

Appendix A – Evaluation of Strengthening Communities Grants Funding Programme

This appendix summarises feedback received by the Funding Project Team.

Feedback was sought and received from a variety of stakeholders including staff, elected members, community groups, and other Christchurch City Council (CCC) business units. Feedback was gathered through a variety of means, including a one day seminar for Community Board members, ongoing discussions with stakeholders and staff, an internal audit, and a formal evaluation process. As part of the formal evaluation process, approximately 500 evaluation forms were sent to community groups that had applied for funding in the 2008/09 year, approximately 300 responses were received.

Some of the positive feedback from stakeholders included:

- 82% of all applicants (of the 255 Groups that responded to the evaluation) had direct contact from Council Staff.
- 252 (of the 255 Groups that responded) believed that information about the Grants Schemes was readily available.
- General comments were that with fewer schemes, Council's Community Funding was easier to access and understand. The new schemes were described as *“less confusing with less funding schemes and the criteria has been clearer for each”*.
- 83% of all applicants thought that the information required (on the application form) was reasonable.
- 100% of all Community Reps (that responded) on the Small Projects Committee believed that the Decision-Matrix had enough information to make a decision.

Issues have been grouped under seven key themes, these are:

- 1.0 Advertisement and Information about Grants Schemes
- 2.0 Timeframe and Application Process
- 3.0 Assessment Process and Information Seminars
- 4.0 Decision Matrix
- 5.0 Criteria
- 6.0 Visiting Groups for Small Projects Fund
- 7.0 Community Organisation Loans Schemes

The tables below outline the issues that have been raised by stakeholders and additional information has been added, as required. Action points that will address the key concerns have also been listed. Where appropriate, recommendations have been included in the main report for consideration and approval by Councillors (marked in red in the tables below).

1.0 Advertisement and Information about Grants Schemes

Issue	Additional comment	Action
<p>1.1 Language and jargon in Guide to Community Funding Schemes make it difficult for Groups whose first language is not English</p> <p><i>Staff feedback</i></p>	<p>Could consider making information available in other languages for future years.</p>	<p>Funding Team to explore options and costs.</p>
<p>1.2 Better promotion of Grants schemes to all groups to enhance awareness.</p> <p><i>Community Board seminar</i></p>	<p>However, 252 (of the 255 Groups that responded) believed that information about the Grants Schemes was readily available.</p>	<p>Could investigate broadening promotional plan (radio advertisement and community public radio).</p>

2.0 Timeframe and Application Process

Issue	Comment	Action
<p>2.1 Length of time it takes to assess and process applications.</p> <p><i>Community group feedback, Community Board seminar</i></p>	<p>Strengthening Communities Fund closing date for applications is 31st March, decisions in August, payments made in September.</p> <p>Need to allow staff time to process the volumes and need to meet meeting advertising/deadline protocols.</p>	<p>Report Rec d) Give full delegation to Community Boards for the allocation of the Strengthening Communities Fund.</p> <p>Payment process will be sped up by the development of a new database.</p>
<p>2.2 Timeframes need to be better aligned.</p>	<p>Decisions made at Metro meetings may have implications for local considerations.</p>	<p>Meeting dates (including information seminars) to be set at start of year. Metro meetings to take place first.</p>
<p>2.3 Application form too complicated for Small Project Fund.</p> <p><i>Community group feedback, staff feedback</i></p>	<p>Given the comparatively small amount of funding applied for, the application form for the Small Project Fund is too onerous.</p>	<p>Shorter version for Small Project Fund to be developed</p>
<p>2.4 Application form should continue to contain information checklist, this should be made more prominent. It should also contain the Terms and Conditions for funding on back of form.</p> <p><i>Staff feedback</i></p>		<p>Include Terms and Conditions on the application form.</p>
<p>2.5 Multiple projects on a single application form from one group</p> <p><i>Staff feedback, Community Board seminar</i></p>	<p>Groups are welcome to put in multiple applications for multiple projects, however, sufficient information is required for each project.</p>	<p>Policy will be one application, one project.</p>

