

REF Funding Framework

1. Background

The purpose of the Funding Framework is to establish clear objectives for the Community Benefit Funds in South Lanarkshire and to support neighbourhood and community planning objectives and help deliver sustainable communities with improved social and economic outcomes.

The REF Community Benefit Funds are a benefit to communities supporting a wide range of community led projects. Since 2004 £4.7m worth of grants have been awarded helping to lever in £20m additional funding to the area. The funds require to continue to support communities and should support ongoing neighbourhood planning. To do this the funds can be better aligned to the identified needs and issues of the rural area such as access to services, pockets of deprivation and an ageing population and align to national and local strategies.

Developing the Funding Framework will deliver four improvements:

- Improve targeting of funds to areas of need (such as deprivation and isolation)
- Better alignment to neighbourhood planning priorities and local strategies
- Improved leverage from other funders and additional investment
- Ability to measure the outcomes and outputs of the investments made against the fund priorities

The Funding Framework aims to dovetail with local needs, local and national policies and strategies and other funds that can help communities particularly rural communities to continue to remain sustainable and thrive. The Funding Framework draws upon statistical evidence such as Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and South Lanarkshires State of the Environment report, community consultations and national surveys and local and national policy. The Funding Framework recognises the aim set by Community Planning which brings together local agencies and organisations from the public, private and voluntary sector to deliver better services for communities. The agreed vision for Community Planning in South Lanarkshire is:

"To improve the quality of life for all in South Lanarkshire by ensuring equal access to opportunities and to services that meet people's needs".

Key areas of focus include:

- Improving Health and Tackling Inequalities
- Reducing Crime and Improving Community Safety
- Promoting Sustainable and Inclusive Communities and Opportunities for all through Life
- Ensuring Sustainable Economic Recovery and Development
- Tackling Poverty

2. Investment Themes

The investment themes are informed by the findings from the various pieces of research and consultations in particular the National Neighbourhood Survey 2016 and Lanarkshire Rural Survey in 2014 and the priorities of relevant local and national strategies including:

Promote an Economic Strategy for South Lanarkshire 2013 – 2023

Lanarkshire LEADER Local Development Strategy 2014 – 2020

South Lanarkshire Sustainable Development and Climate Change strategy 2017 - 2022

Developing the Young Workforce Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy 2014

Scotland's Regeneration Strategy: Achieving a Sustainable Future 2011

It is recognised that some research and consultations were undertaken some time ago and will need to be refreshed. It is considered that an appropriate time to do this will be at the end of the current EU funding period in 2020 and after the direction of replacement funding streams is understood.

Four priority themes have been identified to help strengthen the strategic focus and enhance the internal cohesiveness of the approach. These are aligned with the Community Planning focus areas.

Theme One : Stronger Communities

Investment rationale

Throughout South Lanarkshire there are communities which demonstrate high levels of inequality either in terms of income or access to services and there are significant variations in the well-being of individual communities. Between a third and a quarter of the total population of some rural communities (25-30%) were classed as Income Deprived (SIMD 2012), almost twice the area average and there are pockets of disadvantage in most of the towns. The remoter areas of rural South Lanarkshire are also characterised by weak socio-economic performance. The Funding Framework seeks to prioritise tackling inequality of different kinds by supporting projects that will help break the generational levels of inequality. The theme supports projects that address poverty and disadvantage at both a community and area level. Communities can be enabled and empowered to act in tackling disadvantage and contributing to their own development. This will include helping communities identify their own priorities.

Investment Priorities

- Support for communities to consider their own priorities at a community level and deliver projects that address these priorities.
- Support for projects that seek to address fuel poverty, financial poverty or access to services.
- Support to improve mobility for rural residents.
- Support for projects aimed at older and younger residents of remoter rural communities.
- Support to assist communities take on local community owned and/or managed assets.

Theme Two : Prosperous Communities

Investment rationale

Supporting SME growth, training opportunities, employment and entrepreneurship are recognised as fundamental to the economic wellbeing and sustainability of all communities. Within the rural area and some urban areas there is a higher level of individuals with low or no qualifications and this presents a barrier to individual financial wellbeing and overall Gross Domestic Product growth within the area. This is often exacerbated by the distances to access services and both training and job opportunities.

