**Expressions of Interest to the Woodsmith Foundation – Guidance 2025**

The priority for the Woodsmith Foundation in 2025 is to support local people, communities, and community organisations to **increase opportunity and tackle disadvantage**. Our approach is evolving as we learn what works to create impact and legacy. This year we are accepting expressions of interest for work that would fit our charitable objectives and is delivered in our area of benefit (the Borough of Redcar and Cleveland, the Borough of Scarborough and the North York Moors National Park).

We know that ideas coming from within communities (whether that is a community of place, interest, action or circumstance) can be a powerful catalyst for change. We are interested in working with people and partnerships who deeply understand a community or an issue and have ideas about how lasting change for good can be made. We want to support work that “does with”, not “does to” people.

The projects we are keen to fund bring people together around a common purpose to create new opportunities and provide the momentum for positive, sustainable social change. Our priority for 2025 is funding projects that will make our communities even better places to live through increasing opportunities and tackling disadvantage.

We are seeking to support work will:

* **Increase opportunities for local people to have better life chances**, prioritising; support to people most at disadvantage due to unfavourable circumstances or facing barriers to equality; and tackling structural inequalities through system change or addressing root causes of inequality and disadvantage.
* **Encourage positive changes** by improving lives and places, or tackling issues that negatively impact on local people
* **Build better community connections** between and amongst local people, creating a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for the places where they live and the people they live with.
* **Bring people together** **and enrich lives** by ensuring there are local spaces, resources and activities that provide pleasure, learning, or community action.

We would be excited to see some genuine partnership proposals – where two or more organisations believe that by using their individual strengths they can create or achieve something better together. We continue to be very interested in proposals that tackle complex or “wicked” problems through system change approaches. We have a high priority for proposals that support young people have better life chances where a promising approach has been trialled and is showing a measured impact. Community led proposals, with residents initiating and leading projects that make life better for them and their neighbours, interest us.

We are open to supporting ideas at all stages of development. This would include resources to:

* bring together a partnership, undertake community engagement, research or a feasibility study, connect people to develop an idea, or scoping and planning work.
* pilot a project at a small scale, test and trialling activities or early stage development work.
* deliver a new piece of work that is evidence based, high quality, imaginative and clearly defined.
* scale a project that is tried and tested or has a business plan ready to go.
* share your learning with others or supporting them to replicate your successful work.

We welcome Expressions of Interest from individuals, single organisations or partnerships. If necessary we will work with you to find the right organisation to hold the funding if capacity or organisational structure is an issue.

**The projects we hope to fund:**

* will increase opportunities or tackle disadvantage for people living in our area of benefit (the borough of Redcar and Cleveland, the borough of Scarborough and the North York Moors National Park).
* will know a community well (whether that is a community of place, interest, action or circumstance) and be able to show evidence of community engagement and consultation having been completed or planned.
* will be asset based, demonstrating an understanding of a community’s strengths and aiming to maximise and build on those with the community.
* will clearly understand and be able to talk about the issue they wish to address and think creatively about the potential solution.
* will be open to working with other organisations even if it is not a partnership project.
* can be capital or revenue or a mixture of both.

**We will not fund:**

* Projects or activities that are a better fit for our Community Grants.
* Projects that “do to” a community and do not work with a community to find a solution to a problem.
* Organisations who cannot demonstrate they understand the place they wish to work with and for in our area of benefit.
* Capital costs for a building you do not own where the lease is less than 5 years.
* Projects that are just for equipment, minibuses or similar.
* School residentials and day trips; activities that take place during the school day; statutory education provision.
* Projects where you intend to pass our funding on as grants, sponsorship or donations to other organisations/individuals.
* Projects which have already started or retrospective funding.

**The offer:**

We have total Expressions of Interest funding pot of £400,000 and we are open to discussion about projects timescales. We do not know whether the Expressions of Interest we receive will mean we fund one great idea or a range of projects. We are staying open minded and will continue to learn and evolve how we respond to approaches for support over the coming year. In 2024 we awarded 8 grants totalling £467,000 through the EOI route. We have carried two grants forward into 2025 meaning £105,000 has already been allocated from the 2025 budget.

