

Tobacco & Inequalities project

Managing Small Grant Work

Briefing paper two

conclusions

funding

evaluation



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ASH Scotland
Action on Smoking & Health Scotland

Managing Small Grant Work

The ASH Scotland *Tobacco and Inequalities Project* ran for three years from 1999 to 2002, and built upon the work of the *Women, Low Income and Smoking Project*, which is described in the publication *Breaking Down the Barriers*.

The aims of the *Tobacco and Inequalities Project* were:

- To support the development of community based services to encourage the reduction of smoking amongst people living on low income.
- To develop evaluation approaches relevant to those undertaking smoking based work at community level.
- To support national, regional and local initiatives developed in response to White Paper on Tobacco, *Smoking Kills* and the White Paper on Public Health, *Towards a Healthier Scotland*.

A final project report is available, the *Tobacco and Inequalities Project Evaluation Report*, which describes the activities of six initiatives which received small grant funding of up to £10,000 to undertake community based tobacco work. It presents the process and findings of the evaluation of their work, and outlines the development and dissemination of *The Evaluation Journey: An Evaluation Resource Pack for Community Groups*.

The purpose of this series of briefing papers is to provide further information on specific aspects of the project that will assist practitioners and policy-makers interested in developing, funding and evaluating community based tobacco work. The briefing papers draw upon the experiences and work of the initiatives which were based in a range of settings within urban, rural, and island locations.

Facilitators and participants, and an independent evaluator recorded the work of the initiatives. In this briefing paper we present evidence from each of these sources about the ways in which small grant work can be effectively managed.

Managing Small Grant Work

The small grant funding provided by the *Tobacco and Inequalities Project* aimed to encourage innovation, experimentation and sustainability in health and tobacco work; and invited applications from community groups and organisations working at local level to:

- Improve and develop the way existing services are offered.
- Develop new ways of working and offer new services to individuals and groups.

Six initiatives were identified as having the potential to broaden learning on community based tobacco control.

Recording and Evaluating the Work of the Six Initiatives

The recording and evaluation of the work of the initiatives was considered crucial to the on-going development of this project as well as providing learning to share with others. The methods used to record work varied, and included keeping minutes of meetings; the collection of information about numbers of participants, content of sessions and nature of outputs; photographs; and videos. Evaluation data, i.e. that which enabled the initiatives to make a critical assessment of their work, included a combination of interviews, focus groups, diaries, photographs and questionnaires.

An independent researcher was employed by ASH Scotland to undertake an overall evaluation of the work of the six initiatives. The evaluator collected information using methods that included interviews and focus groups, within an action research approach. Thus, continuous feedback, about the information that was being collected, and the issues which were emerging, was provided to the initiatives. For further detail of the approach and methods of evaluation see Chapter 4 of the final report (ASH Scotland, 2003).

Seeking Applications

The application and selection processes are reported and considered in depth in Chapter 5 of the final report (ASH Scotland, 2003). In summary, across Scotland, four thousand fliers were distributed and eleven briefing and surgery sessions were held, and feedback on these activities was sought. It was clear that in some organisations it had taken time for information about the project to reach the appropriate people. This limited the time available to develop ideas and form partnerships with other agencies.

The briefing and surgery sessions were set up to enable the project manager to give potential applicants general information about the project, and one-to-one advice about making their applications. For some who attended, it became clear that the project was not suitable for them (or vice versa) and thus they did not invest time in making an application. The project manager was active in pursuing contact with potential applicants. Those that needed specific information and/or advice to complete their applications felt that this personal contact enabled them to check the form and process with the manager both then and later.



Two-Stage Application Process

It was decided to develop a two-stage application process, in order that applicants could invest their time and energy appropriately. Great care was taken to avoid jargon in both the application guidelines and the application forms, and to make both them, and the selection process, easy to follow.

Applicants were invited to provide a brief outline of their proposed initiative in the Stage One application form; four pages in total. The guidelines explained that twelve applicants would be short-listed and invited to submit a more detailed application in Stage Two.

On receipt of the completed application form, the project manager contacted each applicant to clarify any outstanding questions and identify further information which could support the application. All this information was forwarded, with the application form, to the multi-agency group that made the funding decisions. This included two facilitators from initiatives which had been funded under the *Women, Low Income and Smoking Project*. At each stage, a series of questions was used to assess applications. These questions related to feasibility, desirability, and sustainability, as well as how partnership working would be undertaken and encouraged.

