VCSE Contract Readiness Fund: Application Guidance

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Summary

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) is running the VCSE Contract Readiness Fund grant competition. DCMS invites bids to co-design and deliver a programme that will enable the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector to compete alongside other organisations and increase its participation in public service procurement in England.

The successful applicant(s) will be awarded up to £900,000 to be spent over three financial years between FYs 2022/23 and 2024/25.

Context

Over 75% of VCSEs deliver public services where they are based, with strong links to and knowledge of that locality. Their expertise and connection to local areas ideally place them to create responsive, efficient and trusted public services. Despite the value that VCSEs bring to public services, they only account for around 5% of government spend on contracts.[1]

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 intends to improve procurement practice and diversify suppliers to the government, enabling more VCSEs to deliver public services. It requires public service commissioners to consider how they can secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits, known as social value, through the performance of a contract.

Government extended the Social Value Act by launching the Social Value Model, placing new requirements on central government from January 2021 onwards to explicitly evaluate social value and thereby further encourage the commissioning of VCSEs.

An independent study commissioned by DCMS highlighted that the VCSE sectors face a variety of barriers to participating in public procurement.[2]

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[1] Tussell Trust Research for DCMS, UK Public Procurement through VCSEs 2016-2020, 2021.
[2] Perspective Economics for DCMS, The role of Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations in public procurement, August 2022.

Government is committed to delivering social value and increasing opportunities for VCSEs in public procurement. This grant funding aims to enable VCSE organisations to compete alongside other providers and better participate in public service procurement.

Purpose

Objectives and goals

The objective of the VCSE Contract Readiness Fund will be to enable VCSEs to compete alongside other organisations and increase their participation in public service procurement in England.

We welcome new and innovative ideas to achieve this objective. At the same time we are interested in initiatives that are proven to work, are targeted, and lead to long-term, sustainable system change. Given this, and taking into consideration the available evidence and the size of this grant funding, we expect that the successful applicant(s) will achieve the objective by:

1. improving the skills, knowledge and support networks of VCSEs for successful bidding
2. improving the awareness amongst VCSEs of opportunities regarding current and upcoming tenders
3. making it easier for the VCSE sectors to position their offer to public service commissioners, raising their awareness and understanding of the sectors' role and value
4. improving the evidence on what initiatives work

We expect to spend most resources on the outcomes related to point 1. and 2. above.

The grant funding intends to contribute to the longer term goals of greater social value, improved public services, more diverse government supply chains, sustainable VCSE sectors and improved evidence of the VCSE sectors' value to public services.

For the purpose of this grant funding we define VCSEs as organisations with a social or environmental purpose, including charities, public service mutuals, social enterprises and many other non-profits.

Target groups

The target groups the funding should help is as follows:
- VCSEs with a turnover of £250k to £10m
- VCSEs delivering services in England
- Where appropriate, activities/outputs should be targeted at VCSEs delivering services addressing health and social care, employability, disability, homelessness, domestic violence and sexual abuse
- Where appropriate, activities/outputs should initially be focused on VCSEs engaging with central government procurement and supply chains, although we would assume some of the support provided will be relevant to both central and local procurement and related supply chains. We are interested in hearing how applicants will use an

iterative approach to delivering the programme across three years to widen the scope of the programme to potentially include local government procurement.

Eligibility

Applicants must be:
- a charity or institution (other than a charity) which is established for charitable, benevolent or philanthropic purposes

and
- UK entities only and they must have traded in the UK for more than 12 months

Consortia

We welcome bids from consortia. Working together can help to enhance existing provision, and brings different sets of skills together to provide improved networks of services for the target groups. If you are working in partnership with other organisations, you should ensure that the divisions of responsibility and how you will manage your relationship with them are set out clearly in your application.

In the case of a consortium or partnership application, the lead partner must be a UK entity and have been trading in the UK for more than 12 months. For additional partners, this is a preference but not essential.

In all cases we require a lead organisation to be the one making the application and receiving government funds.

England programme

The VCSE Contract Readiness Fund is a programme of the DCMS Civil Society and Youth directorate, which funds activities which directly or indirectly benefit the whole or part of England (whether or not they also benefit any other area). It cannot fund programmes that are purely beneficial to those outside England.

