

# Tower Hamlets Council Local Community Fund Programme

## Frequently Asked Questions

Assessment process .....	2
Bidding process .....	2
Budget .....	4
Complaints and Appeals.....	4
Co-production and Co-design .....	4
Costing bids.....	5
Feedback .....	6
Geography.....	6
Innovation .....	7
Local providers .....	7
Monitoring and Evaluation .....	7
Outcomes .....	7
Partnerships .....	8
Premises.....	8
Programme schemes .....	9
Resourcing the process .....	9
Quality Assurance .....	10
Seldom Heard Communities .....	10
Small grants.....	10
Small organisations .....	11
Social Value .....	11
Support.....	11
Themes, Priorities and Outcomes.....	12
Unsuccessful bids - Support for MSG funded organisations whose funding changes significantly.....	12

## Assessment process

Assessment criteria included? Will there be guidance? When can we see it?	The assessment criteria and scores are published in the prospectus.
Will interviews or presentations form part of the decision process	The assessment process is solely based on the information provided in the bidding form.
Who will the assessors be? How will their suitability be assessed?	The council is engaging an external organisation to assess the LCF bids. This organisation will have to meet a number of criteria around capacity, experience and quality standards. The assessors will have to be experienced, have appropriate service knowledge and some understanding of the local area.
Will the assessors see through professional bid writers with their fancy buzzwords?	Assessors are experienced in spotting 'professional' bid writers. Some bid writers are good and do justice to the projects they are representing. We generally discourage organisations to engage bid writers. Even where language may appear to be a barrier, it is better for an organisation to write its own bids and then, if necessary, ask another organisation or the CVS to review it and help improve it. Assessors will be asked to identify similar bids which have clearly been written by the same person and we may consider whether they should be funded or not.

## Bidding process

Will the council make an offer of funding based on my bid or is it 'all or nothing'?	You should cost your project realistically for the amount it will cost to deliver. The council will not 'make offers' except in very exceptional circumstances. The exceptional circumstances will be very limited and likely mainly to be as a result of the equality impact assessment.
By using a method where you will only get what you ask for with no reduced offer if successful in order to ensure more groups have a chance, means this leaves it open for a lot more groups to end up with nothing	We are asking organisations to cost their projects realistically to ensure the limited funding available can be spread as widely as possible. Unfortunately it is very likely we will not have the funds to support all good projects. It would be invidious to dilute the funding to the best projects in order to fund a larger number. There would be two effects. First, organisations would revert to the outdated inflation of costs assuming their bids will not be fully supported. The other effect would be to dilute the impact of the projects which have been assessed as the most effective by not giving them what they need.
Can an organisation apply as an individual AND as part of a consortium or even as part of different (competing) consortia for the same theme?	There is no restriction on organisations bidding in different ways for the same project. However, only one can be successful so if two consortia were successful and both included the same project we would only fund that project once.
Will the process allow for bids that cross themes? Can we bid under more than one	You can bid to more than one theme. Each theme will need a separate bid. If your project spans more than one scheme within a theme, you only need to do one bid.

theme? Two separate applications?	
Should applicants try to put bids in aiming to cover as many priorities as possible, or focus on certain ones?	Your bid will be assessed against relevance to the priorities you select. It would be better to get a good score against one priority which your project is clearly relevant to than to get a lower score because you have included priorities where the project is less relevant.
Can I make a single bid for three priorities in one scheme and also make three separate bids in case the first one is not successful?	The assessment of the link between activity and priority is five points (of 100). If the project links well to the three priorities there may be little merit in submitting separate bids as well. If the project clearly links far better to one priority than the other two a single bid would score more highly.
Are priorities weighted?	Priorities are equally weighted.
How do we evidence need? Are you just looking for high level needs or the needs of subsets of the population?	We will provide a set of references in the programme prospectus for local strategies and datasets. You may also have your own research/user feedback to evidence need. In the assessment you will need to reference national, local and your own evidence of need to achieve the highest score. This is set out in the prospectus.
Will there need to be sub-outcomes within our bid or are the outcomes fixed as written within the scheme?	We ask you to set out the specific outcomes of your project. You may have only two or three for a small project while a larger one may have more. We are suggesting a limit of ten. These are outcome which you design for your project. These project outcomes should like to some or all of the higher level outcomes set out in the LCF scheme you are bidding to. More information about outcomes, indicators and measures is set out in the programme prospectus.
Where do culture and environment fit in?	The LCF programme is not set up to fund specific areas of activity. So for instance, cultural activity such as dance and drama may be able to contribute towards meeting outcomes in a number of different priority areas. Some may be illustrated in the examples of activity but many will not be. We encourage organisations to look across all of the outcomes in the programme regardless of whether some themes appear to be a 'natural fit' or not.
What will happen if there are too many successful applications but not enough funds?	The fund is limited and it is inevitable that some good projects will not be funded. Unfortunately this is the case with any funding programme. The council will have measures in place to support organisations currently funded through MSG whose bids are not successful (see below 'Unsuccessful bids')
With word counts, how can bids capture whole story?	Word counts establish parameters and help focus bids on the relevant material for assessment. The word counts are quite generous for most projects. Bids are assessed on the information provided to ensure fairness and transparency. If

