Small grants fund

Context

There is currently little opportunity for small organisations to secure funding to develop local neighbourhood based activities. The re-establishment of a small grants fund would support small community groups to develop grassroots projects and to fund activities in areas not covered by the main funding programme.

Many smaller organisations are rooted in their local areas which brings with it a detailed knowledge and understanding of those neighbourhoods’ strengths and needs. They can play a role in building social networks and in creating positive relationships between people. They can help to build local social capital and develop links within and between communities. Importantly smaller community organisations are considered to be uniquely placed to engage directly with those that the statutory sector perceives as hardest to reach.

A Small Grants Fund will enable projects such as older people’s coffee mornings, arts and cultural events and activities, intergenerational projects, health and self-care support groups, peer support groups, exercise and healthy walks, horticultural projects – growing fruit and vegetables, environmental projects etc. The key will be that the projects will be local, led by local people/organisations, meeting the needs of local people to improve lives and health and wellbeing on a neighbourhood level.

Budget

One overall fund of up to £0.080m will be available each year from 2019/20 to 2022/23 subject to annual budget approval. It is proposed that organisations will be able to apply for grants of up to a maximum of £3,000.

Proposed funding priorities

The priorities for small grants will reflect the Future Ealing outcomes. The key themes are likely to include the following:

- Improving public health and supporting those with specific needs to achieve well-being and independence
- Increasing resident involvement in their neighbourhoods in order to enable communities to influence social, economic and physical regeneration locally
- Improving Self–Care and peer support
- Increasing Community Connections and reducing social isolation

Small grants can provide a contribution to the cost of new activities, projects and services planned by the organisations which are consistent with our priorities. It would be expected that the organisations applying would also be doing their own fund-raising to support their activities.

Main changes from 2015/19 funding arrangements

There was no small grants fund in 2015-19 so this proposal will re-introduce it for 2019-23. This fund will enable local community and neighbourhood based projects to be developed, some of which are currently being delivered as part of the current area-based grant. Specific criteria for small grants will be developed following the end of the consultation period.
Further details of all of these proposals are set out in the schedule of proposed funding allocations (Appendix 2) and the draft EAA (Appendix 3).

5. Impact and equality implications

The proposed changes will have an impact on people with protected equality characteristics who use services and support delivered by the voluntary and community sector and also on some VCS organisations themselves.

Draft equality assessments for each funding stream which focus on the impact of the proposals on service users are attached as Appendix 3.

The voluntary sector will also be impacted by these proposals. Grant funding for organisations that are currently delivering services and activities as part of the 2015-19 programme ends on 31st March 2019 and organisations in receipt of this funding will need to plan ahead for this.

The VCS will be further impacted because the budget for the 2019-23 programme will be used to award both grants and contracts. For many VCS organisations this will have little impact as they may already have contracts with the council and/or Ealing CCG. For some other organisations however there may be implications in terms of them being able to meet the councils’ procurement criteria. The council and Ealing CCG as well as the VCS itself will be able to support organisations to enable them to bid for contracts individually or as part of a consortium.