Funding

Availability

The VCSE Contract Readiness Fund will offer grant funding up to £900,000 across 2022/23 to 2024/25. The DCMS Civil Society and Youth directorate is funding this.

We will require the successful applicant(s) to phase their delivery into distinct financial years and we will offer the following limits across the three financial years:
- Financial year 2022/23: Up to £200,000
- Financial year 2023/24: Up to £350,000
- Financial year 2024/25: Up to £350,000

The funding for years 2 and 3 are subject to change depending on annual finance approval processes. We will agree to the funding with the successful applicant(s) ahead of the start of the relevant financial year.

£900,000 is the total amount of funding available. If DCMS awards the funding to more than one applicant, £900,000 will be shared between the successful applicants. Applicants can request a minimum of £300,000 and up to a maximum of £900,000 of funding across the three financial years. Applicants should outline the minimum or maximum funding required from DCMS for their involvement to be possible.

DCMS are ideally looking to fund one applicant who is likely to be a lead organisation applying as part of a consortium of organisations. However it is possible that more than one applicant will be awarded, contingent on successful applicants being complementary in the delivery of overall objectives.

The value of the grant requested must not represent more than 50% of the applicant organisation or consortium's combined annual income for the financial year.

Grant funding will be paid upon receipt of proof that eligible expenditure has been incurred and will be processed monthly or quarterly in arrears (subject to agreement between DCMS and the successful applicant(s)).

Usage

Eligible and ineligible activities

We can fund the following activities where they are essential for delivering relevant services:
- Staff salaries
- Project running costs
- Running costs/overheads
- Goods and equipment which would not be capitalised (e.g. to develop enhanced physical environment and continue to deliver services)
- Organisational development

We cannot fund the following activities:
- Activities that make profits for private gain
- Campaigning activities
- Religious activities (we can fund religious organisations if their project benefits the wider community and doesn't include religious content)
- Political or lobbying activities
- Loan repayments
- Debt repayments to HMRC or other crown debts

Grant funding must not be spent on:
- Debts or loans
- Projects outside of the stated funding priorities
- Retrospective funding
- Business as usual activities

- Anything not covered by the objectives of this grant programme
- Payments reimbursed or to be reimbursed by other public or private sector grants.

Administration costs

We allow for administration costs of no greater than 7%. We expect administration costs to cover activities such as grant management.

Value added tax

We will make the grant offer on the basis that the costs presented to the Department take account of all VAT liabilities. If it is later found that the project costs increase because an error has been made about whether VAT can be recovered, DCMS will not increase the grant to cover this. If the applicant is, after all, able to recover VAT, which it had included in the costs put forward to DCMS, the applicant will be liable to repay all or some of the amount it recovers, to DCMS.

DCMS may seek to recover some or all of the grant if the applicant is performing unsatisfactorily or if the project ceases activity. DCMS may not require all or part of the grant to be repaid where the reasons for unsatisfactory performance or early cessation of work is beyond the control of the applicant and reasonably unforeseen by the applicant.

Match funding and in-kind contributions

We welcome match funding from applicants, however this is not a mandatory requirement.

It is essential that the sources of funding used as the basis for the match are legitimate and not sourced by means of unlawful or unethical practices, or from unlawful or unethical sources.

Applicants cannot use a grant from the VCSE Contract Readiness Fund in conjunction with funds received from DCMS or other ALBs or government departments.

Financial requirements

The applicant should present a detailed budget breakdown of their proposed activity. The financial breakdown should be submitted as a separate document that is emailed as an attachment alongside the application form.

The DCMS financial year runs 1 April to 31 March. All funds awarded through this grant **must** be accounted for by 31 March 2025. If successful, your determination letter will set out the committed amount of grant that DCMS will pay for the first financial year (FY 22/23) and indicative amounts for the next two financial years (FY 23/24-24/25).

The grant award must not exceed 50% of your annual income/turnover or collective annual income/turnover if you are applying as a formal consortium.

