

Islington Council's Community Chest

Programme Management 2015-2018

Proposal submitted to Islington Council
by Cripplegate Foundation
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1. Introduction

Islington Council's Community Chest (ICCC) is a partnership between Islington Council and Cripplegate Foundation. It is a small grants programme that funds grassroots activity and brings additional capacity building, networking, and development support to local voluntary and community groups. ICCC targets support to residents experiencing poverty and isolation.

Cripplegate Foundation welcomes the opportunity to submit this proposal to Islington Council for the administration and management of the ICCC programme from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2018. Cripplegate Foundation is an independent charity working in Islington and parts of the City of London. Our vision is of a society free from poverty and the negative effects of inequality, where the potential and aspirations of all local people are fully realised. The Foundation awards grants, provides advice and support to local organisations, develops partnerships, undertakes research, and influences policy.

Islington Council has indicated its intention to make a contribution to ICCC of £200,000 a year over three years and to continue to work with Cripplegate Foundation to administer the fund. This is subject to consideration of this proposal by the VCS Committee on 16 March 2015.

Cripplegate Foundation is committed to continuing to invest in and develop the ICCC programme in partnership with Islington Council. Cripplegate Foundation intends to make a contribution to ICCC of £50,000 a year over three years. This is subject to formal approval, and allocation of a £50,000 commitment for 2015/16, at the Foundation's Programme Committee meeting on 10 March 2015.

Our proposal responds to the 'ICCC Funding Prospectus for 2015 to 2018' issued by Islington Council. It is divided into the following sections:

- Section 2: Responding to local priorities and fostering local resilience
- Section 3: Raising the profile
- Section 4: Growth potential of ICCC grants budget
- Section 5: Programme management fee

In drafting the proposal we have taken account of responses to Islington Council's recent consultation on its support to local voluntary organisations (Islington Community Fund) and comments from the ICCC Panel at their meeting on 27th February 2015.

2. Responding to local priorities and fostering local resilience

Islington Council is committed to working with the local VCS to address priority needs and increase the resilience of local organisations and the communities they serve.

Responding to local priorities

ICCC targets support towards residents on low incomes and who are isolated, including supporting people with protected characteristics. Assessment takes place through an eligibility quiz, written application (with supporting materials), and an assessment visit. Potential applicants are able to attend an information drop-in session and seek guidance from Cripplegate Foundation prior to submitting their application. The programme has five key objectives and applicants are asked when applying to identify how their proposed activity will help achieve outcomes in one or more of these areas.

ICCC priorities were last reviewed and updated by ICCC Panel members within the last 18 months. Examples of local groups funded by the programme over this period indicate how ICCC is helping to tackle poverty and isolation (see table below)

How ICCC is helping to tackle poverty and isolation	
Advising and supporting people	e.g. One True Voice – advocacy, advice and employment support, particularly for Somali women e.g. Betknowmore – addressing gambling addiction and associated problem debt among local residents
Educating people and improving their skills and employability	e.g. Disability Career Support – career training opportunities, including designing/selling jewellery, for those in financial hardship e.g. ICCC supports a number of supplementary schools
Reducing isolation and increasing people’s involvement in the community	e.g. Jannaty Women’s Social Society – supporting sewing classes and encouraging participation among isolated women e.g. Finsbury and Clerkenwell volunteers – befriending and support for isolated older people
Improving people’s mental and/or physical health	e.g. Talking News Islington – talking newspaper for blind and partially sighted residents at risk of social isolation e.g. Dynamic Autism Group – weekend activities for young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders
Improving the local environment and making communities safer	e.g. Arlington Association – community gardening for and with local residents, including supporting the engagement of local residents with physical and learning disabilities e.g. Let’s Get Talking – Ben Kinsella knife crime awareness programme

Current priorities have been cross-referenced against responses to the Council’s consultation on VCS provision (see table below) and they appear to be working well from the applicant/assessment perspective. It is proposed that the current priorities are retained. However, it is advised that the ICCC Panel remain alert to changing needs and that priorities are reviewed annually in the autumn to take account of emerging council budgets.

Having reviewed the ICCC guidance notes Cripplegate Foundation proposes to make more explicit (alongside the different thematic areas of funding) that the programme’s overall intention is to help build local resilience and support residents who are experiencing poverty and isolation. This will be mirrored in the types of questions asked at the application and monitoring stage.