	Why can't assessors ask for clarifications?	assessors engage in conversations with bidders there is a clear potential for them to be influenced by information not included in the original bid.
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## Budget

	<p>What is the budget?</p> <p>Has the amount of funding in MSG been kept the same as promised by the Mayor (in public)?</p>	<p>The amount of money allocated to the new funding programme is the same as the council expects to spend on the current programmes in 2018/19. The budget will be £2.66m with a further £440k available through grants. The council is committed to supporting the VCS. Even though we are forced to make significant cuts elsewhere, we believe supporting the sector is a high priority and brings good value for money for local residents.</p>
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## Complaints and Appeals

	Is there an appeals process if we are unsuccessful?	As with all council activities there is a complaints procedure if people believe they have not been treated fairly. The evaluation of bids will be checked and moderated to ensure they are assessed fairly against the agreed criteria. There will also be an equality impact analysis before final decisions are made.

## Co-production and Co-design

	<p>How will the Local Community Fund be co-produced in line with the council's commitments in the VCS strategy and borough plan?</p> <p>Why no co production as service users would recognise it in the documentation?</p>	<p>Co-production is an approach to working with local people which the council is committed to implementing across all services wherever possible as part of its wider community engagement strategy. The development of the Local Community Fund framework is one of the first major projects to be piloted using this methodology. While we accept this has not reached the gold standard which we eventually hope to achieve, the level of engagement and commitment to the process shown by partners so far has been outstanding. It has been a learning experience particularly around the time it takes and the difficulties of 'engagement fatigue'.</p>
	<p>What are the expectations for co-design? Not all organisations will have the resources for elaborate co-design.</p> <p>Will there be training?</p>	<p>There is a spectrum of experience and knowledge. Some organisations already understand and use the principles of co-design with their users and other stakeholders in the continuous improvement of their services. Many others already use the principles of co-design, though they may not recognise this methodology. For some the principles are totally new.</p>

	<p>We expect that some organisations will be using co-design from the outset but for the majority it will be a learning process during the first year to eighteen months.</p> <p>When organisations submit their bids they need to show that they have thought about how they will implement the principles of co-production. Some may have firm plans in place while others may be at a much more formative stage.</p> <p>The approach will be proportionate taking account of the resources available to smaller organisations.</p>
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### Costing bids

Is there a maximum amount that each organisation can apply for in each scheme?	We expect to fund a number of projects in each scheme. Unless an organisation or consortium can meet all of the priorities and outcomes in a scheme it will not be funded at the full amount allocated to that scheme.
Do we need to include match funding?	There is no requirement for match funding. The assessment process gives some credit for other resources levered in such as volunteers, other non-financial resources and funding for other projects (see assessment guidance in the Prospectus)
Do we need to add VAT to our bids?	There is no VAT on this funding.
Can we include capital costs and equipment?	The LCF is a revenue budget. It cannot be used for major capital works such as building work, refurbishment, IT infrastructure upgrades or other major non recurrent expenditure. Minor works such as minor internal partitioning, access improvements, equipment and other small items of one off expenditure which are part of the delivery of the project may be included in the cost.
Part of our project is digital inclusion but the digital inclusion theme is very small and we might not be successful if we apply for that theme.	Where digital inclusion activity is part of a wider project it can be included in a bid to any theme. The digital inclusion theme is intended to support projects which are exclusively focussed on digital inclusion.
Will there be guidance to determine levels of expected funding or bids? Some funders	We will ask for a budget as part of the assessment of value for money and also to ensure the project is fully costed. We will not be specifying unit costs or any other costs except where this is included in the

