

Appendix A

DEFRA VCS Small grant programme

Background

On 10 June the Government announced an emergency fund of £63 million to be distributed to local authorities in England to help those struggling to afford food and other essentials due to Covid-19. The funding is a one-off contribution to the 2020/21 financial year and is made under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

The purpose of the grant is to help authorities to continue to support those struggling to afford food and other essentials over the coming months. This funding is in addition to the £6.5 billion of extra support from the Government provided through the welfare system.

Within the element allocated to Nottingham City Council is a small grant programme to be awarded to Voluntary and Community Sector organisations and groups such as foodbanks and social eating projects to enable them to provide support to families and individuals within their communities.

Allocation of budget

The recommended allocation to the small grants programme is £210,114. This will be allocated across the City to ensure that all communities have the opportunity to equally access the opportunities, afforded by this funding. This will incorporate both communities of geography and communities of identity.

Grant Process

- **Grant Period:** Funds must be expended within the 2020-21 financial year. Successful applicants will be able to spend any grant awarded up to and including 31st March 2021.
- **Application process:** An online process has been developed using the Firmstep platform to process the existing approved template application form. This is a welcome step forward in terms of grant management processes and the resulting online process will be able to be utilised for any future small grant programmes. *A copy of the application form is included in the appendices.*
- **DEFRA Grant Guidance:** Guidance to distribute and administer this grant is published at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-authority-emergency-assistance-grant-for-food-and-essential-supplies>. The objectives and principles can be summarised:
 - (a) Use discretion to identify and support those most in need
 - (b) Use the funding to meet immediate need and help those who are struggling to afford food and essentials due to Covid-19
 - (c) Use the funding for existing schemes and other support which delivers the same outcome and where the need is greatest
- **NCC Grant Criteria and Guidance:** This follows existing templates for grant criteria, the proforma for which are well known to the VCS within Nottingham. The document is written and designed to be easily accessible without jargon. *A copy of the guidance and criteria for the VCS Small grant programme is included in the appendices.*
- **Assessment of applications:** Assessment will take place in Firmstep and follow two distinct processes. Firstly, the applicant itself is assessed to ensure they are eligible to receive funding from NCC, this considers their structure as an organisation, their financial situation and their understanding and commitment to safeguarding and equalities requirements.

Secondly, the activity or service the applicant wishes to deliver with the funding is assessed to ensure it matches the criteria, meets an evidenced need within city communities, is deliverable within the timeframe and is value for money.

- **Decision making:** Following assessment, recommendations will then be made to a panel of senior officers with relevant specific knowledge to approve or reject the application. The application and assessment comments will be discussed in order to reach a fully informed decision and to ensure a spread of support across communities. The panel will be facilitated by the VCS Partnerships Manager.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** If the application is approved, organisations will be required to provide information and assistance to allow the council to demonstrate that this public funding has been spent to support those in genuine need of assistance, and that suitable measures to prevent fraud have been put in place.

Performance management will be in proportion to the grant amount received using approved NCC template forms to gather data and case studies. Successful applicants will be required to complete monitoring returns within 30 days of the completion of their grant or by 30th April 2021, whichever is the sooner. Once received, monitoring will be collated into a report to detail the activities undertaken, number of people supported etc.

It is also envisaged that colleagues in Comms could be resourced to undertake a video record or video casebook of delivery of activity by successful applicants subject to available funding. This method has been utilised in the past to showcase the activity supported and gives more insight into the changes brought about than a report on its own. *A copy of the basic template monitoring form is included in the appendices.*

Timeline for delivery

- 30.04.21 All small grant monitoring completed and returned
- 31.03.21 Grant fully spent
- 23.11.20 Assessment and grant panel for outstanding applications
- 18.11.20 Final deadline for receipt of applications*
- 21.10.20-18.11.20 Rolling assessment and decision making **
- 21.10.20 Grant programme launched using existing networks and relationships
- 20.10.20 Proposals presented to CLT

*Given the timescales for delivery of the small grant programme, it is proposed that a four week application window exists to enable VCS groups to submit applications. Nottingham City Council has an agreement with the VCS regarding how we do business together known as the Compact Plus. The Compact outlines a minimum 6 week window for an application process for grant programmes, however it also contains an understanding that this can be reduced if needed to ensure that funding reach the VCS and the communities they serve where circumstances dictate a shorter window.

**To ensure that urgent needs are met prior to the four week deadline for applications, it is proposed that a rolling programme of assessment and approval be undertaken during the application window. This will ensure that those communities facing the most disadvantage and in greatest need are supported as soon as possible.

If the November grant panel does not allocate the total available funding, a second round of applications would be supported in the New Year.