

## Policy Bulletin #3 *Small Grants*

### Foreword

This Policy Bulletin is one of a series focusing issues close to the heart of delivering projects under the European Social Fund (ESF). At current estimates for the 2007-2013 ESF Programming Period, London will benefit from £371 million ESF to be matched £ for £ from domestic public sources. This series of Briefings will seek to identify and understand some of the essentially European characteristics of ESF in becoming part of the general landscape of public provision.

This Bulletin looks at **Small Grants programmes**.

### The Issue at European Union Level

The commitment to offer financial support to small projects, under ESF, first arose within the European Commission in 1996. At this time, a three-year innovatory scheme was launched by the EC under the title "*Local Social Capital*". The idea was to promote local street-level/grass-roots networks/social enterprises as means of consolidating the social fabric of the European Union.

This initiative was believed to be a small and positive step towards economic regeneration. Indeed, organisations such as the European Anti-Poverty Network were invited onto the pan-European Steering Group to underpin the development of the scheme as a measure to combat poverty with a "bottom-up" strategy. Since that time, efforts have been made to mainstream this approach across the EU with London, in particular, introducing effective programmes such as *Fast Forward Grants*, in the 2000-2006 ESF Programme, and *Community Grants* in the current 2007-2013 ESF Programme.

### The Issue at UK Level

**Community Grants** are small grants of up to £12,000 specifically for projects which help unemployed and economically inactive people move into or closer to the labour market. They provide one of the only real avenues for small groups to realistically access ESF, a point recognised in the Department for Work and Pensions Guidance:

"A key objective of Global Grants is to make ESF resources more easily accessible to small NGOs. Such organisations are often better placed to respond to social exclusion at a local level, but are not necessarily well equipped to deal with the demands of ESF secured through co-financing or bidding"

Community Grants is the successor to the the Fast Forward Grants programme, which ran between 2002 and 2007 and was managed by GLE. Fast Forward grants distributed over £11 million in the form of more than 1,000 small grants. The Community Grants programme, which is also managed by GLE, continues to build on these achievements.

The first round of Community Grants was launched in the autumn of 2008 and over 100 grants were distributed to third sector organisations. The focus of Community Grants is on increasing employability amongst those furthest from the labour market and the kinds of

activities that projects are based around reflect that. They include support to raise basic skills levels, taster work experience including voluntary work, training, advice and counselling, job search assistance and other assistance necessary to secure employment, confidence building and first contact engagement activities, for example to provide support to engage individuals with barriers to accessing mainstream services in a non-threatening environment.

The grants are targeted on helping economically inactive and unemployed people, but the programme is particularly concerned with those individuals who are most at risk of social and economic exclusion, since mainstream provision does not usually cover them. Hence the Community Grants programme targets certain types of participants: those with parental and/or carer responsibilities (lone parents being a key group); those with health problems (including people with mental health issues and those on incapacity benefit); disabled people; those from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups (including white minority ethnic groups); recent migrants with the right to work; those aged 50+ with low or no qualifications; and young people (19-24) not in education, employment or training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET.

There are also **other opportunities** for organisations. These **Grassroots Grants**. The latter provides grants of up to £5,000 to organisations with a turnover of less than £30,000. This programme is funded by the Office of the Third Sector and managed by local agencies across London, mainly the Community Foundations, and aims to facilitate the strengthening of local communities through helping community groups to become more sustainable. The grant can be used in a myriad of different ways, from purchase of equipment to salary costs to putting on training, so this is an ideal fund for groups who are relatively new. Application deadlines vary depending on the borough and local information should be checked before making a start on any applications.

The **Awards for All** programme, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, aims to help improve local communities and the lives of people most in need through making awards of between £300 and £10,000. To do this they want to fund projects that meet one or more of the following outcomes: people have better chances in life - with better access to training and development to improve their life skills; stronger communities - with more active citizens working together to tackle their problems; improved rural and urban environments - which communities are better able to access and enjoy; healthier and more active people and communities. Awards for All operate a rolling programme so there is no deadline and applications can be made at any time. Results of Applications should be known within six weeks of submission.

There are also a number of **local grants** that are available in specific areas. Groups interested to see what is available in their borough should contact their local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) who will have all the details of locally held funding. If you are unsure of how to contact your CVS, then check the list on the LVSC website at <http://www.lvsc.org.uk/templates/information.asp?NodeID=90297>

If you would like more information, please contact Ray Phillips [rayp@lvstc.org.uk](mailto:rayp@lvstc.org.uk) at LVSTC by email or telephone 0845 262 2006 / 020 7538 4309.

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