Cross-referencing ICCC priorities against LBI Islington Community Fund consultation responses (Small Grants)

Advising and supporting people	'benefits advice' 'gender based work' (cross-cutting)
Educating people and improving their skills and employability	'Education and employability'
Reducing isolation and increasing people's involvement in the community	'volunteering' 'community festivals and events' 'cohesion and integration'
Improving people's mental and/or physical health	'health and wellbeing'
Improving the local environment and making communities safer	'gardening' 'arts and culture'

In addition to *what* ICCC should fund (i.e. the outcomes sought), some LBI consultation responses commented on *how* ICCC funds could be used e.g. prioritising small groups drawing on volunteer support, supporting initiatives for which it may be difficult to fundraise elsewhere, supporting collaboration between groups, testing out small projects. These suggestions are supported and the existing ICCC guidelines and assessment process enable projects/organisations to come forward on this basis.

It is proposed that the suggestion to relax the criteria to allow applications from parent organisations (e.g. community hubs, churches) which house small unconstituted groups is trialled with a review after 12 months. Guidance will be added to the 'notes for applicants' to emphasise that groups need to be embedded locally (i.e. not just based locally) with potential applicants asked to seek guidance prior to application.

It is proposed that the suggestion to relax the criteria to include trips/outings, which are currently ineligible, is amended so that this is included as eligible expenditure with further detail and guidance provided in the guidance notes. Funding towards residentials will not be eligible expenditure.

Fostering local resilience

The community development function of ICCC will be retained over the period 2015-2018 and will build on existing practice. It is proposed that the development role will involve a combination of support provided by grants officers during and after the assessment process, as well as collaborative working with local community hubs and VAI to ensure small groups have access to capacity building and networking opportunities.

VAI and the BIG (Businesses for Islington Giving) Alliance are working collaboratively to deliver a range of business surgeries to local groups. The potential to allocate funds from the ICCC grants budget to support dedicated capacity building workshops for ICCC applicants has not been included in our current proposal but will be discussed with members at a future ICCC Panel meeting.

It is proposed that an annual meeting involving key support/infrastructure agencies takes place to pool knowledge about local support needs and to tailor future provision accordingly.

Other actions to ensure the scheme remains accessible to grassroots, volunteer-led groups will include:

Summary of proposed actions to build organisational capacity and networks among local groups as part of the ICCC programme

One-to-one advisory support during the assessment process e.g. income/expenditure accounting, funding opportunities, links to other local groups/events/advice services	Existing
Advisory support for grantees/potential applicants on an ongoing basis e.g. sharing knowledge about local opportunities and initiatives, bringing groups together on common interests, supporting grantees with queries during the course of the grant	Existing
Referrals to capacity building support from Voluntary Action Islington, including workshops delivered jointly with the BIG Alliance	Existing
Referrals to capacity building support and networking opportunities at Community Hubs	New
Annual meeting between VAI, Here To, BIG Alliance, Octopus Community, Islington Council and Cripplegate Foundation to share intelligence about the support needs of small groups and successful approaches to inform future provision	New
Reviewing and simplifying the ICCC application form to ensure it doesn't act as a barrier to entry	New

Other activities included in the proposal, such as an annual ICCC event, will also contribute to building awareness of local needs and connections between small groups, further supporting local resilience.

3. Raising the profile

Our proposal focuses on raising the profile and awareness of ICCC in 3 ways:

- (i) Increasing awareness of funding opportunities available through ICCC to local organisations
- (ii) Promoting the achievements and impact of activity supported through ICCC
- (iii) Raising the profile of Islington Council as ICCC's main funder

Increasing awareness of funding opportunities available through ICCC to local organisations

A number of actions are currently undertaken by Cripplegate Foundation to advertise the ICCC programme and the launch of each grant funding round. The use of Voluntary Action Islington's eNews is a particularly important communication channel, and this will continue alongside advertising funding rounds on the Cripplegate Foundation and Islington Council websites. Additional actions suggested over the period 2015-2018 include more consistent use of the Foundation and Council's Twitter accounts to advertise the launch and closing of each funding round.

Summary of proposed actions to raise awareness of funding opportunities available through ICCC to local organisations

Advertise ICCC grant funding rounds on the Cripplegate Foundation and Islington Council websites	Existing
Advertise ICCC grant funding rounds through VAI eNews circular	Existing
Hold ICCC briefing session(s) for each funding round, targeting support towards new applicants	Existing
Advertise grant funding rounds more consistently via Cripplegate Foundation and Islington Council Twitter accounts	New

Promoting the achievements and impact of activity supported through ICCC

Islington Council's Community Chest is an outcomes focused programme which seeks to bring about positive change for local residents in five priority areas. Existing programme arrangements involve reports being submitted to ICCC Panel members on the number of applications received, how applicants recommended for funding will support residents (including in relation to equalities), and the contribution the grant will make to programme priorities. The Foundation will continue to report on this basis. It is proposed this is complemented by a number of more external facing actions over the period 2015-2018:

