

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

REPORT ON WEST LOTHIAN VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION MODERNISATION AND IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME AND SECTOR TRAINING

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update the grant awards since the last meeting from the West Lothian Modernisation and Improvement Programme 2021/22 and provide an update on the training and monitoring of the 2019/20 awards.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the panel:

1. Notes that £134,000 remains to be allocated in the financial years 2021/22 and 22/23;
2. Notes that 10 applications have been funded to a total of £60,118;
3. Notes the update on the monitoring for the 2019/20 awards; and
4. Notes the training issues highlighted by organisations.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs. Being honest, open and accountable. providing equality of opportunities; developing employees; making best use of our resources; working in partnership.
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	Appropriate assessments will be carried out as required.
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None, although the report details delegate a specific delegation which is already in place for the Head of Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration to approve and disburse grant funding.
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	An agreed method of assuring quality and continuous improvement is an integral constituent of the move to funding voluntary organisations to deliver agreed outcomes, and should increase performance against agreed indicators.

V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	£134,953 remaining from an overall pot of £650,000
VII	Consideration at PDSP	The Voluntary Organisations PDSP is updated on a regular basis.
VIII	Other consultations	Consultation has been carried out with the Third Sector and Council Executive.

D. TERMS OF THE REPORT

D.1 Background

At the meeting of West Lothian Council on 24 September 2019 a report providing an update on the Review of the Loans Fund, Insurance Fund and Modernisation Fund proposed an allocation of £200,000 from the one off resource to create a fund for voluntary organisations to help modernise their operations.

This funding support was to be delivered through an application based Voluntary Organisations Modernisation and Improvement Fund open to all voluntary organisations operating within West Lothian. The focus of the fund was to support voluntary organisations to:

- modernise and improve to make it more sustainable in the medium term;
- encourage partnership working within the sector;
- demonstrate how it will support the council in meeting its agreed priorities

It was further reported that an additional £450,000 (£150,000 per year) had been identified to support the programme in 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23.

D.2 Update on 2019/20 grant awards

As previously reported the effects of Covid-19 had started to impact our communities just as the original awards were being paid out, £173,590 allocated to 20 organisations. This affected not only our communities but also local organisations as well. It was appreciated that priorities may well have changed both in terms of the immediate needs of their beneficiaries and also their own plans for modernisation, the urgency of which might have changed due to the evolving situation. As such all applicants were awarded the funding with an offer to utilise it for the original purposes or to support their Covid-19 response at their discretion.

Monitoring returns have shown that the majority did use the funding as originally awarded with only three reporting that they diverted the grant fully to support the organisation through COVID-19 and two partially did so.

D.3 Re-opening the fund in 2021/22 and 22/23

The Modernisation and Improvement Fund was reopened in September 2021 to allow the final £134,953 to be made available to support the aims of the fund. This incorporated the changes to the process agreed with the Third Sector Working Group. These were to introduce a rolling deadline based on applications received being assessed on a bi-monthly basis with a new maximum award level of £7,500.

This also removed the specific link to the Business Improvement Programme element that had been part of the original process. However, the training needs of organisations was part of the application form. See section D.5 for more on the training side.

D.4 Grants awarded in 2021/22

Since the fund was reopened ten applications have been received and all ten were awarded either a full or partial grant.

Applicant	Grant Awarded	Purpose
Craigsfarm CDP Ltd	£6,500	Website design and online booking system
Fair Justice System for Scotland	£2,000	Computer equipment
Bridge Community Project	£7,360	New web booking system
SMILE	£7,500	Next level qualification to be delivered by Training Team
Family and Community Development West Lothian	£7,500	Upgrade to IT system.
Simply Play	£6,828	Social Media advertising Print advertising Website redesign
Broxburn Utd SC	£7,500	New computing, internet and software update.
West Lothian 50+ Network	£1,800	Installation of a stairlift to increase access.
Spark	£7,500	Employ part time Relationships Manager to develop new Scottish wide markets plus linked marketing and legal structure
The Larder	£5,630	Market Research and bespoke on line shop.
TOTAL	£60,118	

There remains £74,835 available in the fund to support future funding applications in 2022/23.

D.5 Training needs of the sector

As referenced in D.3 the Business Improvement Programme element was taken out but training and similar support needs were part of the application, and monitoring of the 2019/20 awards. This provides some themes and areas that will be part of the wider discussion on the sector's needs through the Third Sector Strategy Group (TSSG) and the Third Sector Working Group. It is clear that whilst a relatively small sample that some of this could be addresses through better signposting, one to one support but also had the potential for workshop or training sessions if enough interest. This will form the discussion with the Third Sector Working Group.

The areas identified have been grouped into a few general headings and sub bullet points:

Business Development support

- Income generation / Enterprising workshops / Social Enterprise (x3) /

diversification/ Business Planning / Growth planning/ Plan and implement expansion of client users within existing and extended geographical areas / Market research

- Digital support / Web development / Developing and social media strategy / Branding and Marketing (x2)

Organisational Development

- Identifying volunteers / HR Training / Staff training and development/ staffing restructures and similar improvements
- Risk assessments / first aid training/ health & hygiene training
- Financial Assistance – create and follow budgets / Financial planning
- Legal structure / Reviewing the Articles of Association and the governance / Trustee Board Development/ SCIO development

Funding

- Funding / Funding signposting/ Sources of funding for other projects
- Writing successful applications / Writing good funding applications and understanding local and national strategies so as our applications tie into the overall objectives.
- Impact evaluation (x2) / Training on writing good reports to adequately highlight impact and outcomes
- Developing a Fundraising strategy

Environmental Policy/Impact

- Environmental policy / Policies development / Environmental impact reduction (x2) / Environmental sustainability

Community Wealth Building and other local/national strategies

- Community Wealth Building (x2) / Better understanding of local and national policy/council strategies / understanding local and national strategies

Asset Transfer/Taking on Assets

- Asset transfer (x2) / Taking on assets (x3)

Partnership Working

- Demonstrate how relationships between staff, volunteers, clients and partner organisations could be made better and how our activities could be developed;
- Partnership working – working together to help users / Partnership working
- How we work together to make a real impact and address poverty

Other

- Trauma informed training around mental health needs to help groups work with clients.
- Visits to organisations
- food security
- regeneration
- Transport – How it can service our communities and the Third Sectors role
- Understanding the benefits system for our clients

As previously reported £14,953 from the £74,835 has been ring fenced to support the provision of any training element identified that has a cost element. Should this not be required, or any requirement is less, then any balance will go back into the overall pot for allocation as grants

E CONCLUSION

Covid-19 has seen an unprecedented response to our communities needs and has been a factor in the decisions made to allocate the Modernisation and Improvement Fund in 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23. The remaining funding of £134,953 has been reopened and £60,118 allocated to date to support 10 groups.

Some training needs have been identified and these will form the basis of discussions with the Third Sector Working Group to look at what the best support might be.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Voluntary Organisations PDSP, 19 March 2020

<https://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/submissiondocuments.asp?submissionid=45577>

Voluntary Organisations PDSP, 19 August 2021

<https://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/viewDoc.asp?c=e%97%9Di%90my%8F>

Appendices/Attachments: None.

Contact Persons:

Alice Mitchell, Economic Development and Regeneration Manager, tel: 01506 283079; email alice.mitchell@westlothian.gov.uk

Douglas Grierson, Regeneration Team Leader, tel: 01506 281088; email douglas.grierson@westlothian.gov.uk

Craig McCorriston,
Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration

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