



Core Strength – Local Communities

Guidance notes for applicants

Introduction

We are very excited to announce the launch of **Core Strength – Local Communities** for 2017/18. This 12 month programme is responding to the growing need of small locally led groups to cover their day to day costs. The aim is to provide funding for groups' **core costs** - meaning expenditure that is not connected to delivering projects but focusing on investing in the organisation as a whole, such as basic running costs. We know securing core funding can be tough and want to use this programme to help support those doing much needed work in their local communities.

People living in areas of disadvantage or who face social issues often get vital support from smaller local groups based within their communities. It is these locally based groups that truly understand the needs of the people they serve and make a huge difference to their lives.

Sadly though, recent research shows that small and medium sized organisations across the UK are being hit particularly hard by the current economic climate, forcing many to either scale back or dissolve completely. We know these organisations urgently need core funding to continue their crucial work. There are still many communities in the UK that work in areas of economic and social deprivation and disadvantage and the current economic climate may make this situation worse.

We want to recognise the importance of local community organisations and the pivotal role they play across the UK. That is why we have developed this exciting programme to fund organisational costs only and NOT direct project delivery – we hope this goes some way to help ensure organisations continue to sustain themselves and support their local communities.

Core Strength – Local Communities **Grants of £1,000 to £5,000/£10,000 (inclusive)**

Criteria

The Grant shall be used to support groups that can evidence a sustained beneficial impact on people's lives who are excluded or disadvantaged this may be through low income, rural or social isolation, age, disabilities, race, sexuality or gender. Priority is to be given to small, locally based groups or organisations in areas of disadvantage that have a clear understanding of the needs of their community and are undertaking actions as a means of addressing these needs.

Who Can Apply?

You must be a locally led and based organisation. This means you are based within the area you are carrying out activities and have local people involved in the running of the organisation. As such we accept applications from the voluntary and community sector including:

- constituted voluntary and community groups
- charities
- social enterprises
- co-operatives

- community interest companies

Your organisation will need to have been running activities for a minimum of 12 months.

Your annual income must be £100,000 or under for your last full financial year. You will need to provide your accounts to prove this.

To be considered for funding you will need to:

- Be working in a disadvantaged or deprived area
- Have limited access to other sources of income
- Clearly define the need you are addressing
- Clearly demonstrate the benefit of your activities to local people
- Illustrate how you aim to deliver social outcomes
- Provide clear evidence that your services provided are inclusive to all

Themes and outcomes

The Core Strength - Local Communities fund sits under the Comic Relief programme of **Building Stronger Communities**. The work and main focus of your organisation should fit one of the Comic Relief priorities. This means the majority of your work fits under one of the following priorities:

1. Connected communities

We are looking for organisations who work to improve inclusion and cohesion in their neighbourhoods. You should be working to help people find common interests, overcome fear and misconceptions and connect people together. This could be supporting the most marginalised people in your area to make connections or getting people from different backgrounds together. You may also focus on working with people who are isolated because of who they are to improve their ability to engage in their local community.

We believe a community where you know your neighbours and help each other is a stronger, happier and healthier community.

2. Productive communities

We want to help create flourishing communities, where people feel they are personally thriving, whilst sharing a sense of purpose and prosperity – rather than just ‘making ends meet’. We are looking for organisations who help this happen – it could be through those who provide employment and work support or enterprises / community owned assets whose purpose is to help local residents out of poverty for example

3. Empowered communities

We want communities to be heard and to be able to make the changes they need to thrive. Your organisation will focus on building the confidence of local people to tackle the issues they face and empower them to make changes as they need. This could be through building up skills and ability of local people to campaign and take action, or for single issue groups to improve their circumstances through awareness raising for example. This is about supporting community led solutions to improve their own lives.

If your organisation fits one of the above priorities then we would encourage you to consider what would help you over the next 12 months to run your organisation. It could be as simple as paying rent for 12 months or it could be funding additional hours of staff time to focus on creating and implementing a business or fundraising plan that would have an impact on the whole organisation.

We are not being prescriptive – this is your opportunity to get non project funding and invest in you as an organisation.

Each organisation will be able to choose one outcome to report against, from the following:

- Connected communities: seeking to improve inclusion and cohesion in communities
- Productive communities: investing in local residents to help them solve the issues they are facing using local people and resources
- Empowered communities: working to empower marginalised and disadvantaged communities

Your organisation may be working under one or more of these outcomes, in which case you should choose the one where the majority of your work is focused on.

Priorities

It is anticipated that this will be a very competitive programme. Having priorities helps us to make difficult decisions when there are so many applications.

Priority will be given to small, locally based and local run groups or organisations in areas of disadvantage that have a clear understanding of the needs of their community and are undertaking actions as a means of addressing these needs. Depending on the quality and volume of applications received priority will be given to:

- Those that are **new** to Comic Relief and/or Community Foundation funding
- Those in areas of **high deprivation**
- Those in geographically **underfunded** areas
- Those with **lived experience**, where people directly affected by the issues are involved in all levels of the organisation
- Those with **innovative approaches**, to respond to clearly defined need
- Those demonstrating **effective practice**, with evidence that the methodology being used will be successful

Examples of what we will fund

Overheads

- Rental costs
- Heating, lighting, water rates
- Core staff costs (this could be any member of staff for time spent doing the day to day running of the organisation or taking time to do planning for the future for example – this cannot cover any time spent delivering activities – for example we could fund a youth worker to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for the organisation but not to deliver the weekly youth club).
- Stationary, small capital items, internet
- Any volunteer costs if your organisation is purely volunteer led OR if you have paid staff then we will cover volunteer costs who help the day to day running of the organisation (i.e. a volunteer receptionist)

Organisational development

- Staff training
- Trustee training
- Volunteer training
- Fundraising

- Business planning and development
- Developing monitoring and learning
- Marketing and communications

This list is not exhaustive but the main point to remember is that our funding cannot be used for direct project delivery. This is about your organisational needs and support. To help below are some examples of things we cannot fund.

What we would not fund

- A youth worker delivering a weekly drop in for young people (service delivery). But we would fund the same person to do development / fundraising / marketing work (organisational development).
- Any project within your organisation engaging directly with beneficiaries – e.g. training for beneficiaries / a film club / employment programme – basically any of the frontline delivery work you do.
- Any large capital building work, though we will consider small pieces of equipment if it will help you run your organisation better
- Trips abroad

Who cannot apply

- Organisations who are in receipt of a grant directly from Comic Relief (you can apply if you have funding from the Comic Relief Community Cash programme)
- Individuals
- Statutory organisations, including schools, universities or hospitals
- Private limited companies
- National organisations, unless the application is submitted by a local office with a separate management committee, bank account and governing documents
- Organisations whose purpose is to promote party politics or religion. Your organisation must be inclusive to all at every level of the organisation (from trustees to staff to volunteers and beneficiaries) and this must be reflected in your governance and in practice.

What you need to apply

We will ask for the following supporting documents to be uploaded with your application:

- A copy of your governing document (e.g. constitution, memorandum & articles or set of rules).
- A copy of your most recent annual accounts or management accounts if these are unavailable.
- A photocopy of a bank statement no more than 3 months old. The bank account must be in the name of the organisation applying.
- Copies of your safeguarding and equal opportunities policies, if you need support with safeguarding we suggest seeking guidance from the Safe Network.
http://www.safenetwork.org.uk/resources/Pages/policies_and_procedures.aspx
- A list of the names and addresses of your management committee. You need a minimum of three unrelated management committee members to be eligible for the grant.