

Procedure

Guidance Notes for Residents Completing Small Scheme Improvement Grant Application Forms

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Important notice:
Printed paper copies of this procedure are **uncontrolled**.
The current version of this procedure is available on the SHG Intranet site

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1		First Issue	May 1995	MC	RHSC
2	Jan 2005	New document format and numbering (formerly HP048)	Jan 2005		RDW
3	October 2009	New template format and update to relevant dates	Oct 2009	MC	WMP

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1. Introduction

Please read these notes carefully before filling in the application form. They will not only help you when completing the form, but will also provide you with important background information about Western Challenge's Tenant Led Improvement Grant scheme.

2. General information about the grants

These grants for up to £2,500 were first introduced in spring 1995 as part of Western Challenge's commitment to tenant participation. They can provide a practical and affordable means of giving you as tenants more control over your local environment and amenities. They will provide you with an opportunity to get communal improvements on your scheme/estate that fall outside day-to-day maintenance, without it meaning big service charge increases.

By offering these grants, some of the surpluses generated from your rents each year will be put back into your own rented schemes for small but important improvements which you, the local residents want and can control yourselves. This is in addition to Western Challenge continuing to build affordable new homes and improve existing ones. Groups of residents who live on both rented and shared-ownership schemes/estates can apply. The grants must be used for **improvements** (not repairs) **of communal benefit** to residents on the scheme/estate. Works can fall into two categories:-

a) Small scheme improvements (eg. creating a play area, moving or improving fencing or lighting to increase safety, improvements to enable wheelchair access where no other source of funding is available, "sitting out" areas, drying areas, improved parking provision, landscaping or storage facilities).

b) Purchase of equipment for communal facilities (eg. residents' association office equipment or a communal tool library).

The main factors which will be taken into account by Western Challenge when deciding whether or not to approve bids are:-

- i) Size, tenure and regional location of scheme/estate.
- ii) Level of support demonstrated from local households.
- iii) Specific advantages, if any, to target groups with particular needs (see

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- iv) notes on Q10 for more on this).
- v) Any previous bids (successful or otherwise) from the same scheme/estate.
- vi) Consultation carried out within the scheme/estate by person(s) making the bid.
- vii) Any opposition to the proposals from residents within the scheme/estate.
- viii) Any revenue implications and the thought given to how they will be met.
- ix) Proposals for control and monitoring of expenditure and progress of works (with or without Western Challenge's help).
- x) Management and maintenance implications.
- x) Comparison with other bids submitted and total demand.

Note: at least one quotation must be attached for all bids.

The procedure is as follows:-

1. All bids must be submitted on the attached form along with a plan of the scheme/estate showing the position of the proposed improvements, if applicable.
2. You will be contacted if any clarification is required about your bid.
3. Expenditure of approved grants will be monitored and any issues or problems relating to particular grants dealt with, in consultation with yourselves.
4. Any grants not taken up within six months will be withdrawn so the money can be used elsewhere.

3. Notes for completing the application form

If no notes are given for a particular question it is because it was felt the question itself was clear enough. However, if you would like further clarification on any one of the questions please do not hesitate to contact your local Housing Officer.

<u>Question</u>	<u>Notes</u>
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1a	If you are applying for a grant to benefit the whole scheme/estate, and all residents have been consulted, write the scheme name here.
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If you are applying for a grant to benefit residents on a particular road, block etc. within a larger scheme/estate, and have only consulted residents on that particular part of the scheme/estate, only include details of the block, road properties concerned.

- 1c Include the total number of properties within the scheme/estate, block or road specified in 1a.

2. **Purpose**

Be as specific as possible; eg. if your bid is for a sitting out area, what type of seating are you proposing? It is a patio area to be installed, if it does not already exist? Will the seating be fixed down to the ground? Is any planting proposed?

If you want early guidance on whether your bid is likely to meet the set criteria, feel free to discuss your ideas with your local Housing Officer. This will not guarantee success because the budget for grants is limited, so other bids received will also affect decisions. However, it may help you ensure you are on the right track at the start. Western Challenge will also be happy to provide advice on the practicalities (safety, design, maintenance, permissions needed etc) relating to your proposal, if you want it. Contact your local Maintenance Officer for this type of advice in the first instance.

Where relevant you should attach a layout plan that shows positions of existing buildings, entrance(s) to the scheme/estate and all changes proposed, eg. if a footpath is to be re-routed, show the positions of both the existing and proposed new footpaths. Also show any other existing facilities which may be affected by your proposals.

