

Main Grants 2017-18 report

Name of organisation	Noah's Ark Children's Venture at Macaroni Woods (NACV)
Date of meeting	Thursday 15 th September @ 1.30 – 4pm
Names and positions of attendees	Richard Wilkinson, Centre Manager Dennis Hunter, Trustee Winston Castello, Community Enterprise Manager Pippa Taylor, Grants & Resources Officer

Group Name:	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Total funding received 2015-16	£32,000	N/A	£10,666	£10,666	£10,668
Total funding to be received 2016-17	£42,666.67	£10,668	£10,668	£10,668	£10,662.67
Outcomes					
<p>1. More families with disabled children and young carer benefit from respite breaks which refresh them, help equip them for their daily responsibilities and enable them to strengthen their local support networks.</p> <p>2. Increased usage of NACV by groups in Lewisham including adults with complex social needs to enable them carry out residential activities that will enhance and develop their programmes of work aimed at improving physical and emotional wellbeing by building resilience, developing independent living skills, promoting healthy lifestyles, and engaging with others to resolve issues & differences.</p> <p>3. Families with disabled children and young carers feel less isolated/socially excluded as a result of their stay at NACV.</p> <p>4. NACV user groups make good use of expertise and skills of NACV staff and other user groups and specialist contributors e.g. the provision of Woodland Learning – a programme which NACV raise the funds to pay the costs of provision for our users and help with fundraising to run trips.</p> <p>Final recommendation report for funding: Communities that Care – £32k - all funding provided under this area in categories 2d Provision for Vulnerable Adults & 2e Supporting families with disabled children and young carers. Also applied under category 1a Borough Wide theme, but not enough evidence of how fund would be allocated for impact so additional £4k not granted.</p>					

Outputs:	2015-16 Target	2015-16 Q2	2015-16 Q3	2015-16 Q4	2015-16 Total	% Achieved	2016-17 Target	2016-17 Q1	2016-17 Q2	% Achieved
1. Ongoing provision of short stay breaks (3-7 days) with high quality activities & support: - 2015/16 - 30 groups	30	13	8	8	29	96%				
1 cont. 2015/16 – 500 users	500	192	119	140	451	90.2%				
1 cont. 2016/17 – 35 groups							35	16		114%
1 cont. 2016/17 – 620 users							620	170		106%
1 cont. New Lewisham user groups	2	2			2	100%	4			100%
1 cont. Returning Lewisham user groups	20	13	10	4	27	135%	30	9		112%
2. Regular updates through NACV's network communications & networking opportunities – social media / website / fairs / meetings): - Facebook followers (likes)	300	400	500	650	650	216%	650	750		115%
2 cont. Newsletter Distribution (mailed to 400 per quarter)	1200	400	400	450	1250	104%	1600	740		185%
2 cont. Meetings / Networking event	5	2	2	5	9	180%	15	8		133%
3. Provide a purpose built facility – Castree House – for those with disabilities, with wheelchair access to the surrounding woodland	4	2	2		4	100%	4	2		100%
4. Offer NACV 17 seat minibus at fuel cost only to Lewisham groups to provide affordable transport, to and from Lewisham, and for offsite visits during stays.	20	10	6	4	20	100%	15	6		120%
5. Provide a heated classroom teaching area in new activities building, complete with kitchen and toilets – used for workshops, forums & training	This space is available for all groups visiting the site to use and is regularly utilised by the visiting Lewisham groups					Delivered	As per 2015-16 comment			Delivered
6. Continue to raise additional funds from external sources, for both capital and revenue needs: - Capital (higher 2015-16 for biomass & bathroom projects / only biomass in 2016-17) - Revenue	40	30C	20C	10C	60	150%	15			100%
	10	5R	5R		10	100%	25	18		180%

1. Remove funding from under-performing groups/those performing least well

Have you achieved at least 90% of the agreed reporting outputs and outcomes in all quarters since the start of the programme?

It is envisaged that Noah's Ark Children's Venture (NACV) will fulfil all outputs for 2016-17.

2015/16 Outputs:

The number of groups visiting was down by 1 this year. This has affected the percentage of users shown in the table above. As user group sizes vary considerably, NACV & Lewisham Officers are confident that this target will be compensated for in 2016/17.

2016/17 Outputs:

Q1 targets meet or exceed the targets given. The New User Groups target (3rd point under 1 cont.) has no figure against it as it falls under quarter 2, 3 & 4 when NACV have their main influx of visitors.

Have you achieved all of the wider outcomes outlined in the initial grant application?

There has been an increase in groups who work with adults with complex needs using the centre and the take up of the woodland learning sessions with NACV staff on site.

User group quotes include:

"I would like to say a massive thank you to you and your team, for a life changing experience we have been able to offer the young people at The REAP youth group. Many of these young people have never visited a countryside, been away from home or had the opportunity to learn independent living skills such as effective communication, dealing with self-issues and General life skills...They've enjoyed the freedom, environment and the tranquillity of being back to nature...Macaroni Woods is a life experience that the young people will never forget."

