Voluntary Sector Investment Programme Innovation Excellence & Strategic Development Fund 2015-16

Frequently Asked Questions

Voluntary Sector Investment Programme

Innovation Excellence & Strategic Development Fund 2015-16

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Contents

Important Notes

Do you keep this document under review?

- Yes, we review it in the light of your feedback and Government policy developments. We recommend that you check it regularly for amendments.

Important Note Regarding Funding Strands

- If applying under the Innovation strand your proposal must meet the criteria in **all** of the four bullet points on page 19 of the information pack.

- If applying under the Excellence strand your proposal must meet the criteria in **both** of the bullet points on page 19 of the information pack.

- If applying under the Strategic Development strand your proposal should meet any **one** of the five bullet points on page 20 of the information pack.

Grants Hub Contact Details

- You should route all queries through our Help Desk either by email to voluntarysectorgrantshub@dh.gsi.gov.uk or by phone 0113 254 5450.

1. Eligibility

Is my organisation eligible to apply?

The eligibility conditions are outlined on page 11 of the information pack. If having read this you are still unclear, please contact the Grants Hub using the contact details on page 1 of this document.

My organisation is not primarily health or care focused. Can we apply?

If your organisation does not have a health or care focus you may not be eligible. If you are unsure, you can check your charity objectives or your company objectives (as set out in your Memorandum and Articles of Association). If your objectives allow you to carry out health and care focused activities then you will meet this eligibility criteria. We may ask you to provide details of your company objectives if we cannot get this from existing sources such as the Charity Commission website.

Can I make more than one application?

You can submit:

One application with your organisation as the designated sole applicant.

and/or one of:

One application (for a separate proposal) with your organisation as the designated lead accountable body for a partnership application; or

One application as an equal partner in a joint application (even if you are not the lead contact for the purposes of AIMS.

(Please refer to page 15 of the information pack for the definitions of partnership and joint applications).

If you send in more than one application as the sole applicant and/or more than one application as the lead accountable body for a partnership or joint application, we will ask you to identify which application(s) should continue and which should be withdrawn. Please note that you can be involved in numerous partnership applications, provided your organisation is not the lead accountable body.

2. Online Application Process

I don't have internet access. How do I apply?

We can only accept applications submitted via the Award Information Management System (AIMS). Please contact us if this is likely to cause a problem for your organisation. Not having internet or email access should not put you off making an application if your organisation is eligible. There are other alternatives e.g. internet access at libraries.

Do I need to register again if I applied last year?

If you submitted an application, as your organisation's contact, to the IESD Fund in a previous year, you are not required to re-register on AIMS. However, you will still need to complete the eligibility form by noon on 13th March.

If your organisation applied to last year's Fund, but your application contact has since moved on, then the new application contact will need to register her/his details and complete the eligibility form by noon on 13th March. However, you will not need to complete the organisation details again. Once you have created a new AIMS log-in, please contact the Grants Hub to ask us to link you to your organisation.

I'm really struggling with the online application system, is there any guidance available?

An e-learning user guide is available to guide you through the process, this can be found in the top right hand corner of the 'AIMS' log-in page or can be accessed via the IESD page on the DH website.

If you are new to AIMS we strongly recommend you access this e-learning. It only takes a few minutes to complete and we have found it answers most of the AIMS related queries we receive. However, if having completed the e-learning you are still having problems, please contact the Grants Hub directly.

What should I do if I have forgotten my password?

Click the "forgot your password" link. You will be invited to enter your e-mail address. Click 'continue' to request a new password.

We have an application and want more than one person in our organisation to access the form. What should we do?

We would not recommend this, as this has led to confusion in the past, however, this is possible. Please contact the Grants Hub for a member of staff to arrange this for you.

Is there a word limit?

There are character limits on each of the questions. Please use the facilities on your word processing package to count the characters, as we are not able to save text of more than the designated number of characters in our database. There is a character count underneath each box on the application form within AIMS, to help you see how many characters you have left to use.

It should be noted that the word count function in Microsoft Word counts characters (such as spaces, hyphens, tabulation spaces, soft/hard character returns (end of paragraphs) and bullets a little differently than the AIMS system.

In which format should I submit my attachments?

Please submit all attachments in PDF format as we have previously experienced problems opening documents created in newer versions of Word and Excel.

How do I view the whole form?

You can see the whole application form by first clicking on the link "application form" in the "To Do" area of the main application screen (which is titled "Complete application"). The next screen (which is titled "Smartform") shows links to all four sections of the application form. In addition, there is a link "View the whole form (for printing)" and this can be used to generate a read-only Word version of the whole form. We recommend that you print a hard copy of your application form once it is complete, as you will not be able to access an electronic copy once it has been submitted to the Department for consideration.

AIMS does not appear to be working properly

AIMS does not appear to work to its full capability when accessed using older browsers such as older versions of Internet explorer. Try using a different browser such as Mozilla Firefox. If you continue to have problems please contact the Grants Hub.

3. Completing my Application

In the organisation profile section you ask us to indicate which groups our organisation focuses on. We cover all groups. What should we tick?

