

Exeter Community Forum & Exeter City Council

Grass Roots Grants

Guidance Notes for Applicants October 2016

1. Community Strategy and Grass Roots Grants background

In early 2015, Exeter City Council decided that the 'Neighbourhood' proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy, (a planning charge imposed on development, which is used to pay for infrastructure to support that development) should be spent on developing and implementing a community strategy.

The Council endorsed a 'bottom-up' approach, supporting community groups and action. It has asked the Exeter Community Forum to take a lead to work with others across the city to allocate this neighbourhood proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy or CIL. *See Note i below.*

A [Community Strategy](#) was developed in 2015. This will underpin community-led development in the city for ten years. It will provide a way for communities to take the lead, build their capacity to own and manage buildings and other property, work with other organisations, and fund and deliver projects, initiatives and services.

The Community Strategy is based on a statement of principles of community-led development. Other organisations and authorities are invited to sign up. The Strategy will embody openness and accountability in all its activities. *See Note ii below.*

The Strategy includes an action plan for the first three years, from April 2016 to March 2019. The action plan will be delivered through three programmes, all of which will receive funding from Exeter's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and the New Homes Bonus. Community organisations in the city will be able to apply for funding from the **Grass Roots Grants** programme. Some programmes will receive additional funding from other sources, such as the New Homes Bonus.

2. The programmes

The Grass Roots Grants include a number of different programmes which will all contribute towards the goals of the Community Strategy. The guidance below will help you choose which fund can best support the work your community organisations plans to do.

1. Supporting Community Action.

- a) **Community Action Grants:** these funds will contribute towards the costs of setting up or running a project which runs over a period of time, one or a number of events or it may be towards buildings or equipment. They will be projects that benefit the environment in your local area or have broad community benefit in your neighbourhood.

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Note i . the neighbourhood portion is 15% of the levy that is paid to the city, which can be spent on addressing the demands development places on an area.

Note ii See www.exetercommunityforum.net/community-strategy for more information

These grants will fund work that will take place within one year of the application being made. These grants are intended for example to get things started, help develop project ideas, help grow projects to 'the next stage'. They won't be able to fund ongoing costs such as rent or an ongoing salary. The community will be expected to contribute some funds and volunteer time to make these projects happen.

If you're applying for a grant for **equipment** – it should provide a broad benefit to the community and you will need to provide evidence of the cost and *at least two* quotes.

If you're applying for funds towards a **building** we'll need more information including a business plan showing how you plan to develop the building and keep it running and details of other funders. You'll need to have any planning permission place. There is a separate section on the application form to complete for building projects.

You should refer to the Criteria for guidance on the priorities for assessing proposals at the end of the document to help you with your application.

We anticipate having a special grants round for building projects – please keep an eye on the website for details.

b) **Community building:** We plan to invest in a team of community organisers to work across the city.

Community organising is about:

- “empowering communities and harnessing the power of individuals to work together in shared self-interest.
- Community Organising involves building relationships in communities, mobilising people to take action and supporting projects which make a difference to people's lives.
- Community organising creates social and political change through collective action. Community Organisers listen to what people want to see change in their lives and community and help them to achieve this, working in and through democratic structures.
- Community Organisers have no agenda and do not lead or do things on behalf of people”, they help people to do things for themselves.

People have told us they don't like others 'organising' the so we'll call them Community Builders! But they will work to the same principles and approach.

Communities that are interested in a community builder to work with their community will be invited to make an **Expression of Interest**. Community Builders need not be employed by these communities, they will be employed by a '**host**'.

We will invite **Host** organisations to act as an employer and provide training and support to the network of community organisers across the city and work with communities. The programme will be open to expressions of interest in the autumn 2016.

2. Supporting Community Planning

This will be delivered by appointing a Support Worker to help and support communities wanting to draw up a community plan or neighbourhood plan. There will also be grants available to communities in an area wanting to develop a neighbourhood or community plan for their neighbourhood.

More information will be available in early 2017.

3. Community collaboration:

Community organisations are increasingly wanting to work together with other community groups or larger voluntary sector organisations or public bodies. This may be, for example: to run a project, develop a service, run an event, undertake community consultation, joint training, or volunteer recruitment campaigns etc.

This grant programme will support community organisations to grow their capacity and capabilities to work with other organisations and help provide seed funding to help start new initiatives or grow them to the next stage. A community organisation will need to be the lead partner through the application process.

2. Eligibility criteria

Applications can be for capital (building or equipment costs) or revenue funding (so costs for running a project or activity) or both. Particular criteria for community planning and community organising will be set out separately.

Otherwise, **all applicants must:**

1. Promote the objectives, principles and criteria of the Community Strategy.
2. Be a community organisation or community enterprise. These organisations will be:
 - Based in a local neighbourhood of Exeter
 - Led by (trustees) local community residents
 - Accountable to the local community
 - Open membership to all local residents
 - Work to benefit the interests of the local community of an area or community of interest.

Funding cannot be paid to individuals or be for private profit.