	specify a % for admin costs for example.	scheme guidance (meals for lunch clubs, for instance). You are expected to be realistic in your costs. There will be space on the budget template for you to explain costs where necessary. Organisations' core costs vary but we assume the amount included in your bid will be proportionate to the project. A project which is half of your organisation's activity should only include half your core costs, not all of them.
	What levels of insurance will the council require for public liability and employers liability?	The council will expect organisations to have adequate insurance. The levels of cover expected for different risks – public liability, employers etc – will be set out in the guidance documentation. This is part of the cost of the service and, while organisations will want to keep their costs as low as possible, the requirement is the same for all bidders.
	What happens if we make a surplus on our contract?	The agreements we enter into will not be public service contracts and so will not allow automatic retention of any surplus. However, if an organisation finds it is making a surplus, the council will consider any proposal to reinvest this in the organisation's activities.

## Feedback

	Would like to get honest feedback on unsuccessful bids	Feedback will be provided. We anticipate a high number of bids and it would be unrealistic to promise detailed written feedback on all. We will provide brief written feedback to all organisations and try to give more detailed feedback verbally if requested.
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## Geography

	How about ensuring geographic coverage i.e all areas are covered?	Most LCF schemes do not specify services for particular geographic areas. Bids may be for a borough wide service or for a specific geographic area. If the service is for a specific geographic area, you should include in your assessment of need some data showing why that area has particular need. It may be census data showing there is a high proportion of older people in an area and high proportion of single person households in the older age bracket which may suggest loneliness and isolation among older people. That, coupled with few services available to meet those people's needs, may indicate a need for your project with older people targeting that area. The schemes will say where we are looking for geographic coverage of an area or borough wide.
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## Innovation

	<p>How will the new programme support innovation? If the Local Community Fund is based on innovation will you fund more of what we have been doing for the last 5 years?</p>	<p>We will be looking for innovative new ways of addressing the issues which local residents face. However, that does not mean tried and tested services will no longer be supported. What is important is that you can show that you have tested whether your activities still meet the needs of your users and, where appropriate, changed and evolved your activities to meet changing needs. The new programme will include an element of co-design with your service users to ensure that what you provide continues to meet their highest priority needs.</p>
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## Local providers

	<p>How will you value localness? How will the council guard against well-resourced large organisations from outside the borough undercutting local providers with good track records and then providing inferior services?</p>	<p>Any form of commissioning or funding has at its heart gaining best value for local people in the delivery of public services to meet their needs. A local connection and knowledge of the community is often an integral element of a service. Trust, engagement with the local community and working alongside partners in a locality can make a significant difference to the effectiveness and value of a service. These considerations will be an important part of the specification and evaluation process</p>

## Monitoring and Evaluation

	<p>What will the monitoring requirements be? Will the monitoring arrangements be better than MSG monitoring? How will monitoring data be used to evidence impact? How will that data be used – i.e. how will the data be used this time?</p>	<p>Outcome based monitoring is essentially measuring impact. This means that if you are successful the council will agree with you the indicators which will show that you are achieving those outcomes and what data you will need to collect to measure this. We will also agree some performance indicators. These may be linked to the measures of your outcomes.</p> <p>There will be a mechanism for ensuring the data collected through the outcomes monitoring is fed through to support future policy making.</p>
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## Outcomes

	<p>On outcomes it's not clear; do we need to address say at least 1 or 2 etc? Also, if you address more than 1 outcome would you be likely to get an increased score over a project</p>	<p>The assessment of your bid looks at the link between the activity you are proposing and the priorities you are bidding to. Addressing more than one of the outcomes of those priorities will therefore increase you score as it will strengthen the link between your activities and the priority or priorities.</p>
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	that just addresses one outcome?	
	Outcomes are vague enough for more experienced groups to interpret, but smaller groups may struggle to formulate well-worded bids	Some organisations will have more experience in developing outcomes than others – and it is not necessarily a large/small split! We will provide training and support to develop outcomes and there are a number of excellent guides and advice sheets available. The outcomes you develop will be proportionate to your project size. A small project may not make a massive effect on improving mental health for 18 to 25 year olds across the borough but can still have a huge impact on the lives of the young people it works with. That is what the project outcomes will reflect.

