

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader's Portfolio Holder Meeting

17 May 2012

AUTHOR/S: Director, Planning and New Communities

GRANTFINDER (GRANT FUNDING SOFTWARE)

Purpose

1. To present the options for acquiring a GRANTFinder licence for the purposes of:
 - (a) supporting communities and groups to source funding for local projects and;
 - (b) sourcing external funding for this Council to support the delivery of its corporate aims.
2. This is not a key decision but requires the Leader's approval given the resource and financial implications of acquiring the system and evaluating the impact of it. The item was first published in the January 2012 Portfolio Holder Forward Plan.

Recommendation

3. That the Leader agrees to the acquisition of a GRANTfinder licence for a trial period of up to one year, subject to:
 - (a) Cross-service commitment to resourcing the multi-user licence facility in order to source funding for this authority (resources include a financial commitment to purchasing the licence and personnel to manage the system);
 - (b) The development of an implementation plan, detailing timescales for launch, how the service will be used, managed and promoted;
 - (c) A monitoring and evaluation plan, to enable this Council to assess the impact of purchasing the system in terms of external funding sourced as well as benefits and resource implications for individual service areas.

Reasons for Recommendation

4. That a phased approach be adopted in order to effectively assess the benefits to the Council of purchasing GRANTfinder. Options exist to:
 - (a) Extend the contract at a later stage or at the expiration of this first trial licence;
 - (b) To join a consortium of local Councils in year 2, should such an arrangement be beneficial to this Council;
 - (c) To purchase GRANTnet at a later stage instead of, or in addition to, GRANTfinder, in order to bolster the support service this Council provide to local community groups.

Background

5. GRANTfinder is a database of EU and UK funding sources carrying over 6,000 funding programmes. These can be searched using a number of criteria such as geographical location, applicant type, project value and purpose of funding.

Licencees can have multi-user licences, which provide multiple points of access to the system at one time.

6. Purchasing a GRANTfinder licence would enable all corporate service areas to search for funding for the Council itself, as well as supporting community groups to source funding for local projects.
7. GRANTnet (a different service provided by the same company) enables community groups to search for their own funding via a link that can be posted on the licensee's website. However, this software limits searches to funds suitable for community groups and SME's. It does not allow a local authority to source funding for its own use.
8. GRANTfinder licences are currently held by a number of Cambridgeshire authorities, including Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council and Hunts DC (who also provide the additional GRANTnet function through their website). These councils are looking to form a consortium and have approached GRANTfinder with a view to securing a reduced subscription fee for multiple licences. Fenland DC would like to be part of the consortium but East Cambs DC has declined to be involved.
9. This Council does not currently have a licence for GRANTfinder but provides some core grant funding to Cambridgeshire Council for Voluntary Service (CCVS) which contributes, amongst other things, to the provision a fund-seeking service to community groups. To date, organisations approaching SCDC for funding have been given advice and guidance from officers where appropriate, and signposted to CCVS and other agencies for further grant funding information. However, it is felt that the Council could benefit from a more substantial funding support service to communities and groups, and that this would complement our approach to 'Localism'.
10. GRANTfinder is available to the consortium of local councils at a discounted rate as follows:
 - (a) based on a consortium with membership as outlined in above, a rate of £9,000.00 + VAT¹ per organisation for a three-year GRANTfinder licence (GRANTnet would cost the same);
 - (b) each licence would provide multi-user access (in the past, up to 120 users per licence);
 - (c) the consortium approach provides a discount of £1,665.00 per licence off the current three-year GRANTfinder rate card or £2,850.00 over three years based on the cost of purchasing those licences annually.

Considerations

11. As part of the implementation of such a service, evaluation and monitoring would need to be carried out to assess the impact on the Council and on local community groups of providing it.
12. The discounted rate outlined in 6. c) above is offered to the consortium until end July 2012, at which point a new rate would need to be negotiated.
13. Anecdotal evidence suggests that:

¹ All prices quoted are ex-VAT.

- (a) Officers at Cambridgeshire County Council make good use of regular alerts that notify them when new and relevant streams of funding are launched;
 - (b) Hunts DC has purchased the combined GRANTfinder and GRANTnet package to enable organisations to undertake their own searches in their own time. As part of the consortium, this Council could purchase both systems for three years for a discounted rate of £13,650.00.
14. Acting independently from the consortium, or outside the timescales of the quote received, would mean fees as follows:
- (a) An annual rate of £3,950.00 for either a GRANTfinder or GRANTnet licence;
 - (b) A three-year rate of £10,665.00 for either a GRANTfinder or GRANTnet licence;
 - (c) An annual rate of £5,925.00 for both GRANTfinder and GRANTnet licences;
 - (d) A three-year rate of £15,997.00 for both GRANTfinder and GRANTnet licences².

Options

To agree to taking to the necessary steps to:

- 15. Purchase GRANTfinder only over three years as part of the consortium, benefitting from the £1,665.00 discount.
- 16. Purchase both GRANTfinder and GRANTnet for either one or three years, or as part of the consortium at a discounted three-year rate of £13,650.00.
- 17. Purchase GRANTfinder and/or GRANTnet independently from the consortium for one year at the rate card price of £3,950.00 with the option of opting into the consortium for years 2 & 3 (subject to the availability of the discounted rates at that time).
- 18. Continue providing support to organisations in the current way without purchasing GRANTfinder or GRANTnet.

Implications

19.	Financial	Prices quoted for the licences are subject to change if the timescales outlined are not met or if the rate card for GRANTfinder services changes. The cost of purchasing any such licences (as outlined above) will need to be met upfront.
	Legal	In subscribing to GRANTfinder there will be contractual obligations, which will be determined once the decision to purchase has been made. Any breach of contract (for example by users of the system) could feasibly cause legal problems for the Council that are as yet unidentifiable.
	Staffing	Consideration should be given to how the GRANTfinder programme will be managed and how its impact will be measured. Officers will need to be able to build this function into their role and view it as complementary to the support function already provided.
	Risk Management	Proposals discussed with John Garnham, no risks identified.

² Prices quoted are based on the 2012-13 rate card.

Equality and Diversity	None – all eligible community groups and organisations would be able to receive support from the Council. Similarly, all service areas would be able to undertake searches for funding appropriate to their workstreams.
Equality Impact Assessment completed	No. If required, the purchase of GRANTfinder can be built into the EIA being undertaken relating to the grants review.
Climate Change	None.

Consultations

20. A number of teams that manage grants within the Planning and New Communities service area have been consulted and have agreed that GRANTfinder would be a useful tool in providing funding advice and guidance to the public. It is also felt that it would be useful to have the opportunity to see what external funds might be available to this Council as a whole.

Consultation with Children and Young People

Not applicable.

Effect on Strategic Aims

21. The purchase GRANTfinder and / or GRANTnet would greatly enhance this Council's ability to support to local communities who might otherwise not have access to funding information, thereby supporting the corporate aims of engaging with communities, sustaining opportunities for enterprise and innovation, and continuing to offer outstanding quality of life for our residents.
22. The same corporate aims could be supported and enhanced if external funding could be sourced to enable delivery (by, for example, housing; planning; new communities; environmental health).

Conclusions / Summary

23. The purchase of GRANTfinder and / or GRANTnet would be of benefit to the Council and its many and diverse communities in the ways outlined above. The fit with Localism is clear as is the potential benefit to the Council of having access to additional funds.

Background Papers: Not applicable.

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