

MAIN STREAM GRANTS 2015/18 SPECIFICATION

Theme Name: Community Engagement, Cohesion and Resilience

1. Basis of Need (Objectives of the theme)

The Council has a duty to foster good relations between groups as part of the Equality Duty on all public sector organisations and the rich diversity of the borough poses challenges and opportunities in how we work to achieve this.

We are a diverse borough that includes newly arrived and established communities, different religions and ethnicities. We have some of the highest average incomes in the UK as well as remaining one of the most deprived areas in the country based on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

We rank 16th nationally on the Simpsons Diversity Index and whilst this is in line with the broader diversity of London the borough is home to communities who often face cross-cutting issues of inequality including BME, LGBT and the disabled communities in the borough.

We also have a very young population and saw that the most significant increases in the population between the last two censuses was in the younger and working age populations. And there are for example over 90 languages recorded as mother tongue or second languages in schools. There is also a high level of churn in the wider population with many people making Tower Hamlets a port of arrival from other countries with significant numbers moving in and out of the borough.

A key priority for the borough is to retain and improve on the consistently high numbers of people who report that they feel the borough is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together (Annual Residents Survey). At the same time current national and international issues such as extremism and migration have the potential to have a negative impact locally.

There have been serious flashpoints such as the vigilante activities dubbed the 'Muslim' and 'Christian' patrols the EDL and 'gay free zone stickers' that have had the potential to challenge community relationships. Long term investment in the development of strong community networks and on-going engagement are key tools in ensuring communities are able to withstand any setbacks or challenges posed by incidents such as these.

The core priority for this theme is the continuing development of the capacity, voice and representation of local communities and the engagement and cohesion across and between them. This funding stream is about supporting and nurturing activities that promote cohesion and also build the capacity of local groups and people to create, lead and deliver projects on behalf of their communities. This is with the aim of improving the sustainability of projects that are supported within this theme.

The experience of past regeneration and partnership work to improve local areas has highlighted the need for bottom up and co-produced solutions for changes to be sustained in the long term.

The Council has in place a number of programmes and frameworks covering the different challenges described above which are used to engage and support local people to develop positive projects for their communities.

It is proposed that this MSG funding stream is combined with the One Tower Hamlets fund which has provided small grants for projects designed to bring together residents to address specific local issues which undermine cohesion and/or bring communities together through exhibitions, cultural activities and celebrations that help to break down the barriers to understanding between different cultures and beliefs.

2. Target Outcomes (and likely outputs/activities)

We specifically wish to fund local organisations which will:

- Engage local community groups and residents in taking ownership of, and collective responsibility in responding to local issues
- Promote greater involvement of local residents in developing solutions to local issues, which also help to build community resilience
- Bring people of different backgrounds together to develop strong and positive relationships through positive interactions
- Identify and celebrate local identities and culture and engage wider communities as part of these projects
- Ensure the sustainability of projects through developing new and emerging community leaders who can speak for the interests of their community, recognising the multi faith, non-faith and different cultural backgrounds of the peoples of the borough, articulating shared values and concerns, and being able to calm any emerging tensions.
- Equip individuals and groups to act positively for the wider benefit of their communities
- Support or respond to opportunities for intergenerational engagement
- Overcome barriers faced by some communities in achieving equal participation in community life and society more widely
- Increased sense of citizenship, local identity amongst local people based on common values, history and culture

A key sustainability measure within this theme is the requirement for projects to be involved in 2 council sponsored action learning workshops and a closing seminar towards the end of the programme to feedback on project outcomes, and lessons learned.

3. Scope of Activities

This theme will be a small grants programme for localised activities. We are interested in supporting projects which bring together residents and local organisations, and also which develop social capital and community leadership. The assessments will include trying to ensure projects achieve a good geographic spread of activities across the borough.

Potential activities include:

- projects that celebrate local life and share cultures through relevant events and projects
- local interventions that tackle estate and ward level priorities and concerns
- events that bridge communities and build cohesion
- projects that develop community organising and community leadership skills
- projects that improve the engagement opportunities for diverse group
- projects that involve people in local decision-making
- projects that support the 'no place for hate' campaign pledge
- Projects that develop and celebrate citizenship, values, history and culture

4. Beneficiaries and Priority Groups to be Targeted

Cohesion is a borough wide issue and there is a wide scope of potential beneficiaries. The priority will be to fund projects that have a cohesion and cross-cultural, intergenerational, engagement or capacity building focus. Projects that work with key equality groups with particular needs as defined by protected characteristics and the Borough Equality Analysis will be prioritised.

5. Required Geographic Coverage

We will seek to fund projects and activities to achieve a good geographical spread of initiatives across the Borough, responding to any particular local issues from the Ward Profiles or identified by local communities.

6. Equality Opportunities

Projects that work with key equality groups with particular needs as defined by protected characteristics and the Borough Equality Analysis will be prioritised.

Groups and organisations must ensure that activities and services are open and available to and inclusive of all potential users in the area where the activity is being delivered. The aim is to fund projects which specifically enable the meeting and coming together of people from a variety of backgrounds.

Barriers which may exclude individuals from participation must be appropriately addressed as part of project development process.

7. Requirements for Tracking, Onward Referral and Progression

Project monitoring in line with standard MSG monitoring arrangements, appropriate to the size and scale of funding, clarifying evidence of the outputs and outcomes agreed. Successful project leads will also be expected to participate in council run action learning sets and evaluation report reviewing impact of the programme on the aims of this MSG theme.

8. No. of Grants to be Allocated by Type and Size

£105K per annum is available for this theme. Allocations of funding between £5-10K will be made on an annual basis.

9. Guidance on Delivery Methods

Projects will need to deliver One Tower Hamlets objectives as outlined in the target outcomes section above and the Getting On Together toolkit, in terms of the type of activity and how it will meet objectives. Partnership and consortium working are actively encouraged particularly for any unincorporated groups who may have community project ideas.

Applicants should demonstrate that they involve potential beneficiaries in how they design, run and review projects and services. Activities and services should be delivered in ways that are responsive to customer needs addressing barriers to participation, involvement and cohesion.

Neighbourhood Agreements provide a vehicle for co-ordinating activities at ward or smaller geographies and will be encouraged. A [toolkit](#) is available for residents to use in preparing and developing Neighbourhood Agreements.

10. Options for Consortium Bidding and Partnership Working

The emphasis will be on supporting a diverse range of projects across as many wards as possible. There is scope for consortia and partnership arrangements to ensure inclusivity and local coverage.