In the event, the selection panel short-listed eleven applications from the thirty that were submitted. All applicants received feedback from the selection panel through the project manager.

In the Stage Two form, applicants were required to provide more detailed information about their proposed initiative, and were able to access further support and advice from the project manager. The selection panel selected six initiatives for funding. These six initiatives came from a variety of settings and localities and involved a mix of organisations and methods of work (ASH Scotland, 2003).

The two-stage application process proved to have significant advantages. It reduced concerns for small community groups around spending large amounts of time on an application when they were unsure as to whether they might be successful. It also allowed contacts made at the briefing stage to be developed and built upon. Some applicants made good use of the procedure by seeking feedback after being short-listed in order to improve their final applications. For the selection panel, the major advantage was that it was possible to look in detail at the relatively small number of shortlisted proposals.

The application process worked to strict deadlines. Both the timing, in relation to the patterns of community development work, and the short time scales caused some difficulties. Conversely, some smaller community based organisations and partnerships, which had already identified an opportunity for development work from the short application and selection periods, suggested that groups could be recruited before enthusiasm dissipated or key part-time workers were lost to alternative employment.

The Initiatives

A comprehensive overview of the structure and contents of the initiatives is provided in Chapter 3 of the final report (ASH Scotland, 2003). The six initiatives funded by through the *Tobacco and Inequalities Project* developed a wide range of work, and used a range of approaches and methods. They were able to access 80% of their small grant at the outset of their funded work, and the final 20% on submission of a report detailing and assessing these activities.

Facilitators and participants started with agendas, negotiated locally, that emphasised health and lifestyle issues. The overall approach provided flexibility to meet the changing needs of participants as they expressed interest in tobacco and smoking. Funders must appreciate the time it takes to develop small grant funded work in and with communities and that the aims of a project may not, in the first instance, appear to be addressed.

On-going Support and Communication

Prior to the release of funds, each of the funded initiatives was invited to an Information Day in Edinburgh. This provided the initiatives with an opportunity to meet members of the project advisory group and representatives of other initiatives, as well as to share their initial work plans. The event was also used to present the first draft of the evaluation pack *The Evaluation Journey: An Evaluation Resource Pack for Community Groups* (McKie et al., 2002; ASH Scotland Briefing Paper 3, 2003) as well as to outline the roles of members of the advisory group and ASH Scotland staff.

Some initiatives expressed concerns that:

- The emphasis upon innovation in small grant funding led some organisations to feel pressured to keep inventing new ideas



- The limited resources available in small grant work can constrain the range and number of opportunities that are pursued.

During the period of funding the project manager was in regular contact with the initiatives by telephone and email, and she also made visits to the initiatives. The evaluator was also in regular contact, and the support provided by each was recognised and appreciated by all the initiatives. Towards the end of the funding period for the small grant work, a second Information Day was held in Glasgow to share experiences and learning. This event proved very useful in identifying issues and learning of importance relating to tobacco control work in the community, small grant work, and evaluation (ASH Scotland, 2003). During June 2002 a series of briefing sessions took place in Western Isles, Orkney, Elgin, Ayr, Glasgow and Edinburgh to disseminate the work and key findings of the initiatives.

Long-term Capacity Building

Capacity is taken to mean the potential that has been developed in the form, for example, of increased self-confidence and the widened experience of individuals, or the partnerships and networks that have been developed. Facilitators involved participants in the planning and evaluation of activities and were flexible about the programmes of work groups wished to follow. As a result:

- Most participants developed self-confidence and knowledge of health and tobacco issues and policies (Department of Health, 1998; Scottish Office, 1999).
- A range of resources was developed. All initiatives produced final reports and in addition outputs included a drama script and production, video and a report on tobacco policy.
- There was increased confidence amongst facilitators in considering different approaches to tobacco work, such as considering wider health issues, confidence and self-esteem, and the background to the tobacco industry.
- Management skills were enhanced and co-ordinators and facilitators gained experience as they developed partnerships in their communities.
- Although it is difficult to make a formal assessment of this type of learning, all concerned reported it positively as strong rapport was developed between workers. These relationships are an important element of capacity building even when funding periods are limited: there is a ripple effect since the people involved are likely to carry on working locally, and informal contact is relatively easy to maintain in small communities.

