

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
LAW AND CULTURE

GRANT AID FOR VILLAGE HALL/COMMUNITY CENTRE BUILDING
PROJECTS

CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES

The County Council has a small annual budget for grants towards village hall and community centre building projects.

WHAT KIND OF PROJECTS ARE ELIGIBLE?

1. What kind of hall?

Village halls and community centres i.e. buildings in urban and rural areas which are available for use by a wide range of local people and organisations. The managing body of the building should be a properly constituted voluntary organisation representative of users or a town/parish council in a community of under 10,000 population.

Buildings managed by one particular sectional organisation will not normally be eligible. If such a building serves a wider role in the community and no publicly-owned facility is available, an application can be considered on its merits.

In the case of any building not held on trust for public use, the managing body must undertake to make the building available for general public use for at least 21 years.

2. What kind of building work?

Grants will be considered for:

- acquisition of land or buildings
- adaptation and improvement of existing buildings and their accessibility
- erection of new buildings
- professional fees, including assistance with initial design and costing work
- other associated expenses, e.g. fencing, car park
- major replacement items such as a new floor, new roof, new heating system

Grants will not be considered for:

- routine repairs or maintenance work
- associated outdoor facilities, such as play areas, sports facilities and associated changing rooms, which are not related to the indoor use of the building



3. Other criteria

- i. There should be sufficient security of tenure of the building – a freehold or long lease
- ii. Planning permission and building regulations approval should have been obtained. [Applicants will be responsible for arranging for compliance with all planning and building control regulations. Any approval by the County Council of grant aid for building or related work should not be taken to imply that any relevant permissions have been or will be granted.]
- iii. The property should not be subject to a mortgage or a loan secured on the property
- iv. Grant aid is not available for any expenditure on the project which has already been committed or incurred (except, if necessary, on professional fees). (Exceptionally in urgent cases "without prejudice permission" to incur specific liabilities may be sought from the Council.)
- v. Applicants will have to show that:
 - there is a need for the project which could not be met by any other means
 - there is financial need for a grant
 - other sources of finance are available to supplement the grant requested from the County Council to meet the total cost of the project. It will normally be expected that grant aid support will be sought from the Town/Parish Council and District Council
 - the project is technically feasible and reasonably priced. At least 3 estimates or a costing by a quantity surveyor should have been obtained
 - the design and construction meet health and safety and other relevant regulations
 - all building work whether or not it requires building control approval should comply with Part M (2004) of the Building Regs. 2000
 - the property is adequately insured

WHAT LEVEL OF GRANT AID IS AVAILABLE?

The County Council seeks to make available grants of up to 35% of total project costs, normally up to a maximum cash limit of £10,000. For projects to provide access/facilities for people with disabilities, the Council seeks to make available grants of up to 50% of total project costs (normally subject to the same cash limit). For schemes affected by the maximum cash limit there is the possibility of applying for grant aid phased over more than one year.

HOW WILL APPLICATIONS BE ASSESSED?

All applications should indicate how projects will result in accommodation which is more effective and better able to meet local needs. The County Council will give priority to the following:

- Projects where there is no existing publicly-owned provision and no other suitable alternative facilities or where existing provision is seriously inadequate
- Work on existing accommodation which if not carried out would seriously threaten the future of the building or seriously restrict its use
- Work required for health and safety reasons
- Work to provide access/facilities for people with disabilities and to ensure, as a minimum, compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act

WITHIN WHAT PERIOD MUST GRANTS BE CLAIMED?

It is expected that building work should commence within 12 months from the date on which grant aid is agreed. Work should be completed within 2 years from that date.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE RECLAIM OF VAT

If suitable arrangements are made locally with the advice of ORCC, the Council is willing to receive a grant application from a town/parish council in order to assist an independent village hall/community centre committee, so that the council can use the grant to order and pay for part of the building work on the instructions of the hall/centre committee and reclaim the VAT for the benefit of the project. An ORCC information paper on this subject is obtainable from ORCC who can advise further on procedures.

TIMETABLE AND PROCEDURE FOR APPLICATIONS

Applications for grant should be made through the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council. The ORCC has been asked by the County Council to liaise with applicants and make sure their application forms are fully completed. **Applications should be submitted to the ORCC as soon as possible but no later than 9 November 2012 for the financial year 2012/13.** The Council is likely to consider applications in January 2013.

All enquiries about the grant aid scheme should be made to the ORCC not to the County Council.

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