

# Direct Grants Programme

## Progress Report

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MCM Associates Ltd  
4 Woodside Place  
Charing Cross  
Glasgow  
G3 7QF

Tel: 0141 353 5150 Fax 0141 353 5170  
Email: [john.mcmanus@mcm-associates.co.uk](mailto:john.mcmanus@mcm-associates.co.uk)

## 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update and commentary in relation to the progress and performance of the Direct Grants Programme. The report focuses on the performance of the programme against the targets set within the Business Plan.

1.2 A total of 358 awards have been made to projects covering the period to 18<sup>th</sup> March 2004. The actual project activity outcomes and impact position, is based on 48 projects that have been completed and submitted a final report.

1.3 The report has been prepared by MCM Associates as part of the external evaluation process and is based on the information provided by the Direct Grants Programme.

## 2. Review of Programme Activity

### *Grant Awards*

2.1 Direct Grants Programme has approved a total of 358 awards worth a total of £3,034,891 from the commencement of the programme to 18<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

2.2 A comparison with the overarching targets for the programme is as follows:

	<i>Actual To</i> <i>Date</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Actual as</i> <i>% of</i> <i>target</i>
Number of Successful Grant Applications	358	380	94%
Total value of Grants (£)	£3,034,891	£3,200,000	95%
Average Grant Award (£)	£8,477	£8,421	

2.3 A further 72 application with a total value of £697,088 are pending. The fund will be fully committed by the end of March 2004 and will have achieved 100% of its spend target and project target.

	<b>No.</b>	<b>Value</b>
Approved Projects as at 18 <sup>th</sup> March 2004	358	£3,034,891
Pending Projects as at 18 <sup>th</sup> March 2004	72	£697,088

### *Completed Projects*

2.3 The total number of completed projects is as follows:

	<b>No of</b> <b>Projects</b>	<b>%</b>
Total Number of Approved Projects	358	100%
Total Number of Completed Projects	60	17%
No. of Completed Projects Submitted Final Report	48	13%

### 3. Performance Targets

#### Activities

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	TARGETS	ACTUALS
<b>Programme Performance</b>		
Total number of micro-finance awards	380	358
Number of micro-finance awards up to £5,000	200	80
Number of micro-finance awards over £5,000 up to £10,000	100	211
Number of micro-finance awards over £10,000 up to £15,000	80	67
<b>Types of Projects</b>		
Increasing employment opportunities and employability skills	100	185
Increasing training and learning opportunities	90	25
Establishing new social firms	45	36
Initiating new community activity	40	85
Undertaking community audits or surveys	80	55
Commissioning technical work or professional services	60	40
Undertaking a fund raising activity	45	74
Developing new management or sectoral infrastructure	40	22
Sponsoring ICT based activities	50	69
Extending existing services to rural areas or peripheral estates	30	29
Increased volunteer/staff training and skills development	80	50
Increased opportunity for piloting activity	80	86
Strengthening of (local or sector) infrastructure	40	4
Supporting Women		61
Supporting black and ethnic minorities		20
Supporting lone parents		13
Supporting young (16-24) people		75
Supporting (former) drug users and (former) alcohol abusers		11
Supporting ex offenders		2
Supporting disabled people		52
Supporting homeless people		8
Supporting people with literacy and numeracy difficulties		4
Supporting unemployed people		32
<b>Project Activity</b>		
No. of people trained (undertaking training)	1700	1391
Total number of beneficiaries receiving support	10,000	4763
Number of women receiving support	6,500	2113
Number of organisation and management audits	50	0
Number of networks supported	40	16
Number of beneficiaries trained in technical and management skills	250	32

#### Note

1. Information on programme performance and types of projects is based on the 358 projects supported.
2. Information on the project activity is based on the 48 projects that have been completed and submitted a final report.

### 3. Outcomes

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	TARGETS	ACTUALS
<b>Individual Beneficiaries</b>		
<b>Number of beneficiaries completing their courses</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>1178</b>
<b>Number of people trained gaining a (part) qualification</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>43</b>
Increased employment opportunities	250	19
Increased opportunities to access ICT	5,000	271
Increased volunteering opportunities	1,000	294
Access to new and/or enhanced services	5,000	3145
Increased access to community health services	2,500	30
Improved access to community facilities	25,000	2082
Opportunities to influence the development and delivery of services	1,250	282
<b>Projects</b>		
Increased employment opportunities	80	19
Number of new systems developed/implemented	50	36
Increased access to other funding sources	70	13
Increased community activity	180	41
Increased learning opportunities	140	29
Increased participation by wider community	100	17
Enhanced service delivery	60	26
Increased availability of micro finance services	70	2
Increased health promotion activities	60	6

