

Fact Sheet

An introduction to grants

Details of organisations mentioned in this factsheet are listed in *Useful Contacts*. Contact information for grant schemes is listed in *Grant Schemes Relevant to Allotment Projects*.

Grants fall loosely into two main categories: public money and charitable trusts. There is a bewildering array of grants and they are changing all the time. If you are new to grants, start with some smaller, less complicated grant schemes suggested by your local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) or council; don't get 'bogged' down in time consuming research.

Be realistic about how long it will take to secure grants, as most grant schemes take several months to make a decision and you need to allow time for applying for other grants if you are not successful. Also bear in mind that obtaining planning permission, booking contractors and buying materials always takes longer than anticipated.

Aim to build a relationship with anybody that awards you a grant, free materials or service: invite them to open days and other events and send them photos and publicity material from your project.

Where to look for public funding (government grants)

It is tempting to start your research by asking 'what grants are available?' Don't. Instead, ask yourself 'who is likely to be running relevant grant schemes?' Most public funds are contracted out to regional or local government bodies, or voluntary service deliverers to run. Rather than

trying to keep track of the constantly changing community and regeneration investment programmes, obtain updates from your CVS and the bodies listed below on what is currently available.

National funders, especially the lottery, often hold workshops on how to apply for their grants combined with general funding advice. Contact local offices for more information.

Primary Care Trusts

Some Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) run small grant schemes which fund small-scale community led projects that contribute to improving the health of local people. Criteria may focus on healthy living or healthy eating projects, schemes to increase physical activity or facilities for disabled people.

Local authority grant schemes

Many local authorities have a department that can provide information about their own grant schemes (if they have any) and some general information about funding.

Do a search on 'grants' or 'funding' on your council's website or phone your council and ask for the community grants officer (who may also be called the community regeneration team, funding officer, community resources, community development unit, or voluntary support worker).

Police Authority and Fire Service

The Police and the Fire Service are often aware of small-scale grants focussing on crime and arson prevention and community cohesion. Your first port of call



should be your local Police Community Beat Officer. Your local Fire Service will be able to link you with an officer with community duties.

County councils

County councils may have anywhere between one and twenty community grant schemes, with themes ranging from biodiversity, sustainability, urban regeneration, arts, play areas, disabled facilities, community building renovation, to neighbourhood safety.

If your county council administers many grants it will have a funding officer (usually based in economic development) or you can do a search on 'grants' on their website.

The Big Lottery Fund

The Big Lottery Fund is the largest Lottery distributor and will fund projects that bring improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need. Their remit covers health, education, environment and charitable purposes. Check the website to find out what schemes are currently running.

Awards for All, part of the Big Lottery Fund, is a small grants scheme particularly suitable for newly formed groups or those new to grants, and is easy to apply for with a fast 'turnaround'.

Grant schemes administered by voluntary sector organisations

Occasionally CVSs administer certain grant schemes, e.g. Community Chests. Groundwork, BTCV, FCFCG and other environmental organisations have also managed grant schemes in the past.

Government Offices

Generally only manage grant schemes geared towards large-scale community partnerships. They do manage some Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) funds, e.g. 'Safer and Stronger Communities Fund'.

European grant sources

The European Social Fund's grant programmes focus on reducing unemployment, improving and developing

the skills of employed people, investing in industrial or rural areas that are in decline and investing in areas with low economic development.

Most of the grant programmes are suitable only for large organisations or partnerships, although very occasionally there are smaller grants schemes: contact your regional government office.

Landfill Communities Fund

Through this scheme (previously called the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme) landfill site operators contribute money to projects that meet their specific environmental criteria. Projects seeking funding must be within 10 miles of an active landfill site.

Guidelines for the scheme stipulate that allotments are excluded 'since they are used by individuals, not the general public'. However, a number of allotment associations have secured some funding for activities that provide a public amenity (e.g. wildlife gardens, community composting, community building).

Coalfields Regeneration Trust

If you live in a former coalfield community you can apply for funding that contributes to the regeneration of the community.

Where to look for charitable trust funding

Grant-making trusts and foundations give about £2 billion in grants to charities in the UK each year.

