**Connecting Communities Small Grants Fund: Guidance Notes**

**About the Connecting Communities Small Grants Fund**

Connecting Communities is a project funded by the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group for Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) as part of its Ageing Well programme. The project aims to improve the wellbeing of older people across BNSSG, through activities that enable sharing and mutual support. The activities are based on successful models funded by the Bristol Ageing Better programme from 2015-2020.

Connecting Communities is committing £60,000 to support local activities that harness the skills, interests, spaces, and spirit of a community and use them to meet the needs of older people (an approach charities and other organisations often refer to as ‘asset-based’).

The Small Grants Fund will support organisations, groups and individuals running projects and activities that improve the wellbeing of older people in the BNSSG area. Applications are scored and funding awarded by a group of older people on the Connecting Communities Older Persons Commissioning Panel.

**Who can apply**

The Small Grants Fund is open to any group, individual, or not-for-profit organisation. We particularly encourage applications from people and groups who are unable to access other small funding pots, and we have tried to make our application process as simple and transparent as possible.

**What we can fund**

Groups can apply to receive up **£2,000** to fund their activity. We are particularly looking to support new activities, as well as ways to bring new people to an existing activity. Strong applications will show how local older people support the activity, and how it will continue beyond our funding. Activities should not duplicate those already happening locally.

**What information we need from you**

Please complete the application form to provide details about you and your project. This should include what your project will look like and which older people will be involved in the project (e.g. ‘older people living in Weston’, or ‘members of the Somali community’). Please give us an estimate of how many older people will be involved.

Please include a basic cost breakdown for the goods and/or services you will be paying for. All quotes should include VAT and any postal or delivery charges. Make sure you include costs for everything you will need to consider to run your activity – some small yet vital costs such as travel expenses or insurance can sometimes get overlooked.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**What criteria are used to assess the applications?**

Our panel will score bids against the below criteria, giving equal weighting to each:

**Asset-based:** does the project make the most of the skills, interests, spaces, and community spirit present in the location or group the application has come from, with awareness of what is already on offer in the area and how this will serve an unmet need?

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| **5** | The application is clearly asset-based, and demonstrates strong awareness of what is already happening in the community and what local older people need and want |
| **4** | The response makes reference to the community’s assets, and demonstrates awareness of older people’s needs and wants |
| **3** | The application is asset-based, but does not adequately explain why the project is needed or wanted |
| **2** | The application explains the social need, but is not asset-based |
| **1** | The application is neither asset-based, nor adequately illustrative of the social need |

**Supported by older people:** how well does the application demonstrate that older people support the idea?

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| **5** | The response demonstrates that older people have been fully involved in designing the activity and in writing the application |
| **4** | The response demonstrates that the application has good support from older people  |
| **3** | There is some evidence of support from older people for the activity |
| **2** | There is little or no clear evidence of support from older people |
| **1** | There is no evidence of support from older people |

**How the project will make a difference:** how strong a chance does the project have of improving the wellbeing of older people? Has the applicant made clear how they will ensure the activity is accessible and inclusive?

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| **5** | The project has a high chance of improving wellbeing, and has given meaningful consideration to inclusion of people from diverse backgrounds and those who are not currently involved in the local community |
| **4** | The project has a good chance of improving wellbeing, but has not fully addressed inclusion of those not already involved in the local community |
| **3** | The project has some chance of improving wellbeing for a particular group. The applicant should give more consideration to inclusion.  |
| **2** | The project aims to improve wellbeing, but it is not clear how this will happen or how it will reach people |
| **1** | The project is unlikely to improve wellbeing of older people |

**Value for money:** how proportionate is the cost to the benefit to the people involved?

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| **5** | The cost offers excellent value compared to the outcomes for the number of beneficiaries  |
| **4** | The cost is proportionate to the outcomes for the number of beneficiaries  |
| **3** | The cost is slightly high compared to the outcomes for the number of beneficiaries  |
| **2** | It is unclear how many older people will benefit or what the outcomes will be for beneficiaries  |
| **1** | The cost is far too high for to the outcomes for the number of beneficiaries  |

