

2019/21 Grants Programme

Grants Communications and Engagement Plan



Midlothian Council Communities Team

Supporting communities to engage, connect, develop and prosper

www.midlothian.gov.uk/yourcommunity





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Communications and Engagement Plan

1. Background

Midlothian Council Grants supports local projects aimed at reducing inequalities and improving the quality of life of people living in Midlothian.

A discussion paper has been prepared for discussion with elected members, council officers, community planning partners, the voluntary sector, community councils and other stakeholders. The discussion paper includes recommendations that are based on our experience of running the 2015-2018 grants programme. The learning is based on feedback from staff, voluntary groups and good practice from across Scotland, supporting the view that the grants programme should be based on an agreed set of principles that will guide the way in which the grants are awarded and managed:

- **Trust not control.** We will simplify the criteria and reporting requirements based on a starting position of trust.
- **Reduce inequalities and help people most in need.** Grants should support the council's strategic priority in the Single Midlothian Plan of reducing inequalities and supporting those most in need.
- **Simple processes.** The grants process will be simplified so that organisations focus their energy on delivering their work not completing paperwork.
- **Promoting a sense of place.** Funding should be used to bring people together to take part in community activity.
- **Community-led.** Projects should be led by and for people in Midlothian.
- **Enterprising.** Relying on grant funding alone is not a sustainable business model. Where possible, grant funding should be used to generate additional income.
- **Using resources well.** With the unprecedented pressures on local authority funding all grants must demonstrate value for money.



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The discussion paper proposes different types of grants with an upper limit to reflect the reduction in grant funding and to ensure equity across the voluntary sector. If approved, grant applications for 2019 will be open during September and October 2018. Applications are available under three separate streams based on size:

- Micro Grant (up to £500)
- Small Grant (up to £2000 per annum up to 3 years)
- Large Grant (up to £100,00 over 3 years)

2. Purpose

This communication and engagement plan sets out how Midlothian Council will promote the new Grants Fund to prospective applicants to ensure effective communication and engagement. The purpose of this plan is to engage key stakeholders in a revised grants programme, and promote the grants programme to potential applicants across Midlothian.

3. Communications Objectives

- Increase uptake by promoting the Grant Programme, and the availability of financial support to as wide a range of Midlothian community groups, charities and social enterprises as possible.
- Help inform the design of the programme and associated processes.
- Raise general awareness of the Grants Fund and demonstrate its value in supporting specific projects and improving outcomes across Midlothian.
- Encourage and support applications from communities that experience high levels of disadvantage and have been under-represented in previous funding rounds.



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4. Key Messages

- The aim of the Grants Programme is to provide funding for local projects aimed at improving the quality of life of people living in Midlothian communities. A community can be either a geographical area or a community of interest.
- Applications, for grants can be submitted by community groups, charities or social enterprises.
- The new programme represents an evolution of the previous grants programme. The terms and conditions will remain same.
- There are three types (sizes) of grants; Micro (up to £500), Small Grants (£500 - £2,000 per year) and Large Grants (up to 100,000 over 3 years).
- Applications for 2019 -2021, initially must be submitted between 31 August and 12 October 2018, with Micro (6 monthly) and Small grant applications (annually) being invited again throughout the 3 year period.

5. Target Audiences

Primary

- Community groups
- Charities
- Local residents
- Third sector groups
- Social enterprises



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Secondary

- Wider Midlothian community including:
 - Partner organisations
 - Local businesses
 - Specific interest groups

6. Communications Approach

- Review design, content and effectiveness of grants programme
- Review grant process for simplicity and ease of use
- Where possible, illustrate value of Micro and Small Grants Fund to groups/ communities by using examples of previous grants
- Use mix of media channels including local press and community radio as well as online
- Place emphasis on use of social media with regular facebook and twitter posts during application period
- Ensure publicity emphasises the support available to local groups in the form of further information and assistance in completing applications, generating ideas and developing new groups
- Targeted support for unrepresented groups and those experiencing disadvantage
- Disseminate information as widely as possible through existing networks, council contacts, previous applicants and partner organisations



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7. Evaluation

The success of this communications plan will be evaluated after the closing date, based on the number of responses received and on feedback from local groups and individuals on publicity and the application process. We will continue to collate recipients' feedback to ensure lessons are learnt and processes can be improved.

8. Grants - Key Communications and Engagement

What	How	Who	Why	When
Engagement with Midlothian Council's elected Political parties.	Meet with and discuss options with all of the 3 political parties elected to Midlothian Council.	Senior Communities Officer	To gather feedback from Elected Members on their strategic priorities and thoughts for voluntary sector grants	March - May 2018
Engagement	Consultations to be undertaken with Federation of Community Councils on the proposed grants programme	Communities Officer	To encourage and gain feedback on practical use from local Community Councils and issues around the proposed changes	May 2018
Engagement	Discussion with Enterprising with Communities Group	Senior Communities Officer	To explain the proposal and gather feedback	May – June 2018
Engagement	Integrated Impact Assessment	Communities Officer and Senior Communities Officer and Equalities Officer	To ensure proposals comply with equality duties help reduce inequalities	May 2018
Engagement	Via Strategic Leadership Group and Corporate Management Team of Midlothian Council	Senior Communities Officer	To explain the proposal and gather feedback	May 2018

Survey with existing grants recipients on the proposed grants programme	Distribution of online survey via email to all of the current grant voluntary sector recipients on Midlothian Council database. Use social media to promote to wider audience. Midlothian Voluntary Action to distribute the survey to their mailing lists	Communities Officers	To encourage and gain feedback from known existing users on practical use and issues around the proposed changes	May- June 2018
Engagement	Discussion with the voluntary sector forum on revised grants programme including follow up meeting with the assistant manager of Midlothian Voluntary Action	Senior Communities Officer	To gather views from the voluntary sector members that attend this group	May-June 2018
Engagement	Discussion with council leader, deputy leader, chief executive and directors	Senior Communities Officer	To further discussions and ensure strategic fit	June 2018
Engagement	Press release issued	Communications Team	To encourage local residents and voluntary organisations to participate in the discussion regarding improvements to the grants programme	June 2018
Engagement	Discussion with the Community Planning Working Group and the CPP IOM group	CPP Manager Senior Communities Officer	To gather a range of views from the Community Planning Partners	June 2018
Review proposals based on feedback				
Launch fund applications	Launch press release Council website Partner websites Local press Evening News Local radio Community websites Social media Direct mailings to local groups Posters distributed	Communications/ Communities Team/ MVA	Promote funding scheme and encourage applications	August and September 2018



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Social media campaign	Twitter and Facebook	Communications	Promote funding scheme and encourage applications	Launch W/B 27 August and regular reminders during September and October 2018
What	How	Who	Why	When
Profile success of previously funded projects	Press/ Web article	Communications	Promote funding scheme through positive examples to encourage applications	W/B 3 September 2018
Reminder that application closing date is approaching	Web, Local press Social media Local radio	Communications	Reminder	W/B 24 September 2018
Applications close	Social media	Communications	Final reminder	1 - 5 Oct 2018 Closing date 12 October 2018