Payments will be made monthly or quarterly (subject to agreement between DCMS and the delivery partner prior to signing the grant agreement). You will need to provide a breakdown and evidence of actual, eligible expenditure in order to make a claim. We will only pay out the amount you can evidence as spent. If you believe there is a compelling reason to be paid at the point of need please set this out in your application. Your request will be considered as part of the assessment process and subsequent due diligence, but will not, in itself, disadvantage your application.

If your application and point of need request are approved, you will be expected to provide evidence for the need (e.g. through cash forecasts) and subsequent monthly reconciliations for the duration of your project. The reconciliations (with supporting evidence) will be required before any further funding is released and will detail how funds received have been spent, identifying any underspend that may have arisen. You will also be required to complete a formal Financial Reconciliation Statement (FRS) form at the end of the financial year. This will be provided by DCMS to evidence all appropriate spend against eligible grant activity.

You must be able to carry out performance and financial reporting in at least monthly intervals until the end of the funding period. Funds must be shown as restricted funds in your accounts and you must be able to identify separately the value and purpose of the grant in your audited accounts. You will be asked to describe the financial management systems and processes you will put in place to ensure you can achieve this in your application.

Please provide (1) a copy of your annual reports and audited or certified accounts covering the last 12 months and (2) the expected turnover for this current financial year for your organisation and any organisations you are applying as a consortium with. This information is required to support DCMS' due diligence process for applications and must be provided

Subsidy control

As of 1 January 2021, EU state aid rules no longer apply in the UK for new subsidies awarded after that date. The UK has entered into a Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU, which contains certain Subsidy Control provisions governing the award of subsidies by UK public authorities that may affect trade and investment between the UK and the EU.

The current rules are explained in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) guidance [Technical Guidance on the UK's International Subsidy Control Commitments](). [The Subsidy Control Act 2022]() will come fully into force in October 2022.

Applicants will need to consider whether any grant funding they award is compliant with rules on Subsidy Control applicable at the time of award.

Grant monitoring and reporting

Successful applicants will be responsible and accountable for the management of the grant funding which will consist of the following:

- Provide monthly financial and performance monitoring data returns for the grant funding period. DCMS will provide a template for returns
- Attend monthly monitoring meetings to report on the progress of grant awards (based on the monitoring returns) and update on risks/slippage on spend
- Work with the independent evaluation partner to support design of the evaluation and collection of relevant data for the overarching process and impact evaluation (if possible following feasibility study) to be delivered across the whole VCSE Contract Readiness Fund

Evaluation

We will separately commission an independent evaluation of the programme. The successful applicant(s) must work together with the appointed evaluators.

The evaluation will likely include both process and impact strands to understand the reach and delivery of the programme, as well as its impact on participating organisations. We expect that the evaluation will utilise data and evidence collected/generated by the programme provider, including administrative data on participating organisations.

The evaluation will also likely aim to generate formative (i.e. mid-programme) and summative evidence, which is intended to feed back into continuous programme development and improvement.

Proposed timetable

The VCSE Contract Readiness Fund will commence in December 2022 and end by 31 March 2025. Funding will be awarded in distinct financial years.

All activity must have taken place and the expenditure incurred by 31 March of each financial year for which the funding is agreed for.

You must be confident of your ability to co-design and deliver your project so that it is operational by mid-late January 2023 at the latest. A full proposed timetable is below. Please note the proposed timetable is only a guideline. DCMS reserves the right to make any changes it deems necessary to the proposed timetable.

Evaluation timings highlighted in *italic*.

FY 22/23	
1 Sept	Applications for the VCSE Contract Readiness Fund opens
8 Sept	Any questions by potential applicants submitted
By 20 Sept	Answers to questions by potential applicants published
29 Sept	Deadline for applications

12 and 13 Oct	Interviews for shortlisted applicants
By 14 Oct	Notification of successful applicant(s)
By 21 Oct	Due diligence
w/c 24 Oct	Announcement of successful applicant(s)
By 28 Nov	Programme co-design [incl. evaluation]
By 5 Dec	Programme launch
Feb 2023	*Application for evaluation contract opens*
Mar	Programme delivery completed for FY 22/23
FY 23/24	
Apr	*Evaluator appointed*
Apr - Mar	23/24 programme delivery
Sep - Oct	*Mid-programme process evaluation completed*
Jan - Mar	24/25 programme plan scoped and planned
FY 24/25	
Apr - Mar	24/25 programme delivery
Jan - Mar	*End of programme process and impact evaluation completed*
Apr	*Summative evaluation report published*

