

What did groups awarded Capacity Building Funding in 2015 do with their funding?



Background

Community Food and Health (Scotland) launched the Capacity Building Fund in June 2015. The Fund was aimed at groups running community food and health activities in/with low-income groups that wanted to develop or strengthen their organisation. They could apply for up to £500 to run or take part in learning or training to acquire the skills and expertise they needed to do this. The learning or training could be for staff, volunteers or management committee or board members.

Groups were able to apply throughout the financial year: there was no closing date. It was intended to close once all the funding available had been awarded (which it wasn't).

Seventeen groups were awarded funding, with another 13 applications rejected because they did not meet the funding criteria. Most of the unsuccessful applicants were contacted to discuss their applications and were given suggestions of activities that CFHS would consider funding, if they wished to reapply. Some did, but still didn't meet the funding criteria. Most did not reapply.

Several of the successful applicants did not meet the funding criteria initially but, after negotiation, submitted amended applications which were funded.

What did the funded groups intend to use the funding for?

The funding was to be used for a diverse range of activities. Some groups were funded for more than one activity.

Five groups were funded for staff or volunteers to gain qualifications so that they could become in-house trainers and deliver accredited courses (REHIS elementary food hygiene or elementary food and health courses, and CIEH food safety course). Four groups were funded to take part in other 'train the trainer' sessions around the topics including basic nutrition, cookery skills, and customer service. Another group was funded for a staff member to obtain a qualification that would enable them to support its volunteers, but not deliver accredited training.

Five groups were funded to run REHIS elementary cooking skills or elementary food and health courses. Four of these had a member of staff with the qualifications and skills to deliver courses, but were seeking financial support to become a REHIS-registered centre and / or buy course resources. The fifth used its funding to meet the costs of using trainers from other organisations.

Two groups running cafés used their funding to provide workshops for their volunteers around providing healthier food options for their customers.

One group used its funding for 'good practice' visits for its volunteers. The aims of the visits were two-fold; to provide new experiences for the volunteers, most of whom had learning disabilities, and bring new ideas generated from the visits back to the group.



What did the groups tell us about how they used the funding?

The groups were asked to complete an online survey, to find out the following:

- If they had used the funding as expected.
- What difference it had made to staff, volunteers or the people using their services.
- What difference it had made to their organisations.
- How they knew this.
- If they were planning to do anything else as a result of being awarded the funding.

Eleven groups completed the survey. Of the remainder, four indicated that they were unable to use their funding by end March as intended and were therefore excluded from the evaluation. Two groups did not respond.

Did they use the funding as expected?

All 11 groups did.

What difference did it make to staff, volunteers or the people using their services?

All of the groups reported that the funding had resulted in positive differences for staff, volunteers or the communities they work with. Several stated their staff or volunteers were more knowledgeable and confident about delivering healthy eating activities.

‘We now have confident individuals delivering a variety of healthy eating initiatives.’

‘One volunteer is now doing a stall that they would not do in the past.’

‘Staff feel they can do their jobs better because they have a greater understanding of how they assist young people ...’

‘Our staff and volunteers ... more confident about using healthy ingredients that they would not normally use.’

Gaining accredited qualifications

Three groups highlighted the importance of being able to offer accredited qualifications to staff, volunteers or the wider community.

Benefits to own health

‘... some (training participants) reported it has made them think about their own health and food choices ...’

What difference did it make to their organisations?

Ability to deliver training

All eleven groups received funding for training to upskill volunteers or staff. Some stated that they would not have been able to provide this training, or provide it to as many staff or volunteers, without the funding.

‘... (the course) ... would have been totally inaccessible due to cost ...’

‘... we were unable to deliver the course. We had a backlog of volunteers, staff, etc who couldn’t do their work fully in our community.’

Some reported that this increased knowledge had resulted in positive changes to practice

‘A youth group (that took part in training) has now transitioned from selling sweets and soft drinks to having a healthy tuck shop.’

‘Our café is providing a healthier menu.’

‘We now supply fresh fruit to residents at all times as snacks.’

Developing activities

Two groups reported that they were able to develop their food and health activities.

‘Introduced literacy and numeracy activities into our cooking and healthy eating sessions.’

‘... (the volunteers) ... have more confidence to carry out additional work which helps us as an organisation....we are able to develop our services to new customers as our volunteers are able to carry out this work for us.’

Increasing understand what groups do

One group stated that the training undertaken by a member of staff had helped its volunteers understand the work that they did.

How do they know this?

The groups used a range of methods. Most gathered informal feedback, but some used more formal evaluation techniques, such as evidence gathering workbooks, participants recording reflections at the end of sessions, and questionnaires or evaluation feedback charts. One took pictures of the food prepared in cooking sessions and used these to promote future sessions to other service users. One group stated that a participant had written an article about the training for their in-house newsletter.

Were they planning to do anything else as a result of being awarded the funding?

All of the groups said they were. Most were intending to continue to run the training that they were funded for, or were delivering as a result of receiving the funding. Some stated they were planning to develop other community food and health activities, including a community café, and homework classes including cookery for parents and children. One group stated that being able to deliver food and nutrition training to staff and volunteers highlighted the value of these courses for their residents as well, and that they intended to continue to provide courses where they can.

What did we learn from running this funding programme, and what will we do differently in 2016?

Significant number of ineligible applications

As well as applications for food hygiene training (see below), there were several applications for activities that were ineligible.

Actions for 2016

- Emphasise the eligibility criteria in the fund's guidance notes
- In publicity about the fund, emphasise that CFHS may discuss amending applications for resubmission with groups that submit ineligible applications.

Demand for elementary food hygiene training

The guidance notes stated elementary/basic food hygiene courses would not be funded. However, most of the unsuccessful applicants applied to run REHIS elementary food hygiene training. Most of these stated that they were unable to access courses in their area, or lacked the resources to pay for courses.

Actions for 2016

- The fund's guidance notes will emphasise more strongly that elementary/basic food hygiene courses will not be funded.
- National organisations with a role in promoting elementary/basic food hygiene training will be made aware of the number of applications for funding for these courses.

Narrow focus of applications

Despite the fund's guidance notes including examples of a wide range of activities that would be considered for funding, all of the successful applicants sought funding for training for staff or volunteers. Only one applicant applied for part-funding for another activity.

Actions for 2016

- The fund's guidance notes will include examples of the range of activities funded in 2015, as well as examples of other types of activities that will be considered for funding.

Slow rate of applications

Interest in the fund was slow to develop, despite it being publicised widely.

Actions for 2016

- Groups that expressed an interest in the fund, and unsuccessful applicants in 2015 will be advised when the fund reopens for applications.
- The fund will continue to be widely publicised. New avenues for promoting the fund will be explored.