### Impacts

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	TARGETS	ACTUALS
<b>Number of people going into further education or training</b>	<b>1250</b>	<b>48</b>
Sustained beyond the period of the project activity	190	36
Increased member empowerment	80	5
Increased opportunity for sustainable activities	130	12
Increased economic activity	150	21
Direct links between social and economic activities	90	14
Increased community empowerment	100	41
Greater participation in social/economic development activities	70	8
Increased intergenerational integration	20	8

### Note

- Information on outcomes and impacts is based on the 48 projects that have been completed and submitted a final report.

### 4. Survey of Completed Projects

4.1 A telephone survey of 41 completed projects has been carried out during February to March 2004. The telephone survey has attempted to ensure that the completed projects have been fully reporting the outcomes of the activity. Experience has shown that projects have tended to understate the work that has been undertaken at a local level and the outcomes achieved. The survey has also provided an opportunity to gather less quantifiable information in relation to the project.

4.2 The detailed information in relation to activities, outcomes and impacts has been included in the monitoring report. A general review of the outcomes has highlighted the following:

- 29 projects reported a significant *expansion* (Through increased membership and commitment) or *strengthening* (Through training and specific tasks) of their organisational structure.
- 21 projects have indicated that they have been able to identify specific opportunities or have been invited to participate in new partnership working.
- 19 projects reported on participation that extended their cultural awareness (ie developed participation on a wider gender/generational/racial/ability basis).
- 11 projects indicated that the work they had undertaken had identified new opportunities for the establishment of community enterprises.
- 14 projects have already identified or received additional funding (over and above indicative leverage classified in their application).

## **5. Review of Programme Performance**

### *Overall Progress*

5.1 Significant progress has been made by Direct Grants since the Interim Evaluation was published in June 2003. The programme is on target to achieve 100% allocation by the end of March and will achieve the target for the number of projects supported.

5.2 It is obvious that a significant amount of effort has been made to improve the programme spend rate through additional programme work and application processing.

5.3 It should be noted that the increased level of spend would not seem to have been achieved as a result of a reduction in the quality threshold for projects. The review of activity undertaken in February 2004 indicated that the level of approvals has remained constant in the majority of the regions over the previous nine months.

### *Programme Performance*

5.4 Information is now being gathered from completed projects. A total of 48 projects have been completed and submitted a final report. This represents only 13% of the total number of projects approved.

5.5 Based on the information available, the following observations are provided:

- It is evident that in a number of key areas the programme will substantially exceed the targets set in the Business Plan. This includes the number of people that have undertaken training, the number of beneficiaries supported, the number of people completing training, and the increased access to services.
- Building local capacity and providing opportunities for training and development has been a key feature of the programme and is reflected in the level of activity and outcomes being reported.
- It is noted that there may still be some under recording of activity by projects. This matter will be investigated further as part of the final evaluation.

- A post completion survey has been introduced that will be sent out to projects three months after completion. The survey has been designed to gather more detailed information on the impact of the project activity in local communities following completion of the grant. This will include information on whether the project activity has been sustained; sources of funding accessed; number of jobs that have been secured; etc.
- It is also recognised that the impact of Direct Grants Programme cannot solely be measured against quantifiable targets. During the Final Evaluation, a number of project visits will be undertaken and case study material prepared. This exercise will aim to gather evidence in terms of the way that the grant has assisted local organisations to build capacity and generate activity. This will include details of the way projects have progressed; how they link with other local activity and priorities; and any unexpected benefits that have been gained by the project.

## **6. Conclusion**

6.1 It is evident from the monitoring information provided that good progress has been made since the Interim Evaluation was published in June 2003. The programme is on schedule to meet its targets in relation to spend and projects assisted.

6.2 It is evident that a significant effort has been made to address the issues in relation to the delivery of the programme. This is reflected in the level of programme spend and in relation to the overall performance.

6.3 The information available on completed projects suggests that the programme is likely to exceed its targets across a number of key areas. However, it should be noted that the programme is at early stage in terms of reporting information in relation to outcomes and impacts. Only 13% of projects supported have been completed and submitted the final report.

6.4 The Final Evaluation will consider the overall impact of the programme against the agreed targets. It will also seek to examine the impact that the programme has had on local communities in terms of encouraging and developing sustainable community activity. The opportunity will also be taken to identify the lessons from the experience of the programme that should be considered in relation to the design of any future small grants scheme.