Application process

Timetable

FY 22/23	
1 Sept	Applications for the VCSE Contract Readiness Fund opens
8 Sept	Any questions by potential applicants submitted
By 20 Sept	Answers to questions by potential applicants published
29 Sept	Deadline for applications
12 and 13 Oct	Interviews for shortlisted applicants
By 14 Oct	Notification of successful applicant(s)
By 21 Oct	Due diligence

w/c 24 Oct	Announcement of successful applicant(s)

Instructions for submitting bids

The grant will be open for applications from 1 September to 12:00 noon, 29 September 2022.

To submit your application please send your application form along with your supporting documents to vcse-contract-readiness-fund@dcms.gov.uk adding "GRANT APPLICATION" to the subject line.

The deadline for applications is **12:00 noon, Thursday, 29 September 2022.** Any applications received after the closing date will not be assessed or considered.

Assessment

A panel will assess the bids. Please assume that assessors have no background knowledge of your organisation, its aims and what it does. It is therefore important that your application is as clear, concise and unambiguous as possible.

Initial sift

We will review your application to check that the information in the body of the application meets the eligibility checklist.

Individual evaluation of eligible bids

We will then score eligible bids in line with our key criteria.

The table below sets out what we are looking for, the weighting in the bid evaluation, and the questions we will use to make our assessment.

Successful applicants will…	Weighting	Section
have a convincing argument for how and why the programme is likely to meet the objectives and longer term goals of the grant funding, including their approach to co-design.	35%	3.
have the capacity and capability to co-design and deliver at pace.	20%	4.
give us confidence that the bidder will add value to an independent evaluation, and utilise and generate relevant data and evidence that can be used to design and iteratively develop the programme to maximise its impact	15%	5.
have a convincing plan to assure the legacy and sustainability of the programme beyond the grant funding end.	15%	6.

deliver value for money.	15%	8.

Moderation of scores

We will moderate scores and shortlist applicants to interview.

Interview

We expect to interview shortlisted applicants on 12 or 13 October. The interview can be in person or online. The interview panel may include an external party/external parties.

Final moderation

In the final moderation we will decide the proposal(s) we would like to fund. We will take into account the overall score, the interview and the extent to which the set of bids create a well-rounded programme.

Due diligence

All successful applicants will be subject to comprehensive due diligence reviews and other database searches, including fraud risk indicators. The relevant documentation is expected to be provided alongside this form, as set out above.

Final confirmation

Upon successful completion of due diligence, we will issue the final confirmation of the successful applicant(s).

Application form guidance

Wordcount

Word counts apply. We will not consider additional text, whether as annexes, appendices or otherwise, unless where specified.

Eligibility checklist

This checklist will help you to check that your proposal meets our eligibility criteria and that you are sending us a fully completed application. If you answer **NO** to any of these questions, then your application will not be eligible.

My organisation is both: [Yes/No]

- **a charity or institution (other than a charity) which is established for charitable, benevolent or philanthropic purposes**

and

- **UK entities only and they must have traded in the UK for more than 12 months**

Applicants must be both:

- a charity or institution (other than a charity) which is established for charitable, benevolent or philanthropic purposes
- UK entities only and they must have traded in the UK for more than 12 months

My programme takes place in England. [Yes/No]

Only programmes taking place in England are eligible for funding.

