Delegated Grant Funds

Issue	Response
Introduction	This case study takes a different structure to the others in this evaluation report. This is because the case study was undertaken for a particular purpose: to examine the effectiveness of the programme's three delegated grant programmes, with a view to identifying good practice and informing the Leader+ second stage submission. As such, it is more of a comparative analysis of the three programmes, and focuses on processes rather than outcomes.

The three programmes are:

- INTO MiTOWN;
- Small Initiatives Fund; and
- Churches Tourism Initiative.

The main elements of the three grant programmes are set out below. They demonstrate three different approaches to the delivery of delegated grant programmes, with very different criteria and target beneficiary groups. |
| INTO MiTOWN | **Programme summary**

MiTOWN was created to support the retention and stabilisation of the East Riding's market towns as key service centres and hubs for their rural hinterlands. It drew on the lessons of a successful pilot project undertaken in Driffield.

The project aimed to provide community-based solutions to local rural transport issues, including the provision of integrated transport information; improving the links between existing services; and funding new transport initiatives. Five market towns established partnerships to lead on the work of the programme. |

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Leader+ funding: £45,000

Maximum grant limit: No limit

Application process: Applications were developed and submitted by five the market town partnerships for consideration by a central decision making panel which sat regularly. The application form was considered very straightforward by applicants, and decisions were made quickly.

Funding criteria: Locally identified transport needs, and clear evidence of a supply gap and unmet demand.

Impacts

INTO MiTOWN delivered a collaborative, partnership approach to solving transport and access issues, with a specific focus on the area's market towns and links with their hinterlands. Market town partnerships successfully identified and sourced solutions to specific transport needs. For example, the provision of after school transport to enable pupils from outlying areas to attend after school activities; and the extension of a service linking local people to the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Hull. MiTOWN has also helped to extend the reach of local services, for example through the development of a mobile parent and family support service that visits rural villages and hamlets.

Programme strengths

The routing of the programme through the market town partnerships provided strength in the quality, suitability and likely success of applications, and delivered community solutions.

The partnership approach expanded the programme's role beyond just a grant awarding body, and in places identified solutions to transport problems without recourse to substantial grant support (for example by improving information about existing transport provision).

The unlimited grant size (within the boundaries of a maximum overall grant pot) encouraged a wide range of applications.

The decision making panel effective at suggesting alternative funding routes where necessary.

Programme weaknesses

The programme was heavily dependent on the level of activity/enthusiasm of any single partnership, and the extent to which they were able to represent the needs of their market town and rural hinterland.

The programme could be argued as having been quite bureaucratic – five separate partnerships and a decision making panel all to deliver £45k of grant funding. However, this needs to be balanced against the clear positives derived from a community-focused decision-making process, rather than a centralised one.

The small size of the overall pot in effect limited support to pump priming. This leaves a question mark over the longer term sustainability of some projects (although others have successfully continued).

The sustainability of the partnership structure beyond Leader+ would require some ongoing

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	financial support from an alternative source.
Small Initiatives Fund	**Programme summary** The Small Initiatives Fund (SIF) was set up as a small grants scheme to provide a simple and flexible way of supporting small projects, where traditional Leader+ application processes would have proved too onerous and off-putting to potential applicants. **Leader+ funding**: £60,000 **Maximum grant limit**: £5,000 (60% of project costs) **Application process**: Applications were expected initially to come via the Leader+ infrastructure projects, however problems with timing the creation of SIF relative to the infrastructure projects meant that this was not achieved. Development support and panel guidance was provided by the project officer, and appreciated by project applicants. Decisions were made by a decision making panel via email. **Funding criteria:** Funding was available to community or voluntary groups, and businesses. Local initiatives had to be relevant to one or more of the key Leader+ themes. Support extended to pilot studies; research; product development; and business set-up costs. **Impacts** The Small Initiatives Fund (SIF) has supported a range of local enterprises, for example by assisting the relocation of a developing micro business that subsequently was able to increase its local workforce. Funding to support staff training has helped a new day nursery to become established, providing employment as well as a useful service to the local area. SIF funds have also helped to strengthen organisations promoting and conserving local heritage, for example through supporting the creation of a charitable trust to oversee a museum commemorating the contribution of local people during the First World War; and the development of training and support for the management and protection of chalk rivers. The Churches Tourism Initiative has also helped to make more of the area's local heritage by funding marketing products that have supported a campaign to open up more local churches to visitors and tourists. **Programme strengths** Decisions made by email sped up the decision making process – quick responses were given to applicants, which was appreciated, as was the short, straightforward application form. Application development support was provided by the project manager – in some cases, project applicants regarded this as just as valuable as the money itself, in that it helped them think through and structure their business ideas. **Programme weaknesses** The absence of formal decision making meetings possibly reduced the level of scrutiny and discussion of project quality and relevance, although we have no evidence to suggest that wrong decisions were made. Some private sector applicants struggled with the concept of match funding, which had

