

Cairngorms 2030 Communities Fund Panel

Session 4 – Survey Responses

The purpose of this survey was to capture your thinking on the best approach for the fund. This will inform the next session. There are several options on the table, so you were encouraged to consider the options and share your view.

We also asked you to reflect on the structure and provided an open text space for feedback or questions about the Panel process.

The survey was open from Thursday 7 May to Monday 11 May.

16 out of 18 members of the panel responded.

Unedited and anonymised survey responses are [available to view](#). Where percentages are reflected we have rounded to the nearest whole number.

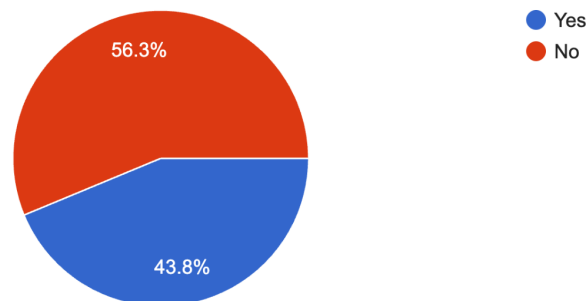
Summary of your responses

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Structure

Do you want the Panel to consider any changes to the structure agreed in weekend 3?

16 responses



9 people responded 'no' and 7 people responded 'yes'.

Proposals for changes (summarised)

- a. **Two grant sizes instead of three.** Two respondents questioned whether we need small, medium and large. One proposed removing large grants entirely, arguing that large awards by definition prevent multiple smaller ones and that larger projects are already covered elsewhere in the park's funding landscape. Another proposed collapsing to just two tiers - small and large - to simplify the process and allow more successful applications within the £1 million limit.
- b. **Add a new pot for individual and legacy funding.** One respondent proposed a dedicated pot for personal skills and education - funding for individuals seeking to gain new skills for the long-term benefit of the community. The argument was that personal development will be overlooked when people see community-facing language, and that individuals would not self-select into the existing pots.
- c. **Separate the EDI allocation.** One respondent argued strongly that the 10% EDI allocation should be a separate fund entirely, on the grounds that embedded EDI funding tends to flow toward the majority demographic. They argued that true inclusion requires targeted, specific interventions rather than a generalised allocation.
- d. **Revisit grant size ranges and application windows.** One respondent proposed capping large grants at £100,000 to ensure proportional weighting across the tiers. Another wanted the medium pot to have fixed application dates rather than TBC, so that only the small pot runs on a rolling basis. One proposed all

pots should have fixed dates.

- e. **Process over structure.** One respondent said they were not proposing a specific structural change, but felt the structure mattered less than getting the processes right. They wanted the Panel to define fair, representative processes first, then consider whether certain processes suit certain pots better.

We can make a decision on structural changes in Session 5. These include:

- Decision 1: Two grant sizes
- Decision 2: EDI as a separate pot
- Decision 3: Legacy / personal development pot
- Decision 4: More specific project categories - *noting this might be an eligibility and communications question for Session 6 rather than a structural change.*

The following proposals can be explored in Session 6

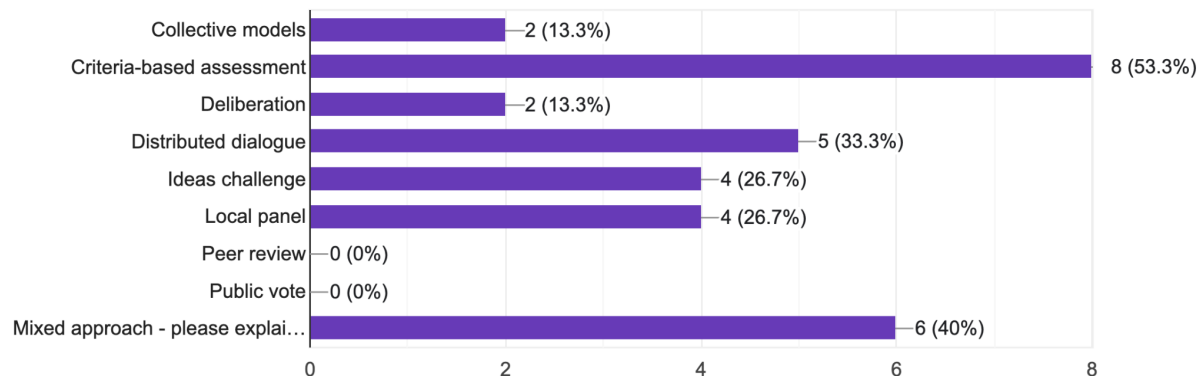
- Cap large grants and confirm size ranges
- Application windows

