

## Transforming Local Infrastructure Questions and Answers

### 1. What is Transforming Local Infrastructure?

Transforming Local Infrastructure is funding from the Office of Civil Society (OCS) to provide better support for frontline civil society organisations by transforming local infrastructure services at a local level.

### 2. Who can get a grant?

Funding is available for infrastructure organisations in England whose main purpose is to deliver support services to other civil society organisations. To be eligible to apply, you must fulfil the following criteria:

- you are an infrastructure organisation.
  - By infrastructure organisation, we mean civil society organisations whose main or only purpose is to support the work of other groups in the voluntary and community sector. This purpose will usually appear in the governing document of your organisation or will be apparent from the work you have carried out. If supporting other organisations is not an explicit purpose in your governing document doing such work must be within the scope of the work your governing document allows you to do.
- you are one of the following types of organisations:
  - a registered charity
  - a voluntary and community unincorporated charitable association
  - a community benefit society registered as an industrial and provident society
  - a community interest company
  - an organisation of another type if you operate as a social enterprise and principally reinvest your surpluses for social benefit
- you are working in partnership (if there is more than one infrastructure organisation in your local authority area).
- You are **not** eligible to apply if you:
  - are a statutory organisation such as a school or local authority, including statutory organisations that have charitable status
  - are an individual or sole trader
  - make a surplus or profit which is not principally reinvested for social benefit
  - are applying on behalf of another organisation.

- We will allow organisations which do not meet these criteria to be part of partnerships only if applicants can show how their involvement will help to deliver the aims and outcomes.

### **3. How much funding is available, and how will it be “allocated” between different areas?**

A total of £30 million is available for the whole programme. Grants will be made to applicants who provide support services across one or more upper tier local authority area. It is a competitive application process - there is no automatic distribution or allocation of funds.

Grants are available to successful applicants:

- between £250,000 and £400,000 per upper tier local authority area or up to £600,000 for local authority areas that have a population of over one million people
- for a project lasting up to 18 months
- mainly for revenue funding
- but can include up to £5,000 of capital funding.

The seven upper tier local authority areas with a population over one million are Surrey, Lancashire, Birmingham, Essex, Kent, Hampshire and Hertfordshire.

### **4. What are the grants for?**

The grants are for activities which transform and rationalise sector support services for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations. These include examples such as:

- collaboration and consolidation - making efficiency savings and creating more effective and agile organisations through rethinking business models, asset consolidation, merger of back-office functions and shared services;
- redesign and integration of services towards more imaginative and enterprising approaches that meet the changing needs of groups and communities, and are valued and supported locally;
- better links with local business; more peer to peer support within the local voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, and stronger partnerships with local statutory bodies, particularly the relevant local authority;
- sustainability in the long-term without ongoing support from central Government.

### **5. I work for a public sector organisation which provides support services to civil society organisations. Are we eligible to apply to this Fund?**

We know that some public sector organisations provide services such as volunteering brokerage. Public sector organisations are not eligible to be lead applicants, but can be part of partnerships within a bid if the lead applicant can show how partners' involvement will help to deliver the aims and outcomes.

## **6. How do I apply for funding?**

Interested organisations have three weeks after the launch of the programme to sign up to register interest online. The deadline for this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> August. **All Interested groups must do this – irrespective of whether you had previously asked BIG to keep you informed about the programme.** After 5<sup>th</sup> August, organisations on the register have a responsibility to contact everyone else who has registered in the upper tier local authority area to agree on the appropriate partnership to submit a single application from each area.

In order to support the aims of rationalising and transforming services, and to manage demand to the available funding for the programme, **we are only going to accept one bid per upper tier local authority area.** This means that you will need to work together with other interested organisations and agree a single lead applicant per upper tier local authority area and (if there is more than one organisation involved) a partnership.

The agreed lead applicant for a local area will need to submit an expression of interest by 2<sup>nd</sup> September. We will send that single lead applicant (and only that applicant) an application form, which has to be completed and sent back to us by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011.

## **7. You are saying that you will only accept one bid per upper tier local authority area. Where can I find a list of upper tier local authority areas and how will this process work?**

A list of upper tier local authority areas can be seen on the Transforming Local Infrastructure web page <http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/tli>

Interested organisations in each local authority area will have to decide on a single lead applicant, who is responsible for submitting an Expression of Interest by 2<sup>nd</sup> September. We will only accept one Expression of Interest from each local authority area, and it is up to the registered organisations to agree who should lead and who else should be involved.