There are almost 10,000 UK grant-making trusts: larger trusts distribute several million pounds each year but the vast majority are smaller and more likely to give out a few thousand. Some may give funds to any charitable purpose, whilst others are restricted to specific subjects (e.g. education or the arts) or beneficiary groups (e.g. children or the elderly).

Most trusts derive their income from an endowment given by a wealthy individual, family or company, e.g. the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. Some trusts receive their income from other sources, e.g. TV appeals like Children in Need or Comic Relief.

Researching Trusts

Anecdotal evidence shows that allotments associations have greater success in obtaining funding if they apply for numerous small grants from local grant schemes rather than applying for one large grant from a national grant scheme. Local grant schemes usually have application forms that are simple to complete, a quick turn-around time, and little reporting paperwork afterwards.

Your first port of call to research local funders should be your CVS, whose staff have up to date knowledge and in-depth experience of local funders. They will also be aware of existing partnerships you may wish to join and give you ideas for new partnerships you could form in order to access funding. You could also ask other local groups and charities who they applied to for funding. Your local council may know of local funders that other groups and charities have had success with.

Focus on charitable trusts based in, or specific to, your local area and which have funding criteria relevant to your project. Try to obtain a list of Trustees and see what you can find out about their roles locally, some of your ploholders may even know a Trustee. Trustees often have particular interests or favourite causes and are more likely to give support to a cause they have heard about or observed first-hand so consider inviting a Trustee or staff member to visit your site. These trusts are generally more appropriate to the needs of small, local organisations.

The internet provides a wealth of information about what funding is available both nationally and locally, however, be prepared to wade through a lot of information that may be out of date or not applicable to your proposal. You can cut out a lot of time on the internet by talking to your local CVS first and they should also be able to provide information about funding if you have no internet access.

There are several online databases of charitable and other grant-making bodies,

which you can access through the Fit 4 Funding website, formerly the Charities Information Bureau (www.fit4funding.org.uk). Go through the "funding search" tab on their site. Some of the databases are free to use, although you will have to register to use them. Others are pay-for services through a subscription. Funding Central, one of the most comprehensive free services, is NCVO's online database (www.fundingcentral.org.uk). It also provides tools and resources to support organisations to develop sustainable income strategies.

The Directory of Social Change produces the 'Directory of Grant Making Trusts', which allows you to research grant bodies and criteria without using a computer, and should be available in all main libraries. The directory is updated annually. The directory is also available online by subscription (www.dsc.org.uk).

Community Foundations

Community Foundations act as 'broker' for wealthy philanthropists and organisations with money to donate to good causes. Increasingly, Community Foundations also distribute key government funding. One way to think of Community Foundations is as a 'one-stop-shop' that has money from funders to give out to good causes in a region. The type of grants and criteria vary, but the overall theme is "community based philanthropy". Many foundations can also help to guide you through the application procedure.

There is a network of 60 Community Foundations across the UK, usually operating at a regional or countrywide level. The Community Foundation Network can give you contact details of your nearest. See *Grant schemes relevant to allotment projects*.

Is your project proposal eligible for grants?

Applying to grant schemes when your project does not fit the criteria wastes both your time and the funding body's.

Criteria of grant schemes vary considerably so check carefully that your organisation and your project proposal are eligible to apply. Phone the grant body if in doubt. Again, do not alter your proposal just to fit the criteria, as this rarely works.

Some grant bodies will say that allotments are not eligible because they only benefit individuals. If you know that your project genuinely has benefits to the wider community, explain these, as you may find that your project is then eligible. See *Widening the benefits of allotments* fact sheet in this pack.

Grant schemes that give out smaller awards (less than £500) are usually less prescriptive. Generally though, to apply for charitable grants you will have to work out how your allotments could benefit the community *beyond* your members (see *Widening the benefits of allotments* in this pack).

Site improvements that only benefit the members

Are you trying to fund infrastructure improvements to your site, e.g. a new fence, toilet or water supply? Project work that only benefits members is generally not eligible for grants, because it does not benefit the wider community. A grant body would expect the costs to be paid for by council subsidy or by the members (plotters) rather than by charitable funds.

