

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can apply for SHINE funding?

We accept applications from individual mainstream secondary schools or groups of schools in the City of Sunderland (e.g. Multi Academy Trusts or informal learning clusters).

When will the new criteria apply from?

The new criteria will be in place for all funding applications from the new academic year, September 2026. The revised criteria only apply to new applications and all projects funded under the previous criteria will continue as planned until the end of the grant period.

I am already in conversation about a funding application for next year that does not meet these new criteria, can I still progress this bid?

Some schools are already working with SHINE to develop a proposal under the previous criteria for consideration at the next panel meeting (December 2026). In recognition of the existing work that has gone into the proposals, these applications will still be progressed, and schools who fall into this category will be informed directly. This is intended only as a mitigation of any challenges arising from the transition to the new criteria, and no further funding conversations under the old criteria will be considered beyond this.

How can I get an application form?

Our full application forms are not publicly available; please submit an outline proposal including an anticipated budget and summary of the work 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, January and March, for projects to begin in either January or April of the following academic year. Exact dates will be confirmed once you have submitted an initial enquiry.

How much funding does SHINE provide?

In the next phase of **SHINE Sunderland**, we are seeking proposals for new work with a minimum grant request of £200,000.

I want to apply for a grant to develop, extend or sustain my existing project, but this will not be as much as £200,000. Is there any opportunity to apply for this kind of funding?

Yes, in some circumstances a grant application for less than £200,000 may be accepted to develop or extend an existing project, or to build sustainability or collaboration, as long as the existing project meets the new criteria.

What is the total funding allocation for each secondary school?

Each of the 18 mainstream secondary schools in Sunderland has a funding allocation of £620,000.

I want to apply for a grant to lead a collaborative project with other schools, if I am successful will this grant award be deducted from my total allocation?

If you are applying for a grant to work with other Sunderland secondary schools, the grant awarded will be segmented into the component that will directly benefit your school, and the component made up of delivery, time or resources directed towards other collaborating schools. Only the component that will directly benefit your school will be deducted from your allocation. The component calculated as directed towards other schools will be deducted from the allocations of those collaborating schools and not from your allocation as the lead/applicant school. This segmentation only applies to collaborations with other Sunderland secondary schools who have an allocation from the SHINE Sunderland fund.

If you wish to collaborate with schools who do not have an allocation within the SHINE Sunderland fund (e.g. primary schools, alternative provision) then the entire grant amount awarded will be deducted from your allocation, as it will be considered that all of the work directly benefits your school.

Please note, the full grant amount will still be paid to your school as the lead/applicant school. This segmentation calculation applies only for the purpose of understanding how much of their total allocation each school has used. It is intended to ensure a lead/applicant school can take full advantage of their total allocation, while maximizing the benefits of collaboration across the City. Similarly, this approach ensures that if a collaborating school is benefiting from funded work led by another school, then this benefit is fairly represented in their total drawdown against their allocation.

For consistency and transparency, SHINE will send a termly update to schools with their funding allocation.

How will you calculate components that directly benefit the applicant/lead school vs components that are directed towards other Sunderland secondaries?

We make this calculation based on the budget you provide, and in some cases by applying educated assumptions about the distribution of central budget lines, such as project management time, resources or training.

The more specific you can be in your budget about how each cost line is distributed (e.g. which schools are accessing training, how many staff, for how many days, what resources are being produced and who will access them), the more accurate we can be when distributing grant allocations across each participating secondary school.

Some examples of how we may allocate funding are described below however this may not cover all possibilities:

- If a staff member from a collaborating school works on a project and the applicant / lead school provides the collaborating school with funding for the time of the staff member this funding will be deducted from the allocation of the collaborating school directly.

- If a grant pays for training and resources which will be distributed across more than one collaborating school, this cost will be deducted from the allocation of the collaborating school directly.