<p>2.6 Confusion about how Groups access multi-year funding</p> <p><i>Community group feedback</i></p>	<p>This would include the additional information that groups would need to submit in order to be considered for multi-year funding. Information required would be cash-flow, sustainability strategy, strategic plan, business plans etc.</p>	<p>Update application form and supporting information to include information about multi-year funding.</p>
<p>2.7 Project basis for funding was difficult for some groups to grasp, and matching projects to outcomes was difficult.</p> <p><i>Staff feedback</i></p>	<p>Groups tried to create a project out of their 'business as usual' in order to get funded. The key point that CCC is concerned with is what will be the outcomes, how does CCC funding contribute towards achieving specified outcomes?</p> <p>An outcomes focus builds opportunities to review trends and see whether the community outcomes are being achieved.</p> <p>This approach, coupled with a results-based reporting process, will provide opportunities for performance measurement with 6-monthly reports recording how well and how quickly a project is making a difference.</p>	<p>Continue to fund organisations based on what project they are delivering, however shift towards funding for outcomes rather than just for projects.</p> <p>Ask Groups to provide intervention logic statements on the application form to show how their project contributes toward CCC's funding outcomes.</p>
<p>2.8 Needs to be made clear that Groups can apply for more than one project</p> <p><i>Elected Member feedback</i></p>		<p>Ensure that this is clear in advertising material</p>
<p>2.9 Confusion over what is covered by 'Small Projects Fund'</p> <p><i>Community Board seminar, Metro Small Project feedback</i></p>	<p>Does Small Project fund need to be project-based? Not all applications were for 'small projects', most for 'small grants'.</p> <p>Intention is for funding to assist a project, but does not have to be a project in itself.</p>	<p>Report Rec e) Rename the Small Project Fund to 'Small Grants Fund'</p> <p>Update funding advertising material.</p>
<p>2.10 Terms and Conditions were too wordy and intimidating.</p> <p><i>Staff feedback</i></p>		<p>Legal Team to revise the Terms and Conditions.</p>
<p>2.11 Interpretation of Terms and Conditions was too broad.</p> <p><i>Community group feedback</i></p>		<p>Legal Team to revise the Terms and Conditions. Terms and Conditions to be included in application form.</p>

3.0 Assessment Process and Information Seminars

Issue	Comment	Action
<p>3.1 Key Local Organisations (KLO) should really be called Key Local Projects</p> <p><i>Staff feedback</i></p>	<p>Title is inconsistent with policy. Funding is on project by project basis, not by organisation.</p>	<p>Report Rec f) Rename Key Local Organisations to Key Local Projects.</p>
<p>3.2 Community Boards would like to have input into the KLO Process.</p> <p><i>Community Board Seminar</i></p>		<p>Review the KLO process for 2009/10 year, particularly timeframes.</p>
<p>3.3 Criteria for KLOs</p> <p><i>Staff feedback, Community Board seminar</i></p>	<p>Criteria need to be better defined and formalised.</p>	<p>Review the KLO criteria for 2009/10 year.</p>
<p>3.4 Elected Members Seminars/Workshops were very useful for Strengthening Communities Fund</p> <p><i>Staff feedback</i></p>	<p>If matrix info is comprehensive, then not needed for Small Project Fund (difficult to justify staff time and cost for SPF in relation to size of grants).</p>	<p>Continue seminars/workshops for Elected Members for Strengthening Communities Fund.</p>
<p>3.5 Guidelines needed for including feedback from Elected Members Seminars into the final Strengthening Communities Decision Matrix.</p> <p><i>Staff feedback</i></p>	<p>Need a mechanism for recording Elected Members comments (questions/ information/suggestions) into the Matrix.</p>	<p>Seminar comments to be included in final matrix alongside original recommendation.</p>
<p>3.6 Some Groups identify as Metropolitan, but are really Local</p> <p><i>Community Board seminar</i></p>	<p>Some groups will be geographically based, but draw members from across the city, other Groups will be small in number but provide a city service.</p>	<p>Staff to use discretion to determine whether a Group is Local or Metro.</p>

