



West  
Northamptonshire  
Council

# Community Funding Grants Framework

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## 1 Framework Statement

- 1.1 The purpose of this Community Funding Grants Framework is to set out the principles and criteria that govern how West Northamptonshire Council (the Council) will award Community Funding to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) within the geographical area of the Council.
- 1.2 These Community Funding awards will be known as Community Funding Grants.
- 1.3 They will be made available to voluntary and community organisations who deliver important services to the residents of West Northamptonshire.
- 1.4 For Community Funding Grants purposes, the Council's definition of a voluntary or community organisation is defined as any organisation that has the following characteristics:
  - **formal** - having a constituted character and having a United Kingdom bank account in the name of the organisation that accepts Bankers' Automated Clearing System (BACS) payments;
  - **private** - is not a local or central government body, organisation, or department;
  - **self-governing** - makes its own decisions in a formal way with procedures for accountability to a Board, Trustees or constituents;
  - **not-for-profit** - does not have the ability to distribute any surpluses to owners or members but spends them on serving its basic purpose;
  - **non-political** - not engaged in supporting political candidates, parties, or political campaigns;
  - **non-religious** - not primarily engaged in religious activities or purposes, or seeking funding to maintain religious buildings, facilities or assets. However, religious bodies will be defined as a voluntary or community organisation, where the Community Funding Grant will be used for the benefit of the wider community and is open to all faiths and agnostics; and
  - **not in an excluded area or group** - see the terms and conditions of the particular Community Funding Grant Scheme. Excluded areas, for example, non-priority areas of West Northamptonshire Council, or excluded organisations, for example, individuals, government bodies (such as Town and Parish Councils), and other bodies are not eligible to apply for a Community Funding Grant unless defined in a particular Community Funding Grant Scheme's terms and conditions.
- 1.5 The Council is committed to distributing available funding fairly, efficiently and effectively. This Community Funding Grants Framework outlines the Council's approach to Community Funding in relation to resourcing external bodies via Community Funding Grants to assist in the delivery of the Council's corporate plan, strategic aims, objectives and priorities.

## 2 Scope

- 2.1 Community Funding Grants are defined as a financial award the Council makes from its funds, or the funds being administered on behalf of an external body, to support the Council's communities. These Community Funding Grants will be made to voluntary or community organisations as defined by this Community Funding Grants Framework, and

sometimes to other bodies or to individuals subject to the terms and conditions of a particular Community Funding Grant Scheme.

- 2.2 This Community Funding Grants Framework, approved by Cabinet, is written for the Council and any who enquire about the Community Funding Grants Framework or obtaining a Community Funding Grant.

### **3 Community Funding Principles**

- 3.1 This Community Funding Grants Framework is built on a set of agreed principles and an understanding that:
- Community Funding Grant awards are made at the discretion of the Council and are dependent on the availability of the budget which is determined by the Council's budget setting and approval processes;
  - activities funded must be consistent with the corporate plan, strategic aims, objectives and priorities of the Council as approved by Cabinet, or any terms and conditions imposed on the Council where the budget is obtained from an external body;
  - to be eligible for a Community Funding Grant, that has not been funded by an external body, the application must be clearly aligned to the Council's corporate plan, strategic aims, objectives and priorities, and the application must be evaluated and recommended for funding, in full or in part, by the Council's Sector Specialists';
  - all Community Funding Grant applications will be determined on their merit. No organisation is entitled to funding because it may have been granted a Community Funding Grant in the past or for any other reason;
  - other sources of appropriate funding held or to be held by the Council, will be considered as an alternative to a Community Funding Grant (for example, Section 106, Community Infrastructure Levy, Community Benefit Funds). This will enable the Council to take into consideration the availability of all sources of funding for community investment and utilise accordingly; and
  - the Council must ensure proper, prudent and effective use of public money for the award of all Community Funding Grants.
- 3.2 In order to achieve the above, this Community Funding Grants Framework has been approved by Cabinet. Each Community Funding Grant Scheme will adhere to the following Community Funding Grants Standards. These can be changed subject to the terms and conditions of the particular Community Funding Grant Scheme and on approval of the Head of Service (or equivalent), or where the budget has been obtained from an external body that places its own requirements and restrictions on the use of that budget.

