

Grants Committee

Grants Programme 2017-21: Update on
commissioning process

Item 6

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Summary

At their meeting of 13 July 2016, members of the Grants Committee agreed nine specifications under the following two priorities,

Priority 1 Combatting Homelessness

Priority 2 Tackling Sexual and Domestic Violence

for services to be delivered from April 2017 to March 2021.

Following this a commissioning application process was launched. This report provides an update on the commissioning application process and information regarding the next steps.

Recommendations

Members are recommended to,

1. Formally thank the borough officers who have been involved in the scoring and moderation process
2. Note the progress made with the commissioning application process, in line with the commissioning performance management framework
3. Note the next steps outlined in Section Four.

1. Background

1.1 Following recommendations from Grants Committee, Leaders' Committee considered a report on the future London Councils Grants Programme at their meeting 22 March 2016 and agreed, that there should be a Grants Programme from April 2017 to March 2021, operating in accordance with the current principles and focused on the following priorities -

Priority 1 Combatting Homelessness

Priority 2 Tackling Sexual and Domestic Violence

Priority 3 Tackling Poverty through Employment (European Social Fund match funded)

1.2 Members also agreed that there should be a re-focus to some of the priorities as follows. Priority 1 and 3 to be more closely aligned, greater focus on the different needs of inner and outer London (particularly in relation to Priority 1) and in addition a strengthened focus on robust outcomes and borough involvement in the specifications development to ensure best fit with local services.

1.3 Grants Committee considered a package of evidence (including two consultations, a letter from MOPAC, a report on homelessness by Homeless Link, equalities information and findings from a borough and VCS domestic violence event). The evidence supported a reflection of the current funding service areas of Priority 1 and 2 with the addition of various changes to address the changes that have taken place since the start of funding in 2013.

1.4 These changes were taken forward and specifications were co-produced with relevant borough officer networks and GLA/MOPAC. The specifications were drafted with the intention of including clear, robust and SMART¹ outcomes, and to ensure value for money and best fit with existing local and regional services and duties. At its meeting of 13 July 2016, Grants Committee agreed the nine service specifications.

2. Update on the commissioning process

2.1 Following members' agreement of the nine specifications, officers launched a commissioning round, seeking applications that address the service specifications, in line with the performance management framework. The commissioning round was launched on 8 August 2016 and closed on 15 September 2016. A notice of the launch was distributed widely through networks of VCS and relevant borough officer networks as well as London Funders and the GLA and a press release.

¹ SMART – Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic/relevant, time-bound

2.2 A total of 33 applications were received. The level of funding applied for is almost double the indicative amount advertised. The total value of funding applied for is £11,712,172 against the indicative funding level of £6,173,133 agreed by members of the Grants Committee, at their meeting of 13 July 2016. Of the 33 applications, 22 are applications made in partnership with additional organisations. This reflects the steer from the Grants Committee towards partnership delivery, in order to address the range and scope of the specifications agreed by members. The partnership applications have a range of 1 – 14 partners in each (not including the lead partner) and there are a total of 62 partner organisations across all applications.

2.3 Applications cover a vast range of target groups across the nine protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010, including many that are difficult to provide specialised services for at a local level due to the low numbers or the fact that they are not typically accessing local support. Applications have sought to address the key issues raised in the Grants Review, including the need to reflect increasing need in outer London, the need to tackle the interrelated issues of poverty and homelessness, and homelessness and sexual and domestic violence. In addition the need to have robust SMART outcomes, a highly focused service that does not duplicate, but links well with and supports local provision.

2.4 The number of applications is considerably less than the level received in 2012 for the previous round for priorities one and two (33 in 2016, 89 in 2013). This can be accounted for by a number of factors. Firstly, an increased number of organisations have developed partnership applications, reflecting the steer from Grants Committee, as described above, reducing the number of individual applications. In 2013, of the 89 applications 44 (49%) were in partnership. In 2016, of the 33 applications, 22 (67%) are in partnership. The reduced number of applications is also in response to the fact that the specifications were produced closely with the input of boroughs and key stakeholders to ensure that the services outlined were those that reflected the principles of the programme and did not duplicate local provision and were best suited to pan-London delivery. This has narrowed the scope further and it was clear during the application process that organisations were mindful of this when making a decision as to whether to apply.

2.5 The fact that the programme reduced significantly, prior to the previous round, meant that the previous round also included a number of speculative applications from priority areas that were not taken forward. This has not been the case with this current round. The reduced number also reflects the fact that since 2012 a number of organisations have gone into administration, due to the economic situation and reduced availability of funding.

3. Scoring and moderation process

3.1 There are several ways in which the scoring process has been designed to give members confidence that it has been undertaken in a robust manner. In line with the commissioning monitoring policy (agreed by Grants Committee, February 2013 and reviewed in a report on this agenda) applications have been assessed against a standard scoring framework. The scoring framework measures ability to deliver the specification, fit with the principles of the programme (including non-duplication and fit with local services), value for money and sustainability of the organisation/management of risk. To ensure transparency the scoring framework was published during the application round. Due diligence and eligibility checks will also be undertaken during the application stage to ensure that organisations are eligible for funding and that the projects financial viability and capacity to deliver the project are assessed.