Whether the council will pay for improvements depends on how many other essential services are vying for taxpayers' money and the general profile of allotments within the council. If they tell you they have no money, take matters into your hands and fundraise, rather than wasting energy in lobbying them. If you go back to the council later, asking them to match-fund money you have already secured, they are more likely to respond positively.

If plotters really want an improved site, they should be prepared to pay for at least a portion of the cost, whether it's by a contribution of their labour in getting the work done, a donation, separate subscription or rental increase.

Attracting new members

Some grant schemes are happy to fund infrastructure improvements that simply attract more members (plotters), especially if you are genuinely attracting types of people who are currently under-represented or disadvantaged. The Lottery's Awards for All has funded a number of such proposals in the past.

'Inclusiveness'

Many grant schemes are looking for evidence of 'inclusiveness': projects that encourage involvement from everyone, regardless of race, colour, gender, physical abilities and so on. Allotment sites often already have a good cross-section of people. Consider constructing a profile of the existing plot holders, to demonstrate to funders the areas in which inclusiveness is already being delivered – spontaneously.

It is not enough to just 'push the buttons' and reel off long lists of minorities who might benefit from the allotment site: you need to think about whether there are barriers preventing those people from getting involved or ways in which you are unintentionally excluding them. The best way to find out is obviously by talking to under-represented people to find out what (if anything) they want from an allotment site. Your CVS or lotteries office may be able to put you in touch with relevant groups.

Providing facilities for people who do not currently use the site only has a purpose if you are certain that the facilities are actually what they want. Do not steam ahead with raised beds and wheelchair paths unless you know that wheelchair users in your local community want to use the site, for example.

Type of organisation

Constituted associations are able to apply for most public grants, whilst some charitable trusts require applicants to be a registered charity. Becoming a registered charity is a lengthy process and allotments are not recognised as charitable unless they have an additional activity, e.g. educational work.

It is generally only worth considering the 'charitable route' if your organisation has grown too big to continue as a constituted association and you require the wider benefits of having charitable status.

Constitution and lease

You may need to provide copies of your association's constitution (or rules) and site lease (if you have one) with your grant application. With many of the bigger grant schemes the wording of these documents has a significant impact on the application. You can sometimes obtain feedback on these documents before making your application.

If allotments are on public land this can exclude them from some of the larger grant schemes. Others may want to see evidence of a long lease, as that makes their investment more secure – so self-managed sites with a 20 year lease have an advantage here.

Policies

You may also be asked to provide copies of policies, such as an equal opportunity or health and safety. If you are a devolved management allotment association managing the site on behalf of your local council it may be sufficient to explain to the funder that, as the council's Agent, you manage the site in accordance with the council's own policies. Your council should be able to provide you with copies of their policies if the funder requires sight of them. If you need to write policies, remember that you will need to allow enough time to draw these up, check with your allotment authority that they are appropriate, and your association will need to formally adopt them. Your ARI Mentor can provide sample documents and link you up with other associations who have developed policies.

Working in partnership

By working with other organisations, you may obtain useful information, help with applying for grants and setting up projects, promotion and a higher profile for your

project. Possible partners include Groundwork, BTCV, PCTs and sustainability and environmental forums.

A word of warning: do not allow other organisations to take over your project or commit to anything you don't want to. Steer clear of organisations that ask for priority for their members or groups in using your services. Partnerships can take up more energy and time than they give, so assess what you want to get out of the partnership and monitor outcomes carefully.

Community Development Trusts

Community development trusts are community enterprises working to create wealth in communities and keep it there. They aim to bring about social, economic and environmental renewal through social businesses. A number of trusts are involved in food projects and may be able to provide help with income generation proposals on your allotments.

Tips on making grant applications

If you have never applied for a grant before, it is easy to be put off trying to work out which grants you can apply for by the paperwork involved. Remember, there is lots of help and advice out there, so don't struggle alone.

Before you start writing any grant application make sure you:

- Reach agreement about what your group wants to do and how you are going to do it.
- Research potential funders thoroughly. What do they require? Is there an application form? Who and what will they fund? When do they accept applications? Is there a deadline?
- Ensure each funding application is tailored to the individual funder – don't just send the same thing to everyone.

