

## **The Prospectus Grant-Making process: Terms of Reference for Appraisal and Assessment Panels**

### **1. Purpose**

An appraisal panel, assisted where required by one or more advisory panels, will assess applications for funding invited under the Prospectus grant-making scheme. It will make final recommendations on funding to commissioners.

### **2. Delegated powers**

The Panel will make recommendations under the delegated authority of the relevant Council Director or equivalent responsible for the Prospectus that invited bids for grant funding. The panel will recommend the allocation of available Council funds to the Council Cabinet member with appropriate delegated authority.

### **3. The Process of Appraisal**

All bids received by the closing date will be considered.

#### **Stage 1**

The first stage of appraisal will be a report to the panel from a representative of the commissioner. The report will indicate which bids meet the technical criteria for consideration. Bids must be from organisations that qualify for third sector funding and include all of the information requested. The report will also identify duplicate bids, which will subsequently be treated as one application.

The report will also set out a number of actions taken by the commissioner between the closing date for bids and the making of recommendations to the panel. This will include a summary of any advice given to bidders who may not have met the technical criteria, and of any arrangements made to allow these bidders time to submit an amended application. Any bids still not meeting the required technical criteria will be declined at this stage.

#### **Stage 2**

The second stage of appraisal is assessment of qualifying bids, followed by recommendation on how Council or other grant funding should be allocated.

The appraisal panel will:

- Ensure that any qualifying bids will be considered.
- Decide where the threshold (i.e. cut-off point) for funding falls, identify which bids are eligible for funding, and which fall below the threshold and are therefore unsuccessful.
- Take account of references and other information supplied with a bid.
- Link decisions to:
  - The strategic outcomes for the commissioning service or partnership,
  - Relevant LAA targets,
  - Strategic plans, joint strategic plans, service plans,
  - Service user, carer and community priorities.

- Consider at every stage value for money and best value principles.
- Record the process including any scoring, and ranking of applications.
- To call on specialist advice, adjourn or establish advisory panels as required.
- Conclude with final recommendations for funding.

The appraisal panel need not necessarily select and recommend applications achieving the highest appraisal score, and can apply a range of criteria in accordance with commissioning strategies and the priorities of funding partners. For example, where there is an uneven geographic distribution of services, a lesser scoring application located in an area of need may rank above other higher scoring applications.

#### **4. Membership of appraisal panels**

Appraisal panels will be chaired by a strategic commissioner and have as many scoring members as needed to ensure sound decisions. Panels should have a quorum of 3 members, including one commissioner and at least one third sector representative. Where helpful, panels can also include representatives of service users and communities.

The chair can invite others attendees as non-voting advisers or observers.

All panel members must agree to be subject to a protocol on conflicts of interest, to be signed by all attendees.

#### **5. Role and Membership of advisory panels**

Advisory panels will be created by the appraisal panel where a particularly inclusive or specialist assessment is needed. Advisory panels will be chaired by a representative of the service commissioner. The chair will invite a membership that will help the panel make the best possible recommendation to the appraisal panel. Membership may be influenced by a need to ensure the inclusion of particular user voices or communities, and/or by a need for specialist or expert advice. Advisory panels must have at least one independent representative of the third sector.

#### **6. Conflict of interest and confidentiality**

Members of panels must to declare any interest they may have in any applicant organisations. They must also undertake not to disclose any of the information considered to any other body or person not present at the panel meeting. Other conflict of interest protocols are also in force; for example, Council staff are subject to the Council's Employee Code of Conduct.

#### **7. Moderation**

The appraisal panel will moderate the results of all recommendations to ensure consistency and best value. Moderation will include financial constraints and panels may invite advisors to assist with this process.

## **8. References**

Where references are required, at least one should be available at or before the panel and it should represent a positive response. If however, any references are negative in tone, or any other relevant information comes to light, appraisal findings will be referred to the chair of the panel for a decision on whether any recommendation already made should stand or be removed from the decision-making process and declined.

## **9. Chairing and conduct of the panel meetings**

Decisions made by panels can be the result of consensus or voting. Accountability for decisions rests with the chair and co-chair of the Appraisal Panel. The chair or co-chairs of the panels will have a casting vote where voting is used.

All panel members and participants must follow the general principles of conduct in public life as set out in the Relevant Authorities (General Principles) Order 2001. Panel members can ask for information about these principles.

## **10. Communication**

The chairs of the appraisal panel will compose a report making the final recommendations to the appropriate final authority. Communication of the final grant-funding decisions to all applicants will take place in time for successful applicants to prepare to deliver their services.

## **11. Feedback to organisations**

Written feedback will be supplied to all applicants in a short pro-forma. As a minimum, the pro-forma will include the application score and the threshold level, and information about the commissioner's complaint procedure. Applicants will also be given verbal feedback on their application if requested.