

# Leicestershire County Council Community Forum Budgets 2013/14

## Guidance Notes for Applicants

### Introduction

Leicestershire County Council has set up a fund of £320,000 for local communities to invest in local priority improvement projects in 2013/14. The fund will be made available through Community Forums with each forum having between £10,000 and £15,000 to allocate depending on population size.

The Community Forum Budgets are unique from other Leicestershire County Council Grants in that funds are allocated via a participatory process that involves applicants and other project representatives as well as residents and community representatives.

### When & How do I apply?

As a first step, you will need to fill out a Project Proposal Form to set out the key elements of your project and submit this before the deadline specific to your Community Forum.

If you would like any help or advice with filling out a project proposal, please feel free to contact us.

### **NB Submission deadlines and workshop dates may be subject to change.**

An up to date schedule of forum workshop dates and submission deadlines is provided at <http://www.leicestershireforums.org>. Paper copies of this guidance will have a schedule attached that is up to date at the time it was sent to you. Please check the website or contact us to check the dates on the schedule are still correct.

### What happens with my project proposal?

- 1) We will make a summary of your application available on the Leicestershire Forums website. This enables local residents and other interested people to comment on your proposal and/or make suggestions for improvement.
- 2) We will share your application with an Expert Panel to get their professional views on your proposal. The Expert Panel will provide a short feedback report on your proposal, which will be sent to you one week in advance of the Community Forum Budget Decision Night. A summary of the report will be published on the Leicestershireforums website.

- 3) **You will need to present your proposal at your local Community Forum Budget Decision Night where priority projects will be considered and voted on by workshop participants. NB At least one representative for your project proposal will need to attend this event. See 'Community Forum Budget Decision Night' for more details**
- 4) If your project has been selected as a priority project for funding at the Community Forum Decision Night, you will be assisted with advice on any outstanding issues and on the award of grants and relevant conditions. The final decision whether or not to approve projects has to be made by Leicestershire County Council as the accountable body for the funding.

Funding for successful projects will need to be spent by March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014 and progress will be monitored by Community Forums.

### **How much funding can I request?**

The Community Forum Budget is intended to be shared in such a way as to maximise the benefits of the funding to the local area and local communities.

The maximum amount of funding your project can be awarded is £ 5,000 and each group / organisation can only submit one project proposal per forum.

There will be opportunities to change the amount you are requesting **before** the voting takes place at the Community Forum Budget Decision Night. (See further guidance below).

NB If your project covers multiple Forums; you can opt to submit that project for each of the relevant Forums. The maximum amount that can be awarded overall to such projects will however remain £5,000.

### **What projects are eligible?**

Community Forum Budget funding can be used to support a wide range of new and existing projects and activities – the key test is that supported projects and activities will need to show that they are appropriate, feasible and sustainable.

To be **appropriate**, projects and activities should:

- Provide value for money.
- Be led by an eligible group or organisation (see 'who can apply' below).
- Link to one or more of the six priorities of the Leicestershire Sustainable Community Strategy. These priorities are:
  - Supporting individuals and families
  - Delivering effective services
  - Protecting our environment
  - Improving our communities
  - Enhancing children's lives
  - Developing our economy

A summary of the areas of activity covered by the priorities can be viewed at <http://www.leicestershireforums.org/uploads/scs.pdf> and is appended to paper copies of this guidance. You might also wish to consider priorities in district Sustainable Community Strategies as meeting these may be useful in gaining practical additional

support from District Councils. These can be found on the website of the District Council for your area.

To be **feasible** projects and activities should:

- Be able to spend the funding applied for between September 2013 and 31 March 2014. Your reliance on securing further funding may, for instance, be a factor impacting on the feasibility of your project.
- Fulfill all legal requirements and have obtained the consents necessary to deliver the project or activity. These requirements and consents may include planning permission, consent from landowner(s), statutory undertakers and the Highway Authority and regulations relating to health and safety, protection of vulnerable people, wildlife etc.

**NB** at the time of submitting your Project Proposal Form, we do not expect you will have all funds, permissions etc. in place. The feasibility relates to how likely it is that you will get everything in place to ensure your project will be completed effectively by 31 March 2014.

To be **sustainable**, projects and activities should:

- Provide some lasting or longer term benefits for your community forum area.
- Ongoing projects should be capable of continuing without reliance on further public funding.

**The Project Proposal form is a key document to demonstrate that the project is needed, is viable and will bring significant benefits, and will give your project the best opportunity to attract community support and win funding.**

**Please also see the attached Criteria & Eligibility checklist.**

### **What area is covered by Community Forum Budget funding?**

Funding is available for projects and activities based in the County of Leicestershire. Each Community Forum will consider projects that are relevant to its area and the benefits that each of these projects will deliver to its local community. Projects that relate to more than one Forum area can be submitted to multiple Forums.

