FAQ’s community councils – Advanced Grant Scheme

**Q – Can you explain how the application process works?**

A – All applications are submitted to SCBF. On receipt of the application, the administration officer carries out due diligence (checking group’s constitution, accounts etc), removes applicants’ personal data then sends application to community council for a decision. The community council will then be asked to complete a feedback form stating whether or not they support the application for funding and return it to SCBF. The grant offer or grant rejection will be undertaken by the admin officer. The aim is an 8 week turnaround from when SCBF receives the application, 6 weeks of this is for the decision from the community council.

**Q – The timeframe to make decisions is quite tight, especially for community councils who do not have a meeting every month. How do we deal with that?**

A – It is SCBF ambition to respond to applicants with a decision within 8 weeks. If there are issues surrounding this, no meeting for example, contact SCBF as we are here to help.

**Q – Can we put a timeframe on when we want to receive applications by?**

A – That would be the choice of the individual community council. The scheme has now been running for over a year, and at least one community council has decided to accept applications at 4 different points throughout the year. If you wish to do this, you must contact the Administration Officer.

**Q – What is the timeframe for community councils deciding upon an application?**

A – It is the aim of SCBF to respond to applicants with a decision within 8 weeks of receiving an application. If no decision is notified to SCBF by the community council within 10 weeks of receiving the feedback form from the administration officer, SCBF will assume the decision on the application is ‘No Award’ unless the community council has kept in touch with the administration officer to advise of any delay when considering an application. This would be fairer to the applicant and in line with the 8 week turnaround detailed in the AGS guidance.

**Q – Can a community council opt to ringfence part or all of their allocation to carry out a participatory budget event?**

A – Yes, that would be their choice. It is up to each community council to decide how to use its funding allocation and how to decide on which applications to support. We would ask that you discuss this with SCBF before launching any event.

**Q – What is the administrative process for holding a PB event with AGS funding?**

For SCBF the arrangements for a participatory budgeting event are no different from dealing with any other application.  All applications come to SCBF for checking - the feedback form with details is sent to the community council which then organises its PB event.   Once the decisions are made on which projects to support and with how much funding the completed feedback form for each project is returned to SCBF.

**Q – What happens if we are delayed in signing the MoU and Data Sharing Documents?**

A – Applicants can still apply to your area, but SCBF cannot send the details to you until the forms are signed. This is due to restrictions surrounding data sharing.

**Q – When people apply for a grant do they have to agree to publicity (this is mentioned in the Data Sharing Agreement between SCBF and community councils)**

A – Yes, however, this would be relevant and appropriate to the size of grant awarded. SCBF would discuss what publicity is appropriate with the successful applicant. An individual in receipt of a grant would not be expected to supply a photograph or their name for example.

**Q – Why are applicant details anonymous when community councils receive them?**

A – Community councils will be given the name of the group applying but not the name of the individual completing the application or any of their contact details. This is due to an individual’s privacy rights under GDPR. The exception to this is when it is an individual making an application and not a group. In that case, you will be given their name but not contact information.

**Q – How do we seek further information from an applicant if we do not have any contact details?**

A – Following due diligence, the administration officer will check through the application to ensure it contains as much information as possible and request clarity if any area hasn’t been completed fully. If you still have questions, direct them to the administration officer who will ask the applicant on your behalf.

**Q – Are we permitted to talk to a group directly if we have questions or must our queries be made via the administration officer?**

A – Yes you could. We are aware that you are all volunteers and making contact takes up time, the administration officer is there to assist with this.

**Q – Can a community council apply for funds?**

A - Yes. A community council can apply for a Tier 1 or Tier 2 grant using the same application form used by other applicants. The SCBF officers will consider any application under £25,000 from a community council. If there is any potential conflict of interest, with an officer also being a member of the community council applying for a grant, then another director will take part in the decision. All applications from a community council over £25,000 will be considered by the SCBF management committee.

**Q – Can a community council decide not to accept Shetland-wide applications?**

A – Yes, but they would need to contact the Administration Officer.