My programme targets: [Yes/No]

- **VCSEs with a turnover of £250k to £10m**
- **VCSEs delivering services in England**
- **VCSEs delivering services addressing health and social care, employability, disability, homelessness, domestic violence and sexual abuse**
- **Central government procurement including supply chains**

We will only fund programmes that target all of the below:

- VCSEs with a turnover of £250k to £10m
- VCSEs delivering services in England
- VCSEs delivering services addressing health and social care, employability, disability, homelessness, domestic violence and sexual abuse
- Central government procurement including supply chains

My programme proposes activities and outputs to enable VCSEs to compete alongside other organisations and better participate in public service procurement by: [Yes/No]

- **improving the skills, knowledge and support networks of VCSEs for successful bidding**
- **improving the awareness amongst VCSEs of opportunities regarding current and upcoming tenders**
- **making it easier for the VCSE sectors to position their offer to public service commissioners, raising their awareness and understanding of the sectors' role and value**
- **improving the evidence on what initiatives work**

We will only fund programmes that propose activities and outputs to enable VCSEs to compete alongside other organisations and better participate in public service procurement by:

- improving the skills, knowledge and support networks of VCSEs for successful bidding
- improving the awareness amongst VCSEs of opportunities regarding current and upcoming tenders
- making it easier for the VCSE sectors to position their offer to public service commissioners, raising their awareness and understanding of the sectors' role and value
- improving the evidence on what initiatives work

My programme proposes resource(s), available freely and beyond the target group(s) participating in the programme, that complements existing free resources. [Yes/No]
We are interested in the resources developed as part of this programme to be available freely and beyond the VCSEs and public sector commissioners participating in the programme, that complements existing free resources.

I am willing to comply with the independent evaluation and will give access to supporting evidence for how the grant was spent. [Yes/No]
Applicants must comply with the independent process evaluation and will give access to supporting evidence for how the grant was spent.

The money I am applying for will be used to fund activities where they are essential for delivering relevant services. [Yes/No]
The following activities can be funded where they are essential for delivering relevant services: staff salaries; programme running costs; running costs/overheads; goods and equipment which would not be capitalised (e.g. to develop enhanced physical environment and continue to deliver services); organisational development.
The following cannot be funded: activities that make profits for private gain; campaigning activities; religious activities; political or lobbying activities; loan repayments; debt repayments to HMRC or other crown debts.

I will be responsible and accountable for the funds. [Yes/No]
Applicants will be responsible and accountable for the funds.

I have provided (1) a copy of annual reports and audited or certified accounts covering the last 12 months and (2) the expected turnover for this current financial year for your organisation [where applicable] and any organisations I am applying as a consortium with. [Yes/No]
Applicants must provide (1) a copy of annual reports and audited or certified accounts covering the last 12 months and (2) the expected turnover for this current financial year for their organisation [where applicable] and any organisations they are applying as a consortium with.

I have included a copy of my organisation's/consortium's equality and diversity statement and safeguarding statement. [Yes/No]
All applicants must include a copy of their organisation's/consortium's equality and diversity statement and safeguarding, which will be the framework within which the programme will operate.

I have attached a complete budget breakdown, and confirmed that I have done so. [Yes/No]
Applicants must have attached a complete budget breakdown and confirmed that they have done so.

I have confirmed I am satisfied with the DCMS draft terms and conditions for grant agreements. [Yes/No]
Applicants must be satisfied with the DCMS draft terms and conditions for grant agreements available on the gov.uk website. The terms and conditions are non negotiable.

I have completed every section of the form. [Yes/No]

Applicants must have completed every section of the form. We will only consider applications which have every section completed.

Section 3. Programme design

Through this section we want to understand:
- how likely it is that the activities and outputs you are proposing will meet the objectives and longer term goals of the grant funding
- how you will approach the co-design phase of the programme
- how well your proposal fits with the target groups we are interested in

This section is worth 35% in the assessment.

We are interested in funding programmes which…	We will not fund programmes which…
…propose a programme backed up by a persuasive hypothesis as to why they will meet the objectives and longer term goals of the grant funding, and therefore propose an effective programme.	… propose a programme backed up by an unclear or unconvincing hypothesis as to why they will meet the objectives and longer term goals of the grant funding, and therefore propose a programme that may not be effective.
… have a convincing approach to co-designing the programme, with a clear plan for the co-design phase.	…do not have a convincing approach to co-designing the programme, with an unclear plan for the co-design phase.
… propose activities and outputs, including some innovative approaches such as innovative partnership structures, that offer additional value to already existing resources, and that sign-posts systematically to those existing ones.	… propose activities and outputs that do not include any new approaches at all, that duplicate already existing resources, and that do not sign-post to existing resources.
…propose clear outcomes resulting from the outputs of the programme.	… propose unclear or ill-suited outcomes resulting from the outputs of the programme.
… identify a clearly defined target group(s) (including their needs) and set out convincingly why the proposed programme is particularly likely to work for them.	… identify a target group(s) (including their needs) that is unclear or ill-suited to the proposed programme.
… set out a convincing plan for how the programme will identify and build awareness, interest and uptake amongst	… provide little confidence that the programme will be able to identify and build awareness, interest and uptake amongst