Then, submit your application in accordance with the specific requirements of the Trust/Company being approached, e.g. application form, time of submission,

additional materials. If the funder does not provide a specific application form send a short personal letter, no more than one page, including an invitation to visit or meet, and a page summary of what you want funding for.

Follow up your application with a short phone call or note after any deadline has passed; unless the funder specifically requests no contact.

Preparing your application

All applications should include the “**Five Ws**”:

- 1 **Who?** Describe your group.
- 2 **What?** Detail exactly what you want to spend the money on.
- 3 **When** do you need it? Allow several months for processing your application.
- 4 **Where?** Describe your local community.
- 5 **Why?** Explain who will benefit as a result of receiving the grant.

They should also include the “**Big three Hs**”:

- 1 **How** you are going to achieve what you want to do.
- 2 **How** much it will cost in total.
- 3 **How** much funding you are requesting.

Other points to remember:

- Enclose some relevant support material (not too much) including, where possible, good visuals, e.g. photos or drawings, a detailed budget for the project (see below) and your last annual report and accounts.
- Always retain a copy of your letters/application forms in case the funder requests further information or clarification, and to enable another member of the association to answer queries if the original writer(s) are unavailable.
- Be prepared for rejection; an application may be turned down for a variety of reasons. It may be too weak, or miss the funder’s specific priorities, or there may simply be no money left in that financial year or round of applications.

Try to find out why it was rejected and consider applying for a different project after a year has lapsed.

- Be honest - spend money as agreed and consult the funder if it is necessary to make significant changes to the project they have funded, it can happen! Sometimes you may receive money from two sources, each for the same work. Get back in touch with one of the funders, explain and ask if you can spend the money on another specific piece of work; they are unlikely to say no.

Budgets

When making an application for funding you will need to inspire confidence in your ability to handle money. You will need to work out what everything is going to cost before you fill out the grant application. Make sure you:

- Obtain three quotes for any capital items or contractual costs and select the one that shows best value for money (not necessarily the cheapest).
- Factor in the cost of obtaining any ‘permissions’, e.g. planning permission for a wooden compost toilet.
- Factor in any consultancy costs, e.g. walls and structures may require input from an engineer, you may need a solicitor, help applying for planning permission etc. Check whether you can access these free from Business in the Community (see *Income Generation* factsheet).

Matched funding

You will probably need to show evidence of matched funding, in other words, funding additional to the grant that you are applying for. The matched funding could be:

- another grant (a secured grant or one that you are applying for)
 - money you have made by fundraising
- or
- ‘in kind’ contributions , i.e. anything that has been given to the project: free materials; expert advice; voluntary help;

loan of machinery. Try to work out a theoretical cash figure for these donations, e.g. state what the materials would have cost if you had had to buy them, what it would have cost to hire the workers or consultants (the hourly rate x number of hours).

Expenditure

You need to be clear about the different types so that you categorise your expenditure correctly and check that it fits the funding criteria.

- **Capital expenditure** is for items that hold their value as assets and could be sold in the future. This includes land, buildings, renovation, vehicles, computers, photocopier, tools, equipment and furniture.
- **Revenue expenditure** is for ongoing spending. This includes salaries, bills for services such as telephone, gas, electricity, rent, stationery and other consumables.
- **Project expenditure** covers all the costs directly associated with the project for which you require funding, e.g. planning permission, consultancy costs.

And finally...

Building and maintaining a positive relationship with a funder from day-one can reap rewards and also helps built upon the good reputation of the allotments movement.

- Always send a formal Thank You letter and include an open invitation to the funder's staff and trustees to visit the site and see the results of their investment.
- If you are having a 'grand opening' of the project, or an open day, don't forget to invite the funder. You could even ask them to officiate at the opening of the project.
- Send a progress report and include some photographs. Tell the funder what difference their funding has made to the site and the people who use it. Two or three contacts per year is enough; too often and the funder may feel bombarded.
- Funders have their own networks and regularly meet with other funders too, so building a positive relationship with one funder may help to spread information about your work more widely.



Our vision is to
increase allotment
uptake by individuals
and groups

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