

Action and activities

An application for £350,000 was made to the Space and Place Capital Funding Programme in April 2015. The tangible and practical nature of the support given was seen as positive, directly addressing the lack of experience and skills in applying for an ambitious grant. Both the Bann Valley Community Group and the RCN felt that VSOS support helped to galvanise and focus the project to result in a considerably stronger case for the iMAC. The stakeholder engagement and consultation process has also increased levels of awareness of the project in the local community and more local people are now involved.

The application, submitted in April 2015, was however unsuccessful. Official feedback indicated that it was a strong application that missed out by just two points. Despite the obvious disappointment, the Bann Valley Community Group are determined to continue to apply for grants and are now in a stronger, more confident position to succeed than they were prior to receiving VSOS support. The next stage for the group is likely to be an application to the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme under the Maximising Community Space Crossing Borders programme.

The Rural Community Network allocated the full award available to provide practical support that was able to quickly address a gap, build skills and capacity and move the project on to the next stage. This was felt to be important in order to get the best results and value for money for the community. In this instance, the RCN did not use any of the VSOS budget towards their own costs in providing support, enabling additional local expertise to be accessed.

Key areas of learning

- Experienced delivery partner support and practical expert input provided tangible and practical support that helped to build capacity, skills and confidence in the community group
- In this instance, the support given relies on the delivery partner being funded from other, non VSOS sources, but this demonstrates the flexibility of VSOS.
- Village SOS has the potential to build the capacity and skills of community groups to complete funding applications and signpost to Big Lottery funding and other programmes across the UK
- Village SOS is flexible and can accommodate a wide range of very specific needs. This is both a strength and a weakness as, in this instance, the community did not immediately understand that it was relevant to them

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Indoor Multi Use Activity Centre Bann Valley Case Study



Images from Bann Valley Community Group iMAC Business Plan 2016-2019

Evaluation prepared for Big Lottery Fund by Catalys Ltd
Reporting on delivery of Village SOS (VSOS) Learning,
Outreach and Engagement Campaign

1st December 2014 to 1st September 2015

Campaign Lead partners: Action for Communities in Rural
England (ACRE), Rocket Science and Rose Regeneration



Summary

The Challenge	Bann Valley Community's funding application for a new community facility had been rejected due to lack of stakeholder engagement. The aim of the project was to use expert input to resubmit an improved application addressing the comments made and to increase the knowledge, capacity and skills of the group.
The Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Needs Assessment • Stakeholder engagement incl. online questionnaire • Desk research • DVD project • Concept drawings • Submit revised application to the Space and Place Capital Funding Programme
How Village SOS added value	The Bann Valley Community Group have increased their skills and confidence in stakeholder engagement and making grant applications as a result of Village SOS support. The community is more engaged and levels of awareness have increased. Despite being unsuccessful in this application, the group now has an improved evidence base and better skills for future applications.

The challenge

Established in 2010, the Bann Valley Community Group represents the interests of the inhabitants of Clady, Inishrush and its environs. The group has been very active in securing much needed activities and facilities within the local community, including the grant-funded renovation of a community hall between 2012-14. This facility is so heavily used it no longer copes with demand. The recent community consultation indicated that an additional facility would allow all ages more opportunities to engage in local activities, especially for younger and older people. Bann Valley Community Group feel it is important that everyone in this isolated community has 'somewhere to go, somewhere to play, somewhere to take part, somewhere to interact and somewhere to enjoy.' The group is also keen to build on their success in bringing a together a community divided through years of sectarian violence by instilling a sense of inclusivity amongst local young people. The original application to the Big Lottery NI Space and Place programme for an Indoor Multi-use Activity Centre (iMAC) included funding for a project officer to deliver a full programme of activities. Although this application was unsuccessful it provided a number of pointers for improvement including stakeholder engagement and better evidence of need.

Who's involved?

The Bann Valley Community Group were directed towards Village SOS by the Rural Community Network as a way to access support to strengthen their application for resubmission and build capacity within the group. This signposting was key in developing the project as, despite awareness of Village SOS, the Community Group did not initially realise that it was relevant to their project, or that they would be able to access the support provided by the campaign.

The Bann Valley Community Group were helped by Northern Ireland Delivery partner the Rural Community Network to put in place an effective project plan of support. Some £600 of the VSOS award available (£1215) was used to pay a local consultancy company to design online and offline questionnaires and facilitate community engagement events and interviews. A further £600 was used to fund three days of filming to produce a DVD as an innovative way to showcase, demonstrate support and show the potential impact of the proposed initiative. Further, in-kind support was given by the Rural Community Network to carry out desk research and by a local architect to produce some concept drawings to support a new grant application. The remaining £15 was used to pay for printing costs.

