

ARIA Fund LAG (A-LAG) MEETING

7th February 2024 13:30 – 16:30

MS Teams

Attendees

Non- Public Sector	Attended	Public Sector	Attended
Jean Brown (JB)	X	Eddie Bulik (EB)	X
Kevin Brown (KB)	X	Brian Connolly (BrC)	X
Barbara Conner (BC)	X	Melissa McCulloch (MM)	X
Chris Campbell (CC)	X	Colin McKee (CM)	X
Mhairi Dawson (MD)	X	Rosemary Ramsay (RR)	
Claire Donaldson (CD)			
Ally Henry (AH)	X		
Jim Watson (JW)	X		
		Emma Bernard (EB)	
Total No. LAG Members	13	Sarah Smillie (SS)	
Minimum Quorum (50%)	6	Jamie Tait (JT)	

LAG Staff	Attended
Angela Lamont (AL)	X
Jennifer Macdonald (JM)	X

Apologies

Noted from CD and RR.

Acronyms

CIA	ARIA Communities into Action Fund
CAM	ARIA Community Asset Maintenance Fund
CLLD	Community Led Local Development
CWB	Community Wealth Building
EAC	East Ayrshire Council
EOI	Expression of Interest
HSPC	Health and Social Care Partnership
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAC	North Ayrshire Council
NFUS	National Farmers' Union of Scotland
QS	Quantity Surveyor
SAC	South Ayrshire Council
SG	Scottish Government
SPF	Shared Prosperity Fund
SRUC	Scotland's Rural College
TBC	To be completed/confirmed

Introduction	Actions
<p>Welcome JW welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>Quorum The meeting was quorate with 1 Members, > than the minimum 50% required (6 at time of meeting). This comprised 7 non-public sector and 4 public sector representatives, so the minimum 51%: 49% non-public: public split was fulfilled.</p>	

Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the 15th Nov 23 meeting were approved. AL ran through the actions:

Continued

- ARIA to monitor/evaluate/use for learnings of Ochiltree project for future – young people engagement/encouragement of applications. **CONTINUED – ACTIONED END 23-24.**

New

- AL to recommend inclusion of maintenance plan into business plan under development with CGHT.
- AL to recommend to Crossroads their business plan is extended beyond 22 and includes maintenance register.
- AL to recommend NICE routinely seek letters of support for funding applications and seek written agreement that project can be delivered in time.
- AL to resend St. Sophia's scoring link for rescoring.
- AL to seek OSCR required documentation (constitution/similar) and Diocese of Galloway bank statements from St. Sophia's.
- AL to note for 24-25: CAM applicants targeted for business plans/other outcomes (eg: Pirmill net zero works).
- AL to request more detailed preferred quote from West Kilbride and recommend highlighting wider community work (cf: arts) in funding applications.
- AL to send general recommendations to all CAM applicants.
- AL to request ACE provide confirmation from supplier charging points can be installed in time and use of app for charging external users.
- EB/MM/RR to send on youth contacts and AL to initiate discussion on potential youth project for 24-25.
- AL to send invite for 7th Feb 24 LAG meeting.

ALL COMPLETED.

Register of Interests/Conflicts of Interest

Covered under Video Fund Assessments:

- Biosphere Bikes, CC
- DART, KB

Both remained out of the voting for these projects.

KB had had to select conflict for the Lochlan's Legacy project because there was no abstain option. AL & JM to make sure this is in place for 24-25 scoring.

AL & JM to make sure abstain option in LAG scoring for 24-25.

Video Fund Assessments

Introduction

Fund as part of the ARIA Video Project which saw 18 groups form around Ayrshire trained in video skills. Applicants invited to apply for an upfront, max. £3,000 grant fund.

Given that the majority of LAG Members had pre-assessed the application through Survey Monkey, it was discussed if automatic approval should be agreed for all projects which scored 100%. The LAG decided to go through all the projects individually, for the benefit of the new LAG Member and those who had not had the time to assess, but to focus on the 3 applications which had received rejections.

AL also raised there being sufficient budget to increase all grant requests to the maximum award of £3,000, even those who applied for less. This was agreed, although 1 LAG member highlighted that this practice should be a one off to ensure it does not set a precedent.

1 LAG Member suggested that an earlier spend date should be sought to allow monitoring visits pre-31st Mar 24. This was agreed.

AL highlighted that the indicative costs method within the application process had been beneficial to the staff team/applicants and reduced the workload during the application process. For consideration across funds from 24-25.

Conflicts – see previous section.

Application Assessments

AL presented the table below to show average scores/% approvals from the online scoring. She/JM then presented the projects for further discussion.