REAP, Lewisham

"This has been a needed break. Having so many other dads and children has meant I have had not to watch my kids all the time. Financially, I could not have afforded to take them away for a weekend this year." Rushey Green Superdads

"Although designed to elevate across the highlighted issues, what transpired far exceeded the facilitators and carers expectations and as such will be a major element of future interactions and training of similar groups. This extremely cost effective project not only impacted significantly on the carers but also, as defined in the carers would support their cared for in their treatment journey, family and community re-integration." PSG & DAAT Carers

If no to either of the above:

- what are the mitigating factors?
- what plans are in place for improving performance?
- what progress has been made against actions agreed with your Development Officer?

NACV and their Council Officer have worked closely together to clarify data that had been missing due to communication breakdown in the recent past.

NACV has found that the annual Rocket Science report, required by the Council from all Main Grants funded groups, has been a useful tool for their internal evaluation and has been utilised by both the staff team and the Board of Trustees.

What local support/evidence of need can you identify for the work you are undertaking?

There is high demand for the provision at NACV from both Lewisham and non-Lewisham groups.

The ethos of the organisation is centred on providing the facilities to Lewisham groups, which take priority over other bookings. The summer period is used solely by Lewisham groups, as is the provision of the mini bus.

NACV market via the Local Assemblies and their AGM which is held in Lewisham each year; as word of mouth is their main route to users. They have also expanded the use of their Facebook page and Newsletter. NACV are actively pursuing new avenues of marketing including requesting access from the Council to procurement sites and lists of users, such as PRIs & youth services, who they could send targeted marketing information to.

Some of the groups using the site in the last year (2015/16):

Deptford Green School – ESOL class / St Andrew's Centre (used both Bazley & Castree house) / Dumps AP / Rushey Green Dads / Lewisham NEET / Drumbeat School / Vietnamese Womens Group / Evelyn Parents Forum / Deptford Autism Group / Lewisham Raise Your Voice / Lewisham DFCG / Lewisham GEMS/ Deptford & Home Park APGs / Fairford Youth Club / Lewisham PSG / XLP Lewisham / Watergate School

2. Negotiate reductions and seek alternative funding streams

Are there any proposals that you can put forward that will deliver significant saving against current expenditure? This can include capital investment to change your delivery/business model.

Having Council funding gives NACV a platform to approach other funders and they believe it is a key factor to their success in securing those other funds. In the last application round NACV reduced their funding request by 25% but not the usage by Lewisham groups which remains at 70% in Bazley House. NACV continue to consider the Council funding as a support to their core costs.

A business plan and fundraising strategy are currently being produced, with a focus on Board development and assisting the organisation to become less reliant on local authority funding support. The plan is being drawn up in collaboration with a consultant because in the next 18 months the core staff team will be retiring and the organisation needed to think strategically about the next phase of NACV's life. The plan will be completed by Christmas 2016.

There has been considerable success with private hirers and the centre is receiving strong reviews on AirBnB where they currently advertise. NACV staff monitor this level of use carefully so that Lewisham groups use of the centre are not affected and that taxes are not levied on the income. NACV are keen to find more private hirers that also fit with the ethos of the centre, for example users needing rest-bite care, but they need time to research this market.

What alternative funding streams are you already pursuing?

Last year, NACV introduced a minimal charge to Lewisham groups as suggested to them by Council Officers. So far this has not proven to be a hindrance to Lewisham groups booking to come to the centre. The Board are currently investigating a "hardship fund" to designate in case Lewisham groups find it difficult to manage the cost in the future; though there is no evidence at this time that this will be needed.

There is a strong working knowledge of the funding landscape, NACV staff are members of the Charity Fundraisers, and submit consistently successful bids to a number of trusts and foundations. NACV staff have created a table showing increased usage of the centre over the past 20 years, which they have readily shared with the Council and shows a strong funding mix.

Courses and events that managers have attended over the past year:

- Leathersellers Charity Luncheon - July 2016.
- Thanksgiving in Gloucester Cathedral as a result of receiving Ecclesiastical (All Churches Trust) funding for Castree bathroom this year.
- The Clothworkers Charity Luncheon – June 2016.
- Deptford Challenge Trust annual presentation – attended by 3 Board members and son of managers – July 2016.

Attended 3 Local Assembly meetings in last 12 months to promote the centre, with 2 more planned but that were rearranged because of purdah so NACV were unable to attend.

There has been a commitment from NACV to send Trustees to up to 10 assembly meetings in the next 6 months.

Additional opportunities for income are sometimes not possible because of the safeguarding of time at the site for Lewisham groups, especially in the summer months. For example, a few years ago the Prince's Trust used the site and were so impressed that they wanted to book a four week residency during the summer but NACV had to turn this down because it was a known, prime time for the use of the site by Lewisham groups.