### **What is the value of Community Forum Budget funding?**

Community Forum Budgets can fund up to 100% of the costs of a project, but your project is more likely to be successful if you have additional sources of funding, or match funding, to demonstrate value for money as well as commitment from the community and/or other external funders. Match funding can include 'In kind' contributions such as volunteer time.

## **Who can apply for Community Forum Budget funding?**

The following groups and organisations will be eligible to receive funding:

- Voluntary and community sector organisations including constituted local groups and charities that operate a 'not-for-profit' business model and which aim to meet the needs of, and make a positive difference to, the local community.
- Parish Councils, local authorities and other statutory agencies.

Individuals, businesses, political groups and academic institutions are not eligible to receive funding. Applications from social enterprises and schools may however be considered.

**NB** Non-constituted groups can apply for funding but would need to be constituted before funding could be awarded. Assistance with becoming a constituted group can be obtained from Voluntary Action LeicesterShire ([www.valonline.org.uk](http://www.valonline.org.uk)) and the Rural Community Council Leicestershire and Rutland ([www.ruralcc.org.uk](http://www.ruralcc.org.uk)).

## **What activities can't be supported?**

Community Forum Budget funding cannot be used for:

- Projects or activities that duplicate existing services.
- Projects or activities which benefit only an individual person.
- Funds to build up reserves or a surplus.
- Costs for activities which have already taken place.
- Activities / projects similar to the activities / projects for which your organisation obtained Community Forum Budget funding in 2012/13. Please contact us if you are in doubt whether this is the case.
- Any political activities and activities that is available to people on the basis of faith only.
- Activities related to or in support of legal challenges, inquests and court proceedings.
- Costs of hiring professionals (ie consultants) to represent your organisation at hearings, legal proceedings, inquests and planning inquiries.

## **Key financial requirements**

- Community Forum Budget funding can be used to match fund grants received from other organisations, providing that it does not duplicate other funding so that the scheme makes a surplus.
- It is expected that you will obtain a minimum of at least 3 competitive quotes for any work carried out which is of a value greater than £5,000. It is however advisable and will be seen as good practice for all projects to seek comparable quotes for the work.
- Funding will only be granted to groups and organisations that have a bank account, with at least two signatories.

### **How will funding be paid?**

If your project is successful you will receive an offer letter from Leicestershire County Council confirming the funding available to you and any conditions. You will need to sign this letter and fill out a form to provide payment details.

Payment will normally be made on completion of your project.

You will be provided with a County Council contact that you should notify when the work is complete and provide with a short 'end of project' report, including financial details such as invoices (see also Monitoring & Evaluation).

**NB** We appreciate many community groups require payment in advance to enable their project to happen and we will facilitate this if possible. Please contact us if you would like to be considered for an advanced payment. Please note that it will take several weeks to process your offer letter and payment. If you require payment in advance and wish to start your project before September 2013, we can therefore not guarantee advanced payments will reach you in time.

Where you have stated on the Project Proposal form that your group or organisation is VAT registered (and can therefore reclaim VAT), any subsequent grant offer will normally be based on the value of your project net of VAT: VAT payments that can be reclaimed cannot be grant aided.

### **Monitoring & Evaluation**

Projects will be expected to provide feedback/evidence of spend (e.g. letter, short report, photograph, visit from funder) to confirm the project activities have taken place. You may be asked to attend a Community Forum meeting to report on progress and/or the results of your project.

### **How will it be decided how the funding is allocated?**

Although the formal decision to award funding lies with Leicestershire County Council, the provisional allocation is decided at a Community Forum Budget Decision Night.

### **What is the Community Forum Budget Decision Night?**

The **Community Forum Budget Decision Night** is the key event in the process as project representatives, local residents and Councillors come together to prioritise the projects that have been submitted for the Forum area. In effect, they will decide on the night which projects are to receive a share of the available Community Forum Budget.

Projects will be prioritised using electronic voting. In the first round, delegates are asked to rate each individual project proposal. The 9 highest rating projects will then be put to a second vote, where all delegates can choose the 3 projects they would most want to see supported. The budget is then provisionally allocated to projects in priority order. So, the project that has attracted the most votes will receive the

funding they requested, followed by the project with the second most votes and so on - until the budget has been fully allocated.

To enable delegates to make an informed decision before they take a vote, delegates will be sent an extract from the Project Application Form and a summary of the feedback from the Expert Panel. On the night delegates will hear presentations from each project. They will also get a chance to discuss project proposals in more detail with other delegates.

All delegates will also be able to familiarise themselves with the projects before the Decision Night by viewing the project proposals and on-line comments on the Leicestershireforums website.

**Your project representative(s) will need to give a 120 second presentation of your project to the meeting and be prepared to discuss the proposal with others participants. Representatives will also be able to discuss project proposals by other groups.**

Further guidance on how project proposers can prepare for the Community Forum Budget Decision Night is available (see contact details below).

