

Policy title: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY



Policy Control

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Title of Policy:	Financial Assistance Policy
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Directorate / Departmental ownership:	Economy, Tourism and Regeneration
Officer responsible:	Amanda Smyth, Assistant Director: Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
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Equality screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed by:	Sonya Stephenson
Equality screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment date:	13/11/2024
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1. Title of policy

This policy sets the basis for providing financial assistance to external organisations within the Council area. It sets out the rationale for such funding and the basis on which it should be provided, monitored and evaluated.

2. Statement

Council endorses the production of this policy which aims to ensure Council meets its legal, regulatory and moral obligations in use of financial assistance and also facilitates the development of community structures and activities within the Council area.

3. Aim

The overall aim of financial assistance is to enable Council to maximise the impact of its work across the Council area for the benefit of residents.

The objectives of the policy are to:

- Maximise the impact of and outcomes from all Council funding.
- Seek to address needs which are clearly demonstrated and fall within, or are compatible with, Council priorities.
- Increase community engagement and voluntary participation in addressing areas of common concern.
- Enhance the sustainability of community based activities and provision.
- Support community based work which addresses the needs of those who are most deprived.
- Support the development of mutual respect, understanding and appreciation of diversity and shared cultural experiences.
- Ensure fairness, transparency and value for money in all Council's Financial Assistance Practice.

4. Scope

This Policy provides a framework within which Council Officers can manage Council's designated Grant and Funding Programmes. It sets out the rationale for such funding and the basis for determining which funding programmes will feature in any particular financial year.

The Grants and Funding policy refers to Internal Guidance Manual which provides substantially more detail on how the Financial Assistance Programme should be run by Council Officers. This includes standards for the application process, the assessment and selection process, appeals process, construction of a letter of offer and the information required to verify the suitability of applicants. The manual also includes information on risk management, monitoring and evaluation of grant use. A further Applicant Guidance Manual sets out the process in simplified form for those applying for grants.

It is the responsibility of all Council Officers involved in Grants and Funding decisions and processes to fully observe the procedures set out in the guidance manuals and to ensure

that applicants also observe the relevant procedures and requirements. Approval from senior management must be sought before any deviation from these procedures and any variation in the procedures used to assess or provide Grants and Funding will be considered to be a disciplinary offence.

The policy specifically seeks to address a number of issues highlighted during a Financial Assistance Review 2024. It takes a different approach to previous Financial Assistance work in that it will focus on outcome measurement rather than on vouching and input assessment. While it is recognised that much more can be achieved through focusing on outcomes and that this is much more administratively effective, it is also clear that care must be taken to protect Council from any risk of fraudulent activity. For this reason, all applications will be reviewed for risk level and the monitoring and evaluation approach will be dependent on the risk identified. In general, applicants without a track record, a live sanction or applications involving larger sums of money, such as capital projects, are likely to be scored as higher risk and require a greater level of monitoring and vouching.

Council have adopted an on-line system for applying for financial assistance. This will also minimise administrative effort, simplify the application process and reduce nugatory effort by applicants who are not eligible to apply.

5. Related policies and legislation

The policy should be read in conjunction with:

- NMDDC FAP Officers Manual (which incorporates Risk Management, Monitoring and Evaluation and process maps).
- NMDDC FAP Applicant Guidance.
- Council's Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedures (July 2024).
- Council's Procurement Policy and Sanctions Procedures.

6. Definitions

Definition of the terms of the policy (if applicable).

N/A

7. Department and Officer responsible

Directorate / Department	ERT
Officer(s) responsible for developing the policy	Amanda Smyth, Assistant Director: Economy, Regeneration and Tourism

8. Policy approval process

Meeting	Date
SMT	5 th March 2019
Relevant Committee(s) e.g. Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee	Active and Healthy Communities 21/03/2019
Council	1 st April 2019

9. Review Date

"The policy will be reviewed in line with the Council's agreed policy review cycle i.e. every 4 years (as per Council's Equality Scheme commitment 4.31), or sooner to ensure it remains reflective of legislative developments."

10. Procedures and arrangements for monitoring the implementation and impact of the policy

This Policy will be implemented and monitored using the FAP Officers guidance. Internal audits will be conducted to ensure delivery is to a satisfactory standard.

11. Equality Screening

This policy has been Equality screened and the decision is that it is not required to be equality impact assessed (with no mitigating measures required).

12. Rural Needs Impact Assessment

This policy has been Rural needs impact assessed.