### **4 Community Funding Grants Standards**

- 4.1 **Standard 1: promotion** - in order to give all potential applicants equal access to a Community Funding Grant Scheme, all Community Funding Grant Schemes will be promoted as they open, with a clear outline of the Community Funding Grant eligibility criteria, on a single Community Funding Grants webpage on the Council's website, in addition to the normal communications undertaken by the Communications and Marketing Directorate.

- 4.2 This will enable any organisation seeking funding to be confident they are looking in the right place for the available Community Funding Grants, ensuring a fair, accessible, open and transparent process.
- 4.3 **Standard 2: Council's priorities** - all Community Funding Grant Schemes must be mindful of the Council's priorities and therefore be consistent with the corporate plan, strategic aims, objectives and priorities of the Council. As part of the application design and evaluation process, all Community Funding Grant Schemes must require the applicant to demonstrate how they will assist the Council in achieving the corporate plan, strategic aims, objectives and priorities of the Council. This will form part of the evaluation process for the decision to fund, part fund or not to fund. The only exception will be where the budget has been obtained from an external body that places its own requirements and restrictions on the use of that budget.
- 4.4 **Standard 3: evaluation criteria** - in addition to the Council's priorities (Standard 2) all Community Funding Grant Scheme applications will be evaluated for the decision to fund, part fund or not to fund via the following criteria:
- **need** - that there are identified local needs for this project / service within the population or local community;
  - **reach** - that the project / service will:
    - benefit a defined group or groups of the community or existing users; and
    - have a clearly defined issue or issues that the Community Funding Grant will address;
  - **outcomes** - benefit outcomes can be clearly established and realised from the award of a Community Funding Grant that impacts on those within or outside the immediate vicinity of the project / service. And these outcomes can be measured and reported to the Council via an agreed monitoring process, return, business plan / delivery plan or Service Level Agreement as determined by the Council;
  - **sustainable** - where applicable, the project / service has in place:
    - future funding arrangements (short, medium and long-term) to sustain the Council's Community Funding Grant investment; and
    - where applicable, all consents are in place before the Community Funding Grant funding agreement is made (for example, planning approval, landlord consent, the right to occupy buildings or land for the expected useful life of the Community Funding Grant funded item or items);
  - **value for money** - applicants are required to demonstrate value for money in terms of economy, efficiency and effectiveness for the:
    - award of the Community Funding Grant (for example, quotes and tenders have been obtained, that no other organisation operating locally provides a similar service); and
    - added value has been obtained from the use of the Community Funding Grant (for example, increased engagement / impact, reductions in antisocial behaviour);
  - **other sources of funding and match funding** - where applicable, applicants are required to demonstrate that other sources of funding have been considered, and, if appropriate, applied for. Where appropriate, the organisation will self-fund some of the costs towards the project / service or other grant funding bodies can match fund with any Community Funding Grant contribution; and
  - **monitoring and evaluation** - the Council recognises that it is important to demonstrate that public money is spent in the right way, achieves value for money and delivers the required results. On the award of a Community Funding Grant, a degree of Council monitoring and evaluation will need to be undertaken. This

monitoring and evaluation will:

- be proportionate to the funding awarded;
- require the organisation to demonstrate that the Community Funding Grant has been spent, the objectives have been met, and the terms and conditions of the Community Funding Grant have been achieved; and
- that this monitoring is kept as simple as possible to reduce the burden of administration for the organisation funded. This may range from the requirement to demonstrate costs have been incurred and paid for, to progress reporting, monitoring returns, service / performance indicators, or Service Level Agreements.

4.5 **Standard 4: due diligence** - the Council will carry out due diligence on Community Funding Grant Scheme applications in accordance with the following:

<b>Community Funding Grant value:</b>	<b>Due diligence levels (pre and post grant award):</b>
£0 up to and including £5,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bank statement to confirm confirmation of payee, sort code and bank account number, and that a UK bank account is held in the organisation's name or individual's name*;</li> <li>• evidence of grant defrayment – invoices, bill, receipts or bank statement; and</li> <li>• where appropriate, Equality and Diversity Policy / Statement / Commitment, Safeguarding Policy, compliance with Health and Safety.</li> </ul>
£5,000.01 up to and including £20,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bank statement to confirm confirmation of payee, sort code and bank account number, and that a UK bank account is held in the organisation's name or individual's name*;</li> <li>• Companies House / Charities Commission website checks;</li> <li>• letter from Finance Officer, Treasurer, Director of Finance, or equivalent confirming funds held for all bank / investment account balances, including current, general, investment, reserves, earmarked reserves and other accounts at a recent date. Where an account balance includes a material reserve or balance held an explanation from the above will be obtained and considered as part of the grant determination process;</li> <li>• evidence of grant defrayment – invoices, bill, receipts and bank statements; and</li> <li>• where appropriate, Equality and Diversity Policy / Statement / Commitment, Safeguarding Policy, compliance with Health and Safety.</li> </ul>
£20,000.01 plus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bank statement to confirm confirmation of payee, sort code and bank account number, and that a UK bank account is held in the</li> </ul>

