

Sevenoaks District Council Code of Practice for Grantmaking 2015

Background

Sevenoaks District Council is committed to improving the quality of life for our residents. We recognize that the community and voluntary sector has a significant role to play in helping us do this for residents who are more vulnerable and in need of support. In line with this, the Council runs grant schemes where it is able to provide additional activities and projects that complement and support our strategic and overall objectives.

This Code of Practice has been adopted by the Council and is intended for use across all teams and services who are running or considering running a grant scheme. 1.3. From time to time, the Council may manage other grants such as those to individuals and other sectors including businesses. Managers should follow this guidance for those schemes.

Definition

For this purpose, a grant is taken to mean:

'a cash award for a specified initiative, project or service not provided by the Council which benefits those who live, work and volunteer in the District'

Requirements of our grant schemes

As a minimum, each grant scheme should specify:

- Guidelines for completing the application form;
- The objectives of the grant scheme, in particular how it will help the Council meet its overall objectives and support the Council's strategic objectives;
- The required outcomes the Council is seeking from the funding;
- Who is eligible to apply (see **Appendix 1**);
- The timescales for the funding, including the deadline for applications and when decisions will be made;
- How we will make our decisions and the criteria against which applications will be appraised;
- Minimum and maximum grant level;
- Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating individual grant awards and the scheme as a whole.

Application Process:

The application form should be in plain English and targeted to the potential recipients. The degree of information required should be proportionate, reasonable and reflect the level of funding available..

The aim of the form is to give the applicant the opportunity to demonstrate how the application meets the scheme criteria, evidence of need, and the outcomes the applicant group expects to achieve. The suggested contents of the application form are found at Appendix 2.

There should be clear guidance on the application process given to applicants with the form. The suggested contents of this guidance is included at Appendix 3

A checklist should be provided for applicants to ensure that all information has been supplied and all relevant and necessary documents are provided with the application form.

Officers should keep a record of all requests for application forms and follow up, where appropriate, why these were not returned as part of the overall scheme evaluation.

Appraising applications and decision making

The Council supports the following principles regarding appraisals and decision-making:

- The process should be transparent and the method used made clear as part of the application guidelines;
- Grant appraisers should be trained and no decision should be made by an individual;
- Appraisal must take place against the given criteria and applicants must meet the set criteria in order to receive the grant;
- Appraisers must be clear that the scheme/proposal meets the main aim of the grant scheme and that the identified need is met;
- Appraisers need to ensure that they have a checklist for all the documents, e.g. completed application form with all sections completed, accounts, safeguarding policies and procedures. If any document is missing, or is not considered adequate, the applicant should be given a limited period of time to provide them. If the document is provided in this time period, then the application may not be considered;
- Safeguarding arrangements for beneficiaries, staff and volunteers will be considered, and any organisation without adequate arrangements not be funded;
- Audited or independently examined accounts should be considered when the application is appraised;
- Appraisers should keep clear records of their decisions regardless of the outcome of the appraisal.

Approval

All grant applications should receive a response indicating that the grant has been approved, held over or refused.

Approval letters should indicate clearly whether there are any conditions attached to the grant and include: the timescale for payments, monitoring requirements, and the Council's requirements regarding promotion and publicity. The Council's logo will be provided for this purpose;

If the application has not been approved, clear reasons should be given and further feedback provided if requested.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Monitoring has to be relevant and targeted to the applicant group, with the degree of detail reflecting the size of grant. It should assess achievements against agreed outcomes/targets;

As a minimum, recipients of grants must keep a record of beneficiary numbers, who else has benefited from the grant and any feedback from users. This should reflect any of the Council's obligations under the Public Sector Equalities Act.

The applicant group should carry out an evaluation of the project with the beneficiaries, proportionate to the size of grant, such as a satisfaction survey and/or case studies.

The grant process itself must be evaluated and reviewed internally at regular intervals, at least every 3 years, to ensure the system is still effective. This includes review of application forms, criteria, reporting etc. with feedback from applicants.

General

There should be an SDC database which everyone can access which gives details of those groups who have applied for funding and the outcome.