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	implications on the overall size of their projects (ie they had not sufficiently grasped that SIF could only provide a proportion of the funding). Some small businesses also struggled with record keeping
	Delays/poor sequencing meant that the infrastructure projects were not in a position to bring through projects. This was a missed opportunity, in that it should have provided smaller pots of funding to complement the larger strategic interventions. It also had knock-on capacity issues for project management/bid development as a consequence.
Churches Tourism Initiative	**Programme summary** The initiative was designed to promote church tourism in the East Riding, while encouraging a greater understanding and appreciation of the cultural, historical and architectural heritage of local churches. In particular, the fund was designed to support additional marketing and publicity material about local churches, and when they were open. **Leader+ funding**: £15,000 (includes Langeled funds) **Maximum grant limit**: £500 **Application process**: A one page application form setting out what items were required for purchase. Decisions were taken by the East Yorkshire Historic Churches Group committee **Funding criteria**: Funding supported the promotion of church tourism thorough signage, information sheets, display boards, etc. Applicants had to be members of the East Yorkshire Historic Churches Group **Programme strengths** The fund tied in well to the wider activity within the East Yorkshire Historic Churches Group project, designed to improve the usage and tourism benefits of local churches. The application process was quick and very straightforward, as befits a grant pot dispensing support of £500 or less. **Programme weaknesses** As evaluators, we would question the impact that can be derived from such small value grants. Given that this is a members-only scheme, and the very limited nature of the application process, it could potentially be viewed as a marketing subsidy more than a delegated grant fund.
Conclusions	While these three initiatives were all delegated grant programmes, It is important not to draw too many comparisons between these three projects. They were all designed to serve different groups, and support different projects. However, we can say that, in all cases, comments from project managers and beneficiaries have been positive. This case study was designed to provide recommendations on the construction of future delegated grant programmes. We therefore provide the following concluding messages drawing on the experience of the three programmes we have reviewed: • **Be clear why a delegated fund is necessary in the first place**. A large number of

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small funds will tend to be more expensive to administer than a single, sizeable fund, so their creation needs to be justified. These projects all demonstrate good rationales for such funding, for example the otherwise daunting and disproportionate nature of the application process, and associated delays in securing a decision.

- **Understand beneficiary needs and their impact on project management capacity.** SIF shows, for example, that small businesses may require more development and monitoring support than might first be realised. They are likely to struggle with public sector funding requirements, eg evidencing outputs. Community and voluntary groups, or individuals, may need a different type of support.

- **If there are tie-ins with other projects, get the sequencing right**. SIF was supposed to support the programme's infrastructure projects. But by the time that SIF had been created, the infrastructure projects were ending.

- **Consider a minimum grant size.** A maximum single grant size may not be necessary; indeed such a value is often seen by applicants as a target rather than a ceiling. But a minimum grant size might help to avoid 'salami slicing' of funds, and we would argue that very small grants are likely to demonstrate little, if any impact.

- **Local partnerships are an innovative approach**. We have been impressed by the MiTOWN approach using a local partnership structure to take on the research, needs assessment and bid writing for a delegated grant fund. While it could be viewed as slightly unwieldy, in this instance it seems to have delivered a series of community led and developed solutions to the intractable problems of rural access.

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