Town Centres are recognised as key to thriving communities and support is fundamental to create sustainable local economies. Communities are still very committed to their towns and the town centre remains firmly at the heart of the communities. It is recognised that there is a need to develop the rural towns in a way that will sustain and retain them as rural service centres playing a key role in rural quality of life.

Growing the SME environment through improved business infrastructure and services can assist the development of micro enterprises and SME's. Support for business hubs and community broadband fibre can help generate prosperous communities.

Direct support to locally focused social enterprises and not for profit organisations aimed at increasing trading figures and numbers employed can have a positive impact both on the business and the rural economy by creating alternative employment opportunities and robust local delivery organisations.

Investment Priorities

- Support for targeted engagement in training, education and employment initiatives.
- Support for projects that aim to improve the vitality and viability of rural town and village centres.
- Support for growing the SME infrastructure and environment through improved business infrastructure and services but not direct to individual businesses.
- Support to locally focused social enterprises and not for profit organisations which aims to increase profitability and numbers employed.
- Support for tourism infrastructure, attracting visitors and or employment.

Theme Three : Healthy active Communities

Investment rationale

The rural area demographics show an increasing proportion of older people within the rural area. In addition the distance to access recreational opportunities and the difficulty in accessing some support services has an effect well being within the area. This can be addressed through improved physical sports and recreational infrastructure, time limited health projects linked to specific needs, volunteering or projects that support older people in the community.

Investment Priorities

- Support for projects that help healthy and active life styles including sports, recreation and leisure.
- Support for projects that aim to maintain independence for older people and disadvantaged groups.
- Support for the relief by reason of age, ill health disability financial hardship or other disadvantage.

Theme Four : Sustainable Environmental Communities

The areas heritage and environment can also establish a sense of place and build local identity and esteem. There are underutilised assets that present opportunities to improve the attractiveness of the area for both residents and visitors.

Investment Priorities

- Support to protect and enhance the area's natural and cultural heritage assets including increasing awareness of the asset.
- To promote and encourage environmental enhancements including the provision or upgrade of infrastructure.
- Support for projects which aim to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, develop sustainable transport, climate change mitigation and increase community growing.

While each theme has a list of priorities projects which do not fit a priority but still deliver well on a theme or across themes can be considered on an individual case and assessed against meeting the themes objective.

3. REF Amendments

To support the Funding Framework and increase the empowerment of communities and support neighbourhood planning 3 additional amendments have been made to the REF.

Amendment 1 : To provide up to £10,000 100% support :

This increase will support Theme 1 enabling communities to deliver larger, more complex projects and activity, quicker, without the need for match funding to be secured. This will support all eligible communities but is of particular support in communities with limited resources or community capacity.

Amendment 2 : Provide revenue support for capital projects :

This will support Themes 1, 2, and 4 and allow new capital projects able to apply for revenue funding (e.g. staff and overhead costs) for a time limited period of up to 3 years to help move the project to sustainability. This will help community group and social enterprises during development and expansion.

Amendment 3 : The introduction of micro grants :

This will support Theme1 and establish a micro grant scheme which will give communities the ability to fund small scale activity which are locally important with the minimum of administration. The administration of the micro grants would be undertaken at a local level, Community Councils within eligible 10km areas can apply to REF for a maximum £5,000 micro grant fund on an annual basis with awards dependent on funds being available covering their area. The individual award maximum limit for Community Councils distributing micro grants would be £500 and administration is undertaken by Community Councils through a simplified application form. Annual returns will be required from participating Community Councils on funds awarded and any governance issues or corrective actions addressed through this process. The micro grant scheme supports strong sustainable communities

1.5 Monitoring success

The Funding Framework will be delivered by promoting the themes, priorities and amendments and by updating and publicising the application scoring matrix. Measuring of grant awards, outcomes and results against the four themes will provide measurements of the success of the REF in meeting the Community planning and neighbourhood priorities.