Are there any other funding streams that you can identify that the council can support you to access?

The following possibilities are being explored:

- Funding bodies that Officers can put NACV in touch with.
- Philanthropic giving – NACV staff are attending a Big Gift Fundraising course run by the FSI in November 2016. NACV staff have also secured a number of visits to the site from highly networked individuals with whom they hope to strike up a relationship.
- Biomass Heating – NACV plan to make the centre more environmentally friendly, which will also reduce energy bills when implemented. The installation of this system will cost £70k but save approx. £10k pa and a considerable number of funding applications have been submitted for this project already.
- Crowdfunding – NACV have already run 2 successful crowdfunding bike rides for the centre. Officers suggested that once Crowdfunder is set up, that NACV link with site. NACV staff were very happy to do this.
- Procurement – NACV asked if the Council could sign post them to any procurement opportunities.

3. Work with groups to consider mergers or asset sharing

Are there any organisations doing similar work to you in the borough who you may consider sharing resources or merging with? Who have you considered/approached?

Due to the unique nature of the organisation there is no obvious asset sharing, apart from what they do already, which is share the entire site with Lewisham groups at a greatly subsidised rate and offer the mini-bus to get to and from NACV.

Are there other groups in the local area that you could share resources with even if they are delivering a different type of service? Again, who have you considered/approached?

Possible collaboration and marketing opportunities were discussed:

- Event – showcase @ AGM, invite Lewisham groups.
- Reinstate library advertising.
- Link with Teatro Vivo's work in the local assemblies.
- Re-advertise in Grapevine and Lewisham Life.
- Open days at site – use minibus to bring Council employees, funders and local groups to promote the site.
- National networking events that focus on provision and ethos.
- Regular (monthly) London/Lewisham event to promote themselves.

NACV are aware that they need to be realistic and fill the space but are in a “Catch 22”. They want to continue to commit to taking Lewisham groups and hold fast to the ethos of the types of group they take, but if they are in a position where they will need more/ alternative income then this means marketing to a wider audience and collaborating with organisations that may not share their ethos.

What support might you need to move these suggestions forward?

Officers considered the following that may support NACV in this process:

- Research into client bases that link with their ethos and who can afford to use the site (non-Lewisham groups).
- Improving in-house staff skills in the use of social media, once the research above is complete and NACV are clear in the clients they wish to attract.
- Utilising the final building on site – currently not renovated to make the balance of the site work, but are there possibilities here?

4. Pro-rata reductions across all groups

What would a 25% cut in your grants look like in service delivery terms? What are the wider impacts?

NACV have modelled a cut across their budget but are left with a fundamental question - how do they keep running, and keep the ethos of the work and people they want to provide the site to, if they embrace a commercial arm.

Have you modelled this cut and developed an action plan for its implementation?

At present NACV see themselves as a Lewisham project. If funding were to be cut substantially or completely, they would no longer look on themselves as this which is a fundamental shift.

Therefore the impact of loss or significant reduction in the funding would mean the de-prioritising of the Lewisham group bookings.

NACV are aware that they are dealing with a two sided cut – to themselves where they would need to increase charges but also to the groups who are losing funding themselves. If the cost were to increase for Lewisham groups at the same rate of other groups, it would be a 225% increase in the charge.

Transport – they would look to protect the minibus provision which they raise considerable funds to support already. Some groups use Lewisham Community Transport who do charge.

In the new year, one member of the team will be reducing their hours, creating an approximate £6k saving.

Conclusion

Any other comments / areas discussed

Semi-retirement of founders – there is some nervousness about this situation which should take place in the next 18 months. The Trustees are keen for both founder members to remain on some form of contract to assist with fundraising and financial management expertise. This would mean that the founding staff would remain on site but the house they currently use will be given to whoever comes in to manage the site full time.

At present, NACV feel that the Council's support is critical through this transition period and plan to designate transition reserve of approximately £20k in their annual budget.

Conclusion and recommendation

It seems to still stand that NACV is “a unique and valuable resource to the borough” as outlined in the recommendation report for the continuation of their main grant in 2015. They have strong data outputs which show the high percentage targets being met year on year.

NACV are aware that they may need to change how they target clients with the funding changes as so far they have been dedicated to providing a service to Lewisham groups, which is often at a financial disadvantage to NACV.

Therefore, it is recommended that Noah's Ark receive a pro-rata cut.

Equalities groups disproportionately impacted by recommendations

Ethnicity:		Pregnancy / Maternity:	
Gender:		Marriage & Civil Partnerships:	
Age:	X	Sexual orientation:	
Disability:	X	Gender reassignment:	
Religion / Belief:			

Commentary and potential mitigations:

NACV's ethos focuses on providing a safe, secure, rural setting for some of the most disadvantaged groups in Lewisham where they can develop resilience, confidence and interpersonal skills by allowing them to experience 'community' life in the countryside in purpose designed facilities.