Practical considerations: PARK AUTHORITY TO ADD IF ANY

Small grants

Which approach or combination feels right for small grants?

15 responses



Criteria-based assessment is the most selected approach at 53%, but the free text consistently softens this – people want it to be simple, quick and not onerous. Nobody is asking for a rigorous written form. The recurring phrase is some version of "light touch criteria to inform a community decision." That distinction matters because it suggests criteria as a filter, not as the decision-making mechanism itself.

Mixed approach is the second strongest signal at 40%, and when people explain what they mean, most are describing a hybrid of simple criteria plus community involvement – not criteria alone.

Distributed dialogue is third at 33%, appearing most often as a way of reaching people before applications open – generating ideas and sparking conversations across the park, rather than as the decision-making process itself.

Local panel and ideas challenge both sit at 27%. The **ideas challenge** is favoured by those who want to lower the barrier for people who wouldn't recognise themselves as funding applicants – using a question or theme to invite people in. The **local panel** is favoured by those who want community knowledge in the room when decisions are made.

Deliberation and **collective models** are low at 13% each which is not surprising given the expectation that small grants should be quick and simple. Deliberation in particular feels like the wrong register for this pot.

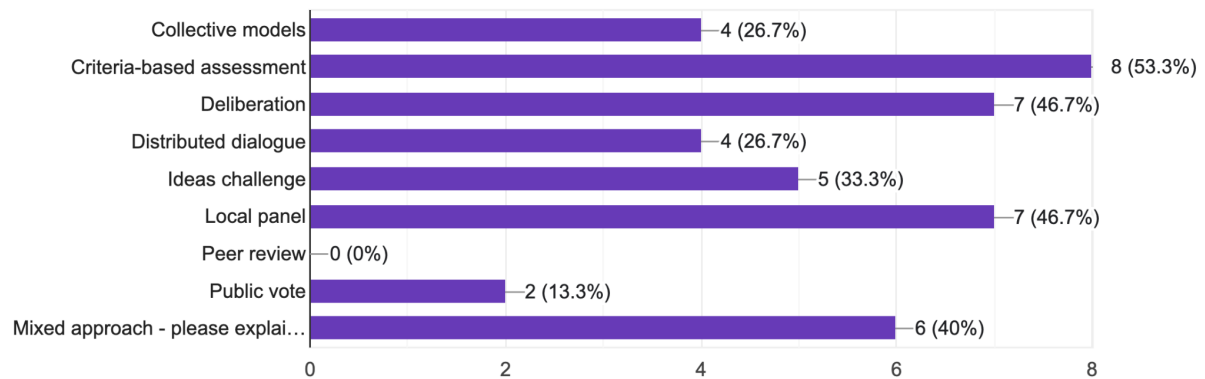
Peer review and **public vote** received no votes. We suggest removing them.

Practical considerations: reminder that the Park Authority finance team normally have to cap the number of small grants at circa £50k total when based on £500 for a grant award for operational reasons, a calculation which is based on a standard grant process.

Medium grants

Which approach or combination feels right for medium grants?

15 responses



The picture is notably different from small grants. **Criteria-based assessment** remains the most selected at 53%, but **deliberation** and **local panel** are close behind at 47% each. A much stronger participatory signal than for small grants. The group's instinct seems to be that medium grants warrant more rigour and more community involvement in the decision, not just in the process leading up to it.

Mixed approach is again strong at 40%, and the free text here is more developed than for small grants. People are describing multi-stage processes where criteria filter applications before a community body decides. The **ideas challenge** also rises to 33%, with several people seeing it as a way of generating quality applications before a panel or deliberative process takes over.