3. Be as accurate as possible about the grant required. Even if it is for less than £1,000, talk to your Housing and/or Maintenance Officer or to suppliers/contractors to get an idea of likely works/purchases, which should be of a standard acceptable to Western Challenge.
4. 'Position' means your role in representing others with regard to the grant bid, eg. you might be Chairperson or Secretary of the local Residents Association, or the person elected as spokesperson for the block with regard to the bid.
5. Write here which residents you are requesting the grant for; eg. members of the local Residents Association or people who live in properties surrounding a certain car park or all households within a

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specific block or scheme/estate. If there is a recognised Residents Association on your scheme/estate please try to submit the bid through them. **If you are not doing so, please say why.**

6. **Consultation**

Before submitting your bid, do some door knocking or leafleting, or hold a meeting to find out what others think. Where a local Residents Association exists, speak to the Chairperson for his/her views at an early stage. Keep a note of those who support the bid, any suggestions for improving it and any objections. You will then have the information you need for this question and Q10. Say how many households are **known** to support your bid.

7. **Quotes**

Bids will not be considered unless at least one quote is attached to your application form. The quote may be for labour, materials or a combination of both. If more than one supplier is to be involved, you should provide a quote from each relevant supplier. If your bid is successful, you will be asked for two more quotes before works can begin. The requirement for three quotes is the same as the rule for Western Challenge's own workforce before expenditure of £1,000 or more can be authorised.

10. **Particular Needs**

Western Challenge is keen to support bids that have taken into consideration peoples particular needs; eg. have you made sure you have talked to people with children, elderly people, people with disabilities, people with learning difficulties or their representatives, people from different ethnic backgrounds, lone parents, single people - in fact the whole cross section of people living on your scheme/estate? All their views are important. You may find people have needs, concerns and suggestions you had not considered. There may be conflicting views and priorities between residents with different needs. If this is the case, you may need to discuss how to prioritise differing needs - can there be a compromise? Or could you bid for two smaller grants so there is something for everyone? By all means phone for advice if you need it.

11. **Revenue Costs**

Revenue costs are the ongoing costs associated with a particular improvement; eg. rental, maintenance, and running costs such as

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electricity bills etc. In other words anything that is not just a one-off cost for the initial supply of something.

- 12,13 You will need to discuss any ongoing revenue costs with the other people on
&14 your scheme/estate. You will be expected to show how such costs would be met. If you are proposing meeting them through a service charge increase (e.g. for additional communal lighting or maintenance of a new landscaped area), Western Challenge will have to consult individual residents before approving any bid. This is to meet our legal obligations on consultation. However, an early indication from you of known views would be helpful. Where service charge increases are likely, a grant can only be approved if the majority of tenants affected agree with the proposals for increasing service charges. If you could show instead that you can meet all maintenance and running costs in some other way well into the foreseeable future, this could be an alternative to service charge increases. Revenue costs must be properly thought through at the start.

Otherwise the improvements made could quickly decline, causing greater problems than there may have been in the first place. Neither Western Challenge nor residents would benefit if that were to happen.

15. **Other Funding Sources**

Funding sources you might consider are the local authority or local parish council. E.g. many local authorities provide grants for disabled adaptations both within individuals own homes (not just council homes) and to help with communal improvements like ramped access, covered parking or widening communal entrance doors to help wheelchair users. Local authorities may also offer special grants for things like energy saving measures, environmental improvements, community initiatives etc. which you should also check out. Check whether they can fund the work you have in mind, either directly or in conjunction with Western Challenge. If they say no, tell us. If they are not sure, check what other information they would need from you before they could give a definite decision. Then either provide them with the information or let us know. If need be Western Challenge can also contact the local authority once your application form has been received. The Tenants' Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) on 0161-745-7903 (Head Office) may be able to advise you on other funding sources such as Housing Corporation or DoE grants.

The improvement you have in mind may cost more than £2,500. In this case you should contact other possible funding sources, letting them

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know that you are bidding for £2,500 from Western Challenge and asking them if they would fund the difference should your bid to Western Challenge be successful. Bids of over £2,500 will not be approved unless additional funding sources have been identified beforehand. An alternative approach would be to bid for larger projects in stages, as long as works done at the earlier stages are worthwhile and sustainable in their own right even if bids at subsequent stages were not successful.

16.

Monitoring

Monitoring expenditure, standards and progress means keeping control of both works and money spent to ensure the work gets done (or that purchases are made) on time, within budget and to an acceptable standard. It need not be complicated but someone does need to take responsibility to make sure things get done.

Monitoring Standards and Progress

If your project is fairly straightforward, e.g. planting of shrubs, or purchase of equipment that does not require associated building works - you will probably be able to carry out monitoring with little or no help from Western Challenge. If you are planning something bigger, e.g. installation of a walled drying area or disable access works, you may need some advice or help. If you are paying contractors to do work in stages, you should find out when they expect to complete each stage and monitor progress accordingly, taking up any delays with them. If you need help with this side of things please ask your Maintenance Officer who will be happy to advise on known contractors who can carry out your type of work to a high standard, on any health and safety requirements and on technical issues. The overall control would remain with you, but Western Challenge would want to make sure works would not give rise to future problems, e.g. claims for compensation if a wall or fence were not installed correctly and subsequently collapsed causing injury. You may of course prefer to seek independent technical advice. That is acceptable, as long as you can demonstrate that your project is properly thought out in terms of safety, maintenance etc. and does not conflict with Western Challenge's own maintenance approach. Whatever way you choose to monitor works, Western Challenge's local Maintenance Officer will wish to inspect all works carried out before the contractor is paid (either by Western Challenge or by you) to ensure that all work is of the required standard. You should therefore identify someone who can detect problems, talk to us about difficulties or unknowns, consider the next steps if things go wrong and get things back on track. It can be one or more people who take on these duties,

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with or without Western Challenge's help. It all depends on what seems most appropriate for your situation locally. And don't forget, we are here to help if needed.

