



Overview

The availability and accessibility of loan finance to the third sector has increased considerably in recent years. Loans can benefit third sector organisations in many different ways but are not appropriate for every organisation. This information sheet is intended to provide a brief overview on loan finance.

What is a loan?

A loan is a financial transaction in which one party (the lender) agrees to give another party (the borrower) a sum of money with the expectation of total repayment. A lender can ask for interest payments in addition to the original loan amount. The terms and conditions of a loan transaction are commonly detailed in the form of a contract. A contract will usually state repayment terms, including any arrangement fees, the amount owed, agreed interest rates and repayment due dates.

Loans are simply another way of financing an organisation and should not be considered as a replacement for grants.

Is loan finance right for your organisation?

Before considering applying for a loan, organisations should be at a stage where thorough business and financial planning has demonstrated the organisation's ability to generate sufficient income to meet loan repayments.

The three discussion points listed below can be used to assist an organisation in determining whether loan finance is an option:

What will the loan be used for?

Loan finance can be utilised for a variety of purposes, including:

- Purchasing property, land, machinery or equipment.
- Renovating existing property;
- Managing cash flow problems and grant income cycles.
- Establishing new projects or ventures.
- Investing in organisational growth.

How will the loan benefit your organisation?

An organisation considering loan finance should be clear about the purpose of the loan:

- Will the loan allow the organisation to better achieve its aims and objectives?
- Will the loan assist in helping to improve service provision or reaching more beneficiaries?
- Will the loan contribute to the future sustainability of the organisation by providing opportunities for further income generation?

Are there appropriate organisational structures and systems in place?

An organisation should be able to prove that it has the ability to take out a loan and repay it:

- Does the organisation's governing document allow for borrowing money and potentially allowing assets to be pledged as security?
- Does the organisation have robust financial systems in place to manage such an investment?

Advantages and disadvantages

There are both advantages and disadvantages to utilising loans as a source of financing an organisation:

Advantages

- Faster to arrange than grants - decision making processes are usually a lot quicker.
- Not as competitive as grant funding - loan applications can be approved on merit rather than suitability to a funders criteria.
- More flexible than grant funding - loan applications can be tailored to what best suits an organisation's needs rather than a grant funders' criteria.

- Reduced output related monitoring and reporting than grant funding – the implications of poor financial reporting must not be overlooked.
- Loans are usually paid in advance, not in instalments or arrears as grant funding.

Disadvantages

- Varying levels of interest.
- High arrangement fees are also sometimes applied.
- Taking on the responsibility of a legally binding agreement.
- Offering an asset as security.

Providers of loan finance

Apart from commercial high street lenders, there are a large number of organisations which offer loans tailor-made to third sector organisations. Many large charitable trusts have also recently begun to experiment with offering loan finance.

Listed below are providers of loan finance specific to the third sector, further information on each organisation can be obtained by utilising the contact details below:

Big Invest

Tel: 020 70740 060

www.biginvest.co.uk

enquiries@biginvest.co.uk

Charities Aid Foundation – Venturesome

Tel: 0870 060 55 07

www.cafonline.org

Charity Bank

Tel: 01732 774040

www.charitybank.org

enquiries@charitybank.org

Co-operative & Community Finance

Tel: 01179 166750

www.icof.co.uk

info@co-opandcommunityfinance.coop

Esmeé Fairbairn Foundation

Tel: 020 7297 4700

www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk

info@esmeefairbairn.org.uk

Finance Wales

Tel: 029 2033 8100

www.financewales.co.uk

info@financewales.co.uk

Triodos Bank

Tel: 0117 973 9339

www.triodos.co.uk

businessbanking@triodos.co.uk

Unity Group

Tel: 0800 783 9650

www.unitygroup.co.uk

us@unitygroup.co.uk

WCVA - Communities Investment Fund

Tel: 0800 587 8898

www.wcva.org.uk

enquiries@communitiesfirst.info

Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.

For further information contact

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