

Direct Grants Evaluation Brief

Introduction

This evaluation brief outlines the Direct Grants Programme and those areas where the managing partner (SCVO) seeks external evaluation of practices and outcomes. In addition to SCVO itself, this evaluation will be of interest to the programme funders and other key stakeholders.

The brief proposes a two-phased external evaluation of the "programme" (unless otherwise indicated, the programme in this brief refers to the current Direct Grants Programme). The first phase will focus on systems, structures and partners participation. This will allow an opportunity to reflect, learn and develop the programme for the second year of grant awards. The second phase will focus on the overall impact of the programme, whether the aim & objectives of the programme have been met, and recommendations post 2004 for any future initiatives funded through the global grants stream.

Background

Direct Grants is a small grants programme that aims "to increase employment opportunities and social cohesion within disadvantaged communities". The grants, which are managed and administered by SCVO, are designed to meet the needs of small local community groups and voluntary organisations that have not previously benefited from mainstream funding.

The programme evolved from two pilots, which SCVO successfully implemented: "Local Social Capital" which targeted the older industrial areas of the West of Scotland, and "Building Brighter Futures" in the former coalfield areas in the East.

Direct Grants is supported by the Scottish ESF Objective 3 Programme through the global grants funding stream. Co-finance is provided by Communities Scotland and the Scottish Enterprise Network. Up to 100% revenue funding is available to support projects that are new or offering added value to local communities.

Approval for the mainstream programme was received from the Scottish Executive in February 2002, and the programme was officially launched in March. Dedicated project staff took up appointment in February 2002 and grant applications were available from the end of April 2002.

Further details of the programme are available from the Direct Grants web pages at www.scvo.org.uk/direct_grants

Purpose

SCVO wishes to undertake an evaluation of this programme for accountability and to encourage evidence-based good practice. Specifically, the first phase of the evaluation will allow ongoing review and feedback into the programme. Consideration will be given to the implementation of recommendations that could improve the quality of the Direct Grants Programme and its delivery. The second phase will give an opportunity to quantify the success of the programme in achieving the overall aim & objectives and how it has impacted on excluded geographic communities & communities of interest.

A final report will be required to pull together all of these issues and make recommendations for any future initiatives funded through the global grants stream. This should include recommendations for improvements/innovations which could be introduced into any future programme funded through the global grants stream.

The benefits of external, independent evaluation in achieving this purpose are acknowledged.

Context

1. *Scottish ESF Objective 3 Programme evaluation*
 2. *Direct Grants Programme external evaluation*
 3. *Direct Grants projects (self) evaluation*
 4. *SCVO project impact study*
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1. The impact of the Direct Grants Programme to date will be considered as part of the Scottish ESF Objective 3 Programme 2000 – 2006 mid-term evaluation, which is currently underway. This will look at how well the Objective 3 Programme is delivering its aims, test the continued relevance of the Objective 3 Programme strategy and make recommendations on any action necessary to improve the Objective 3 Programme quality and performance. The final report from this evaluation will be available in the summer (2003).
 2. The external evaluation of the Direct Grants programme will comprise of two phases.
Phase 1 will concentrate on:
 - the effectiveness and transparency of the management and delivery systems, structures and procedures;
 - partners engagement, understanding and views on achievement of programme objectives to date.Phase 2 will concentrate on the overall impact of the Direct Grants Programme and the achievement of its objectives.
 3. Groups funded through the programme carry out an element of self-evaluation. They are required to confirm targets, which can be both quantitative and qualitative at approval stage. They are also asked to consider what the longer-term impact of their project will be. Projects subsequently report on expenditure, activity and outputs at regular intervals, on completion and when requesting each grant instalment.
 4. SCVO monitor this information and are developing a framework to measure the impact of Direct Grants on projects and beneficiaries.

Scope & Methodology

Phase 1

"evaluate the effectiveness and transparency of the management and delivery systems, structures and procedures"

- How effective and robust are the administrative and monitoring systems & procedures established in the programme?
- Do the project monitoring processes adequately cover the risk element involved in operating a global grants scheme?

- How has demand been generated for applications?
- How effective has programme approach and delivery been?
- Have resources been used effectively?
- How can a more seamless (from the point of view of all stakeholders) service be offered?
- How effective, transparent and robust is the application appraisal process?
- What improvements could there be in the project management process?

