



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Frontline Homelessness Advice

Bidding prospectus

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1. Information about the service required

The Department for Communities and Local Government is running a competitive grant process to find an organisation to deliver specialist support, advice and training to frontline housing and homelessness advice staff covering the period October 2014 – March 2016. The service will provide a safety net for people experiencing housing issues who will have access to effective and efficient housing advice. It is intended that provision of the service will lead to a reduction in incorrect housing decisions and save money by reducing expensive legal challenges and facilitating the cost-effective use of local authority resources.

The audience for the service will be frontline staff providing homelessness and housing support in local authorities and the voluntary sector including Citizens Advice Bureaux. The service will be expected to cover England and will be free for the audience to use and access.

2. Policy context

Statutory homelessness is around half the average rate it was under the last administration, and remains lower than in 27 of the last 30 years. The number of homelessness acceptances has started to decline with the latest statistics showing a 5% decrease nationally compared to the same quarter the year before.

The Government continues to invest in services to prevent and tackle statutory and non statutory homelessness and rough sleeping. We have maintained £470m of investment over the spending review period to help local authorities and the voluntary sector to support the most vulnerable – and continue to protect one of the strongest statutory safety nets in the world.

We value the essential contribution that local authorities and other frontline agencies in the voluntary and charity sector make to assisting those in housing need and want to support them in this important work.

Free, independent and accessible advice services for frontline staff dealing with housing and homelessness issues provides a strong foundation for the support services working with society's most vulnerable people. Its provision will enable services to offer the best and most appropriate advice to those most in housing need.

3. Costs and funding arrangements

This prospectus invites eligible organisations, or partnerships of organisations, to bid for a grant from the department for the financial years 2014 -15 (October - March) and 2015 – 16 (April – March). Available grant is up to £1.5 million for the remainder of the 2014 -15 financial year and up to £3 million for financial year 2015 -16. We are not able to commit

funding beyond the current spending review period (up to March 2016). You are not required to bid for the full amount available. Any funding provided must be legitimately spent in the year it is allocated, so your bids must include a reliable profile by financial year.

Bids must set out the total amount of funding required along side a fully costed budget, broken down by budget lines across financial years (please see table included in the application form).

All grant funding must be spent on services set out in the bid and any unspent funding returned to the department at the end of the relevant financial year. The service should be provided free at the point of access.

Bidders may work alone or in partnership with other organisations. If the successful bid is from a partnership then a lead partner must be nominated to receive all grant payments and provide the necessary grant funding monitoring information. This is to ensure clear lines of accountability and communication. The lead partner will be responsible for passing on the relevant share to the other partner(s).

The successful bidder will be announced by the 30th June 2014. The successful bidder will be expected to commence the service on 1st October 2014.

Funding will be issued under Section 180 of the Housing Act 1996. The funding agreement will set objectives and conditions under which the grant can be spent. Grant will be paid in arrears on a quarterly basis on receipt of valid claims, monitoring data and management information supporting delivery (as will be agreed in the grant funding agreement).

4. Eligibility

An organisation is eligible to receive the grant if it is a corporate body or has a formal constitution if not incorporated.

We will consider as eligible applications from partnerships, where the lead partner organisation meets all the eligibility criteria of the fund in its own right, on the basis that the level of funding applied for were to be provided to that partner alone.

Our financial policy is that we do not in general provide funding to a value of more than 50 per cent of the last year's income of an organisation

5. Process and timetable for assessment of applications

Bids must be led by a single lead delivery organisation. The bidder may work in partnership with other organisations to deliver the service but the department will only fund one organisation who will be the lead partner.

Bids will be evaluated by DCLG officials. If the bids received are close then bidders may be invited into the department for an interview on the detail of their bid. A recommendation will be made to ministers who will decide on the successful bidder and to whom the grant will be awarded.

Timetable

13 May 2014	Prospectus launched and competitive grant process opens
5pm 13 th June 2014	Deadline for submitting bids
16 -18 th June 2014	Sift and evaluation as against criteria
19 - 20 th June 2014	Interviews if deemed necessary
By end June 2014	Announcement of award of grant to successful bidder
July 2014	Agree funding agreement
1 st October 2014	Delivery of service commences

6. Bid requirements

Bidders will need to show how their bid meets the following objectives:

1. Provides nationally consistent, effective, quality homelessness and housing advice to a range of frontline audiences; and
2. Supports and facilitates the prevention of all forms of homelessness (statutory, single homelessness and rough sleeping) through provision of advice and support to frontline audiences.

Bidders are asked to design a service which:

- Provides nationally consistent quality housing advice;
- Provides accessible, responsive and flexible support to frontline advisers;

- Develops and maintains the capacity of frontline staff to provide effective and accurate advice;
- Aids appropriate local authority decision making on statutory homelessness cases;
- Ensures that frontline advice services are up to date on housing and homelessness policy and legislation and that advice is consistent;
- Aids the cost effective use of local authority and voluntary and charity sector resources;
- Is responsive enough to target extra support where it might be identified as most needed;
- Strengthens the capacity of frontline staff (Local Authorities and the Voluntary and Community Sector) to prevent homelessness (and therefore reduce the costs associated with statutory homelessness and rough sleeping);
- Improves outcomes for the most vulnerable by providing accurate and quality advice which is accessible and useable via frontline providers.

