



Working with the Voluntary & Community Sector

Corporate Grant Aid Strategy

2011- 2015

A Introduction

- 1 The 2011- 2015 Corporate Grant Aid Strategy ('the Strategy') details Nottinghamshire County Council's future plans and priorities for Grant Aid funding and strategic engagement with the voluntary and community sector ('VCS').
- 2 The Strategy has been developed as part of the Council's response to the very difficult financial climate in which it will be operating in over the next few years.
- 3 We believe that the best way forward is to specify clear priorities and outcomes, ensuring that our administration and processes are proportionate.
- 4 The Strategy provides a clear and transparent framework for engagement with the VCS and the allocation of the Grant Aid budget.
- 5 The Council recognises the important contribution made by the VCS in Nottinghamshire, both in providing valuable services and ensuring that local communities have a voice. We also recognise the key differences between large and smaller organisations and we will take account of these differences.
- 6 The Council wishes to support the local VCS. Within tight budget constraints the Council will continue to provide Grant Aid investment to voluntary groups delivering services which reflect our strategic priorities.
- 7 The Strategy says what NCC wants to do and an action plan has been produced detailing how we will do it. The action plan is intended to be a live document through which we will continue to detail how we will fulfil our strategic ambitions over the life of the Strategy.

B Scope

- 8 This Strategy applies to all decisions of the County Council on Grant Aid funding to the VCS, which should be consistent with the principles set out below.

- 9 The Grant Aid budget is to provide discretionary financial support to local VCS organisations who seek such financial assistance to help them to provide services and support to the residents of Nottinghamshire. Grant Aid does not purchase services, but provides a contribution towards the provision of non statutory services which complement our strategic priorities.
- 10 Grant Aid is available for revenue funding and cannot fund capital costs.
- 11 Grants will be monitored by a clear agreement which will outline required outcomes. Frequency and level of monitoring will be proportionate to the grant amount.
- 12 This Strategy does not extend to discretionary partnership contributions, which are dealt with by a separate set of arrangements. This is where the County Council provides a financial contribution to a partner organisation for important joint work.
- 13 The proposals contained within this strategy are subject to any future changes including budget constraints.
- 14 This Strategy should be read in conjunction with the relevant Service Descriptions, the Guide to Grant Aid, Grant Aid Terms and Conditions, Policy on withdrawal from an agreement and Reserves Policy which will be available at the time of application.

C Development

- 15 This Strategy has been developed by a cross- political party Member Reference Group in collaboration with voluntary sector representatives. The Feedback taken from an engagement workshop, focus groups and online consultation process have helped to shape the final Strategy.

D Objectives

- 16 The strategy sets out how NCC will provide opportunities for the VCS to enhance its contribution to our shared objectives.
- 17 **The primary objectives of the strategy are to:**
 - Make Nottinghamshire a place where people enjoy life, are healthy, safe and prosperous; and where business is able to thrive
 - Create a fair, consistent and coherent decision making process for the distribution of Grant Aid
 - Have a long term and meaningful strategy that helps promote sustainability in the VCS
 - Review historical Grant Aid and make the best use of the available budget

- Have clear corporate priorities across all areas of Grant Aid funding with a closer link to outcomes, ensuring that everything we fund contributes to the delivery of our priorities
- Be proportionate at all stages of our processes, especially in our performance monitoring, payments and administration
- For each grant award utilise the most appropriate type of agreement
- Retain flexibility in our funding to fund both large and smaller voluntary groups
- Promote a better mixed economy of funding
- Support collaborative working and consortia within the VCS
- Increase Council understanding of the potential VCS provider base and increase opportunities for the voluntary sector to participate in bidding for other Council services
- Improve strategic engagement, building more pragmatic and versatile relationships with the VCS

E Context

18 The Council has undertaken an internal review of its Grant Aid support to the VCS. As a result of this, a number of key changes have come about, including:

- **A Centralisation of Grant Aid processes:** developing one streamlined process for the administration of Grant Aid, with a simplified application process and a proportionate approach to monitoring. This also makes the best use of County Council staff resources with one central unit now responsible for all administration and payments.
- **A Member led approach:** through establishing and developing a work programme for a cross-party Members Reference Group to take a strategic lead on decision making.
- **A Corporate approach:** ensuring all decisions are aligned to the Council's strategic priorities and demonstrate value for money. When making funding decisions the Council will take a complete overview of how much funding any organisation is receiving from other areas of the Council, as well as ensuring organisations advise us of other external sources of funding. This way the Council can target Grant Aid where it is most needed.

F Our Priorities

19 All Grant Aid investment will be aligned to the Council's priorities which are outlined in the County Council's Strategic Plan 2010-14.

