



Love Your Bus Application Guidance Notes

Introduction

1. The Love Your Bus Grant Fund supports Parish and Town Council projects to grow patronage on their local bus service/s. This support Everyone's Essex in contributing to:
 - A strong, inclusive, and sustainable economy
 - A high-quality environment
 - Health, wellbeing, and independence for all ages
 - A good place for children and families to grow
2. Love Your Bus will make available £500,000 for 2025/2026. Grants of up to £50,000 are available for revenue funding. The fund is open to Parish and Town Councils.

Fund Administration

3. The administration of the 2025/2026 Love Your Bus Grant Fund will be undertaken by Essex County Council.

Aims of the Fund

4. Love Your Bus aims to support projects that sustain and grow local bus services. We want to fund projects that are important to local people and respond to local needs, building a strong and inclusive economy, a high-quality environment, health, wellbeing, and independence for all ages and a good place for children and families to grow.
5. Love Your Bus is designed to support projects that:
 - Increase passenger numbers on existing local bus services
 - Deliver service improvements (increases in frequency or additional journeys or stops) that make services more attractive to communities
 - Attract new passengers (through discounted ticketing offers or passes)
 - Improve information (through marketing, leaflets, timetables and maps or community led engagement events)

Alignment to Essex County Council's Strategic Plans

6. Love Your Bus projects must demonstrate alignment to the aspirations set out within Essex County Councils Everyone's Essex. Examples would include:
 - Improved access to education and training
 - Improved access to healthcare, activity, and leisure services
 - Reduce journeys by car



- Reduce loneliness and isolation
- Improve mental and physical health
- Promote independence

Funding

7. Funding is available equitably across the administrative area of Essex.
8. Applications are invited from Parish and Town Councils.
9. The bus services to be funded must run either wholly or substantially (80%+ by mileage) in the administrative area of Essex County Council (which excludes Southend and Thurrock).
10. Grant funding is for revenue projects only. Funding is not available for capital projects.
11. Grant funding is not available for the following:
 - Projects that financially benefit the applicant signatories
 - VAT or other taxes that cannot be recovered.
 - Any form of gambling
 - Core funding which delivers no improved outcome
12. Love Your Bus is subject to a maximum £50,000 for any one project. Applications can be made for existing services only but can include projects that require revenue funding to expand existing provision including to support a new cohort of residents or to a new place. Love Your Bus currently has only one year of grant funding: 2025/26 as it is supported by the Department for Transport's BSIP+ funding.
13. Parish and Town Councils can submit a maximum of three bids. Love Your Bus projects should show how they will benefit the wider community and demonstrate that community engagement and co-production has occurred in the design and delivery of the project. They must also demonstrate the support of their local County Councillor.
14. Examples of projects that revenue funding could support include, but are not limited to projects that:
 - increase passenger numbers on existing local bus services
 - Deliver service improvements (increases in frequency or additional journeys or stops or extended journeys to new locations) that make services more attractive to communities
 - Attract new passengers (through discounted ticketing offers or passes)



- Improve information (through marketing, leaflets, timetables and maps or community led engagement events)

Financial Requirements

15. Applicants must be:

- transparent about the amounts held in their unrestricted reserves, and such reserves should be fully justified in formally ratified reserves policy.
- be fully transparent on the total project costs and where funding will be allocated.

Project monitoring

16. To ensure that grant funding is being spent diligently and show progression of projects, quarterly reporting is required to be submitted to the Funding Officer. Essex County Council may request a full audit of the projects accounts to gain financial assurance.

Public Sector Equality Duty

17. All projects should conform to the Equality Act 2010 which states that public authorities must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty and for them to consider how their policies or decisions affect people who have protected characteristics under The Act. These protected characteristics are:

- Age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, and marriage and civil partnership.

18. Essex County Council is committed to the positive advancement of equality, fostering good relations between different groups and tackling unlawful discrimination. When submitting applications organisations will be asked to confirm that their projects meet the terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Timescales

19. The launch of Love Your Bus Grant Fund is 20th December 2024 at 5pm and the deadline for receipt of applications is 14th February 2025 by 5pm.
20. Further key dates, such as grant award, payments and monitoring will be determined in due course.