- Central or core costs such as project management costs will be allocated between each participant school, in a way which recognises the 'benefit' each school receives from the grant. In some cases, this may be distributed evenly across the allocations of all the collaborating schools, however, if we have more information on engagement levels of collaborating schools we may be able to make a more bespoke allocation of the benefit arising to each school from core costs.

What are the priority areas for the revised criteria?

SHINE aims for the fund to address the challenges identified in the scoping work. During this phase of SHINE Sunderland, we are interested in projects that:

- Improve literacy and numeracy skills by implementing evidence-informed approaches that improve standards across the whole cohort.
- Provide the foundations for successful transition between primary and secondary school to improve secondary school outcomes
- Provide pathways to future careers in Sunderland (connecting to FutureReady Sunderland).

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

We would prefer that schools were signed up before applying, as this helps to confirm that there is sufficient demand and buy-in from other scools for the project you are proposing. In addition, you may need to consider whether other schools have sufficient allocation left to work with you.

If it is not possible or practical to identify schools in advance of making an application, then evidence of your school's track record and capacity to develop partnerships with schools, evidence of demand for your intervention from schools, or a plan for identifying and establishing the commitment of schools should be included in your application. Evidence could include a clear plan for identifying and establishing engagement, with clear timelines for meeting target school numbers. If targets for recruiting other collaborating schools cannot be met, the grant may be reduced to reflect this.

Does a successful proposal need to include direct delivery with other schools?

In this phase of the **SHINE Sunderland** fund we wish to build on the strong foundations for shared practice and lasting impact established in the first stages of the fund. We would like to know how your school plans to work in collaboration with other schools, however, this does not need to be a formal proposal for direct funded collaboration during delivery of the work. Collaboration could include attending meetings to reflect on practice, successes and learnings, presenting at conferences or other opportunities to share insights, attending collaborative events, or other approaches to linking successful work across the City.

What do you look for in a successful application?

Successful applications are likely to include:

- A clear statement of the barrier you are hoping to address, which aligns with the funding criteria, followed by a clear explanation of the project you are seeking funding for. This should include a comprehensive description of the work, an outline of how, when and where it will be delivered, and why you think this work will directly address the barrier you identified.
- An outline of any evidence base for the work you are proposing, and/or links to existing work within or outside Sunderland, including other projects funded by **SHINE Sunderland**.
- Overall, these sections should form a clear narrative that is understandable to someone unfamiliar with your school or with other work in this area. Project descriptions that provide a clear sense of why you have chosen the approach and what it will look like 'on the ground' are really valuable. It is also helpful to make sure any acronyms are spelled out in full.
- Outcomes that are directly linked to attainment and to the core fund criteria. A small number of specific, attainment-related outcomes in core subjects is usually more useful than a large list of less clearly defined outcomes.
- A clear description of your aspirations for the long-term sharing and sustainability of the project, including how you might share anything you have learned with other schools, settings or organisations within and beyond Sunderland, and how the intervention can be sustained once any grant funding has come to an end.
- Evidence of additionality. All work funded through **SHINE Sunderland** must be additional to work and staffing already covered by school core funding. SHINE has a separate **policy on additionality**

and we will assess this directly when reviewing your budget. We may seek additional information to confirm this.

▶ 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 and in keeping with SHINE's charitable objectives.

Is there any more information available on producing a good proposal?

SHINE have produced a number of resources on what good practice might look like, and you might find these useful to refer to when developing a proposal. Click **here** to visit SHINE's Insights page.

How does SHINE's application process work?

Applicants hoping to submit a proposal at one of the **draft application deadlines** should ensure they are in contact with SHINE with sufficient time to establish a discussion on the project idea and to complete the necessary application forms. This is generally 1 to 2 months in advance of the **draft application deadline**, and 3-4 months in advance of the final decision point.

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

▶ We will contact you to arrange an in person meeting to discuss the project idea in more detail and confirm if the proposal is a good fit for funding.

▶ We will then provide SHINE's application forms and advise of the next deadline for **draft application** submissions.