**Continuity:** is the project likely to generate long-term community impact and continue beyond the initial funding?

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| **5** | There is very strong evidence that the activity will generate long-term community impact and continue beyond the initial funding |
| **4** | There is good evidence that the activity will generate long-term community impact and continuing beyond the initial funding |
| **3** | There is some evidence that the activity will generate long-term community impact or continue beyond the initial funding |
| **2** | There is little evidence that the activity will generate long-term community impact or continue beyond the initial funding |
| **1** | There is no evidence that the activity will generate long-term community impact and continue beyond the initial funding |

**Can I apply for funding for more than one activity?**

You are welcome to apply for funding for different activities. Please submit separate application forms for each activity, with separate cost breakdowns. All applications will be reviewed separately.

**Can I apply for partial funding for an activity that will cost over £2,000?**

If you have already received funding from elsewhere – such as another charitable funder, or crowdfunding - for one part of your activity’s running costs (e.g. venue hire or equipment), you are welcome to apply to the Small Grants Fund for the remaining goods and services.

**Is there a minimum amount or funding that I can apply for?**

No, you can apply for any amount up to £2,000.

**What is the fund unable to support payments for?**

The Small Grants Fund cannot be used to fund:

* Salaries of any staff in the organisation applying to the fund
* Payments for work done by the person named on the application for
* Ongoing room hire. For example, if a group currently meets at a community centre on Wednesday mornings and would like to apply for goods and services to increase the provision for that group or start new activities, we cannot cover the cost for the Wednesday morning room hire. If the activity is scheduled for a time when the group does not regularly meet, we can pay for the room hire.
* Any expenditure incurred or committed before the funding is agreed
* Permanent changes to buildings
* Political or religious activities (We can support activities run by faith-based groups or in religious buildings, as long as the activity is open to people of all faiths and beliefs)

**Must my activity be restricted to people aged over 50?**

We welcome applications for activities with an intergenerational focus, and therefore do not require that all goods and services be used solely by over 50s. Successful applications will show that the activity’s main focus is helping to improve the lives of older people, and that the idea is supported by older people.

**May I restrict my activity to people with particular protected characteristics (e.g. race, nationality, gender, sexuality)?**

We welcome applications aimed at older people from minority groups, but encourage applicants not to restrict their activity to groups with particular characteristics unless the characteristics relate directly to the benefits the activity provides (e.g. English lessons for people with a shared first language).

**When will I find out if my application is successful?**

The closing dates for applications in each round of applications are available on the [Connecting Communities page of our website.](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/bristol/our-services/connecting-communities/) We will notify you of your application’s outcome within two weeks of the closing date. If your application is unsuccessful, we will offer you the opportunity to schedule a call from the Project Officer to receive detailed feedback and discuss how you could improve your application if you apply to us again or to another funder. If there are more strong applications received for one review meeting than funding available, the Older Persons Commissioning Panel may choose to reconsider some applications at the next review meeting.

**If my application is successful, what happens next?**

A member of the ­­­­Connecting Communities programme management team will contact you by email or phone to arrange a meeting to discuss your project and complete a short checklist. Once this is complete, we will arrange for the transfer of funds to your
bank account.

The transfer of funds will happen within two weeks of this meeting. We may ask for further information about your project before making a decision.

There will be some monitoring requirements so that Connecting Communities can understand the impact the activities are having on local people and learn how we can best support local groups. There will need to be someone running the activity who is able to take responsibility for this. We understand that this is a relatively small amount of money and so this will not be onerous – a simple questionnaire completed by people taking part in your activity at two different times in the year (to see if their answers change after being involved), and updates on the numbers of people attending every few months. We would also be delighted if you could share stories and photos from your activities for us to publish (if appropriate).

**What other support can you offer to successful projects?**

Our Project Officer is able to provide ongoing support including connecting you with other funded projects to share advice. Although we do require that you explain your long-term plans in your application, we can also provide connections and guidance to help you scale up your activity or access larger funding from other sources, such as registering as a Registered Charity or Community Interest Company or recruiting Trustees or Directors.

**Any further questions?**

If you need any more information about the Small Grants Fund, or would like to ask anything before applying, please contact:

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