**Q – Are there any restrictions on groups applying to several, or even all 18 community councils and will we know if they have done so?**

A – There are no restrictions on groups applying to several or all community councils, but the application must benefit the people/area that they have applied to. You will be advised if the applicant is applying for other sources of funding - including any other community council areas. Applicants considering applying to more than one community council are advised to contact SCBF beforehand.

**Q – Where can we signpost groups to who need additional help with forms or setting up a constitution?**

A – Direct them to the admin officer initially, she can then keep track with them and offer some low level guidance on applying. She will also be able to direct them to VAS or SCIO if required.

**Q – How will we keep track of the remaining budget and if necessary, let our local groups know that information?**

A – The admin officer is working on a summary sheet to send you along with applications. This sheet will highlight potential upcoming applications (if known) along with those being sent that day to help with funding decisions, i.e. you have £4,000 remaining and are deciding on a £2,000 application but a £3,500 application is about to be submitted to SCBF for your area, the admin officer would let you know on the summary sheet.

**Q – Can we get advice of managing the priorities in our area - get examples of good practice and of the mistakes to be avoided**

A – SCBF will provide all the support it can to assist community councils. Also, SSE Renewables has extensive experience of how funds are managed in Scotland - and mistakes that have been made - and you can access this valuable resource of knowledge by contacting the SCBF admin officer. The main point is do not feel rushed to spend the allocation, making ‘good funding’ decisions is more important.

**Q – Who carries out evaluation and monitoring?**

A – SCBF who will then share that information with community councils.

**Q – Who is responsible for promoting the fund?**

A – Both SCBF and community councils. There is standard comms which will be used for the launch of the fund. If you find that there isn’t much uptake in your area then the admin officer can help with further promotion.

**Q – What happens when the AGS ends? Is there more or less money available?**

A – When the AGS ends, the core funding begins. 10% of the core funding will be allocated to community councils using the same share system so the annual allocations are likely to be with £31,200 or £6,200 - roughly 60% of the current AGS funding. How these funds will be distributed will be decided later, but may well draw on the experiences of the AGS. The remaining £2 million of core funding will be used to fund the SCBF Business Plan, which will be prepared after wide community consultation. So, whilst individual community councils will have a smaller allocation, Shetland wide will have more.

**Q – What happens to any unallocated AGS funds?**

A – If a community council has unallocated funds when the AGS formally ends, they can be carried over to a new core funding community council scheme. Details of which are still to be decided by SCBF but may well draw on the experiences of the AGS.

**Q - Will SCBF review the AGS?**

A – Yes. Once the scheme is fully underway SCBF will review how it is operating and consult community councils for ideas on what changes may be needed.

**Q - When should I declare an interest in a grant application?**

A – There is not simple answer to this question. A 'declaration of interest' is sometimes referred to a 'conflict of interest' - is there a conflict (or connection) between your direct or indirect personal interests and a grant application. Another possible way of considering what to do is the 'objectivity test'. Ask yourself what a member of the public might reasonably think if you didn't declare an interest in an application. Would they think you acted properly? The Orkney code of conduct explains the 'test' in the link below.

You could ask your fellow community councillors if they think you should declare an interest or not You could ask your local community worker or Michael Duncan, the council's Community Council Liaison Officer. SCBF cannot give hard and fast advice to what "an interest" is or when a declaration of interest should be made. At the end of the day it is up to the individual community councillor to decide what they believe is the right thing to do.

Further details can be found by selecting ‘Declarations of Interest’ beneath ‘Information for community councils’ on the Advance Grant Scheme page.

**Q – When can a successful applicant reapply?**

A – The AGS Guidelines for Applicants states ‘*Only one successful application is allowed every 12 months.’* The 12 months is from the date of the grant offer letter. This means a successful applicant in receipt of a grant offer letter dated 1st June 2021 can reapply from 1st June 2022.

**Final note**

Please contact SCBF with any queries or concerns you may have. Community councils know their individual areas the best and the AGS funding is here and ready to be spent on projects which can make a real difference to your area.

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