4.0 Decision Matrix

Issue	Comment	Action
<p>4.1 Some information missing from Matrix</p> <p><i>Community Board seminar, Elected Member feedback</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other funding agencies applied to for the project • Past and concurrent funding from other sources • Staff numbers (FTE equivalent) • Volunteer hours • Number of people benefiting from project • Current financial position • Previous years accountability • Purpose of organisation or group 	<p>Incorporate changes into new Matrix</p>
<p>4.2 Inconsistent standard of info</p> <p><i>Staff feedback</i></p>	<p>Decision Matrix needs to contain enough information to make a decision.</p>	<p>More staff training and guidelines. Improved database will make a big difference.</p>
<p>4.3 Community Organisation Grade (5 star system)</p> <p><i>Metro Small Project feedback, Staff feedback</i></p>	<p>Change current risk rating system to grading system.</p>	<p>Senior Metro Team Leader to investigate and possibly develop for 2011/12 funding year.</p>

5.0 Criteria

Issue	Comment	Action
<p>5.1 What is Council responsibility? (Within the context of the Strengthening Communities Strategy and Community Funding).</p> <p><i>Staff feedback, Metro Small Project feedback, Elected Member feedback.</i></p>	<p>Council's approach to strengthening communities is guided by principles around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building • Diversity • Participation • Social Justice • Valuing the community and voluntary sector • Partnership • Treaty of Waitangi • Sustainability • Effectiveness • Managing Risk <p>The Strengthening Communities Strategy's eight key goals are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding and documenting communities' trends, issues and imperatives. 2. Promoting collaboration among key stakeholders, including government agencies, Maori, Iwi and community and voluntary organisations, to identify and address community issues. 3. Enhancing engagement and participation in local decision-making. 4. Helping build and sustain a sense of local community. 5. Ensuring that communities have access to community facilities that meet their needs. 6. Increasing participation in community recreation and sport programmes and events. 7. Enhancing the safety of communities and neighbourhoods. 8. Improving basic life skills so that all residents can participate fully in society 	<p>Council Responsibility will be considered on a case by case basis, recognising the needs of local communities, the Principles and Goals will need to be taken into account.</p>
<p>5.2 Community Boards should have some ability to apply their funding to capital works</p> <p><i>Elected Member feedback</i></p>	<p>For example: a pedestrian facility, seating, art work.</p>	

<p>5.3 What is a Capital cost?</p> <p><i>Staff feedback</i></p>	<p>There appears to be confusion about what is captured by 'capital cost'.</p>	<p>Criteria review working party to consider as part of the wider review of criteria <i>See Report Rec a) Establish a working party, consisting of Councillors and staff, to review criteria for all schemes that make up the Communities Grants Funding Programme</i></p>
<p>5.4 Should there be a maximum value for capital items</p> <p><i>Elected member feedback</i></p>		<p>Report Rec h) Place a funding cap of \$25,000 per application, on all applications to the Strengthening Communities Fund for capital works or capital projects.</p>
<p>5.5 Will internal Unit Bids for capital items be considered ?</p> <p><i>Staff feedback</i></p>	<p>Internal bids should go into the Annual Plan.</p>	<p>Report Rec g) Amend the criteria of the Strengthening Communities Fund to enable Community Boards to consider applications for capital works or capital items received from the community. Applications for capital works or capital items must not be for projects that clearly fit within the Capital Programme or an internal Council Unit budget.</p>
<p>5.6 Some items that are currently ineligible should be reconsidered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation panels; • Sun shades/shade sails; • Community artworks; • Heritage projects; • Vehicles expenses and maintenance; • Heaters for halls; • Community vans; • Conference expenses and travel 	<p>Criteria review working party to consider as part of the wider review of criteria <i>See Report Rec a) Establish a working party, consisting of Councillors and staff, to review criteria for all schemes that make up the Communities Grants Funding Programme</i></p>
<p>5.7 Confusion over when an event is funded by the Events Fund vs. Strengthening Communities Fund?</p>	<p>According to the definitions in the Events Strategy, the Events Strategy covers: Icon (now called Hallmark) Events, Major Events, Metropolitan Community Events, Small Community Events. Local Events are funded through Community Boards. :</p>	<p>Criteria review working party to consider as part of the wider review of criteria <i>See Report Rec a) Establish a working party, consisting of Councillors and staff, to review criteria for all schemes that make up the Communities Grants Funding Programme</i></p>