## Partnerships

	What kind of partnerships will be required?	The council will not be requiring organisations to form partnerships or consortia. However, these arrangements can often lead to more effective, co-ordinated services and this will be highlighted in service specifications.
	What support to create partnerships?	THCVS will be helping partnerships and consortia to establish themselves. However, we recognise that the bidding process may be too short for complex consortia arrangements to be established and there will be opportunities for consortia to be formed post award where appropriate.
	Consortia often don't work or the lead agency dominates and takes most of the cash. How do we avoid this?	The council also recognises the difficulty in funding consortia arrangements and will look at different ways of ensuring the arrangements and funding of consortium working do not become a barrier.

## Premises

	How will you take account of the increased rent costs arising from the move to market rents?	Bids should include the full cost of the service. This will include an appropriate proportion of core costs governance, utilities, premises
	Will you specify the use of particular buildings and the rents that accrue to those?	The Local Community Fund will not specify the use of any particular building.
	Will we be no worse off from moving to market rents as was promised - If not a large proportion of the Local Community Fund will be eaten up by increased rents	Organisations occupying council owned premises will be expected to include a proportion of their premises costs in their bids. An internal budget adjustment will be made so that the Local Community Fund budget is not used to fund rent payments back to the council.

## Programme schemes

	<p>What will the service specifications look like?</p>	<p>Service specifications will reflect the principles of co-production and co-design of services. They will also focus on outcomes rather than the more traditional, prescriptive outputs and input models. The specifications will therefore set out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The context of the specification, theme and priority within the programme that it relates to and the high level outcomes;</li> <li>b) The detailed outcomes which bidders' proposals are required to achieve;</li> <li>c) The requirements for appropriate local focus and how bidders might be expected to achieve these, and</li> <li>d) The requirements for co-design involving service users throughout the life of the funding to ensure the activities continue to meet the needs of local people.</li> </ul> <p>The requirements set out in the specifications will be proportionate to the amount of funding.</p>

## Resourcing the process

	<p>Have you the expertise and resources to deliver on this programme?</p> <p>Does the council presently have the capacity to deliver the Local Community Fund on time?</p> <p>How can you complete the Local Community Fund in less than 12 months for so many projects or services?</p>	<p>The council acknowledges this is process which requires cultural change and the development of new skills and competencies both within the local authority and in the VCS. Wherever possible we are working jointly to develop a shared understanding of how co-production and outcomes based funding will evolve in Tower Hamlets.</p> <p>The council has already made changes to increase our capacity to deliver the programme. Additional resources have been agreed to ensure the necessary skills and expertise are available to deliver the programme on time.</p>

## Quality Assurance

	<p>We need to know now what QAs will be required for which themes? As they can take months to achieve and cost a considerable amount (especially if they end up being unsuccessful) and depending on what they are and which themes groups may not be able to apply as they wouldn't have enough time to finish before contract start ( and you stated no QA no payments)</p>	<p>For the whole programme the council would like to see a recognised quality assurance accreditation. However, not all organisations will have a QA but still have the processes and procedures in place which would be required to achieve a QA accreditation.</p> <p>The assessment process therefore gives some credit for showing an understanding of QA and having measures in place. However the full five marks allocated to QA can only be achieved if an accreditation is in place. There are many QAs available so this list is not exhaustive but the council will accept PQASSO, EFQM Excellence Model, ISO 9000/1 and the Matrix Standard. Where an organisation is an autonomous branch of a national body, the council may accept the national body's accreditation standard. This may be considered on a case by case basis.</p>
	<p>We need to know now what QAs will be required for which themes?</p>	<p>Some areas of work require specific QA recognition. There are set out in the individual schemes where they apply. The main area is advice and information where there are some legal requirements.</p>
	<p>What about the costs of ensuring quality assurance</p>	<p>Where a specific QA standard is required, the cost should be included in the cost of the project. Other QA standards may incur a cost and an appropriate proportion may be included in the cost of the project. You will need to decide how much to include in the price.</p>

## Seldom Heard Communities

	<p>How does the Local Community Fund seek to ensure it delivers for smaller more hard to reach communities or groups?</p>	<p>Information about the programme will be disseminated through the traditional channels, through social media and VCS and other networks which are closer to seldom heard groups.</p> <p>The schemes and bidding process will require organisations to specify how they will work with seldom heard communities and people with protected equalities characteristics.</p>

## Small grants

	<p>Will there be any small grants for really small projects like mine which gets £2K from MSG?</p>	<p>Parallel to the contract based funding programme the council will be launching a small grant programme. Details can be found on the council's funding pages or at</p>

[www.thcvs.org.uk](http://www.thcvs.org.uk).

