

**27 January 2015
Agenda Item: 4**

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR POLICY, PLANNING AND CORPORATE PERFORMANCE

Provision of an on-line funding portal for Nottinghamshire County Council

Purpose of the Report

1. To consider the provision of a customised funding portal for Nottinghamshire Voluntary and Community Organisations.

Information and Advice

2. The recent application round for Nottinghamshire County Council Grant Aid generated a significant amount of interest, presentations were delivered to over 300 organisations, applications were received from 179 and requests for over £4million. Demand for funding clearly outstrips the Councils ability to support all requests.
3. The Community & Voluntary Sector Team, Economic Development Team and Arts and Sports Team at the Council all have access to a externally hosted product called Grantfinder which is owned and managed by a company called **Idox**.
4. Grantfinder allows registered users to access a database of over 8000 funding opportunities updated in real time and searches can be carried out on behalf of the VCS by our officers. However, resources to perform this kind of support are limited and an option to allow Communities access the same searches and a range of other funding support tools is available through another product delivered by Idox called **“Open 4 Community”**

Background

5. **Open 4 Community** is a portal that provides comprehensive coverage of all available funding opportunities, including European Union, national Government programmes, regional schemes and local initiatives, and is kept fully up to date.

6. Information is continually updated and checked for accuracy by a team of specialist researchers. In excess of 20 full time staff are working on the funding content at all times. The portal can be customised with County Council branding and is accessed by a link from our website.
7. It also includes a number of proactive features that offer users additional value. Automatic email alerts can be set up so they are first to know when relevant new or updated funds are added, as well as signing up to weekly newsletters packed with the latest funding announcements.
8. Users access the Open 4 Funding portals via an email-based registration process, giving the council really useful intelligence on who is using the service. Monthly statistical breakdowns are also provided to help evaluate the portal's impact and help demonstrate its value for money. All content is subject to a strict editorial process that ensures the information provided is consistent, accurate and relevant.
9. Research is conducted at two levels:-
 - a. **Reactive** – research teams keep in touch with all relevant breaking news feeds, funders' websites, press releases and latest policy documents. On a weekly basis over 2,000 information sources are tracked. In addition, they have developed an in-house tool, which enables them to track changes to thousands of source websites on a nightly basis.
 - b. **Proactive** – using various update cycles to ensure their data is up to date, they keep regular contact with a whole host of funding administrators and policy managers, councils, charitable trust funds. Excellent contacts ensure inside knowledge on new funding opportunities, can be immediately added to the system and disseminated users.
10. The portal provides:-
 - Complete and concise fund details, including criteria, who to contact and links to application forms.
 - Automatic e-mail alerts
 - Weekly e-newsletters
 - Bespoke reports for funding search results and ability for the user to save searches
 - Full search or browse options depending of user preference
 - Information updated in real time ensuring the latest information is available
 - An enhanced support service for community groups without having to commit additional staff resources.
 - 24/7 access to funding information

11. Open 4 Community is hosted by 50+ Local Authorities throughout the UK. Testimonials from some service users are detailed at appendix 1.

12. The following links and appendix 2 show how the portal and opening web-page can be customised to show branding of the local authority.

- Hull City Council - [Hull 4 Funding | Open 4 Community](#)
- Kent County Council - [Kent 4 Community | Open 4 Community](#)

Financial Implications

13. Should members wish further development of this provision the likely costs would be:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| • Initial one-off portal build cost | | £2000 |
| • Subscription costs | 1 year | £4,850 |
| | 2 year | £9,215 |
| | 3 year | £13,095 |

Any costs incurred would be met from the Grant Aid Budget

Other Options Considered

14. This service if developed would be an investment to support the Voluntary and Community Sector of Nottinghamshire. It would be a new development by the Council and a return on investment is anticipated – a survey following the first six months of use in Hull City saw an additional £225,000 in funding being secured by the voluntary sector.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

15. To help the Voluntary & Community Sector maximise funding for the benefits of the people of the County.

Statutory and Policy Implications

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

17. Following a live demonstration, members are asked to:

a). Consider and assess the potential value of developing a bespoke service for the Voluntary & Community Sector of Nottinghamshire.

Providing members are satisfied that such a product would help the Council & VCS;

b). To commission officers from the Community & Voluntary Sector Team & the Digital Inclusion Team from Corporate Communications to undertake further work to ensure any product is designed and implemented in line with the Council's Digital First approach.

Jayne Francis-Ward

CORPORATE DIRECTOR POLICY, PLANNING AND CORPORATE SERVICES

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Constitutional Comments (LM 6/1/15)

The recommendations within the report fall within the terms of reference of the Grant Aid Sub Committee.

Financial Comments (SEM 15/01/15)

The financial implications are set out in the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

ALL