both targeted VCSEs and public sector commissioners across England.	both targeted VCSEs and public sector commissioners across England.
… set out a convincing plan for how the programme will engage with diverse VCSEs, employing people with protected characteristics.	… provide little confidence that the programme will be able to engage with diverse VCSEs, employing people with protected characteristics.
…are large enough in scale.	… will only reach small numbers of the targeted VCSEs and public sector commissioners
… are tailored to the different needs of both the targeted VCSEs and public sector commissioners.	… offer a 'one size fits all' approach.

Considerations

Below are some considerations you should consider when putting together your proposal of the activities/outputs that you will deliver:
- Services need to be mindful of the different needs of VCSEs (by size, participation levels [incl. central government, local government, Strategic Suppliers, further down the supply chain], public services, location, organisational structure [i.e. commercial vs. non-profit])
- Activities and outputs need to strike a balance between generalist and more targeted offer in order that as much of the VCSE sectors benefit from the programme as possible.
- There may be an opportunity for the successful applicant(s) to collaborate with a cross-government group whose objective will be to improve commissioning of VCSEs across central government.

Below is an <u>indicative</u> list of activities and outputs which we believe would support the delivery of the objectives of the fund. However we also encourage you to propose new and innovative approaches.

A) Improve the skills, knowledge and support networks of VCSEs in order to help them compete for public service contracts:
   a) Audit of existing training/resources
   b) Online and/or in-person training programme
   c) Resources/collateral freely available for organisations to access online
   d) Sign-post systematically to other capability and capacity building initiatives and resources that government has supported
   e) Topics for training/resources could include but are not limited to: technical skills (e.g. bid writing, digital, financial and legal skills), how to engage with commissioners, consortia biddings, responding to social value model and its requirements, getting on to Crown Commercial Service frameworks, what the UK public procurement reforms mean
   f) Brokering pro bono support from private sector to upskill VCSEs
   g) Innovative uses of social investment financing models

h) Where appropriate, training/resources should take learnings from DCMS research publications into the role of VCSEs in procurement

B) Improve the awareness amongst VCSEs of opportunities regarding current and upcoming tenders and what is required to participate
   a) Communication and engagement campaigns

C) Make it easier for the VCSE sectors to position their offer to public service commissioners, raising their awareness and understanding of the sectors' role and value
   a) Organising "Meet the Supplier/Buyer" events between VCSE organisations and central government commissioners
   b) Producing a digital map that shows where VCSEs offer services relevant to contracts/subcontracting opportunities - e.g. using Charity Commission dataset and Social Enterprise UK registry
   c) Producing case studies that demonstrate and promote the social value VCSEs create delivering priority services

Section 4. Programme delivery

Through this section we want to understand how well placed you are to co-design and deliver on your proposal at pace. We will assess the performance management skills in place to ensure your programme meets the objectives and longer term goals of the grant funding.

This section is worth 20% in the assessment.

We are interested in funding programmes which…	We will not fund programmes which…
… build on a track record of programmes of a similar scope and/or scale.	…have no track record of programmes of a similar scope and/or scale.
… give us confidence in the experience of key staff and their roles in the programme.	… give us concerns about the experience of key staff and their roles in the programme.
… give us confidence in the value added of any partnership work and the arrangements in place to manage the partnership.	... give us concerns about the value added of any partnership work and the arrangements in place to manage the partnership.
… set out a comprehensive mobilisation plan that gives us strong confidence the organisation will be able to mobilise quickly.	… give us concerns that the organisation will not be able to mobilise in time.