***Funding Principles for all Expressions of Interest:***

* The applicant needs to be uniquely placed to deliver the work proposed i.e. it is not work we could tender for and expect to receive good applications from more than one organisation to deliver. If the organisation is not uniquely placed to deliver the work proposed than it must have other significant advantages attached to it e.g. a high percentage of secured matched funding or the delivery organisation is grounded in the place they will work and is known to, and trusted by, the community.
* The applicant has identified and evidenced a gap in provision to meet a local need that directly links to a Foundation charitable objective. The proposed solution will have some opportunity of scale if it proves to have a successful impact or allows the organisation to become financially self-sustaining.
* The Expression of Interest project or idea will need to demonstrate it will lead to wide engagement work with the community it will support and be focussed on enduring positive impact for that community or participants.
* The Expression of Interest needs to be ambitious and seek to make real change for those people in our communities who have the least access to opportunities for a good life. There must be a long term vision for where the work will go in the future.
* Our preference is for programmes of work, not one off events. However we will consider funding one off events that offer an exceptional opportunity for local people. In this instance we would want to see a partnership project that can explain what the enduring value to participants will be. Please contact us for a discussion before completing an EOI.
* The leaders of the organisation’s we fund need to be competent (or able and open to develop their skills), visionary, open to support and ongoing engagement in their work by the Foundation.
* An Expression of Interest that requests capital for a community building or space will need to be able to demonstrate that it will significantly benefit the wider community and not just one organisation. Please ensure you have read the Community Grants guidance as this is often a better route for capital support for a community building.
* Although not essential there is an expectation that a request for a significant amount of funding from a local organisation will include a financial match from other sources. For large national charities a financial match is a requirement.

***Additional Principles for Arts and Culture related Expressions of Interest:***

* Applications for arts and cultural projects should explain the beneficial outcomes they aim to achieve for participants. Outcomes should directly relate to the Foundation’s charitable objectives and are likely to be linked to; exceptional education opportunities; employment and skills development; arts-based economic development; or health improvements including social and emotional resilience.

***Additional Principles for Expressions of Interests projects in schools :***

* We will accept EOIs for work in primary schools. We only accept EOI’s for work in secondary schools as an exception because the Foundation has agreed it’s investments into secondary schools through the Achieve Education Programme. Please contact us for a discussion if you are applying to work in a secondary school.
* We would not normally fund core curriculum projects, but we would consider high benefit/impact projects that are outside of the core curriculum that run in the school day or outside of the school day.
* We will only use a small percentage of our overall funding pot on school based projects and the projects we are interested in a likely to be school wide programmatic interventions.

**How to submit an Expression of Interest**

We will accept Expressions of Interest from February 2025 to the end of October 2025, but we will close to EOIs once the budget for the year has been allocated. We strongly recommend you do not wait until the end of October to send us your Expressions of Interest. Last year we closed to EOIs in July as we had already exceeded the budget for the year. We will do this again in 2025 when the budget has been allocated. To apply please email grants@woodsmithfoundation.org.uk with your expression of interest and include all of the following information:

* The name of your organisation and your legal structure. Please include your charity number or company number if applicable.
* The person we should contact for a conversation and their contact details.
* Where did your idea come from?
* What do you want to do?
* What change do you want to see now and in the future?
* What funding do you need and how much is your ask to the Woodsmith Foundation?

Following receipt of your expression of interest we will review your idea and a member of the team at the Woodsmith Foundation will let you know if we would like a conversation to find out more. We will be managing a constantly changing pipeline of possible projects so although we will aim to respond to your Expression of Interest within 4 weeks we cannot say how long it will be before we book time for a conversation or meeting. If we would like to take your idea further we will support you to put together a full proposal for the Trustee Board who will make the decisions about the grants to be awarded.

We cannot meet with you prior to you sending an Expression of Interest, but we are always happy to have a conversation on the phone or answer queries by email. Please call Leah Swain on 07724 832982 or email grants@woodsmithfoundation.org.uk