Application Process

21. Applications will be considered on their own merits with outcomes that deliver against Essex County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan aims to grow patronage, improve reliability, and increase accessibility.
22. The Panel reserve the right to use their sole discretion when assessing any grant applications for acceptance. Applications may be rejected, or grants awarded at a lesser sum than requested. The decision of the Panel upon the Awards made shall be final and not subject to appeal.
23. The application process consists of one full application form and one Award Panel.
24. ECC reserve the right to change time scale if and when required. Please consider this when planning your application. Late Applications will not be accepted.
25. The Application Form and Guidance Notes are available on the TravelEssex website.
26. Completed applications are to be returned to Essex County Council. Applications should be emailed to: Funding Officer: Email: IPTU.applications@essex.gov.uk
27. Note that applications must be approved by at least two Committee members who are authorised to do so.
28. Failure to provide required supporting documentation as indicated in the application form will result in an unsuccessful application

Validity of Funding

29. It should be noted that all funds awarded must be spent and projects delivered by 31 March 2026. Extensions to the above will not be granted.
30. If for any reason the project does not come to fruition or there is remaining unspent grant funding at the end of the project, the Funding Officer should be notified, and funds returned to the ECC.
31. Essex County Council reserve the right to claw back all or partial funding owing to the performance of the project delivery and benefits realisation. Any material changes made to the project after a grant has been awarded will result in the clawback of funds unless



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32. there is express agreement from Essex County Council.

Branding and Communication

33. All supporting material and publicity for the project shall include the TravelEssex brand (guidance will be provided) and include the Funded by UK Government logo (guidance here ([Branding guidelines - GCS](#))).

Completion of Application Form

34. Please see below some general pointers regarding completing an application.

Full Application

- 1. Please confirm you have read Love Your Bus Guideline and Application Criteria for Parish and Town councils before starting this application**
- 2. List of eligible entities who can apply** – circle the appropriate type of council or delete the one that does not apply
Local Authority - This is the name of your Council. This is the full name with no abbreviations.
- 3. Name of Person submitting Application**– This is the person who must be able to answer detailed questions about the application.
- 4. Contact email address** - Please use a business email where possible. (Where a personal email address must be used this will be used for business purposes only)
- 5. Contact telephone number** – Please use business numbers where possible.
- 6. What is your organisation's address** – Use organisation's address only.
- 7. Joint Applications:** Please add a list of all Parish and Town Council who are part of this collaborative applications. Please make sure that lead council is submitting the application.
- 8. Bus Service Details** – the number of the bus service/s to which the application relates and the name of the registered operator/s
Bus Service Start and Destination – The location that the bus services start (the name of the settlement and District) and the final destination of the service (the name of the



settlement and District).

9. **Operator Support Confirmation** - Please confirm that the operator of the chosen service supports this application and that they will meet the data sharing requirements set out in Love Your Bus Guidance Notes (project monitoring section)
Please ensure you provide copy of the email or written letter confirming this.
10. **Full Project Description** –Please provide a full description of your project & what you plan to achieve. Please set out:
 - **What are your project’s objectives and how will you achieve them**
 - **What you are investing in i.e. how you will spend the money**
 - **Summarise how your project will help increase passenger numbers on this service**
 - **Specify any specific groups who will benefit**
 - **Sustainability – please provide how you expect passenger numbers to be sustained once grant funding ends**
11. **County Councillor Support** - Please confirm that you have support from one of your County Councillors. Please ensure you provide copy of the email or written letter confirming this.
12. **Do you have any partners supporting your project, who will also help you to deliver it –**
If you have any supporting partners involved in the project, please include them here. This could include bus user groups, schools, community groups, businesses, clubs, charities, or other partners.
13. **Anticipated start and finish date** – the date the project will start and finish. Please note all projects must complete by 31 March 2026.
14. **Evaluation of impact** - If successful, we need to measure the impact of your project – and we will require information quarterly and a brief end of project report.
15. **VAT Reclaim** - Please state yes/no as to whether you can reclaim VAT. If you answered ‘yes’ please show all costings exclusive of VAT. If you cannot reclaim VAT, please include it in your costings.
16. **Total Project Cost** - Please provide the total project cost. If this is a phased project, please indicate the total of the cost of the phase you are intending to deliver with the Love Your Bus grant contribution and an indication of the cost of all the phases you aspire to deliver. Please ensure clarity is given between figures.



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17. **Grant Requested** - Please enter the amount of grant you are requesting.
18. **Organisation Contribution** – Please include any funding your organisation is putting towards this project either itself or with partners? Please list each contribution from each different organisation separately
19. **Unrestricted Reserves** - Please indicate the amount of funds you have in unrestricted reserves. If you have restricted or earmarked reserves for other commitments, please clearly state what and how much these are. If you have unrestricted reserves that exceed the level of grant funding you are seeking, please set out why those reserves cannot be used to deliver this project.
20. **Project Costings** - Please provide a full a breakdown of your project costs (if phased the phase which you intend to deliver with the Love Your Bus grant funding contribution), indicating what the funding is to be spent on. Please provide any estimates from suppliers demonstrating how you have ensured value for money – this should include the estimate from the operator of the service for delivering the changes.
21. **Declaration** – please ensure the individual completing the declaration is authorised to do so and they have confirmed they read intended grant agreement.