


Grants Determination Sub Committee	 TOWER HAMLETS
9 th May 2017	
Report of: Debbie Jones, Corporate Director for Children's Directorate	Classification: Unrestricted
Event Fund 2017/18 – Revised Guidelines and Criteria and Application Form	

Lead Member	Councillor Asma Begum, Cabinet Member for Culture
Originating Officer(s)	Alison Denning
Wards affected	All Wards
Key Decision?	Approval of change to Guidelines, Criteria and Application Form for Event Fund awards
Community Plan Theme	One Tower Hamlets

Executive Summary

The Event Fund is a small grant fund for community arts events which has been operating successfully for a number of years. It works on a rolling programme with financial year 16/17 still operating on monthly deadlines. The Event Fund is designed to support small scale local events with arts content to encourage participation from the local community across the borough.

The fund is part of the Council's revenue budget and is intended to support the delivery of the Council's Community Plan priorities.

This report covers proposed changes to the Event Fund Application Form, Guidelines and Criteria. This responds to feedback from the Commissioners Decision Making meeting on 8th November 2016 and the Grants Scrutiny Sub Committee that the process is difficult for some organisations and that further work is needed to engage with the community across the borough. Further comment was made about the complicated breakdown of equalities categories considering the value of and type of events that the grants support.

This report will address the action taken to review the process for applications, and recommendations for simplifying the process.

Strategic Alignment

The Tower Hamlets Community Plan provides the long-term vision for the borough, articulating local aspirations, needs and priorities.

It is the objective of the Event Fund to help support the Community Plans outcomes and contribute towards its four themes:

A Great Place to Live
A Fair and Prosperous Community
A Safe and Cohesive Community
A Healthy and Supportive Community

The Event Fund exists to provide small grants for high quality public events and festivals, which are accessible to, and of benefit to the community and to promote the One Tower Hamlets principles across the borough, which are:

- Tackling Inequality
- Strengthening Community Cohesion and,
- Building Community Leadership

Mayor's Priorities:

The Event Fund contributes towards the following strands of the Mayor's key priorities:

- Creating Jobs and supporting the growth of the Local Economy;
- Young People and Schools;
- Older People and Health;
- Community Safety and Community Cohesion;
- Environment and Public Realm; and
- Arts, Heritage, Leisure and Culture.

Monitoring & evaluation

- Organisations are expected to have a system in place to measure the outputs and outcomes by the protected characteristics as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty where relevant and appropriate.
- The level of detail currently required by applicants applying for funding and in the evaluation process is excessive for the amount of money sought for grant awards and the relevance of some of the categories is in question.

Recommendations:

The Mayor and Grants Determination Sub Committee is/are recommended to approve the following documents:

Appendix A: Event Fund Guidelines and Criteria

Appendix B: EF1 Applications £501 to £2500

Appendix C: EF2 Applications up to £500

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 With the move to quarterly applications, and the feedback that the forms and guidelines are too complicated and repetitive, we would like to simplify the process for applicants and encourage more participation from across the

diverse communities of the borough.

The shorter more concise forms would also make it easier and quicker for officers to assess.

We propose revised Guidelines and Criteria and 2 versions of the application form:

1. A longer version for all applications for funding above £500.
2. A second, shorter version of the application form that would be for applications below £500.

The same Guidelines and Criteria will be used for both application forms.

Simplifying the monitoring categories would encourage more participation.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The alternatives are:
 - 2.1.1 To keep the current application form, Guidelines and Criteria
 - 2.1.2 To approve EF1 for all applications
 - 2.1.3 To keep monitoring categories as they are, or simplify them less.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