	<p>organisation's name or individual's name*;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Companies House / Charities Commission website checks;</li> <li>• letter from Finance Officer, Treasurer, Director of Finance, or equivalent confirming funds held for all bank / investment account balances, including current, general, investment, reserves, earmarked reserves and other accounts at a recent date. Where an account balance includes a material reserve or balance held an explanation from the above will be obtained and considered as part of the grant determination process;</li> <li>• Statement of Accounts checks;</li> <li>• evidence of grant defrayment – invoices, bill, receipts and bank statements;</li> <li>• where appropriate, Equality and Diversity Policy / Statement / Commitment, Safeguarding Policy, compliance with Health and Safety; and</li> <li>• post grant utilisation statement detailing grant outcomes.</li> </ul>
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\*Community Funding Grants will only be paid to individuals under the terms and conditions of the particular Community Funding Grant Scheme and where the individual is applying as an individual and not representing a voluntary or community organisation. Unless a specific term and condition of a Community Funding Grant Scheme, Community Funding Grants are not paid to individuals or into third party bank accounts.

- 4.6 **Standard 5: determination process** - complete applications, and the pre grant award due diligence results (Standard 4), will then be assessed by the Community Funding Officer, and / or the Lead Officer, and an assigned group of the Council's Sector Specialists' against the community funding principles contained in this Community Funding Grants Framework. The Community Funding Panel members will then meet to determine each Community Funding Grant application.
- 4.7 The membership of the Community Funding Panel will consist of Officers (including the Community Funding Officer and / or Lead Officer, Sector Specialists (as required), and a Cross-party Advisory Group.
- 4.8 The Officers will make recommendations to award a grant to the appropriate Community Funding Panel Chair. The role of the Sector Specialists is to support or discount approval to fund an application based on knowledge of their respective areas and the criteria defined in the Community Funding Grants Framework.
- 4.9 The Community Funding Officer and / or Lead Officer will present the recommendations to award grant funding to the Panel Chair. The decision to agree a recommendation to award grant funding is made by the Panel Chair. The Panel Chair will be a Head of Service (or equivalent) or higher grade.
- 4.10 The role of the Cross-party Advisory Group is to ensure adherence to the Framework and that the grants awarded are distributed in a fair and equitable manner. The Chair of

the Community Funding Panel is responsible for making the decision to award a grant, in full or in part, following the recommendation of the Community Funding Officer and / or Lead Officer, the views of the Sectors Specialists, and the view of the Cross-party Advisory Group.

- 4.11 A Community Funding Panel will not be required where the terms and conditions of the Community Funding Grant Scheme negates this function, for example, community participation grant awards.
- 4.12 **Standard 6: what the Council will fund** - due to the nature of Community Funding Grants there will be specific eligibility criteria applying to each Community Funding Grant Scheme and the list below only includes those elements which may be common to all.
- 4.13 The Council can fund:
- core running costs (for example, heat and light, insurance rent or premises costs, office costs);
  - programme or activity costs which are directly relevant to the Community Funding Grant application;
  - travel and transport costs;
  - hire or purchase of equipment for meeting project needs;
  - venue hire (excluding hire of own premises);
  - technical assistance;
  - training that will benefit the function or operation of the eligible organisation (for example, first aid, youth worker, wellbeing and mental health training);
  - festivals and events;
  - capital / revenue costs;
  - publicity, marketing, website design; and
  - salaries of staff and service providers.
- 4.14 **Standard 7: what the Council will not fund** - due to the nature of Community Funding Grants there will be specific eligibility criteria applying to each Community Funding Grant Scheme and the list below only includes those elements which may be common to all.
- 4.15 The exclusions that apply include:
- projects or activities which are delivered outside of the Council's geographical area and do not meet the needs of residents within the Council's area;
  - organisations with material income or reserves held without a clear needs / risk based reserves policy;
  - costs that are not auditable, for example, cash payments;
  - costs that can be claimed back from elsewhere, for example, Value Added Tax (VAT);
  - costs towards banking charges or the repayment of debt;
  - direct payments made to individual members of the applicant group or organisation;
  - existing or operational costs that are not core activities or do not broaden the reach of the organisation into the community;
  - programmes or activities which are considered the core activity of national, regional or local government, government departments or arms-length bodies, such as



health, education, social care, maintenance and repair of the highway, public footpaths, bridleways, streetlighting;