▶ You should submit your application form and budget template online in advance of the **draft application deadline** for the funding round you are applying in.

▶ SHINE will review your draft application and provide feedback prior to the **final application deadline**. In some circumstances, SHINE may respond at this point and recommend that you do not proceed further with your application. If this happens, we will always endeavour to give you detailed feedback and information on why we have provided this advice

▶ Applicants can then amend their application in response to 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**.

▶ You will be able to contact the **SHINE Sunderland** lead (Leanne Marquis) at any point during the process and up to the final application deadline for any queries or support you need with the application.

How likely is my application to be successful?

We work in a hands-on way to support schools through the application process. In the first phase of the Sunderland fund 75% of proposals were successful at the first attempt, and all proposals that were resubmitted with recommended amendments to a subsequent panel were successful.

The updated criteria are intended to provide more clarity, and we will work to progress bids that clearly meet priorities and have a strong chance of being approved. However, our assessment process at this final stage is rigorous and designed to ensure that all funded work represents the best possible use of the available funding. We are happy to provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants on the reasons for this decision and may offer resubmission where a proposal contains work that is in line with the criteria but may need strengthening to be approved.

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

SHINE Sunderland focuses on Sunderland schools only, therefore, we are unable to approve applications that support schools outside of Sunderland.

Does an application need to have match funding in place?

SHINE welcomes applications with some form of match funding in place, though this is not essential. This could be in the form of other external funding for some component of the work, or as 'in-kind' funding, where a school is willing to cover the cost of some teacher time or space for a project to take place. It should be clear on the budget what any match funding is being directed towards.

Do you provide bursaries or capital build costs?

SHINE does not provide grants for bursaries, resources that are not connected to a project, 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.

What will SHINE contribute towards staff costs?

SHINE recognises the importance of investing in the people and expertise needed to deliver effective projects. This includes valuing teachers' capacity to lead and deliver high-quality work, alongside the project leadership and wider school support needed to make delivery successful.

Staffing structures and salary costs will vary between schools and trusts. To ensure a fair and consistent approach across the SHINE portfolio, funding allocations are guided by the same principles and limits, rather than individual schools' existing pay structures.

SHINE may contribute towards delivery or project lead costs up to a maximum of £45,000 per academic year of a project (including employer on costs). Where the actual cost of a role exceeds this amount, for example where a school's established salary scale for a role is higher, SHINE may fund the role up to this maximum allocation, with any additional cost met through school match funding or other funding sources.

This policy ensures that the SHINE contribution remains consistent across the portfolio while recognising that actual employment costs may differ.

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 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.

What engagement can I expect with SHINE once a grant is awarded?

SHINE is a 'hands-on' funder, and we work with successful grantees throughout the project to offer regular support with project management, monitoring and evaluation, regular collaboration within Sunderland and opportunities to network and connect across our wider grant portfolio and beyond. For more information on what to expect as a SHINE grantee see our **What to Expect** document.

SHINE requests bi-annual reporting, one lighter touch mid-term update, with a more comprehensive end-of-year reporting.

Successful applicants will be invited to take part in SHINE's workshops from evaluation experts, and opportunities to collaborate with other grantees and obtain ad hoc advice and support, so that you can be sure that your project is having the impact you hope it will and can identify any learning and scope for adaptation and improvement over the course of your project.

SHINE-hosted events and connection opportunities include:

- a Theory of Change workshop in person at the start of the grant.
- 1-2 in person events annually
- 3-4 virtual events
- Annual monitoring and evaluation support calls
- Project visits to your school and to other schools
- Regular support from the Programme Lead in person, over the phone or on video call and via email.

To support attendance at in person events, SHINE will pay for cover costs incurred by the school or trust as a result of releasing the teacher to attend a SHINE workshop, up to a maximum of £125 (half day) or £250 (full day). Grantees must complete a brief form to access this support.

If you have any further questions or would like more information, please get in touch at **grants@shinetrust.org.uk** or give us a ring on 0113 868 9321.