

LEICESTERSHIRE TOGETHER (LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP) BOARD

Tuesday 22nd May 2007

FUNDING TOOLKIT PROJECT

REPORT OF LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Purpose of the Report

- To report to the Board on progress with the Leicestershire Funding Toolkit.
- To highlight the need for further funding to sustain the project after July 2008.

1. Background

1.1 The decision to develop a 'Funding Toolkit' was made in 2004. The purpose of the toolkit is to provide 'on-line' support that improves the ability of voluntary and community sector organisations in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to successfully apply for and secure funding to support the effective delivery of projects and services for local people.

1.2 Development of the project during 2005 included a development day to develop a framework for the Funding Toolkit. Discussions and a paper consultation were also held with voluntary and community sector organisations to test the need and desire for the funding toolkit.

1.3 These activities resulted in a clear view that the development of a Funding Toolkit would be a welcome addition to the support for voluntary and community sector organisations. The elements of the funding toolkit that are considered particularly important are:

- A searchable database of funding sources
- Guidance notes on making applications
- Access to local data and statistics on local economic and social conditions
- Networking

1.4 Resources were secured from Leicestershire Together and Leicestershire County Council to appoint a project officer with a dedicated budget, to take forward the project. Oliver Savage was appointed in early November to take the project forward, with a new project manager taking over on a part time basis as of January 2007 (Lucie Keeley)

2. Current and future activity

2.1 New Year Fund Small Grants for Small Groups

It was decided at the end of 2006 that a small pot of £5,000 could be offered from the funding toolkit budget for voluntary and community groups. The New

Year Fund - Small Grants for Small Groups was launched at the beginning of January 2007, offering grants of up to £100 to the smallest groups in Leicestershire. 230 applications were received by the deadline. Due to the massive oversubscription and the quality of applications, it was agreed that extra budget should be found to allow all eligible groups to have the opportunity to claim the grant. 153 groups were successful, receiving grants to a total value of £14,969. The list of successful applicants is available from the funding toolkit website¹.

A number of groups will be involved in publicity following their successful grant application, which will involve local newspapers, websites & radio. This offers a good opportunity to project the Leicestershire Together partnership, and demonstrate how it has supported local communities.

2.2 FAN & Steering Group

The funding toolkit manager runs a quarterly funding advisors network (FAN) open to anyone who provides support, advice or information about funding to voluntary and community organisations in Leicester, Leicestershire or Rutland. The FAN aims to improve the knowledge, skills and understanding of funding advisors to enable them to provide effective advice and support with the FAN also enabling a strong collective voice for funding advisors.

A Steering Group from this FAN has been formed to assist with the development of the FAN and the funding toolkit project. Membership of the Steering Group includes individuals from a range of organisations and backgrounds. The organisations represented are: Leicestershire County Council, North West Leicestershire CVS, Leicester CVS, South Leicestershire CVS, Leicester Mercury, Rural Community Council, Blaby District Council. The first meeting of the Steering Group was held in November 2006 with subsequent meetings in February and May 2007.

2.3 General Progress

The project is progressing well with statistics showing the yearly targets for both registrations and visits to the open4community aspect of the toolkit being exceeded at quarter 3. Clearly this part of the website, which provides a database of funding sources, is being extensively used above initial predictions.

Protocols exist with most of the CVS's to assist with promotion of the toolkit and to provide the toolkit with details of funding advisors and news. The project has been well received by the District Councils, and has enabled at least one District Council to make savings by not paying separately for a funding database.

2.4 Interim Evaluation

There is a requirement for an independent evaluation to be undertaken to gain insight from users and non-users of the funding toolkit at 18 months (January 2008). This evaluation is expected to begin in September 2007, with reports available in January 2008.

¹ Further details of successful groups and grant distribution are available as an annex to this report

2.5 Sustaining the operation of the Funding Toolkit

At present the Funding Toolkit is managed on a part time basis, but we need to consider how the support provided at present will be continued after the end of the project (July 2008).

A budget of £5,000 has been made available by Leicestershire County Council to support the Toolkit in 2007/08 but there is a need to identify future funds to ensure the sustainability of the toolkit after July 2008 and to consider the direction that the Toolkit should take after the planned initial period of operation.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) notes this report;**
- b) receives a report at a subsequent meeting looking at options to identify further resources to enable sustainability of the Funding Toolkit after July 2008**

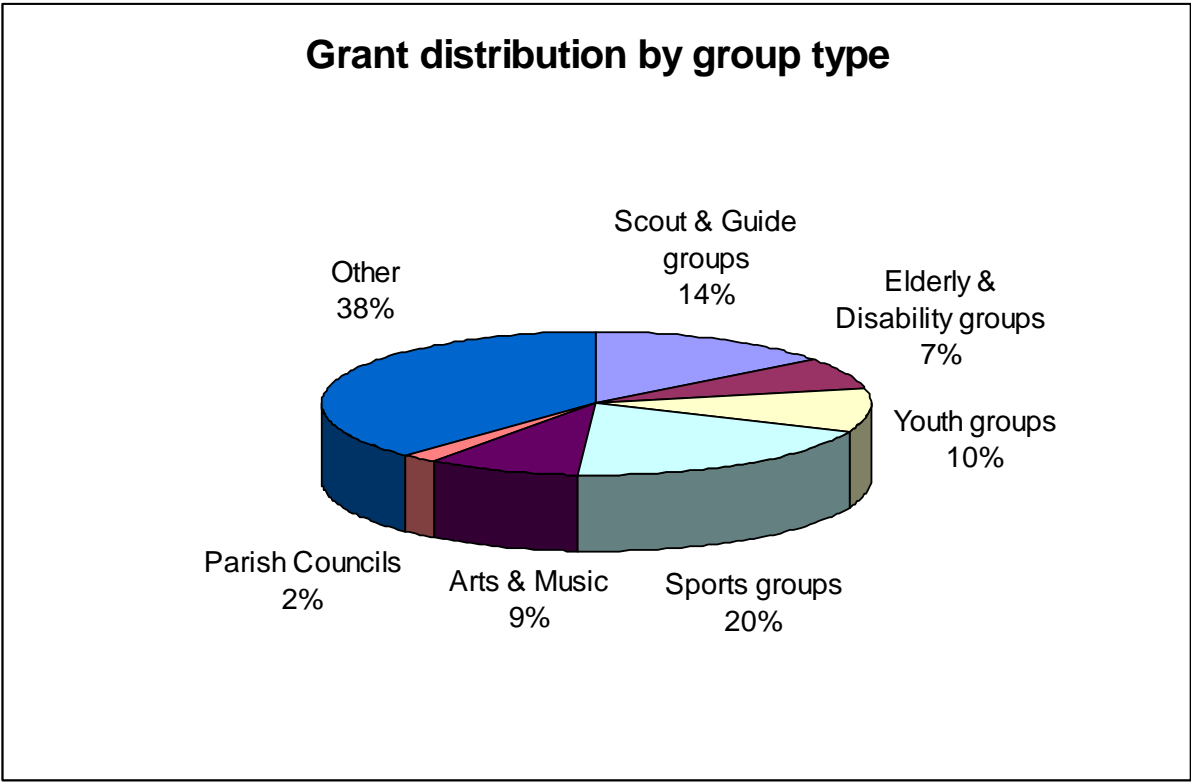
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Funding Toolkit New Year Fund Small Grants for Small Groups distribution



Grant distribution by district