20 The priorities which are of particular relevance to VCS funding are:

21 **To foster aspiration, independence and personal responsibility**

Our priority is to raise the aspirations of local people by enabling them to achieve more both as individuals and as neighbours. We

will encourage local people to take responsibility for how they live and the area in which they live. We are committed to enabling people to live as independently as possible throughout their lives.

We want to:

- Give more people greater choice and control over how they get the support they require to stay healthy and live independently for as long as possible
- Improve the life chances and achievements of children and young people
- Ensure information, advice and access to services is as easy as possible
- Work with the VCS to improve preventative and core services that strengthen the local community
- Enable local people to make more decisions about their lives and where they live
- Embrace the 'localism' and 'big society' agendas by increased community involvement in the way services are shaped and delivered
- Deliver services in ways which promote independence and empower people to make positive choices and decisions about their lives

22 Promoting the economic prosperity of Nottinghamshire and safeguard our environment

Successful local businesses and a prosperous economy are key to our future. Our priority is to do all we can to help our local business community to thrive and to promote Nottinghamshire as a place to invest, do business and to visit and stay. While promoting the economic prosperity of the county we will defend our precious countryside, protect our environment and promote our cultural heritage.

We want to:

- Promote Nottinghamshire as a place to do business and invest
- Develop our infrastructure to enable long-term growth, improve employment opportunities and contribute to reducing the impact of poverty on children and families
- Enhance Nottinghamshire as a tourism destination and increase the number of visitors to the county
- Regeneration of our market towns and rural areas
- Ensure our environment is well managed and our countryside is protected
- Create enhanced opportunities for citizens and visitors to take part in cultural activities

23 Making Nottinghamshire a safer place to live

It is important that people the county is a safe place to live. Managing safety and having a co-ordinated approach to keeping

people and places safe is vital. A greater sense of security helps to create confidence that feeds well-being and growth so it is one of the priorities for improvement that we must address. Our attention must be on the safety of those groups and communities that are more vulnerable and on reducing crime and disorder.

We want to:

- Improve outcomes in protecting vulnerable children and adults in their communities
 - Improve community safety working
 - Ensure communities can be proud of their local area so that residents themselves want to keep areas clean, tidy and safe
 - Public confidence in the county as a safe place to live
- 24 As well as these three overarching strategic priorities, other factors which might influence prioritisation include:
- Community need for the provision
 - Services which secure the best value for the community
 - Increasing volunteering
 - Relevant activities going on elsewhere in the county, regionally or nationally
 - Comparison between different geographical areas
 - The needs of key equality groups (age , disability , gender reassignment , marriage and civil partnership , pregnancy and maternity , race , religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation)
 - Contributing to the Council's other strategic priorities
- 25 In each Grant Aid category, detailed service descriptions will provide specific information about priority areas of work. This will be available at the time of application and should be directly linked to in each application.
- 26 Service Descriptions will be available at the time of application.

G Award Categories

- 27 Subject to availability, the Council proposes to invest Grant Aid funding in the below categories. In future other service areas will be reviewed to identify additional areas that will come under the remit of Grant Aid.
- 28 We recognise the importance of funding both large and smaller VCS organisations and will continue to do so. We welcome applications from new organisations and will make every effort to make the best use of the available budget.
- 29 Where appropriate we will move towards longer term agreements to help promote sustainability in the VCS. Below details the specific areas where this will apply. These will be in principle 3 year agreements which will be reviewed on an annual basis.

- 30 To enable improved forward planning and stability in the VCS, Grant Aid support will in future run from on a cycle that commences on 1st July and ends on 30th June. To enable this, all existing grant agreements awarded for financial period 1st April 2011 until 31st March 2012 will now be extended until 30th June 2012.
- 31 In accordance with the principles set out in the Best Value Statutory Guidance, where on the basis of past practice an organisation might have some basis for expecting the funding to be continued, we will endeavour to provide 3 months notice of any reduction or end of grant aid funding.

H Categories:

Infrastructure Organisations

- 32 The Council proposes to continue to provide a grant for the provision of local infrastructure services to provide leadership, support and represent the VCS in Nottinghamshire.
- 33 Under this proposal existing 15 month agreements which are due to come to an end in June 2012 will be extended until March 2013. Thereafter agreements will be on a two year basis until March 2015.
- 34 Grant Aid will be made available to fund advisory services.

Innovation Grants

- 35 In recognition of the move towards longer term grant agreements, to allow for greater flexibility and retain innovation, a small annual award will be made available from 1st July 2013.

Small Grants (Under £500)

- 36 The Council understands that many smaller organisations fulfil a vital role in their communities and may require a small amount of support to carry out that role.
- 37 In most cases Grant Aid will not be available for amounts under £500. Organisations seeking grants of less than £500 should apply to their local Councillor's Divisional Fund. This does not apply to sports grants to individuals or Play Schemes: small grants under £500 will still be available for these areas. Full information about County Councillors is available online at: <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/whoisyourcllr>
- 38 Organisations or individuals may apply to their local Councillor at any time of the year for discretionary financial assistance.