**As an applicant, you will have four places reserved at this event for yourself and other project representatives.**

In addition, a limited number of places are available to interested local residents, who will also be able to participate in the voting process. **You are therefore welcome to encourage further project supporters to attend.**

Local residents can express an interest to attend their local Decision Night by registering in person via the Leicestershireforums website or via the dedicated Community Forum Budgets telephone number (0116 305 7034). Places will be confirmed one week in advance of the Decision Night.

NB If the number of people who have registered an interest to attend is larger than the number of available places, we will allocate places via a random selection procedure.

**Please see the website (or the attached schedule) for details about when registration opens and closes for your Forum area.**

**Please remember:**

For your project proposal to be considered for a share of the funding, your project needs to be represented by at least one person at the Community Forum Budget Decision Night. **Failure to attend will result in your project proposal being withdrawn from the process.**

Please check the Leicestershireforums website (or the attached schedule) for the date of your local Community Forum Budget Decision Night.

### **Disclaimer**

Leicestershire County Council reserves the right to vary the terms of the criteria.

### **Further Information**

Further information on the Community Forum Budget process is available at <http://www.leicestershireforums.org/cfb.html>

Email: [leicestershireforums@leics.gov.uk](mailto:leicestershireforums@leics.gov.uk)

Tel: 0116 305 7034

## CRITERIA AND ELIGIBILITY - Checklist

The decisions on awarding funding to projects will ultimately be made by Leicestershire County Council – with due regards to the outcomes of the Community Forum Budget Decision Night. Leicestershire County Council’s decision will be based on whether a priority project is considered appropriate, feasible and sustainable.

As part of their considerations, County Council officers and the Expert Panel will ask themselves the following questions, which are directly related to the funding criteria, so it will help if you can cover these points in your Project Proposal Form.

**NB** at the time of submitting your Project Proposal Form, we do not expect you will have all funds, permissions etc. in place. The question is whether you could get everything in place to ensure your project will be completed by March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014.

### APPROPRIATENESS

Would this project duplicate existing or planned services?

- Does the proposal relate to the provision of a service or activity which is already provided by other organisations?
- Does the project relate to a facility, service or activity that is already being planned by another organisation?

Does the project provide value for money?

- Are the costs of the project in proportion to the likely benefits?
- Are there project elements that could be delivered more cost-effectively?
- Are all costs related to the project justified?
- Has match funding been considered and/or secured?

Is the project led by an eligible organisation and is the project activity eligible?

The following groups and organisations will be eligible to receive funding:

- Voluntary and community sector organisations including constituted local groups and charities that operate a ‘not-for-profit’ business model and which aim to meet the needs of, and make a positive difference to, the local community.
- Parish Councils, local authorities and other statutory agencies.

Individuals, businesses, political groups and academic institutions are not eligible to receive funding. Applications from social enterprises and schools may however be considered.

Community Forum Budget funding cannot be used for:

- Projects or activities that duplicate existing services.
- Projects or activities which benefit only an individual person.
- Funds to build up reserves or a surplus.
- Costs for activities which have already taken place.
- Activities similar to the activities for which the organisation obtained Community Forum Budget funding in 2012/13.
- Any political activities and activities that is available to people on the basis of faith only.
- Activities related to or in support of legal challenges, inquests and court proceedings.
- Costs of hiring professionals (ie consultants) to represent your organisation at hearings, legal proceedings, inquests and planning inquiries.

Does the project meet 1 or more of the 6 Sustainable Community Strategy Priorities?

Supporting individuals and families	Improving our communities
Delivering effective services	Enhancing children's lives
Protecting our environment	Developing our economy

Is there evidence of need and community support?

- Does the proposal set out clearly and convincingly why the project is needed?
- Does the proposal demonstrate a high level of community support for the project?
- If community support is essential to the project's success, does the proposal set out realistic steps for obtaining the required level community support?

**FEASIBILITY**

Can the project (or that part of it for which funding is sought) be completed by 31 March 2014?

- Is it clear for which part of the project funding is sought?
- When will the project be ready to commence delivery?
- Will the project be able to complete delivery by 31 March 2014?
- Does the project rely on other funding to be completed and if so, is this funding already in place or likely to be in place in time?
- Is the project planning for this proposal realistic?

Does the project fulfill all relevant legal requirements?

These requirements and consents may include planning permission, consent from landowner(s), statutory undertakers and the Highway Authority and regulations relating to health and safety, protection of vulnerable people, wildlife etc.

- Does the project fulfill all legal requirements and have the consents necessary to deliver the project or activity been obtained?
- If not, is it likely that these will be obtained in order for the project to deliver in time?

**SUSTAINABILITY**

Does the project provide lasting/long term benefits?

- What will the outputs of the project be – what will be there at the end of the project?
- What will the longer term benefits of the project be? Can this be clearly identified?

Does the project rely on future public funding?

- If the project is with regards to a service or activity, how will the service & activity be continued in future?
- Are measures included to improve the longer term sustainability?
- If the project is with regards to a physical building or objects, has the future maintenance and management been taken into account? Who will be responsible for the object after the end of the project and how will longer term maintenance be assured?