

Notes to the entry form

Section 1

Categories

It does not matter if you do not feel your project fits neatly into any of the categories. We will consider any project by any charity, and we will allocate the best category for it. We reserve a right to change the category you submit your entry under.

In order to enter you must legally be constituted as a charity under the law of any UK jurisdiction. If you are an exempt or excepted charity and have no registration number, we will accept your project so long as it is clearly charitable in nature.

If you are not a registered charity

At present we will not accept applications from community interest companies and other social enterprise legal forms. We will accept projects carried out by charity trading subsidiaries and joint ventures partially owned by charities, so long as a charity submits the entry on their behalf.

We will consider any charitable project, no matter how many charities are involved in it. It does not matter if some of the partners are not charitable, so long as the entrant is a charity, and its involvement in the project was more than de minimis. We have previously given awards to partnerships involving many charities and public and private sector organisations. Indeed, evidence of effective collaboration is usually seen as a positive by the judges.

Statutory accounts

If for any reason you cannot submit statutory accounts – your charity is too new, or has recently merged – please contact us and we will discuss the most appropriate course. We do require some evidence of financial propriety in order to make an award, and would probably recommend delaying entry until you have filed your first set of accounts.

Ongoing and completed projects

We are happy to consider both ongoing and completed projects, so long as they remain relevant to the current environment. In general we recommend that your initiative or project has been running long enough to show a compelling track record of success.

Section 2

We are happy to consider entries for a single initiative or project, or for the work of the whole charity (particularly for smaller organisations).

This section is intended to identify the process you went through to implement a positive social outcome. Ideally the judges would like to see that you applied an evidence-based structure to delivering change, and that you succeeded in making a measureable improvement. The stronger the evidence you can show that your charity delivered lasting change, and the more rigorous your approach and methodology, the better.

It is also very important to give the judges some sense of the cost and the funding mechanism. It is certainly not necessary for your project to have low costs or a completely sustainable source of finance – the judges support expenditure on overheads and the use of grants and donations. But it is important to show cost-effectiveness and value for money.

It is also important to show that you have drawn lessons from the project which can be of use to others. The Charity Awards is intended to highlight exemplars which other charities can emulate.

Section 3

The judges will mark the project against all hallmarks. Please complete all six sections.

It is acceptable to repeat some of the information from earlier in the entry, if this is the most appropriate answer.

Outcomes and effectiveness

This hallmark is there to establish that the charity knew what it wanted to achieve, and delivered it, and can prove that it did so. The judges also wish to establish that the project had a clear benefit.

It is not necessarily important to be able to show auditable outcomes or pounds and pence saved. The judges recognise that many social initiatives achieve outcomes which are hard to quantify. However there must have been a legitimate effort to assess that the intervention was a success. Ideally the results should be comparable to those of other initiatives and projects.

Value for money

Having proved that you delivered meaningful benefit, it is also vital that you can demonstrate you did so in a reasonably cost-effective manner. It may be useful to provide evidence here of budgeting and strong financial controls. It is also potentially useful to provide comparators elsewhere in the public or charity sector.

The judges would like to stress that they are not opposed to sensible spending, particularly recognising the importance of adequate investment in support and overheads.

Innovation

The judges want to know what is unique about your project, or how you ensured that you exemplified existing best practice. The answer to this should show what evidence you considered of existing best practice, and the gaps you identified in existing provision.

Sustainability

The judges are keen to ensure that projects given a charity award have a business model which allows for sustainable funding. In some cases it will not be possible to show this – the project may be grant-funded, for example – and in this instance the charity should show that there are plans in place to ensure future backing.

Judges will also accept that some projects are time-limited and do not need to be permanently sustainable, although in these instances they will be interested in how the work carried out will influence long term change.

Replicability and scalability

The judges are interested in the ability of the project or initiative to generate outcomes at the appropriate scale. They understand that this could be accomplished in a number of ways, and are agnostic about the methods involved. However it will benefit your charity to show that you have ambitions to deliver your interventions to as many as possible of the people, organisations and communities which might benefit from them.

Best practice

This is intentionally a very broad category. It looks at the extent to which your initiative or project is delivered in line with current charity sector best practice.

The judges want to know that your initiative or project has all the characteristics one would expect of a well-delivered intervention, and that the charity which sits behind it meets the minimum standards of being well-run. It is up to you how you evidence this.

A well-run charity project will for example have good planning, good leadership, and good governance. It is likely to have considered diversity, to have shown innovation in funding and communications, and to be effective at responding to evidence and measures of success.

Judges understand that you cannot respond in all areas suggested. For example, a quality such as leadership may be difficult to evidence on a form, or that while your charity may have given much thought to diversity, it may not be possible to easily demonstrate it. However judges also feel it is likely that a well-run project should be able to show evidence in several of the areas referenced in the question.

Judges also understand the criteria referenced are not the only ways in which a project could be well run. If you feel there are other characteristics of the project which show a high standard of best practice, in accordance with normal expectations in the sector, these will be accepted as evidence as well.