

Appendix 1: Rural Access Grant – application criteria

Overview

1. Herefordshire Council will invite applications for grant funding to help local community groups to improve access for rural residents and people with limited or no access to public transport and private car transport. The funding will be for community groups active in Herefordshire and for the benefit of Herefordshire residents. Consultation has indicated that older people, people with disabilities, women and younger people are particularly reliant on public transport and community transport services. These services have come under increasing pressure in recent years and these groups have seen some reduction in transport services, which has affected their ability to access important services and activities including: healthcare, shopping, work and education, and leisure. The funding is targeted at projects that demonstrate that they can deliver access improvements for these groups.
2. The maximum funding available for the grant programme is £275k which is non-recurrent. Each individual grant will be for a minimum of £5k and maximum of £30k. The programme will operate during 2019/20 and 2020/21 with the intention that all funds will be committed by June 2020 and all funding allocated by March 2021.
3. The first round of applications will be open to community transport providers recognizing their central role in developing and delivering access opportunities for people with limited or no access to conventional public transport. A second round of applications will be open to other community groups as outlined in paragraph 2.
4. Successful applicants will be required to submit evidence of outputs and project impact through quarterly returns and a project evaluation report within 6 months of completion. This will cover delivery of impacts as set out in the criteria selection below, lessons learned and best practice.
5. Guidance for applicants, formal application forms, appraisal forms and grant funding agreement forms will be prepared with the assistance of the council's delegated grants and programmes team based on the criteria set out below.

Criteria

6. Applications will be accepted from:
 - a. community transport providers;
 - b. formally constituted community and voluntary groups/organisations; and
 - c. parish and town councils.
7. Whilst match funding is not a pre-requisite of this grant scheme applications that can evidence match funding or in kind contributions will be considered as added benefits in the appraisal of bids.
8. Applicants will be required to demonstrate how their projects will meet the following objectives for the Rural Access Grant:
 - a. Address an identified need relating to rural accessibility
 - b. Add value to existing supported transport services
 - c. Reduce costs for other public sector services such as adult social care
 - d. Minimise environmental impacts
 - e. Once established will be viable without ongoing council contribution
 - f. Demonstrate partnership working
 - g. Will provide learning outputs to enable the council to share best practice and lessons learnt with other groups and communities.

9. It will be important to demonstrate specific outputs which will be used to illustrate the benefits of the project and these should include identify:
 - a. People supported with improved access:
 - i. Older people
 - ii. People with disabilities
 - iii. Women
 - iv. Younger people
 - b. Services and activities to which access has been improved:
 - v. Healthcare
 - vi. Food shopping
 - vii. Education
 - viii. Work
 - ix. Leisure/social
 - c. Partners engaged in the project and any match funding
 - d. Exit strategy which indicates how the project activity will continue after Rural Access Grant finishes.

10. The following examples indicate the types of project that could be funded. We will be interested in other innovative ideas which applicants can demonstrate will meet the criteria for the grant:
 - a. New vehicles for community transport use
 - a. Software to help plan journeys
 - e. Schemes to support access for young people
 - f. Initiatives to attract more volunteer drivers
 - g. Schemes which will feed into existing transport services
 - h. Scheme which use social media and smart technologies to increase access
 - i. Brokerage – making greater use of vehicles available in the local community

Bid Appraisal

11. Bids will be evaluated against how well the project meets the grant criteria noting that if all community transport providers make a successful application this will ensure countywide coverage.

12. Bids will be evaluated by a panel of appointed representatives which will include:
 - a. Passenger transport team – process and procurement manager
 - b. Local enterprise and resources team representative
 - c. Facilitation and support will be provided by the delegated grants and programmes team.

13. Based on the information in provided with an application, the panel can make one of four recommendations:
 - j. Recommend award of grant
 - k. Recommend award of grant with some specific conditions
 - l. Request further information from the applicant to aid decision making
 - m. Recommend not to award grant, although reasons for not awarding funding will be provided

14. Should the situation be that there are more applications than available grant funding the panel will ensure that projects which best meet the criteria and provide greatest value for money will be prioritized.

15. The head of transport and access will determine grant awards in accordance with the grant criteria and having regard to the recommendation of the appraisal panel.