Small Grants (All Categories) (£501 - £4,999)

- 39 Small grants for amounts between £501 and £4,999 will be available through the Grant Aid process. These will benefit from an application and monitoring process reflective of the level of award.
- 40 Applications for small grants will open in September 2011. Successful applications will be subject to an agreement of up to three years. Unsuccessful applicants will not be able to re-apply for support until the next three year cycle.
- 41 Organisations are restricted to applying for one small grant per application session (i.e. three years) for an award of £501 - £4,999 annually for up to three years. This means that an organisation may receive up to a maximum of £14,997 over three years.
- 42 Small grants will benefit from a single annual payment.

Sports Grants to Individuals

- 43 The 'Shining Stars Fund' will be continued as a specific targeted fund for grants of up to £2,500 for elite athletes who are representing England or Great Britain on an international level at the Olympics, Paralympics, World and Commonwealth Games.
- 44 This 'Rising Stars Fund' remain as a specific targeted fund for grants of up to £500 for talented young athletes in full time education who are seeking to progress from regional to national level.
- 45 Applications for sports grants to individuals, Rising Stars and Shining Stars will be opened in April 1st and close on 1st June each year.

Sports Grants to Clubs & Organisations

- 46 A sports project fund will remain as a specific targeted fund for grants of up to £1,500 for clubs in the community to develop new opportunities for adults and young people to engage with sport.
- 47 Applications for one off sports project grants to clubs and organisations will be opened for applications in April each year. The fund will be open all year subject to the availability of funding.

Arts Grants to Groups & Organisations

- 48 An arts project fund will remain as a specific targeted fund for grants of up to £2,500 for artists, groups and organisations to develop new opportunities for adults and young people to engage with the arts within communities.
- 49 Applications for one-off arts project grants will be opened for applications in April each year. The fund will be open all year subject to the availability of funding.

Large Grants over £5,000

- 50 All grants over £5,000 will benefit from two payments per year subject to successful agreed monitoring outcomes.

Adult Social Care & and Health

- 51 Applications are invited from voluntary and community groups to provide services which focus on vulnerable adults, young people and families who are not typically accessing adult social care services.
- 52 Grants made will be a contribution to the provision of services which enhance the quality of life for residents and contribute to their well-being, so that they may not need higher level or more intensive support from the department.
- 53 The services may include:
- Prevention and early intervention e.g. practical support to remain at home and awareness raising
 - Universal services e.g. advice and information
- 54 We expect that groups providing specialist services e.g. for people with disabilities, will indicate how they have included that community in their planning and service delivery.
- 55 The proposed service should address at least one of the following which are the departmental outcomes:
- Ensuring that people have a positive experience of care and support
 - Delaying and reducing the need for care and support
 - Enhancing quality of life for people with care and support needs
 - Safeguarding adults whose circumstances make them vulnerable and protecting from avoidable harm
- 56 Applications for Adult Social Care and Health grants will open in September 2011 and will be subject to an agreement of up to three years.

Community Transport

- 57 This will remain a targeted community transport fund. The funding is to support voluntary and community groups to provide transport services in the community which enhance the quality of life for residents and contributes to their well-being; reducing the need for higher level support from other Council funded services.
- 58 Services delivered through Community Transport funding will be expected to be aligned to the Mobility Strategy. The Council is also undertaking a review of policies and strategies for the future

provision of passenger transport services. Community Transport is included in the review.

- 59 Applications will open in September 2011 and will be on a three year basis.

Children and Families

- 60 It is proposed that grants will be available to support Voluntary Sector groups who provide a service or services that they have identified as being useful in their local community and which are in line with the priorities of the Children, Young People and Families plan.

- 61 These will:

- continue to improve our work to keep children and young people safe
- continue to improve how well children and young people achieve in schools and colleges
- reduce the gap in educational attainment for all ages
- improve young people's health and wellbeing
- continue to improve our early intervention services to ensure that children, young people and families in the greatest need receive the most appropriate support
- increase opportunities for children, young people and families to take part in sporting, leisure and cultural activities, to develop new skills and to have fun
- conserve and enhance our country parks, green spaces and cultural heritage, and contribute to an improved visitor experience in Nottinghamshire
- improve the efficiency of our service delivery and supporting infrastructure

- 62 Applications will open in September 2011. Agreements will be on a three year basis.

Play Forums and Schemes and Youth

- 63 Grant Aid will be available through two targeted funds to provide specific young people's services; play forums and schemes and youth grants. The purpose of these is to provide access to high quality, safe and enjoyable positive activities for children and young people outside of the school day. It also provides a structure for children and young people to voice their opinions and to shape the services provided for them.