… give us strong confidence that the organisation would be capable both of spotting any dip in performance, and addressing it.	… give us concerns that the organisation would not be able to identify a dip in performance and address it.
… give us confidence that they will ensure that the funds are spent in the timelines of the fund.	… give us concerns that they will overspend/underspend.

Considerations

Once the grant is awarded to a successful applicant(s), there will be a three to six week co-design process, depending on need, to fully design and agree the programme of work. The successful applicant(s) will be expected to phase activity into distinct financial years and take an iterative approach, using learnings from year 1 to inform activities in year 2 and so forth.

You will need to demonstrate that you have credible plans for delivery. Applications should demonstrate that the programme plans have been thought through and that there is a robust approach to governing the project and managing risks. Applications should provide a clear description of how initial activities will commence and should detail the process for setting up the programme.

Section 5. Programme evaluation and learning

Through this section we want to understand how well placed you will be to:
- add value to an independent evaluation
- utilise and generate relevant data and evidence that can be used to design and iteratively develop the programme to maximise its impact

This section is worth 15% in the assessment.

We are interested in funding programmes which…	We will not fund programmes which…
... give us confidence that the organisation has a clear focus on the use and collection of evidence to support continuous improvement and an understanding of what works.	… give us concerns about the organisation's lack of clear focus on the use and collection of evidence to support continuous improvement and an understanding of what works.
…can add value to an independent evaluation (e.g., working collaboratively with an evaluator, collecting necessary data, generating other evidence).	… give us concerns about their ability to add value to an independent evaluation (e.g., working collaboratively with an evaluator, collecting necessary data, generating other evidence).

Section 6. Programme legacy and sustainability

Through this section we want to understand how well placed you are to:
- use and share the learnings of the programme
- support the most successful initiatives to continue their activity beyond the end of the grant funding.

This section is worth 15% in the assessment.

We are interested in funding programmes which…	We will not fund programmes which…
…can support the dissemination of learning and evidence to further maximise the impact and longevity of the programme.	…cannot support the dissemination of learning and evidence to further maximise the impact and longevity of the programme.
… sets out a convincing plan to support the most successful initiatives to continue their activity beyond the end of the grant funding.	… sets out a convincing plan to support the most successful initiatives to continue their activity beyond the end of the grant funding.

Section 7. Equality and diversity statement and safeguarding statement

Sections 7 require details of your organisation/consortium's approach to equality and diversity and safeguarding. It is critical for the safety and wellbeing of staff delivering the VCSE Contract Readiness Programme, and programme target groups, that it is delivered in an equal opportunities and diversity framework and with a rigorous safeguarding policy.

Section 8. Programme finances

Through this section we want to understand how well placed you are to deliver good value for money through your programme.

This section is worth 15% in the assessment.

We are interested in funding programmes which…	We will not fund programmes which…
… give us confidence that the organisation will deliver value for money.	… give us concerns about whether the organisation will deliver value for money.

Grant award

Acceptance of funding

DCMS will notify all successful applicants by 14 October 2022 and send a determination letter with details of the value of the grant.

If you are successful in your application, you need to accept the offer of funding within one month of the date of the offer letter. Any offers not accepted within this timescale may be withdrawn unless an extension to the offer has been agreed in writing (email and letter).

We will issue determination letters at least each financial year of the programme, and we will review the value of the grant awarded on this basis. We will review the amount of grant being committed in the determination letter based on performance against target and success measures for the programme.

Grant terms and conditions

The DCMS draft terms and conditions for grant agreements is available on the gov.uk website. The terms and conditions are non negotiable. Submitting a proposal means acceptance of the terms. You should not seek to amend the terms and conditions.

Unsuccessful applications

We will inform all unsuccessful applicants by 14 October 2022. We will issue written feedback.

Please note that the decision will be final.

If you have a complaint about the way your application is handled, email us at vcse-contract-readiness-fund@dcms.gov.uk.

Advice and support

All available information and guidance relating to this grant funding is contained in this document.

If you have clarification questions, please contact us on vcse-contract-readiness-fund@dcms.gov.uk by 8 September, after which no more will be responded to.

All clarification questions will be anonymised and made public so that all potential applicants are able to access any additional information.

As the application process is competitive, we are unable to provide support in completing the application.