

Building Better Opportunities

Questions and Answers - June 2015



What is Building Better Opportunities?

- Big Lottery Fund is matching funds from the European Social Fund (ESF), to provide joint investment for projects in England designed to tackle poverty and promote social inclusion.

How do I find out what opportunities are available?

- The funding opportunities available are on our website. Visit www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/esf where you will find a list of LEP areas that have opted to work with us. Each LEP area has its own page which lists the funding opportunities available.
- Visit our website from Friday 5th June 2015 for information on which opportunities are currently open for applications and which will be open later in 2015.

What sort of things will you fund?

- Funding will fit both the LEP's and Big Lottery Fund aims, within the 'Promoting Social Inclusion and Combating Poverty' strand of ESF. However, these are already closely aligned. The types of project we will fund cover a range of activities that meet a local need related to addressing poverty and improving social inclusion. For example, we are looking to fund projects that seek to improve employability for the most disadvantaged, help those with multiple and complex needs, or improve financial literacy, amongst many others.
- Projects will need to meet local priorities. The defining of local priorities was a process LEP area partnerships undertook following direction from government in setting up this new round of European funding. Most LEPs have published their ESIF strategies online; these documents include the priorities that Building Better Opportunities projects will tackle.
- Further information on the funding opportunities available in each LEP area can be found on our website at www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/esf

What is a project outline?

- In order to apply to Building Better Opportunities, applicants will need to respond to one of the project outlines we publish on our website.
- Project outlines describe each specific funding opportunity that is available through the programme and sets out what we want the project to achieve and the areas or groups of people that it needs to target. We'll only fund one project per project outline.
- For further detail on each project outline visit our website, www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/esf

What is the application process?

- Lottery and ESF money will be brought together into one single pot, administered by Big Lottery Fund, with only one application process and one body to report back to with monitoring information.
- Before applying you must read the project outline which you are interested in along with the 'Building Better Opportunities programme guide', 'A summary of our partnership requirements' and 'Guide to Managing EU funding' to ensure you fully understand the application process and requirements of EU funding.
- If you decide to apply you should request a stage one application form by completing a short survey on our website www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/esf.
- Applicants can apply to as many opportunities as they choose, and can apply within multiple LEP areas.
- We will publish funding opportunities in two tranches, the first of which is planned for June 2015. Assuming that the project falls in the first tranche it is anticipated that grant activity would commence early 2016. We will set out our expectations regarding grant activity start dates in the individual Project Outlines that describe the funding opportunities. The second tranche is likely to be opened in October 2015.
- You have until 12 noon, Monday 3 August 2015 to submit your application form to us. Big Lottery Fund will then assess your stage one application form within three months and decide whether to invite you to stage two.
- If you are invited to stage two you will be awarded any development grant you have requested at stage one and you will be expected to develop your application into a full project plan. Once submitted we will take three months to assess it and give you a final decision. We expect the first decisions to be made in Spring 2016.
- Award decisions will be made by Big Lottery Fund but feedback from LEP Area ESIF sub committees will be an essential part of our decision making.
- Each LEP website should list details of its ESIF Committee. In addition, each ESIF Committee will be required to ensure its members complete a register of interests and notify the Fund immediately of any conflicts. ESIF Committees will be required to exclude those with conflicts from participating in activity (including providing feedback on grant applications) that could call the integrity of the grant process into question.
- Individuals involved in the assessment of grant applications will be required to declare conflicts in advance of the assessment and will be excluded from participation in the assessment process if conflicts exist such as being involved in the development of project outlines.
- For further information read the 'Building Better Opportunities programme guide', found in the 'Related Documents' section on our website.

Will partnerships be part of any eligibility criteria when assessing the grant applications?

- Being in a partnership is not a separate eligibility or assessment criterion. We will assess applications on their merit and how they address the project outlines, however the project outlines can often be quite wide ranging and we expect partnerships are likely to be best placed to meet the needs identified.

**What will the financial criteria be in relation to the lead organisation awarded a grant?
Will current turnover be a consideration and if so, at what level?**

- There is a range of financial information we take into account when assessing applications. We will consider various criteria including the relative increase in turnover this award would bring, the size of the organisation and number of trustees /directors, and we will also take into account the track record of delivering similar size grants.

What is the eligibility criteria of participants?

- Eligibility criteria is set out by the European Commission and Managing Authority. It is included in the programme guide and the guide to delivering European Funding which can be found on our website. Project outlines may also detail specific beneficiary groups to target. All BBO activity needs to be additional to existing provision - this may mean supporting people not engaging with mainstream provision, but also providing additional, more intensive support to people on top of what they are receiving from statutory or other services.

What assessment criteria will be used?