## Small organisations

	<p>What support will there be for small organisations around the Local Community Fund?</p> <p>What support will they get to help co-produce their projects or services when they have never done this before and have no idea where to start?</p>	<p>The council is working with THCVS and others to provide a comprehensive programme of training and support for all organisations but with a focus on those which are unfamiliar with the process. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Breaking down the complexities of the bidding process</li><li>• How to present an effective and competitive bid</li><li>• Developing partnerships and consortia</li><li>• Outcome based funding</li><li>• Developing co-design with users</li></ul> <p>As the programme is rolled out, details will be available on the THCVS website at <a href="http://www.thcvs.org.uk">www.thcvs.org.uk</a>.</p>
	<p>What's the restriction on large organisations taking the whole pot?</p> <p>Is there a turnover limitation for organisations to apply?</p>	<p>The full allocation for a scheme may only be given to a single organisation or consortium if it meets all of the priorities and outcomes in the scheme.</p> <p>Smaller organisations may score highly even if their project is for a limited area or community. It is the quality of the proposal which is more important than the size of the organisation.</p> <p>There is no limitation on turnover for the LCF.</p>

## Social Value

	<p>How will the Local Community Fund meet the commitments to social value given by the council?</p>	<p>Social value is now an integral part of the council's commissioning process and is part of the bid evaluation process. VCS organisations are well placed to demonstrate social value in the work that they do.</p>
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## Support

	<p>What support will be available to help organisations bid to the LCF</p>	<p>The council is working with THCVS and others to provide a comprehensive programme of training and support for all organisations but with a focus on those which are unfamiliar with the process. This will include:</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breaking down the complexities of the bidding process</li> <li>• How to present an effective and competitive bid</li> <li>• Developing partnerships and consortia</li> <li>• Outcome based funding</li> <li>• Developing co-design with users</li> </ul> <p>We will also provide training and support on the bidding process including using the on line bidding form.</p>
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### Themes, Priorities and Outcomes

	<p>Why have the 'themes' changed?</p> <p>How does the Local Community Fund link to the Tower Hamlets Plan or VCS Strategy?</p>	<p>The MSG themes were arranged along departmental lines within the council. The co-production of the new themes and priorities takes a more holistic view. All of the themes cross internal departmental boundaries and the draft programme illustrates that some priorities are also shared across departmental responsibilities.</p> <p>All of the priorities in the Local Community Fund programme link to the priorities and outcomes of the Tower Hamlets Plan. Part of the assessment process will look for the golden thread linking the outcomes set out in organisations' bids through the higher level outcomes and priorities in the Local Community Fund through to the Tower Hamlets Plan.</p>
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### Unsuccessful bids - Support for MSG funded organisations whose funding changes significantly

	<p>What support for unsuccessful organisations?</p> <p>Will there be access to the hardship fund for unsuccessful organisations?</p> <p>Have you thought about TUPE and who bears the cost (especially redundancy)</p>	<p>There will be activities currently funded through MSG which will not be funded through the Local Community Fund. Some of these may be significant, good quality services which no longer meet highest priority needs but which are, none the less, important in their communities. The council recognises that in any period of change it is important to ensure that this happens in a managed, orderly way and that as far as possible any adverse impact on organisations and their service users is mitigated.</p> <p>To reduce the impact of change the council will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Support a programme of capacity building to increase organisations' chance of bidding successfully, provided by THCVS, the council and other providers;</li> <li>b. Give as much notice as possible when decisions are made to give organisations the</li> </ol>
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- opportunity to adjust to their new funding levels;
- c. Make available, through THCVS and other partners as appropriate, a programme of support available in advance of the end of MSG to help VCS organisations in the transition from MSG to either alternative funding or an orderly change in the level of service;
  - d. Work with organisations to seek alternative provision for service users where a service is significantly reduced or comes to an end;
  - e. Introduce a VCS Grants programme and link to other funders to provide funding opportunities for organisations to meet new and emerging needs and develop new ways of tackling existing needs, and
  - f. Retain the Emergency Fund to help organisations meet the costs of transition, particularly those directly linked to lower levels of revenue funding.

There will be no transfer of undertakings in the transition from MSG to the Local Community Fund so TUPE will not apply.

MSG is fixed term funding with no commitment from the council towards continuation at the end of the funding period or reasonable expectation that funding may continue. Organisations should therefore be responsible for making their own arrangements for potential liabilities.