

## Forest of Dean District Council REPF Grants - Online Information Session Notes

28<sup>th</sup> February 2024 1pm

Q: Trying to get quotes in quickly is difficult because the trades are busy. If we could just get 2 quotes in the time, and the third one has yet to get back, would this penalise us?

A: If there is a general consensus from the group today that the time scales are really too short, I am happy to take it back and see if we can extend it by a couple of weeks to make it a 6-week window which would mean a little bit more time but also work for the time limits for the council too

Q: Getting an energy audit in that timescale is also quite tight

A: You can ask GRCC to arrange a 10 min call with the Climate Team at the Council which may negate the need to go through an energy audit as they might be able to give you advice on what might be the best or top target you should be looking at for your community space. For example, there is no point in replacing a boiler if you have no insulation. They can chat through things that might not come straight to mind but would help reduce your running costs.

They will also be able to give you advice on what your energy audit should look like which will hopefully prevent spending hundreds of pounds on an audit when it might not be necessary.

Please do take advantage of this

Q: Question regarding one of the application questions – where you have an 8-year or more Lease in place, a copy of this and written confirmation from your landowner / landlord showing permission for the project to go ahead.

The land for the community centre is held by the parish council but its on a long lease (57 years) to the community centre and due to end in 7 years. Would a letter from the parish council saying the community centre has autonomy over the building be sufficient?

A: The aim of that question is to ensure that any funded activity that takes place doesn't end after the period of the lease has expired as someone else might take on the lease and reverse what was funded. Evidence such as a letter will be sufficient that will be submitted with your application. If the lease is guaranteed to be renewed, this would be great to be included in the letter.

Q: We've been trying to get 3 quotes for the replacement windows but have only had about 1 and a half return to us. It's seeming impossible to get the quotes for something big like this in the time limit. I can show you that we have tried to contact people and that they haven't come back but we haven't got the quote from them.

A: If you can't send three quotes, in your application form, you can say you have tried on these occasions to get quotes but we've had no responses or we've had a part quote back as long as you show you've tried and the reasons you haven't heard and it's not your fault, that is acceptable.

Q: The guidance says an EPC or energy audit would be useful but it will cost money that has no other use than this application. Could you recap if a call with the climate team would circumvent this and how quickly can we speak to them?

A: The reason the inclusion of an energy audit came about was because in the last round, some applicants were suggesting improvements but they hadn't said if they had explored other energy efficiency measures so this would help applicants consider all options. However, we don't want you going for an expensive audit if it can be solved with a call with the climate team. The climate change team sit within the District Council and one of the members of that team will be on the panel assessing the grants. They will help you decide if you need an energy audit and what it should look

like. It's not a detailed conversation, just to discuss some ideas but it's suggested you do this in the first instance.

To organise a call with the climate team, please contact [louisef@grcc.org.uk](mailto:louisef@grcc.org.uk)

Q: Our quotes are almost like for like but it's quote challenging to get them identical. How much leeway is there in this?

A: There is some leeway, in it. You don't have to accept the cheapest quote if you don't like it – you may choose a different one because the quality is better but you just need to detail this in your application

Q: Would we be penalised for not answering a question that doesn't apply? For example, we are looking at changing the oil boiler for an air source heat pump for an air source heat pump and on p9 Q3 of the application in the outcomes section, it asks how would the project will increase the number of users.

A: No, you wouldn't be penalised. The panel do look at the whole application so they will understand. It's advisable not to leave it blank however so you could add in that it will reduce your running costs and give estimate by how much, which means you can stop your prices increasing to the people hiring the space. You can also offer them a warmer and more energy efficient space. You can use this as a selling point to get more people hiring your hall too.

Q: In section G, it refers to a fabric first approach. Does this only apply to new builds?

A: The wording of this is referring to your insulation and lighting and looking at what you have in place first. For example, you wouldn't replace the boiler if all the heat it's generating is being lost through the single glazed windows. By replacing the windows with double glazed this would be a fabric first approach.

Q: We are applying for an air source heat pump, and considered solar panels too but would we be penalised if we didn't apply for solar panels this time too?

A: No

Within the remits that the Council have for central government, the time scale can be extended by just over 2 weeks to the 15<sup>th</sup> April. The new dates will be on both websites with when the panel meeting is on too.

This funding has to be for standalone capital projects.

Q: If the closing date was pushed back the some of the quotes might not be valid. I'm sure we can get round it on a practical level but it might be something to bear in mind.

A: I hope they won't have gone up too much if you are getting requotes

Q: We VAT registered so when we are applying, do we put it in excluding VAT

A: If you can reclaim your VAT, it cannot be included in the application form. If you can't reclaim your VAT, then in can be included.

Q: Is disabled toilets and access, upgrading the lighting to LED – would this be acceptable?

A: Yes, both these things are eligible. You would just have to justify that the community space is open to wider community use.

Response: Previously it hasn't been but the community are in need of more space to hire out so we want to make these improvements to enable wider use.

If you have spoken to the climate change team, please do note it in section G and also what their recommendation was. This will help the panel know that you have thoroughly considered the energy solution chosen.

You may have considered decarbonisation at meetings you've had for the community space. If it is minuted, we would love to see a copy of this just to prove you've had these discussions. If you have a plan on a piece of paper, this is also fine, please submit this. Anything that proves you've considered how you want your building to operate, please attach it to the application.

A good way to write the application is to assume the panel know nothing, the more information you can give the better.