



Compact Advocacy Case Study: Joined-Up Holidays

The problem:

A short time ago the Compact Advocacy Programme was contacted by Joined-Up Holidays, a small organisation made up completely of volunteers, which is working towards providing a day centre for children and adults with disabilities or special needs.

The organisation had been given an “in principle” agreement from their Regional Development Agency One North East to their funding application, which would provide vital funding to make the day centre accessible and environmentally sustainable.

As part of the funding agreement, Joined-Up Holidays would seek match funding, which they did over a period of months. After securing match funding they went back to One North East and were then told the eligibility criteria had changed and they were no longer able to support the application. This change in criteria had occurred several months previously but the organisation had not been told. This not only put the match funding and the project itself at risk, it also meant nearly a year’s worth of fundraising and planning, all voluntary, had been wasted and the organisation was now liable for fees on a bridging loan they could no longer take out.

The Compact Issue:

The Compact Advocacy Programme identified several Compact issues:

2.6 Assess the implications for the sector of new policies, legislation and guidance, aiming to reduce the bureaucratic burden, particularly on small organisations.

3.12 Apply the Compact when distributing European funding. Where conflicts arise with European regulations, discuss the potential effects and agree solutions together – the funding was from an EU pot and the new eligibility criteria came from the EU.

4.3 Where there are restrictions or changes to future resources, discuss with CSOs the potential implications as early as possible, give organisations the opportunity to respond, and consider the response fully, respecting sector expertise, before making a final decision.

The Action:

The Compact Advocacy Programme helped Joined Up Holidays challenge One North East by writing to them setting out the Compact breaches and the impact this would have on the project. They asked for a meeting to discuss ways forward and this was agreed.

The Outcome:

The Compact Advocate chaired the meeting which was attended by representatives from both the public body and the organisation, and held in the grounds of the day centre itself. One North East acknowledged its failure to communicate the change in eligibility criteria and apologised for this. Joined-Up Holidays explained the situation they were now in and what needs were most urgent. In response One North East agreed to fast track one part of the application, which would ensure that some of the work could progress. They also agreed to increase the grant in order to cover the fees for the loan that the organisation was liable for.

Although the project is still facing a delay and more funding will be needed to cover the lost grant, Joined-Up Holidays is at least able to move on, can cover costs they have incurred and, perhaps most importantly, they and One North East have reached a mutual understanding and found a way forward that both sides are happy with.