2. Have a constitution and access to a bank account with at least 2 signatories.
3. Be applying for between £1,000 and £50,000. For smaller applications, see the City Council Community Grants Scheme www.exeter.gov.uk/communitygrants or DCC Locality grant see <https://new.devon.gov.uk/democracy/councillors-nav/locality-budgets/> or other grant funders.
4. **Community Action** and **Community Collaboration** grants will normally be completed during one calendar year. If a project needs to take longer than expected the panel will review its progress after 1 year and agree extensions where deemed appropriate.
5. Include an element of match funding, whether a cash or in-kind contribution. (See 3.7 below for more information) It is unlikely that we will fund 100% of a project's costs.

3. Evaluation criteria

The Exeter Community Forum Grass Roots Grants Panel will assess applications and make initial funding decisions and recommendations. It's recommendations will be subject to ratification by Exeter City Council Executive and then the Full Council where Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy or other council-disbursed funds are involved.

All applications will be scored and assessed against the following criteria:

1. Addresses one or more of the priorities and criteria identified by Exeter Community Forum, and/or the Community Strategy, and/or a local community or neighbourhood plan.
2. Provides evidence of local consultation, need and local strengths and opportunities. You can also look at the consultation feedback gathered as part of the community strategy development on the Exeter Community Forum website.

3. Provides evidence of seeking local support. For example this may include other community organisations, community interest groups, e.g. young people, minority ethnic communities etc, where relevant, Surveys, Community Organisers where relevant or local Councillor/s.
4. Provides evidence of working together with others and the community.
5. What difference you plan to make in your community or to the local environment and how you plan to measure this. We will expect organisations receiving grants to measure a number of things which will contribute to our assessment of the impact of the community strategy across the city – for example number of volunteer hours.
6. Provides evidence of the viability of the overall project. So, for example, we will consider things like: is there a good team running the project, is the project thought through, does it have enough funds to do the work, will it make the difference you are aiming to make.
7. Commitment to provide match funding, for example;
 - a. Cash contribution through fundraising activities, crowdfunding, another funder or contribution from a partner organisation(s)
and/or
 - b. Social capital or in-kind contribution i.e.: volunteer hours, expert input, use of building.

Please note that the fund is expected to be oversubscribed; therefore applications may not be successful even if they satisfy all of the criteria.

Organisations receiving a grant will be expected to contribute towards evaluation of the programme and publicity by Exeter Community Forum and Exeter City Council about the grant.

You are advised to discuss your application with Community Team at Exeter City Council.

In the first instance, please use the following contact details:-

- email: grassrootsgrants@exeter.gov.uk
- telephone: 01392 265531 to speak to the Programme Manager - Communities.

You can submit your application:-

By post to: Programme Manager-Communities, Room 3.11, Exeter City Council, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter, EX1 1NN

By email to: grassrootsgrants@exeter.gov.uk, copy to exetercommunityforum@gmail.com

By a combination of post and email. For example, you may have filled out a paper form, and have paper copies of some of the supporting documents, but other documents are stored on your computer. Please send anything you can by email, as it saves us having to scan and copy the supporting documents.

4. Data Protection

In accordance with our responsibility under the Data Protection Act, you should be aware that the personal information you are giving will be held by Exeter City Council and will be passed to Exeter Community Forum Grass Roots Grants panel members who will help to assess your application. Your personal information will not be shared with any other organisation or individual unless we have a legal obligation to do so.

Details of the grants awarded will be made available on the Exeter Community Forum website, however, no personal details will be included.

4 What happens next?

The grant process will be administered by the Exeter City Council Communities Team. They will liaise with the Exeter Community Forum Grass Roots Grants panel Chair to agree applications that broadly meet eligibility criteria (see section 2 above), whether any further information is required and whether costs are realistic relative to the proposals and the funds available.

Applications can then progress to the Panel, or if appropriate referred back to the applicant for additional information or feedback if they are not eligible.

5 More about the decision-making process

The Exeter Community Forum Grants Panel will be composed of the following members:

1. The Exeter Community Forum Chairperson – Diana Moore or nominated substitute.
2. Four other community representatives drawn from different organisations which are full members of Exeter Community Forum. (To be drawn from different organisations and geographic areas of the city. Current panel members are:

- Kate Holmes Park Life Heavitree
- Su Aves Newtown Community Association
- Annette Grahns Digby Community Association
- Jan Peakes ISCA Community Association

3. The Exeter City Council portfolio-holder for Communities and Neighbourhoods or nominated substitute.
4. The Exeter City Council Programme Manager for Communities or nominated substitute (non-voting member)

The panel sits three times a year, with meetings timed to allow decisions to be passed to ECC for ratification by full council

Organisations making an application to the Exeter Community Forum may be invited to make a presentation to the Panel, guidance for this will be given at the time the invite is made.

The forthcoming timetable appears below, together with the corresponding deadline for applications.

Deadline for applications	Panel meeting	Decision by Full Council
1. 12noon 2 nd January 2017	Early January 2017	21 Feb 2017
2. End May 2017	June 2017	25 July 2017
3. October 2017	November 2017	December 2017

For more information:

www.exetercommunityforum.net

Grass Roots Grants Guidance: October 2016

¹Table 1: ECS Criteria for Assessing Proposals: Prioritisation by participants in community events

