

Kent County Council

Straits Committee Small Project Initiative

Explanatory note and Indicative Guidance

The Straits Committee authorities have agreed to set up a small project support initiative for local organisations to work with neighbouring Straits areas on projects that promote good-neighbourly relations and deliver tangible benefits.

The following document is intended to outline thinking on how this scheme will work. It provides:

- **An overview of the key principles of the scheme design:** This sets out how we think a programme supported by the different Straits Committee local authorities can work effectively.
- **Indicative draft guidance:** This provides a model for a guidance note that would be provided to Kent bidders to allow them to prepare applications. The model is based on the guidance provided to bidders under the KCC Combined Members Grant Scheme.
- **A table of process steps:** based on the indicative guidance, this sets out the likely key process steps for a project application from idea to delivery and closure.

The scheme design will be further developed in close liaison with KCC services and Straits partners during the Autumn of 2020. The aim is to launch in early 2021.

Design principles

There will be a single bidding and evaluation process: The Straits Committee partners will develop a single bidding and joint evaluation process. This will be designed between participating authorities during Autumn 2020 to be ready for launching in 2021.

Decisions on which projects to support will be taken by the elected members: The elected members on the Straits Committee's Executive Committee meetings will decide on which funding applications to support. There will be a series of rolling submission deadlines set before each Straits Executive Committee meeting to allow for a technical evaluation of each project.

Each Straits authority will finance the participation of successful bidders from their area: Grant administration will not be centralised. Instead, the general principle is that project partners in successful bids will sign grant agreements with the authority in whose territory they are located. Bidders will respect the funding rules as set out by the authority that funds them.

There are many precedents of funding programmes where two or more partners work together on a project while each receiving funding from bodies located in their own countries. This has also been tried in cross-border programmes in Kent before (for example, under the cross-border Interreg 3a programme). It is also a system used by Innovate UK in their well-regarded Eurostars programme.

KCC intends to use a precedented model for its own financial and administrative processes:

In Kent, we intend to model the small project initiative on the well-established processes used in the monitoring and administration of the Combined Members' Grant Scheme.

Grant administration processes will vary between authorities. There will, however, be a common thread of payments being linked to delivery of agreed activities and outputs: There will be differences in grant administration rules between Straits Members. However, we will seek, as far as possible, to have a consistent approach. This will be developed further in the Autumn of 2020.

Partners will apply different approaches to spending controls based on their internal requirements. KCC, for example, will incorporate spending checks and make payment on actual spend. Some Continental partners, on the other hand, intend to award flat-rate grants. However, the common thread is the delivery of activities and outputs will be a key factor in the payment of the balance of grants by all participating authorities.

Pre-financing: Straits partners in the Belgium and the Netherlands wish to make a partial advance payment and then pay the balance of the grant to their partners at the end of the project once proof of outputs has been provided and signed off. We propose that KCC take a similar approach.

The Scheme will open in 2021: Continental financial years run per calendar year. The earliest the scheme can open, therefore, would be January 2021. Our aim is to be ready in Kent to meet the same timeline.

Process steps

The table on the following page lists out the different process steps for a project application from idea to final payment. The example given is based on a project involving two organisations, one from Kent and one from another Straits area.

	Lead project promoter (Country A)	Project partner (Country B)	Straits officer network (All authorities)	Straits Committee elected members (All authorities)	Funding authority (Country A)	Funding authority (Country B)
Advertise the grant and issue application forms*			X			
Project idea: Promoter contacts local Straits officer for eligibility check, strategic fit etc	X		(X)		X	
Straits officers record idea into project pipeline			(X)		X	
Partner search / Matching service if required	X		X			
Bidders develop & submit application before deadline	X	X			X	X
Straits officers circulate applications to an evaluation group of Straits Committee officers			X		X	
Officers evaluate and submit recommendation to the Straits "Executive Committee" on project applications			X			
The "Executive Committee" approves or rejects recommendations of which projects to fund				X		
Inform all applicants of funding decision in writing			X		X	X
Issue grant award letter, acceptance form (or contract) and supporting documentation to winning applicants					X	X
Receive back acceptance form (or signed contract)	X	X			X	X
Carry out internal administration processes to be able to provide grant to successful applicants					KCC	
Issue grant instalment					X	X
Monitor grant for compliance with terms and expected outcomes					X	X
Manage agreed end of grant life process (in Kent Monitoring; expenditure check; payment of final instalment)					X	X

Kent County Council

Straits Committee Small Project Initiative

Indicative Guidelines for Applicants

The following document, for information only, is to provide an example of guidance that would be provided to organisations in Kent that wish to apply for a Straits Committee Small Project Initiative grant. Final guidance will be produced once the scheme design is finalised with KCC services and KCC's Straits Committee partners.

1. What is the Straits Committee?

The Straits Committee brings together Belgian, British, Dutch and French local authorities bordering the Dover Strait and the Channel- North Sea area. The aim is to initiate a new, flexible and efficient way of working together to pursue lasting good neighbourly relations and create opportunities for mutual benefit for businesses, residents, local stakeholders and communities in the Straits area.