"evaluate partners engagement, understanding and views on achievement of programme objectives to date"

- What are key partners objectives? Are these being met?
- Has the programme increased partnership between players at local, regional and national level?
- Are the other stated objectives of the programme being met?
- Do partners receive the support they require?
- Is the programme proceeding as planned?
- Are the processes working?
- How can the programme be improved?
- Is information shared?
- How well are the partners contributing?
- What is the partners understanding of the programme aim and objectives?

The methodology should include desk research, personal interviews with SCVO development staff, discussions and interviews with other key stakeholders.

Phase 2

"evaluate the overall impact of the Direct Grants programme"

It is accepted that the value of information gathered in the short term will be limited and that ultimate impact will only be truly shown in the longer term.

This phase will be informed somewhat by the outcomes of the other evaluations and the project impact study.

- focus on the effectiveness of the programme as a means of increasing access to the European Social Fund in communities and thereby meeting the stated aim of the programme.
- evaluate how and indeed if, the objectives as laid down in the programme's monitoring framework have been achieved:
 - To increase partnership between players at local, regional and national level;
 - To increase local social cohesion/networking and social regeneration;
 - To achieve organisational development and capacity building within community groups & voluntary organisations locally;
 - To achieve local economic regeneration;
 - To ensure that the grant fund is distributed to organisations supporting targeted individuals, communities and geographical areas;
 - To manage the Programme effectively -
 - a) to promote & monitor the Programme and provide development support
 - b) to establish and implement processes and systems.

The methodology should include desk research, focus groups, questionnaires and discussions with stakeholders. An evaluator may also wish to make comparison with other interventions.

Qualifications

The bidding organisation should be able to demonstrate:

Experience of working with voluntary organisations and community groups;

Understanding of the roles of local community groups, social economy organisations and statutory agencies in promoting economic and social cohesion;

Knowledge and understanding of capacity building, social inclusion initiatives and local economic development programmes;

Evidence of capacity to deliver an efficient service;

Experience of the operation of small grants programmes would be an advantage;

Experience of the European Social Fund Objective 3 Programme would be an advantage.

Award Criteria

The successful tender is likely to offer the following:

The most comprehensive and effective service proposal.

Tender Procedure

The submitted tender should include the following information:

- Full name, business address, telephone and fax number(s), e-mail address and contact name;
- Date of formation of firm or if a limited company, date of registration;
- CVs of relevant staff available to perform this contract;
- Details of experience – including details of similar contracts (value/quantity) in the past three years for the services detailed in this document;
- Details of the individual proposed as responsible for management and delivery of the project;
- Name, address, telephone number and contact names for three referees to whom similar services have been supplied;
- Confirmation that you will be able to meet the timetable expectations;
- A full breakdown of all costs including, the basis of rate charges, travel, subsistence and any other expenses.

Your tender should be submitted no later than 5.00pm on *Friday 14th March 2003* to SCVO's West of Scotland Office. No tenders will be accepted after this date.

Tenders are to be submitted by post or delivered by hand. Documents sent by facsimile or by e-mail will not be accepted. Please address to:

Diane Wilson
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
3rd Floor, Centrum Building
38 Queen Street
Glasgow, G1 3DX.

Please *write sender's full details* on the back of the envelope. It is anticipated that short listed tenders will be invited to give a presentation on *25th and 26th March 2003*.

Fee

The maximum cost of the evaluation should not exceed £10,000 including VAT. Any submitted tender should include a full breakdown of all costs including, the basis of rate charges, travel, subsistence and any other expenses.

Ownership

SCVO will retain ownership and responsibility for all data collected during this evaluation. All completed questionnaires and transcript of interviews shall be passed to SCVO on completion of the work programme. The selected consultancy will have access to all relevant information and files held by SCVO and relating to the project.

Timetable & Reporting

Tender briefs distributed week commencing 24th February 2003

Deadline for return of tender 14th March 2003

Consultants interviewed and appointed by 28th March 2003

Phase 1 to be complete and first report to be with SCVO by 16th May 2003

Phase 2 draft report and preliminary findings to be with SCVO by 1st February 2004

Phase 2 to be complete and second report to be with SCVO by 30th June 2004

Final report and presentation of findings August 2004.