- Preparation of an ICCC '**annual report**'. This will be a concise, PDF report which will summarise the awards made over the previous year, the issues facing local residents and groups, and how ICCC grants contribute to local priorities. Where data is available this will include consideration of ICCC support for residents with protected characteristics.
- Research and publication of at least **3 case studies** of ICCC supported activity each year. These will be concise summaries (max 2 pages A4) with photos/quotes/examples demonstrating the work that has been funded and how this has impacted on the lives of local residents. Many of the groups supported through ICCC are grassroots organisations. The diversity of issues addressed through the programme makes introduction of a standardised approach to outcomes monitoring difficult and the capacity of many groups to develop and implement sophisticated outcomes monitoring tools is limited. We believe a case study approach, coupled with an overarching summary of programme activity in the annual report, will be the best way to capture and share the achievements of the programme and the organisations it supports. Cripplegate Foundation will re-design current dimensions of the ICCC grant monitoring requirements to facilitate this.
- **Annual ICCC celebration event.** Building on previous activity it is proposed that Islington Council and Cripplegate Foundation host an annual ICCC celebration event for all ICCC grant recipients awarded funding in the previous 12 months (this invitation could be extended further subject to the size of venue). The event will showcase a small number of organisations in receipt of ICCC funding (e.g. presentation, short film, photo exhibition) and share information that may be helpful to small groups. However the focus will be on networking, celebrating achievements, and building a sense of community among the borough's grassroots organisations to help foster local resilience. To help raise awareness of the Council's role as main funder of ICCC, a senior politician and/or officer will be invited to speak at the event and all councillors and senior officers will be invited to attend alongside representatives from the local media.

Summary of proposed actions to promote the achievements and impact of activity supported through ICCC

Produce and disseminate an external facing annual 'report' on the ICCC awards made over the previous year summarising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the awards made (who, where, equalities) the issues facing local residents and groups how ICCC grants contribute to local priorities (note: this will be a concise document in PDF format rather than a published report). The report will be uploaded to the Islington Council and Cripplegate Foundation websites, and could be featured in relevant Council publications.	New
Collate and publish to the Cripplegate Foundation and Islington Council websites at least 3 case studies each year of ICCC funded activity which help to highlight achievements and impact of the programme	New
Hold an annual ICCC celebration event for all grant recipients over the previous 12 months, inviting Councillors, senior Council Officers, the local media, and other funders to attend	Existing, with new features

Raising the profile of Islington Council as ICCC's main funder

Islington Council is the majority funder of the ICCC programme, contributing £200,000/year compared to a £50,000 annual contribution from Cripplegate Foundation. A number of existing actions seek to recognise the contribution of Islington Council to the programme. These include:

- the name of the programme, 'Islington Council's Community Chest', which is used consistently in all communications with regard to the programme
- always circulating both the Islington Council and Cripplegate Foundation logos when grant recipients are producing materials to acknowledge the funders/promote their activity
- outlining the dual funder arrangements during assessment visits, including the membership of the ICCC Panel and that recommendations are made by the Panel for formal approval by Islington Council and Cripplegate Foundation

Looking at opportunities for further development we propose the actions below:

Summary of proposed actions to raise the profile of Islington Council as ICCC's main funder

Retaining the name 'Islington Council's Community Chest' and existing terminology on how the programme is funded 'funded by Islington Council in partnership with Cripplegate Foundation'	Existing
Add Islington Council logo to the grant approval letter sent by Cripplegate Foundation when grants are made (currently Cripplegate Foundation letterhead only)	New
Add reference to how the programme is funded to the Terms and Conditions that recipients sign and return	New

4. Growth potential of ICCC grants budget

Cripplegate Foundation has been asked to assess the potential for increasing the size of the ICCC grants budget with contributions from other funders over the period 2015-2018. We have reviewed and appraised four potential options, and summarise these below.

Option 1: Grow the ICCC grants budget with contributions from other funders

Potential for implementation: Difficult to achieve; potentially high reward but also high input for potentially low reward as less funding is available for small grants compared to recent years; there are barriers to entry for independent funders due to it being a Council-led fund rather than a wider giving model

Requirements / implications: Renaming of the programme required. Removal of Islington Council from the name of the fund will reduce association of Islington Council as main funder of the programme.

A focus on fundraising and a greater number of grant assessments due to a higher ICCC budget will increase programme management costs; unless funders are willing to contribute funds for grants and programme management fees this would reduce resources available for grants from the Council/Cripplegate contribution.