	Ave Score	Approve	Conflicts
Biosphere Bikes	4.09	100%	1
Dalry Community Development Hub	3.98	100%	
Lochlan's Legacy	3.71	100%	1*
Dalry Community Sports Club	3.67	78%	
Colmonell Community Association	3.51	89%	
DART	3.49	100%	1
Cumbræ Community Development Company	3.47	100%	
Fossilfield	3.35	89%	

*KB abstention.

1. Biosphere Bikes

Items	Family kart with canopy. To be stored at premises on application/Knockcushan St.
Indicative Costs	£3,038
Grant Request	£3,000
Org Type	Charity
LA Area	SA

Average Score: 4.09 – 1st

% Approval: 100%

Points Raised at Technical Check

- Kart > £1k, 3 quotes sought. Limited suppliers across UK, 2 quotes given + rationale on Irregular Costs Form.

LAG Discussion

- General praise for the video, though comments on the volume being low and that it would have been nice to have seen the community on the bikes.

- There was a general appreciation that there was an “ask” within the application video. It was mentioned that not many groups answered application questions directly in their videos.

Decision

Project approved unanimously with no conditions.

2. Colmonell Community Association (CCA)

Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Awareness Workshop • Tablet x 3 • Ancillary equipment – travel cases, tripods, lights* Storage at Colmonell Community Centre – premises on application.
Indicative Costs	£2,096.15
Grant Request	*£256 – MS Office ineligible – replace with mini-tablet?
Org Type	Charity
LA Area	SA

Average Score: 3.51 – 5th

% Approval: 89% (1 rejection)

Points Raised at Technical Check

Comment on engagement through sessions/feedback – training hugely beneficial, kick-start digital awareness/intergenerational working.

LAG Discussion

- Comment on MS Office being available as yearly subscription (365) or standalone product, thus permissible to ARIA’s timescales.
- LAG Members fed back the video was more like a slide show of the village/village activities – it lacked dynamism and answering the application questions.
- Question on the range of devices sought, better with 1 brand? AL explained it was to train residents who would have a range of equipment themselves but would go back and confirm.
- Concern application lacked huge evidence of need - some felt that it was not a strong application.
- Amount of money in bank raised. AL reminded LAG that the grant like CAM fund was an ‘opportunity fund’ – only participants from the ARIA video training had been invited to apply, so grant requests were almost irrespective of reserves. LAG Members from area explained the group also held money for the Community Council which would be separated out soon.

AL to confirm need for range of equipment brands with CCA.

Decision:

Project approved unanimously with no conditions. This included LAG Member who had previously rejected at assessment stage.

3. Kay Starr/Cumbrae Community Development Company (CCDC)

Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio/podcaster mixer desk • Video camera/iPhone (mobile camera) • Accessories: stands/gimbals/mics/lighting/storage Stored between CCDC premises, Radio Millport and applicant address.
Indicative Costs	£3,000
Grant Request	
Org Type	Company/Charity
LA Area	NA

Average Score: 3.47 – 7th

% Approval: 100%

Points Raised at Technical Check

- Relatively high bank balance but CCDC only parent org, not obliged to fund applicant. Monies for Garrison refurbishment?
- Abundance of support.

LAG Discussion

- Video offered little to do with the application. Volume needed to be raised and captions kept on for longer.
- LAG members believe the proposed media centre would be good for the island. There were however some concerns on commercial support for the individual applying. Confirmation from applicants required to ensure the grant items will be used for the purposes of the application, by the community, not for commercial gain and will be property of CCDC. AL to seek.

Decision:

Project approved unanimously with confirmation as above.

AL to seek confirmation from CCDC/Kay Starr that items used for purpose of application, not for commercial gain & will be property of CCDC.

4. Dalry Community Development Hub

Items	Garden space fit out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heaters/ lighting/ kettle/ fridge/ vacuum IT workshops: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • iPads • Workshop costs (tea/coffee etc) Fit out items – lease provided.
Indicative Costs	£2,035
Grant Request	
Org Type	Charity
LA Area	NA

Average Score: 3.98 – 2nd

% Approval: 100%

Points Raised at Technical Check

- Comment on clarity of video: based on Qs from application form.
- Video benefited from being shot in garden space with user to vouch.

LAG Discussion

- LAG Members were pleased the video covered the application questions, although additional settings within the garden space would have been useful. The captions were again very quick and hence challenging to read
- LAG Member explained – very little in Dalry, DCDH garden space is a lifeline for residents especially if as stated in the application the heaters/lighting will facilitate year-round opening.
- Concern raised on space being powered by solar – this would not allow for the equipment requested.

Decision

Project approved unanimously with no conditions.

5. Dalry Community Sports Club (DCSC)

Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • iPad, photocopier, noticeboard and banners • Equipment is for Food Larder run by applicant – storage here (Dalry Community Centre), letter of comfort provided.
Indicative Costs	£3,098
Grant Request	£3,000

Org Type	Charity
LA Area	NA

Average Score: 3.67– 4th

% Approval: 78% (2 rejections)

Points Raised at Technical Check

- Photocopier will be held in NAC Community Centre where Food Larder held. No formal lease but the group have permission from Dalry Community Association who manage the building on behalf of NAC.

