



Leicestershire & Rutland ProHelp Application Guidance Notes

Introduction

Leicestershire and Rutland ProHelp is a group of professional firms who have come together to provide professional skills and expertise *for free* to community and voluntary organisations across Leicestershire and Rutland.

Each firm has agreed to provide a number of hours worth of free advice each year. These hours may be spent working with just one community organisation or for several different groups. Employees of the professional firm will take on a piece of work during the firm's time, approaching the assignment as they would for any fee-paying customer.

Please note: Members of ProHelp join the initiative on a strictly voluntary basis. The time they spend on ProHelp projects is voluntary, and undertaken *in addition* to their full-time employment. Acceptance of projects is dependent upon the appropriate professional resources being available at the time, and therefore an immediate response to requests for assistance cannot be guaranteed. However, we endeavor to meet requests as soon as possible.

Administration Fee

Leicestershire Cares is a charity and as is the case for most charities we rely on funding to pay the administrative costs of managing and administering Leicestershire and Rutland ProHelp services. Despite our determination to continue to provide these services completely free of charge to all our clients, it has become unsustainable for us to do so.

Therefore all ProHelp requests incur an administration fee as follows:

- For organisations with an annual turnover from £0-£150k = £125 + VAT per project
- For organisations with an annual turnover from £150-250k = £250 + VAT per project

Please enclose a cheque payable to 'Leicestershire Cares Ltd' with your application. We consider this to be excellent value, as the time given by our professional firms is completely free of charge. Applications will not be processed if they do not include payment. Cheques will not be banked until a match with a professional has been made.



Leicestershire and Rutland ProHelp is likely to support the following types of project:

- Projects for community based, not-for-profit organisations and social enterprises based within Leicestershire and Rutland
- Projects that involve a clearly defined, discreet and manageable task
- Projects requiring particular professional expertise, which a member firm could deliver relatively easily and quickly.
- Projects for the trading arm 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,*
 - *the ProHelp Group are happy with the rates of turnover generated by the trading operation*
- Training requests where the ProHelp members can meet the common needs of a number of community organisations, i.e. by running a training workshop

Leicestershire and Rutland ProHelp WILL NOT support the following types of project:

- Projects that do not require particular professional expertise
- Projects for groups who can already afford to pay for professional advice. ProHelp has been specifically developed to support voluntary/ community groups who do not have the resources to pay for professional services. If your organisation can afford to pay for such services, please do not apply for ProHelp assistance. *Please note: if your organisation has an annual turnover in excess of £250,000, it is unlikely that ProHelp will be able to support your application.*
- Projects for branches of national organisations who can access either funding or expertise from other branches or from the national office. *To qualify for ProHelp support, any branch of a national organisation would have to be locally constituted.*
- Projects requesting assistance with funding applications
- Projects that involve or are likely to involve litigation
- Projects for religious groups, unless the project will directly benefit the wider community
- Project for animal welfare organisations, unless the project benefits the wider community
- ProHelp will not get involved with annual audits

Re-Applications for Support

- Community and voluntary organisations are welcome to reapply for ProHelp support should it be required.
- Please be advised however that groups reapplying for support must complete a new application form if their first request was over 18 months previous and/or there have been significant changes within the group e.g. status, contact details, etc.



Special Notes: Business Planning & Feasibility Studies

Where ProHelp input is requested for projects such as business plans or feasibility studies, the support offered will be:

- *advice on process, content and or layout e.g. what to put in a business plan*
- *professional input on a particular section e.g. initial drawings for a building conversion or help with detailed costings*
- *comments on draft plans, studies, applications before the final document is submitted*

Applications for support with Business Planning MUST come from the Chair/equivalent person within the organisation.

ProHelp member firms WILL NOT undertake to produce a complete business plan or feasibility study on behalf of community groups.

Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Voluntary/Community Group:

- To communicate the details of the project clearly to Leicestershire and Rutland ProHelp
- To agree with the professional firm/s the amount of work to be carried out on a pro-bono basis
- To communicate any changes to the project brief, in writing, to Leicestershire and Rutland ProHelp or the professional firm/s
- To agree with the professional firm/s any changes to the non-fee-paying basis of the project and where any changes may alter the status of the project to fee-paying
- To inform Leicestershire and Rutland ProHelp of any delays to the agreed start date of the project or of any anticipated problems

Responsibilities of ProHelp Member Firms:

- To carry out the project promptly and within an agreed timescale
- To carry out the project to the same standard as for a paying client
- To communicate any delays to the community group and to Leicestershire and Rutland ProHelp
- To communicate any changes to the project brief or time-scale to Leicestershire and Rutland ProHelp
- To inform Leicestershire and Rutland ProHelp of progress
- To guide the community group by ensuring they understand:
 - The service offered by the professional firm,
 - Any additional services they may require to meet the project brief,
 - The extent of the work that can be undertaken by the firm on a pro-bono basis.
- To communicate clearly and in advance when the work is to transfer to a fee-paying basis



Responsibilities of Leicestershire and Rutland ProHelp

- To administer requests for ProHelp support and put forward those which are reasonable.
- To present the project brief and any additional material to the ProHelp professional firms
- To identify the most appropriate professional firm
- To inform the community group of the firm undertaking the project
- To inform the community group that the firm will agree the amount of work to be undertaken on a pro-bono basis
- To negotiate any project developments with all parties and produce a new project brief as necessary
- To monitor the work of ProHelp

For further advice and guidance on completing the ProHelp Application Form please contact:

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