3.2 All applications were scored against the standard criteria by two officers individually and then a joint score was undertaken in cases in which the total score did not match. To further ensure a robust process, the scoring has then been checked in internal meetings to review the consistency of scoring. At this stage the applications with the highest scores were reviewed against the specifications to identify any gaps.

3.3 Continuing the triangulation approach outlined in the commissioning performance management framework, officers have worked with relevant borough officers to ensure the best package of applications is recommended, taking on board both their specialised and local knowledge.

3.4 This has been undertaken firstly through inviting officers from the relevant officer networks to participate in scoring and assessment based on their functional areas of expertise. This invitation received a very positive response from borough officers with officers from 17 boroughs (from MOPAC's VAWG borough officer network and the Housing Needs and Homelessness borough officer network) as well as two housing partnerships (covering 8 boroughs each) and GLA officers involved. The joint scoring outlined above was generally with one London Councils officer and one from a borough or the GLA. . being involved in the scoring. This approach is in line with learning from the Grants Review about the need to ensure commissions reflect the needs of boroughs and has greatly strengthened the process. This scoring process is now largely complete and members are recommended to give their formal thanks to those officers for undertaking this task.

3.5 Secondly, borough officers (and key stakeholders, GLA and MOPAC) have been invited to two moderation meetings to review the highest scoring applications. These meetings are designed to review the package of highest scoring applications. The meetings are a chance for boroughs to comment on the extent to which the package of support meets the objectives of the 2017-21 Grants Programme and will deliver the commissioned outcomes as well as the fit with local services. It is anticipated that these

meetings could result in a further review of scoring or additional conditions of grant to be applied to the recommended projects.

4. Next steps

4.1 There are a number of steps that will take place following the initial scoring in line with the Commissioning Performance Management Framework (a report on this framework is on this agenda). It is anticipated that further work will need to be undertaken following the borough moderation meetings, which at the time of drafting this report have not yet taken place. This could include reviewing particular scores, or reviewing applications in light of any gaps identified in addressing the specification (including equalities effects). Officers are keen to ensure that issues raised in the Grants Review and specification co-production are addressed at this stage, including drafting grant conditions for recommended projects where necessary.

4.2 There are also a number of internal checks that are required by the framework. References will be checked for each recommended application (in line with audit recommendations this will be two references for any application above £1m). Due diligence checks will take place to assess the financial viability as well as other checks on relevant policies submitted with the application. This is to ensure that organisations have the relevant governance, insurance, policies and arrangements in place (such as safeguarding, partnership agreements/ letters) and that the financial viability is assessed, and where necessary measures put in place to mitigate any risks.

4.3 Where the number of high scoring applications exceeds the indicative amount allocated by Grants Committee officers will work to review budgets to examine options for the recommended package. Officers will also examine the proposed borough spread from the highest scoring applications against the indicative levels in the specifications agreed by members. Once a list of recommended applications is drawn up, officers will draft the report for Grants Committee and initiate the right to reply process in line with the Commissioning Performance Management Framework. Applicants are provided with 10 working days to submit a response to the officer recommendation based on specific criteria, as outlined in the Commissioning Performance Management Framework. Officers will then draft a response and recommendation following receipt of the right to reply submissions. The initial officer recommendations, applicants' right to replies, and the officer response to the right to replies are submitted together to the Grants Committee.

4.4 At its meeting of 8 February 2017, members will be presented with information on a package of projects recommended for funding. Information will also be provided on applications that are not recommended for funding (including right to replies as above). Subject to agreement at this meeting officers will work with successful organisations to enter into grant agreements, in line with the revised

Performance management Framework Policy (subject to members' agreement of this at the same meeting). Projects will then start delivery on 1 April 2017 or soon after.

4.5 Alongside this process Grants Committee's recommendation with regards to the budget proposals for 2017-18 will be submitted to Leaders' Committee at their meeting 6 December 2016. Recommendations brought to the Grants Committee in February 2017 will be in line with the budget agreed in December 2016.

Recommendations

Members are asked to,

1. Agree to formally thank the borough officers who have been involved in the scoring and moderation process
2. Note the progress made with the commissioning application process, in line with the commissioning performance management framework
3. Note the next steps outlined in Section Four.

Financial Implications for London Councils

None. A report on the 2017-18 budget proposals is included on the agenda.

Legal Implications for London Councils

Legal implications relating to the Grants Review were outlined in the reports to Leaders' Committee and Grants Committee March 2016.

Equalities Implications for London Councils

Information was considered by the Grants Committee and Leaders' Committee on equalities implications at their meetings in November and December 2015 and March 2016. Specifications agreed by members in July 2016 were drawn up with equalities target groups outlined and equalities objectives. Applications have been assessed against standard criteria, which include a question covering the applicant's ability to delivery services accessible to people with the protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010. The equality policies of applying organisations are also reviewed at application stage.

Background Papers

Grants Committee, Grants Programme 2017-21, 13 July 2016

Leaders' Committee, Grants Programme 2017-21, 22 March 2016

Grants Committee, Grants Programme 2017-21, 9 March 2016

London Councils Grants Additional Consultation 2017/21 (including equalities impact assessment)
December 2015 – January 2016

London Councils Grants Consultation 2017/21 (including equalities impact assessment) July – October
2015

Leaders' Committee, Item 9 - Review of Delivery of a London Grants Programme – 8 December 2015

Grants Committee, Review of London Councils Grants Programme, Item 8, 18 November 2015
(including equalities impact assessment)