The member authorities of the Straits Committee are:

- UK: Kent County Council
- Netherlands: The Province of Zeeland
- Belgium: The Provinces of West Flanders and East Flanders
- France: The Départements of Nord and of Pas-de-Calais.

Each member authority has designated a cabinet member to represent their authority on the Straits "Executive Committee". This Committee considers what the member authorities can do within their respective responsibilities to address common challenges and opportunities where they feel there may be tangible benefit from working together. The Committee meets up to four times a year.

2. What is the Straits Committee small project initiative and what will it support?

The Straits Committee authorities wish to give a boost to local-to-local cross-Channel cooperation by setting up a joint initiative to support small cross-border projects.

This programme will support organisations based in Kent to work with partners in one or more areas covered by the Straits Committee. The programme will welcome applications on any theme where a tangible benefit from working together can be demonstrated. A wide variety of projects can be supported.

We expect successful applications to be able to show the following:

- Your project should involve cross-border working and support the Straits Committee's aim of promoting and strengthening good-neighbourly relations between the participating areas.
- Your project should have clear objectives and deliverables that result in, or take a step towards, something of practical benefit for local residents, businesses or communities in the Straits area.

Projects could, for example be about delivering something new or innovative; capturing legacy benefits from existing joint working by extending to other groups of people; or transferring a good practice from one country to another.

3. How does the Straits Committee small project initiative scheme work in practice?

- **You must have a partner in another country in the Straits Committee:** Projects must involve at least two eligible applicant organisations from participating areas in the Straits Committee area. The organisations must be located in different countries.
- **You and your partners decide if you need to apply funding from a single Straits authority or combined funding from two or more authorities:** the general principle is that organisations will apply for funding from the local authority where they are based. For example, if organisations in Kent, West Flanders and Pas-de-Calais submit a project together and they each wish to ask for funding, they each ask for funding for their participation from their local authority area
- However, in certain instances, there may be good reasons that only one organisation requests funding. (For example, a Kent-based organisation leads a project application and the project only requests funding from KCC only.)
- **You have to write a joint application with your partner(s):** Applicant organisations write a single application together. This includes a joint budget, showing clearly how much funding is requested by each partner and from which funding body.
- **Successful applicants will sign a grant agreement with their respective funding authority and respect the rules of that Authority:** Each partner must respect the funding and

monitoring rules of the authority that is funding their part of the project. Important: Please note that funding & monitoring rules may differ between Straits authorities.

4. I have a good idea but I don't have a partner. How can the Straits Committee help me?

Each member authority has designated officers to work on the Straits Committee. This network of officers will act as the first point of contact for organisations in their own area. The network will help with:

- Matching / Partner searches: gathering ideas for projects and identifying organisations with similar interests in other areas through the network
- Facilitation and support: attending virtual / face-to-face meetings between potential partners; providing language support
- Advice: on project ideas; funding available from the Straits Committee; how to apply etc.

5. Important points to consider before you apply

- Any grant you receive must be specifically for the project described in your application. It cannot be used for any other purpose. Any changes to the objective(s) or purpose(s) you have stated in your application must first be discussed and agreed with the Kent County Council officer dealing with your application.
- If you are applying to another part of KCC for a grant for the same project, or part of it, you must inform us on your application form.
- When you apply, it is important that you describe the benefit to Kent from your participation in this project.
- If your project requires any permission (for example, planning permission) you should obtain this before you apply for a grant.
- If for any reason, your project is unable to go ahead within a 12-month period of receiving the grant, the Kent County Council officer dealing with your project must be informed as KCC reserves the right to reclaim and re-distribute the funding.
- Any items purchased or gained through the Straits Committee Small Project Initiative Scheme must remain within the organisation stated and for the purpose stated, for a minimum of two years. If these items are not being used, or if they are transferred to another party without the prior consent from KCC, the items themselves or the value of the grant may be reclaimed by KCC.
- We are unable to support a grant for items which will be purchased with the intention of selling on to raise funds including the purchase of raffle prizes.
- We will only consider your application if you have provided answers to all of the questions on the application form and have given us enough information to understand your project fully.
- By applying for a grant, you agree to support the grant monitoring process and provide information and evidence as and when required.
- You will also give Kent County Council full acknowledgement in any and all publicity and media communication.
- All Kent County Council (KCC) Community Grants are one-off funding. There is no ongoing support implied or made through awarding any organisation with a grant. **KCC will not be**

liable for any ongoing costs that the project may incur for revenue and/or capital expenditure.

6. Who can apply?

You can apply for a Straits Committee small project initiative grant if you are based in Kent, and a:

- Voluntary or Community Organisation or Registered Charity
- Church or Faith group (your application must clearly illustrate that the project will bring benefit to the wider community)
- School or Academy (provided any grant awarded supports wider community benefit)
- Parish or District Council
- Not for Profit Company (e.g. community interest companies)
- KCC service (provided any grant awarded is to support additional activities from the core offer)

All applications must come from an organisation or a group that is properly constituted and has a current bank account with at least two independent signatories.

