



# **COMMUNITY CHOICES FUND 2018/19**

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

## 1. COMMUNITY CHOICES

### What is Community Choices?

Community Choices is the name given to participatory budgeting activity in Scotland.

## 2. PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING (PB)

### What are the benefits of PB?

Each model of PB is different and will have different effects but there are three main ways that PB is regarded as offering benefits:

- It can improve local democracy, widening participation and re-invigorating the role of Public Authorities, local councillors and civil society, and increasing trust in public institutions.
- It can improve the effectiveness of public spending by improving the way money is invested, how service provision is monitored, and by increasing the knowledge available to the Public Authorities when undertaking service planning.
- Finally it strengthens the community and voluntary sector by investing in services essential to disadvantaged communities, so enabling their development, by increasing the number of people taking part in local democratic processes, and it builds social capital by creating forums for citizens and community groups to meet, negotiate and take decisions together.

### What's different about PB (compared to other engagement)?

PB gives a direct role to citizens in decisions about the spending of a public budget. It requires the budget holder to devolve the power to make, or share in decisions, to the people they serve. In this, it differs from consultation or including community representation on a decision making panel. As a consequence, its impact is significantly greater. Whilst it is a flexible process, it is distinguished by a set of values and principles which serve to define it as PB.

### What are the core values of PB?

The core values are:

- Transparency
- Accessibility
- Deliberation
- Empowerment
- Local Ownership
- Shared Responsibility
- Democracy
- Active Citizenship
- Democratic Accountability

These values are not unique to PB, but they are key to ensuring a good quality, meaningful process. All good practice PB incorporates these values to some degree and seeks to contribute to high quality democratic engagement.

### **Small Grants and Mainstreaming is referred to in the Information for Applicants. What's the difference?**

A participatory small grants process refers to a pot of money for a particular area or theme that is allocated using PB. For example it could be for improving a neighbourhood, for services supporting children and young people or for older people. Community, voluntary and sometimes statutory groups propose projects for funding and then present them at a decision day event, where residents or community members vote on which should receive funding. Members of the community can help set the criteria for the fund, or help to oversee and deliver the process. Funding is then allocated to each of the successful bidders who account for their expenditure as is normal within small grant making processes. *The Grant Making - How to Guide provides a step by step guide and a number of supporting templates to run a small projects process.*

Mainstreaming refers to a fund held by a Public Authority (for example the local council) to be decided on using PB. The sums involved in mainstreaming are generally much larger than project based PB and financial responsibility for the fund generally remains with the Public Authority. The community will be involved in shaping how the public money is used by proposing and deliberating on different ways that the money or services should be spent. *The Mainstreaming Ideas Guide is designed to help better understand the issues of mainstreaming includes an indication of the commissioning cycle, a budget matrix, the advantages and challenges of a number of approaches, a key set of principles and useful links to further information.*

### **How do I run a PB event?**

The above guides will help but the following is a helpful snapshot:

- Set a reasonable timescale – around six months from start to finish.
- Keep it simple – people will trust a process they can understand.
- Publicise widely – use social media as well as the local newspaper, notices, leaflets, radio and the PB website.
- Try to have something for all ages.
- At the decision event, whether a small project or mainstreaming, try mounting a small display for each project. People can familiarise themselves, mingle and chat before formal proceedings start.
- Make it a sociable event by providing refreshments and entertainment (local bands).
- Allow time to count the votes. With a good turnout and a wide range of projects, counting can take some time.

### **How do I evaluate a PB event/project?**

A Guide *Hear the Voice, Make the Change – 10 Ways to Record and Evaluate your PB Project* provides a good steer for evaluation.

### 3. THE COMMUNITY CHOICES FUND 2018/19

#### Who is the fund open to?

£750,000 of the Community Choices Fund 2018/19 is open to Community Organisations and Community Councils. For the first time the fund is not open for applications to public authorities. Instead the fund will continue to provide practical support for public authorities and the third sector. The Scottish Government and COSLA will work in partnership to provide a targeted and co-ordinated programme for Local authorities to support the agreement that at least 1% of local authority budgets will be subject to PB by 2020/21.

#### I'm new to PB so how can my application compete with more experienced applicants?

To make the application process as fair as possible, applications from recipients of the Community Choices Fund 2016/17 **and/or** 2017/18 will be assessed separately to new applicants. Applicants will need to demonstrate how further funding will add value to their Community Choices programme. There is no intention to ring fence funding and all applications will be judged on their own merit.

#### How do you define a community organisation?

For the purpose of this fund a Community Organisation should be able to show (through a written constitution, articles of association, etc):

- The community to which the body relates.
- That the majority of the members of the body are members of that community.
- That the community body is open to all members of that community.
- Is controlled by its members.
- The aims and purposes of the organisation.
- That the funds and assets of the organisation are used for the benefit of that community.

#### How do you define a community council?

Community Councils were established by statute in 1973. The general purpose of a community council is to ascertain, co-ordinate and express to the Local Authorities for its area, and to Public Authorities, the views of the community which it represents.

#### How much is available and how much can I apply for?

The total fund available is £750,000 for Community Organisations and Community Councils. The minimum bid is £20,000 up to a maximum bid of £100,000.

#### What period will the grant award cover?

The award will cover the financial year 2018/19 only.

**I am a Community Organisation/Community Council. Do we have to find match funding for our project?**

No. However, funding contributions from other key stakeholders would be welcomed and encouraged to make the PB process more meaningful.

**Will I have to attend training?**

Yes. All applicants will be asked to nominate a staff member or volunteer to take part in Scottish Government funded training. All successful applicants will be required to engage with the training on offer which is designed to support the organisation to plan and conduct a PB process effectively.

**What are the reporting requirements?**

Successful applicants will be required to complete an evaluation template provided by the Scottish Government to be returned by the end of April 2019.

**4. THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

**What is the closing date for applications?**

The closing date for applications is **midnight Friday 13 July 2018** and applications received after this time will not be considered. Please ensure that you answer all the questions in the application as incomplete ones will not be considered or followed-up. The Application Checklist should help. We aim to notify you regarding the outcome of your application by mid-August 2018.

**Who do I send my completed application to?**

Please email the completed application form and application checklist to [community.empowerment@gov.scot](mailto:community.empowerment@gov.scot)

**If successful, how and when will the grant be paid?**

The grant will be paid in one lump sum following receipt of a signed accepted grant offer form and claim form.

**If successful, when will the grant have to be spent by?**

The PB activity needs to have taken place and the money allocated by the end of March 2019. If small grant, it is advisable to have a process in place to get feedback from successful bidders on how they have spent the money but this would not need to be shared with the Scottish Government.

**Who do I contact if I have any questions?**

If you have any questions or require further information please contact [community.empowerment@gov.scot](mailto:community.empowerment@gov.scot)