That section of the profile is seeking to identify organisations that have a specific focus rather than work across all groups. This will provide information to support our Equality Impact Assessment work, it will not impact on the likelihood of your application being successful. If you work across all groups and communities you do not need to select any. Similarly, if your organisation focuses on BME communities you should just choose 'BME'. You can select more than one area if applicable.

Our organisation works across all of the funding themes. How should we apply?

The theme relates to the project, not to your organisation. You should choose the theme that most closely fits your project. Use the space in question 2.2 if you want to describe how your project fits in with the other funding themes. Choosing more themes does not increase your chance of success.

Can you explain what you mean by a local project that has the potential for having an effect nationally?

Please refer to page 14 of the information pack for details on national impact.

For innovation and Excellence proposals what sort of project plan should we attach?

Project planning is a discipline for stating how to complete a project within a certain timeframe, usually with defined stages, with designated resources and within a budget. The plan should consist of the following:

A START and END date

Milestones for deliverables (i.e. outcomes etc.)

Activities/ Tasks needed to deliver these

Include STAGES if required

Any tasks required for the project Evaluation

Any tasks required for the Dissemination of project outputs

Project Closure/ Exit Strategy

For Strategic Development bids, what sort of business plan should we attach?

Business Planning is an organisation's process of defining its strategy, or direction, and making decisions on allocating its resources to pursue this strategy. In order to determine the direction of the organisation, it is necessary to understand its current position and the possible avenues through which it can pursue a particular course of action.

A business plan should cover at least a three year period and may include:

- Organisation's Vision, Mission, Values and objective
- How the strategic direction of the organisation is planned & who is involved
- A SWOT analysis for your organisation (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). The Strengths and Weaknesses are internal aspects and Opportunities and Threats are external.
- Ongoing Projects and proposed projects that the organisation is running
- Income generation and sustainability plans (including capacity building)
- Relationships (including on ongoing projects) with other organisations, commissioners & other stakeholders
- How the activities (this application) will increase your business success in future. What are the opportunities these activities will open up for your organisation?
- How crucial this project (the application) is to the organisation.

There is no space to add my Equal Opportunities or Health & Safety policies

You do not need to supply us with a copy of your Equal Opportunities policy or your Health & Safety policy. Confirmation that you have both of these policies in place in the organisation is sufficient.

We may ask to see these documents if your application is successful.

4. General

What is the maximum amount that I can apply for?

We do not stipulate a minimum or maximum amount. We are interested in high quality applications that demonstrate value for money. We will scrutinise high value projects more closely and may require reports more frequently.

However, be aware that for Innovation and Excellence applications you will not be able to apply for an amount higher than 25% of your annual income. Experience has shown that if one grant is a high percentage of an organisation's income, they may find it difficult to cover core costs through full cost recovery. As a result, it could make the project proposal more risky and the organisation more dependant on central government funding.

Do I have to apply for 3 years funding?

No, you can apply for anything from 1-3 years, depending on the length of your project. Proposals should be an appropriate length in order to achieve their objectives.

How are applications assessed?

As long as your proposal meets the eligibility requirements, we assess applications against set criteria, based on the questions on the application form. We also take into account expert advice in relation to all policy areas that your project would contribute to, and if appropriate, we may ask for the views of other Government Departments and partners.

Our funding programmes have a limited budget and so we will have to prioritise applications. It is important that you read the information pack and tell us exactly how your application tackles each criteria and theme we have described.

Ministers, informed by recommendations from officials, make the final decision on successful applications.

When will we know if we have been successful?

- We aim to inform you of the outcome of your application by Late Summer 2015. We will do this by e-mail to the main registered contact on AIMS.

I'd like to discuss my application. Whom should I contact?

Grants Hub staff can help you with questions about the technical aspects of completing the form and using AIMS. We will also be able to help you with any queries on the application process in general. If you want to discuss how your proposal matches a particular policy, we will ask an expert in the field to contact you.

Can I discuss my project face to face with someone?

Unfortunately, due to the large numbers of applications involved, it is not possible for us to meet to discuss applications.

What is full cost recovery?

Full cost recovery means recovering or funding the full costs of a project or service. As well as the costs directly associated with the project, such as staff, equipment or resources, projects will also draw on the rest of the organisation. For example, adequate arrangements for finance and how you are governed, how you manage staff, IT systems, accommodation and utilities are also important parts of any project or service. There are different ways that you can work out amounts to cover all these different parts, and there are organisations in the voluntary sector that would be able to support you to do this including the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO) and the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA).

What information is required in a reference?

As a minimum, we would expect to see the following:

Referees should state how they know the applicant/s.

the capacity in which they have worked with the organisation;

the duration of time that they have known the organisation for;

an evaluation of the work undertaken;

a statement as to whether the referee would work with the applicant/s again in the future.

What is the definition of a small national organisation?

Our definition is an organisation with an annual income of not more than £500,000, gross assets of not more than £3,260,000 and an average number of employees of not more than 50 per year.