

Norfolk ProHelp – Voluntary Sector Fact Sheet

Norfolk ProHelp connects local charities and community groups with local professional businesses, so that the community benefits from both the knowledge and expertise of businesses; and the time, passion and commitment of local people.

ProHelp is the UK's only multi-sector professional companies' network and provides free professional advice and guidance to local community and voluntary organisations. ProHelp has a 'pot of hours' available and is therefore able to provide a one-stop resource for the voluntary sector to access free professional skills and expertise in a range of services.

ProHelp is not a grant-giving organisation. Support provided by ProHelp professionals is given solely through the goodwill of the member companies and their staff on a voluntary basis (they receive no payment for their work) and as such, they will set a limit on the amount of time that they can offer to any one project.

Members of ProHelp are more likely to spread their pro bono work between different projects for different organisations rather than work with just one organisation on a large time consuming piece of work.

Community groups requesting support from ProHelp have to satisfy certain eligibility criteria, which restricts the service to those who:

- have a track record of working within the local community
- are locally constituted
- are unable to pay for professional services

ProHelp is likely to support the following types of project:

- Community, not for profit, organisations based within the county
- Community organisations working for the social and/or economic regeneration of their local area
- Those which have charitable aims and clearly demonstrate a benefit to the wider community and/or show integration of the whole community
- Those which a member company can deliver support to easily and quickly
- Training requests where the ProHelp members can meet the common needs of a number of community organisations at the same time
- Assignments which are a discrete and manageable task, from which a result can be achieved in a limited period of time
- Trading arms of registered charities:
 - if the profits generated are to be covenanted back to the charity to support its activities and make it more self-sufficient;
 - the actual trading operation is an appropriate activity; and
 - the ProHelp Group are happy with the rates of turnover generated by the trading operation.
- Business plans, feasibility studies or funding applications where ProHelp input requested involves:
 - advice on process, content and or layout e.g. what to put in a business plan
 - professional input to a particular section e.g. initial outline drawings for a building conversion or help with cost estimates

- comments on draft plans, studies, applications before the final document is submitted

ProHelp member firms will not normally undertake to produce a complete business plan, feasibility study or funding application on behalf of community groups.

Examples of the types of projects which ProHelp is **likely** to support:

- Legal advice on property lease agreements
- Guidance on the production/development of business plans
- Taxation/VAT advice and setting up financial systems
- Advice on Health & Safety or employment issues, policies and procedures
- Outline plans and costings for new buildings or refurbishments
- Structural surveys of buildings
- Property valuations or searches
- Guidance on the production of a marketing strategy and/or PR advice
- Setting up a limited company/applying for charitable status

ProHelp is **unlikely** to support the following types of project:

- Those which do not require particular professional expertise i.e. could be completed by anyone with the time
- Groups who can afford to pay for professional advice
- Urgent requests i.e. those that will need to be completed within four weeks (ProHelp cannot guarantee early attention of non-fee paying work)
- Branches of national organisations who can access either funding or expertise from other branches or the national office -- to qualify for ProHelp support, any branch of a national organisation must be locally constituted
- Clubs that have no charitable aims
- Religious groups unless the project will directly benefit the wider community
- Assignments which will involve, or are likely to involve, mediation or litigation and those which occur on a regular basis e.g. annual audits

For more information contact:

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