

Committee Finance Grants Sub Committee	Dated: 21/07/2016
Subject Central Grants Programme – Grant Management Process	Public
Report of: Chief Grants Officer	For information
Report author: Scott Nixon, Project Manager	

Summary

With the Finance Grants Sub-Committee terms of reference now amended so that a more strategic oversight of the City of London Corporation Central Grants Programme can be taken, this report provides an overview of the grant management processes to be implemented by the Central Grants Unit, under the direction of the Chief Grants Officer. In so far as possible, the proposed processes draw on and align with those employed by the City Bridge Trust.

A summary of the key milestones to be achieved between June and September 2016 have been provided to update Members on the momentum of the Grant Programme implementation.

Recommendations:

- To note the processes to be implemented by the Central Grants Unit.
- To note the key milestones leading to the launch of the Central Grants Programme.

Background

In March 2016, the Resource Allocation Sub-Committee and Policy and Resources Committee received a report outlining the work that had been undertaken to date to implement the recommendations of the Effectiveness of Grants Service Based Review (SBR).

The aim of the review was to increase the strategic impact of grant-making, ensure that the grants are managed more efficiently and effectively, improve the consistency and quality of the customer experience and so bring consequential reputational benefits.

As a result of the proposals made to Resource Allocation Sub-Committee and Policy and Resources Committee it was agreed that:

- a) Four grant programmes were in scope for immediate centralised administration.
- b) Four overarching funding themes for the grant programme (for 2016-2018) would be established;
- c) The geographical area for the consolidated grants programme or individual themes would be left to the discretion of the decision making Committees;
- d) The proposed allocation of funding across the four funding themes was approved;
- e) Grant programme arrangements would be reviewed in 2018 to align with City Bridge Trust's next quinquennial review.

In order to manage the Central Grants Programme effectively a new Central Grants Unit was proposed, co-located within the City Bridge Trust and managed by the Chief Grants Officer.

All grant giving committees are currently being consulted on their individual eligibility criteria. In parallel with this, all application processes and procedures are being developed to ensure that there is no delay to implementation.

Main Report

1. Organisations/Individuals eligible to apply for Grants

1.1 In order to ensure that organisations in receipt of funding through the Central Grants programme are able to effectively manage any grant award made to them; and to reduce any potential reputational risks to The City of London Corporation, applications will be only be invited from organisations that fall into one of the following categories:

- Registered charity
- Registered Community Interest Company
- Registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation
- Charitable company (incorporated as a not-for-profit)
- Exempt or excepted charity
- Registered charitable industrial and provident society or charitable Cooperative (Bencom)
- Constituted voluntary organisation

1.2 Should an individual wish to submit an application, they would be requested to apply for funding through a constituted group or organisation, residents' association or charity who will be able to support and countersign their application and therefore have "ownership" of the project, and be legally responsible for its delivery.

1.3 The one exception to this is that applications from individuals will be accepted through the 'Education and Employment' theme, due to the nature of the City Educational Trust Fund and the Combined Education Charity, which supports both students and teachers.

2. Opening and Closing Dates

2.1 Once all four grant-giving committees have been consulted and the number of annual grant rounds per funding theme is confirmed, a timetable of staggered opening and closing dates will be developed. This will ensure that the Central Grants Unit is not overloaded with applications at any one particular time throughout the year.

2.2 The opening and closing dates will be published online once confirmed.

3. Minimum and Maximum Grant.

3.1 The minimum grant award proposed across all four funding themes is £500. A minimum threshold has been proposed, mindful of resourcing.

3.2 The maximum grant award permitted may vary across all funding themes, and will be decided by the four grant-giving Committees in July 2016.

4. Application Process.

- 4.1 To apply for a Central Grant Programme grant, applicants will need to complete an online application form by the corresponding deadline and submit this electronically with their supporting documents to the City of London Corporation Central Grants Unit.
- 4.2 All application forms will be completed through an online City of London Corporation grants web portal. Applicants will be requested to register online, complete all necessary information electronically and submit. Due to the number of anticipated applications and in the interest of fairness, the Central Grants Unit will only consider one application from an organisation at any one time.
- 4.3 Two application forms will be in use for the Central Grants Programme. The first will be used for the 'Open Spaces and the Natural Environment', 'Stronger Communities', and 'Inspiring London through Culture' funding themes which will be orientated towards constituted organisations. The second will be used for the 'Education and Employment theme' as it will primarily be focused on individuals and require bespoke questioning within the application form.
- 4.3 Application forms in large print, Braille or audio tape will be made available on request.