- 3.1 With the introduction of the online form, it has been possible to see who has started to complete an application but not submitted it, and there has been considerable drop off. This has been a mixture of smaller less informed organisations and some experienced ones who have not finished completing their applications for whatever reason. Feedback would suggest that they just got bogged down with the endless repetition and level of detail required.
- 3.2 We would like to encourage more people to apply and complete the application process and a simplified form and less repetitive guidelines and criteria would make this more achievable. We have engaged with the community at workshops, and the majority felt able to apply after the workshops, however quite a few didn't complete the form even though they started to apply.
- 3.3 Through benchmarking with other similar scale grant funds, and feedback, we found that our guidelines and criteria were long and heavy to read and absorb, and some people would not understand what it all meant or not complete reading them. In response to this, we have also simplified and shortened the guidelines and criteria to remove the jargon, repetition and to make it more accessible to people who may feel put off or intimidated by it.
- 3.4 Through the information gathered as a result of the benchmarking exercise looking at other grant funds across London of similar scale, we have based our simplified form and Guidelines and Criteria at the same level.

- 3.5 We propose the addition of a shorter form for grants of £500 or below which would also be used for special projects such as the Jo Cox remembrance street parties “The Great Get Together” and similar events with less arts content, but significant contribution to the Community Plan themes of community cohesion and cross cultural understanding. For details of the benchmarking, see Appendix D.
- 3.6 The majority of applications and evaluations submitted base all of their monitoring on estimated figures, we therefore seek to reduce the range and categories for monitoring purposes. One Tower Hamlets are reviewing the information required and accept that the information requested is not all relevant. The attached forms have a greatly simplified list which has not yet been approved by One Tower Hamlets but we would request that something along these lines could be approved. This would get the applicants to think about their monitoring before they organise their event and would feed directly into the Evaluation form which is also being simplified. See Appendix E: Proposed Event Fund Equalities Data breakdown.
- 3.6 We acknowledge that there is an imbalance between number of events taking place in each ward and have trialled asking organisers to provide additional monitoring to look at the origin of the audience / participants by providing signing in sheets with the borough’s 5 postcodes however this has been impractical and again most have estimated so it does not give a clear indication of who has actually participated from across the borough. We hope that the simpler form would encourage more community grass root organisations to apply for funding and that we would get a wider reach. The new form does ask who the event is aimed at and who will be involved and where it will take place.
- 3.7 The shorter form (EF2) would apply to street parties and special events such as the one mentioned earlier in memory of Jo Cox, which we would like to make accessible to as many people as possible across the borough. These smaller events will not necessarily meet the arts criteria, and will not necessarily have partners, additional cash funding, innovative programming, or describe the Community Plan themes, however they are likely to meet all of them through the nature of the event being organised by the community for the community.
- 3.8 Organisers will be asked to explain how they will measure success rather than listing their outcomes. We acknowledge that a lot of the information currently requested and the language used is not very accessible to those who are not familiar with the grants process or do not have English as a first language. The new layout to the questions would directly inform the evaluation post event so provides continuity for the organisers.
- 3.9 We have had a disappointing start to the application process with only 6 applications being submitted in quarter 1, with many more in progress but not submitted, which we believe is largely due to the vast amount of work needed to gain a relatively small grant, and expect that the simplified process would

help us to spread the funding across the borough to a wider range of community organisations.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 The report recommends for approval the amendments made to the grant documentation set out in the appendices. Priority for grant funding will continue to be given to events that are free to the public, include community participation, and increase the geographical spread of events especially to the east of the borough. The total budget available in 2017/18 for grant funding community arts events is £52,500 which will continue to be managed through the Arts, Parks and Events team.
- 4.2 The grants will continue to be paid in two instalments, an initial payment of 80% of the grant will be made to reflect the spend profile of events that typically require necessary infrastructure to be purchased in advance of the events. The balance of the 20% of the award is retained until receipt of the completed evaluation form, final budget statement and all supporting documents as specified in the guidelines and criteria.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1 The Council has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. This is referred to as the Council's best value duty. Best Value considerations have also been addressed in paragraph 7 of the report.
- 5.2 In respect of Grants, the Best Value Duty requires the Council to operate a fair and open application procedure to process a request to obtain grant funding. In that regard, requests for grant funding should ordinarily be measured against a predetermined set of eligibility criteria and such criteria themselves must be fair and transparent. Importantly, the criteria should not be so complicated so that potential applicants are put off applying.
- 5.3 It is also important that there is effective communication so that those who would be eligible to apply for such grants are informed that they can apply and about the application process. Again, the guidance given about the process should be clear and understandable so that it does not put off potential applicants.
- 5.4 When making decisions in relation to grants, the Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (the public sector equality duty). A proportionate level of equality analysis is required to discharge the duty and information relevant to this is contained in the One Tower Hamlets section of the report.