We encourage bidders to consider innovative proposals for the service – in terms of delivery model, audience and homeless client group. Bidders are asked to demonstrate that all proposals are deliverable within budget and timescale.

7. Assessment criteria

The bids will be assessed against the following criteria:

1. Costs/Value for money / understanding of project requirement
2. Knowledge and experience of homelessness legislation
3. Track record in delivering advice provision to a wide range of audiences
4. Innovation in the delivery model / capacity to deliver within timeframe

Marking will be on the following scale:

Score	Description
0	absence of evidence / response
1	Indicates weak evidence
2	Indicates limited evidence
3	Indicates sufficient evidence
4	Indicates strong evidence

Weighting is not being applied, so the total score will be the sum of scores in each of the 4 sections (minimum 0, maximum 16). This will lead to a total score for each bid out of 16.

Detail of the criteria against which bids will be assessed

1. Costs / Value for money and understanding of the project requirements

- Does the proposal deliver the objectives and services identified in the bid requirements?
- Does the bidder have a clear proposal to tailor support on complex housing issues to frontline audiences?
- Has the bidder demonstrated they are a financially viable entity and provided a set of accounts?
- Has the bidder provided a breakdown of expected unit costs by financial year and a realistic proposed budget breakdown by financial year?
- Are the costs reasonable given the work proposed?
- Have the benefits been clearly outlined and quantified, and do they appear deliverable?
- Are the outputs clearly good value for money when compared to the costs of delivery?

2. Knowledge and experience in housing and homelessness legislation

- Has the bidder evidenced they understand housing and homeless legislation?
- Has the bidder demonstrated that they have experience and / or track record in providing advice on housing and homelessness legislation?
- Does the bidder have any experience of court hearings involving homelessness cases?
- Does the bidder demonstrate how they will keep abreast of Government policy developments, legislative changes and case law?

3. Track record in delivering advice provision

- Can the bidder demonstrate any experience of delivering advice services with, or for, vulnerable households or individuals?
- Has the bidder experience of working with frontline advice service providers?
- Does the bidder have any history of working to prevent homelessness (in all its forms)?

4. Delivery and Innovation

- Has the bidder given a clear explanation of how their proposal would be implemented?
- Has the bidder thought through the practicalities and logistics of their delivery plans?

- Has the bidder demonstrated that they are able to deliver the service within the necessary timeframe?
- How will the bidder ensure that the service proposed is adequately flexible and responsive to user needs?
- Has the bidder demonstrated how they will ensure quality and consistency in delivery across England?
- Has the bidder shown innovation and innovative ways of working when describing their delivery model?
- Has the bidder illustrated how they will maintain and develop frontline staff knowledge and capacity?

Applicants will need to confirm that if their bid was successful the service the department would be grant funding would not be delivered by your organisation or, to the best of your knowledge, by another organisation in the absence of this grant.

Applicants will also need to set out for information what other activities, if any, in relation to housing advice and training to frontline services are being delivered and funded by other means.

Ministers reserve the right not to take forward any bid that does not provide sufficient evidence on any of the points set out above.

8. How to apply

Applicants will need to complete the application form to demonstrate:

- Detail of the service you propose, and how your bid meets the assessment criteria;
- A proposed timetable of planned activities and costs across the entire funding period, for purposes of considering value for money;
- Capacity to deliver - including confirmation that you will be able to start delivering support from 1st October 2014.

In addition, we will need to receive copies of your organisation's accounts for the last three accounting years. If the accounts are not available your organisation will need to provide a statement, agreed with its auditor, explaining the situation.

The information we ask for is to ensure that we understand the nature of the organisation, including any partnership structure, and the organisation's background in terms of suitability to deliver the proposed service, and so that we can be confident that a grant would not be an unlawful state aid.

Application forms are available from www.gov.uk or upon request if you email the DCLG homeless and support team: kirstin.blagden@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Applicants are required to submit bids no later than **5pm Friday 13 June 2014** to kirstin.blagden@communities.gsi.gov.uk. Bidders are encouraged to limit any supplementary information to 3 slides of A4.

A named individual should be nominated for contact purposes. Please provide a contact number and email address. Any queries about bidding for the grant should be directed to kirstin.blagden@communities.gsi.gov.uk in the first instance.

9. How your application will be handled

We will acknowledge receipt of all bids. The process will be to first assess completeness and eligibility of the bid, then to assess the relative quality of the bids from eligible organisations. This stage will assess the relative merits of the bid, having regard to the criteria set out above.

The application best meeting the criteria laid out in this prospectus will be recommended to ministers for approval.

We expect to notify applicants of the result by the end of June 2014. After this we will agree the monitoring and reporting arrangements to the department and what management and financial information will be required within quarterly reports and claims.

Once the selected organisation, or partnership of organisations, have accepted the terms and conditions on which the grant will be provided they will be expected to commence the service on 1st October 2014. The department will reimburse valid expenditure as set out in the signed funding agreement.

Homelessness and Support Division
Housing Directorate
Department for Communities and Local Government
May 2014