


<p>Stronger communities fund policy review - Focus Group</p> <p>7 customers attended</p>		
<p>Discussion question - Is the current criteria fit for purpose? Are we missing anything relevant to our customers and communities?</p>	<p>Managers response</p>	
<p>All customers said the current criteria is fit for purpose and comprehensive. It covers various aspects, such as support, skills and social. It is good that the criteria ensures the funding must be used in the local communities.</p> <p>Suggestion: Include a criteria that focuses on support for befriending & social inclusion.</p> <p>Suggestion: Add mental health support.</p> <p>Comment: It's important that the funding will benefit all ages.</p> <p>Suggestion: Include a criteria that is aimed more at the older person.</p>	<p>We will expand 'community life' criteria: "To involve more people in the life of their community, promoting social inclusion and breaking down barriers."</p> <p>Mental health will be encompassed in the above criteria.</p> <p>We will remove "Strengthening existing community groups and supporting the formation of new ones."</p> <p>We will include in the application process, a list asking who are main beneficiaries of the project.</p>	
<p>Suggestion: Encourage applications for projects that focus on the environment.</p>	<p>Whilst we would support an environmental project with direct benefits to our customers/neighbourhoods, we would not single out environmental projects as a focus.</p>	
<p>Suggestion: Make sure the criteria is simply explained and easy to understand.</p>	<p>We will complete a review to check for plain English</p>	
<p>Discussion question - Our maximum funding offer is £2000, what are your thoughts on this? What could we do to make sure our budget helps as many projects as possible?</p>	<p>Managers response</p>	
<p>All customers agreed the £2000 maximum was fair, and would benefit any organisation.</p> <p>Selwood Housing can continue to fund more project within the budget.</p> <p>20 projects helped with funding last year is a good achievement for Selwood Housing.</p> <p>Suggestion: If a lot of applications are received in the quarter, help with smaller grants to enable all organisations get some help, rather than be rejected.</p> <p>Suggestion: Limit the £2000 grant to one per quarter, this will help spread the budget and enable SH to assist with more projects.</p> <p>Suggestion: Have a small project month, where all application are for £300 or less.</p>	<p>We will keep the maximum set at £2000.</p> <p>We will aim to fund as many projects as possible, rather than fewer at the maximum.</p> <p>If organisations have smaller projects, we will allow them to apply up to twice a year, but not exceed the maximum of £2000 funding in total.</p>	
<p>Discussion question - How do we fairly distribute funds within our communities?</p>	<p>Managers response</p>	
<p>All customers said the applications should continue to be reviewed against the criteria and the project. As long as they take place within the Selwood Housing communities, it is irrelevant what area they are from.</p>	<p>Will continue to review applications against the criteria.</p>	
<p>We need to promote well and fairly to spread the word equally across our areas. Focal areas doctors etc</p> <p>Suggestion: Have an application month by area and promote heavily within those areas during the month.</p>	<p>We will aim to increase promotion through different methods, such as, leaflets in hubs/focal points, funding networks.</p> <p>We will discuss with our communications team - promoting the fund in areas of less housing stock and less previous applications, especially tagging towns/villages through social media.</p>	
<p>Comment: Word of mouth promotion is good, through people you know/trust.</p>	<p>We will look into how we can speak to our customers, encourage them to help promote the fund.</p> <p>We will plan a short survey in lower stock areas, to highlight our stronger communities fund.</p>	
<p>Discussion question - Organisations can submit one application per financial year. Is this time scale fair? Should we allow applications to help with annual running costs? What are the pros and cons for repeat funding?</p>	<p>Managers response</p>	
<p>All customers said the timescale was fair, SH budget is limited and this ensures the money can be used to help as many organisations as possible.</p> <p>Suggestion: Allow groups to apply twice a year.</p>	<p>We will allow an organisation to apply for a second time, but not exceed £2000 in any one year.</p> <p>i.e. granted £1200 in Q2, then in Q4 can apply for a 2nd project of up to £800?</p>	
<p>All customers agreed that the funding should support projects only, not including general running costs.</p> <p>Comment: Repeat funding annually is fair, as long as the projects are proving to be beneficial in the SH communities.</p> <p>Suggestion: Consider repeat funding applications after new applications have been reviewed.</p> <p>Comment: In two minds as the running costs are vital, otherwise the projects wouldn't run anyway. Maybe highlight this to applicants.</p> <p>Pros of repeat funding: Organisations have the facility to apply annually.</p> <p>Cons of repeat funding: Could reduce the number of organisations Selwood Housing can help.</p> <p>Organisations can become reliant on funding if approved every year.</p>	<p>We will allow annual funding for projects, this will support organisations projects that take place every year.</p> <p>We will not fund general running costs, as this will limit the amount of funding we can use for projects.</p>	

Discussion question - What information do you think organisations should provide to evidence where the funding has been used, and how it has made a difference?	Managers response
Suggestion: Are the services any good, are they useful for people?	We ask for good news stories which often includes user testimonials, and we try and visit a variety of projects over the year.
Suggestion: Proof that project worked, ask for photograph and video evidence, including the community/people that have benefitted. Suggestion: Organisations should supply details on how the funding was spent. EG. invoices for items purchased.	We will continue to ask for content and images that we can share across our customer facing and internal platforms (website/social media/newsletters). We will continue to ask for a breakdown of costs, and may request quotes on certain costs if larger or more obscure.
Suggestion: Include Neighbourhood Manager to visit the organisations to see how the funding has made a difference.	We will aim to visit projects and invite relevant colleagues from neighbourhoods and other teams. We will share relevant projects we have funded with our colleagues so they are aware of how we have helped in their patches.
Discussion question - We promote via our website, customer update, make a difference newsletter and social media. What more could we do to promote our funding opportunities?	Managers response
Comment: Social media is really important so continue with that. Suggestion: Making use of places like community hubs/centres etc that need support.	We will continue to use social media to promote our stronger communities fund, we will discuss options with our communications team to ensure we are reaching a wide audience. We will discuss opportunities for local area board coordinators from wiltshire council to promote our funding, and investigate the equivalents in somerset & BANEs. We will aim to speak with Town Clerks.
Selwood Housing promotes the funding widely. Suggestion: maybe including local newspapers to highlight the good news stories, benefits of funding. This could potentially reach a wider audience.	At present we won't consider this due to cost and it not being a guaranteed audience. We will continue to use social media as a free alternative.
Promotion of the funding opportunity is covered across a wide area. Suggestion: Increase promotion of the organisations who have recieved funding to SH customers. Suggestion: Using community noticeboards could help promote the funding opportunity and showcase how it has helped.	We are working closely with our communications team to plan regular promotion of projects we have helped.
Any other questions/comments/suggestions	Managers response
Suggestion: Include a Skills Pot - encourage customers to volunteer their time to help with physical support (plumbers/electricians/builders etc)	We will look to add shout-outs in our newsletter on an ad-hoc basis when requests arise.
Comment: Ensure all promotion of the funding includes the contractors donation (60/40 split), so customers know where the money is coming from.	We will continue to promote those who make a contribution to our stronger communities fund pot.