Minimum 12 month lead-in period required, which would mean increased grants unlikely to be available until Year 2 at the earliest

Option 2: Grow the ICCC grants budget with contributions from other Council or Cripplegate funds

Potential for implementation: Feasible in principle but pressures on other grants budgets for Islington Council and Cripplegate Foundation are likely to make this difficult in practice. Limited indication this is a preferred direction of travel for councillors/governors at the current time.

Requirements / implications: Would need to seek amalgamation of new small grant schemes (e.g. Islington Play and Youth Commissioning Small Grants Scheme) or existing small grants schemes (e.g. Local Initiatives Fund) with ICCC.

Would require reduction in grants budget for Cripplegate Foundation main grants programme (multi-year funds for any size organisation) if increasing funds to ICCC.

Option 3: Align the administration of ICCC funds alongside other small grants programmes

Potential for implementation: Straightforward to implement, builds on existing practice, low risk

Requirements / implications: Requires ICCC staff and Panel members to scope and maintain a 'watching brief' of other small grants programmes to inform ICCC decision making and to direct potential applicants to the most appropriate fund (e.g. LIF, LBI small grants for young people, Islington Giving small grants, housing association funds)

Helps to retain a diversity of funding streams available to local groups rather than focusing resources in a single fund

Can be implemented from next funding round

Option 4: Bring together ICCC funds and donations for small grants to Islington Giving into a single fund

Potential for implementation: Potentially straightforward in relation to grants administration, less so in relation to wider promotional and governance related issues

Requirements / implications: Would bring together ICCC funds of £214k/yr with estimated £40k-60k/yr Islington Giving small grants funding (with potential to increase)

Would require change of name for current programme (as in option 1) and change in governance arrangements – currently separate decision making bodies for grant applications for ICCC and Islington Giving

Given the above, would need to be phased in and likely to be Year 2 at the earliest before ready for implementation

Based on the options appraisal our recommendation is to pursue **Option 3: Align the administration of ICCC funds alongside other small grants programmes**. This would not preclude the Foundation being entrepreneurial in bringing additional funds into the ICCC programme should the opportunity arise but means effort will focus on maintaining an up-to-date knowledge about other small grants schemes and drawing on this insight when advising applicants and making grant recommendations to the ICCC Panel. Cripplegate Foundation would also be willing to convene an annual meeting of all small grants funders who are active in the borough to help align priorities, raise the profile of the grants schemes available and the impact they are having, and to share learning.

5. Programme management fee

ICCC is a partnership between Islington Council and Cripplegate Foundation, with Cripplegate Foundation administering and managing the programme.

Cripplegate Foundation's proposed administration and management fee for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2018 is £36,000 a year. This covers staffing costs (Programme Director, Programme Officer, Programme Administrator) plus a contribution towards the running costs of the building. It is based on administering 3 funding rounds a year and assessing a relatively consistent number of grant applications each year. The prioritisation and allocation of time between tasks may need to be amended subject to application trends but will include:

- Grants administration – e.g. advertising funding rounds, meeting with groups/networks to talk about ICCC, drop-in sessions for potential applicants, amending guideline notes/online application form/monitoring forms, grant confirmation letters, administering payments, updating website details
- Grants assessments – e.g. 1:1 assessment visits with each applicant organisation, reviewing financial accounts and supporting information, internal grants assessment recommendation meetings, preparing grant recommendation reports
- Development support – e.g. advising groups pre- and post-application stage, connecting groups to local support agencies, bringing groups together to build networks/share experience, responding to queries about funding options, information sharing at meetings/via email/by post, reporting on key issues facing small groups to the Panel
- Programme reporting and communications (internal and external) – e.g. collating and analysing monitoring reports, publishing annual ICCC report, researching and writing case studies, organising annual ICCC event, disseminating information including via websites and social media
- Partnership working – e.g. liaison with local agencies including VAI/Community Hubs/Here To/BIG Alliance etc, annual meeting of small grants funders, regular liaison between Islington Council and Cripplegate Foundation
- Panel meetings – attendance, minutes, and reporting for ICCC Panel meetings

Direct costs associated with the hosting of an annual ICCC event have not been included in the management fee identified. Cripplegate Foundation will work with Islington Council to source venues / refreshments in-kind where possible and commits to underwriting costs of up to £2,500 a year (inclusive of VAT) towards the ICCC event.

Cripplegate Foundation commits to absorbing any changes in staff salaries or cost of living increases which take place over the 3 year period to be able maintain a grants budget of £214,000 a year.