Evidence from the evaluation on programme development and impact are presented and considered in Chapter 7 of the final report (ASH Scotland, 2003).

Sustainability and small grant funded work

Sustainability describes situations in which an initiative, or one of its elements, is able to continue in some form after the end of the funding period. The sustainability of small grant community development work can be difficult. It takes time and resources to get work going and often communities are ready to take ownership and further develop work just as funding runs out. It can be hard to sustain community development activities through a succession of short-term small grants. With some of these issues in mind, including the need to sustain participation in the longer-term, a number of ideas were tried:

- On occasions the inclusion of activities or topics that might not seem that relevant to the aims of the initiative but which were popular with local people.
- Work with other groups on topics of mutual interest.
- The involvement of participants in recording and evaluation activities and debates on further work, whether on tobacco control or other topics.

Through the evaluation data collected, and the Information Days, the potential for sustainability was explored. Where there was an organisation or group that offered local support for community work and evaluation (for example, local authorities, health promotion departments, social inclusion partnerships) there was strong chance of some activities continuing. A number of ideas and activities were subsequently developed through other local projects.

Further evidence from the overall evaluation on capacity building, partnership working and sustainability can be found in Chapter 8 of the final report (ASH Scotland, 2003).

References

- Department of Health (1998) *Smoking Kills: Tobacco White Paper*. London: The Stationery Office.
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Conclusions: Practice and Policy Implications

Recent health strategies have emphasised the value of work in and with communities to tackle inequalities in health. With a growing number of small grant projects aiming to identify innovative and sustainable community health work, there is a need to reflect on the findings of projects that have been evaluated.

There is a substantial body of evidence to show that community development work is resource intensive. Funders should consider this when determining the amount of funding they wish to allocate, and should not encourage applicants to be over-ambitious in their aims. The application and selection process should promote an appropriate use of time, skills and resources to undertake preparatory work and to complete forms. Membership of selection panels should include people with experience of community based small grant work, specialist knowledge of the project topic and relevant approaches to and methods for evaluation. The selection process outlined on previous pages addressed most of these concerns.

On-going support can also enhance the skills and knowledge in initiatives and support the development of the partnerships that are crucial for community based work. Communication methods need to vary to suit the needs of initiatives: some community groups may not have ready access to e-mail. Regular events can offer peer support to initiatives, and allow for the sharing and debating of learning.

Within some disadvantaged communities the proliferation of small grant funded initiatives can lead to concerns about the temporary employment of facilitators and the fragility of the longer term potential of the work. As a result, people may wonder whether it is worth developing their skills, since the opportunity to deploy them may be short-lived. Nevertheless, when small grant work offers support and links with funders and other organisations, there can be increases in knowledge of the specific topic, its policy context and successful practice, as well as increased confidence levels and opportunities for learning from planning and evaluation.

Key Points

A creative approach to the management of small grant work on community based tobacco control and smoking cessation offers opportunities to develop a range of activities and enhance skills and levels of confidence among facilitators and communities. People who had been involved, directly or indirectly, in the work of the six initiatives in the *Tobacco and Inequalities Project* described a range of experiences and issues. Key points to share with community groups, practitioners and policy makers are:

- Early contact between the project manager and the staff involved in the funded work during the application process makes a positive contribution to the subsequent management and support of the small grant funded initiatives.
- A two-stage application process enables the support provided by the funder for the completion of applications to be intensified when numbers have been reduced through the shortlisting process, and enables applicants to invest appropriate resources in the development of their proposal.
- Encouraging groups funded within a given programme to network, whether formally or informally, provides valuable opportunities to share experiences and learning, and to help develop programmes that meet the needs of all involved.
- The capacity that can be built in communities and individuals has potential to enable future work in the same field and also on other topics.
- Sustainability is most likely to be achieved where organisations undertaking tobacco work have been able to develop partnerships with other local agencies.



ASH Scotland Briefing Papers Series from
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ASH Scotland Briefing Paper 1 Tobacco Work in the Community
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Contact Details:

ASH Scotland

8 Frederick Street

Edinburgh EH2 2HB

Telephone: 0131-225-4725

Fax: 0131-220-6604

Website: www.ashscotland.org.uk

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