- assets that do not enhance an existing project / service or have a measurable community function or use;
- land or building refurbishment or maintenance for which the applicant does not have a right to occupy for the useful life of the grant funded revenue or capital items;
- activities which are discriminatory, political, or could be classed as religious conversion in nature;
- gifts and prizes;
- alcohol purchases; and
- retrospective costs: activities completed, or costs incurred before the Community Funding Grant offer has been made and the signed acceptance form, where applicable, has been returned to the Council.

4.16 **Standard 8: application form** - all Community Funding Grants will be awarded on completion of an application form accompanied by comprehensive guidance notes. The contact details for the Community Funding Officer, and / or the Lead Officer, will be available on the Community Funding Grants promotional webpage (see Standard 1) and in the guidance notes.

4.17 **Standard 9: incomplete applications, applications received outside the application process, and applications received after the closing date** - to be fair to all Community Funding Grant applicants, the Council will not accept or consider incomplete applications, applications received outside the application process, or applications received after the closing date. These will require a new submission when the next appropriate funding round opens.

4.18 **Standard 10: keeping the applicant informed and assessment decisions** - once a Community Funding Grant application has been received the Community Funding Officer, or the Lead Officer, will acknowledge this within 14 working days. As part of this acknowledgment process the applicant will be informed:

- if the application is classified as complete or incomplete;
- what mandatory information is missing; and
- if any additional information is required.

4.19 Complete applications will then be assessed by the Community Funding Officer, and / or the Lead Officer, and an assigned group of the Council's Sector Specialists' against the community funding principles contained in this Community Funding Grants Framework and the terms and conditions of the particular Community Funding Grant Scheme. The Community Funding Officer, and / or the Lead Officer, and Sector Specialists' will then meet as a Community Funding Panel. The Community Funding Panel will be Chaired by the appropriate Officer (see Standard 5) and will include a Cross-party Advisory Group. The Community Funding Officer, and / or the Lead Officer, and Sector Specialists' will present recommendations to award a Community Funding Grant to the Community Funding Panel Chair for an approval decision.

4.20 **Standard 11: unsuccessful applications and resubmissions** - if a Community Funding Grant application is refused the reasons for the refusal will be contained within a notification letter.

- 4.21 There is no right of appeal.
- 4.22 Applicants cannot reapply for a Community Funding Grant for the same project / service if the initial complete Community Funding Grant application has been refused and they are not asked to resubmit by the Council in writing. Any subsequent Community Funding Grant applications for the project / service will only be accepted, for a following appropriate grant round, if there has been a material change to the application or the amount of funding being requested. Or they are applying under a different Community Funding Grant Scheme.
- 4.23 **Standard 12: framework review** - the Community Funding Grants Framework will be reviewed at least once a year. This can be reviewed more frequently, if necessary, for example, to ensure that the Council's corporate plan, strategic aims, objectives and priorities are appropriately reflected within the assessment criteria.

## **5 Related Procedures, strategies and adopted guidance**

- 5.1 The Community Funding Grants Framework will be supported with working procedures, guidance notes and application forms for each Community Funding Grant Scheme. All Community Funding Grant Schemes will be aligned to the Community Funding Grants Framework to ensure that applying for a Community Funding Grant is easy, transparent and straight forward for the applicant.
- 5.2 The criteria used to assess grant applications will also take into consideration the following Council strategies:
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy;
  - Community Safety Strategy; and
  - Anti-Poverty Strategy.
- 5.3 It will also consider the Integrated Care partnership's ten 'Live Your Best Life' ambitions and the Council's Procurement's Grant Guidance.

## **6 Contact Details**

If you have any questions relating to this Community Funding Grants Framework they can be addressed to:

**Peter Worth**  
**Community Funding Officer**

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