LAG Discussion

- Video again felt more of a slideshow and did not answer application questions.
- Concern over lack of explanation for need of equipment including within the video.
- Questions on the photocopier being too expensive. Application covered reaching residents not on social media, but the expense of the equipment still believed high for the activities stated – printing posters/leaflets. Consensus to go back and seek justification on value for money.

Decision:

Deferred until acceptable explanation on need for costly photocopier supplied (this supplied/approval granted post-meeting).

AL to seek justification from DCSC on need for large photocopier.

6. Darvel and Area Regeneration Team (DART)

Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laptop for video production/editing • Large screen • 2x cameras <p>Equipment will be stored in a locked container near The Corner until leaking roof repaired.</p>
Indicative Costs	£3,000
Grant Request	
Org Type	Charity
LA Area	EA

Average Score: 3.49 – 6th

% Approval: 100%

Points Raised at Technical Check

- Mac requested as volunteers who currently conduct editing use Mac – ensures consistency.
- Support – DART in receipt of King’s Award for Voluntary Service.

LAG Discussion

- Comment that application video once again did not really answer questions, video in general praised though for style/music. Some found background typing images distracting, a less is more approach is suggested for the future.

Decision

Project approved unanimously with no conditions.

7. Fossilfield Training Centre

Items	Laptop, smart phone, iPad, Tripod and Microphone. Resources for a presentation day. Storage – centre.
Indicative Costs	£1,954.95
Grant Request	
Org Type	Charity
LA Area	EA

Average Score: 3.35 – 8th

% Approval: 89% (1 rejection)

Points Raised at Technical Check

- Video application a little simpler than others but smaller grant request.
- Presentation day confirmed to be within current financial year.

LAG Discussion

- Video praised for covering organisation & grant request, 1 of favourites.
- Some LAG Members however found the application unclear, including about the organisation itself and reasons for requiring core IT equipment. JM explained they were recently established and outdoors focussed.
- AL highlighted the applicant was originally a beneficiary of the organisation who was now an employee.
- The strong local support was highlighted.
- Suggestion to support connection with EAC business and Community Wealth Building (CWB) teams to develop business plan/progress.

Decision

Project approved unanimously with no conditions. Approval included LAG Member who had rejected at assessment stage.

8. Lochlan’s Legacy

Items	Video equipment, PA system and promotional materials. Equipment to be held at the charity head quarters.
Indicative Costs	£3,000
Grant Request	
Org Type	Charity
LA Area	NA

Average Score: 3.71– 3rd

% Approval: 100%

Points Raised at Technical Check:

- N/A

LAG Discussion

- Discussion around staff costs on bank statements; highlighted from accounts that there are 2 part-time members of staff (funded potentially by Lottery).
- Significant local support noted.
- Question on if future reach being national was an issue with the ARIA area restrictions. This was decided acceptable as it is potential, not actual/current.
- Suggestion that young volunteers could receive Saltire Awards if not already as they do significant hours.

Decision

Project approved unanimously with no conditions.

General Discussion

- Videos praised for providing insight into group/application not available on paper applications. Discussion on providing option to applicants to provide a short video across all funds, with caveat that it must answer the substantive application questions.
- Question on need to provide explanation on restricted/ring-fenced funding, especially for small grant funds where only 1 month bank evidence required.
- Request for comments box (as well as abstain option, see previous) in Survey Monkey.

AL to suggest Fossilfield connect with EAC business/CWB teams to facilitate org development.

AL to note video option/request for explanation of funding for 24-25 funds.

AL/JM to include comments box in LAG scoring for 24-25.

Fund Finance (Standing Item)