- 64 **Play Forums and Schemes:** The Council aims to support play forums in each district for children aged 3– 14. This seeks to enrich the lives of children through play. In addition, specific grants will be provided to individual play schemes to provide direct play events to

young people aged 3 -14. Grants for play schemes will remain available under £500.

- 65 For Play Forums applications will open in September 2011. Agreements will be on a 3 year basis.
- 66 For Play Schemes applications will open in March 2012 and close in June 2012. Agreements will remain on a 12 months basis.
- 67 **Youth:** Grant Aid investment will also be provided to support individual voluntary groups and umbrella youth organisations who provide positive activities for young people and meet the eligibility criteria.
- 68 Applications will open in September 2011 Agreements will be on a three year basis.

Overview of grants available

Type of grant	Annual level of funding	Application opening/Closing	Length of agreement	Which application form?
Small grants (amounts over £500 in all categories e.g. Adult Social Care, Community Transport, Children & Families, Play Forums, Youth etc)	£501- £4,999	September 2011 – November 2011	Up to 3 years	Small grants application form
Sports grants to clubs & organisations	Up to £1,500	1 st April each year (first come first served)	12 months	Sports application
Arts grants	Up to £2,500	1 st April each year (first come first served)	12 months	Arts application
Adult Social Care & Health	Over £5,000	September 2011– November 2011	Up to 3 years	Large grants application form
Community Transport	Over £5,000	September 2011– November 2011	Up to 3 years	Large grants application form
Children & Families	Over £5,000	September 2011– November 2011	Up to 3 years	Large grants application form
Play Forums	Over £5,000	September 2011– November 2011	Up to 3 years	Large grants application form
Play Schemes	Under £500	March 2012 – June 2012	12 months	Small grants application form
Youth	Over £5,000	September 2011– November 2011	Up to 3 years	Large grants application form
Sports grants to individuals (Rising Stars)	Up to £500	1 st April – 1 st June	12 months	Sports application
Sports grants to individuals (Shining Stars)	Up to £2,500	1 st April – 1 st June	12 months	Sports application

I Decision Making Process

- 69 A new central webpage will be available for the submission of all electronic grant applications and relevant associated documents.
- 70 Two application forms will be available: a simplified application form for grants between £501 and £4,999 and a standard application form for grants over £5,000. This does not apply to Sports Grants to Individuals or Arts Grants who will use the existing process.
- 71 Only one application form need be submitted for bids across more than one category.
- 72 A consortia bid does not preclude organisations from making a further bid independently.
- 73 We encourage organisations to submit their Grant Aid application electronically either direct or with the support and use of facilities provided by their local CVS or library. In recognising that not all organisations will be able to utilise this electronic process, paper applications will be accepted, however we would encourage organisations having difficulty completing their application to contact their local CVS.
- 74 Applications for Grant Aid will be assessed by officers in the Localism and Partnerships Team and lead officers in the relevant service area. Where an application covers more than one service area a co-ordinated approach will be taken. Officers will make a recommendation to Members based on the County Council's Strategic Priorities, the relevance to Service Descriptions, the availability of funding and the operating context as outlined above.
- 75 Limited funding is available and all applications will be subject to assessment to prioritise those which best meet the County Council priorities.
- 76 Final decisions on Grant Aid allocation will be made by a cross-party Member Reference Group. A decision making timetable will be made available.
- 77 Feedback will be provided to unsuccessful applicants.
- 78 Grants over £50,000 to any one organisation will be subject to Cabinet approval in accordance with Nottinghamshire County Council Financial Regulations Section 3.3.3
- 79 The Council recognises the benefits of longer-term funding for both the authority and the voluntary sector. Where appropriate, we will aim to move towards longer term agreements.
- 80 All Grant Aid decisions will be made in line with the County Council's equality and diversity policy.

J Grant Aid Budget

- 81 All Grant Aid funds will be retained in one central budget. Each Grant Aid category will have a designated budget. However, in order to ensure that funding is spent in the highest priority areas, Members will have the discretion to prioritise and take a flexible approach to budget expenditure.
- 82 An indicative budget will be publicised at the time of application – this is subject to Council approval in February each year.

K Strategic Engagement

- 83 The Council is keen to ensure that the best use is made of the skills and expertise of the VCS in the county. This can be achieved through building stronger working relationships and effective strategic engagement.
- 84 Effective relations with the VCS will be underpinned by strong and strategic leadership within the Council. This will be led by the Members Reference Group who will ensure that all investment in the sector takes place within the corporate framework.
- 85 A one message approach will be maintained by the County Council ensuring that the VCS is provided with clear and coherent information.

L Agreement and implementation of the Strategy

- 86 **Approval:** by County Council on 3rd November 2011
- 87 **Implementation:** within Grant Aid process for 2012/13 and then onwards until April 2015
- 88 **Review:** 12 months from implementation