Advice Services Transition Fund – Updates to guidance: December 2012

Since we launched the Advice Services Transition Fund a number of groups have been in touch with a range of queries. However, with the 28th January deadline for submission of bids not too far away, we wanted to remind everyone interested in applying about a few key points. We know that writing bids and developing partnerships is often time-consuming, so if after reading all the materials you are still uncertain about any aspects of the programme or application process, do get in touch with us at Advice.Transition@biglotteryfund.org.uk .

A reminder about the programme…

All projects must meet both of the following two outcomes:

1. Advice organisations collaborate effectively with each other, and other agencies, to improve service outcomes for customers

and

2. Local advice services are resilient and well-equipped to meet future needs, with more modern and enterprising business models and more diverse sources of funding.

You can ask for between £50,000 and £350,000 to be spent over a maximum of two years. We are inviting applications from new and existing partnerships of local not-for-profit advice providers who can come together and demonstrate that they have compelling plans to improve services in their local area and make them more viable.
You can find full details about the programme Here

Updates to guidance

We've had requests for further clarification of some of the Q & A's. Below are responses to the most common queries. Don't forget to keep checking back to read the Q & A updates posted on the website but if you do have specific questions or queries, you can contact us via: Advice.Transition@biglotteryfund.org.uk

Organisations working across more than one local authority area – REVISED GUIDANCE:
Some organisations may provide services in more than one local authority area. For example, some national organisations provide direct advice services in a number of different local authority areas. If these are permanent service points providing social welfare advice and fulfil the other eligibility criteria for the programme, than they are able to lead or be members of separate partnerships. However, no individual organisation can lead more than one bid.
Please note: In the original application form, we indicated on page three that "Individual organisations cannot be part of more than one proposal". This has been superseded by the guidance above and the application form has been amended.

For profit organisations: Some partnerships work closely with for profit organisations, such as private firms of solicitors, often on a pro bono basis. Such organisations can be part of a partnership in order, for example, to receive and make referrals, but cannot receive any funding from the programme. However such an organisation can be reimbursed for the cost of providing services such as training to other members of the partnership and of course a firm of solicitors could benefit in other ways, for example, by being party to a online referral system financed by the partnership or by participating in training provided by others.

Local authority areas: We recognise that some unitary authorities cover a very large area, and there are also a number of unitary counties covering very large geographical areas. In such circumstances we have said that we would be willing to accept bids that work in a different way (perhaps across a local authority boundary, or in smaller settlements within a single area) where applicants can demonstrate there is a clear benefit from that approach. We have also said the range of advice providers within the partnership should reflect the full needs of the people and communities in your geographical area. It will be up to groups of advice providers, working with the local authority, to decide what best meets the needs of a given area.

Lead organisation: We expect advice providers and the local authority within an area to discuss and agree on the organisation best placed to lead the bid. If the selected lead organisation is one whose principal activity is ***not*** the provision of advice, they must be able to demonstrate that it is a ***significant*** activity for them.

Two bids from one second tier local authority area: The range of advice providers within the partnership should reflect the full needs of the people and communities in your geographical area. We expect that each successful partnership should provide at least welfare benefits, debt, housing and employment advice. We would expect that successful bids will include the main advice agencies and relevant local authorities in the area covered. It is highly unlikely that we would fund two separate bids covering the same *geographical* area and so it is important that each partnership covers a broad range of advice needs for the general population.

Local authority support: We have stated in the application materials that we expect all bids to be able to demonstrate that they have consulted the relevant second tier local authority and all the main local advice providers during the development of the partnership. Local authorities have a key role in funding social welfare advice and so their view on the structure of any advice partnership is important. You should discuss your developing proposal with the relevant local authority and explain briefly in your application how their views are reflected in the proposal. We may ask you to provide evidence of the local authority's response.

Direct Service Delivery: We have said that up to 25 per cent of a grant can be used for direct service delivery. By this we mean funds for the continuation of existing frontline advice services run by partners in a bid. The development of new 'direct delivery' channels that will help the advice sector work together to improve services and become more enterprising and resilient should form part of the main bid.

Application Form: In addition to the change mentioned above, we have increased the text limit in the boxes under the 'Change indicators' for each project outcome in section 3.1 of the form. This should allow sufficient text to be entered under each heading.

How we can help

We aim to provide you with all the information you need to make an application to the Advice Services Transition Fund.

As noted on the website, we have dedicated staff that can help you with specific questions. The email address if you do have any queries is: Advice.Transition@biglotteryfund.org.uk We aim to reply to questions within two working days.

If you have a hearing impairment, you can contact us on 0845 6021659.

Further help and support

BIG has been advised that the national advice networks have developed a shared spreadsheet which shows all of their organisations across local authority and 2nd tier areas. You may find this useful in helping develop your bid, but it is not part of the programme materials or a requirement for application or assessment.

Listed below are organisations which may have information to help you. The list is by no means exhaustive, and of course the information you gather in preparing your bid, and developing your bidding strategy, is entirely your choice.

Advice Services Alliance (ASA) – www.asauk.org.uk

Advice UK – www.adviceuk.org.uk

Age UK – adviceunit@ageuk.org.uk

ACEVO - www.acevo.org.uk

Baring Foundation, The – www.baringfoundation.org.uk

Business in the Community – www.bitc.org.uk

Citizens Advice – www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Law Centres Federation – www.lawcentres.org.uk

Law for Life - www.lawforlife.org.uk

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) – www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) – www.navca.org.uk

Shelter – www.shelter.org.uk

Social Enterprise UK - www.socialenterprise.org.uk

Youth Access – www.youthaccess.org.uk

(This is list not exhaustive, and is provided as a guide only. Organisations not shown here may have equal expertise. If you are national level organisations and consider you have information that would be helpful to applicants to this fund, but you are not presently on this list, you can e-mail advice.transition@biglotteryfund.org.uk and BIG may consider updating this list)

Dates for your diary

November 2012 to end of January 2013 – You identify and engage with potential partners and agree how your project will address the outcomes of the programme
12 noon on 28 January 2013 – Deadline for submitting applications
February and March 2013 – We assess your application and discuss any queries with you
April 2013 – We'll tell you our decision. If successful, you will draft a partnership agreement and send it to us for approval. We will review this and may contact you with any questions.
June 2013 – Deadline for submission of partnership agreements – this will be a maximum of two months after you receive our offer of funding. The sooner you send us your partnership agreement and we are able to approve it, the sooner you can start your project.