), [Three Saints MAT](#), [North East Learning Trust](#) and [Vocabulous](#).

What does SHINE mean by 'sustainability after funding ends'?

As a funder, SHINE seeks assurances that its grants will be used effectively, delivering long-term, lasting impact. We aim to support projects that will continue benefitting children in Sunderland even after the grant period ends. SHINE is committed to funding initiatives with the potential for long-term sustainability and growth. Therefore, the sustainability section of your project application should clearly outline how all aspects of the project will endure over time, ensuring lasting change and maximising the value of the grant, so resources are not lost.

If you have any further questions or would like more information, please get in touch with the grants team at grants@shinetrust.org.uk or give us a ring on 0113 280 5872. You can also find further guidance on completing a SHINE application at shinetrust.org.uk/sunderland-support/