Collective models appear at 27% – higher than for small grants – with one respondent describing multiple open collectives based on different challenge questions, all deliberating together. **Distributed dialogue** sits at 27%, mostly as a precursor to the decision process rather than the mechanism itself.

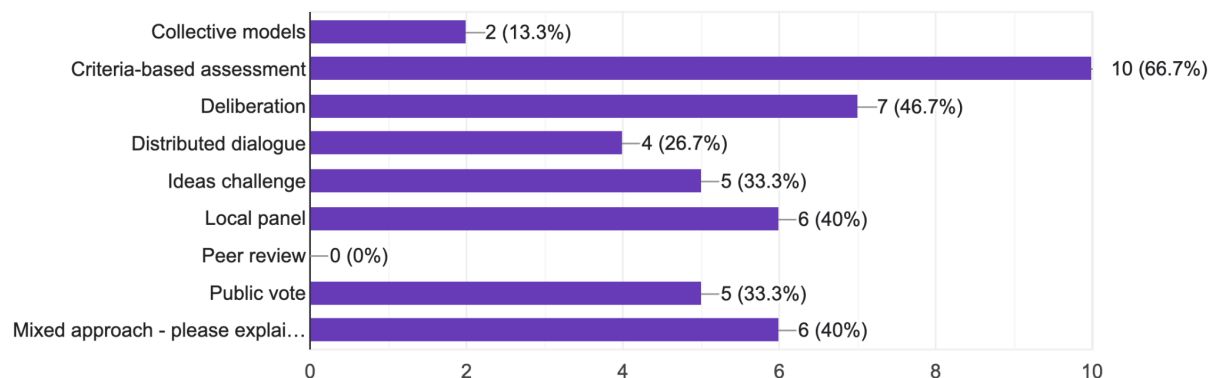
Public vote is low at 13% and the two respondents who selected it both qualify it. One says only after shortlisting, the other as part of a broader mixed approach. It does not have meaningful independent support. **Peer review** received no votes. We suggest removing them.

Practical considerations: we will need to put in a clear timeline as bringing a representative panel takes time and resources. Trade-off will be that the grants launch more slowly as it takes time to recruit and onboard a panel. Cairngorms Trust and Wind Farm fund already do this approach.

Large grants

Which approach or combination feels right for large grants?

15 responses



The large grants picture is the most decisive of the three. **Criteria-based assessment** jumps to 67% - the highest of any approach across any grant size - reflecting a clear instinct that the biggest decisions require the most rigour.

But the participatory signal is also strong: **deliberation** at 47%, **local panel** at 40%, and **public vote** rising notably to 33%. The group is not saying criteria instead of community, they are saying both, and more of each than for the other pots.

Mixed approach is at 40%, and the free text descriptions here are the most ambitious of the three grant sizes. A touring open collective, a showcase event with public voting, a multi-stage process combining criteria, shortlisting and community decision. Several respondents independently arrived at a version of the same idea: criteria filter first, then a community event or panel makes the final call in a visible, public way.

Ideas challenge sits at 33%, most often described as a way of setting the direction and generating strong applications before a more rigorous process takes over - not as the decision-making mechanism itself.

Public vote is notably higher here than for small or medium grants. Five respondents selected it, and the reasoning is consistent: the bigger the decision, the more the wider community should have a say. This is a principled position worth taking seriously rather than dismissing.

Distributed dialogue is at 27%, collective models at 13%. Both lower than for medium grants, suggesting people see large grants as needing a more concentrated rather than distributed decision-making process.

Peer review received no votes and can be removed. **Collective models** has minimal support and feels mismatched to the scale and scrutiny expectations for this pot.

Practical considerations: Park Authority will have a role as an accountable body. Specifically what that role looks like is available to be shaped. It could involve:

- the Park Authority confirming if ideas meet the Cairngorms 2030 themes
- the Park Authority doing sifting against criteria set by this Panel
- the Park Authority doing a due diligence on the project(s)

The Park Authority does expect to:

- Administer the distribution of funds
- Report back to the National Lottery
- Support logistics and delivery of the decision-making process with support from their internal engagement team