

Community Assist

A new Cornish initiative designed to deliver ESF funded employment and skills training to voluntary and community organisations, together with a wide range of free specialist professional expertise.

Training Options

Community Assist training is designed to develop, accredit and deliver bespoke programmes which address identified skills and training needs of voluntary and community sector organisations. The type of training provided through Community Assist can include:

- **Digital Coaching - how to help your users get online**
- **Contract Management**
- **Maximising Effectiveness and Measuring Impact**
- **Committee Skills**
- **Marketing and Publicity**
- **Bid writing**
- **IT & Website Development**
- **Project Management**
- **Policies and Procedures**

ProHelp Support

Established in 1989 and led by Business in the Community (BITC), ProHelp draws from a network of professional firms to provide free advice and support to local voluntary and community groups.

A wide range of support is available including:

- **Accountants** - can help with business plans, financial reporting, pricing strategies, financial policies and procedures, advice on tax and VAT recovery.
- **Architects, engineers and surveyors** - can help with building surveying, design, detailed plans and drawings, planning applications and technical approvals, masterplanning, project management and valuations
- **Solicitors** - can help with company/charity registration, contracts, employment policies and contracts, and property issues e.g. leases.
- **Marketing and Public Relations professionals** - can help with brand strategy, graphic design, developing a communications plan, events management, marketing and PR.
- **HR Directors** - can support with recruitment strategies, appraisal systems, performance management and how to implement staff training and development plans.
- **Business Leaders** - can support with business planning, strategy development, change management, financial planning and leadership.

In addition, Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum will liaise with Cornwall Chamber of Commerce to add value to the ProHelp element by involving other private sector businesses that can provide complementary support of a more practical nature e.g. building decoration, gardening.

Eligibility

To qualify for Community Assist, you must:

- Be a community-based, not-for-profit group working for the social and economic regeneration of your local area (e.g. a charity or social enterprise)
- You must employ at least one paid member of staff for a minimum of eight hours a week, or have at least one individual volunteering for a minimum of eight hours a week, willing to undertake a minimum of one day's training.
- Have a track record of working successfully with the local community.
- Have no funding available for the specific project and no paid advisors retained to do the work.
- If part of a national organisation, your branch must be locally constituted, and prove that neither the expertise nor the funding to pay for the work is available centrally.
- Your project must be realistic and viable.
- Your governing body must be willing to authorise the involvement of ProHelp.

When will a request for help not qualify?

- Applications for assistance with litigation will not be considered.
- Applications appealing funding which has been awarded to other groups will not be considered.
- Help is not normally given to animal welfare groups nor organisations whose primary focus is overseas aid.
- Assistance to religious groups will only be offered if the project benefits the wider community.

How do I access Community Assist support?

Community Assist is co-ordinated by Business in the Community.

Advice and application forms are available from Jon Teague who can be contacted by email at jon.teague@bitc.org.uk or by phone on 07957 228945.

The next step is to complete a referral form that provides background information on your organisation and which identifies both your training needs and details of the area you need ProHelp support with.

Your organisation will also need to provide the latest set of accounts and a copy of your constitution or memorandum and articles of association.

If you qualify for support, Jon will meet with you to undertake a training needs assessment and will match your organisation with the professional support it needs through ProHelp. A ProHelp member firm will then meet with you to take the project forward.

All initial advice, support and work agreed at the outset by the ProHelp member firm will be free of charge (pro bono). If your group or organisation has a future requirement and would like to work with the professional firm on another project, you may wish to consider paying for additional advice/work, often at a reduced rate.