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THE NATIONAL LOTTERY
COMMUNITY FUND

Animate-Build-Connect (ABC) Programme

Applicant Guidance Notes & FAQs

About the Animate-Build-Connect (ABC) Programme

The ABC Programme funded by Dormant Accounts NI and delivered by NIRWN, offers tailored support to rural women's groups to strengthen their capacity, sustainability, grow their impact, and connect with others. Participant groups will receive mentoring, peer learning, workshop access and a £1,000 contribution to support their development.

Who Can Apply?

We welcome applications from:

- NIRWN member groups
- Groups working to support women or improve gender equality and inclusion in rural areas
- Groups seeking to build confidence, leadership, and impact.

Key Dates

- Applications open: Thursday 26th June 2025
- Applications close: Thursday 31st July 2025
- Notification to Applicants: August 2025
- 1st Cohort to start: September 2025

How to Apply?

You'll complete a short [application form](#) with:

- Basic information about your group (name, location, focus, committee/trustee members)
- What support your group needs/opportunities you'd like to explore (you don't have to know the exact support but have goal you'd like help with). E.g. succession planning, income generation, growing membership, enhancing digital skills.
- A few eligibility questions
- How this support would make a difference to your group and/or community

You don't need perfect answers - just be honest and clear.

What Support Will Selected Groups Receive?

Groups selected for the ABC Programme will receive:

- Tailored mentoring and development support
- Group learning sessions (online and in-person)
- Contribution payment of **£1,000** for full participation
- All reasonable overhead costs for programme participation and support will be covered, e.g. venue hire, refreshments, training etc.
- Opportunities to connect and collaborate

How Will Applications Be Assessed?

We'll assess applications based on:

- Fit with programme aims (community benefit, inclusion, development)
- Clarity of need (why now? what impact the programme support could have?)
- Commitment of participation on the programme

If oversubscribed, preference will be given to groups that are constituted and have an average annual income of less than £20,000.

We aim to ensure a fair balance across location, type of group, and themes.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: We're a small group with no paid staff – can we apply?

A: Yes! We are particularly keen to support grassroots, volunteer-led groups.

Q: Do we need to be a registered charity?

A: No, but you do need basic governance (e.g. a constitution and/or committee) and a plan to manage funding and support responsibly.

Q: Do we need to have a bank account?

A: Yes, and it must be registered in your group's name.

Q: Do we have to have a large board of trustees/committee members to participate?

A: No. The size of your group or committee is not important. We will be assessing on the commitment to the programme of those involved. However, we can't support setting up new groups or single entities.

Q: What if we're not selected?

A: All applicants will receive confirmation and signposting to other supports where possible. We hope to open two further calls over the next two years and you will not be excluded from applying again.

Q: Is there a financial grant as part of this?

A: This programme focuses on capacity-building and support, not direct funding. However, full

completion of the programme will mean **you will receive £1,000 for your group** and all reasonable overhead costs for programme participation and support will be covered, e.g. venue hire, refreshments, travel and training costs.

Q: Will the £1,000 programme participation contribution have to be spent on something specific?

A: No. The £1,000 is in recognition of your group's commitment and time invested in the programme. Your group is free to utilize it however they choose. This will be paid in installments at participation milestones throughout the year.

Q: Can we apply if we've had Dormant Accounts funding before?

A: Yes, as long as the support you're seeking now is additional and not a duplication.

Q: Can we apply if we are already receiving 'access to resilience' support from another organisation, such as your local rural support network?

A: No.

Q: Will we have to report back?


A: Yes - successful groups will complete a baseline Strengths Assessment at the start of the programme and follow-up feedback to help us understand what's changed and where support made a difference. We will support you through this process.


Ready to Apply!

Click [here](#) for the application form

Further Questions?

If you have any questions before submitting your application, we would be happy to chat with you. You can contact us at:

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