

Making a complaint



Introduction

If you would like to make a complaint about your contact with our staff, a grant application that you have made or a grant that we have awarded you, you should use the following guidance.

Making a complaint will have no bearing on the level of service you receive from us. So, if your complaint is about a funding application, this will not affect your chances of getting a grant from us in the future. There are certain circumstances that our complaints process will not handle, we explain more in this guidance.

If you have any particular communication needs, or need information in other languages or in another format, please contact our customer services department on **0191 376 1704** or by email **customer.services@biglotteryfund.org.uk**.

What can I complain about?

You can complain if you believe that:

- maladministration has taken place. For example if we have delayed, made mistakes in, or failed to follow the procedures in our application process
- we have failed to give you access to information or have given you incorrect advice or information
- we have not treated you politely
- we have discriminated against you or not treated you fairly.

If your complaint is concerning a funding application, we can only review the application again if:

- we discover that we did not follow the published procedures for assessing your application
- you can show that we have misunderstood a significant part of your application
- you can show that we did not take notice of relevant information.

What you cannot complain about

A rejected application: You may be disappointed if we turn down your application for funding, but you cannot use the complaints procedure to appeal against our decision on giving a grant if we have followed our decision making process correctly.

Big Lottery Fund/government policy: You cannot complain about our published policies or any government policy through this process. If you have any comments about our policies, send these to our customer services department.

Fraud: Do not use this complaints procedure to make a complaint about any fraud you believe has taken place. You should report this to the police or our internal audit department on **0800 4969991** or fraud@biglotteryfund.org.uk.

Concerns that fall outside our grant-making process: You cannot use this complaints process for any interaction with us which is outside of our grant-making processes.

If you do have a concern that falls outside our grant-making processes please contact customer services who will pass it on to the correct department for you. Customer services can be contacted on **0191 376 1704** or by email customer.services@biglotteryfund.org.uk.

How do I make a complaint?

Stage 1

If you are not happy with the service you have received, contact the office you first dealt with. You should do this as soon as possible after the incident that has resulted in your complaint.

If you no longer have the relevant office's contact details, please contact customer services on **0191 376 1704** or write to:

Customer Services
Big Lottery Fund
2 St James' Gate
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 4BE

Email: customer.services@biglotteryfund.org.uk

When making your complaint you should set out the facts as clearly as possible, in a logical order. Remember to include important details and dates where possible. We can explain how we will process your complaint.

If you need any help, you can contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau. To find your local bureau please contact **03000 231231** or visit their website at www.citizensadvice.org.uk.

We will keep all complaints confidential. If you make a complaint, we will treat you with respect, and we expect you to treat our staff in the same way.

If possible we will try to put things right. We hope that we can settle complaints as quickly as possible in this way.

When can I expect to hear back from Big Lottery Fund?

Within three working days of receiving your complaint we will write or phone you to confirm receipt.

We will also tell you how you can contact the person who is dealing with your complaint and when you can expect a reply.

You will receive a final response to your complaint within 10 working days. If we cannot give a full response in this time, we will tell you why and when you are likely to receive it.

How do I make a complaint?

Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the response you receive: you can take this further by writing or emailing our chief executive at:

Chief Executive
Big Lottery Fund
1 Plough Place
London
EC4A 1DE

Or on mail: chiefexec@biglotteryfund.org.uk

Please tell us:

- what happened
- when it happened
- who dealt with you
- what you would like us to do to put things right.

You must do this within four weeks of receiving our response to Stage 1.

If you cannot make your complaint in writing, please contact the customer service department on **0191 376 1704**.

Our response will advise you if you are able to progress to Stage 3 or whether another regulatory body, such as the Information Commissioners Office, would be more appropriate in handling your complaint. We will provide you with the appropriate contact details in our response.

How do I make a complaint?

Stage 3

If you are not satisfied with our chief executive's reply, you may be able to refer your complaint to the independent complaints reviewer (ICR).

We will advise if this option is open to you. The ICR is unbiased and will hear both sides of the complaint.

The ICR is not part of our organisation and their investigations and recommendations are independent. You can ask the ICR to look at your complaint, or our chief executive can ask them to do this. There is no charge for using the ICR.

The ICR has the power to decide whether or not to investigate a complaint, and they will explain their reasons if they decide not to investigate it.

If the ICR investigates your complaint and finds that it is justified, they will recommend ways for us to put things right, and how to prevent a similar situation in future. The ICR aims to report within three months, and usually more quickly. We will normally make any changes the ICR recommends to our current procedures as quickly as possible.

The ICR cannot consider complaints that have not gone through the procedure set out in this document. If you want the ICR to consider your complaint, you must write to them within four weeks of receiving our chief executive's reply.

The ICR cannot reverse funding decisions or make comments or changes to our legal responsibilities and policies on awarding grants.

The ICR contact details are:

Tel: 020 7273 1529

Email: coordinator@lotteryforum.org.uk

Other complaint review bodies

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (England, Northern Ireland and Wales)

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's role is to consider complaints that public bodies have not acted properly or have provided a poor service.

By law, the Ombudsman is independent of the Government and the civil service, and has wide powers to investigate.

The Ombudsman does not normally investigate complaints if they have not been through our complaints procedures first and if it has been more than one year since you became aware of the cause of your complaint.

The Ombudsman can only consider cases that are referred to them by a member of parliament (MP). You will therefore need to liaise with an MP for this to occur. The Ombudsman's services are free and their contact details are:

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman
Millbank Tower
Millbank
London
SW1P 4QP

Complaints Helpline Phone: 0345 015 4033

Web: www.ombudsman.org.uk

Judicial review

A judicial review is where a judge examines your complaint to see whether we have behaved illegally. The judge cannot rule that we must change a funding decision, but they can ask us to reconsider our decision.

Public Enquiry Service

If you want to comment on any government policy on Lottery distribution, contact:

Public Enquiry Service
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

Website: www.culture.gov.uk

Phone: 020 7211 6000 (general enquiries)

Email: enquiries@culture.gov.uk

Further information

Your personal information

If you use our complaints procedure, you are agreeing that we can use any personal information you send us for purposes connected with your complaint. We may also give your personal information to other people and organisations if we have to do so by law or if you have given us permission.

Equal opportunities

We are committed to equal opportunities and take complaints about discrimination seriously. We may use complaints about discrimination to review our policies and procedures. This is to make sure we treat everyone equally.

We will keep all information confidential.

Making a complaint

Further copies available from:

Phone: 0345 4 10 20 30

Textphone: 0845 6 02 16 59

Email: BIGAdviceTeam@biglotteryfund.org.uk

Our website www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

Accessibility

Please contact us to discuss any specific communications needs you may have.