TEST IT

Where creativity starts

Information Pack

What is "Test It!"?

Test It! is a pilot capacity building programme designed and delivered in partnership with Beith Trust and Right Options; two experienced and successful Third Sector organisations who are working alongside North Ayrshire's Community Development Team to invest in up-and-coming local community organisations.

If you are a small-medium sized North Ayrshire-based SCIO or constituted community group with ambitions to grow your organisation, trial new ways of working and scale your offer, Test It! could be the right fit for you. From April to November 2026, a cohort of eight ambitious local organisations will be supported through workshops, peer learning sessions and investment from the Test It! Starter Fund of either £5,000 or £10,000 to develop and test an idea that will help their organisation generate its own income.

Targeted workshops will help you get 'under the bonnet' of your organisation and identify what's working well and areas for improvement, and with the support of Beith Trust, Right Options and the Community Development Team, put together an action plan and work out the 'hows' of getting there. We'll help you get your idea from paper into practice, and support you through your testing phase with a get together every 6 weeks with the others on the programme to see how things are going and solve tricky situations together.

Programme Timeline (2026)

January: Information events and drop ins
February: Applications submitted
March: Applications reviewed; cohort chosen
April - May: Workshops completed; investments awarded
June - July: Phase 1 and first check in
July - August: Phase 2 and 2nd check in
August - October: Phase 3 and 3rd check in
October - November: Phase 4 and final check in
November - December: End of project reporting and evaluation

Who is it for?

The programme is open to constituted community organisations and charities based and working in North Ayrshire with a turnover of between £30,000 and £300,000 per year. It is specifically aimed at organisations who have a genuine interest in - and commitment to - generating an income for their project and need some help to get an idea off the ground.

What kind of thing would you fund?

We don't have specific projects in mind, but the following are examples of approaches that could be a good fit for the programme:

A group who have successfully delivered a service or product for free but need to make a shift to charging for it to secure its long-term future

An organisation that needs to trial an idea to generate an income so that it can grow into a new space, or open access to more people

A project that needs to professionalise its way of working to be able to achieve its next steps, such as by investing in new ways of working that can help it to better understand its finances

An initiative with great ideas that needs some mentoring and coaching support to turn it from concept to reality

Project ideas should bear in mind the timeframe of the programme (April-November 2026), and be at a scale that can allow you to test something that could be scaled, adjusted or further developed after November 2026. We are particularly interested in ideas that are repeatable over a long period of time, making them more likely to help you generate a sustainable income long term.

How will it work?

Test It! isn't a grant; it's a development programme, and in its pilot year, will work with a small cohort of organisations from across the local authority. The programme is split into 4 key phases:

1. Application
2. Development sessions
3. Test and review
4. Evaluation

At application stage, you will be asked to complete an online application form and submit a 'health check' for your organisation, which will help us to understand more about your organisation. The funding panel will review all of the applications and select those with the ideas that have the most potential to be achieved through the programme. Participants will attend three 2-hour workshops: an introductory and welcome session and two themed sessions aimed at strengthening your organisation and developing your proposal before the investment is awarded. You must attend all of the sessions you are required to before you will receive the investment from the Test It! Starter Fund.

The programme then moves into 6-week blocks and you will begin to deliver your planned project. At the end of each block, participants will come together to reflect, review and adjust before the next block begins. Peer support and mentoring is a key component of the programme, and failure to attend the review sessions may result in us recalling the remainder of the Starter Fund from you. After the final block is complete, we'll come together again to review and reflect on what has been achieved together, and begin an evaluation process before the end of the programme in December 2026.

What's the commitment?

You must attend three 2 hour workshops before you receive investment from the Starter Fund.
You must also attend four check-in sessions (at the end of each 6 week delivery block). These act as your quarterly review point and are a mandatory part of the programme. Any proposed changes to your project plan will be approved at these sessions and they form part of the audit trail for the programme.
As Test It! is a development programme rather than a grant process, we expect you to engage proactively and consistently throughout the length of the programme to get the most benefit from it. While we will endeavour to support your participation as much as possible, your own engagement will make the difference to the overall experience; the more you put in, the more you'll get out.

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