<p>AL referred to the Budget Spread Sheet circulated pre-meeting and reiterated the underspends she had communicated by email on 5th Feb 24:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admin & Administration budget underspent by approx. £8,000. Discussion with JW prior to email had concluded it was not worth reporting to SG. • Projects revenue budget underspent by £14,000 with the withdrawal of the Cumnock Action Plan Cumnock Memory Garden project. This was more significant and had been reported to SG. 	
<p>Monitoring Visits</p> <p>AL presented a slide on the monitoring visits required for 23-24 projects. All were covered by LAG Member offers. AL advised the process of sending them a monitoring visit form once final claims had been submitted with items to be witnessed on. The form should be printed out, signed by both applicant and LAG Member at the visit and sent back with photographs of the items.</p>	
<p>24-25 Proposal</p> <p>AL referred to the paper which had been circulated pre-meeting and laid out the proposal.</p> <p>Issue</p> <p>The employment provided by SAC had not worked out as it prevented the Co-ordinator from claiming travel expenses to/from Ayrshire and accommodation in Ayrshire. It had been concluded pre-Christmas 23 the Co-ordinator would revert to self-employment, but that would threaten the IT set up because their laptop would have to be returned and access to online apps on a personal computer be given in place. The Co-ordinator felt this would risk undue disruption for the end of 23-24 so had chosen to remain employed until early April 24. LAG Chair JW had agreed to procure a new IT system which would be in place by then. The employment and appropriate ICT facilities provided by SAC in the ARIA-SAC Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) were however not being provided, and the team ARIA had planned to have built within SAC by now had not been.</p> <p>This, the change to the IT set up (third since establishment in July 22), and continuing uncertainties from SG, left ARIA on an unstable footing.</p> <p>Certain central questions were key:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Accountable Body (AB) SAC were/were not providing (were providing procurement, AB representative, admin support (paid from Nov 23), internal audit (paid) and bank/cash-flow system*. Were not providing employment and ICT system as in the ARIA-SAC Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)). • Who ARIA is/where it wants to go. • Possibility of managing wider funding/provide greater security than SG year on year CLLD funding. The creation of an Ayrshire rural/islands funding hub had been discussed at the end of LEADER. NB: Present CLLD funding is covered by the current Scottish agricultural legislation until end 24-25. It is proposed beyond this will be covered in the new agriculture/rural communities bill but this has yet to be confirmed. • Best structure to achieve this. *With an independent structure, the LAG would be paid their monies upfront). <p>Proposal</p> <p>It was proposed to slow down delivery for 24-25 to allow time for the above questions to be answered, and possible set up of an independent structure. Delivery would cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Young people project – to initiate the engagement peer CLLD areas had achieved to date resulting in youth LAGs etc. A small grants pot per LA area had been discussed with young people deciding on all aspects. Slowing down of other activity would also allow this to be done in earnest, with study visits etc. Estimated cost £120k. ○ CAM Fund as in 23-24, estimate - £50k. 	

<p>Revenue funding was explained as the most time consuming to deliver, with a greater no. of more disparate costs resulting in relatively low grants (ave £13k for 23-24).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital fund, £150k in 23-24, with a cap on the number of costs proposed. <p>Together with resource and additional activities, this would result in allocation of between £453k and £502k of the £748k allocation (23-24 figure).</p> <p>LAG discussion covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could larger chunks of revenue funding be allocated through collaboration projects? • Could the revenue budget be given to a third party for allocation on ARIA's behalf? Reposts on this were a body would be required to cover all 3 Ayrshire LAs, difficult to come by, and ARIA's requirements would still have to met which would in itself require management. • 25-26 would come with inherent uncertainties with the new agriculture bill, delays were expected. • The capital budget was not yet confirmed, but if/when it is, was there possibility to increase it? • Concern over not allocating all of budget – this could be allayed by sharing the proposal with SG at outset and having the allocation reduced, with the strict caveat that this would be <i>for 24-25 only</i>. Concern remained with some LAG Members. • Provision for the Co-ordinator to revert to self-employment, discussion on the robustness of this (Co-ordinator AL and SAC employees CC & MM left the room). It was decided the LAG would ensure a watertight contract was in place and suggested a direct award through procurement, though AL explained as it would be >£50k it would have to go to full tender. Methods of awarding the contract to Community Enterprise Ltd for the continuation of JM and a possible other contractor were suggested. <p>Decision The 24-25 proposal as it stood was put up for approval. The LAG voted in favour of: 9 Members: 2. Those rejecting did so over the concern of not utilising the full allocation, and local groups who were in need of revenue funding.</p> <p>Young People Engagement AL said she would send the brief for the delivery partners out on this once drawn up, based on the discussion outlined earlier (under Proposal).</p>	<p>AL to circulate brief on young people engagement for 24-25.</p>
<p>Date of Next Meeting/AOCB Suggested for end of April 24, AL to send Doodle Poll.</p> <p>Close</p>	<p>AL to send Doodle Poll for end April LAG meeting.</p>

Actions

Continued

- ARIA to monitor/evaluate/use for learnings of Ochiltree project for future – young people engagement/encouragement of applications. **CONTINUED – ACTIONED END 23-24.**

New

- AL & JM to make sure abstain option in LAG scoring for 24-25.
- AL to confirm need for range of equipment brands with CCA.
- AL to seek confirmation from CCDC/Kay Starr that items used for purpose of application, not for commercial gain & will be property of CCDC.
- AL to seek justification from DCSC on need for large photocopier.
- AL to suggest Fossilfield connect with EAC business/CWB teams to facilitate org development.
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- AL to circulate brief on young people engagement for 24-25.
- AL to send Doodle Poll for end April LAG meeting.

James Watson

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ARIA LAG Chair

18th March 24