If we receive multiple Expressions of Interest from an upper tier Local Authority Area, then we will not issue any application materials. As a consequence, that area will effectively be rejected from the programme. The only exception to this is if we receive any “frivolous” Expressions of Interest by groups who clearly do not have the capacity to meet the aims and outcomes of the programme.

## **8. There are lots of organisations in my local area who deliver support services to civil society. What if we can't agree on who should be the lead organisation?**

It is a requirement of participating in this programme that interested organisations agree on a single lead applicant. It is the responsibility of infrastructure organisations to work together to form effective partnerships and decide on how best to transform and rationalise their services to meet the needs of the frontline. Many of these organisations have a history of working in partnership, including through the ChangeUp and BASIS programmes.

If you are unable to reach a mutually respected agreement, please contact us on [TLI@bigfund.org.uk](mailto:TLI@bigfund.org.uk) and let us know. Please note that whilst we can offer you advice, we are not able to broker an agreement, referee disputes or grant exceptions within this competitive programme.

**9. My organisation works within one district / with one specific type of organisation within a local authority area. Are we excluded from taking part if we don't deliver services across an entire upper tier local authority area?\***

No. Applicants have to provide evidence that their proposed activities are the most effective way of meeting needs in their local area, and demonstrate how their proposals will help to promote equalities. So your area may choose to prioritise transformation of support in specific localities within the overall local authority area, or work with specific groups. The important thing is to provide evidence of need for these activities.

**10. Why don't you let individual organisations bid and just choose the ones which provide the best applications?**

The aim of this programme is to rationalise and transform services, so it is vital that infrastructure organisations work closely together from the start. Furthermore, it is in everyone's interest that maximum resources go into funding transformational activities, rather than assessing thousands of grant applications from each individual infrastructure organisation.

**11. Who can I contact for more information?**

Please make sure you have read the Guidance Notes and the associated materials thoroughly. These include all the information necessary to make your decisions on this programme of funding. If you still find that you still need some more advice, please email [TLI@bigfund.org.uk](mailto:TLI@bigfund.org.uk)

**12. My organisation provides support services across a region. Are we eligible to bid for funding?**

This Fund is for activities at an upper tier local authority level (for example, county, London borough or unitary authority). We will not accept bids which cover an entire

region. However, regional and specialist infrastructure organisations can be part of one or more bids to deliver services at a more local level. As with all interested groups, you should first register your interest in the programme.

**13. We deliver most of our services in one area, but some services in neighbouring areas, is this allowed?**

Yes. Applicants are able to deliver up to 25% of their activities in neighbouring local authority areas. If you are planning to do this, then you will need to show how this will help you to meet the outcomes of Transforming Local Infrastructure, provide evidence of how your activities help to rationalise and transform service provision, and show that these will not increase duplication of services. We therefore recommend that in developing your application, you talk to applicants in the areas where you are planning to deliver services.

**14. Some local authority areas are much larger than others. Isn't it unfair that each area can apply for the same amount of money, regardless of population or levels of deprivation?**

This funding has been set aside to rationalise and transform infrastructure support services. This is a competitive process and no area is "guaranteed" to receive any funding at all. We expect to receive up to 154 applications and make around 80 awards.

Value for money is crucial: applicants should consider how much funding they need to transform and rationalise services, the quality of the outcomes and what resources are needed to deliver the transformation. Applicants simply bidding for the maximum amount without explaining why this is needed are likely to end up with nothing.

Our research has found no obvious direct link between population size and increased need for the transformation of services, and no evidence that the costs of merging two organisations (for example), increase in line with the populations they cover. Some areas have already rationalised and merged services and put them on a more financially sustainable basis, whereas others need to do so.

We are, however, allowing some flexibility for the seven largest upper tier local authority areas with populations of over one million. They will be able to bid for up to £600,000, but the same principles of value for money apply.

**15. Do I need to get my local authority's support for my bid?**

There is no requirement for local authorities to "approve" the application before it is submitted. However, we would strongly encourage applicants to discuss their ideas

with their local authority. If services are to be sustainable in the longer-term, a good relationship with the local authority, as well as the local community, will be crucial. In areas where existing relationships are poor, we will want to see evidence that you are seeking to address this, and the transformational activities you propose in your application could well include building stronger partnerships with local authorities.