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The Event Fund is designed to support small local events that bring people together and help promote a sense of community. The Event Fund helps to support the diverse local community to celebrate this richness of cultures helping to promote cultural understanding, a sense of inclusion and tolerance and promoting conditions conducive to a sense of wellbeing, community and local pride. Many of the events promote diversity, equality and intergenerational work which support the Council's One Tower Hamlets theme, making a significant contribution to creating a cohesive community.
- 6.2 All applicants must demonstrate that they will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and will not discriminate on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics specified in the Act. All groups funded must fill in the monitoring forms supplied to them. The current evaluation includes a template for the recording the nine protected characteristics. We propose that certain characteristics are not relevant and that this is simplified for these small grants. This information may be used by the Council to assess the degree to which funded events are successfully serving people with protected characteristics.
- 6.2 An equality analysis has been completed (Appendix G); and Equality Analysis Quality Checklist (Appendix F).
- 6.3 We received feedback from the Commissioners and Grants Scrutiny Sub Committee when presenting the Quarter 1 Report on 8 November 2016 that the process is difficult for some organisations and that further work is needed to engage with the community across the borough. We believe that simplifying the application and evaluation monitoring data will make the application process more accessible to the community whilst getting the basic information on demographic etc.
- 6.4 We successfully held 2 workshops in Bromley North and Blackwall and Cubitt Town in January prior to opening the new application process for Quarter 1, 1718, and will continue to hold them in partnership with THCVS before the new quarterly deadlines to promote and explain the simplified forms and make the grants more accessible to organisations less confident or familiar with applying for funding.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The conditions of the Event Fund state that it cannot be the sole source of funding, so it helps to lever in other funding and assistance in kind for community activity. This would still be the case with the grants over £500, but would not be necessary for grants of £500 or under.
- 7.2 The Event Fund supports valuable community led activity supporting a range of key strategic objectives of the Council in a cost effective manner which would otherwise be unlikely to take place (annually it supports circa 40 – 50

community events). The Council therefore receives added value from the events supported through their additional funding received from other sources.

- 7.3 There are a number of repeat applications year on year, and although we have some success in bringing new organisations on board, we believe that the simpler format will encourage greater variety.
- 7.4 Due to changes in the administration and assessment of the Event Fund in 2016/17 which now necessitates additional cross-departmental input, and sign off by the Divisional Director, and the move to quarterly deadlines, the simplified forms will mean that less officer time is needed to assess applications which currently take 3 officers approximately 45 minutes to an hour for each application.

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

N/A

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

N/A

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Free community events help to promote community cohesion which in turn helps to reduce crime and disorder, particularly where young people are engaged in volunteering and supporting local events.
- 10.2 Priority is given to arts events which involve young people, encourage personal responsibility and making a positive contribution to the community.

11. SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no specific safeguarding implications

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- Event Fund 201718 - Revised Guidelines and Criteria and Application Form

Appendices

- Appendix A: Event Fund Guidelines and Criteria
- Appendix B: EF1 Application form questions £501 to £2500
- Appendix C: EF2 Application form questions up to £500
- Appendix D: Benchmarking London Grants
- Appendix E: Proposed Event Fund Equalities Data breakdown
- Appendix F: EA Checklist
- Appendix G: Current Event Fund Application questions

- Appendix H: Current Event Fund Guidelines and Criteria

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

- None

Officer contact details for documents:

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