Details of all successful applications are now provided on the SDC website Transparency pages as required by law under the Localism Act 2011.

Appendix 1 Eligibility for all Council community grant schemes

All of the following should be included in the eligibility criteria for applicants.

- The project should be for the benefit of people **living, working or volunteering in the Sevenoaks District**. This includes applicants who are based outside of the area but whose proposed activity is of benefit to those within the District;
- Any funding given should be ring-fenced for those living, working or volunteering in the Sevenoaks District and appear as such in the applicant organisation's accounts;
- The applicant group must have a written constitution or a set of rules;
- The applicant group must have a bank account with 2 signatories, who are not related to each other and who do not live at the same address. If they do not have a bank account, they must nominate a properly constituted voluntary organisation to take responsibility for the money on their behalf;
- The applicant must have, and enclose with the application, a set of audited or independently examined accounts for the latest year available. If they have not been in existence long enough to have a set of audited accounts available, they must have a business/financial management plan made available with the completed application form and provide evidence that they have a bank account;
- The applicant group must have safeguarding policy or policies in place to safeguard children, young people and/or vulnerable adults. The level of detail in safeguarding policies will be determined by the level of contact the organisation or individuals have with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults;
- Any organisation working directly with children, young people or vulnerable adults will need to demonstrate that have safeguarding systems in place that safeguard these groups and appropriate DBS checks have been undertaken.

Appendix 2: Application Form Contents

The level of detail the Council will require will vary according to the scheme and the amount of funding.

For most schemes we will expect the form to capture the following information:

- A description of the project, who it is aimed at, how it meets the scheme's objectives and criteria, and what outcomes will be delivered;
- The applicant's capacity to deliver the project, based on previous experience;
- A fully costed and itemized budget including any other confirmed or outstanding external funding contributions, and any other contributions whether cash or in-kind. The budget will need to include VAT and to state whether or not this is recoverable;
- Clear evidence of financial need, and how the scheme provides value for money;
- If relevant to the funding pot in question, confirmation as to whether the applicant has applied to the Council on previous occasions;
- A project plan and timetable;
- A section where the applicant will set out performance indicators, which are measurable and capture the outcomes of the project;
- Details of any accreditation the organization has or is working towards;
- Confirmation that the applicant has written policies on equal opportunities, health and safety and safeguarding, and that these have been included with the application;
- Details of the applicant's bank account;
- An Equalities statement;
- A named individual with contact details who will be the lead contact for the grant;
- Signature and date box.

Appendix 3 Guidance on the application process

The Council considers that the following information is included in any guidance on the application process:

- Who is eligible to apply;
- The scheme criteria including links to relevant Council documents such as the Community Plan;
- The types of outcomes the funding pot expects to see and at least one example of these;
- Timescales for the scheme and the dates by which we will notify applicants of receipt of applications (within 10 days of receipt) and decisions on awards;
- How we will consider value for money;
- A clear statement that no applications will be considered after the closing date;
- How we will make our decisions, who will do this, and how we will allocate funding if the scheme is over-subscribed;
- A clear reminder that failure to complete all the necessary questions may invalidate the application;
- A statement that the Council will require grants to be paid back if the project does not go ahead for any reason and that failure to notify the Council that a project is not proceeding may jeopardize future applications;
- A statement that any grant monies unspent by the applicant at 31 March of the following year must be paid back to the Council;
- Notification regarding payment processes and at what stage the funding will be made available e.g. on receipt of invoices, 100% in advance, staged payment etc;
- A statement confirming that all Council grants payments will be by direct debit and will be accompanied by a remittance advice and a letter setting out the conditions of the grant and monitoring arrangements;
- The level and timing of monitoring, evaluation and annual reporting required (*see Section 7: Monitoring and Evaluation*);
- Signposting to where further support is available, e.g. on writing and adopting safeguarding policies;
- A statement regarding data protection and our obligations as required by law under the Localism Act 2011 for transparency;

- Grant managers should provide a form for the applicant to sign and date and return, to confirm they have received the money and that it will be used for the purpose for which it was approved;
- The evidence required from applicants to prove that the money has been spent on what it was intended for. (*The financial threshold needs to be considered*).