Any local authorities interested in discussing how their own approaches to supporting local infrastructure could fit with this Fund should contact [TLI@bigfund.org.uk](mailto:TLI@bigfund.org.uk)

**16. Do we need to get matched funding for our projects or will you fund 100% of the costs?**

We will fund 100% of the costs for activities in Transforming Local Infrastructure. In your application, you can tell us about any other sources of funding which you will use to help achieve the outcomes, but you must either make sure that your funding is secured at application stage or show that the outcomes can be delivered without relying on any other sources of funding.

**17. In Greater Manchester and Greater London, government has explicitly legislated to create another tier of local government above the local authorities. Will you accept bids from these areas?**

Yes. We will accept additional bids which cover the whole Greater London Authority and whole Greater Manchester Combined Authority areas. We will take into account how well the plans detailed in each of these applications complement and avoid duplication with services at an upper tier local authority level, so if you are planning an application for either of these two areas, you should ensure you have considered this.

**18. What was the Government's motivation for launching this programme?**

Nick Hurd, Minister for Civil Society, set out the thinking behind this programme:

*"I know the difficult funding environment makes the job of leading both general and volunteering infrastructure organisations all the more challenging. But from my many conversations with the sector, I also know there is agreement that business models need to change and local infrastructure must develop and prove its value to local customers.*

*We announced our intention to offer a new fund to support local infrastructure in the Giving White Paper. This document sets out more detail. You will see that the fund is not designed to support "business as usual". We want to encourage local leadership that sees the need to adapt to both economic reality and the changing needs of frontline groups and communities. So we will be looking to support plans that are designed to develop more efficient and effective forms of support to local charities; social enterprises and community groups. We anticipate and support more consolidation and collaboration. We would like to encourage fresh thinking about the support that civil society needs and how it is best delivered. We want to see better*

*links with local business, more peer to peer support and stronger partnership with local strategic bodies.”*

**19. How does Transforming Local Infrastructure link to the previous Government’s initiatives, for example, Change Up and the work of Capacitybuilders?**

In the past, Government has made a considerable investment into infrastructure, but many frontline groups have still not had access to good quality support. The government’s consultation on *Supporting a stronger civil society* identified considerable frustration amongst frontline groups with the large number of support organisations working at a local level. There was a clear message that support needed to be rationalised, and duplication eradicated. Infrastructure organisations themselves also recognised that change was long overdue, and expressed support for merger and collaboration.

The proposed programme of work is about building on that investment, but recognising that central Government cannot continue to fund in perpetuity.

**20. Could BIG add its own money with OCS and make this Fund wider reaching?**

Lottery funding remains additional to that of government, BIG Lottery Fund isn’t able to add its own lottery funding to that of a government initiative in this way. BIG has agreed that there should be close co-ordination in England with the Office of Civil Society in any national investment to improve the support available to civil society organisations. In that way, the available national investment can be most effectively used.

**21. What are state aid rules and where can we get advice about how they might affect our partnership?**

State aid is a European Commission term which refers to forms of assistance from a public body, or publicly-funded body, given to undertakings on a discretionary basis, with the potential to distort competition and affect trade between member states of the European Union. If you would like more information about this, please visit <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/europe/state-aid/advice-on-state-aid>

**22. We are going to have to decide on who is in our partnership and who the lead applicant will be in our area in August, but this is when lots of people are on holiday. Could we have more time for this?**

The deadline to decide on the lead organisation and submit an Expression of Interest is the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2011. We understand that this means that discussions will have to take place during July and August, but we expect in most areas that prospective applicants will have had experience of working together, and that these discussions will build on existing relationships. In addition, partnerships will have until 31<sup>st</sup> October to complete the application form.

**23. Is BIG planning any investments of Lottery money in this area?**

Yes. BIG will be investing at least £20 million between now and 2015. Alongside supporting the best features of current provision, you'll also see a break from the past. BIG will be giving greater control to customer frontline organisations to decide on how their needs are best supported. We'll also help to grow peer-to-peer, local community and business involvement in building capabilities in the voluntary sector, and rationalise on-line support services. Further information about this will be announced in the autumn.

**24. When will my organisation be able to apply for some of this funding?**

We are developing proposals for how this funding will be allocated, and will make more details available later this year. We are not planning to run a grants programme which infrastructure organisations can apply to like BASIS. The majority of our funding for support services will come via frontline civil society organisations, who will be given more resources to get the support which they need. So infrastructure organisations will be rewarded for their ability to provide support services which frontline organisations value and choose.

To complement this demand-led approach, we will also be making a limited number of investments in developing the supply of key services which are needed by civil society organisations.