- We will be assessing the extent to which the proposed project:
 - directly addresses the project outline it responds to, including any requisites like location or participants
 - has been designed with local circumstances firmly in mind
 - is additional to, or adds value to existing services, together with any relevant local or national strategies
 - will be led by an organisation with the appropriate expertise, capacity and capability to ensure success and
 - if the applicant is a partnership, that it involves the right partners with a clear role for them in planning and delivery.

Further details regarding eligibility can be found in the programme guide on our website.

How do you define multiple and complex needs?

- We define people as having multiple needs if they are experiencing at least two of the following: mental ill health; substance misuse; homelessness; and offending/reoffending behaviour. However other people may include other needs within that, such as domestic abuse, disability, long term health issues, financial difficulties and isolation.

Will there be any claw back of grant funding if outputs / outcomes are not achieved?

- We will pay grant instalments up to three months in advance with an initial payment at the start of the project to cover the first three months of project activity. The evidence submitted during each quarter will then form the basis of further claims for grant instalments. Payments will be made on the basis of the

actual costs you incur - not on a unit costs or payments by results basis. We will monitor the delivery of the project to ensure the targets are being met over its lifetime. We may withhold payments if progress towards these targets is limited or unclear. We'll also withhold payments if the correct documentation is not retained or submitted to us as part of the claim process.

- There is a risk of claw back, either from the Managing Authority, European Commission or from us, if EU regulations are not followed and in certain cases of under achievement. Whilst we will work closely with grant holders to avoid this outcome, we reserve the right to claw back funds if necessary.
- We are also subject to systematic claw back if we do not run a fully open and competitive process, or don't meet branding and publicity requirements. We are offering additional support to all potential applicants to help them understand EU requirements around reporting and monitoring to reduce the risk of claw back

Will there be any restrictions on the level of managing agent fees that a lead body may set for running the programme?

- A lead organisation does not necessarily need to deliver frontline activities. We recognise that reporting on European funding can be complex, so a lead organisation that can effectively coordinate all partners to comply with ESF reporting requirements could be an appropriate managing body. In these situations, the lead organisation would not be able to apply a flat management fee, but would be able to claim for all eligible and evidenced costs incurred in their management role.
- We have not set a limit, but any fees would need to be clearly articulated and evidenced and provide demonstrable value for money. We would only reimburse actual costs incurred and evidenced.

When will the rest of the funding opportunities be available?

- We expect to publish details of further funding opportunities in autumn 2015. We will update our website with information as it becomes available.
- To receive regular e-updates about Building Better Opportunities you can register your interest on our website at www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/esf

Are PDF organisations able to apply for the main funding?

- Yes. Being a PDF lead organisation does not preclude you from applying for the main funding.
- BBO grants will be awarded following fair and open grant competitions, not procurement processes. The main purpose of the PDF activity was to raise awareness of local ESF opportunities amongst *all* potential grant applicants and therefore PDF organisations and those they have worked with do not have an advantage over other applicants in the grant competition for main ESF funding.
- PDF organisations have been advised they cannot be involved in devising project outlines so to not be given an unfair advantage.

Will private sector organisations be able to apply for the main funding?

- Yes. Under EU rules the funding has to be open to everyone therefore private sector organisations will be eligible to apply. The opportunities are likely to be in areas where the VCSE sector has great expertise and we expect VCSE organisations to be well placed to make very strong applications. However, all applications will be assessed in the same way and grants will be awarded to those organisations who demonstrate the capacity to deliver the best outcomes for communities and people most in need.
- All applicants will be treated fairly and equally - the same assessment criteria will be applied to each applicant regardless of their sector. This is a central tenet of the ESF rules.

How might an EU referendum affect the tranches of funding being released?

- Any referendum is unlikely to happen before next year at the earliest. Even if the vote is to leave the EU then it will take some time to sort this through and the first round of BBO would remain unaffected. This is one of the many reasons why we have committed to review our involvement after 3 years.

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

What is Programme Development Funding?

- In October 2014 we awarded a programme development grant to one organisation in each LEP area that intended to opt in to our main ESF programme from 2015.
- This organisation raised awareness of the ESF opportunities available, acting as a main point of contact for queries and bringing interested organisations, including the VCSE sector, together to discuss local need and how best to tackle local priorities.

Who are PDF organisations?

- In most cases PDF organisations were VCSE organisations, however we also funded some LEPs where they were appropriately constituted and had the networks and relationships to deliver the objectives of this funding effectively.
- Further information about the organisations who received Programme Development Funding in each LEP area can be found at <http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/esf>

Do interested parties have to engage with the organisation awarded the Programme Development Funding (PDF) in order to be able to apply for the grant?

- There is no requirement to engage with the PDF funded organisation in order to apply for funding. In terms of our assessment of applications, each application will be treated on its own merits.

Will there be future rounds of Programme Development Funding?

- We will analyse the impact of the PDF stage and then consider, with LEPs, whether to run another round for the second half of the programme.