Exceptions:

- Individuals (or where the benefit of the grant will only benefit an individual)
- Party political groups or political activities. This includes any Parish Council (or group of), District Councils, or the Kent County Council where any grant would challenge or oppose the democratic functions of that Local Government. Or where such grants would be deemed to risk the reputational standing of Kent County Council.
- Church or Faith groups who are using the grant to promote religious activity.
- Schools and Academies cannot apply for funds towards capital building costs; teaching materials; or curriculum delivery (although they may apply for funding towards projects that support wider community benefit). **However, the production or procurement of dedicated materials for a cross-border educational project would be eligible**
- Businesses/companies which do not reinvest surpluses for community benefit.
- Voluntary and Community Organisations who have a turnover of over £100K if seeking replacement funding for a project previously funded by KCC.

7. How much can I apply for?

You can apply for grants within a range of £500-£5,000 towards some or all of your project costs.

Your application will be evaluated for value-for-money and impact. We therefore welcome applications for grants where additional funding and resources are being provided from other sources or from the organisation putting forward the application. You may be able to demonstrate greater value for money and impact if you can show that your application contributes to a wider project and that the grant requested is for part and not all of a project's total costs.

8. What cannot be funded?

- Any costs incurred putting together your application
- Day to day running costs – e.g. utility bills, rent, salaries (except for pilot projects lasting no longer than six months for any one organisation in any financial year)
- Contingency costs
- Fundraising activities for your organisations or for others
- Items that mainly benefit a small number of individuals e.g. training/trips, unless you can show there is a benefit from training that will go beyond those who are trained.
- Loans
- Membership or registration costs
- Political or religious activities
- Activities which would risk the reputational standing of Kent County Council
- Purchase of alcohol
- VAT that you can recover
- Used vehicles or the maintenance of used vehicles.

9. How to apply?

The Straits Committee will decide quarterly on which funding applications to support. Deadlines for submitting applications will be set four to six weeks before each Straits Executive Committee meeting. We will confirm all submission deadlines in due course.

You submit your completed application form to [insert where to send applications to here]

You **must** keep a copy of your application for your records as you may need to refer back to it when completing the monitoring paperwork that will be sent to you in the next financial year.

10. What happens after I apply?

When we receive your application, we will do the following:

1. Your application will be acknowledged within 10 working days of receipt. If you do not receive an acknowledgement within this timescale, please notify the Straits Committee officer.
2. The Straits Executive Committee, which consists of Cabinet members from each participating authority, will discuss all project applications received and recommend which applications to support. Decisions are taken by consensus so, if your project is recommended for support, you will have the approval of the KCC Cabinet member responsible for the Straits Committee.
3. Once your grant has been recommended and approved, you will be sent a formal offer letter by email. **Please read the letter carefully - It sets out the terms of conditions of the grant and what you will need to do to help us to monitor the progress of your project.**
4. **The letter will include a link to an online acceptance form that you must complete and**

return. It will also ask you to give details of the bank account into which we should pay the grant. By completing the acceptance form, you are agreeing to abide by the terms and conditions and the monitoring requirements of the Straits Committee Small Project Initiative scheme. These include safeguarding policies where you work with children and or vulnerable adults and equality and diversity. For advice:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-safeguarding-policy

www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/corporate-policies/equality-and-diversity

5. For grants that combine funding from two or more authorities, both authorities must receive signed letters of agreement before a project may start. Failure to return any grant letter will invalidate the whole project.
6. KCC will pay the grant directly to your organisation's bank account by BACS transfer only. We aim to pay **X%** of the grant to your account no more than 28 days after we receive the completed acceptance form from you. The balance will be paid on receipt of the final report

Please note. The grant administrative process can take up to twelve weeks from the start of your application until payment is received into your organisation's bank account.

11. Monitoring

KCC will monitor the use of all grants awarded and, by accepting the grant, you are agreeing to participate fully in the monitoring process.

You will be required to complete a monitoring form and provide evidence of expenditure. In some cases (for example for larger awards) you project may also be visited by a senior Officer to see how the money has been used.

12. Publicity

It is a requirement of the Straits Committee Small Project Initiative that grant recipients give recognition in any publicity to Kent County Council and the Straits Committee.

At the end of each financial year, all Straits Committee Small Project Initiative grants awarded will be published on the KCC website, detailing the organisation, the project and the amount funded.

13. For more help

We hope these guidelines will help you complete the application form for a Straits Committee small project initiative grant; **please read them carefully** before you start to complete the form. If you have any questions about this information or the application process, please contact:

Myriam Caron, European Partnerships Manager Email: myriam.caron@kent.gov.uk Tel:	Dafydd Pugh, Project Manager Email: Dafydd.pugh@kent.gov.uk Tel: +44(0)3000 417157
---	--

Good luck with your application!

Draft