5. Application Assessment.

- 5.1 Once an online application and all supporting documents have been received, it will be assessed by the Central Grants Unit. A Grants Officer will liaise directly with each applicant to ensure all required information is provided to support their application.
- 5.2 Applications will be acknowledged automatically upon submission of the electronic application form. If an application is incomplete it will be returned to the applicant who will be given a further 10 working days to provide the missing information. Applications that are incomplete or deemed ineligible after this 10 day window will be rejected by the Central Grants Unit and not submitted to the corresponding grant-giving Committee or Officer assessment panel.
- 5.3 A Grants Officer may arrange to visit an organisation as part of the application assessment process, with an Officer from the corresponding department when their specific skills and expertise may be required.
- 5.4 Once a full assessment against the eligibility criteria has been undertaken by the Grants Officer and all legal or financial aspects have been clarified and approved, the funding requests will be forwarded to the corresponding Committee or officer assessment panel. Each Committee will be provided with a standardised report detailing all applications, together with the available budget. Based on this the Committee will be charged with approving or rejecting applications as appropriate.
- 5.4 The timescale to process applications may vary as the quantity of applications to be received is still unknown; however, the Central Grants Unit will aim to ensure that all applications are assessed within 12 weeks of the published closing date. Organisations will be requested to take into account this timetable when planning their projects.

5 Successful Grant Applications.

- 5.1 If an application is successful, an initial offer letter detailing the level of grant awarded will be issued. This may contain special conditions relating to the grant award or pre-agreement grant conditions as determined by the grant-giving committee.
- 5.2 Standard grant acceptance terms and conditions will be issued which should be signed and returned within 20 working days.
- 5.3 Once all documentation has been received and approved, the organisation would be required to formally request payment of their grant award. They will be unable to start their project until the Central Grants Unit have received, checked and approved all information requested.

6. Unsuccessful Grant Applications.

- 6.1 Due to the limited budget available and the number of applications for funding likely to be received, it will be made clear to applicants that grants will be issued on a discretionary basis, that there will be no appeal process and that the decision of the City of London Corporation will be final. Verbal feedback will be provided to any applicants who request it, in line with City Bridge Trust procedures.
- 6.2 An overview of the unsuccessful applicants will be reported to this committee.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation of Grants.

- 7.1 If a Committee agrees to fund a project or service, the organisation in receipt of the award will be requested to complete an end of grant monitoring report to confirm how the grant has been spent and what was achieved. This will facilitate the reporting process to this Committee.
- 7.2 This monitoring form will be completed and submitted through an online portal and be evaluated by the Central Grants Unit. All reports received will be graded 'Very Good', 'Good', 'Satisfactory' or 'Poor'.
- 7.3 Should it be deemed necessary, a face to face visit to check how the grant is being spent will be made by a Grants Officer and should any risks associated with project delivery be identified throughout the course of the project, an unannounced compliance visit may be undertaken.
- 7.4 Organisations may reapply for funding to deliver a continuation of the same project however they will need to have satisfactorily met all grant monitoring requirements before applying again.

8. Support with Applications

- 8.1 All applicants that are unsure about whether to submit an application would firstly be signposted to the eligibility criteria on the City of London Corporation website. Should organisations have an enquiry that is not covered within the online criteria, they will be able to contact the Central Grants Unit directly via a dedicated e-mail address and phone number who will respond to general queries regarding the application process.

8.2 Organisations may also attend a Grant Officer led workshop held either at the Guildhall complex or in a community based location; dates for which will be publicised on our website throughout the year.

9. Key Milestones to Launch of Central Grants Programme

9.1 A summary of the key dates and activities to be delivered between June and October 2016 is provided below:

Month	Milestone
June 2016	All Committee terms of reference changes with regards to the transfer of management of charities approved by the Court of Common Council.
July 2016	The carrying Forward of any unspent Finance Grants Sub-Committee grants budget to be approved by the Chamberlain in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Resource Allocation Sub-Committee.
	All Grant Giving committees to consider and agree the eligibility criteria specific to their funding theme.
	Application form completed and uploaded to Online platform in anticipation of Grants programme launch in August.
	Update on the Central Grants Programme to be included in the Members Briefing e-bulletin.
August 2016	Opening and closing dates for all funding themes agreed and all grant assessment committee dates established for the year ahead.
	Web portal and online application process goes 'live' for the Central Grants Programme.
	Grants Programme opens to applications.
September 2016	Report to be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee to consider the revised proposals for the Central Grants Unit staffing and resource levels

Background Papers:

- Policy and Resources Committee, March 2016, 'Implementation of Grants Review'

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