Monitoring Expenditure

Monitoring expenditure can be as simple as checking invoices from suppliers, arranging for Western Challenge's Maintenance Officer to check work carried out and sending the invoice(s) to Western Challenge for payment from the grant sum agreed. Or, if for example you are a recognised Residents Association with a bank account you can ask for the grant up front, in which case you will need to explain how you will keep a check of expenditure and keep Western Challenge informed. Completed works must be inspected by Western Challenge before you pay contractors. The more suppliers involved, the more organised your accounting will need to be. There may be someone on your scheme/estate with book keeping abilities that could take on this role with other people's agreement.

19.

Timing of Works

Speak to suppliers and contractors to find out delivery dates, length of time works could take and when they could start work. Also, if any planning permission, services, installations etc. are needed, check out the affect these would have on timing. Again, do not hesitate to speak to us for advice.

Western Challenge can offer advice to help you complete the application form on any of the above points. Please contact your Housing or Community Development Manager.

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4. Appendix A Application Form

TENANT LED IMPROVEMENT GRANTS APPLICATION FORM FOR 2009/2010

PLEASE READ THE ATTACHED GUIDANCE NOTES BEFORE COMPLETING THIS FORM.

1. a) Scheme/Estate Name /Address

.....
.....

b) Type of Scheme/Estate (tick one box only)

Rented General Needs [], Rented Elderly [], Mixed General Needs
Rented/Shared Ownership [], Rented General Needs/Elderly Mixed [], Shared
Ownership [], Leasehold Elderly [], Other [] (please specify)

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.....

c) Number of households within area covered by the bid

.....

2. Summary of what grant is to be used for:

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Please attach a simple layout plan of scheme/estate showing locations of works to be done, facilities to be introduced etc. (E.g. If you wish to create a sitting out area, where will it be?)

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3. Total grant required ,..... (the maximum grant is ,2,500)

If the grant is for more than one thing, please state below the cost of each element.

Purpose..... Cost ,.....

Purpose..... Cost ,.....

Purpose..... Cost ,.....

Purpose..... Cost ,.....

4. Name/Position/Address/Tel No. of person submitted bid

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5. Bid is being made on behalf of (see guidance notes)

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6. Number of households on your scheme/estate known to support this bid? (see guidance notes)

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7. Please attach at least one quote for works/purchases required.

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8. Which residents did you consult about your proposals for an improvement grant, and how did you do this?

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9. Please give details of any opposition you encountered in relation to your bid during consultation and any changes made to your bid as a result

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10. Please state below if and how a grant for this purpose would benefit people with particular needs on your scheme/estate, e.g. people with disabilities or other particular needs, people from minority ethnic groups, lone parents etc. (see guidance notes)

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.....

11. If your bid is successful, would the improvements made have any ongoing revenue cost implications (e.g. running costs, maintenance costs etc.)

YES / NO

12. If you answered 'Yes' to Q11, how do you propose that these costs will be covered (grants **cannot** cover such ongoing costs)

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.....

13. Have you consulted other residents about ongoing revenue costs?

YES / NO

14. If you are proposing that ongoing revenue costs be funded through increased service charges, are other residents on the scheme/estate agreeable to such an increase?

YES / NO / DON'T KNOW*

*If you answered 'Don't know' you should now ask your Housing Officer to write to all residents for their views.

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15a. Are you aware of any other funding sources for these improvements/purchases?

YES / NO

15b. If you answered 'Yes' to 15a, have you applied for funding from another source?

YES / NO

If 'Yes' who?

16. Who will monitor expenditure and progress of works, timing, quality and so on if your bid is successful and how?

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.....

17. Have you submitted a bid for a Tenant Led Improvement Grant before?

YES / NO

18. If 'Yes' when and was the bid successful **YES/NO**. Was it for the same improvement **YES/NO**. If 'No' please state briefly what previous bid was for

.....
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19. If your bid is successful, how long will it take to complete works and/or purchase equipment (as applicable) from the time your grant is approved?

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.....
20. Is there anything else you wish to add to support your bid?

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Signed.....

Name.....

On behalf of.....

Date.....

On completion, please return this form to:

**Mike Collis
Community Development Manager
Western Challenge Housing association
Spinnaker House
Grange Road
Christchurch
BH23 4GE**

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