6.0 Visiting Groups for Small Projects Fund

Issue	Comment	Action
6.1 Inconsistency between funds in visits	Visits only happen for the Small Projects Fund. Why visit at a Small Project level and not at a Strengthening Communities level. Why visit for a \$150 and not for \$15,000?	Report Rec j) Adopt the policy statement that the (currently named) Small Projects Fund Assessment Committees do not visit applicants to the Fund as part of the assessment process.
6.2 Legal advice is that it is best practice not to visit Groups, unless it is indicated in the funding application form that a Group will be visited.	<p>Legal advice is that a decision should be made on the information provided to the Committee, together with any additional reports from staff, not in conjunction with additional information obtained from visiting an applicant.</p> <p>In 2008/09 there were 540 applications for Small Projects Funding. Community Boards had between 40 and 70 applicants to the Small Projects Fund. At a Metro level, there were 190 applications.</p> <p>From a staff point of view, implementing this process would be difficult in terms of the timeframes that would be needed to assess applications and then arrange visits.</p>	
6.3 Groups may perceive the visiting process as unfair,	<p>Not all Groups visited, inconsistent questions asked or visits from different Committee Members. This process creates a number of potential risks for Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the process is seen to be unfair, that one group get favourable treatment over another. • That advice tabled after visits could be inconsistent and of varying quality. • That Community groups may challenge funding decisions due to perceived unfairness. <p>It is the role of staff to provide enough information to make a decision.</p>	
6.4 Elected members value visits as an opportunity to network and liaise with their community.	Networking opportunities are provided throughout the year, Elected Members are encouraged to attend..	Specific networking opportunities could be arranged to maintain and develop relationships at other times of the year – not solely to consider funding decisions
6.5 Community Groups are in effect assessed twice, once by Staff and once by Committee Members.	<p>This is inefficient.</p> <p>Staff's role is to assess applications and provide enough information on the Decision-Matrix to make a decision.</p>	

7.0 Community Organisation Loans Schemes

Issue	Comment	Action
<p>7.1 Tight timescales to assess applications from Round Two of the fund round in order to go before Council before the end of year.</p> <p><i>Staff feedback</i></p>	<p>Currently the closing dates for funding rounds are: Round One – May 30, Round Two – September 30. This means that there is a very tight turnaround required to get applications to Council before the end of the year.</p>	<p>Report Rec k) Revert back to one loan funding round for the Community Organisation Loans Scheme with an annual closing date of 31 January.</p>
<p>7.2 2% interest rate is below inflation</p> <p><i>Audit</i></p>	<p>Currently, Council is losing money. If the interest rate were increased 0.5% above inflation (as of September quarter each year) this would mean that the real value of the fund would be maintained.</p> <p>This rate would still be significantly lower than a commercial loan.</p> <p>This increase will come into effect for all new loans, from 31st July 2009. Existing loans will continue at 2% until they have been repaid.</p>	<p>Report Rec l) Increase the interest rate of the Community Organisation Loans Scheme from 2% to 4.5%. This rate to be reviewed annually.</p>
<p>7.3 Currently Council does not ask groups to put up security for loans.</p> <p><i>Audit</i></p>	<p>Why is this an issue? Risk to Council</p> <p>That applicants be made aware that they will need to put up security when applying for a Council loan.</p>	<p>Report Rec n) Require all new applicants to the Community Organisation Loans Scheme to provide security against their loan by way of mortgage/financial instrument. Where a security is not practical, a personal guarantee from the organisation's management will be considered.</p>
<p>7.4 Repayment frequency</p>	<p>Currently organisations that have loans make repayments on an annual basis. Quarterly repayments would ensure that staff will be able to better monitor successful applicants repayments.</p>	<p>Report Rec o) Require all successful applicants to the Community Organisation Loans Scheme to make loan repayments on a quarterly basis.</p>